

KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 9 AUGUST 2020

SPORTS | 8

Indian spinner Yuzi is engaged

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IN BRIEF

Aspiring singer arrested for fraud

Hyderabad: A 22-year-old man, an aspiring singer, was arrested for allegedly creating fake profiles in social media platforms in the name of a popular Telugu female playback singer. He claimed that he was her manager/co-singer and tried to trap her fans and admirers with false information, police said. Based on a complaint filed by the woman singer, a case was registered and the accused was arrested on Friday, the Cyberabad police said.

ZOO TO CELEBRATE WORLD LION DAY TOMORROW

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

With a view to creating more awareness and educating people on supporting and protecting the lions, the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad will celebrate World Lion Day on August 10.

On the occasion, the zoo that currently houses 19 lions, 11 Asiatic and 8 African, will conduct an online drawing and painting competition on the topic 'Life of Lion' for students of nursery to fifth standard and a creative story writing competition topic 'The Lion' for students of sixth to 12th standards in English or Telugu language, not more than 500 words. Those interested can log on to the zoo website www.nehruzoopark.in and submit the drawings, paintings and stories at awarnesnehruzoopark@gmail.com.

Entries will close on August 10. Winners will be awarded e-certificates and prizes from Nehru Zoological Park.

For further updates, students can check the official Twitter handle of the Zoological Park @nehruzoopark1 or contact on 9885257246, 9390744053.

● **THOSE INTERESTED** can log on to the zoo website www.nehruzoopark.in and submit the drawings, paintings and stories.

Avoidable ride

Motorists take a detour as the newly constructed road has been barricaded before its opening but without sign-board of road closed. Once opened, people can directly access Raidurg from Hitech City. — R. PAVAN

ONE ARRESTED WITH OPIUM WORTH ₹1.2L

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The Bowenpally police arrested a 40-year-old man, Hanuman Ram, and seized 300 gm of opium worth ₹1.2 lakh from him. He was arrested at the Old Bowenpally checkpoint while travelling in a car, which was also seized. Another person associated with transporting the opium, Pappuram, 35, is at large.

Ram came to Hyderabad about 10 years ago from Rajasthan and began a business of selling tiles by opening two shops, one in Suraram village and another at Ameenpur. After the Coronavirus lockdown, he faced losses. He met Pappuram, also from Rajasthan, who encouraged Ram to sell opium illegally in Hyderabad.

Covid +ve patients ostracised**Colony residents force virus infected kin of Gopal to vacate the house**

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to much fear and paranoia among the general populace, as evident from many confrontations and intimidation of infected patients or their relatives. Sai Gopal's is one such story, where his infected relatives were forced to evacuate a house they were living in temporarily at Kamala Nagar in Vanasthalipuram after colony residents reportedly threatened them with physical violence.

Gopal, is a resident of Saroornagar, has relatives hailing from Kollapur in Nagarkurnool district. His great aunt, an 86-year-old woman, and her son tested positive for Covid-19 a few days ago. Gopal's family decided to bring the woman, her son and

daughter-in-law to Hyderabad so that they could get better medical care.

Doctors at the hospital she was examined at said she could stay in home isolation with oxygen support until she recovers. Incidentally, Gopal's mother has also tested positive for Covid-19, hence, the three could not stay at Gopal's house. They had to find a place where they could stay for a few weeks.

Gopal said, "We checked with our relatives and friends. We found an independent house at Kamala Nagar, which has been empty for many years. The owner allowed us to use it for a few days. We moved them there three days ago."

However, on Friday evening, everything changed when he and his sister Swaroopa came

with an oxygen cylinder to replace an empty one. "Some colony residents saw the cylinder, gathered around us, and were very aggressively asking who we were and we were up to," said Gopal.

The residents reportedly broke tree branches and threatened to beat up Gopal and his sister and hurled abuses at them.

"Once they realised my relatives were Covid-19 patients, they wanted us to take our relatives away from the colony immediately. They simply refused to listen to reason. This was around 11 pm, and I told them I would do so in the morning. They weren't having any of it," he said.

Gopal recalled how the residents didn't even let him go home to get another car to transport his relatives. "I told the mob I would bring another car,

Doc: Use plasma therapy with care

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Medical professionals, Covid-19 patients and their families were on Saturday cautioned against rushing and relying on plasma therapy. Director of Medical Education Dr K. Ramesh Reddy said there appears to be a misplaced view that plasma therapy will work on Covid-19 patients when all else fails.

"It only works, and in some cases, when administered well before a patient develops serious conditions. It relies on a small number of Covid-19 antibodies being administered to a patient and AIIMS also cautioned on relying on it," he said. Not every Covid-19

● **DR RAMESH Reddy** urged people to be cautious when demanding specific treatments for treating Covid-19.

recovered patient has enough antibodies in his or her system unless they at least experienced moderate symptoms when afflicted by the disease, he said.

Dr Ramesh Reddy urged people to be cautious when demanding specific treatments for treating Covid-19. Even the use of injections like Remdesivir are evaluated by the doctors who will take a decision on its use, or use of other medications, he added.

ADOPT TECH TO FIGHT PANDEMIC, SAYS KTR

S.A. ISHAQUI I DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao on Saturday said that "the disruption caused by #COVID19 pandemic has forced us to embrace technology in a way never seen before and has helped accelerate our approach towards remote working and implementation of digital solutions."

Rama Rao was delivering the keynote address in the online session 'Reinventing Technology in India: Combining the Best of Local and Global Talent, Innovation and Capital' held as part of CII IndiaAt75 Summit. During the session he said "Bold reforms are what India needs today."

Stressing the need to design proactive policies to encourage companies to invest in India, he said as a step towards the same, the Telangana government has introduced a best-in-class electric vehicles policy on Thursday.

He said that India has one of the largest pools of technology workforce across the globe and has gained a significant lead in the industry over the last two decades.

"The pandemic acts as a perfect platform to strengthen our position in the sector," the minister added.

The minister highlighted the three 'I' mantra and said, "What India needs today are innovation, infrastructure and inclusive growth."

He said that 5G will play a critical role and India is capable of developing a cost-effective and swiftly deployable 5G solution. "This is crucial and will go miles in strengthening our position as a technology leader in the world," he added.

Govt. medical contract staff to strike today

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Medical personnel and other staff working on contract in government hospitals of Telangana will go on a day's strike on Sunday to protest against non-fulfilment of promises made by the state government.

Telangana State Medical Contract Employees' and Workers' Union president M. Narisimha told *Deccan Chronicle* that the government has failed in fulfilling its promises made when they had earlier agitated from July 10 to July 15.

At that time, Chief Minister K. Chandrababbar Rao had promised an incentive of 10 percent to medical staff and 15-day quarantine leave to those working in Covid-19 hospitals.

Health minister Etala Rajender had assured that contract staff working at Corona hospitals as paramedics will be paid a risk allowance of ₹ 500 per day and those working in san-

● **THERE ARE** about 3,000 outsourced staff working on contract at all the 24 government hospitals in the state.

itation, patient care and security wings would be given ₹300 per day. But none of these promises have been fulfilled so far. Thus, they have been left with no alternative but strike work on Sunday, the union president said.

A strike notice has already been served on director, medical and health on August 6. There are about 3,000 outsourced staff working on contract at all the 24 government hospitals in the state.

They had earlier staged a protest in front of the Director's office in Kothi on July 10.

They also struck work from July 10 to July 15 at Gandhi Hospital when the government intervened and promised to them various incentives, which have, not been fulfilled.

At the mercy of nature

A building in the premises of the Karimnagar collectorate has plants growing that has damaged the roof. Three years ago ₹2 crore was spent and preliminary repairs was done but no maintenance was done. Despite this being brought to the attention of the officials nothing has been done till date. — YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Covid duties take a toll on docs

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The high workload and no rest took the life of a 35-year-old deputy medical and health officer in Bhadari Kothagudem district Dr G. Naresh Kumar.

The lack of doctors in public health centres, district and area hospitals has hit services hard during the pandemic as there are no rotation duties for those working and they have to do Covid-19, non-Covid-19 and also administration work.

Doctors state that they have to work even on Sundays due to the emergency and there is no reprieve for them. Workload has increased four times and there are no extra hands to allow for rotational duties as was followed in Hyderabad.

A senior government doctor said, "We are doing out-patient duty, screening patients for Covid-19, non-Covid-19 cases are also

● **DOCTORS STATE** that they have to work even on Sundays due to the emergency and there is no reprieve for them.

● **WORKLOAD HAS** increased four times and there are no extra hands to allow for rotational duties as was followed in Hyderabad.

high due to seasonal changes and there is a lot of administrative work that has to be completed. Even if we are exposed, the decision to isolate is not possible as there is so much work and there are no replacements."

This adds to the viral load in the body, often not recognised on time even by doctors.

Doctors state that there are enough personal protection kits provided by the government but to wear it for eight hours is exhausting.

They get dehydrated in these kits as they cannot go to bathroom, so their water intake is limited. Weather conditions are hot and humid, making it

difficult for them to work in these kits.

Due to this reason, all of them have been asking patients to maintain social distance but that is difficult for many to follow. The concept of social distancing is not understood properly and it is one of the prime reasons for the faster spread of the virus.

The death of Dr G. Naresh Kumar has caused a lot of anger among government and private doctors across districts. They state that there must be steps in place for doctors to protect themselves.

Dr V. Rakesh, president of Warangal Telangana Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association, said,

"There is a need to divide the Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 duties. There is already a shortage of paramedical staff due to the spread of the infection. In these times, doctors are overburdened and these unfortunate incidents create more fear. There is a need to boost the morale of the medical fraternity by providing more doctors and specialists to deal with these cases."

The lack of specialists is one of the prime reasons for many government hospitals to send serious patients to Hyderabad for treatment.

Government doctors have been told that the recruitment process of those on contract will be completed in the next two days and there will be more hands available.

It remains to be seen of how many will join and work in the rural areas during these challenging times.

Muharram rituals may be skipped this year

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The centuries-old Muharram procession of Hyderabad will not be the same this year due to Covid-19 surge and the traditional rituals involving elegies, self-flagellation and rhythmic chest-beating may not be held at all considering Covid-19 protocols.

Shia Muslims hold special ceremonies during the first Islamic month, which starts on August 21 (depending on the sighting of the moon).

There are fewer chances of allowing the elephant for 'Bibi ka Alam' and self-flagellation on roads during the central procession.

A final decision will be taken at a high-level meeting on Tuesday under the chairmanship of minister for minorities welfare Koppula Eshwar.

In the meeting, standard operating procedures (SOPs) will be finalised. This year the number of participants may be reduced. According to sources in the minorities welfare dep-

● **THERE ARE** fewer chances of allowing the elephant for 'Bibi ka Alam' and self-flagellation on roads during the central procession. A final decision will be taken at a high-level meeting on Tuesday.

artment, this year social distancing is to be observed, wearing masks is mandatory and no one will be allowed to enter ashoorkhanas without a mask. In ashoorkhanas, carpets will be removed and sitting places should be clearly marked. Touching of the alam and tazia should be avoided and ziyarat (homage) should be done from a distance.

Thousands of Shia Muslims from different parts of the state gather for mass mourning rituals on the tenth day of Muharram during the Bibi ka Alam procession in Hyderabad, which will probably fall on August 30. Artisans began galvanising the ornaments of the alam.

Cases likely to fall by Aug. end

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Covid-19 cases will begin falling in Hyderabad and the rest of the GHMC limits by the end of August, the state health department predicted on Saturday. It said that cases in the rest of the state will begin falling by the end of September.

According to director of health services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao, the number of cases in GHMC limits was coming down. "The past few weeks, thanks to preventive measures taken by the government, cases have reduced in Hyderabad. There is no distress and panic in the city. This is a

good sign for the GHMC area with its one crore population," he said.

He, however, said cases in the neighbouring Ranga Reddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri districts were going up. Covid-19 cases were rising in several district headquarters, he said.

Addressing a press conference, he said the government was focusing on decentralising of identification of Covid-19 cases and treatment so people identified with the disease can start receiving treatment quickly.

The recoveries were almost 70 per cent of the total identified cases and, in absolute numbers, it amounts to 99 per cent.

TS MINISTER, WIFE AND MLA TEST POSITIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

A second minister from the state, Ch Malla Reddy, tested positive for Covid-19. The minister, who looks after the labour portfolio, is the second from

the state to test positive for the disease. Previously home minister Md Mahmood Ali had contracted Covid-19.

Meanwhile, Rohit Reddy, the TRS MLA from Tandur, is also learnt to have tested positive for

Covid-19 on Saturday.

The MLA has since been admitted to a top corporate hospital in Jubilee Hills where he is undergoing treatment for the virus.

Malla Reddy announced in a brief video shared on

from the disease in the state," he added.

The government has ensured stocks of medicines and disposables to meet the need for another two months. The government has made extensive arrangements.

