

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 11 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 27
Tithi: Ashtami
Star: Bharani
Rahukalam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.41am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.28 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.49 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.32 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.48 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 12.40 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+53,016)	(+886)
22,67,077	45,352

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,914)
TN: 3,02,815 5,041

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,01,44,884

DEATHS

7,36,072

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info

Andaman OFC project to usher new era of development: Shah

New Delhi: Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday said further hearing was required in the 2009 criminal contempt case against activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan and journalist Tarun Tejpal to examine whether comments on 'corruption' against judges per se amounted to contempt or not.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra on August 4 had made clear to Bhushan and Tejpal that it would hear the case against them, if it does not accept their "explanation" or "apology" in the matter.

Lebanese PM steps down in wake of Beirut explosion, protests

Beirut: Lebanon's prime minister stepped down from his job on Monday in the wake of the disastrous Beirut port explosion that triggered public fury, saying he has come to the conclusion that corruption in Lebanon is "bigger than the state."

COUNTER POINT



Don't worry about me... I used to face this since my childhood!

STATE | 3

DK, MDMK speak for Kanimozhi



NATION | 4

Dhankhar slams Mamata on Kisan scheme



SPORT | 8

Ex-Bangla cricketer catches coronavirus



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RAJ BREAKTHROUGH IMMINENT

Pilot steers conciliatory course, meets Gandhis

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 10

Ahead of the August 14 assembly session, there seemed a breakthrough in sight for the Congress government in Rajasthan with former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot meeting both Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi in Delhi and discussing a possible formula for rapprochement.

In a statement after the meeting, which lasted for more than two hours, Congress General Secretary (Organisation) in a statement said: "Sachin Pilot has met with former Congress President Rahul Gandhi and expressed his grievances in detail. They have had a frank, open and conclusive discussion. Sachin Pilot has committed to working in the interest of the Congress party and the Congress government in Rajasthan".

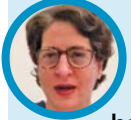
"Following this meeting, Congress President Sonia Gandhi has decided that the AICC will constitute a three-member committee to address the issues raised by Sachin Pilot and the aggrieved MLAs and arrive at an appropriate resolution thereof," the statement said.

Sources said most of the 18 MLAs loyal to Mr Pilot were set to return to Jaipur tonight to meet Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

Party sources add that some of the rebel MLAs have also been in touch with the Congress leadership in the last few days.

However, it was yet unclear as to whether the Party's Central leadership had accepted the demands of either Mr Pilot or Mr Gehlot.

Sachin Pilot expressed his grievances in detail to the Gandhis and they had a frank, open and conclusive discussion, said senior Congress leader KC Venugopal. Congress president Sonia Gandhi has decided that a three-member committee would address the issues raised by Pilot and the other rebels.



I had maintained from Day One that I would never join the BJP. My stand vindicated today" — Sachin Pilot

The sources said that Mr Pilot has demanded that he be reinstated as the State Congress Chief and made Chief Minister for the last year of the term of the Government in Rajasthan, the Central leadership was in no mood to agree to these demands.

Mr Gehlot on the other hand wanted that his former deputy be adjusted in Delhi and kept away from state politics, according to sources.

It was clear that the committee would look into these demands and take a call, the sources added.

During the meeting among the many things discussed was favourable voting by Mr Pilot and MLAs loyal to him in case of a trust vote during the upcoming Rajasthan assembly session.

Mr Pilot and 18 other MLAs had rebelled against the Gehlot-led Congress government in Rajasthan, leading to his sacking as deputy chief minister and state party chief.

Today or a few months later, Cong govt in Raj will disintegrate: BJP

New Delhi, Aug 10: Amid signs of a rapprochement between the Congress and its Rajasthan rebel faction led by Sachin Pilot, the BJP is weighing its options and working to put up a united face against the Ashok Gehlot government ahead of the assembly session from August 14.

BJP legislative party leader Gulab Chand Kataria claimed even a unity in the Congress ranks can only be temporary and the government is "bound to disintegrate sooner than later". A meeting of BJP MLAs has been called on Tuesday, Kataria told PTI. BJP sources said former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, who has been meeting party's national leadership in Delhi over the last few days, may attend the meeting in Jaipur.~

— PTI

Army to probe Jammu & Kashmir encounter of three 'terrorists'

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 10

The Army on Monday said that it has launched an investigation into the rumour that three alleged militants killed during an operation in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district on July 18 were actually labourers from frontier Rajouri district who had arrived in the area a day before to earn a living.

"We have noted social media inputs linked to the operation in Shopian on July 18, 2020. The three terrorists killed during the operation have not been identified and the bodies were buried based on established protocols. Army is investigating the matter," defence spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said in a statement. Earlier on Monday, various political parties and

● **The families of the missing persons - Imtiaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf - had on Sunday lodged an FIR at Peeri Police Post in Rajouri that their kin are missing since July 17. The trio, aged 18, 21 and 26 years respectively, had last called their families on July 17 informing them they had reached Shopian and got a room on rent**

human rights activists in J&K demanded an impartial probe into the sudden disappearance of three labourers soon after they had arrived in militancy-infested Shopian from Rajouri on July 17.

The families of the missing persons — Imtiaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed Khan and Abrar Yusuf — had on Sunday lodged an FIR at Peeri Police Post in Rajouri that their kin are missing since July 17.

The trio, aged 18, 21 and 26 years respectively, had last called their families on July 17 informing them

they had reached Shopian and got a room on rent.

"They last called on July 17 when they informed the families that they have reached Shopian where they have taken a room on rent," Lal Hussian, a relative of one of the missing persons, told Global News Service (GNS). Asked the reason for filing the missing report now, he said, "We thought there are connectivity problems in Kashmir for one or the other reasons and we were waiting that they will call soon".

At 895, fatalities remain very high for second day running in India

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, AUG. 10

Former President Pranab Mukherjee was among those testing positive for coronavirus Monday as India's overall infections reached 22,64,054, with 52,817 fresh cases. India also reported 895 deaths on Monday following a day of 1,007 deaths on Sunday, and the total fatality count to 45,352, the health ministry said.

According to Covid-19India.org figures, the country's total cases were about 22.64 lakhs, with more than 45,000 deaths.

In a tweet, Pranab Mukherjee, India's President from 2012 to 2017, said: "On a visit to hospital for a separate procedure, I tested positive for Covid-19 today. I request people who came into contact with me in the



Pranab Mukherjee



Sanjay Dutt



B.S. Yediyurappa

last week to please self-isolate and get tested." He has been admitted to the Army's R&R Hospital in Delhi.

This comes on a day World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus predicted the number of people infected by the coronavirus will hit 20 million this week, including around 7,50,000 deaths.

India's Covid-19 recoveries crossed 1.5 million Monday after 15,35,743 patients were fully cured, including 54,859 in the past

24 hours. The recovery rate is now almost 70 per cent.

Meanwhile actor Sanjay Dutt on Monday was discharged from the hospital, two days after he was admitted for breathlessness.

The 61-year-old actor was taken to Lilavati Hospital on Saturday evening for full check-up, where he was also tested for COVID-19, which turned out to be negative. An official from Lilavati Hospital told PTI that Sanjay Dutt was discharged around 3 pm,

Supreme Court doesn't accept Bhushan apology

New Delhi, Aug. 10

The Supreme Court on Monday said further hearing was required in the 2009 criminal contempt case against activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan and journalist Tarun Tejpal to examine whether comments on 'corruption' against judges per se amounted to contempt or not.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra on August 4 had made clear to Bhushan and Tejpal that it would hear the case against them, if it does not accept their "explanation" or "apology" in the matter.

The bench, also comprising justices B R Gavai and Krishna Murari, which posted the matter for hearing on August 17. — PTI

No relief for State from 100+ virus deaths a day

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 10

Covid-19 fatalities in the State touched 5,041 with 114 person succumbing to the virus on Monday when 5,914 fresh cases were reported, taking the total number of infections so far beyond the three lakh mark to 3,02,815.

In Chennai, new infections were at 976 and deaths at 25, while in the adjoining districts new cases were high — Chengalpattu 483, Kanchipuram 310 and Thiruvallur 399. Other districts that reported high numbers were Coimbatore 292, Cuddalore 287, Kanyakumari 205 and Theni 357.

The infection rate had been brought down in the

Total fresh cases on Monday
5,914

Deaths on Monday
114

Number of active cases
53,099

State because the government had been following the protocols strictly, State Revenue Minister R. B. Udhayakumar said in Chennai.

Speaking after reviewing the work of frontline warriors at Thiru Vi Ka Nagar, the Minister said that there were some complaints about e-passes and

● **State revenue minister R.B. Udhayakumar said that there were some complaints about e-passes and that they would be sorted out after the committees set up in the districts submitted their reports to the Chief Minister**

that they would be sorted out after the committees set up in the districts submitted their reports to the Chief Minister.

Asked about the lockdown, he said that enough relaxations had been given for the public and more would be given based on the needs of the people.

COURSE CHANGE

J&K's ex-IAS officer Shah Faesal quits politics
Srinagar: Shah Faesal, who resigned from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and floated the Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement (JKPM) last year, resigned as its president, the party said on Monday. Mr Faesal, the 2010 IAS topper, had dropped a hint about stepping away from politics on Sunday as he edited his personal details on Twitter, removing the reference to his political affiliations. ■ **P4**

Cop accused of police brutality dies from Covid

ARUL OLI M | DC
THOOTHUKUDI, AUG. 10

One of the 10 policemen accused in the Sathankulam father-son custodial death case, whom CB-CID sources identified as Paldurai, succumbed to Covid-19 attack, invariably creating a setback for the investigations.

The victim Paldurai, was the special sub-inspector at Sathankulam police station on duty, when trader Jayaraj and his son, Bennis, were allegedly tortured and subsequently died. Cases against 54-year-old Paldurai, had been registered under Sections 302, 201, 342 and 107 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and the victim was arrested on July

● **Seven of the eight CBI sleuths probing the case have also been diagnosed positive for Covid-19, hampering investigations**

8 and remanded to judicial custody.

While in judicial custody, Paldurai became a Corona victim, and was constantly monitored by the doctors in Madurai Central jail.

Paldurai's swab samples sent for testing on July 24, confirmed the infection, and he was admitted at the corona special ward, at the Madurai government hospital. Being an acute diabetic and a heart patient,

Paldurai's condition worsened and he was shifted to the hospital's intensive care unit on August 8, where he died in the wee hours of Monday (August 10).

In addition, seven of the eight CBI sleuths probing the case have also been diagnosed positive for Covid-19, hampering investigations.

The CBI is said to suspect one more lady constable in the case, as her witness statement to them was contradictory to the statement she gave to the CB-CID team that first investigated the case. A highly-placed police source said that the CBI has to get its officers back in form, before they could probably further proceed with the case.

Rhea seeks SC relief from trial by media in SSR death

New Delhi, Aug. 10: A day before the crucial hearing, actress Rhea Chakraborty Monday told that Supreme Court that she should not be made "scapegoat of political agendas" in the actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case and alleged that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is "reported to be responsible for registration of FIR in Patna" against her.

She claimed that the "sad incident" of Rajput's death unfortunately occurred just in wake of elections in Bihar and this led to the

issue of suicide being isolated and "blown out of proportion in media", causing extreme trauma and infringement of privacy of her rights due to the "constant sensationalisation" of this case.

The actress said she has already been 'convicted' by the media in the matter even before any foul play has been established.

