





## SHORT TAKES

## 95.44% OF BENEFICIARIES GET PENSIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

Village and ward volunteers on Saturday distributed social security pensions to 95.44 per cent of the beneficiaries under YSR Pension Kanuka Scheme in 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh. Handing over pensions at doorsteps turned out to be a big relief for beneficiaries, particularly because they have been forced to remain indoors because of Coronavirus.

Around 2.68 lakh village/ward volunteers started distributing the pension amounts from the morning of the first day of the month. By 5 pm on Saturday, they covered 95.44 per cent of the beneficiaries. It is expected that they will complete distribution of pensions to all beneficiaries by the same night.

The state government is spending ₹1,478 crore on this initiative. Because of Covid-19, officials used the geo-tagging technology, instead of biometrics, for safety purposes. Photos of the beneficiaries were captured as proof of paying the pension.

As many as 96.71 per cent of pensions were distributed in Vizianagaram district, followed by Chittoor 96.7, Kadapa 96.33, Srikakulam 96.14, Krishna 95.92, Nellore 95.80, West Godavari 95.51, East Godavari 94.77, Kurnool 94.63, Guntur 94.51 and Anantapur district 94.41 percent.

## PANEL SET UP TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY IN VIZAG

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

The state police has appointed a committee to look into the security aspects in Visakhapatnam, which is set to become executive capital. With the Governor giving his assent to the three capitals Bills, a major hurdle has been removed to the setting up of executive capital in the Port City.

In this background, DGP Gautam Sawang issued orders on Saturday constituting a committee to be headed by the Visakhapatnam commissioner of police. It will have four IGs (Training, Personnel, Intelligence, P&L wings) and two DIGs (Technical Services, Visakhapatnam range) and Planning OSD as members.

The committee will study the additional personnel, facilities and infrastructure required for the police department in the Port City.

The committee is likely to start its work in a day or two and submit a report within two weeks.

The shifting of the state police headquarters situated at Mangalagiri in Guntur district to Visakhapatnam has become inevitable now. A few weeks ago Mr Sawang had visited Visakhapatnam and inspected various places suitable for police headquarters.

## TWO COMMITTEES TO BE FORMED TO PROBE ACCIDENT

From Page 1

Collector Vinay Chand, Vizag police commissioner R.K. Meena, and senior officials rushed to the spot and oversaw relief and salvage efforts. While inspecting the spot, the collector said two committees would be formed to probe into the accident.

The deceased were identified as R.Venkata Rao (35), Chaitanya (33), Ramu (43), crane operator P.V. Ratnam (40), P. Naga Demudu (35), Satyaraj (28) Sivakumar (30), P. Bhaskar, K. Jagan, and K. Prasad. The body of one more victim is yet to be identified. The bodies have been shifted for the post-mortem examination.

The HSL management not responded to the accident and officials said that a detailed report would be released on the incident.

This is said to be the first such mishap in the public sector ship-building company's 75-year-old history.

HSL has reportedly constituted an internal committee, headed by its director (operations).

Anupam Cranes of Mumbai had erected the jetty crane at HSL two years ago, but it was not made operational. The company later backed and HSL engaged Greenfield Company to operationalise the crane. It contracted Lead Engineers for maintenance and Squad7 for regular operations.

## Section of advocates resent HC relocation

They claim in order to do so, AP govt has to pass resolution in state legislature, forward it to the court

## AP proposes AMRDA to protect farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority (AMRDA) came into existence and effectively replaced AP Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA), which was repealed to protect the rights of farmers and develop Amaravati.

The TDP government had repealed the then Vijayawada, Guntur, Tenali, Mangalagiri Urban Development Authority (VGT-MUDA) and formed APCRDA on December 30, 2014 to oversee establishment of new capital city Amaravati and Capital Region development. APCRDA played a crucial role in collection of 34,000 acres of land under the Land Pooling Scheme (LPS) and played a pivotal role in most developmental activities, including establishing temporary Secretariat and Legislative Assembly complexes at Velagapudi.

The era of APCRDA ended on July 31 after Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan agreed to the repeal the bill following the government's decision to establish AMRDA for the development of Amaravati as Legislature Capital and protecting the rights of farmers.

According to the government gazette order, the areas within the jurisdiction of APCRDA under the principal Act, that is the A.P. Capital Region shall be deemed to be constituted as Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Area under the Andhra Pradesh Metropolitan Region and Urban

Act 5 of 2016 and would be called Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority. The government issued AMRDA in the extraordinary gazette detailing the norms.

All the assets and liabilities, both current and contingent, bonds issued by the APCRDA with government guarantee under Section 28(4) of the Principal Act shall stand transferred to and shall vest in AMRDA as constituted under Section 3(1)(b). The Government will continue to be the guarantor for all such loans availed by the APCRDA with Government Guarantee.

Every person who was immediately before the repeal, employed by APCRDA will continue in AMRDA. Further, the government has the power to redeploy persons under employment to APCRDA to other similar authorities or to other local bodies in the State or to any other government departments to protect rights of employees. In order to protect interests of Amaravati farmers, the government has proposed all the rights as vested in them under LPS will continue in AMRDA.

Further the government would continue payment of ₹5,000 per month to every landless poor family on par with APCRDA. Amaravati farmers will continue to get their annuity according to the norms of APCRDA. The Transferable Development Rights issued by APCRDA, as defined under Section 2(41) of the Principal Act, shall be deemed to have been issued by AMRDA.

## Naidu unfit to be Oppn leader: Nani

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

YSR Congress has claimed that N. Chandrababu Naidu was unfit to be an opposition leader and demanded Naidu and party legislators to seek fresh mandate by resigning from posts to know the pulse of the people.

They announced that the State Government will reconsider the three capitals decision if the TD wins all MLA seats in the by-elections.

Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao (Nani) and MLA Jogi Ramesh refuted the allegations of TD the three capitals move was creating differences among Andhra people.

Addressing a press meet here on Saturday, Nani reiterated that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy wants development of all regions through decentralisation but Naidu was trying to promote commercial activity by concentrating only on Amaravati. He claimed that TD leadership has no moral right to talk on the capital issue as it planned to create wealth for a few and in one region while depriving others of any benefit and demeaning institutions of the Govern-

ment and Legislative Council.

The Minister criticised Naidu for ignoring the recommendations of Sivarama Krishnan Committee that suggested decentralisation.

He recalled that the committee did not favour a single large capital city with a concentration of legislature, judiciary and executive at one place as a feasible option and opposed building a capital city in Amaravati, between Vijayawada and Guntur, as the land was fertile. He claimed that the committee had suggested decentralisation to avoid an imbalance of development in the State, which was why Jagan Mohan Reddy had brought this decentralisation of capitals after appointing three committees, all suggesting decentralisation.

Nani challenged Naidu and TD legislators to put in their papers as MLAs and win.

Addressing a separate press meet, Jogi Ramesh said that any amount of mudslinging by Naidu cannot stop the decentralisation process set in motion by the Chief Minister. He also challenged Naidu to ask his 23 MLAs to resign and seek fresh elections. He said TD would be wiped out.



Farmers of Mandadam village stage protest against the setting up of three state capitals at the camp in Vijayawada on Saturday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

● **ADVOCATES FROM** Guntur, Krishna, Prakasam, Nellore, West Godavari, East Godavari, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam are in favour of the High Court to be in Amaravati while those from Visakhapatnam want a bench in case of a shift. Advocates from Chittoor want HC to be in Tirupati while those from Kadapa want it to be in Kadapa. Advocates from Kurnool and Anantapur want it to be in Kurnool.

● **THE ADVOCATES** are critical as the state government has not given them any chance to even air their protests publicly.

● **THE LAWYERS**, quoting Article 13 of Indian Constitution, say that any laws made inconsistent with or in derogation of the fundamental rights can be struck off either by the High Court or Supreme Court.

they are preoccupied with Covid-19 woes.

Indian Association of Lawyers AP president Muppala Subba Rao said "The state government is taking unilateral decisions on setting up three separate capitals even as it lacks the authority to decide. Such decisions will not stand legal scrutiny in the courts."

Senior advocate from Visakhapatnam, Prudhvi Raj, said, "We want Amaravati to be our capital city with all three organs of governments located in it. In case of any change, we want the HC bench to be set up in Visakhapatnam even as the administrative capital is established in the city for the reason that people from north Andhra region cannot travel to Kurnool to file their petitions in High Court, if it is located there, for want of proper transport connectivity."

The advocates are critical as the state government has not given them any chance to even air their protests publicly.

## Amaravati farmers stage stir, say YSRC cheated

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

Pro Amaravati farmers staged protests at Mandadam and other places in Amaravati capital region on Saturday demanding that the Jagan government take back its decision to shift capital to Visakhapatnam. They said that the YSRC won the election with their support in Amaravati, but it cheated them after coming to power.

They reiterated their resolve to continue the agitation till the government shelved the three capital decision.

Former minister and TDP senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao with other leaders visited the Amaravati protest camp at Mandadam and expressed his support to the agitating farmers. He alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy as opposition leader had given his support to the previous TD government to build capital in 30,000 acres in Amaravati. He termed the Governor's assent to three capitals and APCRDA Bills anti democratic and anti constitutional and stated that they would continue legal fight till Amaravati farmers got justice.

● **FORMER MINISTER** and TDP senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao with other leaders visited the Amaravati protest camp at Mandadam and expressed his support to the agitating farmers. He alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy as opposition leader had given his support to the previous TD government to build capital in 30,000 acres in Amaravati. He termed the Governor's assent to three capitals and APCRDA Bills anti democratic and anti constitutional and stated that they would continue legal fight till Amaravati farmers got justice.

Amaravati Women JAC leaders appealed to all political parties to join the agitations. AWJAC convenor Sunkara Padmasri alleged that while the YSRC directly cheated the farmers, BJP-Jana Sena betrayed them by indirectly supporting three capitals. Referring to a series of accidents in Visakhapatnam, she said that they were a bad omen for CM Jagan and he should take a hint and stop capital shifting.

Women JAC leaders Padmasri, Devineni Aparna, Narla Malathi, Yarlagadda Suchitra, Gadde Anuradha and others said that they would launch statewide protests in 13 districts on Sunday by tying rakhis to BJP, Jana Sena and YSRC MLAs.

## Kurnool admin scouts for land to set up HC complex

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC  
KURNOOL AUG. 1

With Kurnool having been declared as judicial capital of AP, the district administration is focusing on identifying a suitable land for establishing the high court complex. It has identified five areas for the purpose, including the place where APSP battalion is located. Another is the land belonging to Bala Sai Baba.

Meanwhile, advocates of Kurnool Bar Association took out a victory procession in the city saying justice has finally been done to them. The procession started from the district court and ended at Kondareddy Buruju, where they garlanded statues of Telugu Talli and Mahatma Gandhi. Bar association president K. Mohan Babu said advocates had staged protests, including relay hunger strikes and dharnas, demanding establishment of High Court at Kurnool for over five months. He hoped Kurnool will also turn into a popular city like Vijayawada and Bangalore.

Royalaseema Advocates JAC convener V. Nagalakshmi Devi said they are happy that AP Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan has approved the bill for decentralisation of administration. She asserted that Kurnool is the most suitable place for setting up the High Court, as it has a long history of serving as the first capital of Andhra Pradesh.

● **PRAJA PARIRAKSHANA** Samithi president K. Bala Ram demanded that, apart from establishing the judicial capital in Kurnool, the state government should also focus on constructing irrigation projects and establishing industries around Kurnool.

Praja Parirakshana Samithi president K. Bala Ram demanded that, apart from establishing the judicial capital in Kurnool, the state government should also focus on constructing irrigation projects and establishing industries around Kurnool. Only that can bring about development in this backward region, which continuously faces drought, he said.

YSR Congress party cadre, including MLAs and MPs, also organised rallies and celebrations in major towns of the district.



Sequence of pictures show the collapse of huge crane inside the Hindustan Shipyard Limited when the load on the crane was increased to peak level for the test and the floor fittings came off, which resulted in the crane leaning over and crashing on the workers, in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA



## SHORT TAKES

## RECOVERED FROM COVID, WOMAN ENDS LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, AUG. 1

Unable to bear the isolation and locals' reluctance to talk to her, a 70-year-old woman, who recovered from Covid-19, committed suicide by hanging in her house at Birajupalli in Ramasamudram mandal of Chittoor district.