For people advised home isolation the government has stocked a total of 86,600 kits, with the required medicines, instructions and guidelines, in all the districts. Of these, 33,000 are available for use in GHMC limits. He also said a total of 25,000 Remdesivir injections have been stocked in all districts of which 12,500 are available in government hospitals in GHMC limits.

some social media platforms that he had tested positive for Covid-19 last Sunday and spent a few days at a hospital and was now in isolation at a hotel. He said his wife had also tested positive for the disease.

TS logs 2,256 cases, 14 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The surge in cases continued with 2,256 people testing positive for Covid-19 and 14 others dying of the disease. The overall case-load stood at 77,513 on Friday evening and the toll at 615, according to the Covid-19 bulletin issued by the state health department on Saturday.

The bulletin said 15,830 persons were under treatment at home and the state had a total of 22,568 active cases. The state tested 23,322 samples on Friday, and the overall test count reached 5,90,306.

Of the deaths, those attributed to Covid-19 is at 46.13 per cent and due to co-morbid conditions 53.87 per cent. This is because those in the age group of 31 to 40 years have 25 per cent and those in 21 to 30 years have 22 per cent of the infection. Those in the younger

age groups are severely affected and fatality rate in this group is also high.

In the districts where there were a total of 1,792 cases noted. Only those who have SARI (severe acute respiratory infection) are being tested. Those with mild infections are in isolation wards and if their symptoms are aggravating then testing is carried out.

District hospitals and public health centres are having a huge caseload and most of the serious cases are being sent to Hyderabad for treatment.

The Covid-19 cases are at an high in Warangal Urban at 187, Ranga Reddy 181, Medchal-Malkajgiri at 138 and Karimnagar at 101. Government and private doctors who are treating these cases say that the pattern of the disease is more like that of the city and in districts too those who can afford are coming faster.

OTHER STORIES

ADIVASIS PROTEST
SUSPENSION OF
ADIVASI COPDC CORRESPONDENT
KUMARAMBHEEM ASIFABAD,
AUG. 8

Leaders of various Adivasis organisations on Saturday staged protests at various places objecting to the suspension of an Adivasi police head constable.

Arka Mengarao Chithalamanepalli police station head constable had seized cheap liquor and Glycovil being transported illegally in autos while on duty in Chinthalamaneipalli on June 30. Mengarao a native of Markaguda in Tiryani mandal and was discharging duties in Chithalamanepalli when the incident took place.

Adivasi leaders staged protests in Bejjur and Asifabad headquarters and requested top police officials to conduct a thorough enquiry into the incident and reinstate the suspended police constable.

ALL GOVERNMENT
HOSPITALS TO HAVE
'OXYGEN BEDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Every one of the 18,000-odd beds in government hospitals and medical facilities in the state will soon be an 'oxygen bed' with 10,000 of these, including the 5,000 odd that currently have oxygen supply, to be brought online in the next few days, the state health department has said.

With Covid-19 making everyone realise how important providing supplementary oxygen to the patients is, and that it can make all the difference between recovery or death of such patients, the government has also called for tenders for extending oxygen supplies to all the beds in its hospitals.

"We are taking several steps to ensure as much oxygen as needed is provided to the patients. For instance, beds in maternity wards are also going to be provided with oxygen supplies," according to health department officials who spoke with the media on Saturday.

VETERAN CONG
LEADER NANDI
PASSES AWAYS.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Senior Congress leader and eight-time parliamentarian Nandi Yellaiah died after being detected positive for Covid-19 on Saturday. He was 78. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

A prominent Dalit leader of the Congress, Yellaiah was vice-president of the TPCC till his death.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee informed that Yellaiah was admitted to Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) with complaints of pneumonia on July 29. He tested positive for Covid-19, subsequently. After undergoing treatment for 10 days, he passed away at 10.30 am.

Born on July 1, 1942 at Bholakur in Hyderabad, Yellaiah began his political career as a follower of Dr Marri Channa Reddy and took part in the 1969 Telangana movement. He was a MCH councillor in the 1970s.

Yellaiah was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1977, representing the Siddipet parliamentary constituency. Subsequently, he won from the same constituency for another four times.

In 2014, he was elected from the Nagarkurnool parliamentary constituency defeating Manda Jagan-natham of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha twice and also worked as a member of the state Legislative Council for some time. The last rites of Yellaiah were performed at Bansilalpet crematorium in Secunderabad.

Expressing sorrow, Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family. TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy, CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, senior leaders of the party, including Marri Shashidhar Reddy, V. Hanumanth Rao, Sampath Kumar and others mourned the death of Yellaiah.



RDO Anand Kumar along with the revenue staff conducts survey of lands present in Bommakal village in Karimnagar district on Saturday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

Authorities to take action
against land-grabbers

Team formed to conduct surveys in Bommakal, Kothapally

PULI SHARAT
KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 8

District collector K. Shashanka on Saturday ordered the concerned officials to take necessary steps to prevent encroachments on government lands along with the lakes and their catchment area and immediate action against the land mafia.

Chairing a review meeting with the commissioner of police, V. B. Kamalasan Reddy, revenue division officer, Anand Kumar, chief executive officer, Ramesh, circle inspector, Tula Srinivas Rao, and other concerned officials in the collectorate in Karimnagar. Mr Shashanka said that a spe-

cial team was appointed from revenue divisional officer (RDO) level, as some issues regarding land grabbing came to light in recent times and it is also learnt that some police department officials and officials from other departments are also involved with the land mafia.

Ordering the special team, along with the Bommakal and Kothapally surveyors, to conduct surveys of government and other lands present in the respective villages, Mr Shashanka informed the officials that for the past two years complaints have been received regarding Bommakal land grabbing and that the land mafia are threatening land owners and also encroaching

on government lands, including water bodies and their catchment areas.

As many as 12 cases have been filed till date against the land mafia and applicants also mentioned in their complaints that not only in Bommakal, land grabbing was also going on unabated in Sitarampuram and in surrounding villages.

After identifying the encroached lands, action must be taken immediately against persons involved in encroachment of the government lands within corporation limits without sparing anyone involved, Mr Shashanka ordered.

Anand Kumar, RDO, said that after receiving the orders from the collector

for the past two days, a survey was conducted under the supervision of deputy inspector, Sevy Naik, in about 87.25 acres of land, survey numbers 652, 695, 108, 99, 105, 228 and 96 in the Bommakal village and identified land encroachment along with filing a criminal case against the persons who encroached the lands.

The survey will be conducted in the remaining land in Bommakal village, along with other villages in the surrounding areas. The process of demolishing of illegal layouts and constructions on government lands will be done along with taking action against the concerned revenue officials who gave permission without official approval, said Kumar.

HC rues people's lack of civic sense

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

Noticing that most pedestrians prefer the haphazard road crossing on busy roads of the city while ignoring the safer foot overbridges (FOBs) facility, the Telangana High Court observed that it might be due to the steepness of the steps that are potentially risky. It said that this shortcoming should be looked into by GHMC authorities.

Justice Challa Kodandaram asked the civic body to set up an escalator system or ramp at FOBs to make it convenient for commuters, especially aged people and women. This will also help improve civic sense.

The judge was dealing

● JUSTICE CHALLA
Kodandaram asked the
civic body to set up an
escalator system or
ramp at FOBs

with a petition by Ruhaina Apartment Owners Association at Tarnaka, seeking directions to GHMC not to go ahead with its proposal to erect an FOB in front of their apartment complex.

Justice Kodandaram rejected the plea of the petitioners but expressed concern about the zigzag road crossing and why people were not getting accustomed to zebra crossing.

"Many people are not accustomed to using zebra crossing which is not in existence on account of the apathy of the municipal

and police authorities. There is also no requirement of mentioning the lack of basic civic sense among the people, which seems they have not been ingrained at the school level," he observed.

At the same time, Justice Kodandaram stated that there were inconveniences in using FOBs and opined that it was not being patronised on account of the steepness of the steps.

"The FOBs which are constructed at huge costs are not being used; and the Corporation might not have received any complaints or protests from the public, which is typical of the Indian society. Now this court hopes and trusts that the Corporation will give immediate attention.

Medical device sector sees 85% decline

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

An 85 per cent decline has been noted in the use of stents, implants and optical devices from April to June due to Covid-19.

The medical device industry has seen a major drop in use of stents for heart surgeries as elective procedures are not being carried out. Most of the management of heart blockages was through medicines only. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in heart attacks and sudden deaths.

A senior cardiologist, said, "We have no data of the people who have died due to non-Covid reasons during the pandemic.

Collector orders enquiry
into half-burnt bodyDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, AUG. 8

Collector, Sikta Patnaik, responded to the news that dogs allegedly dragged off the half-burnt body of a Covid-19 patient after performing funerals in an open graveyard located on the outskirts of the Mavala gram panchayat, ordering an enquiry into the incident that took place on August 7.

People of Adilabad town have demanded respectable funerals to the people who died of Covid-19 by the concerned authorities.

Ms Patnaik appointed the additional collector, G. Sandhyarani, as the enquiry officer and asked her to take action against the persons responsible for the incident if found guilty. It is said that the concerned officials are

making efforts to set up a fence around the graveyard.

Adilabad Municipal officials said that the half-burnt body was not that of a Covid-19 patient and clarified that the municipal sanitary workers were present till the bodies are burnt fully. The Adilabad Municipal officials suspected that the half-burnt body was that of an animal.

COVID SURVIVOR
MLA DISTRIBUTES
MEDICINESDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 8

Nizamabad rural MLA who is also a Covid-19 survivor is supplying Covid-19 medicines to the positive patients in Nizamabad rural Assembly constituency limits. Medicines were distributed in Dharpally mandal headquarters on Saturday.

To get the medicines, patients must submit their prescription where it states that they are Covid-19 positive and a Xerox copy of their Aadhaar card. The Covid-19 medicines will be made available in all the mandal headquarters in the rural constituency.

The MLA along with his wife had tested positive for the virus in the month of July. After treatment in Hyderabad, they home isolated. Presently, the MLA has been participating in all official programmes and has been following the Covid-19 safety protocol.

Covid cases on the
rise in slum areasNARENDER
PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 8

The slum areas in the municipal towns in old Nizamabad district- Nizamabad Municipal Corporation, Bodhan, Armoor, Bheemgal, Kamareddy, Banswada and Yellareddy district- saw a sharp rise in the number of Covid-19 positive cases.

This is due to the unhygienic conditions, not following Covid-19 protocol of not maintaining physical distancing, not using sanitisers and face masks and ignoring lockdown norms.

Of the 1,705 positive cases in Nizamabad district, 1,056 cases were registered in the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation limits. In Kamareddy district, the number of positive cases has touched 1,481. Some of the guest workers who returned to their native places in old Nizamabad were carriers of the virus.

The municipal staff is spraying sodium

● OF THE 1,705 positive cases in Nizamabad district, 1,056 cases were registered in the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation limits.

hypochlorite in the containment areas and the medical and health department teams are visiting the homes of Covid-19 positive patients and monitoring their health. In addition, Covid-19 counseling centers in Nizamabad and Kamareddy district headquarters have been set up and provide information to the needy.

Shockingly, a municipal councillor from Bodhan succumbed to Covid-19 recently, while two others tested positive for the virus. On the same lines, a municipal corporator in Nizamabad also tested positive for Covid-19. The civic chiefs and the municipal commissioners are jointly monitoring the situation.

● THE WORST hit industry is the optical sector, which has seen its lowest phase during lockdown. Many ophthalmologists state that they had absolutely no work as people could not come forward due to the risk of infection.

Only the emergency room profile shows that there have been many patients who have come to hospitals too late and died or were brought dead. During lockdown most treatments were by using medicines while post-lockdown, there have been a few surgeries."

Similarly, orthopedic implants have seen 90 per cent dip as patients are not coming forward for knee replacements, which is an elective procedure and has come to a halt. Only emergency orthope-

dic treatments are being carried out.

The worst hit industry is the optical sector, which has seen its lowest phase during lockdown. Many ophthalmologists state that they had absolutely no work as people could not come forward due to the risk of infection.

In the optical sector, the biggest problem was in transporting goods from the manufacturing unit to the retailer. With states having lockdown specifications of varying kinds, transporting had become

a major challenge to the industry.

A senior government ophthalmologist said, "We can only take up emergency cases and even those are few. Till there is a decline in Covid infection rate, there will not be much scope for elective surgeries."

Pavan Choudary, chairman and director general of Medical Technology Association of India said, "The medical device industry is facing a challenge and only government intervention can bail it out of the situation. The cost of freight movement has increased by almost seven times.

"Health cess on imported products is adding to the woes."

ANDHRA PRADESH

AP records 10,080 new Covid cases

SAMPAT G.
SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 8

Andhra Pradesh continues to witness a rise in Coronavirus infections as 10,080 new Covid-19 positive cases have been registered, taking the overall tally to 2,17,040. The state also witnessed a single day high of 97 deaths, raising the death toll to 1,939 during the last 24 hours.