In an additional affidavit filed in the apex court, Chakraborty said that she has "no objection" if the top court refers the case to CBI by its order and "even if the

CBI investigates the matter the jurisdiction will still be with the courts at Mumbai and not at Patna".

The affidavit by the actress which stated that "ruling party in Bihar and Centre is same and the said party is in minority in the state of Maharashtra", also alleged that the purported transfer of the case to a Patna court and further to the CBI on August 4 is only to render her petition in the apex court infructuous.

It alleged that the transfer of investigation to the CBI by Bihar Police is "illegal

and bad in law".

Chakraborty filed the affidavit in the top court which is seized of her plea seeking transfer of an FIR, lodged against her by Bihar Police in Patna on a complaint by Rajput's father Krishna Kishore Singh, to Mumbai.

In her additional affidavit, she said that two actors — Ashutosh Bhakre and Sameer Sharma — were reported to have committed suicide in last one month and "yet no whisper about the same in power corridors." — PTI



Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik leave after a fresh round of questioning by ED in connection with a probe in a money laundering case linked to the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in Mumbai on Monday. — PTI

IPL in UAE gets go-ahead, Patanjali may bid for title

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 10

Indian Premier League chairman Brijesh Patel on Monday confirmed that the central government has given the approval to organise the 13th edition in the UAE.

The organisers of the glitzy league also revealed the bidding process for the tournament's new title sponsors.

The successor of Vivo — who pulled out for a year

following public outrage against Chinese brands — will be announced on August 18.

Meanwhile, Yoga guru Baba Ramdev promoted Patanjali Ayurveda Pvt Ltd has shown interest. A spokesperson confirmed that Patanjali would be bidding for the title rights. BCCI is expected to offer 20 per cent to 30 per cent discount on the current sponsorship price pegged at ₹440 crore.

■ **Full report on P8**

OTHER STORIES



Krishna Janmastami to be livestreamed

Chennai: Iskcon will be livestreaming Lord Krishna Janmastami on August 12 to offer devotees darshan of abhisekham online. Devotees can log on to Iskcon on Facebook or www.youtube.com/c/iskconchennai and watch it with commentary in Hindi and English from 7 pm. There will be a special program on August 13 from 11 am to 2 pm on celebration of Nandotsav.

Gold worth ₹22 L seized at airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

The customs officers at Chennai airport on Monday seized contraband gold worth ₹22.21 lakhs from three passengers.

According to a customs release, two men - Saminathan Kannan, 41, and Thangavel Sivasankar, 49, from Thanjavur who arrived from Abu Dhabi by Air India Express Flight IX-1642 were intercepted by the customs officers at exit. On search one gold paste pouch was found concealed in the shirt sleeve of each person.

Another passenger, Kamarudeen Shajahan, 57, of Trichy who arrived from Abu Dhabi by Air India Express Flight IX-1638 was intercepted at the exit. On search, one gold paste pouch was found concealed in his inner wear. On extraction, 402 grams of gold valued at ₹22.21 lakhs were recovered and seized under customs act, 1962. Further investigation is under progress.

Temple hundi broke open, ₹50K stolen

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

Burglars broke open the hundi at a temple at Morapakkam near Maduratakam and made away with cash around ₹50,000.

The incident came to light when the residents found the locks on the hundi of the Sri Vaala Vatta Mariamman Temple broken and cash stolen. The burglary came as a shock to the residents of Morapakkam, who gathered near the temple, which had remained closed for four months, in large numbers.

The Madurantakam police visited the spot and conducted investigation.

The increasing number of temple burglaries in the city suburbs has raised concern among the police and temple managements.



In all, 35 baby Russell's vipers hatched at VOC Park zoo in Coimbatore.

— DC

Covid makes Indians stressed up: Study

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 10

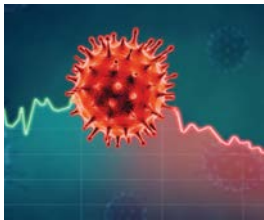
The Covid-19 virus is still spreading its tentacles in the society, even revving up the stress level among Indians.

A mental health study carried out by YourDOST, an online emotional and mental wellness platform, among 8,396 individuals across the country has revealed that 65 per cent of respondents were under stress while 33 per cent reported high to extreme level of stress. Only 16 per cent experienced no stress.

The study has also found that stress levels had gone up significantly during the long lockdown period. Loneliness or boredom followed by anxiety and anger were the top three emotions which overwhelmed the people during the period. The uncertainty over the unending lockdown and pandemic is the main reason for ballooning of emotions. Personal health concerns and job security were other key factors that left the people more stressed.

While the anxiety disorders increased by 117 per cent, relationship issues

LOSS OF | SLEEP



shot up by 146 per cent. Time management-related problems recorded 125 per cent rise and stress to maintain balance between work and life rose by 52 per cent. At least 51 per cent increase was registered in sessions related to mood disorders which include depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder.

The most preferred stress-relieving techniques among respondents are falling back on friends and family by way of being able to be vocal, frequent fitness activities and cut in news and social media usage.

According to the study, sleep deprivation was the major impact of stress followed by productivity and diet (overeating or undereating). Despite lockdown being largely relaxed,

people are still unwilling to do outdoor activities due to the fear of getting infected by virus.

Puneet Manuja, co-founder, YourDOST, said that the survey was conducted in two phases during early lockdown period and post unlock situation among people aged between 17-90 years from Tier-I, Tier-II and Tier-III cities. "The responses were picked from a mixture of college students, working professionals, entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, housewives, unemployed individuals and retirees. Overall, the study collected insight from 8,396 people. Responses were taken from 1,196 people (560 during the lockdown 1.0 and 636 post unlock period). The insights were further combined with inputs from 7,000 unique individuals who have undergone counselling sessions for the last couple of months.

"Additionally, over 50 psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists and coaches were interviewed to understand the kind of cases they have been observing in their respective practices during the lockdown period," he said.

CARCASSES OF LEOPARD, GAUR FOUND IN COONOR

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG 10

A leopard and a gaur lost were killed in a fight, and their carcasses were found in a private farm land here at Periyarkumbalam near Coonoor, on Monday morning.

On an alert, foresters rushed to the spot. By noon, an autopsy was done on both the carcasses on the spot, and viscera samples were collected by the veterinary team.

Assistant Conservator of Forests, the Nilgiris, Saravanakumar, said the injury marks on both the carcasses indicated that there could have been a hard battle between the prey and the predator, where both were very badly injured, later causing the death of both the animals. Officials estimate the leopard to be a six-year-old male, and the gaur, an eight-year-old female.

"The rib cage of the leopard was found fractured. It is presumed that the leopard could have attempted to kill a calf in the gaur herd. Infuriated, the mother gaur could have entered into a fierce battle with the leopard and inflicted serious injuries on its enemy. There is a possibility of the other gaurs also attacking the leopard. While the calf and others vanished into the jungles, the leopard had killed the gaur and consumed part of it. Following this, the injured leopard also would have died. Gaur meat and blood were found in the digestive system of the leopard," he explained.

● **Officials estimate the leopard to be a six-year-old male, and the gaur, an eight-year-old female**

HC restrains union from holding strike on company premises

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

The Madras high court has restrained the Krishnagiri District National Engineering Employees Union and its members from holding stay in strike on factory premises of VST Tillers Tractors Ltd., at Sipcot Industrial Complex, Moonkondapalli, Hosur, and preventing movement of staff and officers and other persons and ingress and egress of vehicles carrying finished goods and raw materials till September 7, 2020.

Justice G.K. Ilanthiraiyan who granted the interim

injunction, also made it clear that in case of any violation of the injunction order, the Sipcot police at Hosur shall extend the necessary protection to the factory.

While ordering notice to the superintendent of police, Krishnagiri, DSP, Hosur, inspector of police, Sipcot police station and the Krishnagiri District National Engineering Employees Union, the judge posted to September 7, 2020, further hearing of the petition filed by VST Tillers Tractors Ltd.

In his interim order, the judge said it appears that an industrial dispute pending between the members of the Works



Committee (Krishnagiri District National Engineering Employees Union), and the management, before the commissioner of labour. The company has filed this petition stating that in spite of the pendency of the conciliating proceedings, the union has been instigating other workers to indulge in

unlawful activities affecting the normal functions of the company. Counsel for the petitioner submitted that in spite of the interference of the conciliating authority, the agitating workers were refusing to refrain from striking and have also issued notice to go on hunger strike, the judge added.

The judge said additional public prosecutor submitted that the police have already extended protection outside the petitioner's premises and the conciliation authority had also attempted to conciliate the dispute between the workers and the management, which failed. It was seen that the concilia-

tion proceedings, with regard to the dispute raised, was still pending before the authorities. The present demand made by the union was that their union needs to be recognized by the management, among other demands. While conciliation proceedings were pending on the demands, it would not be appropriate to allow the workers to take such coercive action, which was also opposed to law. Hence, there shall be an order of interim injunction restraining the fourth respondent (union) and its members from holding stay in strike at factory premises of the petitioner, the judge added.



Light fading for association of blind

N. SAMPATH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 10

When Angammal D., a visually challenged woman, came to Chennai she had no clue that the city would offer her ample opportunities for survival. She had lived in a small village in Kancheepuram district all her life and came to the city to learn computer skills at Tamil Nadu Association of the Blind.

Headquartered at Tondiarpet, the association has supported hundreds of visually challenged men and women such as Angammal, hailing from economically weak background. Today, Angammal stitches clothes, makes office files and knows to work on a computer. She owes her success to the association and the city, which has not sidelined the differently abled.

Started in 1968, Tamil Nadu Association of the Blind has around 500 members, mostly women. A lot of them are street vendors selling groceries and sweets on local trains. The association offers employment opportunities for the fraternity.

"Orders to make files and other stationary material and cloth bags from government offices kept us going all these years," says Viswanathan V S, the association's general secretary.

But now things are not as rosy as it was. As the system is computerised owing to less dependency on stationery, the number of orders has been depleting as well. Covid-19 has also worsened the situation.

"A few private companies such as Ashok



Leyland and Tamil Nadu Petroleum Corporation still give us the orders of making stationary items. This keeps us going," added Viswanathan.

The association members, however, are learning other skills such as tai-

loring for employment.

"It is necessary to know many skills. I can now stitch cloth bags, churidars and blouses as well," Angammal says, in a high-spirited tone.

However, the members request government

departments and private offices to send orders so that it would help many in the fraternity. "Orders from educational institutions will be helpful. It is not donations but employment that betters our lives," added Angammal.



100-year-old idols found



The consecration of Shenbagathin Sundaravalli Sametha Somanath Eshwarar temple, Vellore, one of the oldest of temples, was last performed in 1970. The temple is now being refurbished. On Monday, work on construction of ramps to separate the idols of deities was undertaken and ground work commenced. At a depth of three feet, workers found two idols, one of Dakshinamoorthy and the other Brahma, buried under the mud. Villagers soon gathered and offered pujas to the idols. Revenue officials who studied the idols said they would be at least 100 years old.

— K. Senthil Nathan

OTHER STORIES

'Provide rly jobs to sons of soil'

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, AUG 10

The Southern Railway Mazdoor Union (SRMU) has appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami to approach the Centre and prevent more and more North Indians getting railway postings in Tamil Nadu.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, SRMU deputy general secretary, S Veerasekaran, pointed out that in all other states, Chief Ministers insist that the Centre should give priority to youths of their respective state to secure railway jobs in their native states. He urged Chief Minister Palaniswami also to follow such CMs and provide railway jobs to Tamil youths.