The woman underwent treatment for Covid-19 at the Covid Hospital in Tirupati and returned home 25 days back. She has been staying with her son and daughter-in-law.

She felt humiliated as all the known people started maintaining distance and stopped talking to her because of the stigma associated with the virus.

Depressed by the situation, the woman ended her life on Friday evening.

Ramasamudram SI Ravikumar said. He said that the woman seems to have felt ashamed about being a Covid-19 patient.

## DISCHARGED COVID PATIENTS STAGE PROTEST FOR CASH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, AUG. 1

Several people, who were discharged from the Covid centre at Haj House at Chennur on Saturday, staged a protest on the Kadapa-Kurnool national highway demanding ₹2,000 cash aid announced by the government towards post-Coronavirus treatment expenses. Vehicles on both sides came to a halt as they squatted on the road alleging that the authorities did not pay them the money.

Nodal officer Mastan Vali clarified that the state government did not release any funds to the centre for payment to the victims. When the matter was taken to the notice of joint collector C.M. Saikant Verma, he asked officials to write down the details of those who did not receive cash aid on their discharge sheets so that they could be paid when the funds were received by the centre.

## 'MANIKYALA RAO'S DEATH GREAT LOSS TO STATE BJP'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, AUG. 1

The sudden death of Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former endowments minister Pydikondala Manikyala Rao has left the party leaders and cadre in two Godavari districts in a state of shock.

Manikyala Rao won Tadepalligudem Assembly seat in 2014 elections and was inducted into the Chandrababu Naidu cabinet as endowments minister.

Former BJP district president Y. Malakondaiah described Manikala Rao as a dedicated RSS worker. Another leader Y. Ramkumar said that Manikyala Rao's death due to Coronavirus was a big blow to the BJP in the state. Recalling Manikyala Rao's services as minister, party state council member D. Subrahmanyam said he was a simple man and accessible to the people of all sections all the time. Bikkina Visweswara Rao, another BJP leader, described the former minister as a man of integrity. Soon after testing positive for Covid, Manikyala Rao released a video urging people to take all precautions and face it with courage. He also expressed the hope that he would recover soon and return to active public life.

## CHIRALA SI ARRESTED FOR DEATH OF A YOUTH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, AUG. 1

In a sudden turn in the investigation over the death of one Kiran Kumar of Chirala after an alleged thrashing by the police, the police have arrested the SI of Chirala two town, K. Vijayakumar on Saturday.

It may be recalled that Vijayakumar had arrested Kiran Kumar and his friend Shiny Abraham after they attacked a constable when he stopped them for not wearing mask and driving under the influence of liquor on July 18.

Kiran Kumar sustained grievous injuries after the arrest, and he succumbed to injuries during treatment in a private hospital in Ongole on July 21.

## 2 million tests



Medical Staff collects the swabs from the residents of Chinnawaltair and East Point Colony areas for Covid-19 testing at GVMC Model Primary School at Chinnawaltair in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — K. MURALIKRISHNA

## Covid +ve cases cross 23,000 in north Andhra

In Vizag, the number reached to 11,920 with 8,698 active cases

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC  
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 1

Covid-19 positive cases have been increasing in the north Andhra districts.

Even the administration is taking up several precautionary measures to check the spread of Covid-19. According to reports, as many as 23,268 positive cases have been reported by Saturday in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, and Visakhapatnam districts.

In Visakhapatnam, the number reached to 11,920 with 8,698 active cases. In Srikakulam, the positive cases crossed the 7,000 mark. As many as 7,025 cases were registered with 3,001 active cases.

In Vizianagaram district, the number of cases increasing at a massive scale 4,323 positive registered cases with 2,274 active cases.

The number of Covid-19 deaths is also increasing. The death toll in Visakhapatnam reached 113, in Srikakulam, it is 74 while it was 58 in Vizianagaram district.

During the last 24 hours, 455 in Srikakulam, 1,155 in Visakhapatnam, and 119 positive cases were reported.

## East Godavari affected badly

FROM PAGE 1

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 cases, East Godavari has been hit badly, registering 21,271 cases, followed by 18,081 in Kurnool, 15,827 in Anantapur, 15,669 in Guntur, 12,804 in West Godavari, 11,920 in Visakhapatnam, 11,327 in Chittoor, 8,423 in Kadapa, 7,875 in Nellore, 7,200 in Krishna, 7,025 in Srikakulam, 5,569 in Prakasam and 4,323 in Vizianagaram district. In addition, 2,461 cases from other states and 434 cases from other countries have taken the total number of positive cases to 1,50,209.

Recovery rate among Covid-19 infected patients has been found to be good in East Godavari with 13,317 patients getting discharged after recovery. Patients discharged in other districts are 9,294 in Kurnool, 8,366 in Guntur, 6,885 in Anantapur, 6,462 in West Godavari, 6,010 in Chittoor, 4,728 in Krishna, 4,026 in Kadapa, 3,950 in Srikakulam, 3,109 in Visakhapatnam, 2,946 in Prakasam, 2,635 in Nellore

and 1,991 in Vizianagaram. In addition to it, 2,461 patients from other states and 434 from other countries have also recovered, taking the total number of recovered cases to 76,614.

The state witnessed death of 58 infected patients during the last 24 hours. Of them, eight each deaths have been reported from East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, seven from Guntur, six each from Anantapur, Kurnool and Chittoor, four from Srikakulam, three each from Krishna and West Godavari, two each from Nellore, Prakasam and Vizianagaram, and one from Kadapa. With this, the death toll in the state has reached 1,407.

AP tested 37,689 samples for one million population, registering the

Covid-19 positive rate of 7.46. Maharashtra tested 17,083 with positive rate of 19.78.

AP has registered a recovery rate at 51 per cent, with mortality rate being 0.94 per cent while Maharashtra registered 60.68 per cent recovery rate and 3.55 percent mortality rate.

According to latest reports from districts, Nellore has registered 559 new cases, raising the tally to 8,578. 10 patients aged between 55 and 92 years succumbed to the virus in the district. In Prakasam, 402 new cases have been reported, taking up the total cases to 5,569.

In Kadapa, 547 new cases have been recorded, taking the tally to 8,608. The district is having 1,650 beds available in all Covid-19 designated hospitals. In East Godavari, 876 new cases have been registered from 63 mandals.

In West Godavari, the district administration has de-notified 12 containment zones, as no fresh case of Covid-19 have been reported in the last 28 days.

## 20 +VE CASES DETECTED AT CENTRAL PRISON

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, AUG. 1

As many as 20 Covid-19 positive cases have been detected at the central prison in Nellore during a screening of 470 convicts and more than 30 staff members during the last two days. The infected include staff members and prisoners.

Prison Superintendent Rajeswar Rao said they had arranged the screening after two people in a murder case tested positive when they were brought to remand a couple of days back. He said that all the 20 infected were asymptomatic and that they are being kept in an isolation ward located close to the prison following the advice of medical officers.

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## Portal on status of Covid-19 beds

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1

You can find out the status of availability of beds in Covid hospitals on a unique portal launched by the department of health, medical and family welfare. The department started a dashboard with the details on Saturday. People can get the details of bed availability through the dashboard.

[http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed\\_reports](http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed_reports).

The dashboard would display the details of ven-

tilators, oxygen beds, general beds and ICU beds across 13 districts in the state.

The dashboard contains the data of total beds, beds occupied and beds available in all categories.

The dashboard is real time data which gets auto updated every time there is an admission or discharge from the hospital under Incident Management System (ICM). Minister for medical and health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas appealed to the public to make good use of the online IMS facility.



Priests perform puja on the third and final day of the three-day annual Pavitrotsavams in Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple at Tirumala on Saturday. Pavitra Purnahuti was performed between 7 pm and 8 pm.

## MLA carries victim's body to dispel fear

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, AUG. 1

Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan participated in the last rites of a Covid victim to dispel the fear among the public that the bodies carry the virus and infect those touching them.

Wearing a PPE suit, the MLA along with his team lifted the body of the Coronavirus victim into the ambulance. The cre-

mation took place near summer storage tank, located on the outskirts of the city on Friday evening. It went viral on social media on Saturday. Mr Khan said he had participated in the last rites to send a message that if people took adequate precautions nothing would happen to them.

Meanwhile, six persons died of Covid on Saturday alone here, taking the toll to 201 in the district.



A worker sprays disinfectant around the INS Kurusura Submarine Museum on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## 'Covid cases reflect underdevelopment'

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, AUG. 1

Kurnool MP Sanjeev Kumar, in a weird analogy, said that underdevelopment of an area is directly responsible for the higher incidence of diseases, citing why Kurnool got more coronavirus cases.

"Judicial capital would improve economy. New jobs would be created,

and that would lift the people out of the morass of poverty," said Kurnool MP Dr Sanjeev Kumar. The MP was participating in celebrations at Konda Reddy Fort on Saturday for attaining the status of judicial capital to Kurnool.

Dr Sanjeev Kumar, who is a medical doctor by profession, is a first time MP elected on YSRC ticket in 2019.



CPM leaders stage protest on BRTS Road against the 3 capitals in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

## Tilak's 100th death anniv observed

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, AUG. 1

Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak death anniversary was observed here at Nagara Ganesh Utsav Samithi Kakinada Rural Office on Saturday. The Samithi members paid rich tributes to the great freedom fighter. Garlanding the photo of Tilak, the President

Duvvuri Subrahmanyam said that Tilak was one of the firebrand freedom fighters and strongest proponent of "Purna swaraj" and raised slogan of "Swaraj is my birth right" and I shall have it caught the imagination of country fighting to free itself from the colonial rule. He said that to protect Hindu Dharma Tilak commenced Vinayaka Chaturthi festival.

## COVID | STIGMA

## Brush aside kin's fear, public anger, cremate woman's body

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC  
NELLORE, AUG. 1

In a heartwarming gesture, municipal, medical and police officials of Addanki town in Prakasam district performed the last rites to an 80-year-old woman Covid-19 victim, amid her family's reluctance and public objection.

A diabetic, the woman, a resident of Ramnagar,

which is in containment zone, suffered from mild fever, throat pain and other symptoms of Covid. A compounder working in a private hospital treated the women. She died on Friday afternoon and a rapid test conducted on her body by local health officials revealed that she had Coronavirus.

Shocked by the results, the members of the woman's family were in a

● A diabetic, the woman, a resident of Ramnagar, which is in containment zone, suffered from mild fever, throat pain and other symptoms of Covid. A compounder working in a private hospital treated the women. She died on Friday afternoon and a rapid test conducted on her body by local health officials revealed that she had Coronavirus.

dilemma as to how to cremate the body without getting infected with the virus. Seeing their predicament, Addanki

municipal chief S.K. Fazullulla and medical officer Jaychandra took the responsibility of carrying out the final rites.

Sub inspector Mahesh also joined them at the instance of CI I. Anjaneya Reddy.

They faced another problems when the residents near the graveyard at Narravaripalem did not allow the burial of the body. They gave in only after SI Mahesh threatened that the body would be abandoned in their colony if they kept up their objection.



## IN BRIEF

### Pvittrotsavams concludes in

**Nellore:** The annual three-day Pavittrotsavams concluded on a religious note in Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala on Saturday. The processional deities of Sri Malayappa Swamy along with his two consorts, Sridevi and Bhudevi were rendered the sacred Snapanam Tirumanjanam between 9 to 11 am. In the evening, Pavitra Purnahuti was performed between 7 to 8 pm.

### SANITISER TOLL RISES TO 15 AS FOUR MORE DIE

**DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 1**

The number of deaths related to people who were killed after consuming hand sanitisers increased to 11 following the death of four more from Kurichedu in Prakasam district during the last 24 hours.

According to the police, Khambati Dasu, 65, breathed his last after midnight on Friday at Christian Palem in Kurichedu.

Similarly, one Mathangi Subba Rao of Kurichedu died after consuming sanitiser in Guntur, late on Friday night. He drank the sanitiser while attending a wedding two days back in Kurichedu. He had purchased five more 100 ml bottles while returning to Guntur.

Two rickshaw pullers, Kavuluri Narasiah, 45, and Maniga Nageswar Rao, died while being shifted to Guntur for treatment after their condition turned critical at a PHC (Primary Health Care centre) in Kurichedu on Saturday.

