

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 30 | AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 34°C  
**Min:** 23°C  
**Rainfall:** 1mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvri:** Aavani 14  
**Tithi:** Thrayodashi  
**Star:** Uthiradam  
**Rahukalam:**  
4.30 pm to 6 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
12 noon to 1.30 pm

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.45 am  
**Zohar:** 12.17 pm  
**Asar:** 3.19 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.26 pm  
**Isha:** 7.39 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.21 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 4.30 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 5.04 AM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+77,180)	(+934)
35,38,413	63,648

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+6,352)  
**TN:** 4,15,590 7,137

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,50,68,871

**DEATHS**  
8,44,194

**COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES**  
215

worldometers.info

## BSF detects tunnel along India-Pak border

**New Delhi/Jammu:** The Border Security Force (BSF) has detected a tunnel originating from across the border just beneath the Indo-Pak international boundary fence in Jammu, thus foiling attempts of terror groups and drug mafia in Pakistan to sneak into India, officials said on Saturday.

## Sunny Leone's name in college merit list

**Kolkata:** Bollywood actor Sunny Leone's name appeared on the college merit list in West Bengal for the third day on Saturday and the authorities of the institute have lodged a complaint with the police against mischief makers. The actor's name featured in the third place in the list for English honours in Barasat Government College.

## COUNTER POINT



**The car will suit Indian conditions more!**

## STATE | 3

**BJP makes former IPS office Annamalai state VP**



## NATION | 4

**'Telangana HC to resume physical hearing on Sept 7'**

## WORLD | 7

**Don calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual**



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Vol. 10 No. 243 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹4.00

# Congress writes to FB chief

**New Delhi, Aug 29:** The Congress on Saturday wrote to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg for the second time in a month, asking what steps were being taken on repeated allegations about the global social media giant's India unit being biased towards the ruling BJP.

The opposition party also demanded an investigation by a Joint Parliamentary Committee into

## WHATSAPP TOO

the alleged "links of Facebook employees and the ruling establishment". The Congress' letter to Zuckerberg came over an article in Time magazine, which the opposition party claimed "revealed" more information and "evidence of biases and a quid pro quo relationship" of Facebook India with the

Bharatiya Janata Party. There was no immediate reaction from Facebook or the BJP on the allegations. A report in the Wall Street Journal earlier this month had brought to fore similar allegations, which were strongly rejected by both Facebook and the BJP. Tagging the Time magazine report, Congress

leader Rahul Gandhi claimed in a tweet that it exposes the "WhatsApp-BJP nexus".

"Used by 40 Cr Indians, WhatsApp also wants to be used for making payments for which Modi Government's approval is needed. Thus, BJP has a hold over WhatsApp," he alleged, without elaborating. Popular messaging app WhatsApp is also owned by Facebook.

# Covid-19 fatality rate in State just 1.7%: CM

■ **TN recovery rate of 85% highest in India**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 29

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami urged district collectors to create awareness among the people on the need to approach a hospital within 24 hours of developing Covid-19 symptoms like fever, cold, dry cough, breathlessness, fatigue, headache, loss of taste and loss of smell.

The government had so far spent Rs 7,162 crore in managing the pandemic, Palaniswami said while addressing district collectors through video conference to discuss the measures taken to prevent the spread of Coronavirus on Saturday.

Making a special mention of the State remaining the lowest in terms of Covid-10 deaths at the rate of 1.7 per cent, he said, adding 3,49,680 persons had been cured after treatment and the percentage of recovery was 85.45 per cent.

Collectors should monitor and ensure that the rules and regulations relating to the Covid-19 treatment were followed by both private and government hospitals, he said, adding that senior citizens and people suffering from comorbidities should be given preference in taking RTPCR test.

The door-to-door surveys and fever camps conducted across the State had helped identify people with symptoms and thus bring the spread of the virus under control, the Chief Minister said.

The government was managing the situation well by having 58,840 beds in Covid hospitals, 77,223 beds in Covid Special Care centres, 26,801 beds with oxygen supply facility, 4,782 ICU beds and 5,718 ventilators, he said, adding that 2,882 ventilators were available exclusively for Covid treatment.

Tamil Nadu was the State having the highest



## Infections go up in State

Fresh Covid-19 infections went up more than usual with the State reporting 6,352 cases and 87 deaths on Saturday, when Chennai showed a slight reduction in the spread of the virus with 1285 infections and 17 deaths. Some of the districts that had high numbers were Chengalpattu 306, Coimbatore 491, Cuddalore 420, Kanchipuram 241, Salem 432 and Thiruvallur 284.

number of testing facilities for Coronavirus with a total of 146 labs - 63 of them government and 83 private, he said and listed out the various measures taken by the government like appointing 15,000 medical professionals, making available life-saving drugs like Tocilizumab 400 mg, Remdesivir 100 mg and Enoxaparin 400 mg in hospitals, besides PPEs and other protective gear for hospital staff.

He said the government had been holding periodic meetings and monitoring the situation relating to the spread of the virus and had been announcing relaxations in the lockdown in a responsible manner.

## UNLOCK 4.0: OK TO METROS FROM SEPT. 7

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 29

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs announced several relaxations to the lockdown norms in September, allowing all activities outside containment zones other than cinema halls, swimming pools, entertainment parks and theatres (excluding open air theatres), and making it clear that the States should not impose any lockdown without consulting the Centre.

So, in Unlock-4, Metrorail will open from September 7 in a graded manner and social, academic, sports, entertainment, cultural, religious and political functions and other congregations would be allowed for 100 persons. Open air theatres can also be opened from September 21. Though schools, colleges and other educational institutions will remain closed till the end of September, 50 per cent of teaching and non-teaching staff will be allowed to attend schools for online teaching, tele-counselling and related work.

Students of Classes 9 to 12 can visit the schools to take guidance of teachers with the written consent of parents and guardians. Skills and jobs training institutes will also be allowed. For students of higher education, research scholars and PG students of technical and professional programmes are allowed to visit their institutions for laboratory and experimental purposes.

There should be no restriction on inter-state or intra-state movement and national directives for Covid-19 should be followed, the new guidelines from MHA said on Saturday.

## IPL COVID-19 NUMBERS

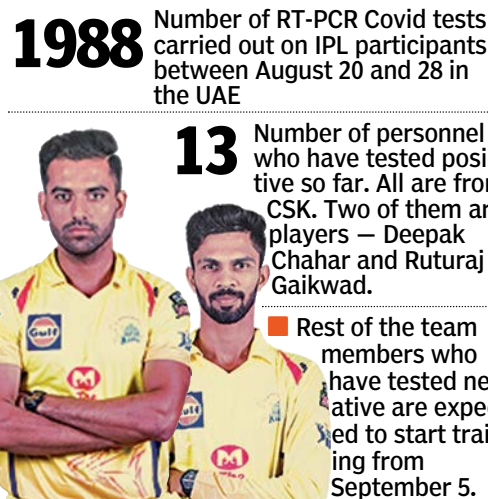
**1988**

Number of RT-PCR Covid tests carried out on IPL participants between August 20 and 28 in the UAE

**13**

Number of personnel who have tested positive so far. All are from CSK. Two of them are players — Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad.

■ Rest of the team members who have tested negative are expected to start training from September 5.



## What next for CSK?

According to the IPL's Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs), all those who tested positive will now need to undergo at least two weeks of further quarantine and clear two more tests before they can rejoin the team.

# Second +ve case in CSK cup of woes

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

As batsman Ruturaj Gaikwad became the second Chennai Super Kings player to test positive for Covid-19, the BCCI on Saturday announced that all 13 members who are infected have been isolated from the rest of the team.

"All the affected personnel as well as their close contacts are asymptomatic and have been isolated from other team

members. They are being monitored by the IPL medical team," said a BCCI release.

Upon landing in the UAE, all players and team officials followed a mandatory testing and quarantine programme and the BCCI said it has put in place stringent health and safety protocols for the event in the UAE. "A total of 1,988 RT-PCR COVID tests were carried out between August 20 and 28 across all participant groups in the UAE."

# Madras HC for hearings in court

**Chennai, Aug 29:** The Madras high court has decided to open physical court hearing partially with six Division Benches at the Principal Seat at Madras and two Division Benches at Madurai Bench, with a combination of physical court hearing and virtual court hearing with effect from September 7, 2020.

The Administrative Committee took this decision at its meeting held on Saturday, after con-

sidering the issue with regard to physical court hearings in the High court.

The physical court hearing in Madras HC in two Division Benches will be in the pre-lunch session and three Division Benches in the post-lunch session in order to avoid overcrowding in courts. The virtual court hearings will be alternatively conducted for the rest of the day.

■ **More on P4**

## ₹24.713 CR DEAL Ambani's Reliance buys Future Group

**New Delhi:** Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries on Saturday announced the acquisition of Future Group for ₹24,713 crore to bolster its fast growing retail business. "Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL), subsidiary of Reliance Industries, will acquire the retail and wholesale business and the logistics and warehousing business from the Future Group as going concerns on a slump sale basis for lumpsum aggregate consideration of INR 24,713 crore," the company said.

# India out of Russia war games

**PAWAN BALI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, AUG 29

India has withdrawn from multi-nation military exercise "Kavkaz 2020" in Russia next month as China was one of the participating countries.

India did not want to participate in a military exercise with China at a time when armies from the two countries are involved in a stand-off in Eastern Ladakh from last three months.

Pakistan is also participating in the Kavkaz 2020 military exercise among 20 countries including Iran and Turkey. The exercise Kavkaz is being held

in Astrakhan region of Southern Russia September 15 to 27. The military exercise is part of a four year exercise cycle of the Russian army and the name is based on the region where these exercises are held. Kavkaz was last held in 2012 and 2016.

As per the earlier plan India's participation in the exercise was to be a company level strength (180 troops from an infantry battalion plus elements of other arms) along with elements of IAF and observers from the Indian Navy.

Some 13,000 troops will participate in the exercise.

China is likely to participate with substantial numbers of naval surface combatants. The aim of the exercise is to provide real-time training to counter international terrorism in the Northern and Caucasus region. The current exercise setting will involve both offensive and defensive operations against international terror organisations. Russia has been a major partner of India in the defence sector and the cooperation has been steadily growing further. In June, a tri-services contingent from India participated at the Victory Day Parade at the

iconic Red Square in Moscow to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. A contingent from China had also attended it. Both India and China are members of the SCO, an influential regional grouping. The SCO, seen as a counterweight to NATO, has emerged as one of the largest transregional international organisations which accounts for almost 44 per cent of the world population stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea.

# 19 Shia mourners hurt in pellet firing in J&K

**YUSUF JAMEEL**  
SRINAGAR, AUG 29

At least, 19 mourners were injured when the police fired teargas canisters and pellet shotguns to disperse a Muharram tazia procession in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday.

The hospital sources and witnesses said that 12 of the injured were hit by pellets and that the condition of, at least, one of them who received multiple pellet entrance wounds in the face is stated to be critical.

The police burst teargas canisters to disperse the Shia mourners also in Shalimar area on the outskirts of the City later dur-

ing the day.

However, a large number of mourners took to the streets in congested Gaw Kadal area of the summer capital and amid chanting of slogans and rhymes in praise of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred along with 71 of his family members and companions in the Battle of Karbala (Iraq) in October 680 began intense self-flagellation. The witnesses said that the police and other security forces watched them from a distance and did not try to interfere unlike at Bemina and Shalimar.

The police authorities said

that only "mild force" was used against groups of people at a couple of places after they violated restrictions in force in parts of Srinagar in view of the COVID-19 and tried to take out tazia processions, ignoring the appeals of the authorities to the contrary.

On Friday, the police detained dozens of Shia mourners to foil their repeated attempts to take out a tazia procession through the streets of uptown Srinagar.

The authorities had at dawn on Friday imposed restrictions under Section 144 CrPC on areas falling under eight police stations-

Karan Nagar, Maisuma, Kothi Bagh, Shergari, Krala Khud and Ram Munshi Bagh to hold back tazia processions.

Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, Pandurang K. Pole, on Thursday night announced a complete ban on holding of such rallies in view of the spike in COVID-19 deaths and positive cases in the Valley and urged the heads of religious organizations to use their influence and make people aware of the importance of following Coronavirus related SOPs including social distancing protocol and use of face masks while commemorating martyrdom of Imam Hussain.



A youth who received pellet gunshot wounds on his face during police action against Shia mourners in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday being treated at City's Imam Hussain Hospital.

*Photo courtesy: A local resident*

# 'Black Panther' star Boseman dead

**Los Angeles, Aug 29:** Chadwick Boseman, who played Black American icons Jackie Robinson and James Brown with searing intensity before inspiring audiences worldwide as the regal Black Panther in Marvel's blockbuster movie franchise, died Friday of cancer. He was 43. Boseman died at his home in the Los Angeles area with his wife and family by his side, his publicist Nicki Fioravante told The Associated Press.

Boseman was diagnosed



with colon cancer four years ago, his family said in a statement.

"A true fighter, Chadwick persevered through it all, and brought you many of the films you have come to love so much," his family said.

— AP



## OTHER STORIES

Brain dead man  
breathes new life into  
corona patient

**Chennai/Mumbai:** A brain dead man has breathed new life into a Covid-19 patient with severe lung infection and given hope to a young Mumbai woman as his lungs and hands were transplanted to the respective recipients.

The wife of the 34-year-old man from the city agreed to donate his heart, liver and skin also for various recipients in city hospitals.

The hands were airlifted to Mumbai with the hope of giving the woman a real pair of limbs after she lost them in a mishap at Ghatkopar railway station on January 12, 2014. The transplant that benefited more than one recipient was made possible due to the donation from the deceased, who was declared brain dead at Gleneagles Global Hospital in Chennai after intracerebral hemorrhage on Thursday, hospital sources said. After his wife's consent, the man's organs were allotted to various hospitals. While Global Hospital Chennai retained the liver, the heart, lungs, kidneys and skin were donated to different hospitals in the city. His hands went to Monika More, a young woman from Mumbai's suburban area, who was using artificial hands and is now set to get a real pair, if the bilateral surgery succeeds. The heart and lung transplant surgeries were performed at MGM Healthcare here.

— PTI

Lung transplant done  
on Covid-19 patient

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

For the first time in Asia, the Chennai doctors have conducted a successful bilateral lung transplant on a 48-year-old man who was infected by Covid-19. The transplant was performed on August 27 by a team led by Dr. K. R. Balakrishnan, chairman and director of cardiac sciences and director of heart and lung transplant program at MGM Healthcare. Dr. Balakrishnan said that the patient was recuperating well and his condition was out of danger. "The patient, who was infected on June 8, was airlifted to the hospital from Ghaziabad in UP on July 20 after his lungs were severely damaged by Covid-19. The decision to conduct transplant was taken after his condition worsened despite ECMO support for more than one month. It was very difficult for us to conduct a complicated transplant as organ donation was not frequent due to the pandemic. Luckily we got a healthy pair of lungs to conduct the transplant", he said. "As the patient's both transplanted lungs were working well, we removed the ECMO support. Now his clinical condition is stable," said Suresh Rao, co-director, Institute of Heart & Lung Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support.