Veerasekaran also appealed to the Union Government to give up its move to privatise the railway network, and also not to convert permanent railway employees as casual employees by amending the existing labour welfare act.

Govt buses can be taken on hire

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

The Government Express Transport Corporation has been renting out its buses as 'contract carriages' for companies that need to transport employees or private parties travelling long distance as groups for marriages and other functions.

Those who wish to book the buses are requested to email texpress16@gmail.com or contact any of the following mobile phone numbers for details: 9445014402, 9445014416, 9445014424 and 9445014463, according to a press release from the Corporation.

Apart from the 40 buses that are being run as contract carriages, the corporation was also operating buses to ferry government staff to offices like the Secretariat and the High Court, the release added.

Dr K. M. Cherian bereaved

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

Selien Cherian, wife of noted cardiologist Dr K. M. Cherian, passed away on Monday. She was 73. She is survived by her husband, children Sandhya and Sanjay and daughter-in-law Divya. The funeral will be held at the Kilpauk Cemetery at around 10 am on Tuesday.

Blast from the past



Stone inscriptions and statues belonging to Raja Raja Chola period unearthed at Peraiyur in Madurai district. — DC



Bhavani dam water level touches 100 ft

■ With heavy rains pouding area, residents on river banks asked to move to safer grounds

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
ERODE, AUG 10

The water level of Bhavanisagar dam touched 100 feet due to heavy rains in the catchment area, forcing collector C Kathiravan to warn residents living on the Bhavani river basin areas to be safe and vigilant.

Bhavanisagar dam is the main water source of Erode district, with a total storage height of 105 feet. Its catchment area is the Nilgiris. As many as 2.50 lakh acres of land is irrigated by the water released from the dam in Keezh Bhavani, Kalingarayan, Thadappalli and Arakkankottai canals.

In addition, Erode corporation and municipalities of Sathyamangalam, Panchai Puliyampatti, Gobi, Bhavani and over 100 panchayats, avail the dam's water for their drinking water purposes.

Heavy rains in the Nilgiris and its catchment areas add to the water inflow into the dam. Surplus water released from Billur dam in Coimbatore district, also adds to the rising water level in the dam.

As of 6 pm on Saturday, water level in the dam was 98.87 feet, with an inflow of 13,602 cusecs per second. Water level was 99.87 feet by 6 pm on Sunday, with an inflow of 7,517 cusecs per second. Water level in the dam on Monday was 100.48 feet, including the water reserve of 29.105 tmc.

A total of 1,000 cusecs of water per second was released from the dam for irrigation of the Thadappalli Arakkankottai canal. Water level in the dam has risen by 15 feet in the last eight days alone, making the farmers happy.

Collector C Kathiravan,

said, "Water level in Bhavanisagar dam in the district has been rising for the last few days due to continuous rains in the Western Ghats. Water level in Bhavani Sagar dam has now reached 100.48 feet due to continuous rains in catchment areas of North Kerala and the Nilgiris, in the last few days. Water level in the dam is expected to reach 102 feet in the next 48 hours, due to continuous flooding."

Once the dam's full capacity of 102 feet is reached, the dam will be opened and its water released into Bhavani river.

As a precaution, people residing along the banks of Bhavani and in the lower reaches of Bhavani Sagar dam, have been cautioned to move to higher places and keep themselves safe, added the Collector.

Mark of success



With class 10 results released on Monday, students of Lady Willingdon school, Triplicane, share their joy. — DC

Tributes to students who drowned in Volga

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and PMK youth wing president Anbumani Ramadoss paid homage to the four medical students from Tamil Nadu who drowned in

river Volga in Russia and expressed their condolences to the families of the deceased.

Palaniswami said on Monday that he had instructed the officials to coordinate with the external affairs ministry and the Indian Embassy in

Russia to bring back the bodies of the students, Ashik of Tiruppur district, Vignesh of Cuddalore district, Manoj of Salem district and Stephen of Chennai.

They were studying for their medical degrees in the Volgograd State

Medical University and had gone on a picnic when the mishap occurred.

Ramadoss said in his statement, that the PMK shared the grief of the parents of the four youth, who had send their sons to Russia with great hopes and dreams.

Mother, sons die in fire sparked by mobile phone on charge

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, AUG 10

A 29-year old woman and her two sons aged 3 and 2 were killed in a fire mishap suspected to have been sparked by a mobile phone plugged in and charging at Rayanur near Karur on Monday.

While the woman died on the spot, her sons died on way to the hospital. Police said the deceased were identified as Muthulakshmi and her two sons children Rakshit and Dakshit. The neighbours alerted the police who in turn sent the bodies for post-mortem.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Monday distributes re-usable, cost-free Covid-19 masks, at an event held at the Kallakurichi collectorate, in the presence of law minister C. V. Shanmugam and collector Kiran Gurrula. — DC

OPS, Stalin wish Pranab speedy recovery

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 10

"I am extremely saddened to hear that former President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee has tested positive," Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam tweeted

on Monday. "We wish and pray for speedy recovery. Get well soon, sir," he added.

DMK president M. K. Stalin also wished Mukherjee as speedy recovery from Covid-19 and a quick return to good health.

DK, MDMK speak for Kanimozhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 10

Dravidar Kazhagam president K. Veeramani and MDMK founder Vaiko had played the incident at the Chennai airport on Sunday when DMK MP representing Thoothukudi constituency was asked if she was an Indian by an officer of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) when she was asked to give her instructions either in English or Tamil.

That this had happened in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, was shocking and needed to be taken note of, said Veeramani, adding that language was an emotional issue and that national integration could not be achieved by imposing a language on the people.

The query of the CISF officer reverberated with an inherent urge for



Hindi domination and imposition and hence could not be taken lightly, Veeramani said in a statement on Monday.

Reacting strongly to the incident, Vaiko, in a statement, said that it was a pointer to the Centre's desire to thrust Hindi hegemony on others.

He said the BJP government had been making a plethora of efforts to achieve Hindi domination all over the country, adding that such efforts would not fructify in Tamil Nadu.

Unlocking Chennai



With the government giving nod to opening of small temples and gyms, devotees flock to a Perumal temple at Valasaravakkam and fitness lovers to a gym in the city on Monday. — DC



'Over 5,725 patients treated thru Siddha'

Chennai, Aug 10: The traditional Siddha system of medicine has come in more than handy in the treatment of COVID-19 patients in Tamil Nadu with nearly 6,000 people being cured of the contagion in dedicated facilities across the state, official sources said on Monday. Siddha treatment has helped to successfully treat 5,725 patients at 11 exclusive Siddha Covid-19 Care Centres (CCC) in Tamil Nadu, including two in the metro, till August 7, the sources added. Chennai's Siddha CCC facilities at Jawahar Vidyalaya and Dr Ambedkar Government Arts College in Vyasarpadi, offering Siddha-based treatment for asymptomatic patients, handle high case-loads and they have treated nearly 3,200 patients as on August 7. While 434 patients are undergoing

treatment in the two centres here, 715 persons are undergoing treatment at 12 Siddha CCC in the districts. Next to Chennai, Vellore has been handling the maximum number of positive cases, treating 1,258 people, sources pointed out. Apart from two Siddha CCCs in Theni, the exclusive centres function from Tiruvannamalai, Thachur, Vellore, Thirupathur, Ranipet, Tenkasi, Villupuram and Coimbatore. Two more centres were started at Salem and Pudukottai recently. Earlier, the state government had ordered "kabasura kudineer," a herbal concoction regarded as immune booster and capable of combating viral infections, to be included in the integrated approach.

Chief Minister K. Palaniswami had launched the 'Arokyam' special programme with



Ayush intervention for Covid-19 in April including Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy, to be included in the fight against COVID-19. "It is very difficult to isolate the role of Siddha in treating the COVID-19 patients in order to quantify the percentage contributing to Tamil Nadu's recovery rate because Kabasura concoction is administered to patients, visitors and even medical professionals in all government CCCs in the state," said a senior official at the directorate of Indian Medicine. Moreover, Kabasura con-

coction is given regularly to the police, public and even the health and sanitation workers, as a precaution, he said. Mohammed Kasim, a ready-made garments outlet owner here, said "we are also apprehensive of the spread of the virus, but we take adequate precautions. In addition, we regularly consume Kabasura kudineer." According to an official with the Greater Chennai Corporation, the moment a coronavirus positive case is identified, apart from disinfecting the area, "we distribute Kabasura concoction to all the families around the infected person's house. It is also given at the regular fever camps." Kritika of Pallavaram here, who lost her sense of smell, was quick to getting admitted to a Siddha CCC here. "Within two days after consuming herbal tea and Kabasura concoction, I

regained my sense of smell," she said and added that during her stay at the centre, she never felt like staying in a hospital. "The doctors, nurses and those who served us food, were kind and caring," she added. A typical day at the Siddha CCC dawn with gargling using salt water, a session of Yoga, pranayama and mudra practice. The patients are also provided counselling. Their diet includes Thinai Pongal (a dish made with foxtail millet), Thuthuvalai thuvaiyal (Solanum Trilobatum), a medicinal plant food to address respiratory problems and Vazhaipoo poriyal (made with banana blossom). The patients are also given other herbal food preparation. As of Sunday, Tamil Nadu's cumulative tally of Covid cases stood at 2,96,901, including 2,38,638 recoveries. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

FOUR MAOIST HIDEOUTS BUSTED IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 10

Security personnel have busted four Maoist hideouts and seized huge cache of live ammunition and other articles following an exchange of fire between the ultras and security forces in Gandhamardhan Reserve forest in Bargarh district, police said on Monday.

“About 10 to 15 CPI (Maoists) managed to escape after the shootout that took place at around 7.30 am on Saturday and lasted for about half-an-hour,” a press note by the state police headquarters, Cuttack, said.

Upon Intelligence input regarding camping of Maoists in Gandhamardhan range forest area, the Special Operation Group (SOG) teams of Bargarh-Bolangir along with CRPF platoons had started joint Anti-Naxal operation in the area.

The Maoists started indiscriminate firing upon the police team, the statement said.

It added, “Though the SOG team appealed to the ultras to stop firing and surrender, they shouted ‘Lal Salam Jindabad.’ Finding no alternative, SOG team resorted to controlled firing in self-defence. The exchange of fire continued for 30 minutes. The Maoist group could manage to escape taking advantage of dense forest and heavy rainfall.”

DHANKHAR SLAMS MAMATA ON KISAN SCHEME

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, AUG. 10

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s announcement of direct transfer of ₹17,100 crore through PM Kisan Samman Nidhi to nearly 8.50 crore farmers bank accounts, West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has blamed the Mamata Banerjee government for not allowing the central welfare scheme in the state.

In a letter to the Chief Minister on Monday, he wrote, “It is indeed distressing to note that in our state, 70 lakh farmers continue to be denied the benefit of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi. Farmers in the state have already lost ₹8,400 crores benefit which was their due and right. While each farmer all over the country has so far received ₹12,000, our farmers have been denied of this legitimate right on account of insensitivity and confrontational stance of the state government. I have flagged the issue to you and the administration severally.”

L-G CONDEMNS KILLING OF BJP ACTIVIST IN J&K

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs SRINAGAR, AUG. 10

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, has strongly condemned the killing of BJP activist Abdul Hamid Najar by suspected militants in the central district of Budgam.