Several people who are in the habit of consuming hand sanitisers rushed to the PHCs and private hospitals after the revenue and police officials alerted the people of Kurichedu through local electronic media and social media.

Medical officers shifted 19 persons to RIMS Hospital in Ongole in two ambulance vehicles under the supervision of Dr. Praveen, Darsi DSP, Prakasa Rao and CI Shaik Mohammad Moin on Saturday.

### FOUR SANITISER VICTIMS TEST CORONA +VE

**DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 1**

To the shock of the family members and locals, four people, who were killed after consuming hand sanitisers in Kurichedu on Friday, tested positive to Covid-19.

Alarmed by the deaths in his segment, YSRC legislator Maddichetti Venugopal has instructed the medical and health field staff and village volunteers on Saturday to conduct door to door survey and identify people in the habit of consuming sanitisers. He told the health officials to conduct medical tests to the suspected persons and shift them to RIMS in Ongole for better treatment.

Meanwhile, the Drug Control Department officials are in a fix over tracing the address of the companies producing the sanitisers responsible for the death of 15 people. They collected the samples from the medical shops in Kurichedu and tried to locate the companies as part of the investigation.

### SIT TO PROBE INTO SANITISER DEATHS

**DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 1**

Prakasam SP Siddharth Kaushal has appointed a special investigation team (SIT) headed by the OSD of Markapuram, K. Chowdeshwar, to probe into the death of 15 people after consuming hand sanitisers in Kurichedu village in Prakasam district.

The other members of the team include Darsi DSP K. Prakash Rao, Marakapur DSP G. Nageswara Reddy, Darsi CI Md. Moin, Podili CI V. Sriram, and Addanki CI I. Anjaneya Reddy.

The SP asked the team to find out the manufacturer of the killer sanitisers and check whether the unit has a valid license or permit and if they produce them as per standards. He has also told them to check on such deaths reported in Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other states besides procedures being followed at deaddiction centres in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

# AP loses 4 govt docs to Corona

**Docs express concern about fate of their families in case of any eventuality**

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1**

Andhra Pradesh has lost nearly nine doctors including four government doctors, three retired and two private doctors, and also several health personnel in their bid to save Covid-19 infected patients so far, while several others are fighting with the virus to survive.

Dr V. Yogendra Babu, resident medical officer (RMO), government hospital, Eluru, West Godavari; Dr Prem Kumar, RMO, district hospital, Tenali in Guntur; Dr Dilip, medical officer, ART centre, government hospital, Vijayawada, Krishna and Dr P. Prabhakar, anesthetist, Asram Medical College, Eluru, West Godavari have succumbed to the virus.

A team of five senior doctors led by APVVP commissioner, Dr U. Ramakrishna Rao, met the family members of Dr Babu at Eluru and consoled them, assuring all government help to them.

As both RMOs were looking after the day-to-day running of the hospitals, allotting duties to doctors to attend to Covid-19 patients to provide treatment, handling patients and talking to the kin of deceased patients to arrange the release of bodies and were also involved in a host of other activities, they contracted the virus and lost their lives.

As the number of deaths of doctors and health care professionals rises daily, doctors are more apprehensive and express concern about the fate of

● Sources say that all senior doctors who have crossed 50 years of age and are suffering multiple health issues are of the opinion that the state government should provide them exemption from attending to Covid-19 patients directly.

their families in case of any eventuality.

Health sources say that all senior doctors who have crossed 50 years of age and are suffering multiple health issues like heart or kidney ailments, high blood pressure, diabetes and other health complications, are of the opinion that the state government should provide them exemption from attending to Covid-19

patients directly to and instead utilise their services for administrative work and also for tele-medicine so that the risk of infection is minimal.

A senior government doctor suffering from multiple health complications said, "As we put on a PPE kit and attend to Covid-19 patients for six hours in a shift, we get totally exhausted and become weak. As our immunity levels come down, we are more likely to contract the virus."

Another senior government doctor said, "We have been asking for special wards in private hospitals to treat us in case we get infected with the virus and if we are assured of such a facility, we will treat infected patients without nurturing any fear of contracting the

virus ourselves. We also want medical insurance coverage so that if anything happens, it will help our families survive."

The doctors say that though over 100 doctors and several health care professionals have died fighting Covid-19 after contracting the virus while on duty in the country, the centre has not released the promised medical insurance coverage of ₹50 lakh to anyone so far. They want the state government to give a matching grant of ₹50 lakh and provide medical insurance coverage worth of ₹1 crore to each of them so that they can work without worrying about their families as such an amount will help their families to survive in their absence.

# NGT panel finds irregularities in sand mining

**VADREVV SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, AUG. 1**

A committee, constituted by National Green Tribunal (NGT), found several irregularities in sand mining across the 23-km River Godavari stretch from Kotipalli in East Godavari of Andhra Pradesh to Yanam, an Union Territory enclave of Puducherry in 23 sand reaches.

The committee said that there is no proper sand policy and the sand excavation guidelines are not being followed properly.

Sunkara Swamy Naidu Welfare Organisation, represented by its President Sunkara Karthik had petitioned the NGT, Southern Zone, with regard to the illegal mining of sand from the Godavari River mouth/estuary at Yanam.

According to the petitioner, the river enters the sea at Yanam and the river mouth area is known as Vrudha Gowthami Godavari and is an ecologically fragile area. Indiscriminate and illegal sand mining is being carried out in Yanam without obtaining any environment clearance or NOCs from statutory authorities.

The NGT constituted a committee, comprising East Godavari District Collector, Yanam Regional Administrator, Director of Mining and Geology of State of AP and State Coastal Zone Management Authority of AP and Puducherry, Central Pollution Control Board, Regional Office-Bengaluru, AP Pollution Control Board.

The panel has to inspect the area to find out whether illegal mining is taking place in Godavari River bed and later submit an action taken report to NGT. The Committee observed that proper scientific method is not used for assessment of the total sand reserves and depth of sand

● According to the petitioner, the river enters the sea at Yanam and the river mouth area is known as Vrudha Gowthami Godavari and is an ecologically fragile area.

● Indiscriminate and illegal sand mining is being carried out in Yanam without obtaining any environment clearance or NOCs from statutory authorities.

deposited before granting mining permissions and mining is also taking place in lanka lands in the district, namely Govalanka, Pillanka, Peddalanaka, Pasuvulanka. Lanka Lands mean islands formed in the river and these lands are very old and are described in the revenue maps of the district of 1926. Currently, permission is given by the Mining department to carry out mining on lanka lands stating that these are shoal formation and they obstruct navigation.

If mining has to be carried out in lanka lands, then the Government of AP shall devise a proper policy to address all such issues. The thickness of sand in the reaches in the district is not assessed before starting the mining activity and the depth up to which it is carried out is also not monitored during the operation. Mining is taking place in open reaches on the river bed and boat reaches, using the open cast manual method that is scooping of sand directly and in other open reaches. Tractors, tippers, JCB and trucks are plying on the river bed against the mining plan and which is detrimental to ecological balance.

There is no monitoring mechanism and geo-fencing that can ensure that mining is taking place only in the permitted areas.

# Id celebrated with social distancing

**MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 1**

The Muslim community of Andhra Pradesh celebrated Bakrid in a simple manner on Saturday, in accordance with the strict health guidelines stipulated by the state government in view of the Covid-19 global epidemic.

Majority of the Muslims offered Eid Namaz within their houses. They avoided shaking hands and hugging each other, which is the tradition. They greeted each other from a distance.

Only 50 persons were allowed in mosques to offer the Eid Ul Adha Namaz. Imams went through the Bakrid Namaz in two to three batches at all the mosques to ensure social distancing. This is the first time that Bakrid was celebrated without the traditional customs and rituals.

Mosques in Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore, Kurnool, Kadapa and other districts otherwise used to be full with huge gatherings for Eid prayers. But this time, only a limited number of Namazis were allowed into the mosques. Wearing masks and using sanitizers was



Muslims take part in special prayers by maintaining physical distance on the occasion of Bakrid at a Masjid near Police Barracks in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

made compulsory. The Janamaz (long prayer mats) were removed from the mosques. Markings were made for Namazis, so that they ensured two metres of physical distance between each other. The Khutba (traditional public address before Eid Namaz by Imams) used to last for one hour, but it was shortened to 15-20 minutes to cut down on continuous stay within a gathering, which could spread Covid-19.

Namaz was not allowed at the huge Eidgahs this year to curb the spread of Coronavirus. The otherwise crowded Eidgahs remained deserted as a result. Majority of the mosques performed the Namaz from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. against the normal timing of 9 a.m.

Political leaders, including ministers, MPs, MLAs and MLCs, used to join Eid prayers in their respective areas and meet members

of the Muslim community. But they avoided the same this year due to the virus protocol.

Moulana Mohammed Altaf Ali Raza said mass Dua was performed in every mosque seeking an end of Corona pandemic and swift recovery of patients undergoing treatment in Covid hospitals. He expressed hope that Covonavirus could be controlled in the near future with collective efforts.

## For temple construction



Silver bricks weighing 11 kg each being sent for laying the foundation stone during the Bhoomi Pujan on August 5 to build the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The event was organised by Vedanilayam and Pavan Foundation at Somajiguda on Saturday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

# Don't loot patients: Etala to pvt hosps

**BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUGUST 1**

The government accused private and corporate hospitals of fleecing Covid-19 patients by overcharging them for drugs, and in the guise of PPE kits and ICU charges.

"Private hospitals have forgotten their humanity. Instead of providing medical treatment to the needy, these hospitals are only looking to make money off the patients," health minister Etala Rajendar said.

The remarks came at a meeting he chaired to review with senior health officials, the hundreds of complaints the government has received from patients. He said, "It is just not fair to make money off the people who are fearing for their lives. Our department is receiving complaints that these hospitals are charging ten

times of what they would have during normal times. Instead of chasing money and profits, private hospitals should play a constructive role in saving the lives of Covid-19 patients and display a sense of humanity."

He instructed that a committee of senior officials be formed to probe every complaint received about private hospitals and action taken on those not following government orders on billing.

The meeting discussed complaints pertaining to rejection of health insurance, demanding deposit of up to ₹5 lakh before a patient is admitted, increasing charges saying a bed is being made available only with great difficulty, and some pertaining to how private hospitals were bundling off to government hospitals Covid-19 patients who were near death.

# No point hiding Covid figures, Kishan tells TS

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUGUST 1**

There is an urgent need for creating faith among the people on the services being provided by government hospitals in the state for Covid-19 patients, Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy said on Saturday.

The minister said Covid-19 was a global pandemic and the state government should have no reason to hide the actual number of people who are dying from the disease or those affected. "If such is the case, then it is not the right thing to do. I am asking the state government to come clean and reveal the true figures. The Centre is only willing to help the state government in combating the disease," he said.

Kishan Reddy was speaking with reporters

at the Gandhi Hospital, after his visit to the facility. Earlier in the day, he also visited TIMS at Gachibowli, and the Government Ayurvedic Hospital. This is the second time that Kishan Reddy visited Covid-19 hospitals.

"I met with doctors, nurses, staff and officials at these hospitals and interacted with patients. We need to give them confidence and take steps to increase the faith of the people in government hospitals. Right now, many people are going to private hospitals and paying huge bills and going into debt. This needs to change," he said.

The minister also warned that the coming weeks are expected to see a worsening of the Covid-19 situation and state government needs to increase the number of beds for the

patients and hospitals to treat them.

He said there was a need for increasing the incentives being paid to staff, particularly the outsourced and Class 4 workers. "The government said it is recruiting 279 doctors. This number will not be enough. Many more should be recruited as outsourced employees and they should include nurses, maintenance and other staff," he said.

Kishan Reddy expressed serious concern that containment measures were not being implemented strictly. "Many people who tested positive and are under home quarantine are leaving their homes and going around. The government and residential associations must put an end to this. It is also a matter of concern that villages too are reporting cases," he said.

# Telangana State defers meet on water dispute

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 1**

The Apex Council meeting on river water disputes between AP and Telangana state, which was scheduled for August 5, is said to have been postponed by the Union ministry of Jal Shakti.

Jal Shakti ministry secretary M.P. Singh had on July 29 written to the state government asking for its opinion on convening the Apex Council meeting.