According to Covid-19 bulletin released by the state health authorities here on Saturday, out of 30,342 samples tested, 10,080 patients have been found infected with Coronavirus. Out of 24,24,393

samples tested so far in the state, 1,29,615 infected patients have been discharged after recovery, while 85,486 are undergoing treatment at various hospitals in the state.

Among new cases, Kurnool has been badly affected with 1,353 cases, followed by 1,310 in East Godavari, 998 in Visakhapatnam, 976 in Anantapur, 963 in Chittoor, 878 in Nellore, 681 in West Godavari, 601 in Guntur, 525 in Kadapa, 512 in Prakasam, 450 in Vizianagaram, 442 in Srikakulam and 391 in Krishna.

With regard to cumulative infections, East

Godavari has emerged on top with 30,160 cases, followed by 26,032 in Kurnool, 23,249 in Anantapur, 20,837 in Guntur, 18,532 in Visakhapatnam, 17,015 in West Godavari, 16,249 in Chittoor, 12,614 in Kadapa, 12,524 in Nellore, 10,527 in Srikakulam, 9,853 in Krishna, 8,448 in Vizianagaram, 8,105 in Prakasam, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Among the total active cases where the patients are taking treatment, East Godavari has recorded 13,794 cases, followed by 9,480 in Kurnool, 8,694 in Visakhapatnam, 7,588 in Guntur, 6,925 in

Anantapur, 6,919 in Chittoor, 6,251 in Nellore, 6,065 in Kadapa, 5,026 in Vizianagaram, 4,510 in Srikakulam, 3,715 in West Godavari, 3,398 in Krishna and 3,121 in Prakasam.

The rate of recovery has been good in Kurnool with 16,314 infected patients recovering, followed by 16,162 in Anantapur, 16,148 in East Godavari, 13,164 in West Godavari, 13,038 in Guntur, 9,681 in Visakhapatnam, 9,169 in Chittoor, 6,486 in Kadapa, 6,247 in Krishna, 6,182 in Nellore, 5,903 in Srikakulam, 4,884 in Prakasam, 3,342 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

BACK TO SCHOOL

No exams for Classes 1 to 8, assesment to be done on class participation

Parents stand divided on revised AP syllabus

MD. ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 8

The syllabus in AP schools is to be reduced. The revised syllabus will be finalised by the re-opening of the schools on September 5 and parents are divided about it.

The schools usually work for 222 days every year but this year the schools have been closed from March 22 due to the pandemic. The government decided to cut 30-40 per cent of the syl-

labus to reduce pressure on the students in their studies.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the date of the re-opening of schools from September 5 on uru Pujotsavam, Teachers Day. The education department is making arrangements accordingly.

Education minister Audimulapu Suresh said that the completion of the entire syllabus in a six-month period is a herculean task but that the

● EDUCATION MINISTER Audimulapu Suresh said that the completion of the syllabus in a six-months is a herculean task and the government has decided to reduce the syllabus to help the students and teachers.

government decided to reduce the syllabus to help the students and teachers. He said that the State

Council of Educational Research (SCERT) was asked to work on the reduction of the syllabus and will suggest the decreased syllabus for each subject and class.

Suresh said that the government will give thorough information about the syllabus reduction to parents and students before the re-opening of the schools.

Stating that the education department would plan schedules for lessons

and that the government decided not to conduct exams for Classes 1 to 8 as their abilities will be assessed on class participation, activities and internal projects, Suresh said that all schools should maintain records of every student's health and should conduct health check-ups at regular intervals, preferably every fortnight.

Parents D.S. Prasad and K. Prabhu welcomed the decision of the government to reduce the syl-

labus. They said that students are worried about completion of all lessons in six months which would be difficult. They said that the government can apply the reduction of syllabus for this year only due to the crisis and can restore the total syllabus from next year.

They said that the government should announce the revised syllabus before the schools re-open to help the students to plan their studies.

MAN, TWO
DAUGHTERS DIE
BY SUICIDEDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, AUG. 8

A 53-year-old electrician, Dhanireddy Babu Reddy, allegedly died by suicide over family issues, and, unable to bear the shock, his two daughters also ended their lives.

The atmosphere in YMR Colony in Proddatur, where they lived, was poignant. Babu's wife Vijaya Bharathi, 49, who fell unconscious on hearing of the three deaths in the family.

Babu's daughters Sweetha, 26, married to Suresh Kumar Reddy, 30, of Tallamapuram in Proddatur Rural mandal and Sai Preethi, 21, a second year engineering student.

According to Proddatur Rural inspector Sattaru Viswanatha Reddy, Babu had spent around ₹20 lakh on his elder daughter's marriage. He believed that his son-in-law had a job. However, he realised that the boy had no job and his family was harassing his daughter. Unable to bear it any longer, he recorded a video in which he alleged that his son-in-law was harassing his daughter for more dowry. He ended his life on the outskirts of the town and his body was found on Saturday.

SHORT TAKES

AAI CHIEF: WILL TAKE ACTION AFTER PROBE REPORT

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Airports Authority of India (AAI) Chairman Arvind Singh on Saturday said "corrective action" will be taken after receiving the probe report on the Air India Express plane crash at Kozhikode airport on Friday.

The airport in Kerala, which has a tabletop runway, is operated by state-owned AAI.

Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is probing the accident at the Kozhikode airport that has left at least 18 people dead, including the two pilots of the plane. The Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) and the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) have been recovered at the crash site.

Singh said rescue work is over and reasons for the crash would be known once the AAIB report comes.

"This report will tell us about all the issues... we are awaiting the inquiry report and then we will take corrective action," he said.

On whether there were any safety issues had come to the notice of the AAI in recent times, Singh replied in the negative.

AI EXPRESS SAYS 3 RELIEF FLIGHTS SET UP FOR PEOPLE

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Air India Express said on Saturday that three relief flights had been arranged to Kozhikode in Kerala to assist passengers and their family members affected by the plane crash a day ago.

Officials said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri would go to Kozhikode on Saturday.

The Air India Express flight from Dubai with 190 on board overshot the tabletop runway at Kozhikode airport on Friday night while landing in heavy rains and fell into a valley 35 feet below and broke into two, killing at least 18 people.

Air India Chairman and Managing Director Rajiv Bansal, and Air India Express Chief Executive Officer K Shyam Sundar have already reached Kozhikode, according to a statement.

Bansal, along with senior airline officials, "rushed" to the accident site "to take stock of the situation and are being briefed by experts", Air India tweeted.

Two special relief flights have been arranged from Delhi and one from Mumbai for rendering humanitarian assistance to all the passengers and the family members, Air India Express, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the national carrier, said.

INDIAN CONSULATE TO BE OPEN FOR INFO ON AI CRASH

Dubai, Aug. 8: The Indian Consulate in Dubai will remain open on Saturday to help those who need assistance to travel to Kerala and provide information about the crash of the Air India Express flight that skidded off a hilltop runway and split in two while landing in heavy rain at an airport in Kozhikode, killing at least 17 people.

According to the Civil Aviation Ministry, the Boeing 737 aircraft on a flight from Dubai to Kozhikode overshot the runway at Kozhikode airport at 7.41 PM on Friday. There were 184 passengers including 10 infants, 2 pilots and 4 cabin crew on board the aircraft, the ministry added.

Captain Deepak Sathe, the pilot-in-command, and his co-pilot Akhilesh Kumar were among those who died, police and airline officials said on Friday.

AIR ASIA ABORTS TAKE OFF AT RANCHI AFTER BIRD HIT

Ranchi, Aug. 8: An Air Asia India aircraft departing for Mumbai on Saturday morning aborted its take-off at Ranchi airport after encountering a bird hit, said the airline spokesperson. This incident occurred a day after an Air India Express flight from Dubai with 190 people onboard overshot the runway at Kozhikode airport in rainy conditions and went down 35 feet into a slope before breaking up into two pieces, killing at least 18 people.

"AirAsia India aircraft VT-HKG operating from Ranchi to Mumbai as flight 15-632 encountered a bird hit during scheduled departure at 11.50 am, today, 8th August 2020," stated the airline spokesperson.

Plane shook, there was loud noise

Survivors scrambled out of plane, saw heaps of twisted metal; many passengers were bleeding

Kozhikode, Aug. 8: Several injured passengers of the ill-fated Air India Express flight from Dubai which overshot the runway and crashed at the airport here are yet to get over the horror moments that took them close to death. "We did not realise what really happened other than the flight was shaking," said Ramshad, who was injured.

Ramshad's wife Sufaira and four-year old daughter Saidasherin escaped without any serious wounds.

Similar is the experience of Ashraf, a native of east Kozhikode, now under treatment at the Medical College Hospital here, who said he was yet to recover from the shock.

"As soon the flight crashed, the emergency door was opened and people jumped out to safety, another survivor said. Ashik, undergoing treatment at a hospital here, said the fire force personnel reached immediately and shifted the injured to hospital soon.

Vijaymohan, who escaped with minor injuries and is recovering in a private hospital, said he thought it was a nightmare, unsure whether he was dreaming it all or living through it.

"I could see heaps of twisted metal spread around when I opened my eyes after the initial shock of the impact, said Vijaymohan, a resident of nearby Malaparamba.

His wife Jameema is admitted in the ICU. The couple had gone to Dubai in December to join their son but got held up due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown.

Describing the horrific minutes that stretched into what seemed like hours, Riyas said the flight went around the airport twice before attempting to land.

"I was in the back seat. There was a big noise and I don't know what happened after that," he told a media channel after he was rescued.

Fathima, another passenger, said the flight landed with heavy force and mo-

Ashraf, a native of east Kozhikode, now under treatment at the Medical College Hospital here, who said he was yet to recover from the shock. Describing the horrific minutes that stretched into what seemed like hours, Riyas said the flight went around the airport twice before attempting to land.

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Ashik, undergoing treatment at a hospital here, was thankful to the fire personnel who reached immediately and moved the injured to safety.

In a telephone interview from his hospital bed, Renjith Panangad, a plumber who was returning home for the first time in three years after losing his job at a construction company in Dubai, said the plane swayed before the crash and everything went dark.

He said he followed other passengers who crawled their way out of the fuselage through the emergency exit.

"A lot of passengers were bleeding," said Panangad, who escaped without major injuries. "I still can't comprehend what happened. As I am trying to recall what happened, my body is shivering."

He said the pilot made a regular announcement before landing, and moments after the plane hit the runway, it nosedived. "There was a big noise during the impact and people started screaming," he said.

— PTI, AFP



The mangled remains of the Air India Express flight, en route from Dubai, after it skidded off the runway while landing on Friday night, at Karippur in Kozhikode, Saturday.

PASSENGER TESTS +VE, RESCUERS ASKED TO GO INTO QUARANTINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

One of the passengers in Air India Express aircraft tested positive for Covid-19 while three others were suspected to have the infection.

Health minister K.K. Shailaja has asked all persons who took part in the rescue operations to report to their nearest health authorities and if required go into self quarantine as a precautionary measure.

"All persons who took part in the rescue will be tested," she added.

Around 50 CISF personnel who took part in the rescue work and their family members have been asked to go into preventive quarantine.

'Back home' selfie goes viral, but passenger dead

Kozhikode, Aug. 8: A selfie taken by Sharufudheen Pillassery, along with his wife and three-year-old daughter, in PPE kits inside the Air India Express flight from Dubai that crashed here, has gone viral as reports emerged that the journey turned out to be his last trip.

Before take off, Pillassery had posted the selfie, on his Facebook page with the caption "Back Home". However, he did not make it. While Sharufudheen succumbed to his injuries, his wife is seriously injured and undergoing treatment in a Kozhikode hospital. Their daughter, who suffered minor injuries, has been handed over to her grandparents.

Another tragic case is that of 29-year-old Sahira Banu's

● **WHILE SHARUFUDHEEN** succumbed to his injuries, his wife is seriously injured and undergoing treatment in a Kozhikode hospital.

whose dream was to get a government job for herself and though married with three children, that yearning never left her.

She had gone to Dubai hardly 10 months ago and had taken the AIE flight to pursue her dream, a relative said. Her three minor children were also with her.

While two of her children, who survived, are undergoing treatment in two private hospitals, her youngest 10-month-old son died along with his mother in the crash. — PTI

AMID COVID, PEOPLE QUEUED UP TO DONATE BLOOD

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

Soon after Friday night's aircraft crash, people from Kozhikode, Malappuram and even Kannur thronged blood banks in various hospitals to donate blood for the injured. All this happened within minutes of the hospital authorities sending out an SOS for blood requirement including that of rare groups.

People braving heavy rains and the Covid-19 threat queued up to donate blood which proved crucial for saving critically injured passengers.

Most hospitals were facing shortage of blood due to Covid. The donors kept arriving in the hospitals till the early hours of Saturday and waited in the queues.

Rescue operation by locals brings down casualties

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

The massive rescue operations carried out by the local people of Kondotty taluk soon after the Air India Express aircraft accident has come in for huge applause. The CISF, state police, fire, rescue services staff and agencies did a commendable job in carrying out the rescue operations in record time.