38-year-old Najar was shot at and critically wounded by militants while on a morning walk in Budgam’s Empora area on Sunday, the police said adding that he died in Srinagar’s government-run SMHS hospital early Monday.

While expressing anguish over the killing, Mr. Sinha said “the heinous act is an attempt to spread fear and there can be no justification for such attacks”.

He added, “The society does not have any space for perpetrators of violence and those involved in this cowardly act shall be brought to justice.”

Mr. Najar is the second BJP worker killed by suspected militants in the past one week.

On August 6, Sajad Ahmed Khanday, a sarpanch associated with the party, was killed by gunmen in Vesoo village of Qazigun area in southern Kulgam district.

On the August 4 evening, a BJP Panch Arif Ahmad was critically wounded after militants fired upon him in Akhran village of the same district.

Earlier on August 2, a Territorial Army jawan Shakir Manzoor was abducted by gunmen while he was travelling through Damhal Hanjipora, a militancy-infected area of Kulgam. Before taking him along forcibly, the suspected militants reportedly torched his car, the police sources said.

Rich haul



The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence personnel inspect after seizure of 191 kgs of heroin worth ₹1,000 crore from containers at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Navi Mumbai on Monday.

LEADERS WHO JOINED BJP MAY RETURN TO NCP, CLAIMS MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 10

Maharashtra Cabinet minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Nawab Malik has rubbished reports that 12 MLAs of his party are joining the BJP. Instead, those legislators who went to the BJP before 2019 Assembly polls are eager to return to the party, he said on Monday.

There is a buzz in the political circles that 12 NCP MLAs are on their way to the BJP, which is likely to bring the MVA government, consisting of Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, into trouble.

The NCP broke its silence on the issue calling these reports ‘baseless’.

“Some people are spreading rumours of 12 NCP MLAs joining BJP, this is baseless and fabricated news. The legislators who went to the BJP before the election are eager to return to the NCP. Soon, a decision will be made and the details will be made public (sic),” Mr Malik tweeted.

The reports of NCP legislators joining the BJP have come on the backdrop of saffron party leaders’ assertions that the MVA government will not last long due to its internal conflicts.

In Assembly polls, BJP emerged as the single largest party in the state with 105 seats followed by the Shiv Sena with 56 seats, NCP bagged 54 seats while Congress got 44 seats in 288-member Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha.

However, Sena broke its alliance with the BJP on the issue of sharing of the Chief Minister’s post and formed the MVA government with NCP and Congress.

Shah Faesal steps down as JKPM chief

He quit civil services 20 months ago, and formed a party

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, AUG. 10

Amid speculation that Shah Faesal may formally shun politics, the 2010 IAS topper has dropped his political bio as the founder of Jammu and Kashmir Peoples’ Movement (JKPM) from his Twitter handle.

He changed his Twitter bio late Sunday evening even though he has not tweeted since August last year. It now reads “Edward S Fellow @HKS Harvard University, Medico. Fulbright. Centrist”.

As per a statement issued by the JKPM, Faesal has informed the party’s state executive members that he is “not in a position to continue

with political activists and wanted to be freed from the responsibilities of the organisation.”

The statement added that keeping in view his request, it was decided to accept his resignation “so that he can better continue with his life and contribute whichever way he chooses.”

The statement further said that former minister and JKPM chairman Javed Mustafa Mir has also quit. He had joined the JKPM after leaving PDP last year.

Faesal is yet to react to reports that he may rejoin civil services. Repeated attempts by this correspondent to reach Faesal to know his viewpoint did not materi-

alise.

Meanwhile, Feroz Peerzada, his deputy in the party, has replaced Faesal as the JKPM president.

Faesal took the country by storm after quitting his job in January last year to protest against the “unabated killings and lack of political outreach from New Delhi, marginalisation and invisibilisation of around 200 million Indian Muslims at the hands of Hindutva forces and growing culture of intolerance and hate in mainland India in the name of hypernationalism”.

On March 17, 2019, he floated a new political party in J&K as what he had said was a sincere

and creative effort to change the political environs of the restive state. The dominant slogan of the new party named as Jammu and Kashmir Peoples’ Movement (JKPM) would be — “*Ab Hawa Badlay Gi* (now there will be wind of change),” he had said at a rally here on that day.

The official sources here said that Faesal’s resignation as IAS officer has not still been accepted.

Even after his submitting resignation 20 months ago and subsequently forming a political party, his name has not been removed from the list of J&K cadre IAS officers on the official website of the government.

PLANE CRASH: 56 PASSENGERS DISCHARGED

New Delhi, Aug. 10: Air India Express on Monday said 56 passengers injured in the plane crash in Kozhikode have been discharged from hospital after “obtaining complete fitness”. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said on Saturday that 149 people have been admitted to hospitals, 23 have been discharged, while 3 are critically injured.

The Air India Express flight from Dubai with 190 people, including a 6-member crew, overshot the tabletop runway during landing at the Kozhikode airport in heavy rain on Friday night, fell into a valley 35 feet below and broke into two, killing 18 people. — PTI

First SARS CoV-2 strain from China mutated: experts

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 8

The first strain of SARS Cov-2 virus — the so-called L strain — that initially caused Covid-19 is slowly disappearing according to 48,653 genomes that were studied by researchers and published in the journal Frontiers of Microbiology.

The L strain which was widespread in Wuhan has mutated during its journey to different continents and five different strains have been produced.

The L strain from Wuhan emerged in December 2019 and the first mutation was the S strain that appeared in the beginning of 2020. After that, there were strains G and V which have been produced in mid-January 2020 as they spread to different parts.

The G strain is most widespread till date and it has mutated to GR and GH strains in February 2020. In India, earlier there was L strain and then G and GH strains have been dominant.

According to the CCMB, there has also been Clade A 3i which has been found to be very virulent in India.

These were found in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi and also parts of Telangana state.

There are different samples which are being collect-

ed from states and the genomic studies are being carried out.

The genomic study of the virus is also important for development of drugs for the diseases and also checking use of old molecules on the virus. Presently, CCMB has got more than 20 different molecules for testing on whether it will work on the virus. The scientists are looking at the different strains and the impact of medicines on them to understand how treatment can be further improved.

Meanwhile the biggest worry was whether like the influenza virus, the Coronavirus will be variable but it has been found that, despite mutations, variability will be limited. This means that despite the different strains due to mutations, the virus structure has remained the same.

A scientist at CCMB explained, “Less variability means that even if there is a mutation the vaccine will work for all the strains of Coronavirus. This is positive news. The disappearing strain L also shows that due to constant mutations there are chances that other strains will slowly disappear and there may be new ones or they may not be. Or it could also mean that there is immunity developing for some strains.”

Relief as AP tally dips below 10,000 mark

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 10:

Giving a much awaited relief to the Andhra Pradesh government, the number of Coronavirus infections witnessed a slight dip when compared to previous days, as 7,665 new Covid-19 cases have been reported rising tally to 2,35,525 in the last 24 hours.

Out of 46,999 samples tested, 7,665 individuals were Covid-19 positive. Out of the total number of 25,34,304 samples tested so far, 1,45,636 patients have been discharged after recovery.

Number of tests, new cases down in TS

Hyderabad: The state recorded 1,256 new cases of Covid-19 and 10 deaths due to the disease on Sunday, taking the tally to 80,751 cases and toll to 637. The fall in numbers could be due to the smaller number of tests

performed — 11,609 on Sunday against 22,925 on Saturday, when 1,982 cases were reported.

Kerala reports 1,184 cases, 7 deaths

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Monday recorded 1184 cases while 784 recovered from the infection. Of the new cases 956 contracted the infection through contact, source of infection among 114 persons is yet to be known. Seven deaths were reported in the state on Monday.

4,267 cases, 114 deaths in Karnataka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Monday logged 4,267 new cases of Covid-19 and 114 fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 1,82,354 and the toll to 3,312. The day also saw 5,218 patients being discharged after recovery.

Ensure protocols are followed, PM to CMs

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 10

As natural calamities like floods/landslides badly hit states like Kerala, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed concern over the adherence to physical distancing rules during rescue efforts.

In a virtual meeting with the chief ministers of Assam, Bihar, UP, Kerala and Maharashtra and

Karnataka’s home minister, Mr Modi said they must ensure people follow health protocols like wearing masks and maintaining adequate physical distancing while conducting rescue and relief efforts.

He said relief material must include provision for hand washing or sanitising and face masks for the affected people.

The PM directed the officers of all ministries and organisations to take action on the suggestions by states and said the Centre will continue to support the states.

Idukki landslide toll up at 49, search on

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 10

Six more bodies were recovered from Pettimudi in Rajamala in Idukki district on Monday taking the death toll in the landslide to 49.

The search for 22 more persons who are suspected to be buried inside the debris is continuing despite extreme weather conditions. Majority of the victims are tea plantation workers engaged by the Kannan Devan Company.

The company had earlier informed that 83 people lived in the one room housing clusters known as “line houses” or “Layams” in the

place where the landslide occurred on Friday.

However, the local authorities pointed out that the records of some of the persons who died in the landslide were not available with them.

There is a possibility that people from neighbouring places might have come there before the tragedy. Moreover, there was a birthday function in one of the houses which was attended by outsiders.

The continuous rain in the area has hampered the rescue operations being carried out by the agencies using men and machines. NDRF teams are being assisted by the state police.

NEW | MOVE

Muneer Aalam, an engineer-turned-teacher behind project

Open air classes gain pace in Valley

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, AUG. 10

As Kashmir continues to reel under lockdown necessitated by the alarming increase in the number of Covid-19 deaths and cases, the holding of open-air classes for students forcibly kept away from schools for more than a year now is gaining momentum.

Private teachers and tutors are organizing such lessons for students from primary to higher secondary classes, at least, at a couple of dozen

places in various districts of the Valley. In most cases, the education in the time of pandemic is being imparted to these students free of cost.

In remaining instances, mohalla (locality) or village welfare committees or charitable organizations are funding the pursuit, however.

The trendsetter of this unique exercise is Muneer Aalam, an engineer-turned-teacher from Srinagar. He had in view of the slow 2G internet speed debilitating the

online classes launched for students by their respective institutions in earlier, started free open-air coaching classes at Srinagar’s Idgah grounds in June “to ensure the students don’t fall behind their school or college syllabi.

His “Minaz Zulumaat-Ilan Noor” from darkness (of ignorance) to the brightest light (of knowledge) - endeavour not only continues but it has also inspired many people here and elsewhere in the Valley and is being widely appreciated. 40-year old

Aalam reaches spacious Idgah grounds at the break of dawn to start his classes for 80 boys and girls.

These students pour in from different parts of Srinagar and neighbouring townships, carrying their foldable chairs or mats to attend the classes. “We adhere to the Covid-19 SOPs and guidelines and take all precautions which include students sitting at distances and wearing masks.”

Last week, when Srinagar received rains after a long time, these

classes were held on the porch of Aali Masjid, which is part of the historical Idgah where Muslims offer special Id prayers twice in a year, instead.

“For the first time in the last 50 day, we took the classes a few metres away from our open-air classroom on the veranda of Aali Masjid. The management of the mosque, the second largest in Kashmir, readily agreed to it,” he said. He added, “It was raining but I decided to look for an alternative place.”

IN BRIEF

11 drown in Panama flood

Panama City: Eleven people from one family died Sunday in Panama when their home was swept away in a flash flood as they slept, officials said. Nine of them were minors, said Carlos Rumbo, head of the national civil protection service. Two other people are missing in the sudden rise of the Bejuco River in Veraguas province west of Panama City. President Laurentino Cortizo expressed his condolences on Twitter. The civil protection service had warned Sunday of heavy storms with lightning and gusting winds in much of the Central American country.