TS Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on July 31 held a high-level meeting after which the Chief Secretary was asked to write to the Centre to schedule the meeting after August 20, or after the completion of the Independence Day celebrations as the govern-

ment had scheduled certain programmes on August 5.

The Telangana Rashtra Samiti government faced sharp criticism from the Opposition for seeking to postpone the meeting; they said the date proposed by the state government was significant.

The Andhra Pradesh government has floated tenders for the construction of the Rayalaseema lift irrigation project which was intended to divert 3 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) of water a day from the Srisaillam reservoir to Rayalaseema. The last date for the submission of tenders is August 17.

The Krishna Water Management Board has directed the AP government not to go ahead with the tender process.

# MOHAN BABU THREATENED AT HIS RESIDENCE

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 1**

A group of unidentified persons created a scene at film actor Mohan Babu's house in the city and reportedly shouted a warning that they would teach him and his family a lesson.

The incident happened in the evening following which the actor lodged a complaint with the Padashareef police.

About four persons drove up to the gate of the actor's house in an MPV, and the security guard reportedly let the vehicle in. The vehicle drove up to the entrance of the house and the men got down and shouted the warnings before getting back into the vehicle and driving out.

# CM neglecting TS interests: Uttam

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUGUST 1**

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Saturday alleged that there was a major conspiracy behind Chief Minister

K. Chandrashekar Rao's silence on the "grave injustice in the making" in the form of Andhra Pradesh's plans to divert 8 tmc ft of Krishna water every day from the Srisaillam reservoir.

Addressing the media, he said the postponing of the August 5 Apex Council meeting to a date after August 20 by the Chief Minister under the pretext of holding a Cabinet meeting was part of that conspiracy to do injustice to Telangana state in the matter of Krishna waters. Reddy alleged that Rao

had sought a date after August 20 only to allow AP to complete the tender process for the Rayalaseema lift irrigation project.

He pointed out that the neglect of South Telangana in the matter of river waters would also make statehood to Telangana meaningless as it was one of the three planks of the movement. The TPCC chief announced that the Congress would intensify its struggle to protect the state's river waters, in case the state government failed to play its role.

Meanwhile Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarra in a press statement said that with the diversion of water from Srisaillam reservoir, Nalgonda, Khammam and Mahabubnagar district will turn into deserts.



## IN BRIEF

## TOLL IN PUNJAB LIQUOR TRAGEDY RISES TO 86

Chandigarh, Aug. 1: The death toll in the Punjab spurious liquor tragedy rose to 86 on Saturday even as Chief Minister Amarinder Singh suspended seven excise officials and six policemen, officials said.

The government also announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh for each of the families of the deceased, they said.

Tarn Taran alone accounted for 63 deaths, followed by 12 in Amritsar and 11 in Gurdaspur's Batala.

It may be recalled that till Friday night, the state had reported 39 deaths in the tragedy unfolding since Wednesday night.

Among the suspended officials are two deputy superintendents of police and four station house officers.

Strict action will be taken against any public servant or others found complicit in the case, said the chief minister, describing the police and excise department failure to check the manufacturing and sale of spurious liquor as shameful.

Nobody will be allowed to get away with feeding poison to our people, the Chief Minister added.

## ₹2 CR SIPHONED OFF FROM COLLECTOR'S A/C

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 1

An official of the sub treasury here allegedly siphoned off ₹2 crore from Thiruvananthapuram Collector's account.

The Treasury director has ordered an inquiry into the embezzlement. Sources in the treasury department said the culprit, a senior accountant in the department, had used the user name, password of a sub treasury officer who retired from service on May 31.

The staffer siphoned off the amount from the collector's account which had been started for a specific reason and was in operative. Several transactions amounting to a total of ₹2 crore were made during the period up to July using the login name and password of the retired official.

Subsequently the transaction details were deleted.

Many say the department's failure to cancel the retired official's account including login name and password came handy for the staffer to carry out the fraud. Normally the user name and password of officers are scrapped the day they retire from service.

However, the fraud came to light when officials found a difference of ₹2 crore in the day book noting.

Meanwhile, on the direction of the treasury director, a high-level probe has begun into the fraud. The involvement of other officials is also being probed.

## SSR CASE: BIHAR COPS KEEP A 'WATCH' ON RHEA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 1

Amidst rising animosity between the Mumbai and Bihar police in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide probe, senior officers of the visiting personnel will be coming to the city to speed up the probe.

The Bihar Police have meanwhile met Mumbai crime branch's deputy commissioner of police and sought for cooperation. The Bihar police said that they are keeping 'a watch' on Rajput's actor girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty while the probe speeds up in the case.

Rajput was found hanging in his suburban Bandra apartment on June 14. The Bihar police has recorded statements of six persons including Rajput's sister, staying at Versova, former girlfriend Ankita Lokhande, a cook, his friends and colleagues, till Saturday. They have also collected details of Rajput's bank transaction.

"She (Chakraborty) is under our watch and a notice under sections of the CrPC has been sent to Chakraborty, asking her to cooperate with the probe," said a Bihar police officer. The visiting team also met the DCP detection-I of Mumbai crime branch. The visit attracted eyeballs as the city police were videographed bundling the Bihar cops in a police van and whisking them off. Later, the city police clarified that this was for their 'safety' and that they were dropped off at a distance.

## Uma Bharti gets invite for Ram Temple event

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, AUG. 1

Two senior BJP leaders of Madhya Pradesh, former chief minister Uma Bharti and ex-minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya, have been invited to attend the 'Bhumi Pujan' for Ram temple, to be held in Ayodhya on August 5.

Both the saffron leaders are currently facing trial in the Babri mosque demolition case.

They are the only leaders from MP who have received an invitation to attend the ceremony by the Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the ceremony.

Ms Bharti on Saturday made public the invitation extended to her to attend the ceremony in a twitter post.

According to her, the invitees have been asked to reach the venue on August 4 and not leave before August 6.

● Uma Bharti, who played a major role in Ram temple movement, said she felt elated when she received the invitation to attend Bhumi Pujan for the temple.

Ms Bharti, who played a major role in Ram temple movement, said she felt elated when she received the invitation to attend Bhumi Pujan for the temple.

Another BJP leader from MP who received an invitation to attend the occasion was former minister Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya. Mr Pawaiya had also played a role in Ram temple movement and is an accused in Babri mosque demolition case.

He had earlier served as national president of Bajrang Dal.

Mr Pawaiya who lost 2018 Assembly polls in Gwalior in MP as a BJP candidate, is also known as a bitter critic of erstwhile Gwalior royal family of Scindia.

## All set for the big day



Preparations ahead of the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Saturday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony of the temple on August 5. -PTI

## New domicile law triggers fear

The law has raised fears of bringing demographic changes in predominantly Muslim J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, AUG. 1

In the past one year, the government has in unseemly haste introduced several new laws and altered many existing ones in Jammu and Kashmir, the enterprise to the dismay of vast sections of its population.

While the government authorities insist the enactments are legally sanctioned and follow the pattern set by the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A ending the special status of the erstwhile state within the Indian Union, people here and also in Jammu ask why

not a single such or similar law has been introduced in Ladakh carved out of J&K as a separate Union Territory.

As no one in the government has attempted to answer this justifiable question, so far, people tend to believe bringing in changes in J&K's statute and the haste with which it is being done are "ill-intentioned".

It is mainly the new domicile law introduced earlier this year which has raised fears of the beginning of demographic changes in predominantly Muslim J&K.

Reports pouring in mainly from Jammu say

365 DAYS  
AFTER 370

that thousands of non-locals have been granted domicile certificates during the past couple of months. They include some IAS officers, their family members, refugees of erstwhile West Pakistani and members of Balmiki Samaj and Gorkha communities. While various political and social groups in Jammu have publicly expressed apprehension that they might lose their land and identify as a consequence of the new

domicile law, in the Valley the dominant public view is: India is transforming Kashmir into another Palestine.

"There are instances which clearly indicate that the Government of India is following the footsteps of Israel to change the demography of J&K and assimilate it socially and culturally after altering its Muslim majority character. People are worried over it," said Noor Ahmed Baba, political analyst and former professor at University of Kashmir's political science department.

J&K's major regional mainstream parties have

termed the implementation of new domicile law as "ill-advised, arbitrary and dishonest" as Supreme Court has yet to decide on a series of petitions challenging the abrogation of Articles 35A and 370 and cautioned the government that it's "misadventure" is fraught with grave consequences for the state and the country as a whole.

CPIM leader Muhammad Yusuf Tarigami warned, "Changing the demography of J&K, plundering its people of their identity and going back on constitutional guarantees and commit-

ments of the country's leadership which provided the basis for the state's accession will only invigorate alienation".

BJP spokesman, Anil Gupta, rejected the criticism as "unfounded, motivated and part of a misinformation campaign aimed at misleading people for political reasons."

He said, "The new domicile law will neither change the demography nor snatch the jobs of the local youth. It will, however, end certain discriminations and injustices which were there but went against the constitutional guarantees."

## Assam schools likely to reopen from Sept. 1

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 1

Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Saturday announced that his government has decided to set up a 40-member committee to suggest measures for implementing the new education policy while releasing a broad guideline for opening of educational institutions possibly from September 1.

Informing that panel headed by principal secretary education will submit its recommendations by December 31, the minister told reporters that they have started this exercise to prepare the blueprint of implementing the policy from January next year.

Pointing out that implementation of New Education Policy may require a lot of structural reforms, he said, "The panel will be divided into several sub-groups to study and analyse the various facets of the new policy."

He said "The Assam government welcomes the new policy, which is a historic step as it will bring about integration of different streams, art, culture and languages, particularly the regional languages."

He also said that the Assam Government is all set to thoroughly peruse the National Education Policy 2020 and modifications, if required, will be discussed at the cabinet.

The minister said the new policy, while putting stress on mother tongue and local language up to primary level would not only address the long pending demand of patronising the local languages but also generate a large number of employment in the educa-

● ASSAM HAS ALSO decided to set up a 40-member committee to suggest measures for implementing the new education policy.

tion sector.

With Assam going to general elections next year, the minister said that schools, colleges will be provincialized from August 15 and it will come into effect from January 1, 2021.

At least nine Higher Secondary, 197 High School and 149 Junior Colleges will be provincialized, the minister said adding that a total of 3,359 posts will be provincialized in these schools.

The minister also reiterated that 241 posts of lecturer will be provincialized in 30 new colleges and the government will provincialize 690 old posts of lecturers.

"The government will also set up high schools in 119 tea gardens and each school will have the expense of ₹1.19 crore. The construction work of all the schools will be started from October 2," he said.

While reiterating about reopening of schools in the state he said that his government was preparing to open schools and colleges from September 1 and all the teachers and fourth grade employees of the government schools will have to undergo compulsory Covid-19 tests.

He, however, clarified that they would follow the guidelines of ministry of home affairs on opening of schools and colleges. The minister said that they would seek the opinion of parents and teachers on Special Operation Procedure being finalised by the state to open the educational institutions in the state.

## Covid-hit Kerala police HQ shut for two days

GILVETER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 1

The Kerala police headquarters here was shut down for two days after three staff members tested positive for Covid-19 even as the state recorded 1,129 new cases on Saturday.

The police headquarters premises will be sanitized thoroughly before resumption of work on Monday. State Police Chief, Lok Nath Behera, has also issued an order exempting police officials above 50 years from Covid prevention/control duties and other field duties, especially in crowded areas.

Those with lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension and chronic ailments will also be exempted from field duties. The decision comes in the wake of the death of a Sub inspector of police on Saturday and the significant increase in numbers of police personnel contracting the infection while on duty.

Several police personnel attached to the armed reserve camps and police stations were detected with Covid-19 recently.

The DGP has directed the district SPs and heads of all wings to strictly enforce Covid-19 safety protocol in their respective departments and adhere to social distancing norms.

Kerala has 10,862 active cases. Meanwhile, 752 persons recovered from the disease.

The active cases in the state have gone up to 10,862 and a total of 13,779 people have recovered from the infection so far. The highest number of cases were reported from Thiruvananthapuram at 259 followed by Kasarogd 153 and Malappuram 141.

Of the new cases, 880 contracted the infection through contact, 80 came from abroad, 114 from other states and the source of infection of 58 persons is not yet known.

As many as 24 health workers also contracted the disease.