## The nation needs a break

While decibel levels on TV shows soar, allegations and counter-allegations fly and 'facts' emerge with astonishing regularity. But the viewer-in-the-drawing room is a confused soul. And will justice ever be done?



Apsara Reddy

And the point is..

While decibel levels on TV shows soar, allegations and counter-allegations fly and 'facts' emerge with astonishing regularity. But the viewer-in-the-drawing room is a confused soul.

And will justice ever be done? Whether justice is delivered in the Sushant Singh Rajput case or not, the television anchors seem to be pronouncing their verdict on prime-time TV shows. The decibel levels of the anchors may be buttering their bread, but they sure are confusing the ordinary news consumer. A dear friend of my mother's is almost on the verge of a mental breakdown after each crazy studio fight, with the demented news anchor insisting that the country unite in support of his hashtag journalism.

And then there are a few lacklustre and deadpan anchors who've allowed Rhea Chakraborty, the nation's dashboard of the moment, to tell her tale with little or no interjections. She monopolises every moment and delivers an almost impeccable performance - no retakes, no hiccups, and a piercingly confident gaze. Her answers are so perfectly practiced that one almost misses the fact that they are patchy; and the

anchors seem too meek to point it out! In fact, one anchor looked like he needed a dose of whatever Sushant was supposedly on. Rhea took control, and how! Not a single question threw her off guard and she came prepared with dates and her own version of the facts. But the anchor failed to ask her even a basic question -

If she was never in control of Sushant's finances or life, why did she go far back into his accounts and check that he had spent Rs 70 lakh on a boys' trip much before she came into his life?

When it comes to TRPs, the anchors are all the same. We've seen it over decades. The same lot who are now gunning for 'nepo kids' and stirring emotions will gladly fawn over Karan Johar if he promotes their next film! And I wish Rhea had said "no comments" and just waited it out. Instead, she's engaging with this display of Gradel manure, setting in motion another round of hate hashtags.

I had stopped following this case and the news coverage a while back until I was sent a WhatsApp forward of a news anchor jumping off his seat while presenting his show. It was hilarious, and drew me back to the tamasha. This case is all bluster, no facts, no func-



tional brains being used, no common sense brought to bear on any news show. Everyone is unilaterally pushing their own agenda, as agencies are going about doing their job. Rivalry and popularity aside, news anchors using their shows to discredit and demean others must really stop. These boisterous boys of the idiot box must really get a grip!

Suddenly, the deafening silence from the film fraternity is making so much sense. Imagine being vocal and being dragged into this sewage of a narrative.

The point is - It is an active investigation. How are so many "facts" coming out only on news channels? If agencies had found these same 'facts', wouldn't a few arrests have been made by now?

The media has a key role to play in fighting for justice but mustn't get ahead of itself in delivering verdicts. To remain relevant TV news media needn't just take refuge under sensationalism.



## CM, Stalin laud Mariappan, Ranjith Kumar

**Chennai, Aug 29:** Chief Minister K. Palaniswami and DMK president M. K. Stalin congratulated parathlete Thangavelu Mariappan and J. Ranjith Kumar, conferred the Khel Ratna award and Dhyan Chand award, on Saturday. India's sporting heroes, including Mariappan, were bestowed the annual national awards in an unparalleled online ceremony on Saturday amid the pandemic during which athletes logged in from multiple cities to be honoured by President Ram Nath Kovind.

Taking to Twitter Palaniswami said, "my special wishes and congratulations to my Thamizh brothers Thangavelu Mariappan



Thangavelu Mariappan

and Ranjith Kumar, who have been conferred with the Khel Ratna Award and Dhyan Chand Award today." In another tweet, the Chief Minister paid tributes to Dhyan Chand and said "Remembering Major Dhyan Chand on his 115th birth anniversary. A true inspiration for every sportsman and gen-



Ranjith Kumar

erations to come." "On this #NationalSportsDay, I salute all our sportsmen who work tirelessly to bring laurels to the nation," he said. The legendary hockey player's birth anniversary is celebrated as National Sports Day. Palaniswami also uploaded a picture of his party leader, late chief

minister J Jayalalithaa, with a quote which said, "sports teaches us the three most essentials required for our lives - hard Work, fighting spirit and Teamwork." The photo also featured Palaniswami holding a badminton racket and a shuttlecock. DMK chief Stalin too took to the microblogging site to say, "On this #NationalSportsDay, let us remember the remarkable performances of our sports personnel and encourage the young talents to set foot on new horizons. My hearty congratulations to Khel Ratna and Dhyan Chand awardees, Thangavelu Mariappan and Ranjith Kumar." — PTI



Women seek the blessings of a person dressed up as Mahabali Chakravarthi during Onam celebration at Tiruvottiyur organised by North Chennai Kairali Association on Saturday.

— DC

## Is naughty Nithy's nation fit for a Netflix flick?



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

No, I am not from any of Swami Nithyananda's favourite districts in Tamil Nadu. Nor do I stand a chance of flooring Ma Nithyananda Mayi aka Moyi in a personal interview. So there is no point in dreaming of stepping into the hallowed land of Kailaasa for doing business or whatever with its joyful inhabitants. All that I can do is to stand away and peek.

It was a peek of a miscreant into the bedroom of the swami, albeit through a video camera lens, that threw a certain light on Ma Nithyananda Mayi aka Ranjitha and Bhagwan Sri Nithyananda A Paramashivan aka A Rajasekaran, way back in 2010. In the 10 years since then, both of them have come a long way, hand in hand, along with some others, the fact that the video was beamed into the drawing rooms by a Tamil television channel notwithstanding.

So, as the bejeweled guru and his band of devotees

apparently wait for the complete launch of Kailaasa - or, are they already rollicking there? - a plethora of questions brim up. But before raising them, let me introduce Nithyananda for the benefit of those who might not know much about him, particularly his rags to riches story.

Ahead of that, to put things in perspective, Nithyananda is now a fugitive, accused of rape. He is wanted by the Karnataka Police for allegedly raping a former disciple repeatedly for five years at his ashram in Bidadi. After the case was filed in 2012, Nithyananda claimed that he was physically incapable of doing what he had been charged with, prompting a potency test in Bangalore, and then said that it was a case of consensual sex.

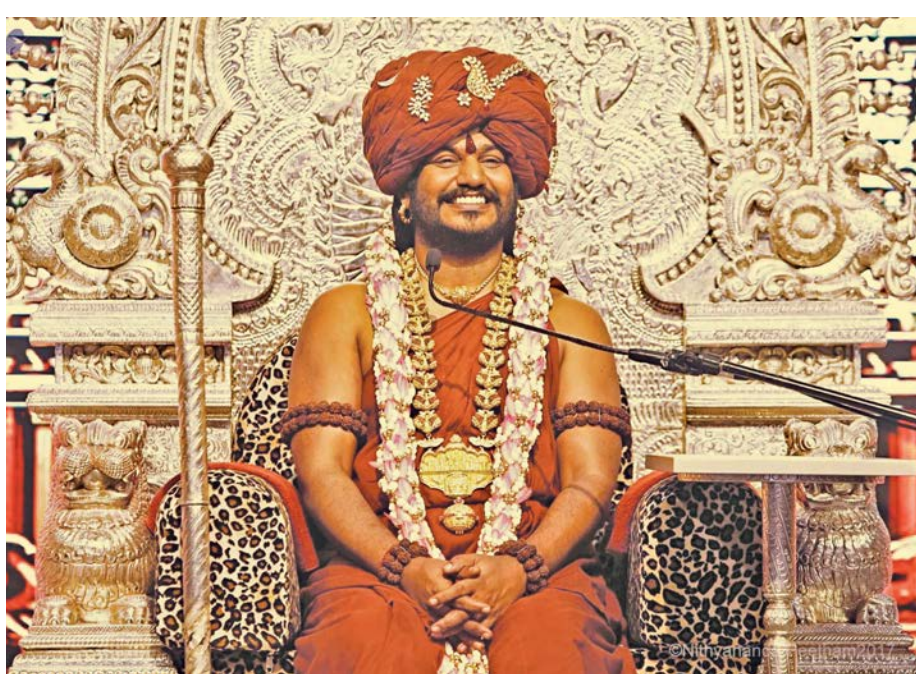
An Interpol Blue Corner Notice was issued against him in January this year after the Gujarat Police, looking for him in a case relating to two girls missing from his ashram in that State, said that he had escaped to another country.

While the police have no clue as to where he is, he is connected with his band of disciples back in India and also an army of detractors and trolls through the internet, through which he reels out scientific mumbo jumbos like "e=mc2 is wrong."

Well, all that bilge started at the Arunachala hills in Thiruvannamalai, where Rajasekaran grew up watching and interacting with the scores of godmen who lived in or visited the temple town. Since the age of 10, he had been trying out meditations, yoga and all things religious on his own, at times taking the guidance of some godmen. After completing his diploma in mechanical engineering from a local polytechnic, he joined the Ramakrishna Mutt as an ascetic in 1995.

Then he started out as an independent spiritual leader offering guidance and solace to ordinary people from a small hut-like structure and slowly became popular to go on to build sprawling monastic structures, in the style of a true rags-to-riches fairytale. In 2000 he launched a meditation centre at Bidadi in Karnataka, where he is said to have raped the devotee and was also caught on camera with Ranjitha - he later claimed that he was practicing a 'Shavasana Yoga' pose.

When the video with Ranjitha was telecast, he



was already an internationally renowned spiritual guru with centres at various parts of the world. Both Nithyananda and Ranjitha, who was even at that time a part of the cult and a resident of the ashram, openly said that the video was morphed and that the persons in it were not them, which was disproved by forensic tests.

Ranjitha later grew in stature within the international organisation, becoming Ma Nithyananda Mayi, and is now destined to conduct the interviews for

those aspiring to do business in Kailaasa.

Kailaasa, the Hindu nation, whose motto is 'reviving the enlightened civilisation', going by all that is put out in the social media accounts of its top honchos, is a fairy land. Its exact geographical location still remains a matter of speculation since Nithyananda would not reveal it. Apart from having its own Reserve Bank and currency, which is in pure gold, it has a 300 page economic policy, prepared by a

team of monastic members, who pored over 100 books and 360 articles on Hindu Economic Policy.

Well, this sort of drivel is dished out through the videos that are released continuously, evoking interest among the people about the nation he had bought somewhere. Despite the surrealistic nature of the offerings - 'don't be surprised to see holy monkey welcoming you in Sanskrit in Kailaasa airport' or 'as said in Manu dharma cast and caste strictly not allowed here' -

some people in Tamil Nadu are taking pride in one of their own boys buying out a whole country.

Nithyananda, on his part, keeps enticing the crowds out there with announcements like the Kailaasa Premier League Soccer Championship played by Team Nithyananda Moyi vs Team Gopikananda. It was such attractions that prompted a hotelier in Madurai, a textile merchant in Trichy and a farmer in Madurai to send letters to Nithyananda seeking permission to start businesses in his country.

It was in that context, assuring the applicants of permission to do business that Nithyananda spelt out the names of the three districts in Tamil Nadu - Madurai, Tiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram - that would be his favourites. It's a different matter that there would be 'no reservation in Kailaasa because there is no caste in Kailaasa' or 'Black, white, peach, pink all skins will be treated equally.'

The point is when the Tamil civil society has been interacting with Nithyananda, why are the police not able to reach him. Are our investigative agencies so backwardly placed, technologically and otherwise, that they are unable to go to Kailaasa if at all it exists somewhere? Even if it is just imaginary, the godman should be in some

place, along with Ranjitha and other devotees who share pictures in social media.

So, is someone protecting the swami, who apparently spends his time challenging his trolls or speaking nonsense? As if replying to the jokes that are made on him through memes, Nithyananda childishly comes out with statements like 'I am God. I am not just the President or Prime Minister of Kailaasa' or asks 'did you think that I will be vanquished.'

But the comical demeanour seems to be just a façade since the Reserve Bank of Kailaasa and its currency seem to have something untold behind it. Is it a safe haven to park the huge reserves of money that he collects from all over the world as donations and fees for programmes offered by his institution? Or is it formed to stash slush money from international criminal rackets? Are international financial frauds operating from behind Nithyananda?

Whatever it is, the final question is: Will the entire Kailaasa narrative, given the mystery behind it, qualify one day to be the subject of a Netflix documentary, on the lines of 'Wild Wild Country'? If it does, to fit into the role of Ma Anand Sheela, we have Ma Nithyananda Mayi, who can tell us all, at least, then.

Court proceedings  
against IELC stayed

J. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

The Madras high court has stayed all further proceedings in the suit filed by Rev. C. Ravi pending before the additional district munsif, Thanjavur against India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC).

Justice P.T. Asha granted the interim stay on an application filed by IELC represented by its administrator, Justice D. Hariparanthaman, a retired judge of the Madras high court, which sought to stay all further proceedings in the original suit No.142 of 2020 on the file of the additional district munsif court, Thanjavur and to strike off the plaint in the suit.

The judge said on July 24, 2020, this court had passed an order that "the property in question belongs to the IELC and therefore, no other person can collect the rents in the name of IELC or otherwise. This court is called upon to protect the interests of the true owner to the property and proceeds therefrom. Therefore, in the interest of justice and balance of convenience there shall be an interim injunction restraining Rev. C. Ravi or any other person claiming through him, or on his behalf from collecting monthly rent from any one of the tenants in St. Lukas Shopping Complex, St. Lukas Church compound, No.8, Medical College Road, Thanjavur until further orders. There shall also be a direction to all the tenants occupying the said premises to remit monthly rents into the bank account of the IELC-Trust association and to no other person until fur-

ther orders".

The judge said it was brought to notice of the court through an application filed by the administrator that Rev. C. Ravi had filed a suit on the file of the additional district munsif, Thanjavur against the IELC represented by its secretary. The fact that the plaintiff has impleaded the India Evangelical Lutheran Church secretary shows that subterfuge being practised by Rev. C. Ravi especially when he was well aware that by orders of this court dated July 31, 2018 an interim administrator who was a retired judge of the high court, has been appointed as the administrator and all authority to administer and manage the India Evangelical Lutheran Church and its assets was entrusted to the administrator till an election was conducted and a new set of office bearers elected as per the by-laws of the church.