Niger: French aid workers killed

Koure, Niger: Gunmen on motorcycles killed eight people, including a group of French aid workers, as they visited a part of Niger popular with tourists for its wildlife, officials said. "There are eight dead: two Nigeriens including a guide and a driver, while the other six are French," the governor of the Tillaberi region said on Sunday. France confirmed its nationals were among the dead, without giving a figure. French aid group ACTED said several of its workers were among those killed during a tourist outing. "Among the eight people killed in Niger, several were Acted employees," said the NGO's lawyer Joseph Br-eham. It is believed to be the first such attack on Westerners in the area, a popular tourist attraction in the former French colony thanks to its unique population of West African or Niger giraffes.

Bomb kills six in Balochistan

Quetta: An improvised bomb planted on a motorbike killed six people in Pakistan's Balochistan province on Monday, police said. A vehicle carrying personnel from the country's anti-narcotic force was believed to be the target of the blast in Chaman town, which borders Afghanistan, senior police official Razzaq Cheema said. "The explosion killed six passersby and wounded 10 others, two of them critically," he said. Local police official Masood Khan confirmed the attack and casualties. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but Baluch separatists demanding greater autonomy have been waging an insurgency for years while the province is also riven by sectarian strife and Islamist violence. Interior minister Ejaz Shah said in a statement that "such attacks are aimed at spreading fear among the people". Mineral-rich Balochistan, bordering Afghanistan and Iran, is the largest of Pakistan's four provinces, but its roughly seven million inhabitants have long complained they do not receive a fair share of its gas and mineral wealth. China is investing in the area under a \$54 billion project known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

BASHIR'S TRIAL DELAYED

Khartoum, Aug. 10: The trial of Sudan's ousted ex-president Omar al-Bashir was delayed Monday at the request of his defence, a prosecution lawyer said. The trial of Bashir over the military coup that brought him to power more than three decades ago, as well as of 27 other defendants, opened with a brief hearing in July. The second hearing had been set for August 11. But defence lawyers requested a delay for three of the defendants — Bashir as well as two former senior leaders of the once powerful but now defunct National Congress Party. "Lawyers for three defendants petitioned the Court of Appeal to release three defendants on bail, after the court refused to grant their request at the trial's first hearing on July 21," Moaz Hadra, one of the prosecution lawyers, said. "The Court of Appeal must rule, and then a new date for the trial will be set," Bashir, 76, and his co-accused could face the death penalty if convicted over the 1989 Islamist-backed overthrow of the democratically elected government of prime minister Sadek al-Mahdi. It is the first time in the Arab world's modern history that the architect of a coup is tried for plotting a putsch, although the man dubbed the true brain behind it, Hassan Turabi of the National Islamic Front, died in 2016. Bashir stayed in power for 30 years before being overthrown on April 11, 2019.

US polls: Why running mate pick matters more this year

Joe Biden has committed to selecting a woman and is considering Blacks

New York, Aug. 10: For all the secrecy and speculation that typically surrounds the search for a vice presidential candidate, the decision rarely sways an election. But ahead of Joe Biden's imminent announcement, this year could be different. At a minimum, the decision will shift the force of the campaign — at least temporarily — away from Donald Trump's turbulent presidency onto Biden himself.

That's not a place many Democrats are comfortable given Biden's proclivi-

ty for gaffes and the persistent lack of excitement behind his candidacy.

More fundamentally, the choice offers Biden an unusual opportunity to unify a party still reeling from Trump's 2016 win and solidify its future. He's already committed to selecting a woman and is considering several Black women. And since the 77-year-old Biden has not committed to seeking a second term, his running mate could be strongly positioned to become the Democratic Party's presid-

ential nominee in 2024 and shape national politics for the next decade.

Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, who served as Hillary Clinton's vice presidential nominee in 2016, said Biden's decision "may be the most closely held and personally driven vice presidential pick ever".

"Nobody knows this job better than Joe Biden and nobody did the job better than Biden, so he's gonna really control this one on his own," Kaine said in an interview. He pushed back against those who dis-

count the impact of running mates, estimating he added about 2 percentage points to Clinton's winning margin of 5 percentage points in Virginia.

While Biden has said a top priority is selecting someone who could step into the presidency on Day One, the politics of the moment have pushed the silver-haired white man to the brink of making history. He could become the first presidential nominee of a major party to select a woman of colour.

Last weekend, he met

privately with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who's white.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who also is white, has been a leading contender. Biden's campaign team has been in recent contact with a small group of finalists that includes at least four women of colour: California Sen. Kamala Harris, former national security adviser Susan Rice, California Rep. Karen Bass and Illinois Sen. Tammy Duckworth.

— AP



Volunteers, clad in masks due to the Covid-19 pandemic, distribute meals to people who have been affected by the Beirut port explosion in the Ashrafieh neighbourhood of Lebanon's capital Beirut on Monday.

— AFP

World pledges 250 mn euros for Lebanon Govt to resign over blast fallout

Paris, Aug. 10: World leaders on Sunday pledged more than 250 million euros for disaster-struck Lebanon, conference host France said, with the emergency aid to be delivered "directly" to a population reeling from the deadly port blast in Beirut.

Fifteen government leaders, including US President Donald Trump, took part in the virtual conference hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron and the UN, pledging solidarity with the Lebanese people and promising to muster "major resources" in the coming days and weeks.

A joint statement issued after the meeting in which representatives of nearly 30 countries as well as the EU and Arab League participated, did not mention a global amount. But Mac-

Beirut, Aug. 10: Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab was expected to announce his government's resignation Monday amid popular outrage over the deadly Beirut port explosion that has reignited angry street protests.

The under-fire cabinet, struggling to weather the political storm, met amid widespread demands for an end to an entrenched political system widely seen as inept, corrupt and dominated by sectarian interests and family dynasties. During the session, "most of the ministers called on the government to step down", Sport and

Youth Minister Vartine Ohanian said, saying she backed such calls.

Diab, who was set to address the nation on television at 1630 GMT, "is heading towards resignation", said another minister who asked not to be named after four of his colleagues had already stepped down.

According to the health ministry, at least 160 people were killed in Lebanon's worst peacetime disaster, 6,000 were wounded and about 20 remained missing. Six days after the enormous chemical blast which wreaked destruction across swathes of the

capital and was felt as far away as the island of Cyprus, residents and volunteers were still clearing the debris off the streets.

International rescue teams with sniffer dogs and specialised equipment remained at work at the disaster's charred "ground zero", where the search was now for bodies and not survivors.

The Lebanese want heads to roll over the tragedy and are asking how a massive stockpile of volatile ammonium nitrate, a compound used primarily as a fertiliser, was left unsecured at the port for years. The country's top offi-

cials have promised a swift and thorough investigation — but they have stopped short of agreeing to an independent probe led by foreign experts as demanded by the protesters.

Four ministers had already decided they could no longer stand with a government that has shown little willingness to take the blame or to put state resources at the service of the victims.

The contagion looked set to spread, leaving Diab, who only accepted the top job in December last year, no option but to follow suit and agree to a full cabinet resignation. — AFP

have been collected," including 20 million euros from Germany.

The joint statement from the world leaders and their representatives underscored concerns about Lebanese government corruption. "The participants agreed that their assistance should be timely, sufficient and consistent with the needs of the Lebanese people, well-coordinated under the leadership of the United Nations, and directly delivered to the Lebanese population, with utmost efficiency and transparency," it said.

USAID acting adminis-

trator John Barsa also said in a conference call Sunday that American help, some \$15 million announced so far, "is absolutely not going to the government".

The donor nations urged Lebanon's authorities to "fully commit themselves to timely measures and reforms" in order to unlock longer-term support for the country's economic and financial recovery. And they said assistance for "an impartial, credible and independent inquiry" into Tuesday's explosion "is immediately needed and available,

upon request of Lebanon". The UN said some \$117 million will be needed for an emergency response over the next three months, for health services, emergency shelter, food distribution and programmes to prevent further spread of Covid-19, among other interventions. Lebanese President Michel Aoun, who was also on Sunday's group call, thanked Macron for the initiative.

"Much is needed to rebuild what has been destroyed and to restore Beirut's lustre," the Lebanese presidency quoted him on Twitter as saying. "The needs are many and we

need to address them quickly, especially before the arrival of winter, which will accentuate the suffering of homeless citizens."

At least 21 people are still missing from the blast, and the Lebanese army said Sunday hopes of finding survivors are dwindling. Lebanese people enraged by official negligence blamed for the explosion have taken to the streets in anti-government protests that have resulted in clashes with the army. Macron said it was now up to the authorities of Lebanon "to act so that the country does not sink". — AFP

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US cabinet member meets Taiwan leader

Taipei, Aug. 10: A US cabinet member met Taiwan's leader Monday during the highest level visit from the United States since it switched diplomatic recognition from the island to China in 1979, a trip that Beijing has condemned.

Health Secretary Alex Azar is in Taipei for a three-day visit to promote shared democratic values and the island's success in taming the Coronavirus. His trip comes as relations between the United States and China are in tumult, with the two sides clashing over a wide range of trade, military and security issues, as well as the pandemic.

China, which insists Taiwan is its own territory and vows to one day reclaim it, has described Azar's visit as a threat to "peace and stability". On Monday morning, Azar met President Tsai Ing-wen, who advocates the island being recognised as a sovereign nation and is loathed by China's leaders. "Taiwan's response to Covid-19 has been am-

ong the most successful in the world, and that is a tribute to the open, transparent, democratic nature of Taiwan's society and culture," Azar told Tsai. Tsai thanked the US for supporting its bid to be part of the World Health Organisation (WHO), a body Beijing keeps the island frozen out of.

"Political considerations should never take precedence over the rights to health," Tsai said, calling Beijing's refusal to let Taiwan join "highly regrettable". Azar brushed off China's criticism when asked about Beijing's anger over his visit.

"The message that I bring from the US government is one of reaffirming the deep partnership the United States has with Taiwan in terms of security, commerce, health care and shared common values of democracy, economic freedom and liberty," he told reporters before his meeting with Tsai.

Azar has previously been critical of Beijing's response to the Coronavirus. — AFP

HK media mogul Jimmy Lai nabbed

Hong Kong, Aug. 10: Hong Kong pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai was arrested Monday and led in handcuffs through his newspaper office as police raided the building, part of a sweeping crackdown on dissent since China imposed a security law on the city.

Lai, 71, was among nine people detained on charges, including colluding with foreign forces — one of the new national security offences — and fraud, in an operation targeting his Next Digital publishing group. It was the latest police operation against dissidents under the sweeping new law introduced at the end of June.

Two of Lai's sons were among those detained, a police source said as well as Wilson Li, a former pro-democracy activist who describes himself as a freelance videographer working for Britain's *ITV News*. The most serious national security crimes carry up to life in jail.

Journalists working at Lai's Apple Daily broadcasted dramatic footage on Facebook of some 200 police officers conducting the raid, and the newspaper's chief editor Law Wai-kwong demanding a warrant from officers. Apple's staff were ordered to leave their seats and line up so police could check their identities as officers conducted searches across the newsroom.

At one point Lai was present, in handcuffs and surrounded by officers.