## RECORD SINGLE DAY SPIKE IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 1

After an unprecedented increase in positive cases and fatalities in July, Odisha continued to witness an upward trend in the Covid-19 graph with a record single-day spike of 1,602 new cases on Saturday. With this, the Covid-19 tally in the state reached 33,479.

As per the information shared by the state government, maximum 308 cases were reported from Ganjam district followed by Khurda (285), Rayagada (164), Gajapati (108) and Cuttack (54) in the last 24 hours.

Apart from the biggest spike, Odisha's Covid-19 toll reached 187 after 10 more positive patients succumbed to the virus in the last 24 hours.

## Second sero-survey kickstarts in Delhi

New Delhi, Aug. 1: With a steady decline in the number of active Covid-19 cases in Delhi, the containment zones have come down to 496 from 715 following a review, providing relief to thousands of people living in these restricted areas, while a second sero-prevalence survey kick-started on Saturday in the national capital.

The city reported 1,118 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 1,36,716. The active cases stand at 10,596. With 26 fresh fatalities, the death toll stands at 3,989. The recovery rate is over 89 per cent.

While more restrictions are being eased under Unlock 3, a fresh tussle is on between the AAP government and the lieutenant governor, this time on whether hotels and weekly bazaars should be reopened.

A day after L-G Anil Bajjal rejected the AAP government's decision to allow hotels and weekly bazaars to resume business, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking directions to the L-G to reverse his order.

In his letter to Shah, Sisodia said the Delhi government will again send its proposal on reopening of hotels and weekly markets to the lieutenant governor on Tuesday.

Sisodia accused the Centre of adopting a "dual policy" towards Delhi where Covid-19 situation has been "quite under control" in past one month and "is gradually headed to become normal".

"At such a time when hotels and weekly markets are open in the whole country, even in states like UP, Karnataka etc where highest number of cases have been reported hotels, it is beyond comprehension as to what the Centre wishes to achieve by keeping hotels and weekly markets shut in Delhi," he wrote.

"I request you to ask the L-G not to stop the proposal. If traders start their business, jobs will be generated, and that the condition of the

## NEP EMPHASISES ON JOB CREATORS, SAYS MODI

New Delhi, Aug. 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the new education policy announced by the government emphasises on making 'job creators' instead of 'job seekers' and is an attempt to transform the intent and the content of the country's education system.

Addressing the finale of the Smart India Hackathon, he said the National Education Policy-2020 facilitates interdisciplinary study which will ensure that the focus is on what the students want to learn.

"It is not just a policy document but a reflection of the aspirations of over 130 crore people. A large section of students feel they are judged on the basis of subjects in which they have no interest... often there is pressure from friends and families and they start studying a particular subject without interest," Modi said.

"This approach has contributed to a population which is literate but what it has studied is of no use to it... despite having a pile of degrees, individuals feel incomplete and lack confidence which affects their whole life. The new education policy is an attempt to change this approach and bring systematic reforms," the Prime Minister added.

The prime minister said that the new NEP has been framed keeping in mind the aspirations of the youth of 21st century of our country.

"The 21st century is the era of knowledge. This is the time for increased focus on learning, research, innovation. This is exactly what India's National Education Policy, 2020 does. We are focussing on the quality of education in India. Our attempts have been to make our education system the most advance and modern for students of our country."

"The policy is about the spirit which reflects that we are shifting from the burden of the school bag, which does not last beyond school, to the boon of learning which helps for life, from simply memorising to critical thinking. The role of the youth is very important in achieving the goal of 'ease of living' to give a better life to the poor," he said, while addressing students.

-PTI

● DELHI REPORTED 1,118 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to 1,36,716. The active cases stand at 10,596. With 26 fresh fatalities, the death toll stands at 3,989. The recovery rate is over 89 per cent.

● AFTER A TWO-DAY REVIEW, the number of containment zones has been brought down to 496, which affects the movement of 1,06,211 people.

economy will improve," Sisodia, who also holds the finance portfolio, said.

The AAP government has been advocating further easing of restrictions to revive economic activities.

After a two-day review, the number of containment zones has been brought down to 496, which affects the movement of 1,06,211 people, according to Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot.

Earlier, there were 715 containment zones affecting 3,48,099 people, he said.

In a containment zone, all entry and exit points are completely barricaded to prevent any movement of residents. Police are deployed to keep a watch on it, while necessary supplies are provided to people in such zones at their doorstep.

The review to decrease the number of containment zones by Delhi government comes close on the heels of a Health ministry office memorandum earlier this week, allowing all states and Union territories to de-notify a containment zone 14 days after discharge of the last confirmed case which was 28 days earlier, officials said.

"As desired by Honble CM @ArvindKejriwal all the containment zones in Delhi were extensively reviewed in the last 2 days with each District DM and surveillance Team," Gahlot said in a tweet.

In Delhi, a locality is declared a containment zone by district authorities if three or more persons test positive to Covid-19. -PTI



## DECCAN Chronicle

2 AUGUST 2020



Shreevatsa Nevatia

Off the beaten track

## When Covid hits too close to home

I now live in the same house in which I was raised. From the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of a 16-storeyed high-rise, the monuments of Kolkata — Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, Vidyasagar Setu — all seem a stone's throw away. The vista makes the city intimate. When developers started selling the building's 64 flats in the mid-1970s, buyers were, of course, enamoured by the perks of a Central Kolkata lifestyle, but it was the view, I'm told, that took their breath away. Over the years, pigeons have come to make our windowsills their homes, while crows have grown accustomed to sharing some of our breakfast. Until recently, this avian proximity had been nothing but charming, but of late, when I stand by my window at dusk, looking at bats circle our apartment complex, I've started to think they portend greater doom.

Barely a month after the country had gone into lockdown on March 25, we heard our neighbour on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor had passed away. The story of his death was harrowing. As his three children found their father gasping for breath, they tried hard to find him a ventilator. After being denied admission by two hospitals, my neighbour, a garrulous man in his late 60s, died while on his way to the third. His final rites didn't have much of an audience, but a few hours after he had cremated his father's body, my neighbour's son tested positive for Covid-19. As he recovered in hospital, I noticed his sisters were barely turning on their lights anymore. From my bedroom window, I saw them quarantine in the dark.

With their panic sometimes bordering on hysteria, residents of our apartment complex came to fear an infestation. Sudden death is a cause of



From the 13th floor of a 16-storeyed high-rise, the monuments of Kolkata — Victoria Memorial, St Paul's Cathedral, Vidyasagar Setu — all seem a stone's throw away. The vista makes the city intimate.

tragedy, yes, but it is also invariably a whodunnit. Those who had come in contact with the Covid-infected father and son were now doubting their every stray cough, while others busied themselves with the impossible task of trying to deduce how the virus had reached the building in the first place. Once all forms of amateur detective work had failed, one hoped that the municipality would help. Dressed in hazmat suits, they came looking the part, but, sadly, there were no nasal swabs or lengthy interviews. Seeing only our front gate being sealed felt anti-climactic.

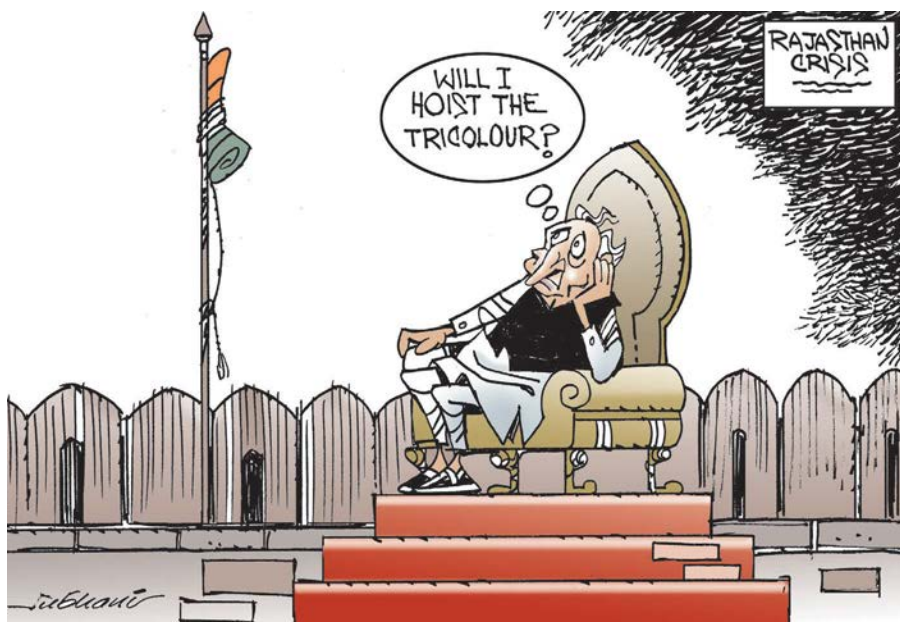
Finding us desperate to 'unlock' with the rest of the city, the constables posted outside our building turned a blind eye when we surreptitiously started using the back gate to visit our friends and barbers. When the Amazon parcels and Swiggy deliveries started coming back in, we felt free. Our prolonged isolation, we'd come to contrarily believe, had given us antibodies we did not have. Then, without warning, it happened again. Having resumed her evening walks at the Victoria Memorial, a middle-aged woman on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor is said to have returned with dengue one day. When tested, we're told, she was Covid-positive, too. Last week, a man with a heart ailment passed away in his second-floor home. Covid-19 had exacerbated his condition as well, and by the next day, his sister and help had also tested positive.

Strangely, these new cases haven't caused much panic. With flats having become their own islands, my neighbours now seem inured to tragedies that unfold next door. The consensus is simple: life, or what's left of it, must go on. Even the municipality this time is letting us be. When I reduce the impact of Covid-19 on my building to numbers — two deaths and three active cases — I feel oddly comforted. I tell myself things haven't gotten out of hand, yet. But I am deeply aware that this numeric reduction doesn't begin to encompass the dread of mortality I think I've seen in the eyes of some I've ridden the elevator with recently. You can reduce death to a number but its imminence is a lot harder to quantify.

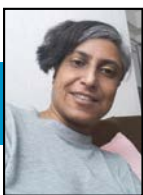
My building has a WhatsApp group that swings into action every time a family finds itself in crisis, or when someone badly wants a special bread. Residents also organise Zoom calls to discuss what action they should take to protect themselves better. I sometimes feel these digital interfaces don't allow for a commiseration that can feel authentic. My neighbours who have died recently deserve better obituaries. Regrettably, however, I only know they'd smile when they'd see you in the elevator. They were large, tall men, who wore their shirts tucked in. I hear they tried their best to provide for their families. I know that when they died, their children were near them. Denied a chance to bid them a proper farewell, I imagine their relatives will find it hard to process their grief. But most importantly perhaps, I'm sure they'd have been happy with the purchase of their flats. The view here is truly great.

*Shreevatsa Nevatia is a Kolkata-based journalist and the author of How to Travel Light: My Memories of Madness and Melancholia*

Subhani



## The Women's Party: An opening manifesto



Sucheta Dasgupta

No More Mansplaining

What are women's issues? Contrary to common-place belief, they are not necessarily LPG subsidies, or women's coaches and CCTVs. But they could be women's freedom of independent movement or mobility, access to schooling, food and birth control, and visibility within the workforce insofar as their identity as workers are concerned instead of being stereotyped as 'housewives plus' so that they, too, can avail what the government holds out to their male cohorts by way of livelihood opportunities. They could also take the form of evaluating the economic value of the service most of them perform in terms of domestic labour and instituting for it a fair remuneration.

Experience shows that our policymakers do not notice these issues. So how about an all-women party to push forward the cause? After all, it's only honourable that women take responsibility for their own well-being, growth, rights and quality of contribution to society.

There are three ways of ensuring equality of opportunity between the sexes — free access, affirmative action and reservation of seats. The case for an all-women party becomes all the more urgent seeing as the women's reservation bill has been hanging fire for 12 years and at the panchayati raj level, where 33 per cent reservation has been implemented, many of the elected are being seen as stooges of their husbands, or worse, more malevolent forms of patriarchy. Clearly, whether equity of outcome or equality of opportunity is the goal, reservations are not the final answer.