"I saw the aircraft flying over the airport for some time. It was trying to land amid heavy rains. Soon I heard a deafening noise. We rushed to the spot and somehow managed to reach the aircraft. I could see people screaming, wailing and writhing in pain. Many were lying unconscious with broken limbs. Without waiting for a moment, we started to bring out people from the aircraft and

rushing them to hospitals in whatever vehicles were available," said Anzar, a local resident. Most passengers were wearing PPE kits and face shields. The rescuers took care in rescuing all children including infant from the aircraft.

Since most passengers were critically injured, rushing them to hospitals within the "golden hour" was crucial to save their lives. The doctors say the

casualties could have been higher had the locals and security personnel not brought the injured to the hospital in time.

"It was an amazing rescue operation by the locals and the security personnel. We rarely see the speed and swiftness with which people were rescued from the site of such crash," said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan while addressing the media in Kozhikode.

"I heard a huge sound. From the terrace of my house I could see the aircraft crashing into the 35 ft valley. In no time I collected my friends and hopped into a pick-up van and rushed to the runway," said Abhilash of Kondotty.

It seemed as if the entire village had descended on the spot to save people. "People just wanted to help in whatever way they could," said a local.

Govts announce ₹10L compensation

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

The Centre and Kerala state governments announced ₹10 lakh each for the families of the victims of the Air India Express aircraft mishap at Kozhikode international airport on Friday, even as the civil aviation authorities recovered the black box, digital flight recorder (DFDR) and the

cockpit voice recorder (CVR) from the site. These are critical to find out the cause of the accident that killed 18 people, including the pilot Capt. D.V. Sathe and the co-pilot Akhilesh Kumar.

A team from the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) and experts of the flight safety department of the Director General of Civil Aviation arrived at the airport on Saturday to

● **UNION CIVIL AVIATION** minister Hardip Singh Puri said weather conditions were unfavourable at the time of the landing because of the monsoon rains.

inspect the site of the mishap and the aircraft wreckage.

The experts will examine the CVR and DFDR to reach a conclusion on what might have led to the tragic accident of Flight AXB1344.

Union civil aviation minister Hardip Singh Puri said weather conditions were unfavourable at the time of the landing because of the monsoon rains. The pilot seems to have tried to bring the aircraft to a halt on the runway but due to slippery conditions the plane skidded away leading, he said.

As many as 23 passengers are in a critical condition in various hospitals in Kozhikode.

VIPs made a beeline to Kozhikode on Saturday. Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Union minister of state V. Muraliedharan visited the site of the accident and families of the victims and the injured in hospitals.

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Capt Sathe was to meet mom today

Pune / Kozhikode, Aug. 8: Captain Deepak Sathe, pilot of the ill-fated Air India Express flight, who died along with 17 others after the mishap at Kozhikode airport, had planned to pay a surprise visit to Nagpur to greet his mother on her 84th birthday on Saturday, his relative said.

"He had last met his parents in March and was constantly in touch with them over phone. They had last spoken a day before yesterday," his nephew Dr Yashodhan Sathe said on Saturday.

Captain Sathe lived with his wife in Mumbai. His mother Neela Sathe lives with her husband Vasant Sathe, a retired Colonel, in Bharatnagar locality of the city.

Sathe was a former Wing Commander of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and had served at the flight testing establishment. A passout of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Pune, topper in the 58th course and an awardee of 'Sword of Honour', Deepak served in the IAF for 21 years before joining as a commercial pilot with Air India in 2005.

Dr Yashodhan said that the body of Captain Sathe is yet to be handed over to



Captain Deepak Sathe

the family. He has two sons. "Dhananjay lives in Bengaluru and he is trying to reach Kozhikode by road. His second son is in the USA and he won't be able to come," Dr Yashodhan said. Sources said Air India was trying to fly him home.

Capt. Sathe had survived an air crash in the early 1990s when he was in the Air Force and was hospitalised for six months, his cousin Nilesh Sathe, who is adviser, finance, at the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), said in a Facebook post.

Sathe had suffered multiple injuries on his skull. Due to his strong will power and passion he cleared the fitness test and started flying again, Nilesh said. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

KERALA RECORDS SINGLE-DAY SPIKE IN VIRUS CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

Even as Kerala struggled to come to terms with the Air India Express aircraft crash in Kozhikode and landslide in Rajamala in Idukki district, there was bad news on the Covid-19 front as well with the state recording biggest single day spike with 1420 cases on Saturday.

Of the people infected, 1216 contracted the infection through contact, 60 came from abroad, 108 from other states, the source of infection among 92 was yet to be known. The state recorded four deaths.

The only relief was that 1715 persons recovered from the infection.

NEDFI EMBARKS PLAN FOR MARKETPLACE

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 8

The north eastern development finance corporation ltd (NEDFi) has embarked upon an ambitious plan to facilitate the 'marketplace' for entrepreneurs of MSME sectors facing challenges in the northeast region due to the pandemic as much as structural reasons.

The facility that the NEDFi intends to create will be of help especially for entrepreneurs who are located away from Guwahati, the deputy general manager of the NEDFi, Ashim Kumar Das said, adding that product categories will include handloom and handicraft products, non-perishable food products as well as MSME products.

JAIPUR COPS TOLD TO PROBE PHONE TAPPING RUMOURS

Jaipur, Aug. 8: Rajasthan DGP Bhupendra Singh on Saturday instructed the Jaipur police to investigate the complaint lodged against the "rumours" that phone numbers of six MLAs holed up in a Jaisalmer hotel are being tapped, according to a statement.

The DGP said the information is "utterly baseless, false and misleading" and asked Jaipur Police Commissioner Anand Srivastava to take immediate action in this regard, the statement said.

Amid a political crisis triggered by the revolt of dissident Congress leader Sachin Pilot against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, the Congress had shifted the MLAs backing the CM to the Jaisalmer's Suryagarh hotel, accusing the BJP of the bid to topple its government in the state.

On Friday, it was claimed in a message circulated on WhatsApp that phone numbers of six MLAs lodged in the Jailsalmer hotel are being tapped. The message was circulated with a list of phone numbers. Reiterating his department's stand over the controversy, the DGP in the statement clarified that the Rajasthan Police did not tap the phone number of any legislator, "neither in the past nor in present".

25-YEAR-OLD FILES RAPE CASE AGAINST ODISHA COP

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 8

The Odisha police on Saturday faced an embarrassment after a 25-year-old woman alleged that she was raped by a subedar of the 7th Battalion of the Odisha State Armed Police (OSAP) at gunpoint for over four months.

The woman in her complaint lodged at Capital police station alleged that Subedar Debasis Swain on March 28 called her to his government quarters in the pretext of engaging her as a maid and immediately confined her to a room there.

"Subedar Debasis Swain called me to his official quarters in Unit 1 here on March 28 for domestic work with a monthly salary of ₹4,000. He told me that his wife and children have gone to their village due to the lockdown. Hearing this, I told him that I will come to work once his wife and children return from the village. But he confined me to a room in his quarters and threatened to kill me if I made any attempt to escape," the woman told reporters after lodging the police complaint.

She added that the cop used to rape her at gunpoint everyday after returning from duty.

SSR DEATH CASE: RHEA RELEASES TEXT MESSAGES IN HER SUPPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

In a bid to support her claims, Rhea Chakraborty, girlfriend of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, on Saturday put out some text messages exchanged between them and gratitude notes, which she claimed were written by Rajput. Along with this, she uploaded a picture on social media of the 34-year-old actor's water bottle stating that these three things were the only property of Rajput that were in her possession.

During the Enforcement Directorate (ED) interrogation, Chakraborty claimed that the 500 sq. ft residential property in Khar (East) was bought using her money and that she had not taken any monetary help from Rajput. The ED has not found any direct bank transaction between the two actors and the details of other accounts is now being checked. The probe entails allegations by Rajput's father of Chakraborty taking away ₹15 crore from the deceased actor.

The statement recorded by Chakraborty and her brother Showik will be vetted with the findings in the probe, officials said. The ED will also question bank officials apart from Chakraborty's chartered accountant. The officials are using the case filed by Bihar police as the base of initiating the investigation, which has now been taken over by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

"All angles are being probed and details of the bank accounts of the family members is also being looked into," said investigating officials.

The Maharashtra government meanwhile filed their reply before the Supreme Court stating the case cannot be transferred to the CBI as the Bihar had no locus standi to register a case in connection with the incident that took place in Mumbai.



A vehicle moves slowly through a waterlogged street following heavy rainfall, in Kottayam district, in Kerala on Saturday.

— PTI

Munnar landslide toll rises to 23; 43 trapped

12 out of 81 plantation workers on tea estate were rescued

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAURAM, AUG. 9

The death toll in the Munnar landslide rose to 23 even as search operations continued for 43 persons who are feared trapped under the debris at Pettimudi near Rajamala in Idukki district of Kerala on Friday.

There were 81 people, most of them plantation workers of tea estates, in the area at the time of the mishap. Of these 12 were rescued from the spot on Friday. The local people carried out a massive rescue work.

As it took a couple of hours for the security agencies including police and fire force personnel to reach the mishap spot, the locals mainly plantation workers tried to save as many people risking

Karnataka flood toll rises to 12

Bengaluru, Aug. 8: Swollen rivers and flood-like situation continued to threaten lives and property in several parts of rain-ravaged Karnataka, where the death toll reached 12 on Saturday.

Though there has been a respite from the rain in some parts, rivers continue to flow above the danger mark, inundating low-lying areas in several parts of Malnad, coastal and interior Karnataka. There are also reports of continued

landslides in hilly areas of Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru.

Total human loss from August 1 to 6 pm this evening in 12 rain and flood ravaged districts is 12 and five people are missing, according to official data. As many as 70 relief camps are active across the state so far where 1,292 people are taking shelter while 23 animals have died so far. While 276 houses are completely damaged, 1,913 are partially damaged. —PTI

their own lives amid heavy rains. It was a humongous

task since the area was experiencing power cuts for many days and the

telecommunication network had been damaged due to the landslide. The place was cut off from the rest of the world.

Soon after the incident, the locals trekked for several kilometres to reach the nearest forest station and inform them about the mishap. Revenue minister E. Chandrashekhara and power minister M. M. Mani went to the site on Saturday to supervise the rescue operations.

The state government on Friday had dispatched 20 ambulances, medical teams, mobile medical units to provide assistance to the people trapped in the landslide. Meanwhile, heavy rains continued to wreak havoc in Kerala with the Met department sounding red alert in Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad and Wayanad districts.

J&K chief secy sparks row over 'corrupt' ministers

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 8

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary B.V.R. Subrahmanyam's remarks that its political leaders were "corrupt" and, therefore, not a "single soul had cried" over their detention in August last year has drawn flak from various political parties of the erstwhile state. They have accused him of contravening service rules and breaching propriety.

The CS had on Friday while speaking to a group of visiting mediapersons here said, "J&K was a broken state and there was no system in place due to years of mis-governance, corruption and unbelievable levels of fraud committed by leaders of mainstream parties and separatist organisations." He had added that, therefore, "not a single soul had cried" over their detention on August 5 last year when the state was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories.

He claimed that J&K was "a big Ponzi scheme," when he was sent here in June 2018 and was asked by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 'Go, clean up the administration, rebuild it and hand over the 'amanat' (precious possession) to the local people'.

Reacting sharply to his remarks, People's

Democratic Party (PDP) said that the CS has committed "gross abuse" of civil service rules and asked him "If no one sheds a tear for them why are the leaders jailed under PSA (Public Safety Act)?" It termed Mr Subrahmanyam's remarks as "uncalled for and utterly flagitious."

The PDP accused him of having come to J&K "with a colonial mindset and being the chief executioner of RSS" in the erstwhile state. "It is ironic that he is finding fault with the entire population of J&K while running the most corrupt administration that the state has ever witnessed. He is, in fact, heading a cabal of officers who are affiliated with RSS and are enforcing their agenda in Kashmir. IAS has never stooped to this low."

The PDP alleged, "His only fame to glory is establishing a culture of impunity, polarised administration, systematic sidelining of local officers, fragmenting of bureaucracy on feudal lines and perpetuating the quid pro quo culture of rewarding incompetence. This is the part of the RSS campaign to destroy the identity of Kashmir and they are now attributing criminal charges on almost everybody in Kashmir in the name of terrorism, separatism and corruption."

Major General-level talks help matters

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

India and China on Saturday held major general-level talks at Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) to discuss disengagement at the strategic Depsang plains and other friction points. The talks were held after five rounds of corps commander-level meetings.

The meeting started at 11 am and ended at 7:30 pm and was held on the Chinese side of the LAC.

Depsang plains and Pangong Tso emerged as the major sticking points in the disengagement process.

Till now, military talks had mainly concentrated on disengagement at Galwanvalley, Pangong Tso, Hot Springs and Gogra post.

In Depsang Plains, Chinese troops have been

preventing Indian army patrols from going to patrolling points 10-13. In Depsang plains, the Chinese are concentrated at a place which is around 20-25 kilometres from a strategic airstrip: the Daulat Beg Oldie advanced landing ground (ALG). This is one of the world's highest airstrips, built in 1962 and re-activated in 2008.