CHINA SANCTIONS 11 AMERICANS OVER U.S. MOVE

Beijing, Aug. 10: China on Monday sanctioned 11 Americans, including senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, in retaliation for similar US moves prompted by Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong.

Washington last week accused 11 officials of suppressing "freedom and democratic processes" in Hong Kong, including city leader Carrie Lam, and announced plans to freeze their US assets.

It was the toughest US action yet in response to Beijing's introduction of a sweeping and controversial new national security law for the former British territory.

Beijing said the measure was a violation of international law and "grossly interferes in China's internal affairs". — AFP

Police said the search was conducted with a court warrant which was shown to staff.

Chris Yeung, president of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, described the police action as "shocking and terrifying". "This is unprecedented, and would be unimaginable only one or two months ago," he said. — AFP

HK police could face torture case

London, Aug. 10: Senior British officers in the Hong Kong police force could face legal action in the UK on torture charges after activists said Monday they planned to proceed with a private prosecution. The expatriate officers are accused of directly engaging in torture against pro-democracy demonstrators, or directing others within the force

to carry out the crimes.

Torture has allegedly been carried out in police stations and on the streets, with an incident cited at Hong Kong's Citic Tower during protests in June 2019. The prosecution is being brought by prominent activists and lawyers, who are using a JustGiving page to raise \$260,000 to employ a full-time legal team. — AFP

CITY UNREST

Mayor Lori Lightfoot says a neighbourhood protection programme has been activated

Chicago looting: More than 100 arrested, 13 officers hurt

Chicago, Aug. 10: Hundreds of people smashed windows, stole from stores and clashed with police early Monday in Chicago's upscale Magnificent Mile shopping district and other parts of the city.

At one point, shots were fired at police and officers returned fire, police spokesman Tom Ahern said on Twitter. No officers were injured in the shooting. Many of the businesses that were ransacked had recently opened after Chicago protests of George Floyd's May 25 death in Minneapolis devolved into chaos. It wasn't immedi-

ately clear what led to the unrest, which began shortly after midnight, but anti-police graffiti was seen in the area of the Magnificent Mile, which is one of Chicago's most-visited tourist attractions.

Hours earlier, dozens of people had faced off with police after officers shot and wounded a person Sunday in the city's Englewood neighbourhood, located about 10 miles (16 kilometres) away.

Asked for updates on the situation, Ahern said that police planned to hold a news conference Monday morning. Police Superin-

tendent David Brown and Mayor Lori Lightfoot were expected to attend.

Along the Magnificent Mile, people were seen going in and out of stores carrying shopping bags full of merchandise as well as at a bank, the *Chicago Tribune* reported, and as the crowd grew vehicles dropped off more people in the area. On streets throughout the downtown area, empty cash drawers from stores were strewn about and ATMs were ripped open.

Stores miles from downtown were also ransacked, with parking lots littered

● **ON STREETS** throughout the downtown area, empty cash drawers from stores were strewn about and ATMs were ripped open. Stores miles from downtown were also ransacked, with parking lots littered

with glass and items from inside the stores. Clothes hangers and boxes that once contained television sets and other electronics were seen — evidence that

thieves had taken racks of clothes and removed them from the hangers.

"This was obviously very orchestrated," the Rev. Michael Pfleger, a prominent Roman Catholic priest and activist on the city's South Side, told *WBBM-TV* as cameras panned the downtown area.

One officer was seen slumped against a building, several arrests were made and a rock was thrown at a police vehicle, the newspaper said. Police worked early Monday to disperse the crowds.

There was a large police presence Monday morning

outside an Apple store located north of Chicago's downtown area. Blocks away, debris was strewn in parking lots in front of a Best Buy and a large liquor store.

Train and bus service into downtown was temporarily suspended at the request of public safety officials, the Chicago Transit Authority said on Twitter. Bridges over the Chicago River were lifted, preventing travel to and from the downtown area, and Illinois State Police blocked some expressway ramps into downtown.

Chicago and its suburbs,

like many other cities, saw unrest following the death of Floyd. Chicago's central business district and its commercial areas were shut down for several days after violence erupted and stores were damaged in the wake of marches protesting Floyd's death.

In the Sunday shooting in Englewood, police said in a statement that they responded about 2:30 p.m. Sunday to a call about a person with a gun and tried to confront someone matching his description in an alley. He fled from officers on foot and shot at officers, police said. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

11 AUGUST 2020

Covid-19 facility fires offer safety lesson

Back-to-back early morning blazes in private Covid facilities, claiming eight and 11 lives respectively, should be seen as a much-required wake-up call for state governments. Fire services are under the 12th Schedule of the Constitution and fall in the domain of urban local bodies. These have an abysmal performance record when it comes to enforcing fire safety guidelines.

After the tragedy, however, a fire safety check has been ordered on all hospitals in Andhra Pradesh. Several states and municipal corporations all over India have followed suit. It is likely to open a can of worms.

Already, the fire service department has reported that over 250 hospitals under the jurisdiction of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation have not obtained no-objection certificates. In Hyderabad, in neighbouring Telangana, 90 per cent of its 1,700 hospitals are not following fire safety guidelines.

The National Building Code of India, 2016, stipulates regulations required for fire prevention and life safety for buildings. These regulations relate to design and construction; building materials; occupancy features necessary to minimise danger to life; smoke; equipment and installations and guidelines for fire drills and evacuations. Also, according to the Model Building Bylaws, 2003, building plans have to be referred to the chief fire officer.

However, like road safety, fire safety continues to stay on paper. Unplanned construction in densely-populated areas remains the biggest threat. Only 30 per cent of cities have a fire master plan, which in most cases is outdated.

Those who lost their lives in the fire at Vijayawada's five-storey Swarna Palace hotel, taken on lease by Ramesh Hospital, are more than mere statistics. Among them was Sabbithi Abraham, a pastor who had recently recovered from the disease but who stayed back to be with his wife, Raja Kumari. Raja Kumari, too, died in the disaster. Another patient, C. Pawan Sai Kisan, was the one to call up the police upon discovering the fire. The hotel's fire alarm had not been working.

In both cases, a short circuit was the event that led to the blaze. In the Swarna Palace blaze, the hotel as well as the hospital knew of the presence of defects in the air-conditioning system and wiring but had not bothered to carry out repairs. The hotel did not have a fire safety certificate. As was the case with Ahmedabad's Shrey Hospital, which is owned by Bharat Mahant, who defected to the BJP last year.

A common refrain is that private hospitals are capitalising on people's reluctance to avail care at government hospitals during this crisis and are charging exorbitant fees. Ramesh Hospital, for instance, was charging its Swarna Palace patients a daily package of ₹5,000 in addition to treatment and other charges. However, governments are reluctant to rein them in as yet.

Language of alienation

Reading the tweet of DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi that she was asked if she was an Indian just for not knowing Hindi gave a sense of deja vu to many people in Tamil Nadu who had travelled up North. Students from the state being subjected to such savage humiliation for not speaking in Hindi in colleges and universities in places like Delhi is old hat. But the insult to Kanimozhi was striking as it happened at the Chennai airport.

Whatever be the real reason for the officer of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) refusing to communicate in a language that all air passengers could understand – it could be her lack of fluency in English or her fondness for Hindi – her questioning a passenger's nationality was uncalled for. Even if she was oblivious to India being a multi-linguistic nation, she had no right, as a CISF officer or otherwise, to take upon herself the authority to pronounce who can be an Indian.

While these personal drawbacks can hamper the officer from discharging her duties impartially, the present political situation allows her and many others like her to go about displaying Hindi chauvinism at airports and other public spaces without worrying about their prejudice and bigotry alienating non-Hindi speakers from the Indian mainstream.

It is of course intriguing that the particular officer, who should be living in Chennai, did not acknowledge that Tamil is never thrust upon the people who come to the state from outside. None of the lakhs of guest workers who walked their way back home from Tamil Nadu due to the sudden lockdown recently had to learn Tamil. For, the people of Tamil Nadu are not language chauvinists. They only resent forceful imposition of another language, be it through maltreatments at airports and universities or the implementation of a new National Education Policy.

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Aakar Patel

India losing its 'mahabharat' against Covid?

The "Mahabharat" against Covid-19 has been lost. India had registered more cases last week, about three lakhs, than any other nation including the United States. We are clocking over 60,000 cases a day and there is nothing to stop the number from going to one lakh a day and higher.

The only places in India that have registered a drop are the cities where the levels of infection are so widespread that half the city has already been touched, and the scope for increase is limited. Nothing is stopping the spread of Covid-19.

It may interest readers to know that India is the only nation to show a consistently exponential trend of growth. Our graph from the beginning of March till today is one that goes straight up and steeply. This is not how other nations have responded. Europe saw peaks in March and then Italy, Spain, Britain and others have declined since then. America saw a peak in April, led mostly by the spread in New York, then a fall and now is seeing another rise in other parts of the country.

Bangladesh saw a peak in June and has since been in decline.

Pakistan was clocking half the number of cases as India but peaked in June and has been dropping since, averaging less than 1,000 cases a day now. Sri Lanka has been in total control of the epidemic and has only 300 active cases now, and a total of only 11 deaths since its first cases in March.

India is the only nation, to repeat, that has consistently been going up in terms of number of cases from the start till now. This was not the result expected when the Centre took charge of the problem on March 24, when we had 500 cases. We have 30 times more cases each day today after various lockdowns, from total bans on all activity to a series of unlocks that nobody really understands any longer and almost nobody follows. Even the police, initially enthusiastic about stopping movement, has lost interest across the country in trying to combat the plague. The question is not whether we have lost the Covid "Mahabharat" because the numbers are clear. The question is why. The answer is that we never had a strategy to counter the pandemic. The first lockdown was the biggest mistake

The lockdown in India, along with that in Mauritius, New Zealand and South Africa, was rated 100, meaning individuals had no freedom. New Zealand peaked in March, Mauritius in April and South Africa in July.

we made. What Prime Minister Narendra Modi should have told the country was that this was a highly infectious disease but with a very low fatality rate. People should be extremely cautious about not touching their face, washing their hands regularly and wearing a mask to protect others. They could go about their work and business otherwise.

What he did instead was to create panic across the entire country. By calling it a "Mahabharat" and saying specifically we would win it in 21 days, he took the seriousness out of the fight against Covid-19. It would end after the lockdown is what he told us, and this was wrong. 'This was not a short and sharp battle that would be won or lost over three weeks, but a long one of vigilance

rather than extreme measures.

The three-week strict lockdown was described by an Oxford University study as the harshest in the world. The lockdown in India, along with that in Mauritius, New Zealand and South Africa, was rated 100, meaning individuals had no freedom. New Zealand peaked in March, Mauritius in April and South Africa in July. In India, it made no meaningful difference to the rate of spread. Not only that, it has comprehensively gutted the economy in a way that all of us can palpably feel at the level of each individual. All of us are suffering in a way that we have not before in our lives. Those who are not yet, will soon do so. This is a recession, a word whose meaning none of us is familiar with.

The mismanagement of the lockdown has made India pay a real price, that it is still continuing to pay four months later. A report in the Hindu Frontline headlined "Surat: Silence of the looms" said 35 lakh migrants in the Surat area had gone back home after suffering great deprivation. There was nobody to operate the machines and even mar-

kets that were open would be shut down when one positive case was discovered. There was no plan to move forward and things were happening by default. If the workers return, and if the demand for fabrics returns, then the great manufacturing city of Surat would try to stand again on its feet. Till then, things will continue the way they were. This level of incompetence is not to be found in any other nation that has been hit by Covid-19.