The judge said the papers filed along with the application would show that order of this court has been posted on the website of the IELC on July 24, 2020 itself and the administrator had also sent a notice dated July 28, 2020 to Rev. Ravi enclosing the order dated July 24, 2020. "In the light of the above, there shall be an interim order of stay of all further proceedings in the suit OS No.142 of 2020 on the file of the additional district munsif, Thanjavur until further orders of this court. The Registrar (judicial) shall communicate to the additional district munsif, Thanjavur; this order on account of paucity of time and as the suit is listed for hearing on August 31, 2020", the judge added.



## SHORT TAKES

## Exempt students who did not pay fees, too

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

DMK president M. K. Stalin urged Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to extend the exemption given to college and university students from appearing for their arrear papers to even those who had failed to pay the examination fees. The Chief Minister had announced on August 26 that all the students who had paid the examination fees for clearing their arrears need not sit for the examination due to coronavirus crisis.

Today, Stalin, in a statement, demanded that the facility be given to those who did not pay the examination fee, too, as many students were unable to pay the fees due to the pandemic. It would be unfair to give the exemption only for those who could pay the examination fees alone, Stalin pointed out.

## Feeding the crocodiles

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

To support the Madras Crocodile Bank, which has been facing severe financial problems due to the lockdown, an amount of Rs 1.5 lakh was donated by the Madras Sterling Round Table and Madras Sterling Ladies Circle.

Since the major revenue for the Crocodile Bank came from ticket sales, they were in a crisis and the funds, donated by Madras Sterling Round Table 123 and Madras Sterling Ladies Circle 63, will be used for feeding the reptiles.

The fund was raised through an event "Feed the Crocs" and the cheque was presented to the Crocodile Bank Chairman by the office-bearers of the two organisations. The online event was attended by close to 200 people who enjoyed watching the animals being fed.

## Kindest Teacher Award instituted

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

School teachers in the city will be awarded for their kindness. Instituted in the memory of late Judith Pinto, a teacher at Don Bosco School, Egmore, on August 27, the Judith Pinto Memorial Kindest Teacher Award will be presented to a teacher on a rotational basis for a different school every year in the city.

The award will be bestowed at Don Bosco School in its first academic year 2020-2021.

There will be a cash prize along with a trophy and citation presented at the school's Annual Day. Late Mrs Pinto taught at the school for over three decades.

Her former students and colleagues remember her with fondness and vouch for her kindness. Her son, lawyer and columnist Sanjay Pinto, in a press release, said, "With corporal punishment so rampant in the world today, our family thought it fit to celebrate her life and contribution with an annual award."

## BJP makes Annamalai VP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

Former IPS officer of Karnataka cadre K. Annamalai was appointed as a BJP state vice-president, five days after he formally joined the party in the presence of its national general secretary Muralidhar Rao in New Delhi.

In the letter announcing his appointment, BJP state president L. Murugan wished Annamalai all the best.

Hailing from Karur, Annamalai was selected for the IPS in 2011. He

**He had repeatedly said that he was an admirer of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Another point that he had made is that the BJP had been misrepresented in Tamil Nadu**

resigned from the IPS in 2019 when he was Deputy Commissioner of Police in Bengaluru South. In his various jobs in Karnataka, he endeared himself to people so much that there were public protests in two places

when he was transferred out.

Annamalai, too, learnt the local language and in a speech vowed to remain a Kannadiga till his last breath.

After joining the BJP on August 25, he visited the Coimbatore office of the party two days later and also addressed a press conference. But police booked a case against him and other party functionaries for violating rules under the Epidemic Diseases Act and Indian Penal Code.

In fact even before he joined the BJP he had been giving interviews to

various media organisations in the country and had initially spoken about his aspiration to work independently and also being a farmer. Initial pictures of him had a lamb on his shoulders.

He had repeatedly said that he was an admirer of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Another point that he had made is that the BJP had been misrepresented in Tamil Nadu.

So the BJP might be fielding him Tamil Nadu as a future hope of the party, expecting people to support him since he had been an IPS officer.

## One more jumbo found dead

DC CORRESPONDENT  
COIMBATORE, AUG. 29

A wild female elephant was found dead in mysterious circumstances near Anaikatty-Dhomanoor in the Coimbatore forest range spiking the serial elephant death numbers in the Coimbatore division. Officials refused to disclose details on the death even as experts and members of NGOs claimed that the dead female elephant was the mother of the calf that died recently near Mangarai.

The Makna elephant with seriously injured mouth that ransacked a house near Marudhamalai on August 15 night and ran into neighbouring Kerala forest last week before the Tamil Nadu forest department could treat it has returned into Tamil Nadu forest border on Saturday near Vettaikaran Kovil after being tranquilized and treated by the Kerala forest department.

## 2 die in mishap

**Karur:** Two persons were killed on the spot in a road accident in which a two-wheeler and a car were involved near Thogamalai in the district, on Saturday. Police identified the deceased as Palanisamy of Pullambadi in Karur district, and S Raja of Koppu village, in Tiruchy district. They were working in a private petrol bunk at Kazhur village near Thogamalai, and were on their way back to bunk on a bike, when a car fatally knocked down them.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, AUG. 29

A welder by profession, Ananth (38) of Vallalar street, Vallam, six kms from here, set himself ablaze on Thursday by dousing himself with kerosene before a private bank at Vallam, over loan repayment and later died



People pay homage to Kanyakumari Congress party MP H. Vasanthakumar on Saturday who died of coronavirus, — DC

## Kumari dt's beacon in Parliament falls silent

M. ARULOLI | DC  
KANYAKUMARI, AUG. 29

Kanyakumari MP H. Vasantha Kumar, cutting across party lines is being gratefully remembered by people in his constituency not just for his iconic friendly smile, but also for his performance as their representative in the Lok Sabha.

Recalling his friendly gesture towards his rival candidate, BJPs Pon Radhakrishnan during the last LS campaign, BJP p a r t y m a n Hariharasudhan, said, "On information about a clash between the Congress and BJP cadres on the campaign trail, Vasantha Kumar, who was campaigning close by, rushed to the spot. To everybody's surprise, he got down from his vehicle and straight away went towards the BJP cadres with his usual friendly smile, settled the issue between the party cadres. Thus, he proved himself a man of action and never hesitated to get down from his level to settle things amicably."

His performance as an elected people's representative also has been highly appreciated, as during his tenure as MLA in Nanguneri constituency in Tirunelveli district during 2006-2011 and during 2016 till he resigned his MLA post to contest in the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha election in 2019, Vasantha Kumar gave priority in renovation and desilting of water bodies in the drought-hit constituency, and created road infrastructure to all

## Congress leaders, public pay homage to MP

**Chennai, Aug. 29:** Congress leaders and the general public on Saturday paid homage to deceased party Lok Sabha MP from Kanyakumari H. Vasanthakumar, who succumbed to Covid-19 on Friday.

His mortal remains were placed at his T Nagar residence, where scores of people, including TNCC President K S Alagiri paid tributes.

Later, Congress General Secretary Mukul Wasnik

and Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy paid tributes to Vasanthakumar on Kamarajar Arangam premises.

Though there were plans to keep the mortal remains at TNCC headquarters Sathyamurthy Bhavan, the plan was changed as the family insisted that they had to leave for Agastheeswaram in Kanyakumari for the final rites, Alagiri said. — PTI

villages in his assembly constituency, said Muthukumar of Parappadi village, in Nanguneri constituency.

"He also spent from his pocket and sponsored JCBs to be used to weed out babool trees that made the land dry," recalled Muthukumar.

His performance as parliamentarian since the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha on June 2019, is highly appreciable, said deputy president, OBC wing, Tamil Nadu Congress, advocate T Kamaraj.

Being very keen in parliamentary affairs, Vasantha Kumar during his one-year in parliament since June 2019, has 88 per cent attendance higher than the national average and Tamil Nadu average attendance of the MPs in parliament in the first year of the 17th Lok

Sabha. Unlike many others who spoke on general issues in parliament, our MP raised more questions and placed specific demands to our constituency, added Kamaraj. He had demanded the Centre's immediate intervention for the safe return of around 600 Kanyakumari fishermen stranded in Iran due to corona lockdown there. He also spoke on the issue of personal and employment safety of the fishermen employed abroad from Tamil Nadu. Natural rubber manufacturers here remember their MP raising their issues in parliament in 2019.

His last speech in parliament on March 20 was about containing corona infection. He had demanded the Centre to declare Corona as a national disaster, and give ₹2,000 to all daily wage earners.

## Tormented by loans, youth kills self

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, AUG. 29

A welder by profession, Ananth (38) of Vallalar street, Vallam, six kms from here, set himself ablaze on Thursday by dousing himself with kerosene before a private bank at Vallam, over loan repayment and later died

at the Thanjavur medical college hospital, on Saturday.

Police said, Ananth had borrowed ₹nine lakh from the private bank as housing loan.

He repaid some installments, but could not repay after some time. The bank issued a notice for auctioning the house. Ananth

came to the bank on Thursday and sought some time for repayment of the loan.

But officials allegedly refused him time. Hence, he poured kerosene and set himself ablaze before the bank.

He was taken to the TMCH for treatment, but died on Saturday.

Ananth's kin staged a demonstration before the hospital demanding police action against the bank officials, who they alleged forced Ananth to commit suicide.

They also demanded a job in the bank for one of the victim's kin. CPI(M) members also joined the agitation.

## Dull trade for farmers, florists

## Pandemic dampens Onam spirit in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, AUG. 29

Onam, certainly is a festival of rich culture, tradition, vibrant colours, wonders of vegetables and nature. While flowers add elegance and colours to 'Pookolam' that carries the ancient legacy associated with Onam, vegetables always add flavour, taste and tradition to this festival. And of course, who would say 'No' to the delicious and sumptuous 'Onam Sadya' that makes one relish the richness of the world of vegetables, with a touch of Kerala-style cuisine.

It is needless to mention that Onam always accounts for good trade and tidings for vegetable and cut-flower growers in the Nilgiris, as large quantities of hill vegetables and flowers would make their way to Kerala. But sadly, for the second consecutive year this time, Onam failed to bring the much expected smiles and tidings to farmers and florists in the Nilgiris as trade of Onam-related vegetable and flower has come



down drastically.

President, Nilgiris Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, R Rangasamy, said that in 2019 unprecedented rains and related damages in Kerala during Onam played spoilt-sport with vegetable trade, and this year, the Corona crisis has dealt a big blow to the season's vegetable trade here.

"Potatoes, cabbages, beet-roots, cauliflower, carrots, beans, fresh green peas and capsicum are some of the Nilgiri grown vegetables that come in for high demand during this period.

Unfortunately this year, due to the pandemic, vegetable export to Kerala from the Nilgiris has dropped, as demand for these vegetables has also come down in Kerala. The financial crunch this season has dampened the festival spirit, adding to the misery. Generally, hill farmers would be busy sending vegetables to Kerala at least a week before Thiruvonam. This year, only in the last couple of days, there was a slight surge in vegetable transport from the Nilgiris to Kerala," he noted.



Echoing the same tenor, S Sunder, a cut-flower trader here, said that usually hill grown Carnation and Gerbera flowers would be in great demand in Kerala during Onam, as the petals of these flowers are used extensively to draw Pookolam. This year, the demand is almost nil. Here in Nilgiris also, cultivation of cut-flowers has fallen drastically after March. The Covid-19 crisis has turned the fortunes of florists here into gloom this Onam," he explained.

Meanwhile, Devaki

Velayutham, a septuagenarian Malayalee resident here, said that Onam in the hills is slightly different from Onam observed in the plains, as Keralities in the Nilgiris extensively use hill-grown English vegetables like carrots, cabbages and beans for preparing 'aviyal' that gives the touch of Englishness for the Onam Sadya in the Nilgiris.

"We use double beans to prepare a special side dish, as in this part of the year, double beans are available in plenty in the Nilgiris," she added.



K. Vijayan

## A SPECIAL ART

For the three children Shilpa Manu, Akshitha Anurag and Sanskrita Anurag, residing in Coonoor this Onam, amidst the lockdown and closure of schools, has given them an opportunity to learn drawing Pookolam and learn the art of Pookolam from their parents and relatives, as they have come out with a small-sized Pookolam at their residence to mark Onam. Shilpa Manu said that Pookolam is a special art by itself and it's quite challenging to learn this art, as it requires good creative skills and patience to attain perfection.

## 'Caste certification, government's Onam gift'

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, AUG. 29

The EPS-led AIADMK government's move in July that resolved an almost four-decade deadlock by issuing 'Backward Class' caste certificate to the Ezhava Thiyya community, has come as an Onam gift this year to members of the community who live here in good numbers.

Stating that this move of the AIADMK government will be gratefully remembered forever, K Vijayan, TN state convener of the association for restoration of rights of the Ezhava Thiyya community, said that the community which had been counted among the BCs in the erstwhile Travancore - Cochin state, remained a BC in Kanyakumari district and Sengottai taluk of the erstwhile Tirunelveli district, even after the merger of these areas with the erstwhile Madras state. But Ezhava Thiyyas residing in other districts including the Nilgiris were denied BC sta-

tus after 1976, as the then state government decided that communities which were outside the state need not be on its BC list.

"After a four-decade-long battle, the issue stands solved now, that too at a time just when Onam festival is round the corner. In the Nilgiris, where Ezhava Thiyya community members live in good numbers, especially in Gudalur and Pandalur taluks bordering Kerala, the government's decision to accord BC status to them has come as an unforgettable Onam gift.

The Ezhava Thiyya community in the Nilgiris is grateful to all the political parties and leaders who had been vocal in raising this issue in various forums as well as in the TN assembly that helped the community get what it desired. "Members of the Ezhava Thiyya community here had long been in the bakery and tea stall trade, besides in Eucalyptus oil extraction trade," Vijayan added.



## SHORT TAKES

## 110-YEAR-OLD WOMAN RECOVERS FROM COVID-19

GYLVESTER ASSARY  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
AUG. 29

In Malappuram district, a 110-year-old woman was cured of Covid-19. The patient, Pathu, who tested positive on August 18, was discharged from Manjeri medical college on Saturday after successful treatment.

The oldest patient to have been cured from infection in Kerala so far, health minister, K.K. Shailaja, congratulated the medical team which treated Pathu. "It's a proud moment for all of us," she added.

On Saturday, Kerala reported 2397 new Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of cases to 71,701. Of the 71,701, 23,277 are active cases. The state also reported six deaths taking the toll to 280 while 2225 people recovered from the infection.

## RAYANNA STATUE DISPUTE GETS RESOLVED

VITTAL SHASTRI | DC  
HUBBALLI, AUG. 29

The dispute between Kannadigas and Marathas over the installation of a statue of freedom fighter Rayanna in Peeranawadi village of Belagavi taluk was settled amicably after the intervention of district incharge minister Ramesh Jarkiholi and additional director general of police Amarkumar Pande.