There has been a huge build-up of troops, tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery at the Depsang and DBO sector by both India and China.

There are estimates that India has deployed around 15,000 troops and Russian T-90 tanks at the Depsang-DBO sector. Unlike other friction points in Ladakh, the Depsang plains, situated at an altitude of over 15,000 feet, are flat and suitable for tank action.

Rahul hits out at govt over Asha workers' strike

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at the Centre over the ASHA health workers' strike demanding better service conditions and benefits, saying the government was "mute" already, but now maybe "blind and deaf" also.

"ASHA workers take

health protection to homes across the country. They are truly health warriors, but today they are forced to go on strike for their own rights," Mr Gandhi tweeted in Hindi.

"The government was mute already, but now maybe blind and deaf also," the former Congress president said tagging a media report about workers under the ASHA

● **THE STRIKE** by almost six lakh Asha workers has been called by central trade unions against the Centre for not providing adequate assistance — lack of safety equipment, delay in pittance — amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

(Accredited Social Health Activist), anganwadi, and National Health Mission

being on a two-day nationwide strike from Friday.

The strike by almost six lakh Asha workers has been called by central trade unions against the Centre for not providing adequate assistance — lack of safety equipment, delay in pittance — amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

Asha workers have played a significant role in contact-tracing, carrying

out surveys and organising awareness schemes for the Coronavirus in India.

They want better and timely pay, and a legal status that ensures minimum wages, to sustain their work of helping Indian officials track down high-risk contacts of Covid-19 patients across slums and hard-to-reach rural parts of the country.

States told to focus on recoveries

SHASHI BHUSHAN DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

As the fatality rate has declined to 2.04 per cent, the Union Government on Saturday directed state governments to focus on efforts to further reduce the Covid-19 mortality due.

The Union Health ministry, meanwhile, pointed that focused efforts have resulted in the recovery rate rising to 68.32 per cent.

With a single-day rise of 61,537 cases, the country's coronavirus tally has reached 20,88,611 while the death toll rose to 42,518 with 933 fresh fatalities being reported in a day.

According to the Health ministry, India has one of the lowest cases per million at 1,469 as against the global average of 2,425.

"With focused efforts to reduce mortalities, India has registered one of the lowest deaths per million at 30 as compared to the global average of 91 deaths per million," said the health ministry.

There has been a sharp increase in Covid-19 recoveries. With 48,900 patients discharged in the last 24 hours, the country's total recoveries has reached 14,27,005. The recovery rate, on a steady upward rise, stands at 68.32 per

cent. The active cases, which are the actual case load for India at 6,19,088 account for 29.64 per cent of the total positive cases.

Union Health Secretary, Rajesh Bhushan chaired two high-level virtual meetings on Friday and Saturday to engage with the states reporting with high case load and higher Case Fatality Rate (CFR) than the national average.

Saturday's meeting focused on 13 districts concentrated in eight States or Union Territories.

"These districts account for nearly 9 per cent of India's active cases and about 14 per cent of deaths.

They also report low tests per million and high confirmation percentage," it said.

The Centre advised those states to address the issues of low lab utilisation, less than 100 tests per day for RT-PCR and 10 for others; low tests per million population; decrease in absolute tests from last week; delay in test results; and high confirmation percentage among the health care workers.

They were advised to ensure timely referral and hospitalization in view of reports from some districts of patients dying within 48 hours of admission.

CHANGING I ROLE

New jobs opened for weaker sections in govt as old political leaders lose voice

Most of J&K adjusted to Art 370 abrogation

Harsh V. Pant

It was a year back on August 5, 2019, that the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A was announced in Parliament, which led to the bifurcation of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories — Ladakh without a legislature, and Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature. It was a bold move, one which resulted in national and global rever-

berations as it came into effect on October 31, 2019.

We have grown so used to the status quo that a change of this magnitude challenges our intellectual faculties. But it is also a reality that much as many of us would like to ignore it, the status quo on Kashmir had become unsustainable long back. It was only the political and policy inertia that was keeping Indian policymakers from challenging it.

A year on, despite the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, things are beginning to settle down

in both Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. With the development and empowerment process underway in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, this is likely to become even stronger in the future.

At the domestic level, there has been a big change in the way governance has been ramped up and has started benefiting those who were not really part of the national and intellectual discourse — the under-privileged and marginalised communities like Valmikies, Gorkhas and Dalits.

With the new administrative arrangements ushered in last year, it is that silent majority that is regaining its voice and role in the regional and national matrix as central laws are starting to be implemented. New job opportunities have been opened up for weaker sections in the government.

This is also being reflected in the manner in which development projects which have been languishing have been energised. As of 2018, projects worth over ₹7,000 crore were stuck at various stages.

Even Prime Minister's relief package for socio-economic infrastructure announced in 2015 had not got the traction it deserved but in the last year various investments in infrastructure and other sectors has gathered momentum.

It is remarkable that while the critics continue to harp on a seeming lack of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, grassroots democracy has actually been thriving with Panchayati Raj elections of 2018 witnessing a voter turnout of 74.1 per cent followed by elections to the

Block Development Councils held for the first time in the history of Jammu and Kashmir in October 2019 with a record 98.3 per cent voter turnout. This has brought in new voices and new actors into the political arena, away from the stranglehold of a few families who dominated local politics.

No wonder that few are calling for the restoration of Article 370 today.

The writer is a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).



Arjun Ram Meghwal

UNION MINISTER WHO ENDORSED 'BHABHI JI PAPAD' POSITIVE

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, who had recently endorsed 'Bhabhi ji papad' claiming that the snack will help prevent Coronavirus, himself tested positive for the deadly contagion on Saturday. As per reports, Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs he currently admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. With this, Meghwal becomes the fourth Union minister to have tested positive for coronavirus. Earlier in the day, Union Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Chaudhary also tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Jodhpur. — Agencies

DECCAN
Chronicle

9 AUGUST 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

My first brush with a
'Madras autowallah'

These days, when I have time on my hands, my mind drifts back to old times, and to surprises, of which there are many. Back in the 1970s, my elder brother went off to college, to a hostel and to what I thought was freedom. Envious, I nagged my parents into allowing me to go on a longish train ride from our home in Trivandrum to Madras, some twenty hours away by the metre-gauge line that was, in those days, the sole direct rail route between those cities.

My parents saw me off with ₹50/- for expenses, tickets both ways, instructions on what not to eat on the train, and written instructions on how to get to my cousin's place in Besant Nagar from Egmore railway station. Also, for emergency use, I had the phone number of a friend of Dad's, and one final instruction relayed from my Madras cousin: *Don't ever take an autorickshaw in Madras because the drivers are all cheats!*

The train left Trivandrum in the afternoon, and I managed to follow Mom's instructions on food until dinner-time, when I succumbed to temptation and polished off a fragrant but forbidden chicken biryani. The night was pleasant and I slept well enough, even though the berth was merely a plank, and the ride was bumpy as it always was on metre-gauge railway lines.

I came awake to sunlight, a queue for the toilets, which I wanted desperately to use, and the sight of fellow passengers packing their bags, preparing to get off. I asked one of them how long it would take to get to Madras, and he replied, "Less than ten minutes." No hope, evidently, of making it to the toilet before that. I asked him about the buses my cousin had written about, and he replied, "Oh! No problem. There's one every twenty minutes. You'll get to Besant Nagar in an hour."

That roiling stomach made an hour look like an eternity. Dad's colleague lived in Adyar. "What about Adyar?" I asked. "Is that closer?"

"Yes," he said. "About half the distance."

By now the train was drawing up at the platform and there was a surge to the door. Larger passengers loaded with luggage shoved me out of the way in their rush to get wherever they were going. Perhaps they, too, needed a toilet, I thought, and waited for my turn to step off the coach. Saving half an hour seemed important enough, I thought, to justify calling Dad's friend to ask if I could go straight to his place.

There were coin telephones in the concourse of the station. In those days the coin telephone system worked as follows: you got your coins ready and dialled the number you wanted to call. When the connection was made, you would be able to hear whatever the person you called said, but he or she wouldn't be able to hear you until the coin slotted into place. The phone wanted a ten-paisa coin, which I had, but what I didn't know was that it required a "new" or aluminium ten-paisa coin, not the steel ones I had. When I dialled Dad's friend, he couldn't hear me: all he knew was that some stranger was trying to get through to him.

I gave up after the second attempt and decided that my internal situation had now become an emergency, and so, against my cousin's emphatic advice, I took an auto, the first in a queue. The driver was a tall, lean, bare-footed man in an orange lungi and a khaki shirt, with frizzy hair, a drooping moustache, and red eyes. I distrusted him on sight, but since the queue was rigorously enforced, I had no choice.

When I got into the vehicle and tried to tell him where I wanted to go, we discovered that he knew just enough Malayalam and I knew just enough Tamil for us to communicate basics. I remembered Mom telling me that the auto fare to Besant Nagar would be eight to ten rupees. This being my first time alone in a strange city, I kept my eyes glued to the meter as, in a very short while, it went up to what I thought was ₹13. I swallowed, collected my scattered wits, and told the driver there was something wrong with the meter. He stopped and got out of the vehicle to look at the meter, and burst out laughing, saying that it was showing only ₹1.30... While I shrank back into the passenger seat, he resumed the ride, his mood vastly uplifted by my display of foolishness.

When we got to the Besant Nagar bus stop, I couldn't find the sheet of instructions I'd been given, and had no idea how to get where I wanted. My emergency was now compelling, and I needed to find my cousin's house before things broke loose. The driver saw that I was in doubt, and asked me where I wanted to go. I told him my cousin's name, that she lived somewhere in the neighbourhood, and I didn't know exactly where. He knew that I was a stranger, a kid, didn't know the language, and was in some kind of trouble. He parked his vehicle, and told me in simple Tamil to follow him. He asked a couple of passers-by where so-and-so lived, and, in a couple of minutes, found their street. As we entered it, I saw my cousin at a second floor balcony watching our progress... Jackpot!

There was just enough time to hand the driver a ten-rupee note before rushing up the staircase: I've never climbed four flights of stairs that fast, and I'll probably never forget the relief that followed. But the enduring memory is of that evil-looking auto man who turned out a gem...

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

Subhani

Jaishankar's new vision
may face a reality check

K.C. Singh

Come September, external affairs minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar's book *The India Way* will be out. His intention, stated on record, is to encourage "an honest conversation among Indians, without discouraging the world from eavesdropping". An excerpt published recently from the book's introduction outlines his worldview. It raises a number of interesting points.

First, serving foreign ministers generally avoid treatises on challenges and policy options of a government, constrained by the need for secrecy over real thought processes within a government. Henry Kissinger penned his four experience-based books — *White House Years* (1979), *Diplomacy* (1994), *On China* (2011) and *World Order* (2014) — after he left office. Similarly, other US secretaries of state like Madeline Albright, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton have penned their thoughts only after retirement. Thus, unable to write with candour about the diplomatic choices before the Narendra Modi government, Mr Jaishankar has chosen to provide broad perspective on the evolving geopolitics. In any case, he realises that in the current politically surcharged atmosphere, when the public wants answers on how the government proposes to counter the Chinese intrusions, it is best to play professor.

He expounds that the bipolar world is now gone and we are headed towards "multipolarity and less multilateralism". He ignores 50 years of Indian foreign policy after Independence when the non-aligned movement was born to defy the bipolar world and did provide, however fitfully, a third leg. India's alliance of convenience with the Soviet Union in 1971 enabled it to stymie America's support for Pakistan, its treaty ally, France under then Presi-

dent Charles de Gaulle pulled French forces out of Nato in 1966 to pursue more independent policies, reversed finally in 2009 as benefit was seen in coordinating action with European allies. So, the bipolar world of the Cold War era also had middle powers creating space for independent action. The world is now headed towards two looser alliances, as China extends its reach through the Belt and Road Initiative continentally and via maritime domain. The proposed 25-year agreement between China and Iran and the Myanmar-China re-engagement after President Xi Jinping's January 2020 visit to that country will extensively extend China's reach, through ports and overland via Central Asia. Likewise, India has no option but to work with its Quad partners — United States, Japan and Australia — and other Asean members willing to join hands to balance Chinese assertiveness. Rather than multiple poles, multiple groupings of the willing are emerging to create a new balance and put China back on the guard rails. Critical to the shape the future will take will be the outcome of America's November election, but Mr Jaishankar dodges that issue, as PM Modi has already moved too deeply into the Donald Trump corner.

Prime Minister Modi handpicked Mr Jaishankar, first as foreign secretary, days after he handled President Barack Obama's visit to India in January 2015, by displacing an incumbent. Then he plucked him from retirement to make him external affairs minister. So, the book is meant to provide intellectual clothing to global convergence between right-wing populist leaders. Mr Jaishankar notes three seminal events constraining India's strategic options. One is Partition, which diminished India territorially and demographically,

enabling China to manipulate Pakistan and others in the Indian periphery. Two, delayed economic reforms. Three, the reluctance to espouse nuclear weapons, leaving India stranded between the signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the five nuclear weapon powers, with differential powers and obligations.

