

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 19 AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER

**Max:** 29.5°C  
**Min:** 22.6°C  
**RH:** 70%  
**Rainfall:** 0.9 mm  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Light to moderate rains likely  
 Max/Min temp. 29/23 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+63,054)	(+1,096)
27,63,985	53,018

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,682)	(+8)
TS: 93,937	711
(+9,652)	(+88)
AP: 3,06,261	2,820

### CASES AROUND THE WORLD

2,21,74,684
<b>DEATHS</b>
7,79,999
<b>COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES</b>
213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
 Tithi: Shravana Bahula Amavasya till 8.09 am and then Bhadrpada Shuddha Padyami till 5.18 am (Thursday)  
**Star:** Magha till 2.05 am (Thursday)  
**Variyam:** 3.05 pm to 4.33 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 11.54 am to 12.45 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**HJRI CALENDAR**  
 Zulhijja 28,1441 AH  
**PRAYERS**

**Fajar:** 4.56 am  
**Zohar:** 12.30 pm  
**Asar:** 4.44 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.46 pm  
**Isha:** 7.56 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.39 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 5.59 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.08 PM**

## COUNTER POINT



Stop playing games... the party has given us these phones only to spread fake news!

## BRIEF

## Shah fatigued, joins AIIMS

**New Delhi:** Union home minister Amit Shah has been admitted to AIIMS here for post-Covid care after complaining of fatigue and body ache. According to a statement issued by AIIMS, he is comfortable and is continuing his work from hospital. Home ministry officials said Amit Shah was working from AIIMS. He had undergone treatment for Covid-19 at Medanta Hospital. Meanwhile UP minister of state Atul Garg has tested positive. Garg is hypertensive and a diabetic.

## BIG | HONOUR

# Shuttler Satwik wins Arjuna award

**MOSES KONDETY | DC**  
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Badminton player Rankireddy Satwiksairaj continues to be a smash hit. He has been recommended for the prestigious Arjuna Award along with men's doubles partner Chirag Shetty by the sports ministry's selection committee on Tuesday. "I just cannot believe this!" Satwik shrieked when *Deccan Chronicle* broke the news of his selection. "Ever since I got nominated (in June), there have been so many calls... my father must've got more than 500 of them, wishing



## NATION | 4

**Ashok Lavasa resigns as EC, to join ADB**



## WORLD | 5

**Trump slaps new curbs on Huawei**



## SPORTS | 8

**Dream XI wins IPL title bid at ₹222 cr**

## SC: PM-CARES MONEY CAN'T GO TO RELIEF FUND

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC**  
 NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

Observing that PM-CARES is a public charitable trust that was set-up in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said that money collected for PM-CARES Fund need not go to the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF) as the former had different object and purpose. Rejecting the prayer for the transfer of funds collected under PM-CARES to NDRF, Justice Ashok Bhushan, who pronounced the judgment, said, "The funds collected in the PM CARES Fund are entirely different funds which are funds of a public charitable trust and there is no occasion for issuing any direction to transfer the said funds to the NDRF."

Besides Justice Bhushan, other judges on the bench included Justice R. Subhas Reddy and Justice M.R. Shah. Making a distinction between the funds under NDRF and PM-CARES, Justice Bhushan said, "The NDRF and PM-CARES Fund are two entirely different funds with different object and purpose."

The court dismissed a PIL by an NGO, the CPIL, seeking a direction for the transfer of money contributed to PM-CARES in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

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

## Too close



Water in the river Godavari flows very close to the road-cum-rail bridge in Rajahmundry on Tuesday. The water in the river has increased because of heavy inflows from upstream areas.

— A. MANIKANTA KUMAR

# NHRC orders TS to pay ₹5L to kin of Alair encounter victims

**ATHER MOIN | DC**  
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the state government to pay ₹5 lakh within four weeks as monetary compensation to the next of kin of each of the five persons allegedly shot dead by the police in the Alair encounter of April 7, 2015.

The order dated July 29 was received last week, but was lying in the office of advocate Mohammed Osman Shaheed, who had presented the case before the commission. The advo-

● **THE ORDER** dated July 29 was received last week, but was lying in the office of advocate Mohammed Osman Shaheed, who had presented the case before the commission.

cate, who is also president of the All India Minorities Defence Council, is ailing, and he saw it only this week.

Izhar Khan, Syed Amjad Ali, Mohammed Haneef, Mohammed Zakeer and Vikar Ahmed were allegedly shot dead on the outskirts of Tanguturu vil-

lage in Nalgonda district while they were being shifted to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Courts from the Warangal Central Prison.