The Marathas agreed not to remove the Rayanna statue installed by the Kannadigas at Peeranwadi circle on Friday morning. The Kannadigas agreed not to harm the Shivaji statue situated at the venue.

Rural development and panchayat raj minister K.S. Eshwarappa, who visited the disputed place on Saturday, has assured that he will persuade home minister Basavaraj Bommai to withdraw the cases lodged against both Kannada and Marathi activists over the issue.

## ARMY RESCUES PEOPLE IN FLOOD-HIT MP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
BHOPAL, AUG. 29

The army has been called in to rescue people in marooned areas in Madhya Pradesh's Hosangabad district following flash floods in the Narmada caused by heavy downpours in the region over the last 24 hours. The river was flowing nine feet above its danger level in the district.

"The army has been called in to evacuate the people in marooned areas in the district. Besides, the national disaster response force (NDRF) teams have already been pressed into service to rescue the people in flood-hit areas," Hosangabad divisional commissioner, Rajnish Srivastav, said.

Chief minister, Shivrāj Singh Chouhan, made an aerial survey of Hosangabad to assess the flood situation.

Road communications between Bhopal and Sagar and Narasinghpur and Chhindwara have been cut off as the flooded Narmada breached bridges and national highways at several places in the region.

## MADRAS HC FOR PHYSICAL HEARINGS

From Page 1

The Benches would be functioning for half a day through physical court hearing and for the next half through virtual court hearing, so as to facilitate the lawyers of both categories, who opt for physical court or virtual court hearings.

Reacting to the decision of the Administrative Committee, P.S. Amalraj, Chairman, Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry said, "The BCTP welcomes the decision of the Madras high court to initially open Six Division Benches on a trial basis. Now, the general public is fully aware of the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and they have been following all the precautionary measures. Advocates will be vigilant and they will follow all the safety protocols. The BCTP assures that the advocates will be following all the precautionary measures and guidelines issued by the WHO, Government of India and Tamil Nadu Government, like social distancing, wearing of masks and using sanitizers."

## INDIA RECORDS SINGLE DAY SPIKE OF 76,140 NEW CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

India once again recorded a single-day spike of 76,140 cases of Coronavirus taking the country's overall infections till now to 35,35,435 out of which 27.12 lakh people have recovered. Such high numbers come at a time when the government is planning to restart metro train services, call the Monsoon Session of Parliament, hold medical and engineering entrances and university exams.

It is learnt that the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha may either function on alternate days or have staggered timings.

Maharashtra with close to 15,000 fresh cases saw a new high while Andhra Pradesh (10,621) and Karnataka (9, 386) too registered large numbers of cases in the last 24 hours. The total number of deaths recorded due to the deadly virus in one day was 1, 057 taking overall fatalities to 61, 529 according to the union health ministry.

According to COVID19India.org, the total cases in India by Saturday evening were over 35 lakh and deaths over 63,000.

There are 7,62,950 active cases of Covid-19 in the country.

The Union health ministry pointed out that in the past five months, more than three-fourth of Covid-19 cases have recovered and less than one-fourth are active now. "The number of recoveries is nearly 3.5 times the active cases of Coronavirus infection currently," health ministry officials said.

Uttar Pradesh on Friday reported 77 Covid-19-related deaths, taking the death toll in the state to 3,294, while 5,447 new cases pushed the infection tally to 2,13,824.

## 110 yr-old lady cured of Covid-19 in Kerala

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
AUG. 29

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Kerala on Saturday reported 2397 new cases of Covid-19 taking the total number of cases to 71,701. Of the 71,701, 23,277 are active cases. The state also reported six deaths taking the toll to 280 while 2225 people recovered from the infection.

There was good news from Malappuram district where a 110-year-old woman was cured of Covid - 19. The patient, Pathu, who was tested positive for Covid 19 on August 18, was discharged from Manjeri medical college on Saturday after successful treatment. She is the oldest patient to have been cured from infection in Kerala so far. Health minister K.K. Shailaja hailed the medical team which treated Pathu. "It's a proud moment for all of us," she added.

A fourth of total are active cases in TS

**Hyderabad:** The number of Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment either at home or in hospitals continues to rise with no let-up in the fresh

## Mourner shot at



A youth lies injured hit by multiple pellets when the J&K police used force to disperse a Muharram tazia procession in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday. — PHOTO COURTESY: A LOCAL RESIDENT

## Ahead of polls, Nadda meets MPs from Bihar

## BJP asks MPs to visit 60 panchayats each to ensure win

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday met party MPs from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha from Bihar at the party headquarters to review the party's preparedness for the coming crucial Assembly polls in the state. The BJP, which is a junior coalition partner in the state government led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), has asked its MPs to visit at least 60 panchayats, two each day, not in their own constituencies to meet people and also work to ensure the victory of NDA candidates, whether it is of their own party or alliance partners — JD(U) and LJP. Nadda

● **WHILE NADDA** is likely to visit the state in the second week of next month, former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis is expected to visit Patna on September 6.

had recently announced that the NDA will go to polls under the leadership of Kumar and exuded confidence that the ruling coalition will retain power. Bihar will be the first state that will go to polls in October-November amid the global pandemic Covid-19. While Nadda is likely to visit the state in the second week of next month, former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, who is likely to get a key

role in the election committee, is expected to visit Patna on September 6, when the BJP could officially start the seat-sharing talks with allies.

During the meeting, BJP MPs were asked to address at least one virtual rally at Shakti Kendras (booths) and reach out to as many prominent people in every district, highlighting Central government and state government's achievements. BJP MPs have also been asked to observe Prime Minister Narendra Modi birthday on September 17 as 'Seva Divas' and the birth anniversary of party ideologue Deen Dayal Upadhyaya next month in a big way.

For the Prime Minister's

monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat in September, BJP leaders have been asked to make sure that arrangements are made at every booth in the state for the karyakartas and locals, while keeping in mind the social distancing norms and guidelines against Covid-19.

Nadda held a separate meeting with Union ministers, including Ravi Shankar Prasad, Giriraj Singh, Ashwini Chaubey and Nityanand Rai. During the meeting with the party MPs, general secretary B.L. Santosh, general secretary and state's in-charge Bhupendra Yadav, Bihar organisational secretary Nagendra and state unit chief Sanjay Jaiswal also attended.

## 3 militants, one jawan killed in Pulwama fight

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, AUG. 29

Hours after the security forces gunned down four Al-Barq Mujahedin militants and captured a fifth one in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district on Friday evening, a similar fire fight occurred in neighbouring Pulwama leaving three more militants dead. One Army jawan was also killed in the second clash, the officials said here.

A spokesman of J&K police said on Saturday that its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) together with the Army's 50 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'s 182 and 183 Battalions launched a cordon-and-search operation in Pulwama Zadoora village overnight.

"During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given the opportunity to surrender. However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the spokesman said.

He added that the three Hizb-ul-Mujahideen cadres killed in the clash have been identified as Adil Hafiz, Arshid Ahmed Dar and Rouf Ahmed Mir—all residents of Pulwama.

In the encounter, Army jawan Prashant Sharma received critical injuries. He was evacuated to Srinagar's 92-Base Army Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries later.

Defence spokesman, Colonel Rajesh Kalia said Sepoy Sharma "was in the lead element of his party when it came into contact with the terrorists during a specific search operation launched in village Zadoora." An Army jawan suffered gunshot wounds.

## 19 MOURNERS INJURED IN PELLET FIRING

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, AUG. 29

At least 19 mourners were injured when the police fired teargas canisters and pellet shotguns to disperse a Muharram tazia procession in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday.

The hospital sources and witnesses said that 12 of the injured were hit by pellets and that the condition of, at least, one of them who received multiple pellet entrance wounds in the face is stated to be critical.

The police burst teargas canisters to disperse the Shia mourners also in Shalimar area on the outskirts of the City later during the day.

However, a large number of mourners took to the streets in congested Gaw Kadal area of the summer capital and amid chanting of slogans and rhymes in praise of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred along with 71 of his family members and companions in the Battle of Karbala (Iraq) in October 680 began intense self-flagellation. The witnesses said that the police and other security forces watched them from a distance and did not try to interfere unlike at Bemina and Shalimar.

The police authorities said that only "mild force" was used against groups of people at a couple of places after they violated restrictions in force in parts of Srinagar in view of the COVID-19 and tried to take out tazia processions, ignoring the appeals of the authorities.

## Physical hearings to start in TS HC

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 29

The Telangana High Court will resume physical court hearings from September 7, after a gap of five-and-a-half months. The court had stopped physical hearings due to the Covid-19 pandemic and taken to the online mode.

The decision was taken by the full court of the Telangana High Court, which has 14 judges, at a meeting convened on Saturday. In the first instance, only five benches will start physical hearings.

A division bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and four individual single benches headed

by Justice Challa Kondaram, Justice Ponugoti Naveen Rao, Justice Md. Shameem Akther and Justice Gandikota Sridevi will hold physical court hearing.

The benches headed by the other judges will continue hearing through videoconference for one week. The full court will meet later to evolve a plan for gradual opening of all courts.

With regard to lower courts, the High Court had previously directed the unit heads to resume the physical form of hearing after studying the pandemic situation. The court also had directed them to take help from the police to prevent crowding and to continue physical hearings.

## Sushant case: CBI grills Rhea for 2nd day in a row

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 29

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) grilled Rhea Chakraborty for the second day in a row on Saturday in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide.

Chakraborty is the prime accused in the case of abetment to suicide and cheating filed by Rajput's father. She was escorted to the DRDO guest house by a team of Mumbai police. The CBI also questioned others in connection with the suicide on Saturday.

The officials had grilled Chakraborty on Friday

for more than 10 hours in connection with her monetary details and bank transactions. The CBI also questioned Rajput's flatmate Siddharth Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh, domestic help Keshav, manager Samuel Miranda and accountant Rajat Mewati on Saturday.

Separate teams are questioning the suspects to weed out discrepancies in the sequence of incidents. Rajput's father has accused Chakraborty of allegedly swindling at least ₹15 crore from the actor's bank account. The ED is hence studying the monetary transactions of the

actor and Chakraborty.

"The family will also be questioned at a later stage on the same lines. Chakraborty may also be questioned again if needed," said an officer privy to the probe.

On Friday, Rhea had sought police protection for her family citing hounding by the media and others. A police escort vehicle was provided to her, who dropped her to the CBI office at DRDO guest house in Santacruz.

Apart from the ED and CBI, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is also investigating the narcotics angle in the case.

## Mahanadi river breaches at Banki in Odisha

AKSHAY KUMAR  
SAOO | DC  
CUTTACK/JAIPUR, AUG. 29

Thousands of people were on Saturday marooned and hectares of agricultural lands got submerged as the river Mahanadi breached at Bhagipur under Banki block in Odisha's Cuttack district.

According to sources, initially, a breach measuring around five-foot wide was

formed which later widened to around 60-foot causing a heavy flooding in the area. This is the second time after 1982 when the embankment of the state's major river caved in.

Vehicular movement on many routes disrupted as roads and bridges were submerged by the flood water.

Reports from Jaipur district said at least 26 breaches occurred in Brahmani,

Baitarani, Kharasrota and Jalaka river systems, causing serious damage to standing crops and vegetables.

As many as seven human lives have been lost and two others have gone missing in the last three days. Several cattle and goats were reportedly washed away in the floods in north Odisha as major rivers like Budhabalanga and Subarnarekha flew above their danger marks.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena said 46 sluice gates of Hiranakud dam were opened as the upper catchment areas of the Mahanadi received huge rainfall in the last 24 hours. The SRC stated that the inflow into Hiranakud reservoir had increased by more than 1 lakh cusec and the water level is rising by 8 cm every hour. "While over 8.9 lakh cusec water is entering the

Hiranakud reservoir, more than 7.2 lakh cusecs of water is being discharged through 44 of the 64 sluice gates of the dam. The water level at Hiranakud Dam stood at 626.37 ft as against the full reservoir level of 630 ft," Jena said. Till last reports came in, over 8.95 cusecs of water is flowing at Mundali barrage in Cuttack district which is likely to go up to 10 lakh cusec by Saturday evening.

## ASSAM SCHOOLS TO REOPEN FROM SEPT. 1, SAYS STATE EDUCATION MIN

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 29

A day after doling out appointment letters to 5,319 teachers for primary and upper primary schools, Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that all schools across the state will reopen from September 1.

However, for the first 15 days, teachers will focus on sanitisation of their respective school premises and informal classes

will start from September 15. Moreover, the government will also distribute free masks for the students.

Informing that teachers who had tested negative in mandatory Covid-19 tests will start coming to schools from September 1, Sarma told reporters it was decided to carry out massive sanitisation of the school premises. "We have also decided to allot a fund to the schools for sanitisation of schools," said the minister.

## RESCUE | MISSION

## Marooned man airlifted by chopper

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, AUG. 29

A man perched atop a tree for nearly 24 hours on a marooned island in a Madhya Pradesh district was on Saturday rescued by a helicopter.

Madhu Kahar (31), resident of Belkhada village in Chhindwara district, had gone fishing along with his friends to the nearby

island formed by the Pench river on Friday morning.

The island was completely submerged when water from Machgaon dam was released, leaving him and his friends stranded there.

While his friends swam to safety, he climbed a tree in the marooned island to prevent him from being washed away by the flood water.

"A team of the national disaster response force

(NDRF) rushed to the area after receiving reports on the plight of the man. The NDRF team, however, could not approach him due to strong current of the water in the area. Later, he was airlifted by a chopper," the state revenue control room here said, quoting reports from the Chhindwara district collector's office.

The man was taken to a local government hospital

for a medical checkup.

Chhindwara has recorded eight inches of rain in the last 24 hours, leaving many villages and the district headquarters town of Chhindwara marooned.

At least 50 villages in Chhindwara district have been cut off from the rest of the world due to flash floods in Pench river caused by torrential rains experienced by the district in the last 24 hours.

● **WHILE HIS** friends swam to safety, he climbed a tree in the marooned island to prevent him from being washed away by the flood water.

● **THE MAN** was taken to a local government hospital for a medical checkup.

● **CHHINDWARA** HAS recorded eight inches of rain in the last 24 hours.



## IN BRIEF

**Mexico prez attacks environmentalists**

**Mexico City:** Mexico's president launched a blistering attack on several environmentalist groups on Friday, suggesting they were being paid by foreign foundations to oppose his controversial train project in the Yucatan peninsula. One group demanded President Andrés Manuel López Obrador apologize, claiming he was "criminalising" environmentalists. "I have received information that all of these supposedly independent non-governmental, so-called civic groups are getting money, sometimes from abroad, to oppose the construction of the Maya Train," López Obrador said, accusing them of "disguising themselves for money as environmentalists, disguising themselves as human rights defenders for money as well, when in the end it is a struggle for political and economic power."