The truth is that Narendra Modi is attracted to the grand announcement. He likes the spotlight and the energy of the moment. Covid-19 was a struggle not of brief violence, an 18-day war like the Mahabharat, but a long one of carefulness and patience. Other nations knew it and their leaders communicated it in that fashion. Mr Modi's style has left us with 20 lakh cases and over 40,000 deaths, and who knows how many more to come. The peak is nowhere in sight. And it has absolutely ruined an economy that was already tottering last year.

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist

Subhani



Will Kashmir turn into 'heaven on earth' again?



Vishnu Prakash

Upon setting foot in Kashmir, Mughal Emperor Jehangir spontaneously recited an evocative couplet "Gar firdaus bar-rue zamin ast, hami asto, hamin asto, hamin ast (If there is a paradise on earth, it's here, it's here, it's here)" - which continues to resonate with millions of visitors every year.

The spell of mother nature's craftsmanship – inlaid with snow-capped mountains, golden sun rays, fabled valleys, lush meadows, glistening water bodies, manicured gardens, captivating flora and fauna – endures a lifetime. The region, traditionally home to Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, had been an abode of multiculturalism, tranquility and harmony, thanks to its culture of "Kashmiriyat".

Alas, that idyllic way of life was rudely disturbed by external inimical elements in October 1947 itself, within weeks of India's Independence. The UN commission hammered out a cease-fire agreement in August 1948, but without restoring the status quo ante.

At the behest of Sheikh Abdullah, Article 370 was introduced in the Constitution, temporarily according a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. In retrospect, this act of appeasement, that too on religious and political considerations, widened the emotional chasm between Kashmiris and other citizens, besides preventing a seamless integration of J&K with India.

To compound the folly, Article 35A was inserted by a presidential order in May 1954, barring Indians living outside J&K, from buying immovable property, applying for state government jobs or seeking permanent residency in the state. Such privileges were reserved only for J&K's so-called perma-

nent residents, otherwise called "state subjects".

In the process a short shrift was given to the foundational and fundamental right to equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The state was also exempted from all the laws of the land, unless specifically adopted by its own Legislative Assembly.

Before long it became evident that these special provisions were damaging the national fabric. Kashmiri Muslims, in particular, began shunning their Indian identity. Vested interest groups gradually sprung up across the spectrum, to accentuate the divide for political and monetary gains. They unabashedly played the religious card to further their purpose, thereby also tempting external forces to fish in troubled waters.

Articles 370 and 35A started acquiring a façade of permanence. Though elections were held regularly and the electorate spoke its mind; peace, progress and stability eluded the state due to the machinations of disruptive forces, corruption and nepotism. While the miniscule elite lined its pockets, the ordinary people of J&K, especially women and the underprivileged, faced discrimination and suffering. They lost out on socio-economic empowerment initiatives becoming available to the rest of their countrymen.

Ending almost seven decades of injustice due to political dithering, on August 5, 2019, the Modi government made bold to accord similar rights, benefits and duties on the residents of J&K, as available to all other citizens in India. The offending "temporary" provisions under Articles 370 and 35A were removed. The separatists and the state's political elite were stunned. To deter them from creating any kind of

mischievous, some short-term restrictions were imposed, most of which have since been lifted.

Barring the usual suspects, the global community recognised that the full integration of J&K with the Indian Union, in consonance with its Constitution, was an internal matter of India. Ahmad Al Banna, the UAE's ambassador to India, voiced the expectation that "the changes will improve social justice and security and confidence of the people in local governance and will encourage further stability and peace".

The historical move ushered in a "new dawn in the region". It was decided to create two Union territories – namely J&K and Ladakh. J&K would have its full statehood restored at the earliest. A blueprint to provide gainful employment, promote tourism and establish quality infrastructure, centres of educational excellence like IITs and IIMs, as well as top grade medical and sports facilities was unveiled. Ladakh is to become a solar powerhouse and play a crucial role in the International Solar Alliance.

"Promises are never kept" ... did you say? Why not examine the actual implementation during the preceding 12 months. For the first time, the J&K government has launched an accelerated recruitment drive. Some 10,000 vacancies are being filled and 25,000 more are in the pipeline. Thousands of additional employment opportunities are being generated through power and infrastructure projects, especially under the Prime Minister's Development Programme. Of the 6,000 jobs earmarked for Kashmiri migrants, nearly 4,000 have already been filled.

Under the PMDP, 54 and nine projects have been allocated to J&K and Ladakh respectively. The pace of work has picked up dramatically. Seventeen projects have already been fully or substantially completed. The rest – including the construction of highways, bridges and flyovers,

transmission lines, hospitals and educational institutions, and hydro power generation projects – are being fast-tracked. Kashmir is to be connected with the rest of India, by rail, by December 2022.

Every effort is being made to strengthen grassroots democracy to empower panchayats, in particular. Implementation of the Centre's welfare schemes like MGN-REGA, Swachhh Bharat Mission and the mid-day meals have been entrusted to them. A commendable "Back to Village" programme has been initiated, under which a gazetted officer actually stays for two days in every village, to take stock of implementation, review constraints and receive feedback.

Particular attention is being given to empower the underprivileged. Welfare schemes like Ujjwala, Ujala (100 per cent electrification achieved), income support to poor farmers, placement linked vocational training, scholarships, etc are being provided.

Since becoming an UT, Ladakh's socio-economic, educational and development needs are getting utmost priority. Steps have been initiated to prepare a vision document titled "Ladakh 2050".

In sum, the government's farsighted decision in August 2019, has heralded a new era of hope, equity and empowerment. Kashmiris are witnessing purposeful efforts by the state and Union governments to instil greater dignity, development and democracy in the region. Consequently, the green shoots of peace and aspiration are beginning to sprout. With the government and people determined to stay the course, Kashmir is certain of reclaiming its crown as "heaven on earth" once again.

The writer is a foreign affairs analyst and a former Indian ambassador to South Korea and high commissioner to Canada.

LETTERS

PLAYING WITH FIRE

This refers to the report that a CISF officer at Chennai airport asked DMK MP Kanimozhi if she was an Indian when she mentioned to the officer that she didn't know Hindi. Kanimozhi has wondered whether being an Indian is equal to knowing Hindi! Normally, we come across complaints against MPs for their acts of highhandedness or throwing a tantrum at public places on flimsy grounds. An MP being at the receiving end is a rarity. I'm afraid the CISF officer in question is going to pay a dear price for his poor knowledge of Tamil Nadu politics.

P.G. Menon
Chennai

UNWANTED CONTROVERSY

THE DMK MP Kanimozhi, who is famous for her penchant for raising controversies, has not failed her fans and supporters to keep her fame floating. This time she has faulted a lady officer of the CISF posted in the Chennai airport for questioning her 'Indianness' as she did not respond to her question posed in Hindi. While none knows or understands the exact reason why first of all the MP had pretended as to not knowing Hindi, she could have easily diffused an unpleasant situation by stating that her preference is for English to Hindi though she can speak in it. Everyone in Parliament and in TN knows that her late father MK had chosen her to represent DMK in the august forum simply because of her proficiency in Hindi as she had proved it when she had translated the late Devi Lal's Hindi speech into Tamil while still being a student. The airport controversy created by the MP herself does no credit to her and instead has dented her image!

B.S. Jayaraman
via e-mail

A GIFTED WRITER

WRITER SA. KANDASAMY leaves a deep void in the field of Tamil literature. He was not only a prolific writer, but also a renowned documentary filmmaker. His novel Visaranai Commission was conferred with the Sahitya Akademi award in 1998 for the best Tamil novel. Sa. Ka, as he was fondly known, was a gifted writer, who did not believe in language flair or ornamental writing, but preferred to write using simple elements that were as simple as his lifestyle.

R. Sivakumar
Sholavandan

SHORT TAKES

France's Fiona is victorious in Italy

Palermo: Fiona Ferro of France upset fourth-seeded Anett Kontaveit of Estonia in the Palermo Ladies Open final to win the first four-level tennis title in five months.

Ferro, who is ranked 53rd in the world, won 6-2, 7-5 on Sunday. She had lost just one set on her way to the final. It was Ferro's second WTA title and the 23-year-old sealed it on her second championship point when Kontaveit hit a

return long. Kontaveit has lost five of the six finals she has contested. It was the first official tennis event — for men or women — since March when the coronavirus pandemic shut down sports across the globe. There were strict health protocols, including fewer ball kids, a limited number of fans and no post-match handshakes between opponents. Players and officials for the tournament were tested every four days for Covid-19 and one player who tested positive withdrew over the weekend. — AP

Deepa sees 10+ Para medals

New Delhi: India's first-ever woman Paralympic medalist, shot-putter Deepa Malik believes the country's medal count will be in double digits at the Tokyo Games next year. "At Rio we had doubled the medals, we were a squad of 19. We had two gold, a silver and a bronze. In 2018 (Asian Para Games), we were a squad of 194 and won 72 medals. It has already set the benchmark," Malik told paddler Mudit Dani during his chat show, *In The Spotlight*.

"The sensational thing about Tokyo next year will be India bagging Paralympics medals in double digits," she added. Malik has never let her disability come in the way of her passion. She had taken inspiration from the injured soldiers of the Kargil war when, in 1999, she was told that she would need a surgery to remove a spinal tumour. "The hospital to which I was taken for my surgery was full of war casualties. I think that immediately became my inspiration. If these healthy young men were losing a limb in their line of duty, then I have no reason to crib just because I have a disease," she said. — PTI

Players stabbed at Oz rugby game

Sydney: One man has been charged and another remains under police guard in a hospital after a low-tier rugby league game in Sydney ended with one player allegedly stabbed another competitor and two spectators. *Australian Associated Press* reported on Monday that New South Wales state police had arrested and charged a 20-year-old man with affray and assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

Police and emergency services were called to Old Saleyards Reserve in North Parramatta on Sunday following reports of an assault after an under-20s community game between Wentworthville Magpies and Penrith Brothers.

A 19-year-old player and two spectators, aged 16 and 22, were injured during the incident and the injured men remain in Westmead Hospital.

New South Wales Rugby League chief executive David Trodden described the incident as "sickening criminal behaviour." — AP

ALEX KEEPS POINT SCORING RUN AT BRNO

Brno, Czech Republic: The Repsol Honda Team took steps forward on a demanding Sunday as a difficult Brno weekend came to a close, Alex Marquez and Stefan Bradl ready to come back stronger in Austria next week.

Blue skies welcomed the MotoGP World Championship to the third race of the 2020 MotoGP World Championship at the Automotodrom Brno.

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TWIST IN THE TALE

Yoga guru Ramdev's Patanjali eyes IPL sponsorship

New Delhi, Aug. 10: The new IPL title sponsor to replace Chinese mobile phone company Vivo will hold the rights for only a four-and-a-half-month period and the highest bid may not necessarily end up being the winning one, the BCCI stated on Monday.

Vivo, which had a ₹440 crore per year deal for five seasons, has suspended its partnership with the Board due to the Sino-India border stand-off.

Baba Ramdev's Patanjali has shown interest in becoming the new title sponsor. "We are considering the IPL title sponsorship for this year since we want to give the Patanjali

brand a global marketing platform," Patanjali spokesperson S. K. Tijarawala was quoted as saying.

BCCI floated the tender invite for a new sponsor on Monday. Secretary Jay Shah announced a 13-point clause for submission of the bids from interested "third parties" and the winner will be announced on August 18. The last date for submission of bids is August 14.