Mr Jaishankar is right about the last point as India did have the knowhow and fissile material for a possible nuclear test before the 1967 cut-off date, which would have enabled it to sign the NPT as a nuclear weapon power. It has been speculated that after 1965 India-Pakistan war, PM Lal Bahadur Shastri may have authorised such a test had not he and Dr Homi Bhabha, the custodian of India's nuclear programme, died tragically within days of each other in January 1966. However, it must be contextualised that India was then in a defensive mode after the demoralising defeat in 1962 at Chinese hands and Jawaharlal Nehru's death in 1964.

Mr Jaishankar, in an article published recently, traces contemporary global dilemmas to differences over the "relationship between the State, politics, society, business, faith and the markets". This omnibus conclusion and his remark on Partition as India's strategic burden deserve a riposte. Ironically, the minister's own party would be the first to contradict him on Partition. Were roughly 400 million Muslims of Pakistan and Bangladesh to join India's Muslims in an imagined undivided India, the demographics would be the BJP's electoral nightmare. After attaining a dominant position in South Asia, following the 1971 victory, India's gains were frittered away as the nation went into a decade of internal strife, the Emergency, the rise of the Congress fam-

Partition didn't stymie India. It was a historical inevitability due to irreversible communal polarisation, exacerbated by Muslims' fear of marginalisation in a democracy.

ily heir, etc. Pakistan, on the other hand, got a lucky break with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, rekindling their US alliance and gaining protection for their clandestine nuclear weapons programme. Ignoring Pakistan's weapons programme was a strategic mistake. Thus, Partition didn't stymie India. It was a historical inevitability due to irreversible communal polarisation, exacerbated by Muslims' fear of marginalisation in a democracy. Mr Jaishankar's party is today proving those fears correct by their majoritarian agenda. The malaise afflicting India today is this uninhibited pursuit of the BJP's core agenda, in line with similar democratic regression towards illiberalism in many democracies like the United States, Brazil and others.

Foreign policy thus can't be conducted in isolation from domestic politics. Mr Jaishankar is in receipt of a bipartisan letter from the US Congress on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. If the November election produces a Joe Biden victory, and particularly if the Democrats capture both Houses, the Modi government's domestic politics will come under more scrutiny. President Barack Obama too had engaged the Modi government cautiously. He ended his 2015 state visit with a Siri Fort speech reminding India of its constitutional pledge to uphold the "dignity of the individual", respect for religious diversity and freedom of faith. The Modi government's second term has mainstreamed majoritarian politics, ranging from Ayodhya, the Ram Mandir to the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act and the abolition of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

The lesson from the past is that a united India is a stronger India. An India distracted by partisan politics loses its edge, regionally and globally. Intellectual hair-splitting and bandying about of geopolitical terms cannot change that.

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

LETTERS

TRAGIC MISHAP

NRIs returning to their loved ones facing such a situation is pathetic (16 die as AI flight falls into valley, DC, Aug. 8). The survivors are no better than the dead with all their belongings and savings lost. Officials say they were fortunate that the aircraft did not catch fire. The ministers will hitch a joy ride to the accident site, order an inquiry, speak a few words to the inconsolable, present some irrelevant statistics.

Varghese George
Secunderabad

LOAN RESTRUCTURING

The RBI's decision to allow banks to restructure loans borrowed by MSMEs, corporates and individuals is timely (*RBI loan policy spells relief for borrowers, DC, Aug. 8*). Borrowers should be given time for restructuring loans to tide over the present financial crisis.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao
Hyderabad

RAM NARRATIVE

Manan Kumar's statement is not true (*Progressives must unite to expose govt's 'Ram' narrative, DC, Aug. 8*). K.K. Muhammed, former regional director, North, ASI, part of the team of archaeologists which had carried out the first excavation in 1976-77 said that below the Babri mosque there were remains of a grand temple structure.

S. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

Apparently Lord Rama has approved construction of the Ram Mandir, but I am sure He might spring a surprise for Muslims. Wait, Lord Rama is looking into political side of the masjid destruction and mandir construction.

M.S. Murty
Hyderabad

NOT HANDLOOM

Saris worn by minister Smriti Irani and Priyanka Chopra are not handlooms (*Celebrities sport handlooms in support of weavers, DC, Aug. 8*).

Molugu V. Sreenivasulu
Hyderabad

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

Furore in Lok Sabha
over Soviet maps

NEW DELHI, August 8 Barring the two Communist parties and the DMK, the entire Opposition in the Lok Sabha today walked out of the House to protest against Speaker G.S. Dhillon's rejection of their request for the admission of an adjournment motion.

Opposition members sought to move the adjournment motion to discuss inclusion of large

chunks of India territory as Chinese in the maps in the Great Soviet encyclopedia.

The DMK also joined the other parties in their demand for the admission of the adjournment motion in place of the call attention motion on the subject which stood in the name of Mrs. Tarkeshwari Sinha and four others. But, Mr. Era Sezhiyan who was the only DMK member present, stayed behind.

When Somen Mitra shoved Amar Singh out of Kolkata

Miffed Uma turns up

The Ram Janmabhoomi temple *bhoomi puja* at Ayodhya was a grand affair where everything went as per plan. But behind the scenes was disquiet within both the BJP and the Congress. Uma Bharti, a key figure during 1980s-1990s Ram Janmabhoomi movement, first said she would stay away and then landed up on the banks of river Saryu. Uma was reportedly miffed that she was not formally invited at the first instance. The firebrand *sanyasin* has not been keeping well so the Covid-19 scare is said to have also played on her mind while initially declining to be there.

In the Congress, the leftist lobby worked hard to oppose Ram Janmabhoomi temple inauguration but pressure from party MPs worked. Rahul Gandhi took a nuanced position while Priyanka Gandhi, Amarinder Singh and Kamal Nath took a pro-temple stand. Nath organised *Hanuman Chalisa* at his Bhopal residence and posted a picture of him in a saffron robe on twitter. Not to be left behind, Mani Shankar Aiyar wrote a newspaper article pro-

fessing Congress faith in secularism.

Pilot intractable

There are no signs of truce in the Rajasthan Congress. The Ashok Gehlot government has dropped its charges, but rebel Sachin Pilot is reportedly still insisting upon the removal of Gehlot as Chief Minister. Peacemakers want Rahul, Sonia and Priyanka Gandhi to draft either Gehlot or Pilot into the AICC secretariat but both are unwilling. Rahul, who is set to return as AICC chief, is in particular opposed to the idea of jettisoning Gehlot as a pre-condition.

A quiet goodbye

It was a sad and quiet exit for Amar Singh who for most of his life remained boisterous and flamboyant. Defence minister Rajnath Singh, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Jayaprada were prominent persons who paid their respects at Singh's Chhattarpur farmhouse in Delhi minutes before his mortal



By WAQYANAWIS

remains were consigned to flames. Amar's political journey began in Kolkata with Subrata Mukherjee and against Somen

Mitra who died recently. During a Kolkata corporation election, the Amar-Somen animosity turned so intense that Amar had to flee Kolkata. He could only return to the city after giving an undertaking that he would not indulge in Kolkata's municipal politics. The initial setback in politics made Amar turn to the Birla and Bhartiya households that gave him a big foothold in Delhi.

Celluloid patriotism

Have you heard of a Patriotic Film Festival? Well, everything is possible in New India. The National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) is organising an online patriotic film festival as part of the Independence Day Celebrations 2020 by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Shyam Benegal's 1996 *Gandhi Se Mahatma Tak*, Bimal Roy's 1944 acclaimed Bengali film *Udayar Pathay*, Mani Ratnam's Tamil hit *Raja* (1992) and Rajkumar Santoshi's 2002 drama, *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* are some

of the acclaimed films which can be watched on www.cinemasofindia.com.

Just good neighbours

Love in the time of Covid: Nanavati Hospital, Mumbai, has been insisting that megastar Amitabh Bachchan is not a shareholder in Radiant Life Care, the private company that manages the hospital. However, an interesting development has come to light. Abhay Soi, the promoter and managing director of Radiant, and the Bachchans are soon going to be neighbours. Both families reportedly have bought apartments in the Uber luxury development Three Sixty West at Worli, which will be serviced by the Ritz Carlton Hotel chain. In the spirit of friendship and loving neighbourliness, we expect many more lyrical tweets in praise of the hospital from you know who.

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

IN BRIEF

8 soldiers die in Somalia blast

Nairobi: A Somali police officer says at least eight soldiers are dead and more than 14 others wounded after a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at the gates of a military base in Somalia's capital. Captain Mohamed Hussein says the toll is expected to rise. Police Colonel Ahmed Muse says the bomber struck the 12th April Army Brigade base near the newly reopened sports stadium in Warta-Nabadda district. Witnesses say ambulance sirens can be heard as police cordon off the scene. Huge clouds of smoke are billowing. The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group often targets military sites in Mogadishu.

2 Lebanese shot dead in Tehran

Tehran: An unknown gunman has killed two Lebanese nationals on the streets of the Iranian capital, local media reported on Saturday. The semiofficial Mehr news agency said the assailant, riding a motorcycle, shot dead Maryam Dawood and her father Habib Dawood in northern Tehran. The report said Habib Dawood was a history professor and his daughter Maryam was 27 year old. The report did not provide further details but said the case is under investigation. Many Lebanese, usually Shiites, work and live in Tehran. Iran is the main supporter of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. Such incidents are rare in Iran, though a series of bombings targeted several Iranian nuclear scientists between 2010-2012.

20 gunned down in Burkino Faso

Ouagadougou: Gunmen stormed a cattle market and opened fire in an eastern Burkina Faso village on Friday, killing at least 20 people and injuring many others, a local government official said. The attack in Namoungou village is being investigated, said Saidou Sanou, the governor of the eastern region, who urged people to be vigilant and to closely collaborate with the army. Violence linked to Islamic militants and local defense militias killed nearly 2,000 people in Burkina Faso last year and displaced almost 1 million. Violence in the once peaceful West African nation is on track this year to surpass that of last year, Sahel researcher Heni Nsaibia says. The eastern region has been particularly hard hit, with attacks increasing almost 75 per cent this year compared with last, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project says. Eleven clashes have already taken place during the first week of August, according to an internal security report for aid workers seen by The Associated Press.

9 KIDS KILLED IN YEMENI AIRSTRIKES

Sanaa, Aug. 8: Airstrikes in northern Yemen killed as many as nine children, a United Nations official said on Friday, making it the third such attack with significant child deaths in that rebel-controlled region this month. Lise Grande, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, said in a statement that a group of mostly women and children were hit while they were traveling by road on Thursday. She said it was "shocking and completely, totally unacceptable." The statement said at least seven more children and two women were injured, but added that the casualty figures were only preliminary and still under investigation. The health ministry for the Houthi rebels, who control the area where the incident happened, had said on coalition supporting Yemen's government conducted six airstrikes in the mountainous northern Yemeni province of Jawf.

It said a rough early count indicated more than 20 dead, mostly women and children. Limited access to Houthi-controlled areas for aid workers and journalists often makes details of attacks difficult to confirm.

A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, Turki al-Maliki, told the Saudi newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat paper on Friday that the coalition was "seriously looking into" the recent allegations of civilian casualties.

Beirut in protest mode, grief turns to rage

For fourth day, Lebanese capital woke up to sound of broken glasses being swept on the streets

Beirut, Aug. 8: Thousands of Lebanese prepared on Saturday for a major protest against a political leadership they blame for a monster explosion that killed more than 150 people and disfigured the capital Beirut.

Two days after a landmark visit by French President Emmanuel Macron, diplomatic activity intensified in Beirut to organise international support for the disaster-hit country ahead of a Sunday aid conference.

For the fourth day running, Beirut woke up to the sound of broken glass being swept on the streets, its inhabitants still taking stock after one of the biggest blasts of its kind in recent history.

A fire at Beirut port on Tuesday ignited a stock of ammonium nitrate and triggered an explosion that was felt in neighbouring countries and destroyed entire neighbourhoods of the city.

Spectacular videos of the disaster show a mushroom-shaped shockwave that drew comparisons with the 1945 atomic bombs on Japan while foreign rescue teams compared the devastation with earthquake scenes.

Saturday could be the last day anybody buried under rubble has any chance of being found alive and according to the health ministry, more than 60 people are still missing.

The Netherlands announced on Saturday that its ambassador's wife was among the 154 people confirmed to have died in the tragedy. Solidarity for the victims of the blast, from inside and outside Lebanon, has been impressive but this disaster was man-made and residents want heads to roll.

The president and prime minister of Lebanon have promised that a government investigation would net the culprits but, more than a mere case of negligence, many Lebanese see the blast as a direct result of their leaders' corruption.