**Mutilations ritual kills horses in France**

**Paris:** Armed with knives, some knowledge of their prey and a large dose of cruelty, attackers are going after horses and ponies in pastures across France in what may be ritual mutilations. Police are stymied by the macabre attacks that include slashings and worse. Most often, an ear — usually the right one — has been cut off, recalling the matador's trophy in a bullring. Up to 30 attacks have been reported in France, from the mountainous Jura region in the east to the Atlantic coast, many this summer, the agriculture minister said on Friday. One attack was registered in February, according to the newsmagazine Le Point. With each attack, the mystery only seems to grow. "We are excluding nothing," Agriculture Minister Julien Denormandie said on Friday on France-Info, before heading to a riding club in the Saône-et-Loire region, in east central France, where a horse was attacked a day earlier.

**Kim: Typhoon Bavi caused little damage**

**Seoul:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Typhoon Bavi had caused only minimal damage to the country after making landfall early on Thursday, state news media KCNA reported on Friday. Kim, who visited South Hwanghae province southwest of Pyongyang, had issued an alert to prevent crop damage and casualties from the typhoon, which made landfall near the capital, dumping heavy rains and uprooting trees. North Korea, which has also been stepping up efforts to combat the novel coronavirus, had referred to Typhoon Bavi as the No. 8 storm. "He said that the scale of damage from Typhoon No. 8 is smaller than expected, adding that he had worried a lot and he feels it is fortunate to have that amount of damage," said KCNA, referring to Kim's remarks. Kim's visit came after the KCTV state television showed scenes of damage from the storm. Heavy rains earlier this month that caused flooding and damaged crops have raised concerns about food supplies in the isolated country.

**STATES MOVE COURTS OVER CHANGES TO KEY HABITAT LAWS**

**Washington, Aug. 29:** More than 20 states sued the Trump administration on Friday over its plan to curtail environmental regulations in permitting infrastructure projects that can take years to complete and have long-lasting consequences on land and communities. Lead by California and Washington, the lawsuit seeks to block changes the administration has proposed to how the 50-year-old National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is implemented. It was filed in federal court in San Francisco against the White House Council on Environmental Quality and its chairman, Mary Neumayr. NEPA requires that prior to permitting a project, federal agencies assess its environmental effects, a process many industries have criticized as lengthy and onerous. U.S. President Donald Trump announced the finalized NEPA rule last month. It is intended to expedite permitting for projects like oil pipelines and road expansions, but critics say they would reduce public input, especially from low-income and minority communities.

# Protest in Mauritius over dead dolphins

## Tens of thousands of protesters take to the streets over government's slow response to oil spill

### Dying mother dolphin struggles to save baby

**Johannesburg, Aug. 29:** Honking and drumming, tens of thousands of people protested on Saturday in Mauritius over the government's slow response to an oil spill from a grounded Japanese ship and the alarming discovery of dozens of dead dolphins in recent days.

Outraged over the Indian Ocean island nation's worst environmental disaster in years, protesters displayed signs such as "You have no shame" and "I've seen better Cabinets at IKEA." "Inaction," one protester scrawled on an inflatable dolphin held above the crowd.

They marched peacefully through the capital, Port Louis, a month after the ship struck a coral reef a mile offshore. It later cracked under the pounding surf and spilled around 1,000 tons of fuel

oil into fragile marine areas.

"It's clear we are at a turning point in the history of our country," a commentary in the Le Mauricien newspaper said, as residents said the demonstration could politicize a broader section of the population.

Addressing the crowd in Port Louis, some speakers called for top officials to step down. There was no immediate government comment. Other protests were reported outside the Mauritius High Commission in London and in Paris and Perth, Australia.

"I'd be surprised if it's not close to 1,00,000" people who attended the march, local writer Khalil Cassimally said. Public demonstrations aren't common in Mauritius, but "one of the things that



Tens of thousands of people protest in Port Louis, Mauritius, on Saturday.

— AP

really binds people together is the sea," he said. "It's one of the jewels of this country, and everyone feels very passionately about this."

Another protest is planned on Sept. 12 in Mahebourg, one of the most affected coastal villages, Cassimally said. Mauritius depends heav-

ily on tourism, and the spill has been a severe blow on top of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, which has limited international travel. — AP

## Banksy-funded migrant rescue boat calls for aid

**Rome, Aug. 29:** Two humanitarian ships were en route to assist a rescue vessel in the Mediterranean funded by British street artist Banksy, which sent out a distress signal on Saturday with more than 200 migrants onboard.

The German-flagged MV Louise Michel said it was stranded and needed urgent help after lending assistance to a boat that was carrying at least one dead migrant.

The 31-metre (101-foot) vessel's crew said it was overcrowded and unable to move after encountering another boat attempting to cross the expanse dividing Europe and Africa with 130 people on board.

"There is already one dead person on the boat. We need immediate assistance," the Louise Michel crew wrote on Twitter, saying other migrants had fuel burns and had been at sea for days.

The vessel's crew of 10 had earlier rescued another 89 people from a rubber boat in distress on Thursday, and said European rescue agencies had so far ignored its distress calls.

They said on Twitter that there were a total 219 people on board and that they had requested assistance from the Italian and Maltese authorities.

The boat — named after 19th-century French anarchist Louise Michel — was around 90 kilometres (55 miles) southeast of the Italian island of Lampedusa on Saturday, according to the global ship tracking website Marine Traffic.

Thousands of people are thought to have died making the dangerous trip across the Mediterranean to flee conflict, repression and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

Sea-Watch 4, which has rescued 201 migrants and is itself in search of a

● **THE GERMAN-FLAGGED MV Louise Michel** said it was stranded and needed urgent help after lending assistance to a boat that was carrying at least one dead migrant.

● **THE ITALIAN left-wing collective** *Mediterranea*, meanwhile, announced it would send the ship *Mare Ionio* from the port of Augusta in Sicily to assist, citing the lack of response from Italy or Malta in the face of "imminent danger of death" incurred by migrants.

● **PAINTED IN hot pink and white**, the Louise Michel features a Banksy artwork depicting a girl in a life vest holding a heart-shaped safety buoy.

host port, decided to help the Louise Michel "in the face of the lack of reaction" from the authorities, a spokesman for the German NGO Sea-Watch, which charts the boat with Doctors Without Borders (MSF), said. The Italian left-wing collective *Mediterranea*, meanwhile, announced it would send the ship *Mare Ionio* from the port of Augusta in Sicily to assist, citing the lack of response from Italy or Malta in the face of "imminent danger of death" incurred by migrants.

Banksy's decision to fund the high-speed boat follows a body of work by the artist that has levelled scathing judgements on Europe's halting response to the migrant crisis. Painted in hot pink and white, the Louise Michel features a Banksy artwork depicting a girl in a life vest holding a heart-shaped safety buoy.

— AFP

## Hurricane Laura victims struggle without water, power; toll rises to 14

**Lake Charles, La., Aug. 29:** The Louisiana coastline devastated by Hurricane Laura began a long and gloomy recovery on Friday as hundreds of thousands of people still without water and power confronted the possibility that basic services may not return for weeks or even longer. The number of dead climbed to at least 14.

A day after the Category 4 storm hit, more bodies emerged in the aftermath in Louisiana and neighboring Texas. The deaths included five people killed by fallen trees and one person who drowned in a boat.

Eight people died from carbon monoxide poisoning due to unsafe operation of generators, including three inside a Texas pool hall, where authorities say the owner had let seven Vietnamese shrimp boat laborers and homeless men take shelter. The other four were in critical condition.

The lack of essential resources was grim for the many evacuated residents eager to return. Chad Peterson planned to board up a window and head to Florida. "There's no power. There's no water. There's no utilities," he said.

Thousands of people who heeded dire warnings and fled the Gulf Coast returned to homes without roofs, roads littered with debris and the likelihood of a harsh recovery that could take months.

Lawrence "Lee" Faulk came back to a home with no roof in hard-hit Cameron Parish, which was littered with downed power lines. His metal storage building, 24 feet square, was thrown into a neighbor's oak trees.

"We need help," Faulk said. "We need ice, water, blue tarps — everything that you would associate with the storm, we need it. Like two hours ago."

The White House said President Donald Trump would visit the region



A building destroyed after the passing of hurricane Laura is seen partially submerged in the river in Hackberry, Louisiana.

— AFP

Saturday and survey the damage.

Simply driving in Lake Charles, a city of 80,000 residents that sustained some of the worst damage, was a feat. Power lines and trees blocked paths or created one-lane roads that drivers had to navigate with oncoming traffic. Street signs were snapped off their perches or dangled, and no stoplights worked, making it a trust exercise with those sharing the roads.

Mayor Nic Hunter cautioned that there was no timetable for restoring electricity and that water-treatment plants "took a beating," resulting in barely a trickle of water coming out of most faucets. "If you come back to Lake Charles to stay, make sure you understand the above reality and are prepared to live in it for many days, probably weeks," Hunter wrote on Facebook. — AP

## Louisiana avoided Laura's 'wall of water'? Not so, says forecaster

**Lake Charles, La., Aug. 29:** The 20-foot high "unsurvivable" wall of water Hurricane Laura was forecast to send onto the Louisiana coast showed up despite widespread reports of a lower peak, authorities said on Friday, rejecting criticism that they had raised too much alarm.

The highest surge hit about 15 miles east of where Laura was forecast to make landfall but it "wobbled" at the last moment. That slight change likely saved the city of Lake Charles, said Jamie Rhome, head of the storm surge team at the National Hurricane Center (NHC). Most US media played

up a nine-foot surge recorded by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration observation station near Cameron, Louisiana, and the NHC was criticized for perhaps raising too much alarm. There is just one problem, Rhome said. "It's wrong. That reporting is based off a single observation station in Cameron Parish that didn't come close to measuring the peak storm surge which occurred at 10 or 15 miles east of there," he said. Fresh data on Friday from an Army Corps of Engineer gauge 15 miles east indicates that the storm surge

was right at the 15- to 20-foot forecast that was Rhome's highest in his 20-year career, he said.

An exact reading would soon be released after the data and gauge are fully analyzed, Rhome said.

"We're finding out the storm surge was really 15 to 20 feet," Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards confirmed.

## FUTURE TECHNOLOGY Implant tested on 3 pigs, team working on potential for clinical trials

# Musk's Neuralink links brains, PCs

**San Francisco, Aug. 29:** Futurist entrepreneur Elon Musk late on Friday demonstrated progress made by his Neuralink startup in meshing brains with computers, saying the work is essential to the future of humanity. Musk has long contended that a neural lace merging minds with machines is vital if people are going to avoid being so outpaced by artificial intelligence that, under the best of circumstances, humans would be akin to "house cats." "It's gonna be important from an existential threat standpoint," Musk said of the project.

"That is what I think might be the most important thing that a device like this achieves." Members of the team shared a "wish list" that ranged from the technology returning mobility to



This video grab made from the online Neuralink livestream shows Elon Musk standing next to the surgical robot during his Neuralink presentation.

— AFP

the paralyzed and sight to the blind, to enabling telepathy and the uploading of memories for later reference — or perhaps to be downloaded into replacement bodies.

"Yes, I think in the future

you will be able to save and replay memories," Musk said.

"This is obviously sounding increasingly like a 'Black Mirror' episode, but I guess they are pretty good at predicting," he

quipped, referring to a Netflix series that puts disturbing twists on near-future technology.

For now, Neuralink is being tested in pigs with the team working on the potential for clinical trials. A trio of pigs in pens took part in the demonstration: one of them named Gertrude was said to have been implanted with a Neuralink device wired to detect spikes in nerve activity in her snout.

Gertrude happily focused on food, mostly ignoring Musk and others gathered for the event.

Musk said that since the first version of Neuralink was revealed slightly more than a year ago, the device has been simplified and reduced to about the size of a large coin and the thickness of the skull.

— AFP

### Tesla targeted in failed ransomware extortion scheme

**Boston, Aug. 29:** In a tweet, Tesla CEO Elon Musk solved a mystery involving a 27-year-old Russian, an insider at an unnamed corporation and an alleged million-dollar payment offered to help trigger a ransomware extortion attack on the firm.

Prosecutors declined to name the target, but Musk was happy to oblige. According to the billionaire, the scheme took aim at the electric car company's 1.9 million-square-foot factory in Sparks, Nevada, which makes batteries for Tesla vehicles and energy storage units.

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30 AUGUST 2020



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

The pandemic  
kissiquette

The new normal has brought with it new priorities, new rules of engagement, and a new or rarely-used-before vocabulary, which includes 'coronavirus' itself, wfh (bet you thought it a swear word at first — I did!), lockdown, flattening the curve, and social distancing. We all now know the two-metre rule, though we don't seem to be able to abide by it (what's with all the barging, People?). We've also been advised not to hold hands, hug or kiss, except in our bubbles. Since kissing from two metres away is a physical impossibility, this rule isn't hard to maintain except for politicians and cheats, viz. often one and the same. The rags are full of scandals about British politicians caught with their pants two metres down, in bubbles that don't appear to be theirs, because the lockdown rules have eluded them (though they made them themselves). Yet, for many of us the pandemic rules of engagement are no more baffling than those we had to contend with before, such as the etiquette around kissing, aka. Kissiquette. Having had two children, and perfectly aware of how they came about, it's not romantic or affectionate smooching that perplexes, but the formal, impersonal, performative variety, practised with relative strangers. For example —

1) How many kisses before one can disengage? Us plebs would have it at one, if at all. But if you're part of the fashionable set, it is at least two, on either cheek. This, I understand, is French (not to be mistaken for French kissing which doesn't involve cheeks at all). At other times, they will complete their pair of kisses and lean in for a third. The Swiss Kiss, I believe. This is fraught with danger. Will they or won't they? Will you offend them by stepping away too soon or unwittingly end up molesting them by moving in for an unwanted third? As a writer and a reclusive one, this is more stress than I can handle, especially at festival time, when the literary fraternity morph into showbiz luvvies, rushing into the arms of their peers, no matter how often they've stabbed each other in the back. At one such, I found myself in a sticky situation when having kissed me twice, the well-known author surfaced for air, but did not appear to have finished. Very much the novice, at both literary fests and social snogging, I became so unnerved by the ticking time bomb of our face-off, I found myself holding up my half-eaten biscuit and squeaking, "Want my cookie?" They did not, nor my company thereafter. Which settled that, but left me no wiser about how many kisses are too many. Or why not a wave, smile, or namaste instead?