Vikar and his associates were facing trial for murdering a home guard. Three other associates of Vikar Ahmed — Riyaz Khan, Mohammed Abdul Sayeed and Vinod Kumar Sahu — were acquitted by a Metropolitan Session Judge on September 14, 2016.

Advocate Mohammed Osman while presenting the case before the National Human Rights Commission had demanded monetary compensa-

tion and departmental disciplinary action against the police personnel involved in the alleged encounter.

The NHRC intimated Mohammed Osman that the Chief Secretary of Telangana state had been directed to ensure that monetary compensation of ₹5 lakh each is paid to next of kin of the deceased persons within four weeks. The commission said it had sought a compliance report along with proof of payment.

■ **Page 2: TS didn't comply with NHRC award in 2018**

## GOV. RETWEETS W.H.O. POLICY: TEST, TEST, TEST

**BALU PULIPAKA | DC**  
 HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Governor Dr Tamili-sai Soundararajan on Tuesday has warned that the state government might find the going difficult in eradicating Covid-19.

Dr Soundarajan, took to Twitter, a platform she is active on, to point out what is wrong with the government's approach to Covid-19 control. "1) Testing Testing Testing 2) Tracking 3) Treating," she said, was the World Health Organization's mantra.

The Governor said she wanted to "re-str-ess view of WHO unless adequate numbers of testing done, our efforts to eradicate Covid-19 in Telangana will be difficult."

She said the degree of difficulty will be "more so amidst rains & floods in this season."

On several occasions in the past, the Governor had pointed out how the government was not putting its best foot forward when it comes to Covid-19 diagnosis and control measures.

In addition to raising the issue of incre-ased testing to identify Covid-19 cases and tracking them and tracing contacts of the people identified as positive for the disease, she had also written several letters to the state government in the past, attempting to bring its focus on the Covid situation.

The Governor had also summoned senior government officials to Raj Bhavan to take stock of the situation emerging out of the Covid-19 pandemic in the state.



A group of youngsters crosses an overflowing tank at Kothapalli near Karimnagar on Tuesday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

# New Sircilla collectorate building gets inundated

**PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC**  
 SIRCILLA, AUG. 18

The new collectorate complex constructed with advanced and modern facilities at a cost of ₹36 crore on about 30 acres of land was inundated due to heavy rains over the past few days in Rajanna Sircilla district.

The officials who prepared a plan for the construction of a complex for the collectorate, and along with all other offices of various departments, had forgotten to construct a drainage canal to release the water.

While they chose the place where a lake existed to construct the building, they did not take any steps after filling the lake to divert the water that

would enter the lake during heavy rains.

They laid one canal temporarily to divert the rain water from the premises of the new building.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao laid the foundation stone for the collectorate on October 11, 2017 and fixed the date of completion as t March 31, 2019. The buildings have spacious rooms and special quarters for officials, along with parking facilities. A Haritha hotel is also at the premises.

After three years, the construction work is still in progress in the district. Even though the government has 93 acres in Sircilla and Vemulawada bypass road, officials chose 25 acres of land of Damarakunta lake for construction of the collec-

torate and took much time to fill the lake.

Chinnabonalu, Mushtipally and Chandrampet lakes are located upstream of Damarakunta lake. When those lakes are filled with water, the excess water reaches the Damarakunta lake along with drainage water from Sircilla municipality.

Without concentrating on what must be done with such an inflow of water, officials started construction work on the new collectorate buildings without laying a drainage canal.

Before constructing the buildings, the construction of an eight metre wide and 800 metre long drainage canal was imperative. Officials did not start work on the drainage canal.



## SHORT TAKES

## Man held for indecent pics

**Hyderabad:** A 45-year-old from Mallapur was arrested by the Nacharam police for allegedly taking the pictures of the private parts of his step-daughter. She came home after her marriage some months ago, and saw the pictures of her in the laptop, which were taken during her teenage years. She approached the Nacharam police, who arrested the accused.

## BOYS SPORTS COMPANY, AOC TO HIRE STAFF

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

The Boys Sports Company, AOC Centre, Secunderabad, will be hiring administrative staff in the categories of teacher, clerk, housekeeper, masalchi and chef. The interview will be conducted by a board of officers between September 15 and 17 at Thapar Stadium, AOC Centre from 9 am. There is no age restriction to apply for the mentioned trades.

Teachers should have minimum graduate with BEd qualification to educate students of Classes VIII to X (CBSE syllabus) and clerks should be ex-servicemen having knowledge of accounts.