"After three days of cleaning, removing rubble and licking our wounds... it is time to let our anger explode and punish them," said Fares Halabi, a 28-year-old activist who planned to join a protest on Saturday afternoon. — *AFP*



This aerial picture shows the Samuel De Champlain Bridge illuminated with the colours of the Lebanese flag as a tribute to the victims of Beirut's blast and in solidarity with the people of Lebanon in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on Saturday. — *AFP*

Israel's Lebanon aid offer unlikely to find takers

Jerusalem, Aug. 8: For some it's a gesture of goodwill, to others sheer hypocrisy: Israel's offer of humanitarian aid to Lebanon after the massive Beirut blast is unlikely to be taken up.

The two neighbours are still technically at war, have no diplomatic ties and mutual suspicion, even animosity, defines their relations.

As Beirut reeled Tuesday after the monster blast at the port ripped across the city, many eyes were on Israel.

The military initially offered a traditional "no comment" to queries about the possible source of the explosion, until later a government source added: "Israel has nothing to do with this incident".

Hours later the government offered humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

"Israel has turned to Lebanon through interna-

● **GOVERNMENT AND diplomatic sources in Jerusalem say Israel has tried unsuccessfully since Tuesday to send medical equipment to Lebanon via the United Nations, which monitors a buffer zone between the two countries.**

tional security and political contacts to offer humanitarian and medical aid to the Lebanese government," a statement said.

As Beirut hospitals became overwhelmed by the influx of thousands of injured, Lebanon's government did not comment. Aid has been streaming in from elsewhere, including from former power France and Iran, an ally of Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement and key Israeli rival.

Israel and Hezbollah last fought a 33-day war in the summer of 2006 that dev-

astated parts of the Lebanese capital and killed hundreds.

Government and diplomatic sources in Jerusalem say Israel has tried unsuccessfully since Tuesday to send medical equipment to Lebanon via the United Nations, which monitors a buffer zone between the two countries.

Israel even sought to dispatch medical personnel to Cyprus, where Beirut victims could be treated, according to the sources.

"It is a very human gesture," Amos Yadlin, former head of Israeli military intelligence, told reporters. "It is a gesture that can bring the two nations together."

Yadlin blamed Hezbollah's backers in Tehran for the continuing air of hostility between Israel and Lebanon, insisting there was "no real dispute" between the neighbours. — *AFP*

EMBASSY: OVER 40 SYRIANS KILLED IN BEIRUT BLAST

Beirut, Aug. 8: More than 40 Syrians were among those killed in the massive blast that devastated the Lebanese capital this week, the Syrian embassy said Saturday.

The embassy did not specify if the Syrian fatalities were included in the 154 death toll announced by Lebanese authorities. "The confirmed number we have of Syrian martyrs so far is 43," it said. "The embassy is offering all services to facilitate the transfer some corpses back to Syria and is helping bury others in Lebanon," it added.

Lebanon's health ministry has said more than 60 people are still missing after Tuesday's blast at Beirut port.

Some of the Syrians killed were crewmen on cargo ships docked at the port, according to *AFP* correspondents at the scene. — *AFP*

Dutch envoy's wife dies in Beirut blast

The Hague, Aug. 8: The wife of Dutch ambassador to Lebanon Jan Waltmans has died of wounds sustained in the Beirut bomb explosion, the Netherlands' foreign ministry said on Saturday.

"It is with dismay and great sadness that we report the death of our colleague Hedwig Waltmans-Molier. She succumbed to injuries sustained in the massive explosion in Beirut," a ministry statement said.

Waltmans-Molier was hit by debris from the explosion shortly after returning back to Lebanon from holiday with her husband of 38 years.

"Hedwig was standing in her living room next to her husband when she was hit, sheerly by bad luck, by the explosion," the ministry said.

● **IT IS** with dismay and great sadness that we report the death of our colleague Hedwig Waltmans-Molier. She succumbed to injuries sustained in the massive explosion in Beirut, a ministry statement said.

● **WALTMANS-MOLIER** was hit by debris from the explosion shortly after returning back to Lebanon from holiday with her husband of 38 years.

The 55-year-old was the only Dutch citizen reported to have died from the explosion that rocket Beirut on Tuesday, killing at least 154 and devastating swathes of the capital.

Five other Dutch citizens were slightly injured, the ministry said. — *AP*

MPs resign after Beirut explosion

Beirut, Aug. 8: A three-member Lebanese parliamentary bloc resigned on Saturday in protest at the Beirut blast widely blamed on government negligence and corruption, bringing to five the number of MPs to quit since the disaster.

In an emotional speech during a funeral service for one of his top party officials who died in Tuesday's blast, Samy Gemayel announced his resignation and that of the two other MPs from his Kataeb party.

"Your comrades took the decision to resign from parliament," Gemayel said, addressing Kataeb secretary-general Nazar Najarian, one of the 154 confirmed victims of the explosion at Beirut port.

Gemayel criticised the reactions of several top politicians who argued

the international aid effort following the disaster would be an opportunity to break the diplomatic isolation of Lebanon.

"A new Lebanon must be born on the ruins of the old one, which you represent," he said, addressing the authorities at large and their clan leaders.

The Christian party's three resignations from the 128-seat parliament come after those of Marwan Hamade from the party of Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and independent MP Paula Yacoubian.

Yacoubian told the CNN news channel that she was urging the entire parliament to stand down.

"As the MP of Beirut, I took the decision of resigning because I feel I'm a false witness in this parliament," she said. — *AP*

Mauritius declares crisis over oil spill

Johannesburg, Aug. 8: Anxious residents of the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius stuffed fabric sacks with sugar cane leaves on Saturday to create makeshift oil spill barriers as tons of fuel leaking from a grounded ship put endangered wildlife in further peril.

The government has declared an environmental emergency and France said it was sending help from its nearby Reunion island. Satellite images showed a dark slick spreading in the turquoise waters near wetlands that the government called "very sensitive." "When biodiversity is in peril, there is urgency to act," French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted Saturday.

Wildlife workers and volunteers ferried dozens of baby tortoises and rare plants from an island near the spill, Ile aux Aigrettes, to the mainland as fears grew that worsening weather on Sunday could tear the Japanese-owned ship apart along its cracked hull. A French statement from Reunion on Saturday said a military

● **THE GOVERNMENT** has declared an environmental emergency and France said it was sending help from its nearby Reunion island.

● **WILDLIFE WORKERS** and volunteers ferried dozens of baby tortoises and rare plants from an island near the spill,

transport aircraft was carrying pollution control equipment to Mauritius and a navy vessel with additional material would set sail for the island nation.

Residents and environmentalists alike wondered why authorities didn't act more quickly after the ship ran aground July 25 on a reef. Mauritius says the ship, the MV Wakashio, was carrying nearly 4,000 tons of fuel.

"That's the big question," Jean Hugues Gardenne with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation told The Associated Press. "Why that ship has been sitting for long on that coral reef and nothing being done." — *AP*

Rajapaksa takes oath as Lanka PM after landslide

Colombo, Aug. 8: Mahinda Rajapaksa will be sworn in as Sri Lanka's prime minister at a historic Buddhist temple on Sunday, allowing the powerful Rajapaksa clan to consolidate their grip on power in the island nation.

The 74-year-old Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) leader, who polled over 500,000 individual preference votes — the highest ever recorded by a candidate in the country's history of elections — will take the oath of office for the ninth Parliament at the sacred Rajamaha Viharaya

in Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, according to an official statement.

The SLPP, led by Mahinda, registered a landslide victory in the general election, securing two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the Constitution to further consolidate the family's firm grip on power for the next five years.

The party won in 145 constituencies, bagging a total of 150 seats with its allies, a two-thirds majority in the 225-member Parliament. It polled 6.8 million votes (59.9 per cent).

Canada's last intact ice shelf collapses due to warming

Toronto, Aug. 8: Much of Canada's remaining intact ice shelf has broken apart into hunking icebergs thanks to a hot summer and global warming, scientists said. Canada's 4,000-year-old Milne Ice Shelf on the northwestern edge of Ellesmere Island had been

the country's last intact ice shelf until the end of July when ice analyst Adrienne White of the Canadian Ice Service noticed that satellite photos showed that about 43 per cent of it had broken off. She said it happened around July 30 or 31.

Two giant icebergs

formed along with lots of smaller ones, and they have already started drifting away, White said. The biggest is nearly the size of Manhattan — 21 square miles (55 square kilometers) and 7 miles long (11.5 kilometers). They are 230 to 260 feet (70 to 80 meters) thick.

On Saturday, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 71, congratulated his elder brother Mahinda for winning the General Election. "I extend my warmest congratulations to Prime Minister @PresRajapaksa and all the candidates of the @PodujanaParty, who contested the recent General Elections and was elected to Parliament by popular vote and the National List," the president tweeted ahead of the swearing-in ceremony on Sunday morning. The Cabinet will be sworn-in on Monday. — *PTI*

THREAT OF MELTING GLACIER TO ITALIAN RESORT EASING, SAYS MAYOR

Courmayeur, Italy, Aug. 8: The threat that a massive chunk of glacier loosened by soaring temperatures could collapse near an alpine resort on the Italian side of the Mont Blanc mountain range has slightly eased, a local mayor said on Saturday.

Climate change has been increasingly melting the world's glaciers, creating a new danger for the town of Courmayeur,

a resort community in Italy's Aosta Valley region, near the French border.

The town was put on high alert on Wednesday as a block of ice estimated at about 5,000 cubic metres — the size of the Milan cathedral, one official said — from the Planpincieux glacier risked falling and threatening homes. — *AP*

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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on the left was easy? Try this. Check the solution tomorrow. Tips available at www.sudoku-xyz.com. Discuss the SU◆DO◆KU puzzles printed and contribute mind teasers of your own at www.sudex-el.com/forum

SHORT TAKES

Svitolina, Bertens out of US Open

New York: Two more top-10 women — Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens — will miss the U.S. Open, joining No. 1-ranked Ash Barty in skipping the Grand Slam tennis tournament during the Coronavirus pandemic. The U.S. Tennis Association also announced on Friday that Barbora Krejčíková withdrew. The fifth-ranked Svitolina, a Ukrainian who was a semifinalist at Flushing Meadows a year ago, posted Friday on social media that she doesn't "feel comfortable to travel to US without putting my team and myself at high risk."

No.7 Bertens, who is Dutch, wrote on Instagram that one of her concerns is the need to be quarantined upon returning to Europe after the U.S. Open, which runs from Aug. 31 to Sept. 13 and will not have any spectators.

The French Open — where Bertens reached the semifinals in 2016 — is scheduled to begin Sept. 27. She also wants to play on the clay-court tournament in Rome before heading to Paris for the Grand Slam.

— AP

Tokyo Olympics OC member +ve

Tokyo: Two employees of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee have tested positive for Covid-19, officials said Saturday. That brings to three the number of employees of the committee who have tested positive since the pandemic began. Organisers said a man and a woman had tested positive but gave few details. They said the man was in his 20s and the woman in her 30s, and that both were now working from home rather than at the headquarters located near Tokyo Bay.

Many of the organizing committee's employees have been working remotely though some have returned to office work in the last few months. The organising committee has a staff of 3,500. The 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been put back to July 23, 2021 due to the pandemic. The original closing ceremony was to have been Sunday, August 9. Japan has reported just over 1,000 deaths from Covid-19. Like the country, Tokyo has been largely spared.

— AP

Shakib all set to resume training

Dhaka: Premier Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is set to start training at the BKSP facility at Savar near here from next month, ahead of his return to competitive cricket. The southpaw was banned for two years, one year of it suspended, for failing to report corrupt approaches by an alleged Indian bookie during the Indian Premier League. His ban ends on October 29 this year.

"Shakib will come to the BKSP next month where he will have coaches and trainers available," Shakib's mentor Nazmul Abedeen was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricInfo*.

"We are functional as the coaches are all residing within the campus, so we can work with him well. Shakib will have everything at his disposal," he added.

Abedeen, who was the Bangladesh Cricket Board's game development manager for many years, is one of Shakib's earliest coaches.

— PTI

TESTING DAY FOR REPSOL HONDA TEAM

Brno: One lap pace eludes Alex Marquez in Brno as Stefan Bradl gains more speed during a busy day, the Repsol Honda Team pair ready to fight forward on Sunday.

It was a day of contrasts for MotoGP rookie Alex Marquez, the 2019 Moto2 race-winner was pleased with his race pace but continued to search for one-lap speed. Having cut 1.2 seconds off his best time from Friday to Saturday morning, Alex ended Free Practice 3 just 1.298 seconds off first but down in 19th and would enter Q1 as a result.

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FAST & FURIOUS

Dhoni will retire when he is outrun: Manjrekar

Mumbai, Aug. 8: Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar on Saturday revealed Mahendra Singh Dhoni had told him he would consider himself fit for international cricket as long as he is "beating the fastest sprinter in the team."

Manjrekar, a well-known commentator, said he had a chat with the two-time World Cup-winning former captain regarding his future in international cricket during India skipper Virat Kohli's wedding in 2017.