**Bruderkuiss: Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker kiss on the 30th-anniversary celebrations of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic, in 1979**

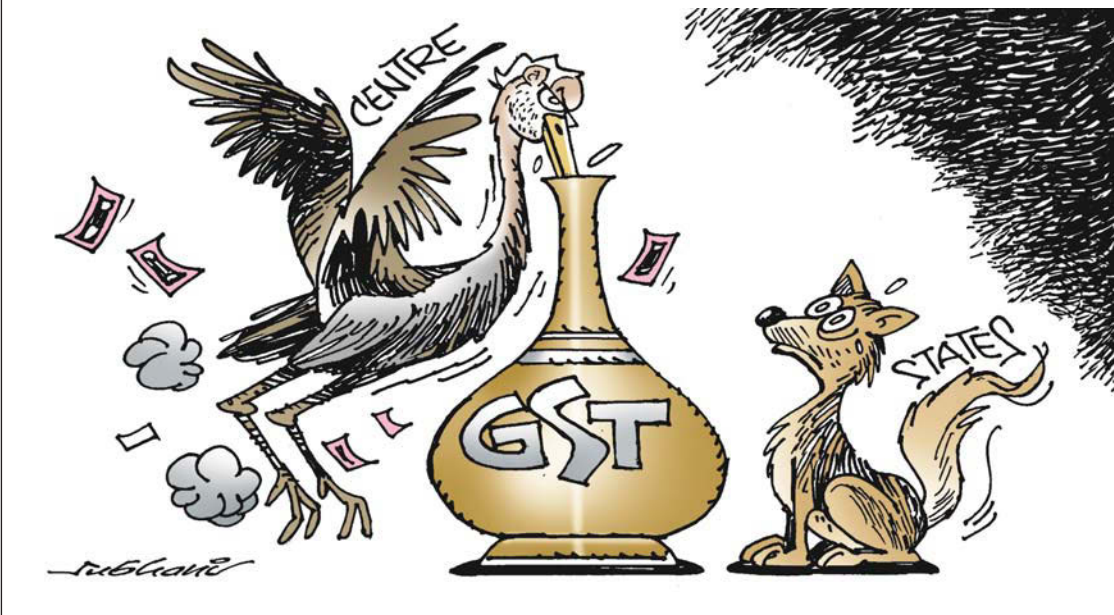
2) Whose idea was it to start blowing kisses on Zoom? In these long months of webinars, only one person has, thus far, ended a session by actually planting a smacker on the screen. But nearly everyone now blows kisses at it. The problem with virtual kisses is that they're so indiscriminate. You cannot blow kisses selectively. It has to be to everyone in the 'room' or not at all. Or go to extraordinary lengths to ensure you're left at the end with the right people, the kissable people. Or shut down screens, open up other screens, kiss the wrong people. Gaah. What if, outrageous though it might sound, a blown kiss for you is not a thing of air and inconsequence but an affirmation of actual affection? And blowing kisses to all and sundry smack of hypocrisy? If that's making heavy weather of something slight, doesn't the awkwardness of it all bother you? While the planted smacker may have been the only one, several people in their inelegant attempt to throw kisses from too close to the screen have thwacked it instead, jolting the session to a premature close. Of course friendly chats shouldn't stint on kisses blown, but strangely, younger, singler friends tell me that romantic assignations, much of which has moved online, have turned out terribly chaste. That there's no va-va-voom in Zoom, no Tinder kegs are lit, and blowing of any sort hardly happens. Through time and tide and many conversations, slow and steady wins the kiss. Like the amours conducted through epistles in the pages of an Austen classic.

3) But what would Jane have made of kissy emojis and the many curious crosses in texts? Oh I've learnt to mirror them exactly when writing back, in the hope no one guesses I haven't a clue what they mean. I get that they're kisses of course, and a convenient way of expressing affection in writing, because how many of us have time to compose sonnets? Yet, how many emoji hearts are too many? What colour should they be? If it's a kissy emoji, should it wink, for example, if your feelings are true? How about those pesky little exes, I mean x's; when are they in excess? I was led to believe a capital X denoted passion till the many messages from my 102-year-old great-aunt-in-law, each carrying giant X's, convinced me otherwise. Similarly, when is it "love", and when "luv"? Whatever it is, I must have got it wrong hundreds of times, and offended as many as I've scared!

I know I no longer need worry in this pandemic if in-the-flesh salutations involve one kiss or three (hurrah). And if biscuits are misplaced in such transactions, there's clearly more for me (double hurrah). Yet the question stands: how much performative love is too much (or too little), and why wasn't I sent the explanatory memo everyone else got? If you know the answers to these, especially the correct number of kisses, please drop them into an envelope and send to The Editor, *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad.

**Shreya Sen-Handley** is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures*. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenanhan.

Subhani

Is Modi govt ready for  
Biden-Harris sarkar?

K.C. Singh

The naming of Kamala Devi Harris, an Indian-African-American senator from California, as Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's running mate, elicited more excitement in the United States and of course in Chennai and elsewhere in India than in ruling BJP circles. When the external affairs ministry's spokesman was asked why no congratulatory message had gone from Prime Minister Narendra Modi or anyone in Cabinet, he incredulously replied that India doesn't interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Why then, one could ask, did Mr Modi serenade President Donald Trump at the "Howdy Modi" Indian diaspora rally in Houston in September last year? Or goad the crowd by shouting "Abki baar...", awaiting the roaring reply of "Trump sarkar". South Block's nervousness is understandable as external affairs minister S. Jaishankar quarreled with a US congressional committee demanding Indian-origin Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal be excluded for her critique of the Indian government's majoritarian politics. Senator Kamala Harris and other influential Democrats rallied to berate Mr Jaishankar. Ms Harris is, in any case, known human rights crusader.

What then would be Biden-Harris government's foreign policy priorities and their impact on India-US relations, tailored by Modi government to keep Mr Trump's ego massaged. A diaspora assemblage at Houston, followed by lakhs gathered at Ahmedabad, provided Mr Trump the stage

to indulge in populist self-gratification, while irritants like trade were side-stepped. Mr Trump in turn ignored anti-CAA agitation, including rioting in parts of New Delhi as he settled at Rashtrapati Bhavan for the farewell banquet.

James Traub, in *Foreign Policy* magazine, quotes Colin Kahl, then vice-president Joe Biden's national security adviser in 2014-16, that three issues will dominate a Biden administration's agenda. One, the inter-connectedness of the world and global existential challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic; two, democracy at threat across the world; and three, with ongoing power transition between nations the return of great power competition. Mr Biden had earlier this year written in *Foreign Affairs* that the contest between democracy-liberalism and autocracy-fascism did not end in the last century. It lurks in the future again. Mr Biden plans a "Summit for Democracy" in the first year of his presidency. But his vision for resurrection of liberalism and democracy, centres on Europe. By instinct an "Atlanticist" his priority would be revival of European alliance that Mr Trump has scorned. James Traub tellingly remarks: "On many issues, emerging-world democracies like India and Brazil feel much more like the problem than a part of the solution". The smothered voices of liberalism in India would agree.

Many recent books have analysed worldwide democratic recession, seen in Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Brazil, etc. Even autocrats like Russia's Vladimir Putin and Chi-

na's Xi Jinping have eliminated term limits on their rule. *How Democracies Die* by Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky analyses the malaise. The authors conclude that "Trump's rise may itself pose a challenge to global democracy". Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Barack Obama presidency, US governments maintained a broadly pro-democratic foreign policy, except where strategic interests were dominant. But globalisation de-industrialising the US and the rush of immigrants created by Syrian crisis, with greater effect in Europe, and through America's porous southern border created the conditions for the rise of a populist leader playing on the sense of marginalisation of the working and middle-class white majority. The authors' conclusion, written before the pandemic hit the US, is that only President Trump's gross failure would create public disgust and desire for political reform, as happened after Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974. Weighing against this is dominant social media spreading unbridled bigotry, slanted news and prejudice.

America's founding fathers created foolproof institutions and separation of powers to counter power grab by either the executive, legislature or judiciary. They also mandated unwritten shared beliefs and practices that enabled those institutions to work. Two cardinal principles prescribed were mutual tolerance and institutional forbearance. Similar traditions were nurtured in Jawaharlal Nehru's India. Breached in the US, and progressively so in India, these ideals surrendered to highly polarised politics once Newt Gingrich in 1989 gained control over Republicans in two houses of US Congress. Institutional legitimacy of the US Congress got degraded, paving the way for the anti-establishment presidency of Mr Trump. Treating mainstream

media as illegitimate interlopers, attacking political opponents to not just defeat but destroy them and stealing mandates by gerrymandering or vote suppression, as Mr Trump is attempting by attacking postal ballots, or as in India by forming defection-based governments even after losing mandates. All these are signs of slow strangulation of liberal democracy.

New Delhi may today downplay Prime Minister Modi's unwise public political dalliance with Mr Trump, but the latter's campaign is merrily using videos of the Houston and Ahmedabad joint rallies in their publicity blitz to woo Indian-American votes, who mostly favour Democrats. According to Pew Research, Hindus constitute about 51 per cent of the two million-odd diaspora voters, others being Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. Will the diaspora be drawn to Democrats' promises on immigration laws, health insurance and a fairer economic order or accept Mr Modi's endorsement of a divisive, pro-rich Mr Trump, hoping he is better for India?

US voters are living through mishandled pandemic, economic chaos and racial tension caused street violence. Mr Trump is getting traction fanning the white majority's law and order fears, while promising a vaccine and economic turnaround is around the corner. US leadership is critical for addressing vital issues like climate change, anti-globalisation paranoia affecting global trade and investment, and an aggressive China. On November 3 will be known whether a reforming and pro-democracy Biden wins, compelling majoritarian populists globally to reflect and perhaps change, or the US sees the return of disruptive, autocratic and "America First" Trump.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

## LETTERS

LEARN FROM  
JAPAN

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has resigned because of a chronic health problem. He has said unequivocally that he would not be able to do justice to his job as his affliction needs constant monitoring in a hospital. In fact, a temporary replacement for him is underway. The Congress party in India should take a cue from Abe. These men have no qualms in insisting on Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to continue to lead from the front despite the fact that she has serious health issues. Are we to assume that, at present, there is no one qualified enough to replace Mrs. Gandhi and that she has to manage the party affairs, her indifferent health notwithstanding? Japan's PM has shown that in today's world nobody is indispensable. When will we learn that lesson?

P.G. Menon  
ChennaiHUGE LOSS FOR  
CONGRESS

**THE SHOCKING DEMISE** of MP H. Vasanthkumar due to COVID-19 complications is an irreparable loss not only to the Congress but also to the entire political spectrum of the country. He was a simple and an affable politician, who won the hearts of many political leaders, cutting across party barriers. Besides his strong political career, Vasanthkumar was widely known for establishing TN's biggest appliances retail chain 'Vasanth & Co', which has its roots in several parts of the state and beyond. His commercial brand had given enough popularity to him even before he became a politician and its branches had vastly etched his face among people, which helped him for a flourishing reach as a politician. His smiling and cheerful visage will remain incised in the memory of one and all.

R. Sivakumar  
ChennaiEXTRAORDINARY  
BIZMAN

**THE NEWS OF** Congress MP H. Vasanthkumar's death came as a shock. I see him more as a successful businessman than an astute politician. My friend recalled the unique experience he had with this great man fifteen years ago. My friend had made some enquiries about a TV brand in his shop. Later he purchased it. When he visited the shop again after a fortnight, Vasanthkumar recalled the incident. This shows not only his memory power but also his enterprising nature. In a country like India where people hunt for secured jobs, businessmen like Vasanthkumar are a rarity. His rags-to-riches story is indeed phenomenal!

S. Ramakrishnasayee  
Chennai

## ‘23 vs 23’: Is affable Ahmed the ‘villain’ of the piece?

## Favouritism stink

It's 23 versus 23. On the face of it, the Congress power struggle is between the 23 dissenters and the Gandhis but a closer look would reveal something additional. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Manish Tiwari and others have problems more with AICC treasurer Ahmed Patel than with Sonia or Rahul. The grudge against otherwise affable Patel is that he is pushing his favourites at all levels of the Congress hierarchy. Since Patel's residential address in New Delhi is 23, Mother Teresa Crescent, Congress insiders are dubbing the leadership challenge as 23 versus 23.

## New kid on the block

The BJP's nominee for a Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha seat, Zafar-ul Islam, has a past in the Congress. The BJP spokesman who got his nomination for the remaining term of the late Amar Singh from Uttar Pradesh (in Rajya Sabha bypolls, the ruling

party gets the numerical strength) was a part of the Congress social media team till 2014. Zafar, then an investment banker, had joined Deependra Singh Hooda's team and functioned from 15, Gurudwara Rakabgunj Marg, when he became disillusioned with the grand old party. There has been no looking back since. It is a different matter that not everyone in the BJP is happy over the rise and rise of Zafar-ul Islam. Veteran Shahnawaz Hussain was a contender for the Upper House berth.

## Interminable wait?

Call it a Covid-19 impact but in the coming Parliament session, Central Hall will be out of bounds for journalists and ex-MPs. The Lok Sabha Speaker has already constituted a panel to look into criteria for issuance of Central Hall passes. Cynics believe by the time the panel submits its report there will be a new Parliament building in the central vista. The panel, headed by TV personality Rajat Sharma, has not



By WAQYANAWIS

been meeting as its chairman wants to discuss issues online while most members feel a physical, offline discussion would be suit-

able. Emails are being exchanged to work out a consensus. Meanwhile, senior journalists who have passes in the Long and Distinguished (L&D) category are most exercised over the delay.

## Azad's motivations

The Congress disquiet has rattled many, particularly the manner in which Ghulam Nabi Azad has turned dissident. Azad's term is ending in early 2021 and there is no sign of renomination. At present Azad is the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, enjoying the perks of a Union minister. There is likelihood that Mallikarjun Kharge, who was the Congress leader in the Lok Sabha during 2014-2019, may get the job in the Upper House. Some Congress insiders see more in Azad's defiance pointing that he has been the only former J&K chief minister who was not booked or detained under the Public Safety Act after the abrogation of Article 370. There is also talk of misuse of the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of

Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001, popularly known as the Roshni Act during Azad's chief ministerial stint. Investigations into the land transfers subsequently said to have found that land in Gulmarg and elsewhere in the valley had been given over to ineligible beneficiaries.

## Surrender to Sangh

BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia was Brecently at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur. It prompted Digvijaya Singh and a number of Madhya Pradesh Congress leaders to twist a notable Buddhist chant, *Buddham Sharanam Gachchami*, to "Sangham Charanam Gachchami". In the original chanting, the disciple supposedly surrenders to the Buddha, the awakened one but in the perverted form, Scindia is accused of taking a shelter in RSS.