Say, we form a women's party. Luck (sortition), and not election experience or 'winnability', will be the criterion for handing out tickets within this women's party (it will perhaps make for grooming of many good leaders and save it from the trap a certain young Delhi-based, and now Delhi-confined, party has fallen into). Turncoats may avail party membership but will be barred from this draw of lots. The left/right nature of electoral politics excludes perspectives and concerns falling outside particular party agendas — these are deliberately kept out for fear of misperception of ideological dilution on the part of the electorate. One advantage of sortition over intra-party elections will be that, not being partisan in the old sense of the word, new members will bring to the table many more of these perspectives and concerns.

Just as a dalit party is not anti-brahmin, and a Dravidian party, outside of domicile issues, does not necessarily militate against north and east Indians, so also a women's party by definition will not be an anti-men party. Men are expected to trust the party enough to vote for it — if they do not it is their loss, but they do have the option of changing their mind after five years. In any case the women's party manifesto, and hopefully a five-year term, will have brought many of the real women's issues into the general policy agenda.

What are these issues? What will the (imaginary) manifesto look like? Take a sneak peak.

■ Identity cards for female farmers. In terms of sheer numbers, women's best productivity is in the field of agricul-

ture. Arguably, they number slightly more than male farmers. Yet only 12.7 per cent of them actually own land and hence miss out on the fruits of all the schemes the government provides for the *kisan bhai*.

■ Reasonable minimum support price for forest produce and forest rights. Women constitute a majority of forest workers. Yet they are being evicted from their places of livelihood in the name of development. A speedy hearing of their lawsuits will also go a long way towards ensuring their right to livelihood.

■ Universal service income to cover cooking, cleaning and chores performed by family members (of any sex) and domestic labourers

■ Gender-neutral laws. This puts paid to fears of a woman's state denying men their rights. If laws are well-implemented, the interests of everyone, including women, will be protected. Women do not need additional safeguards.

■ Law reforms. According to the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, the husband of a married female minor is her guardian, even if minor himself and having a guardian in his father. The same law stipulates that the natural guardian of a Hindu minor is "the father, and after him, the mother". Then again, the Special Marriage Act provides sanction to disinherit from ancestral wealth any Hindu who resorts to a civil marriage, which is an option available to those who wish to marry outside the community (without con-

**How about an all-women party to push forward the cause? After all, it's only honourable that women take responsibility for their own well-being, growth, rights and quality of contribution to society.**

verting the spouse). The list goes on.

■ Bar on the face veil. In the name of so-called multiculturalism/diversity, women cannot be denied identity, rights and agency.

■ A special law against honour killings because it holds back society in deeply normative ways

■ Abolition of the women and child ministry. Because it is not as if women are a real minority and for democracy's sake, men who run the government needs must deign to accept the consensus developed within this group regarding various issues pertaining to their interests and cause. It is women and men who together created the social contract and together they must reform or refine it.

■ Educating the mother. Mothers are the honorary patriarchs of the family. It is they who perpetuate patriarchy, by not letting daughters travel independently and expecting daughters-in-law to do the housework. While it is time for feminists to reclaim the roles of the *behenji* and the 'aunty', it is moms who must face social pressure, not only to teach their sons to cook and 'respect women' but to teach them by example.

■ Inclusion of women in RWAs and local recreation clubs. This will lead to more sporting and artistic pursuits and possibly pave the way for the end of the institution called arranged (forced, or coerced) marriage.

There is already a women's party in existence; it's called the Women Empowerment Party. But it does not have this manifesto and it has male members. It also does not contest the general election.

There is also the newly launched National Women's Party that has among its goals women's safety and 50 per cent reservation of seats for women in parliament. Women's safety is frankly not a priority for this party. Because freedom is.

Would you vote for the new women's party?

## LETTERS

### SPOILER

Supplying cash at the doorsteps of pensioners on 1st of every month is bad economy. Free money destroys the will to work. It is a vote generating exercise while several persons in this category are earning in private offices. If at all the government wants to help poor, it must be routed through banks. A survey must be conducted for most eligible. The state is not helping middle class senior citizens.

Kantichand Rampuria Jain  
Srikalahasti

### THREE CAPITALS

The three capitals issue has finally got the nod subject, however, to the legal tangles to be fought in the courts as the aggrieved stakeholders in the CRDA are bound to continue with battle. The concept is new but there is no harm in trying it out as the same promises development of all the three regions in AP. The establishment of the High Court in Kurnool was a historical necessity. Shifting the Secretariat to Visakhapatnam has come as a new measure and is welcome.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

The issue has been up in the air for a long time. Now, the die is cast with the approval of the Governor. It will pave the way for the developmental work of the state. It would also generate employment and infrastructure for AP.

Dr C. Ghanshyam  
Visakhapatnam

### 5-STAR LEGISLATORS

Our vibrant democracy of 137 crore people is thriving in 5-star hotels. Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot and his flock will stay put till August 14 at Jaisalmer to stop horse trading. Last fortnight they led a captive fortnight at Fairmont Hotel, Jaipur. The 18-member Congress team led by Pilot is having a gala time in Haryana hotels. Now, Bihar Assembly is scheduled to be held for four days in a star hotel at Patna (August 1). Political leaders seem to have no role in Covid-19 control.

Parthasarathy Mandadi  
Tirupati

Email your letters to [info@deccanmail.com](mailto:info@deccanmail.com), [editor@deccanmail.com](mailto:editor@deccanmail.com). You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

### Assam flood toll now 21

SHILLONG, August 1 The death toll in Brahmaputra floods rose to 21 today as the river and its tributaries were again hitting riverine areas of five of the six districts in Assam plains, official reports said.

A boy and three girls were the victims of a latest drowning tragedy reported from sub-

merged Soala Uchi village of northern Kamrup.

PTI reports from Kathmandu: The death toll in the current floods and landslides in Nepal might cross the 500 mark. While incomplete official estimates put the toll at about 300, reports from other sources said about 250 persons died in Chitwan district alone, south-east of here. Road communications between India and Gangtok were totally cut off last night following landslides.

## J&K statehood: Will it be announced from Red Fort on Aug. 15?

### I-Day buzz

What might be the singular big announcement in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech from the ramparts of Red Fort in New Delhi? With the Ram Temple inauguration done many speculate that it may have something to do with Jammu and Kashmir, where the resumption of the democratic process has been long overdue. However, there is a catch. Post the abolition of Article 370, the state was bifurcated and reduced to two Union territories. It is not just the Abdullahs but many political players from Jammu region are also less than enthusiastic about Jammu and Kashmir's UT status. The big question doing the rounds is whether Mr Modi and his deputy, home minister Amit Shah, will think out of the box and do course correction?

### Churning in Congress

There is renewed disquiet in the Congress party over Sonia Gandhi's stepping down as party chief and Rahul Gandhi taking over the mantle of leadership. The absurd replay of son taking over from mother is not bizarre enough. There is an intense tussle between those considered loyal to Sonia and the members of team Rahul. Thus if the edifice of Sonia's preeminence is to end, it requires a dismantling. In this context, the Congress' internal tussle for supremacy may yet produce some jarring notes.

### MPhil envy theory

What is it about the Masters of Philosophy degree (MPhil) that it has been dropped in the draft New Education Policy? The MPhil was introduced as a programme to train research students for more serious and rigorous postgraduate work.



By WAQYANAWIS

The MPhil was considered important because many doctorate (PhD) scholars were found wanting in research skills. A

political explanation might be that two young Gandhis — Rahul and Varun — are MPhil holders, both in developmental economics from Cambridge University and the London School of Economics, respectively.

### Veteran in a spot

Janardan Dwivedi must be ruing the moment he decided to attend a meeting in memory of the late Sheila Dikshit, held by the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee. A motley gathering, after paying lavish tribute to the former Delhi chief minister, turned its attention to the Congress crisis in Rajasthan and the leadership issue. The former AICC general secretary was caught in the middle when someone asked Dwivedi to raise a banner of revolt from within the party. With his son already in the BJP, Dwivedi, who once took pride in being Sonia Gandhi's Hindi speechwriter, decided to flee instead of getting bogged down by the

rebellious deliberations.

### The other Shah

The appointment of Hardik Satishchandra Shah in the Prime Minister's Office has taken many by surprise. Shah was promoted to the IAS in 2010 and is now Prime Minister Narendra Modi's private secretary. His rise has been spectacular. After doing his MTech, Shah was drafted into Gujarat's environment and forest department sometime in 2004. A fellowship abroad was followed by an appointment as member secretary in the Gujarat environment board. Shah arrived in Delhi soon after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister and was working closely with successive environment ministers.

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



## IN BRIEF

**Hurricane Isaias lashes Bahamas**

**San Juan:** Hurricane Isaias ripped shingles off roofs and blew over trees as it carved its way through the Bahamas early on Saturday and headed toward the Florida coast, where officials in Miami said they were closing beaches, marinas and parks. Miami Mayor Carlos Giménez said on Friday that 20 evacuation centers were on standby that could be set up with Covid-19 safety measures. "We still don't think there is a need to open shelters for this storm, but they are ready," he said. Authorities in North Carolina ordered the evacuation of Ocracoke Island, which was slammed by last year's Hurricane Dorian, starting Saturday evening.

**Afghanistan flood leaves 16 dead**

**Kabul:** Flash flooding in eastern Afghanistan killed at least 16 people after heavy rains swept parts of a mountainous area, an Afghan official said on Saturday. Heavy floods hit the Khewa district, said Attaullah Khogyan, spokesman for the governor of Nangarhar province. He added that four others were wounded in the incident. The majority of the victims are children, said Khogyan. He added that a team has been sent to the area to help with emergency services following the foul weather. The flash floods damaged dozens of homes, the spokesman added. Summer often brings heavy rainfalls in eastern Afghanistan.

**UAE starts up first Arab reactor**

**Dubai:** A nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates successfully started up its first reactor, authorities said on Saturday. The Barakah nuclear power plant in the Emirates' far western desert near the border with Saudi Arabia reached what scientists called its "first criticality" on Friday. That's when the nuclear chain reaction within the reactor is self-sustaining. The nuclear reactor ultimately will generate electricity and be connected to the country's power grid. The \$20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant was built by the Emirates with the help of South Korea. It's the first nuclear power plant on the Arabian Peninsula.

**Indian dancer bags UK PM's award**

**London:** An Indian-origin dancer who transformed his dance classes into free Bhangra sessions online to help people stay fit during the Coronavirus lockdown has bagged a Points of Light honour from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Rajeev Gupta, who believes bhangra offers an "upbeat, energetic and infectious" way of exercising, began the lockdown with a mission to stay active and positive through the traditional Indian dance form and went on to share that spirit through social media live streams. Last month, it resulted in earning him the honour of being a Point of Light, an honour conferred every weekday by the UK prime minister to outstanding volunteers and people making a change in their community.

**US ASTRONAUTS PACK UP FOR RARE SPLASHDOWN**

**Cape Canaveral, Fla, Aug, 1:** Two US astronauts about to make the first splashdown return in 45 years said on Friday they'll have seascak bags ready to use if needed. SpaceX and NASA plan to bring Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken back Sunday afternoon in the company's Dragon capsule, aiming for the Gulf of Mexico just off the Florida Panhandle. Flight controllers are keeping close watch on Hurricane Isaias, expected to stick to Florida's east coast. Hurley said if he and Behnken get sick while bobbing in the waves awaiting recovery, it won't be the first time for a crew. Astronauts returning in the early 1970s from Skylab, NASA's first space station, did not feel well following splashdown. Hurley noted. Feeling sick "is the way it is with a water landing," he said during the crew's final news conference from the International Space Station. This will be SpaceX's first splashdown with astronauts on board.

**Protest for justice**

Black Lives Matter protesters rally at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse on Saturday, in Portland, Ore. Following an agreement between Democratic Gov. Kate Brown and the Trump administration to reduce federal officers in the city, nightly protests remained largely peaceful without major confrontations between demonstrators and officers.