"During Virat Kohli's wedding, I had a little corner time with him and he said as long as 'I am beating the fastest sprinter in the team, I am going to consider myself fit enough to be playing international cricket or playing high-level cricket'," Manjrekar said.

"People like Tendulkar, Dhoni, these are champions on public stage, you will never see Dhoni ever on a public stage, like a cricket field, looking slightly unfit or unable to sprint or run..." he said on a sports show.

Dhoni's last outing in competitive cricket was the 2019 World Cup semifinal against New Zealand.

Manjrekar also reckoned Dhoni would come good in the IPL, saying the presence of "only four-five" good bowlers in the league is not enough to trouble the seasoned campaigner.

"He is going to be very good and one of the reasons he is so successful and consistent in IPL as a batsman as opposed to international is that he knows that there are about four to five bowlers to handle," Manjrekar said.

"So, as a batter, with MS Dhoni in the IPL, I don't see much difference," he added.

— PTI



Cricketers Hardik Pandya (left) and M. S. Dhoni run during a training session in this file photo.

Biggies off the blocks for kit

● German sporting brand Puma is one of the frontrunners to bag the kit sponsorship for Indian cricket team. Rival brand Adidas may enter the race while current sponsor Nike is still undecided.

New Delhi, Aug. 8: German sports apparel and footwear major Puma could be the frontrunner in bagging the Indian cricket team's kit sponsorship rights while rival Adidas could also enter the fray.

However, it couldn't be confirmed whether Nike would re-bid after refusing BCCI's scaled down bid offer from their ₹370 crore (plus 30 crore royalty), which they paid from 2016 to 2020.

"I can confirm you that Puma has bought the ITT (Invitation to Tender) document worth ₹1 lakh. While buying bid document doesn't mean one is bidding, Puma has shown genuine interest in submitting a bid," a senior BCCI official said.

It is learnt that Adidas

too has shown interest but whether it will be bidding for the sponsorship rights is still not known. Even though some feel that the German giant could independently bid for merchandise products, which will be a separate tender.

Selling of exclusive merchandise products depends on how many exclusive stores a company has along with the point of sales (shops that sells your company's products).

While Puma has over 350 exclusive stores, Adidas has more than 450 outlets

which makes these two companies the most sought after.

A senior industry insider explained the whole sponsorship issue in these turbulent times of economic slowdown.

"Don't be surprised if the new rights holder pays something around 200 crore for a five-year deal which will be significantly less than what Nike paid during previous term," the industry veteran explained.

"Look BCCI offered Nike the first right of refusal and that too a scaled down

offer which they declined. This could mean two things. Either they are not interested or may submit a bid which is even more scaled down than what BCCI offered," he said.

As far as Puma is concerned, it has had an increased interest in the Indian market over the years especially through IPL but now it also has India captain Virat Kohli as its brand ambassador along with KL Rahul.

"Puma has been a part of IPL for some years now and with Virat in their roster, it would only enhance their presence in Indian market," he added.

The BCCI in its new bid has kept a base price of Rs 61 lakh per match compared to the Rs 88 lakh during the last cycle.

— PTI

FORMULA | ONE

Bottas barges to pole for top race

Silverstone (United Kingdom), Aug. 8:

Valtteri Bottas outpaced his Mercedes teammate and world championship leader Lewis Hamilton by the finest of margins on Saturday to claim a dramatic pole position for the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix.

The Finn clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 25.154 seconds to beat the six-time world champion by only 0.063 in the final seconds of an enthralling qualifying session.

It was the Mercedes team's 67th front row lock-out in Formula One.

"It feels good," said Bottas who was securing the 13th pole of his career 48 hours after signing a new contract to keep him at Mercedes next season.

He added: "We have improved the set-up and the car since last week. Mentally, when you start on pole, you can only aim to win the race — and the starting point is good! It is

so nice to drive this amazing car."

Hamilton explained his unexpected 'slip' to second. "I wasn't that great, but Valtteri did a great job and he deserves pole."

Nico Hulkenberg, standing in for coronavirus victim Sergio Perez with the Racing Point team, was third, securing his spot with an impressive performance only 10 days after receiving a late call-up when eating a pastry in a Cologne caf. "It's been a crazy last week," he said.

He failed to start last Sunday's British Grand Prix at the circuit after an engine problem.

Max Verstappen took fourth for Red Bull ahead of Daniel Ricciardo of Renault, Lance Stroll in the second Force India, Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri and down in eighth Charles Leclerc in the leading Ferrari. Alex Albon was ninth in the second Red Bull and Lando Norris 10th for McLaren.

— AFP

CHAMPIONS | LEAGUE

City, Lyon blast big guns away

Manchester, Aug. 8: Manchester City took advantage of two shocking mistakes by Raphael Varane to beat Real Madrid 2-1 in their Champions League last 16 second leg on Friday and advance to the quarterfinals as Pep Guardiola came out on top in his duel with Zinedine Zidane.

But Madrid had been left with a mountain to climb in this tie after throwing away the lead to lose 2-1 in the first leg in Spain in February, before the coronavirus forced the competition into hibernation.

An identical defeat at an empty Etihad Stadium means it is City who advance 4-2 on aggregate.

Varane was dispossessed inside the box in the ninth minute allowing Raheem Sterling to put City ahead, and his poor headed back-pass attempt gifted Gabriel Jesus another goal midway through the second half.

Before that second goal the tie had been in the balance with the in-form Karim Benzema having scored for the visitors just before the half-hour mark.

Meanwhile, Lyon also qualified for the quarterfinals of the Champions League despite losing 1-2 in Turin, on away goal advance.

Lyon squeezed past the Italian champions thanks to Memphis Depay's 12th-minute penalty which put Rudi Garcia's side two goals ahead in the tie and left Juve with a mountain to climb.

Needing to score three unanswered goals in order to go through, Cristiano Ronaldo tried his best to drag the Italian champions over the line.

He levelled the scores on the night with a penalty of his own with two minutes left in the opening period before crashing a second home on the hour mark.

SARRI GETS THE BOOT

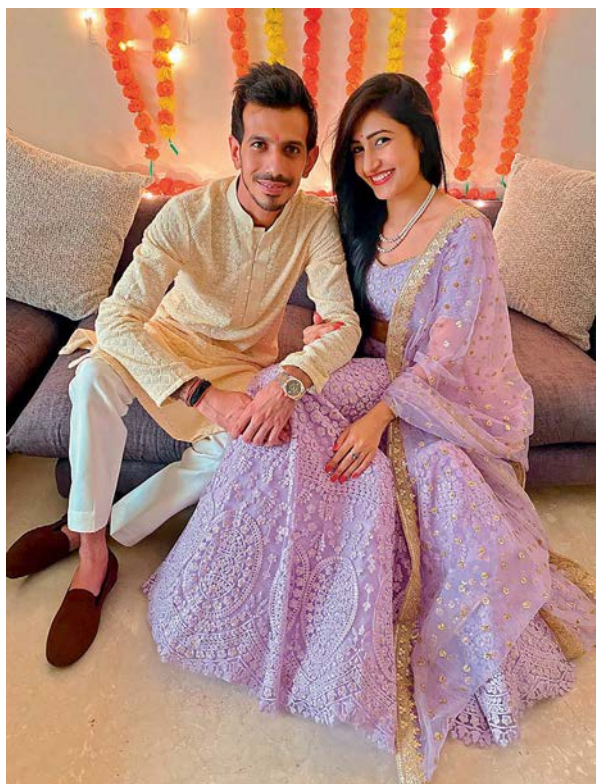
AS JUVE MANAGER

Juventus fired coach Maurizio Sarri on Saturday after his first season in charge ended with the team's Champions League exit.

Despite winning the Italian title, Sarri paid the price for the Round-of-16 loss to Lyon on Friday.

Sarri also left Chelsea last year after only one season in charge — despite winning the Europa League with the London club. While he led Juventus to a record-extending ninth straight Italian title, the team never really adapted to his quick-passing style.

— Agencies



Indian cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal is all smiles with his fiancée Dhanshree Verma, a dentist from Mumbai.

Indian spinner Yuzi is engaged

**BIPIN DANI
MUMBAI, AUG. 8**

Rahul Dravid is not the only Indian cricketer who is married to a dentist. Another Indian cricketer and a chess player Yuzvendra Chahal's fiancée is also a dentist.

Team India's 30-year-old leg spinner Chahal has checkmated Mumbai dentist Dhanshree Verma.

The *roka* ceremony was performed in Mumbai, Chahal's father Krishan Kumar confirmed to this reporter.

"Dhanashree Verma is a dentist in Andheri (West). Both met on social media but met each other person-

ally for the first time today. We all came from Delhi in the afternoon today and performed the *roka* ceremony," Kumar confirmed.

"Engagement will be done one day before the marriage. Because of Covid-19, the marriage will not happen soon", mother Sunita Devi said.

"Yes, my son will head to UAE for the Indian Premier League matches. Dhanshree will not be accompanying him," the mother added.

Chahal's family headed to Dhanshree's grandmother's house in the evening for dinner. Chahal's family will leave for Delhi on Sunday morning.

Buttler leads fightback

Manchester, Aug. 8: Pakistan sparked a top-order collapse before Jos Buttler led an England fightback as the first Test headed for a dramatic finish at Old Trafford on Saturday.

England were 167-5 at Tea on the fourth day, needing a further 110 runs to reach a challenging target of 277.

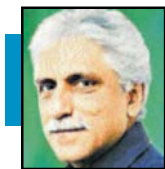
Only twice has a team chased more than 200 to win in the fourth innings of a Test at Old Trafford, with England making 294-4 against New Zealand in 2008 and 231-3 against the West Indies in 2004.

England, trying to end a run of losing the first Test in each of their last five series, were making

steady progress at 96-1. However, they lost four wickets for 31 runs in slipping to 117-5, with captain Joe Root and Ben Stokes both falling in the collapse.

Brief scores: Pakistan 326 & 169 (Y. Shah 33, A. Shafiq 29, S. Broad 3/37, vs England 219 & 167/5 in 53 overs (J. Buttler 32*, C. Woakes 26*, Y. Shah 2/74).

— AP



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The central government last week gave clearance for the IPL to be held, albeit outside India, ending months of suspense. The BCCI had been on tenterhooks since late March, when the league was first indefinitely suspended.

Several lockdowns because of Covid 19 almost scuttled prospects of the tournament being played this year. As weeks flew by, the powers-that-be in the

Indian cricket establishment were left wringing their hands in anxiety.

Finally, it came to the stage where the only possibility for IPL2020 to be played this year was if the T20 World Championship, scheduled in Australia in October this year, was scrapped. Not an easy matter considering the strained relations between the ICC and BCCI.

Strong behind-the-scenes negotiations over a pro-

tracted period of time finally forced the ICC and Cricket Australia to take this decision which opened up the window of opportunity for the IPL between late September and early November.

While the fact that IPL2020 will be played is major relief to the BCCI, it has come accompanied with complications. To conduct a tournament of this magnitude overseas (UAE) in such a short time and in the times of Covid is a logistical nightmare. And that's only one of several problems.

Largely, these are to do with money. Last week, title sponsor Vivo pulled out of the tournament following a backlash in India

over the face-off with China at the LOC in Ladakh. The BCCI was receiving a whopping Rs 440 crore per year from the Chinese cellphone maker over a five-year deal.

Interestingly, the BCCI put out an official release stating Vivo would not be associated with the IPL for this year only. This leaves the gate open for the Chinese company to return as title sponsor next year, which has raised eyebrows in several quarters.

Insiders in the cricket establishment and those from industry claim this was a decision taken jointly by the BCCI and Vivo. Neither wants to lose out. The money is excellent for

the former, while the latter would be loathe to surrender a hot property like the IPL.

Both parties will likely test the waters in the coming months.

If the current acrimony between India and China cools off, Vivo should be back within seven-eight months when the next edition of the IPL is due. For the moment, though, the BCCI has to make a last-minute scramble for finding a title sponsor.

Given the bleak economic outlook which has forced deep financial setbacks to companies, it seems extremely difficult that a substitute sponsor would cough up ₹440 crore. That said, finding a spon-

sor at a discounted rate should not be very difficult considering the allure of the IPL.

Money matters have also made relations between the BCCI and IPL franchisees fraught currently. With the tournament being played in the UAE and in stadia spectatorship either non-existent, or vastly reduced if permitted, gate money will take a big hit.

So too team sponsorships and merchandise sales. Usually, companies would queue up to sponsor IPL teams, but this time around its lukewarm at best: due to the late call to play the tournament, as well as company balance sheets lacking hefty

because of the pandemic.

Lower disposable income will also mean merchandising will take a hit. Taken together, this means less income for the franchisees. This has led to some grievances, and disagreements with the BCCI on share of profits and distribution.

From a wider perspective, however, a recalcitrant approach — on both sides — is unwarranted. The broadcast fee itself is so high that in itself it leaves profit for the BCCI and franchisees. While the overall income will undoubtedly reduce, both parties still stand to make decent money.

In such hard times, this is a big deal!