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



## IN BRIEF

**Kansas girl's killer is 5th execution of 2020**

**Terre Haute:** A Kansas girl's killer on Friday became the fifth federal inmate put to death this year, an execution that went forward only after a higher court tossed a ruling that would have required the government to get a prescription for the drug used to kill him. Questions about whether the drug pentobarbital causes pain prior to death had been a focus of appeals for Keith Nelson, 45, the second inmate executed this week in the Trump administration's resumption of federal executions this summer after a 17-year hiatus.

**New Orleans pianist Ronnie Kole dies**

**New Orleans:** Ronnie Kole, an acclaimed New Orleans pianist who performed across the globe, has died. He was 89. His death on Thursday night was announced on his website and the Ronnie Kole Entertainment Facebook page. The cause of death was not released. Kole was a Chicago native. In interviews, he said he suffered from a heart condition as a child and was discouraged from playing outdoors. He began learning piano from an aunt and considered himself largely self-taught. He went on the road at 16, he told WWL-TV. A master of a variety of musical styles, he performed for six presidents. He also played a rollicking version of "Amazing Grace" when Pope John Paul II visited New Orleans in 1987.

**Royal bros reunite to unveil Diana's statue**

**London:** Britain's Princes William and Harry, believed to have become estranged from each other as the latter stepped back from frontline royalty to move to the US, are expected to reunite to unveil a statue in memory of their late mother, Princess Diana, to mark her 60th birth anniversary next year. Kensington Palace issued a rare joint statement on behalf of the royal brothers on Friday to announce that the memorial will be revealed in the Sunken Garden of Kensington Palace on July 1, 2021. The statue had been commissioned by William, the Duke of Cambridge, and Harry, the Duke of Sussex, the second and sixth in line to the British throne, respectively, a few years ago as a permanent memorial on the grounds of the palace in central London which was their late mother's home.

**Nevada man to be 1st virus reinfection in US**

**Reno:** Nevada officials are reporting what may be the first documented case of coronavirus reinfection in the United States, following similar reports earlier this week from Hong Kong and Europe. A 25-year-old Reno man with mild Covid-19 symptoms initially was found to have the virus in April, recovered and tested negative twice, and then tested positive again in June. He was much sicker the second time, with pneumonia that required hospitalization and oxygen treatment. Genetic tests from each episode showed that viruses were similar in major ways but differed in at least 12 spots that would be highly unlikely from natural evolution of the bug if the man had it continuously rather than being infected a second time, said Mark Pandori, director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory.

**KENOSHA LAWYER SAYS TEEN ACTED IN SELF-DEFENCE**

**Kenosha, Wis., Aug. 29:** A high-profile lawyer representing the 17-year-old boy charged with killing two protesters and wounding another during demonstrations on the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin, said on Friday that his client had acted in self-defence. Atlanta-based attorney Lin Wood said video footage of the altercation would vindicate Kyle Rittenhouse despite what he described as misinformation being spread by the media. "Kyle Rittenhouse acted in self-defence. Murder charges are factually unsupportable. An egregious miscarriage of justice is occurring with respect to this 17-year old boy" Wood said on Twitter.

Rittenhouse, who prosecutors say traveled 30 miles (50 km) to Kenosha from his home in Antioch, Illinois, before the shooting at about 11:45 p.m. on Tuesday, is charged with six criminal counts, including first-degree homicide and attempted homicide.



Smoke billows from burning tyres and pallets and fireworks as a few hundred protesters riot in the Rosengard neighbourhood of Malmö, Sweden.

— AP

## Riot in Sweden after Danish leader banned from Quran-burning rally

**Stockholm, Aug. 29:** Protesters threw stones at police and burned tyres in southern Sweden late on Friday, authorities said, hours after an anti-Muslim Danish politician was blocked from attending a Quran-burning rally nearby.

About 300 people were on the streets of Malmö with violence escalating as the evening wore on, according to police and local media.

The demonstration was connected to an incident earlier in the day in which protesters burned a copy of the Islamic holy book, police spokesman Rickard Lundqvist told Swedish tabloid Expressen.

Rasmus Paludan, who leads the far-right Danish anti-immigration party Hard Line, was due to travel to Malmö to speak at that event, which was being held on the same day as weekly prayers for the Muslim sabbath.

But authorities preempted Paludan's arrival by announcing he had been banned from entering Sweden for two years. He was later arrested near Malmö.

"We suspect that he was going to break the law in Sweden," Calle Persson, spokesman for the police in Malmö said.

"There was also a risk

## Anti-racism protest crowds flood US

**Washington, Aug. 28:** Tens of thousands of protesters demanding an end to racial injustice and police brutality thronged the US capital on Friday, signaling a renewed groundswell of anger gripping the nation following a white officer's shooting of African-American Jacob Blake.

Crowds flooded the National Mall for a mass march marking the anniversary of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr's historic "I have a dream" speech on August 28, 1963.

Friday's demonstration was dubbed "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks," in reference to George Floyd, who suffocated beneath the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis in May, igniting the most wide-

spread civil unrest in the country in decades.

Al Sharpton, the civil rights activist who gave the eulogy at Floyd's funeral, told the crowd it was time for a "new conversation" with America. "We need to have a conversation about your racism, about your bigotry, about your hate, about how you would put your knee on our neck while we cry for our lives," he said.

Often fighting back tears, relatives of Floyd, Blake and Breonna Taylor — a black 26-year-old shot dead by police in her own apartment last March — took turns addressing the sea of people, who repeatedly called out the victims' names in response.

— AFP

from Sweden for two years. However, rapists and murderers are always welcome!" he wrote.

Paludan last year attracted media attention for burning a Koran wrapped in bacon — a meat that is anathema for Muslims.

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# Don calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual

## Trump asserts he will win in November polls

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## Harris 'not competent' to be US Prez: Don

**Washington, Aug. 29:** Kamala Harris is "not competent" to be president, US President Donald Trump has said as he launched an attack on the Indian-origin senator's credentials for the top post.

Addressing his supporters at a Republican campaign rally in New Hampshire on Friday, Trump said he would support seeing a female president in the US but suggested that his daughter and senior White House adviser Ivanka Trump would be a better candidate for such a role.

Harris, 55, was a presidential aspirant until last year before she dropped out of the race because of lack of popular support. Harris returned to political limelight after Joe Biden, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, picked her as his running mate in the November 3 election.

Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, Harris is the first Indian-American and first

● **THE COMPANY** that owns the Trump International Hotel in Vancouver has filed for bankruptcy.

● **ACCORDING TO** the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada, TA Hotel Management Limited Partnership filed for bankruptcy on Thursday. Records show the company has CDN\$4.7 million (US\$3.59 million) in liabilities and CDN\$1.1 million (US\$840,000) in assets.

● **THE FIRST** meeting of creditors is expected on Sept. 16.

woman of colour to be picked by a major American political party for the top post. "You know I want to see the first woman president also, but I don't want to see a woman president get into that position the way she'd do it, and she's not competent," Trump said.

— AFP

more personal attacks on his rival.

"We are all that stand between the American people and the left wing mob," he said. "If you want to save democracy from the mob, then you must vote to defeat an extremely poor candi-

date."To cheers and laughter, Trump, 74, described 77-year-old Biden as "weak" and "the worst candidate ever put up by the Democratic party." As he has before, Trump claimed falsely that Biden, a lifelong Catholic, is "against God."

— AFP

# Matt Hancock warns of extensive lockdowns

## Berlin braces for 'anti-Corona' demo

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**Berlin, Aug. 29:** Thousands of Corona-

virus sceptics are set to descend on Berlin on Saturday for a mass protest against pandemic restrictions that was allowed to go ahead after a bitter legal battle.

Police said they will turn out in force and strictly monitor compliance with mask-wearing and social distancing, with Berlin police chief Barbara Slowik warning that if the demonstrators do not adhere to virus safety rules, police will clear the area "very quickly".

"We will not be able or

willing to watch tens of thousands assemble and create infection risks," she added.

Berlin city authorities had previously decided not to allow the Saturday demonstration to go ahead, fearing that the estimated 22,000 protesters would not keep a distance of 1.5 metres apart or comply with face mask requirements.

The ban sparked outrage from organisers and their supporters who flooded social media with angry messages vowing to protest anyway, with some even calling for violence.

— AFP

## HK MASS VIRUS TEST PLAN HAMPERED BY SWIRLING CHINA DISTRUST

**Hong Kong, Aug. 29:** Hong Kong's plan to offer free Coronavirus tests to all residents has become swept up in the festering political debate dividing the city, where many remain deeply distrustful of both local leaders and China.

Billed as a benevolent public health initiative made possible with Chinese help, the city-wide tests are set to start on Tuesday in an attempt to stamp out a third wave of infections that have swept through the densely populated financial hub.

But the involvement of

doctors and companies from the mainland has sent the rumour mills into overdrive and compounded fears of Beijing's surveillance state, while many health experts in the city have questioned the efficacy of a mass testing programme.

On the authoritarian mainland, biometric data forms a crucial part of China's vast security dragnet and many Hong Kongers fear mass testing will lead to widespread DNA collection — something local authorities have strenuously denied.

— AFP

## Right-hand man Suga, longtime anchor of government, seen as a possible successor

# Japan succession race for PM kicks off

**Tokyo, Aug. 29:** The race to succeed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe kicked off informally on Saturday, with several contenders announcing their plans to stand, a day after Japan's longest-serving leader announced his resignation.

— AFP

Abe said he was suffering a recurrence of ulcerative colitis, the condition that forced him to cut short his first term in office, but that he would stay on until his successor is decided.

Exactly how the process will unfold was still unclear, with local media reporting on Saturday that several options were being considered.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party could opt for a more traditional leadership election, involving lawmakers but also members of the party nationwide.

But the urgency of the situation, as well as the constraints imposed by the coronavirus outbreak, could see the party instead

opt to poll only its lawmakers and regional representatives—a faster process.

A decision on how the election will be held, and when, is expected early next week, along with more clarity on who will stand for the post.

A few would-be candidates have already thrown their hats into the ring,

including party policy chief Fumio Kishida, a mild-mannered former foreign minister considered Abe's personal choice for successor, and ex-defence minister Shigeru Ishiba, who is seen as more popular with voters but commands less party support than some other candidates.

Finance Minister Taro Aso, himself a former prime minister and long considered a likely successor to Abe, has announced he will not stand.

Other possible candidates include powerful chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga, viewed by many as a frontrunner, and current defence minis-

ter Taro Kono, a social-media-savvy former foreign minister who is seen as something of a long-shot.

One woman is among those expected to stand so far: Seiko Noda, a former cabinet minister whose chances are thought to be slim.

— AFP



## SHORT TAKES

## Humpy helps India reach final

**Chennai:** Koneru Humpy took the spotlight as she beat Monika Socko in a nervy tie-break to help India pip Poland in the semifinals and reach the summit clash of the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad on Saturday. After the two teams won one round each in regular play, world rapid champion Humpy was pitted against Socko for the Armageddon (a tie-break), and the Indian beat her rival in style with black pieces to clinch a spot in the final. India will play the winner of the other semifinal between Russia and the USA, in the summit clash on Sunday. It was, however, not an easy job for the Indian team as they lost the first round 2-4 before bouncing back strongly in the second with a crushing 4.5-1.5 win. Humpy did the rest in the match-deciding tie-break. Viswanathan Anand came into his own with a much-needed win over Jan-Krzysztof Duda in 78 moves in the second round after losing to his opponent in the first round. — *PTI*

## Djokovic in final, Osaka withdraws

**New York:** World number one Novak Djokovic battled into the ATP and WTA Western & Southern Open final despite a neck problem while Japan's Naomi Osaka withdrew from the tournament after reaching the final due to a left hamstring injury on Saturday, just two days before the start of the US Open. Djokovic was treated twice by a trainer for neck issues but rallied to defeat Spanish eighth seed Roberto Bautista Agut 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/0). He will face Milos Raonic in Saturday's final after the Canadian eliminated Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/5), 6-3. The world number 10's withdrawal means meaning Victoria Azarenka takes the title by walkover. "I'm sorry to have to withdraw today with an injury," said Osaka. — *AFP*

## Kristoff wins first stage of Tour

**Nice, France:** Norway's Alexander Kristoff won the opening stage of the Tour de France on Saturday in a mass bunch sprint along the iconic Promenade des Anglais in Nice. UAE Team Emirates rider Kristoff takes hold of the race leader's yellow jersey following a stage littered with crashes on a slippery 154km loop around Nice, where the finish line was limited to just 100 spectators due to strict coronavirus health protocols.

The Tour de France set off from the French Riviera on Saturday, two months later than planned and under the shadow of a coronavirus pandemic which could still shatter hopes of the world's greatest bike race making it to the Paris finish line in three weeks' time. — *AFP*

## NBA playoffs set to resume

**Washington:** NBA playoff games are set to resume on Saturday, but players are determined to keep the focus on the fight for social justice and racial equality with the help from club owners and the league. NBA commissioner Adam Silver and National Basketball Players Association executive director Michele Roberts said in a joint statement on Friday that "All parties agreed to resume NBA playoff games on Saturday". Players and the league agreed to form a social justice coalition to address a broad range of issues including access to voting, promoting civic engagement and police and criminal justice reform. The announcement came on a third day of postponed NBA playoff games after the Milwaukee Bucks — shocked by the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin — refused to take the court on Wednesday for a scheduled Eastern Conference first-round matchup against Orlando in the NBA's COVID-19 quarantine bubble. — *AFP*

Regd. No.  
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by  
**K. Sudhakar** on behalf of  
Deccan Chronicle Holdings  
Limited and Printed at  
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at  
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,  
N.G.G.O Colony Post,  
Kurudampalayam Village,  
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI  
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692  
Ph No : 2231252, 253, 255, 257 & 358  
Editor: **ADITYA SINHA**

## DOUBLE WHAMMY

## Raina pulls out of IPL, virus count touches 13

**C. SANTHOSH KUMAR**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

Over a dozen Covid-19 positive cases in the Chennai Super Kings camp and a surprise pullout by Suresh Raina have sent shock waves across IPL teams based in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Even though the other teams have settled into their bubbles and begun training, the Covid-19 scare has raised serious doubts about the tournament, scheduled to start on September 19.

The BCCI is yet to announce the fixtures as different health protocols in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have complicated the scheduling issue.