— AP

**China ready to push close ties with Nepal**

**Xi says both countries have written new chapter of friendship**

**Beijing, Aug. 1:** Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday said he wants to push for a continued advancement of ties with Nepal amidst Beijing's sustained forays to shore up pro-China Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli's grip on power in the backdrop of intra-party feud in the ruling communist party. In an exchange of congratulatory messages with his Nepalese counterpart Bidhya Devi Bhandari on the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Xi asserted that he was ready to work to bring greater benefits to the two peoples of the two neighbouring countries. The Chinese President said that he attaches great

importance to the development of China-Nepal relations and is willing to work with his Nepali counterpart Bhandari to push for the continued advancement of the bilateral relationship. Xi, also General Secretary of the ruling Communist Party of China, said that since the establishment of the diplomatic ties, the two countries have always respected each other, treated each other as equals, enhanced political mutual trust and deepened mutually beneficial cooperation. Xi said the two sides have stood together through thick and thin in the fight against the Covid-19 and have written a new chapter of friendship between China and Nepal. — PTI

**Trump says will ban TikTok app from US**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** President Trump said on late Friday he plans to ban Chinese-owned TikTok from operating in the United States, the latest sign of the administration's increasingly strident stance on China and its tech companies. "As far as TikTok is concerned, we're banning them from the United States," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. Earlier on Friday, Trump was considering signing an order forcing China's

ByteDance to sell off the US portion of TikTok over national security concerns, according to people familiar with the talks, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss them publicly. One of the individuals confirmed Microsoft was in the lead to acquire the popular platform's US service. Trump said he could use emergency economic powers or an executive order to ban TikTok. — AFP

**3 CHARGED IN TWITTER HACK, BITCOIN SCAM**

**Miami, Aug. 1:** A British man, a Florida man and a Florida teen hacked the Twitter accounts of prominent politicians, celebrities and technology moguls to scam people around globe out of more than \$100,000 in Bitcoin, authorities said Friday. Graham Ivan Clark, 17, was arrested on Friday in Tampa, where the Hillsborough State Attorney's Office will prosecute him as adult. He faces 30 felony charges, according to a news release. Mason Sheppard, 19, of Bognor Regis, UK, and Nima Fazeli, 22, of Orlando, were charged in the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk to protest the arrest of the regional governor, continuing a three-week wave of opposition that has challenged the Kremlin. Khabarovsk Krai Gov. Sergei Furgal has been in a Moscow jail since his July 9 arrest on charges of involvement in murders that occurred before his political career started. He has denied the



Police block protesters during a rally supporting Khabarovsk regions governor Sergei Furgal in St. Petersburg, Russia, on Saturday.

— AP

**Russians protest the arrest of Gov.**

**Moscow, Aug. 1:** Thousands of demonstrators rallied on Saturday in the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk to protest the arrest of the regional governor, continuing a three-week wave of opposition that has challenged the Kremlin. Khabarovsk Krai Gov. Sergei Furgal has been in a Moscow jail since his July 9 arrest on charges of involvement in murders that occurred before his political career started. He has denied the

charges. Protesters in Khabarovsk see the charges against Furgal as unsubstantiated and are demanding that his trial take place in his home city, 6,100 kilometers (3,800 miles) east of the Russian capital. His supporters have held daily protests, with the largest turnouts on weekends. The latest demonstration attracted about 10,000 people, according to some news reports. — AP

## INTERNET | SENSATION

**The couple began modelling from clothes left behind in their laundrette**

**Taiwan grandparents become Insta stars**

**Taichung, Aug. 1:** Taiwan's trendiest couple these days are neither young celebrities nor teen influencers — they are an octogenarian duo who run a mom-and-pop laundry service and have become an online sensation by modelling abandoned clothes. Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-er, 84, have racked up nearly 6,00,000 followers on Instagram over the last month as their attitude-filled fashion portraits went viral. They have even been featured in the Taiwanese edition of Vogue and Marie Claire. The couple have run a

laundry for decades in a small town near the central city of Taichung. Over the years, customers have either forgotten or failed to collect reams of clothing that the couple never felt able to throw away. Grandson Reef Chang, 31, hit upon the idea of using the clothes to allevi-

ate the couple's boredom. "My grandpa and grandma were staring blankly at the streets because business wasn't good," he said. "I wanted to find something new they could enjoy doing." The pair were naturals in front of the camera. "Modelling these clothes makes me feel 30 years younger," beamed Chang. "Many people are telling me 'You are famous now and you look younger'." Hsu felt so, too. "I am old in age but my heart is not ageing," she said. "I like to put on pretty clothes and go out to have some fun." It was while modelling

other people's garments, Hsu came to remember that she also had many forgotten outfits in her closet which she has since rediscovered. "I even found some clothes I bought 30 years ago and I can still wear them. It's a happy surprise," she said. The couple's Instagram account — @wantshow-asyoung — is managed by grandson Reef. Chang currently only uses the Line messaging app to make free phone calls but Reef says his grandfather is keen to learn how to make the perfect Instagram post. — AFP

**Biden eyes major foreign policy change if he wins**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** Should former Vice President Joe Biden win the White House in November, America will likely be in for a foreign policy about-face as Biden reverses, dismantles or severely curtails many, if not all, of President Donald Trump's most significant actions.

From the Middle East to Asia, Latin America to Africa and, particularly, Europe, and on issues including trade, terrorism, arms control and immigration, the presumptive Democratic nominee and his advisers have vowed to unleash a tsunami of change in how the US handles itself in the international arena. With few exceptions, Americans could expect Biden to re-engage with traditional allies. Where the iconoclastic Trump has used blunt threats and insults to press his case, Biden, a former senator, would be more inclined to seek common ground. Historically, US foreign policy hasn't changed drastically as the presidency shifted between Democratic and Republican administrations. Allies and adversaries stayed the same and a non-partisan diplomatic corps pursued American

**Foreign threats loom ahead of Prez polls**

**New York, Aug. 1:** As the November 3 presidential vote nears, there are fresh signs that the nation's electoral system is again under attack from foreign adversaries. Intelligence officials confirmed in recent days that foreign actors are actively seeking to compromise the private communications of "US political campaigns, candidates and other political targets" while working to compromise the nation's election infrastructure. Foreign entities are also aggressively spreading disinformation intended to sow voter confusion

heading into the fall. There is no evidence that America's enemies have yet succeeded in penetrating campaigns or state election systems, but Democrat Joe Biden's presidential campaign confirmed this week that it has faced multiple related threats. The former vice president's team was reluctant to reveal specifics for fear of giving adversaries useful intelligence. Because of such secrecy, at least in part, foreign interference largely remains an afterthought in the 2020 contest. — AP

**Don, GOP soften on opposition to \$600 unemployment benefit**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** With political pressure rising, talks on a huge coronavirus relief measure resumed on Saturday, focused on restoring a newly expired \$600-per-week supplemental unemployment benefit, a fresh \$1,200 direct payment to most Americans, and hundreds of billions of dollars in other aid to states, businesses, and the poor. President Donald Trump is eager for an agreement but talks so far have not yielded progress. The administration is willing



Donald Trump

to extend the \$600 jobless benefit, at least in the short term, but is balking at other demands of Dem-

ocratic negotiators like aid for state and local governments, food stamp increases, and assistance to renters and homeowners. Unemployment insurance is a principal element as the Covid-19 relief bill is expected to grow considerably from a \$1 trillion-plus GOP draft released this week. The \$600 per week jobless benefit officially lapsed on Friday and Democrats have made it clear that they will not extend it without securing other relief priorities. — AP

**US may use China, Russia vaccine as virus cases rise**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** America's top infectious diseases official has raised concerns over the safety of Covid-19 vaccines being developed by China and Russia as the world scrambles for answers to a pandemic the WHO warned will be felt for decades.

Six months after the World Health Organisation declared a global emergency, the novel coronavirus has killed at least 6,79,000 people and infected at least 17.9 million, according to an AFP tally. As countries across Western Europe announced new lockdowns and reported historic economic slumps, the UN health body said the pandemic was a "once-in-a-century" crisis and its fallout would be felt for decades. Several Chinese companies are at the forefront of the race to develop an immunity to the disease and Russia has set a target date of September to roll out its own vaccine. But US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said it was unlikely his country

● **AS COUNTRIES** across Western Europe announced new lockdowns and reported historic economic slumps, the UN health body said the pandemic was a "once-in-a-century" crisis and its fallout would be felt for decades.

would use any vaccine developed in either country, where regulatory systems are far more opaque than they are in the West. "I do hope that the Chinese and the Russians are actually testing the vaccine before they are administering the vaccine to anyone," he told a US Congressional hearing on Friday. "Claims of having a vaccine ready to distribute before you do testing, I think, is problematic, at best."

As part of its own "Operation Warp Speed," the US government will pay pharma giants Sanofi and GSK up to \$2.1 billion for the development of a Covid-19 vaccine, the companies said. — AFP

**MEXICO NOW AT NO. 3 IN WORLD FOR VIRUS DEATHS**

**Mexico City, Aug. 1:** Mexico has become the country with the third most Covid-19 deaths in the world, behind the United States and Brazil. Mexican health officials said on Friday there were 688 deaths for the latest 24-hour reporting period, pushing the country's total to 46,688. That put Mexico just ahead of the UK, which has 46,119, according to the tally by Johns Hopkins University. The health officials also said Mexico now has had more than 4.24 million confirmed Coronavirus cases during the pandemic. Also on Friday, nine state governors from opposition parties criticized what they call the federal government's "confusing messages" on measures to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. — AP



Kayleigh McEnany

**US CONDEMNS HK DECISION TO POSTPONE POLLS**

**Washington, Aug. 1:** The US on Friday condemned the Hong Kong government's decision to postpone its legislative council elections by one year in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, saying the move undermines democratic processes. The government invoked an emergency ordinance to delay the polls. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the government will hold the polls in September 2021. "We condemn the Hong Kong government's decision to postpone by one year its legislative council elections and to disqualify opposition candidates," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters at a news conference here. "This action undermines the democratic processes and freedoms that have underpinned Hong Kong's prosperity. And this is only the most recent in a growing list of broken promises by Beijing which promised autonomy and freedoms to the people of Hong Kong until 2047 in the Sino-British Joint Declaration," she said, responding to a question on the Chinese government-backed administration's decision to delay elections. — PTI

● **HONG KONG** leader Carrie Lam said the government will hold the polls in September 2021.



Chang Wan-ji, 83, and his wife Hsu Sho-e seen posing for a picture with their outfits.

— Credits: Instagram



## SHORT TAKES

## Botham member of House of Lords

**London:** Legendary England all-rounder Ian Botham has been made a member of the House of Lords of the British Parliament.

The 64-year-old Botham, a former captain, was among 36 new peers announced by the government to join the unelected House.

Botham, who played 102 Test matches for England between 1977 and 1992, is a prominent Brexit supporter. He was knighted in 2007 in recognition of his services to charity and cricket. He will sit as a crossbench — independent — peer. He is the first cricketer to be awarded a peerage since former England women's team captain Rachael Heyhoe-Flint in 2011. David Sheppard, Colin Cowdrey and Learie Constantine were the others who were honoured with House of Lords seats earlier.

Botham's most famous moment on the cricket field came in 1981 when he inspired England to a sensational win over Australia in the Ashes.

— PTI

## TNPL postponed for second time

**Chennai:** The fifth edition of the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL) has been postponed for the second time due to the COVID-19 pandemic with TNCA now hoping to host the T20 event either in November this year or March next year. The popular T20 league tournament, which was initially scheduled to run from June 10 to July 12, was put off by the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association in May.

The TNCA was looking to conduct the event between July-end and September but will not be in a position to host.

"The TNCA was looking at a window between end July/August to end September as a possible window for playing the 5th edition of the TNPL tournament. However, due to the ongoing Covid related issue in the State of Tamil Nadu, TNCA will not be in a position to host the tournament in this window," TNCA Honorary Secretary R S Ramasaamy said in a press release. — PTI

## Golfer Stanley in lead at PGA event

**Los Angeles:** American Kyle Stanley eagled the par-five 12th hole as he grabbed the lead after the second round of the PGA Tour's Barracuda Championship.

Stanley leads the field with 22 points in the event in Truckee, California which uses a modified Stableford scoring format.

Players receive eight points for albatross, five for eagle, two for birdie, zero for par, minus-one for bogey and minus-three for double bogey or worse.

Robert Streb, Austria's Matthias Schwab and South Africa's Branden Grace are tied for second with 20 points each at the Tahoe Mountain golf club.

Maverick McNealy and Troy Merritt share fifth place at plus-19.

First round co-leader Adam Schenk, Peter Uihlein, Argentina's Emiliano Grillo, Australia's Cameron Percy and Russell Knox are tied for seventh at plus-18. — AFP

## RELIEF FOR BOSTON RUN BOMBER

**Boston:** A federal appeals court Friday threw out Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's death sentence in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, saying the judge who oversaw the case did not adequately screen jurors for potential biases.