For further details, candidates can contact Officer Commanding, Boys Sports Company, AOC Centre, Secunderabad.

## 8-YEAR-OLD FEMALE CHEETAH DIES IN HYD ZOO

**T.S.S. SIDDHARTH I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

An eight-year-old female African cheetah, Hiba, passed away due to paraplegia at the Nehru Zoological Park on Tuesday. The zoo is left with one African cheetah, Abdullah, aged about eight years and is in good health.

According to officials of the Nehru Zoological Park, Hiba was received from Saudi Arabia, and was suffering from lameness for the last three years.

The post-mortem was conducted by Dr Laxman, Professor of Pathology, PVNR College of Veterinary Sciences, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad along with veterinary team of the Nehru Zoo in presence of Dr M.A. Hakeem, deputy director (Vet).

Samples were collected and sent to Veterinary Biological Research Institute (VBRI), Shantinagar, PVNR College of Veterinary Sciences, Rajendranagar, for further investigation.

## GUDUR PLANS COVID-19 PLASMA BANK

**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy, who is also the president of Telangana Plasma Donors Association, on Tuesday offered to set up a Covid-19 plasma bank if the government provides necessary permission and space.

Narayana Reddy made the offer through his Twitter handle in response to an earlier post by IT minister K.T. Rama Rao on April 6. Rama Rao had posted, "Yesterday good friend @kiranshaw called me and suggested that we set up a 'Covid blood bank' in Telangana; with antibody-rich plasma from patients who had recovered from Covid. Have requested Health Secretary & Commissioner to explore further (sic)."

Responding to the post, Narayana Reddy wrote: "Dear dynamic @KTRTRS where is the rich Covid-19 plasma bank in Telangana? It's been more than 4 months since you made this tweet, govt has not set it up yet! If govt gives me permission and space, I am ready to set it up in 48 hours with my own funds! (sic)"

The senior Congress leader informed that the Telangana Plasma Donors Association, which he floated, after he himself had recovered from Covid-19, has been rendering great service to the people by motivating hundreds of people who recovered from Covid-19 to donate their plasma.

Narayana Reddy also said that the Plasma Bank was a good idea and it should be implemented immediately in Telangana without wasting any time.

## Low testing, few cases is TS trick

TS lags behind other states in terms of testing

**BALU PULIPAKA I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

For long, Telangana state has been an island of sorts amidst the Coronavirus storm that has been ravaging some of its neighbours. Compared to Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka that Telangana state shares its borders with, the Telugu state has had the fewest Covid-19 cases so far.

Even a quick study of the testing numbers vis-a-vis the number of cases between August 15 and August 17, as well as the numbers from the first two Sundays of this month, shows that on days when the tests were low, so were the number of Covid-19 cases found in the state, indicating that low testing can artificially suppress the true extent of the disease.

On August 15, Telangana state conducted 12,120 tests and found 1,102 positive cases, on August 16 there were 8,794 tests with 894 new cases while on August 17, the number of tests was 19,579 that resulted in 1,682 new cases being found. On two Sundays this month, when typically the testing numbers are lower, Telangana state conducted 9,443 tests on August 2 with 983 cases being found while it conducted 11,609 tests on August 9 and found 1,256 cases.

It may be recalled that low testing rates had been an issue for long. The state found itself being clubbed with nine others as the poorest performing states on this front and those contributing most Covid-19 cases in the country by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently.

It may be recalled that Modi, during a videoconference on August 11, made it clear that Telangana state, along with the other states, needs to step up and do much more to increase testing, tracing and tracking to contain Covid-19.

Though Telangana state

## TS reports 1,682 new Covid cases

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

Testing has again resumed for Covid-19 with 19,579 samples tested on August 17 and 1,682 persons were positive on Monday, according to data released by the state health department on Tuesday. There were eight deaths, taking the toll to 711.

The total number of cases in the GHMC area stood at 235. Medchal-Malkajgiri saw a surge

with 106 cases, Ranga Reddy 166 and Warangal Urban 107.

The numbers in districts are rising and many small and private hospitals have to be set up as Covid 19 centres as beds in the local government hospitals are full.

Patients in a serious condition in the districts are being shifted to Gandhi Hospital as there is lack of specialists locally. Positive cases in men continue to be high at 65.10 per cent in the state.