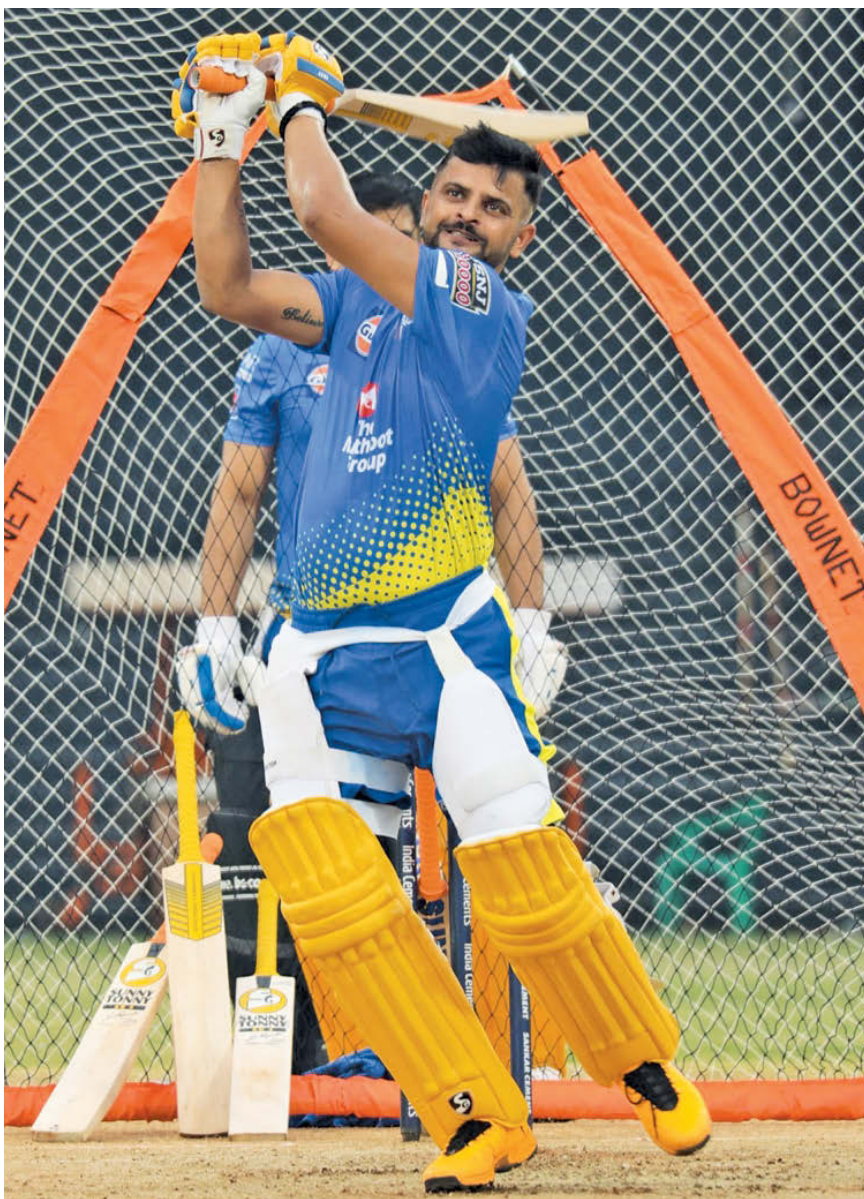
As defending champions, Mumbai Indians were expected to take on CSK in the opener but now that the M.S. Dhoni-led team's pre-tournament camp is in disarray, BCCI could give them extra time and rework the plan.

A top CSK official said the team is looking to start training by September 5, with those who tested positive expected to rejoin the bio-bubble later.

As many as 13 from CSK have tested positive and all of them have been moved to a different hotel for a two-week isolation. "All the affected personnel as well as their close contacts are asymptomatic and have been isolated from other team members," said a BCCI release without mentioning the name of the franchise or players.

## FOCUS ON COUNSELLING

As Raina was reportedly 'worried' about the growing number of cases within the bubble and dealing with family issues, the focus of the teams has now shifted to counselling their players. A few teams, including the Super Kings, are said to have sought help from mental health experts to deal with the situation. "It's very important to survive in a bio-bubble where players have to cope with Covid-19 fear, isolation and anxiety. We sense that some players are not their usual self with so many restrictions and



Suresh Raina bats during a training session in Chennai in this file photo.

protocols to follow," a team official said. Players have been constantly monitored through a gadget (a fob) which they are supposed to wear all the time.

Apart from that, they have to feed their body temperature in a mobile app on a daily basis.

## FOREIGN PLAYER JITTERY

A foreign player who is currently in the CSK bio-bubble has reportedly raised concerns over the pre-departure conditioning camp in Chennai which is believed to be the source of infection. A net bowler and a member of the social media team had to be left out of the contingent after they

tested positive in Chennai. CSK were the only team to organise a pre-departure conditioning camp for their Indian players at the insistence of skipper Dhoni. The 'jittery' foreign player has questioned the decision to hold the camp in a city that witnesses at least 1,000 new positive cases every day.

## BHAJJU TO JOIN CSK CAMP ON SEPT. 1

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who opted out of CSK's conditioning camp in Chennai, is expected to join the squad on September 1. He had withdrawn from the team's travel schedule because of personal reasons.

## Hamilton dedicates pole to Boseman

**Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), Aug. 29:** Lewis Hamilton delivered two successive record breaking qualifying laps to claim his sixth Belgian Grand Prix pole position and a record-increasing 93rd of his career with a flawless demonstration of speed on Saturday.

The championship leader clocked a best lap in one minute and 41.252 seconds in the final seconds of a session that he dominated in a personal tribute to the Hollywood film actor Chadwick Boseman, who died on Friday. His Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas was second, to complete another 'black

● It was Hamilton's fifth pole in seven races this year, a feat he said he had wanted to achieve in memory of Boseman whose life had been an inspiration to Hamilton.

arrows' front row of the grid, but he was more than half a second adrift of Hamilton's pace.

It was Hamilton's fifth pole in seven races this year, a feat he said he had wanted to achieve in memory of Boseman whose life had been an inspiration to Hamilton.

"Today was a very, very clean session for me and the end of the lap was getting better and better. We did such a lot of work for this in the back-ground."

Max Verstappen, who trails Hamilton by 37 points in the drivers' title race, took third place for Red Bull ahead of Renault's Daniel Ricciardo, who aborted his final lap, and Alex Albon in the second Red Bull. After winning last year's race, Charles Leclerc and his Ferrari team-mate Sebastian Vettel were eliminated during Q2 and will start Sunday's race from 13th and 14th positions.

— *AFP*

## Banton sparkles before rain washes out 1st T20

**Manchester, Aug. 29:** England rising star Tom Banton made a fine 71 before Pakistan fought back in the first Twenty20 international at Old Trafford on Friday only for rain to reduce the match to a no-result washout.

England had threatened a huge total while the 21-year-old Banton was compiling his maiden fifty in four T20s at this level.

But his exit left England 109-3 and sparked a collapse that saw four wickets lost for 14 runs in 19 balls before rain fell with

England 131-6 off 16.1 overs.

The umpires held a lengthy inspection but decided shortly after 9:00 pm (2000 GMT) that the outfield was too wet to get the game back on.

But Banton, opening after Jason Roy was ruled out with a side injury, at least had a night to remember. "It was good fun," Banton told Sky Sports. "I struggled to begin with, they bowled quite nicely and then I just backed myself when the spinners came on."

— *AFP*



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates as he stands on his car after securing his 93rd pole position during the qualifying session at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Spa on Saturday ahead of the Belgian Grand Prix.

— *AFP*

## NATIONAL SPORTS | DAY

## Players receive awards virtually

**New Delhi, Aug. 29:** India's sporting heroes were bestowed the annual national awards in an unparalleled online ceremony amid the COVID-19 pandemic during which athletes logged in from multiple cities to be honoured by President Ram Nath Kovind.

This year a whopping 74 were picked for the national honours, including an unprecedented five Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratnas and 27 Arjuna awardees.

Of these, 60 attended the virtual ceremony conducted across 11 Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres in various cities.

Cricketers Rohit Sharma (Khel Ratna) and Ishant Sharma (Arjuna) missed the ceremony due to their IPL commitments, while star wrestler Vinesh Phogat (Khel Ratna) and shuttler Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (Arjuna) had to pull out of the ceremony after testing positive for the Coronavirus.

The other three Khel Ratna winners — table tennis player Manika Batra, Paralympic gold-medallist Mariyappan Thangavelu and women's hockey team captain Rani Rampal — attended the ceremony.

While Batra logged in from Pune, Thangavelu

and Rampal joined from the Bengaluru SAI centre.

President Kovind applauded as names of the attending awardees were called out and their achievements cited as is the convention.

Missing, however, was the grandeur of the Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall.

Sports minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday defended his government's decision to confer a record 74 National Sports Awards this year, including an unprecedented five Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna honours, a move which faced severe criticism from all quarters.

## RIJIJU CONDOLES RAI'S DEATH

Rijiju on Saturday condoled the death of veteran athletics coach Purushottam Rai, who was to receive this year's Dronacharya award in the lifetime category.

Rai, who was to be bestowed the honour on Saturday and had even participated in the dress rehearsal for the first-of-its-kind virtual ceremony, died on Friday evening after suffering a heart attack in Bengaluru. He was 79.

— *PTI*

## MASSIVE HIKE IN PRIZE MONEY OF RATNA, ARJUNA

**New Delhi, Aug. 29:** Sports minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday officially announced a massive hike in the prize money in four of the seven categories of the National Sports and Adventure Awards.

The prize money for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award has been increased to a whopping ₹25 lakh from the previous amount of ₹7.5 lakh, while Arjuna Award has been enhanced to ₹15 lakh from ₹5 lakh.

The Dronacharya (Lifetime) awardees, who were earlier given ₹5 lakh, will now be richer by ₹15 lakh, while Dronacharya (Regular) winners will be given ₹10 lakh instead of ₹5 lakh.

The prize money of Dhyan Chand Award has been increased to ₹10 lakh from ₹5 lakh. The hike will come into effect from this year.

— *PTI*

## 14-year struggle paid off: Dutee

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 29

● Dutee Chand was among 27 sportspersons to have been selected for the Arjuna Award. With this, she became the ninth Arjuna awardee from Odisha.

Ace sprinter from Odisha Dutee Chand, who was on Saturday conferred with the prestigious Arjuna Award for the year 2020, said her struggle had brought her 'sweet successes and recognitions'.

"My 14 years of struggle and hard work has brought me enough successes and recognition. This Arjun Award is a very special recognition for me. Every sportsperson cherishes a dream to get it in his lifetime," Dutee said while receiving the award from President Ram Nath Kovind.

The athlete who in the past faced questions on her gender and was banned temporarily from international events thanked followers and supporters for standing by her during hard times.

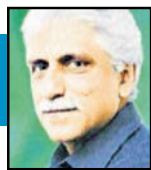
She also took to micro-blogging site Twitter and wrote, "Grateful and proud of my journey till now. Lots to achieve still. Let's

get to work!"

The sprint queen of India was nominated for the award in the discipline of athletics. She was among 27 sportspersons to have been selected for the Arjuna Award. With this, she became the ninth Arjuna awardee from Odisha.

Earlier, eight sportspersons from Odisha have won the Arjuna Award. They include Minati Mohapatra (cyclist), Bijay Kumar Sachpathy (weightlifter), Rachita Mistry (athlete), Dilip Tirkey (hockey), Jyoti Sunita Kullu (hockey), Ignace Tirkey (hockey), K. Ravi Kumar (weightlifter), and Pramod Bhagat (para-badminton).

## Raina's absence a big blow for CSK and IPL



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

Star player Suresh Raina pulling out of the IPL for 'personal reasons' just a day after a clutch of people attached to the Chennai Super Kings squad in the UAE tested positive for Covid made it a double whammy for the franchise and the league.

On Friday evening, news emerged from Dubai that several from the CSK group had tested positive. Identities and precise number of those infected by the virus was not clarified by either the franchise or the

BCCI. In these excruciating circumstances this is neither smart nor desirable.

On Saturday afternoon, the BCCI finally put out an official release, confirming that 13 people associated with the tournament — players, support staff, management, etc — had tested positive. The release, however, did not still identify those afflicted.

Nor did the franchise (assuming CSK is the only affected party), which created more questions than were answered. Raina

returning home for reasons unknown exacerbated the situation.

The franchise was perhaps looking to do damage control, and the BCCI for a full status report before going public. Both understandable in ordinary circumstances. But secrecy in these times is an invitation to wild speculation.

The BCCI did clarify though that all 13 who tested positive "as well as their close contacts are asymptomatic and have been isolated from other team members". They will be attended to by the IPL medical staff.

This is in keeping with standard operating procedures.

That prompt action has been taken is also reassuring, but I still can't fathom the need to hide the identi-

ties of those infected. It tinges the situation unnecessarily with controversy. More importantly, it is unfair on everybody else involved in the tournament.

It is unclear what 'personal reasons' prompted Raina to return. There could be some other compelling grounds, but for argument's sake, it is perfectly reasonable if this was because of Covid-related anxiety too.

Since the time big time cricket resumed in June, players have been given the liberty to join a series/tournament or not, without fear of recrimination. Three West Indies players — Shimron Hetmyer, Darren Bravo and Kemo Paul — skipped the tour to England for personal safety.

Dread of the Coronavirus is not misplaced, and players cannot be faulted for prioritising their families and themselves over cricket. That elite athletes are immune to Covid 19 because of their supreme fitness, has been shown to be a fallacy.

Tennis world no.1 Novak Djokovic, among the fittest sportspersons on the planet, tested positive (along with some other players) during the ill-fated Adria Tour he organized a few months back.

Djokovic had cavalierly underplayed the Covid threat. Players on the Adria Tour mixed with spectators, in fact even attended after match parties where social distancing was completely disregarded. The consequences were harrowing.

This brings us back to the issue of the 13 people in the IPL who have tested positive in the UAE. How did this happen when they had cleared everything that the bio-secure bubble protocol demanded before leaving for the gulf a week back, as also in the time there subsequently before the calamitous tests on Friday?

Was it that the tests done in India or the earlier ones in UAE, were erratic? This is not impossible. Remember Mohammed Hafeez's flip-flop test results before he was cleared to join the Pakistan team to England? Was the problem then in the diagnostic analyses done earlier?

Or is it because these people came in contact with carriers of Corona in some

other way, which suggests a loophole in the bio-secure bubble, or a contravention of laid down SOPs? This becomes a far more serious issue if true.

Whatever the cause, events of the past couple of days should set alarm bells clanging violently in the BCCI. There clearly needs to be a more diligent implementation of the SOPs with the active and total participation of franchise owners/management, players, support staff et al. The vigil has to be strict, and even the most minor transgression — by anybody — has to be treated unsparingly.

If the problem is not arrested asap, the league itself could collapse. Worse, it would also imperil India's tour of Australia scheduled at the year-end.