A three-judge panel of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered a new penalty-phase trial on whether the 27-year-old Tsarnaev should be executed for the attack that killed three people and wounded more than 260 others. "But make no mistake: Dzhokhar will spend his remaining days locked up in prison, with the only matter remaining being whether he will die by execution," Judge O. Rogerie Thompson wrote in the ruling, more than six months after arguments were heard in the case. — AP

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## PSG on French high

## Paris side claim another domestic treble

**Paris, August 1:** Pablo Sarabia scored the winning penalty in a shoot-out as Paris Saint-Germain warmed up for their assault on the Champions League in Lisbon by defeating Lyon in Friday's French League Cup final to claim another domestic treble.

The Spaniard's successful kick came after Keylor Navas saved from Bertrand Traore and allowed PSG to win 6-5 on penalties after the game at the Stade de France finished 0-0 at the end of extra time.

The victory comes a week after they beat Saint-Etienne 1-0 in the French Cup final, the first competitive match on French soil since the Coronavirus shutdown.

They had previously been awarded the Ligue 1 title by virtue of being top when the season was ended in April with 10 rounds of matches unplayed because of the health crisis.

Before penalties, Thomas Tuchel's team had the better of a terse final on a sweaty night, but they badly missed the injured Kylian Mbappe.

The masked France superstar watched from the stands as Lyon kept PSG at bay for two hours before having Brazilian defender Rafael sent off for chopping down Angel Di Maria on the edge of the box late in extra time. Mbappe was injured in last week's French Cup final, suffering a sprained ankle that looks likely to rule him out of the Champions League quarterfinal against Atalanta in Lisbon on August 12.

PSG are desperate for tangible success in Europe but on this evidence they still have some rust to shake off before being ready for that test.

"We suffered but it's beautiful to win at the end. We will celebrate this and then tomorrow we will start to think about another big match," the excellent Marco Verratti told *France 2* television.



PSG players celebrate after defeating Lyon 6-5 on penalties, after their final ended in a stalemate at the end of extra time, to win French League Cup at Stade de France stadium, in Saint Denis, north of Paris, on Friday. — AP



PSG's Neymar (from left), Kylian Mbappe and Marco Verratti celebrate on the podium after winning the French League Cup in Saint Denis on Friday.

This is the Qatar-owned club's fourth treble in the last six years, but the League Cup, an unloved competition, will be discontinued next season.

It was the Parisian contingent who were celebrating at the end, as their team lifted the trophy for

the ninth time in total, denying Lyon a first trophy since 2012.

Both of these teams must fear being at a disadvantage in the latter stages of the Champions League though after France opted against restarting its league sea-

son, unlike the other major European leagues.

As a consequence, the two cup finals are the only competitive match practice PSG will have managed in five months before facing Atalanta. Meanwhile, this was Lyon's one and only competitive game since early March before they make a daunting trip to Turin to play Juventus in their Champions League last 16 second leg next Friday.

At least they have a 1-0 lead to defend, but they will still need to do better than they fared here.

PSG created almost all the notable chances, despite Mauro Icardi looking sluggish up front. Neymar looked sharper, fresh from scoring the

winner in the French Cup final.

He had the first chance of the game when he drilled a first-time shot just wide from a Thiago Silva lay-off in the eighth minute, and he also saw a header tipped over by Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes late in normal time before going on to coolly net in the shoot-out.

In between, Lopes also made a spectacular save to turn an Idrissa Gueye piledriver over late in the first half.

Verratti's performance in midfield was a major positive for Tuchel.

Here, left-back Layvin Kurzawa was needed on the right but hobbled off hurt midway through the second half. — AFP

● **Paris Saint-Germain have won the French league, French Cup and French League Cup this season, claiming their fourth treble in last six years.**

## BRITISH GRAND PRIX

## Lewis smashes record for pole

**Silverstone, August 1:** Lewis Hamilton smashed the track record twice on Saturday to grab a record seventh British Grand Prix pole position with a stunning performance in a tense qualifying session.

Hamilton, who on Sunday seeks a record-increasing seventh Silverstone victory, finished ahead of his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas by more than three-tenths of a second after the Finn had been fastest in final practice and then again in both Q2 and Q3 when he also set lap records.

The defending six-time champion and current series leader bounced back from a ragged performance, including a spin, in the first parts of qualifying to claim his 65th pole with Mercedes and the record-increasing 91st of his career.

It was also a record eighth successive Mercedes pole success in Britain on a day when they were clear of their nearest rivals Red Bull by a full second, Max Verstappen taking third place on the grid ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Rising British star Lando Norris, 20, was fifth for McLaren ahead of Lance Stroll in Racing Point's 'pink Mercedes', Carlos Sainz in the second

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McLaren, Daniel Ricciardo and his Renault team-mate Esteban Ocon and Sebastian Vettel, who was 10th for Ferrari.

"This track is awesome! But it is tough out there - with the winds, it is like juggling balls on a moving plate," said a delighted Hamilton.

"I had a spin and as you know qualifying is all about confidence and I was struggling in the first sectors of every lap, but I took some deep breaths, composed myself and in Q3 I had a clear lap and the second one was even better!" the reigning champion added.

He added that it was strange to drive without any fans in the circuit. "Usually, it's all sirens, flags and smoke and the atmosphere is buzzing — you get out of the car and have a different energy so I miss them, but I hope everyone is safe and happy at home," the Brit added.

Earlier, Bottas posted the fastest time in third and final practice ahead of Hamilton and Verstappen. — AFP

## Giannis powers Bucks to victory

**Los Angeles, August 1:** Giannis Antetokounmpo shook off the rust of a long layoff by scoring 36 points to power the Milwaukee Bucks to a 119-112 victory over the Boston Celtics in their first game of the NBA's restarted season.

Milwaukee, who are trying to win their first NBA title since 1971, boasted the best record at 53-12 when the league was shut down in mid-March due to the global pandemic.

"We just got the stops. We tried to play hard, make the right play and hit open guy," said Antetokounmpo after starring in the team's first game post the Pandemic.

In the late game, James Harden scored 49 points and the Houston Rockets outgunned the Dallas Mavericks 153-149 in a high-scoring Western Conference contest that went into overtime. The Bucks trailed by two points at the half, then built a big lead and held on in the fourth quarter to beat the Celtics in the battle between the two Eastern Conference powerhouses.

The 25-year-old Antetokounmpo also had 15 rebounds, seven assists and five fouls. He almost fouled out with 88 seconds to go but after a video review the officials overturned a sixth foul call, allowing him to stay in the game and lead the Bucks to victory.

Khris Middleton scored 18 points and added eight assists, while Brook Lopez

● **Giannis Antetokounmpo's 36 points helped Milwaukee Bucks go past Boston Celtics 119-112 in their NBA game.**

● **Before the league was shutdown due to the Pandemic, the Bucks boasted a record of 53-12.**

tallied 14 points and made six blocks for the Bucks, who came into the game holding a 6 1/2 game lead over second place Toronto.

Both teams did a good job of acclimating themselves to their new surroundings, which includes playing without fans at the Disney World complex that is acting as the "bubble" venue for the 22 teams taking part in the restart.

**HARDEN SHINES AS ROCKETS TRIUMPH**

In the late game, Harden scored 23 of his game high 49 points in the first quarter and Russell Westbrook chipped in 31 points for Houston after arriving late to Orlando because he tested positive for the coronavirus.

"It was tough to be home for 18, 19 days no working out," said Westbrook.

Kristaps Porzingis had 39 points and 16 rebounds for Dallas, and Luka Doncic had a triple-double with 28 points 13 rebounds and 10 assists.

— AFP

## Stage set for IPL GC meet

**New Delhi, August 1:** The IPL governing council will be updated on the status of necessary government approvals for hosting the T20 league in the UAE when the members meet on Sunday apart from deliberating a foolproof SOP on health safety along with a discussion on the Chinese sponsorships.

While the BCCI is all set to shift the league to the United Arab Emirates, it is learnt that status of government's clearance is top-most in the 10-point agenda of the Brijesh Patel-led governing council.

It is expected that president Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay

Shah, both of whose "cooling off waiver" case is in Supreme Court will be attending the meeting as permanent invitees along with treasurer Arun Dhimal and joint secretary Jayesh George.

"We have a meeting tomorrow (Sunday) but everyone is awaiting the clearances from the Home Ministry as well as the External Affairs Ministry for the tournament to be shifted to the UAE," a senior BCCI official abreast with GC developments said.

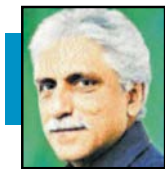
It is learnt that the fate of VIVO, the Chinese mobile company which pays ₹440 crore for title sponsorship will also come up for discussion. — PTI

## What a delivery!



Indian allrounder Hardik Pandya holds his newborn son in this photo uploaded on Saturday after his fiancée Natasa Stankovic delivered a baby boy on July 30.

## Windies tour of England heralds new era in cricket



**Ayaz Memon**  
**Over The Top**

The Test series between England and West Indies has given international cricket a filip. There were several trepidations about resumption of matches in the time of Covid-19. But barring Joffra Archer's foolhardiness in breaking the bio-secure bubble, which cost him a place in the second Test, everything else went near-perfectly.

The matches were engaging, and till the West Indies faded away dramatically in the third Test, closely fought. In fact,

England had to dig deep to overcome the stiff challenge posed by Jason Holder and his team. After winning the first Test and losing the second narrowly, the West Indies sadly lost focus and resolve.

That, of course, is one side of the picture. The flip side bespeaks England's deep ambition to come from one Test down to clinch the series. This is never easy against any side, more shwn playing at home when everybody expects you to win. The pressure this creates can cause loss of morale and

panic within the team.

England benefited primarily from the fantastic exploits of two players: Ben Stokes and Stuart Broad. The former is unrugably the world's best player currently and his all-round performances in this series enhanced his stature further. If he is not already there, Stokes is surely on the cusp of all-time greatness.

However, Broad's performances were the more compelling in my opinion, in the context of the series, as well as his own career. In the second and third Tests — which England won — he put in fiery spells that changed the trend of the match, and also had a lusty half century in the last Test that completely demoralised the West Indies.

Broad's prowess in

English conditions is well known. His ability to swing the ball both ways, and the height from which he delivers the ball put batsmen to severe hardships. His 500 Test wickets, even without big success in the sub-continent is testimony to his ability.

His partnership with Jimmy Anderson, with almost 1100 wickets between them, puts them among the great fast bowling pairs in the history of the game. Importantly, from the 2019 Ashes series Broad has been the highest wicket-taker in Tests, reiterating that he is riding a marvellous second wind.

I've dwelt on Broad at length as the circumstances this time were different, which is what makes his performances even more fantastic. He was dropped from the first

Test. That is never a good signal. Smarting from this decision, Broad proved the selectors wrong in the most dramatic way possible.

Assessing careers of even established players in the mid-30s, is always a dilemma for selectors, subject of unending debate in the media and cricketing fraternity. This usually leaves the player concerned on tenterhooks and vulnerable. The only way out of this, as Broad showed, is by winning matches.

Beyond individual performances, the series was hugely significant on two counts. One, it provided a template on how international cricket will be played as long as the Covid threat lasts. Two, it showed that not having spectator at the ground is

not the serious impediment, as was feared, to intensity of performance.

Apart from Archer's recklessness mentioned earlier, the series was incident free. Players were tested regularly for Covid, as prescribed by the ICC protocol, and errors by players in using saliva on the ball (banned for now), or celebrating without maintaining social distancing, were very few.

This is encouraging. It shows players are seized of the situation and are willing to change time-held habits when needed. More importantly, the quality of cricket that was played allayed concerns whether players would be as pumped up without spectators in the stands. How this unravels in the medium-to-long-term is to be seen, but for the present

players look happy to be back on the field.

The major concern that remains is of cost. Creating a bio-secure bubble is not cheap. On flights to get the West Indies players to England, close to half a million pounds was spent.

The number of players needed for a series also goes up to provide for Covid setbacks (substitutions are allowed), which adds to the expenses, not to mention maintaining the bio-secure bubble with medical experts et al.

While cricket boards of countries like England, India and Australia (though not if their current dire financial state continues) can afford these expenses, other boards can't. This could create an undesirable class system which can't help the sport.