"The Rights are available for the period from August 18, 2020 to December 31, 2020," the BCCI press release stated.

"Details regarding the Rights and product categories in which the Rights

● **The BCCI has invited tenders for IPL sponsorship for a four-month period. However, the highest bidder is not a guaranteed winner, who will be announced on August 18.**

are available will be provided only to parties who submit the EOI and are found eligible," it stated.

The BCCI also stated that bidding the highest amount may not fetch the rights for a company if the board is not satisfied with its plans on commer-

cialising its most precious property. "...it is clarified that BCCI shall not be obliged to award the Rights to the third party which indicates willingness to pay the highest fees in the course of discussions/ negotiations with BCCI after submitting an EOI," the BCCI stated.

"BCCI's decision in this regard will also depend on a number of other relevant factors, including but not limited to, the manner in which the third party intends to exploit the Rights and the potential impact of the same on brand IPL..." the BCCI release stated. "...it will be exam-

ined/evaluated by BCCI in the course of discussions/negotiations with interested third parties who submit an EOI," it added.

It can now be safely assumed that BCCI will get a lesser valuation for a four-month period compared to Vivo which had the rights for a bigger duration.

According to the BCCI's norms for accepting the 'Expression of Interest' (EOI), "...turnover of the interested third party must be over ₹300 crore (Indian Rupees Three Hundred Crores only) as per the last audited accounts."

— PTI

ICC MEETING ENDS IN A DEADLOCK

New Delhi, Aug. 10: The ICC Board of Directors meeting on Monday ended up being a damp squib after they failed to reach consensus over Shashank Manohar's replacement as the next chairman of cricket's global governing body.

The sole agenda of Monday's meeting was to finalise the nomination process for the election but no breakthrough could be made over a unanimous choice to lead the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"Yes, there was no unanimity on a number of issues. Firstly, there is a divided house on whether there should be simple majority or the existing 2/3rd majority in a house of 17," an ICC Board member said.

However, the bigger issue is lack of an acceptable face and there is no clarity yet over BCCI president Sourav Ganguly throwing his hat in the ring.

There are multiple candidates who are harbouring ambitions of leading the ICC. "Colin Graves (England) is a strong candidate but it can't be said that he is favourite anymore. There are countries which won't support Graves. Similarly, someone like Dave Cameron (former Cricket West Indies president) may enter the fray with support of two independent directors but may not get enough numbers. Ditto for Chris Nenzani (South Africa)," a former ICC Director, who is abreast of the latest developments, said.

The veteran administrator made it clear that at this point, no potential candidate has numbers to go the distance and that's the precise reason that the board is not able to come up with an uniform election process.

"The best solution is to have a candidate acceptable to all and avoid an election which creates a tense atmosphere between member nations. But yes, I agree that by now, we should have been able to finalise the nomination process," the official said. — PTI

Buttler brings a lot to table

Manchester, Aug. 10: Jos Buttler is the "whole package" and that is why the wicketkeeper-batsman should be a regular in England's Test side, feels Australian spin great Shane Warne.

Buttler was under immense scrutiny due to lapses behind the stumps during the first Test against Pakistan last week. He missed two chances against opener Shan Masood on 45, who went on to score 156, helping Pakistan put up 326 on the board in their first innings.

However, the 29 year-old, who had also been struggling with the bat for some time, played a crucial 75-run knock in the second innings and shared a century stand with Chris Woakes to help England win the first Test by three wickets.

"He should always be in the side. Jos is a very good and reliable keeper but, occasionally, you're going to have a few bad days — it wasn't easy out there, either," Warne told *Sky Sports*.

"But Jos should always be in your side because of what he's capable of, with the bat especially. And then his keeping, he's a good leader among the team as well — there's a calmness about him — he's the whole package. He's always one of the first pencilled in for me," Warne added.

Buttler changed the complexion of the game with his aggressive batting. He struck seven boundaries and a six in his 101 ball-75, helping England, who were reeling at 117 for five, chase down the 277 run target.

"What really impressed me with Buttler was the way he went about it, he trusted himself, said 'I'm the man, I'm going to get this done'."

Warne added that Buttler's positive approach helped his non-striker Woakes, who struck a match-winning unbeaten 84 after having averaged only 5.22 in his last six Tests. "He just played beautifully; and that helped Woakes, who had been struggling for form. It was a fantastic chase, against a quality attack, on a good pitch," he said. — PTI



England batsman Jos Buttler plays a shot during the fourth day of the first Test against Pakistan at Old Trafford in Manchester on Saturday.

— AP

Angry old Anderson is still hungry for more

Manchester, Aug. 10: James Anderson insisted Monday he was still "hungry" to play Test cricket after speculation the England great was considering retirement.

Anderson, recently turned 38, an age where many previous pace bowlers would have long since retired. Given his age, Anderson's meagre match haul of 1-97 during England's three-wicket win in the first Test against Pakistan inevitably led to speculation about his future.

By his own admission, Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, "did not bowl very well" at his Old Trafford home ground, where one of the ends is named after him, as England went 1-0 up in a three-match series.

I want to play as long as I possibly can. If I keep bowling the way I did this week, the opportunity to retire will be taken out of my hands. It will be a selection issue.

— JAMES ANDERSON
England pacer

But the swing specialist, whose 590 wickets are the most taken by any pacer in Test history, said he should not be written off after one poor game. "I want to play as long as I possibly can," Anderson told reporters during a conference call on Monday.

"If I keep bowling the way I did this week, the opportunity to retire will

be taken out of my hands. It will be a selection issue," he added ahead of Thursday's second Test at Southampton.

"I'm still hungry to play the game. I think the frustration for me this week was that, after one bad game... the sort of whispers (about retirement) that go around, I don't think that's really fair," Anderson said.

Reflecting on his own performance in the first Test, Anderson said: "It's one of those things, everyone has a bad game, every now and then. I've not bowled very well and felt out of rhythm. For the first time in probably 10 years I got a little bit emotional on the field, got a bit frustrated, let it get to me a little bit."

— AFP

Sixth player from hockey team +ve

New Delhi, Aug. 10: Indian hockey team forward Mandeep Singh has tested positive for Covid-19, becoming the sixth national player to contract the dreaded infection, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Monday.

The 25-year-old from Jalandhar is asymptomatic and is being treated along with the other five players by doctors in Bengaluru, where the national camp is due to start on August 20 at the SAI centre.

"Mandeep Singh, a member of the Indian Men's Hockey team, who was given the Covid test (RT PCR) along with 20 other players at the National Camp at SAI's National Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, has tested Covid positive, but is asymptomatic," the SAI said in a statement.

"He is being administered treatment by doctors, along with the other five players who have tested positive."

Indian captain Manpreet Singh and four other players had tested positive for Covid-19 last week after returning to the SAI Centre following a month-long break.

— PTI

EX-BANGLA CRICKETER CATCHES CORONAVIRUS

Dhaka, Aug. 10: Former Bangladesh left-arm spinner Mosharraf Hossain, who has represented the national team in five ODIs, has tested positive for Covid-19.

The 38-year-old, who had undergone four months of intense treatment including a surgery for brain tumour, contracted the infection after his father also tested positive for the contagious disease.

He was diagnosed with a brain tumour last year. Mosharraf is doing fine and has self-isolated himself at home after receiving the result of his Covid test on Sunday. "My wife and my child however tested negative and they are living with her parents," Mosharraf was quoted as saying by *The Daily Star*.

— PTI



Damian Lillard of the Portland Trail Blazers goes up for a shot against the Philadelphia 76ers during their NBA match in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

— AFP

Lillard's half-ton powers Portland

Miami, Aug. 10: Portland's Damian Lillard poured in 51 points against a Philadelphia team missing injured stars Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons, powering the Trail Blazers to a 124-121 victory in their NBA match on Sunday.

Lillard, taunted on social media after two key missed free throws in a Saturday loss to the Los Angeles Clippers, unleashed the 10th 50-point performance of his career and fifth of the season to pull Portland within a half-game of Memphis for eighth in the Western Conference play-off fight.

"This was different because our season was on the line. We drop this one and we don't control our destiny. I thought we answered the call down the stretch," Lillard said.

Lillard hit 16-of-28 shot from the floor, 4-of-12 from 3-point range, and 15-of-16 from the free throw line and dished out a game-high seven assists.

The Blazers (33-39) and Memphis (33-38) are trying to hold off San Antonio (31-38) and Phoenix (31-39) for

spots in next weekend's play-in series for the last West playoff berth. Portland's win eliminated New Orleans and Sacramento.

In another match, Cameroon playmaker Pascal Siakam scored a game-high 26 points to spark Toronto over Memphis 108-99, clinching the second seed in the Eastern Conference play-offs for the defending champion Raptors (50-19).

Memphis, led by 25 points from Dillon Brooks, missed a chance to clinch a play-in series berth. The Grizzlies are 1-5 in bubble games.

San Antonio, trying to reach the playoffs for a 23rd consecutive season, pulled within a game of Memphis by beating New Orleans 122-113. DeMar DeRozan scored 15 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter to ignite the Spurs' attack and subdue rivals.

Jayson Tatum scored 29 points, five in the final minute of regulation time and five more in overtime, to spark the Boston Celtics over Orlando 122-119.

— AFP

Hami up for duel with 'mad' Max

Silverstone, Aug. 10: Lewis Hamilton welcomes the prospect of a Formula One title battle with Max Verstappen following the Dutchman's dramatic victory in Sunday's torrid 70th Anniversary Grand Prix at Silverstone.

Defending champion and current leader Hamilton, who has a 30-point advantage at the top of the drivers' standings, praised Verstappen and his Red Bull team for inflicting a first defeat on Mercedes in five races this year.

"It's great that Max won," said Hamilton, speaking in the aftermath of his record-equalling 155th podium finish, in second place.

"As I've said before I want to have races and a challenge. Obviously, the Red Bull seems to be quite close to us in race condi-

tions, but that's a good thing and it will be interesting to see their progression through the rest of the year.

"I definitely will not overlook them. We will keep a close eye on them. It's not going to be easy by any means," he added.

Hamilton, who shares the podiums record with seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher, is in pursuit of his own seventh drivers' title this year and also has the German's unrivalled haul of 91 GP wins in his sights.

However in sweltering conditions on Sunday, Red Bull had not only a superior strategy — by choosing to start Verstappen on hard-compound tyres — but also a superior level of management of tyre wear, which appears to have become a weakness of



Max Verstappen jubilates after winning the Formula One race at the Silverstone circuit on Sunday.

— AP

Mercedes' otherwise flawless car this year.

Hamilton had only won the British GP at the same track a week earlier after surviving a last-lap puncture as Verstappen closed in.

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff conceded his team had failed to deliver after starting with Valtteri Bottas on pole and Hamilton second in their 67th front row lockout.

Verstappen started

fourth and won by 11 seconds, a luxury that afforded him several light-hearted quips on his way to victory and a poor sign for Mercedes heading into the weekend's Spanish GP in Barcelona.

"It was a difficult day in the office," admitted Wolff, adding, "We have a handful of days to find out what exactly caused our issues today, come up with solutions, test them in Barcelona and then hopefully have a better race on Sunday."

The somewhat haunted looks on the Mercedes pit wall as their Pirelli tyres blistered over and again told its own story and Red Bull team chief Christian Horner, suggested their car, with its phenomenal levels of downforce, was almost too strong and too fast for the softer tyres introduced. — AFP