STATE-WISE REPORT			
State	First case	Tests	Cases
Telangana	March 2	7,72,928	93,937
Tamil Nadu	March 7	37 lakh-plus	3,43,945
Karnataka	March 9	20 lakh plus	2,33,283
Maharashtra	March 9	32 lakh plus	6,04,358
AP	March 12	29 lakh plus	2,96,609

● **THOUGH TELANGANA** state lags behind in terms of number of tests it has conducted to detect Covid-19 cases compared to Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, it was the first in this group of states to find a Covid-19 case.

lags severely behind in terms of number of tests it has conducted to detect Covid-19 cases compared to Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, it was the first in this group of states to find a Covid-19 case. This was on March 2. Tamil Nadu found its first Covid-19 patient on March 7, while it was on March 9 that Maharashtra and

Karnataka discovered their first cases, and in Andhra Pradesh the first case was discovered on March 12.

The total tests conducted by these states also shows just how suppressed the real Covid-19 cases in Telangana state could be when viewed against the number of cases found. Tamil Nadu till August 17 conducted 37,87,778 tests (significantly, TN only conducts the gold standard RT-PCR testing and has rejected using Rapid Antigen Tests as being unreliable but have found great favour in Telangana state), while Maharashtra has till August 18 conducted 32,64,384 tests. Andhra Pradesh has conducted 29,61,611 tests till August 17 while Karnataka hit the 21-lakh mark in testing. Lagging way behind is Telangana with 7,72,928 tests till August 17.

## OGH old building didn't leak, open it, say doctors

**SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

The Osmania Medical College alumni and doctors from the Osmania General Hospital demanded that the heritage building, which was closed, to be re-opened for patient treatment.

Because of the rainwater entering the wards during the rains on July 20 and 21, the government took the decision of sealing the old building. The patients were shifted out to new buildings. The 1,200-bed hospital building fitted with oxygen pipe lines is a heritage construction. However, despite incessant rain for the last three days in the city, there has been no waterlogging or flooding in the old building. Pointing this out, doctors have asked why at this point of time when the pandemic is spreading the old building, which would serve a lot of people, is closed.

Dr Iqbal Jaweed, executive member of Osmania Medical College Alumni Association, said, "This

● **DESPITE INCESSANT** rain for last three days in the city, there has been no waterlogging or flooding in the old building. Pointing this out, doctors have asked why at this point of time when the pandemic is spreading the old building, which would serve a lot of people, is closed.

● **HUNDREDS OF** alumni of Osmania Medical College and who worked in the OGH want that the heritage building to be used for patient care.

indicates a strong answer to our doubt about a man-made block in the storm water drains passing from Begum Bazaar to the Musi river behind the heritage building which led to the flooding of the ground floor." Dr Iqbal wants the heritage building to be brought back into service.

There has always been a demand from the doctors to restore the building. Hundreds of doctors who are the alumni of Osmania Medical College and who worked in the OGH want that the heritage building to be used for patient care. One among them is Dr Sudhir Naik, who retired from the as superintendent. He strongly condemned the closure of the heritage building.

"This building has oxygen pipelines connected to the beds. At this time of pandemic, it will be useful to many patients," he said. "The Secretariat building could have served as a Covid-19 hospital till this pandemic is over, then later they could have gone ahead with its demolition. The government should be focusing on delivering treatment to the common people. This government's decisions on health are beyond my understanding," said a frustrated Dr Naik. Comparisons were drawn with the Moazzam Jahi market, too.

**SLIDING | HONOUR** Ranked fourth in 2019, the varsity drops 6 position this year

## UoH again among top 10 institutes

**HARLEEN MINOCHA I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

The University of Hyderabad (UoH) held on to its place in the Top 10 list of Institutes of National Importance and Central Universities in the Union education ministry's Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) 2020.

Compared to the 2019 rankings, during which it stood fourth, the

University of Hyderabad dropped six positions this year and is ranked tenth this year.

The rankings were released by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday

IIT-Hyderabad that had secured the eighth position last year on the Top 10 Engineering Colleges list, dropped out this year.

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras topped the list of Institutes of National

● **IIT-HYDERABAD** that had secured the eighth position last year on the Top 10 Engineering Colleges list, dropped out this year.

Importance, followed by the IITs at Mumbai and Delhi. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru stood in fourth place, while IIT Kharagpur ranked fifth. The University of

## Where are the tiles, GHMC?



Due to sheer neglect of the civic authorities, the tiles on the pavement along the GHMC head office in Hyderabad, go missing causing grave danger to pedestrians.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

## One-third nation faces mental health problems due to Covid

**KANIZA GARARI I DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

One in three persons in India suffer from mental health problems due to the pandemic but they are not able to understand their anxiety, panic, depression, anger and stress.

Most affected are frontline healthcare workers, of which doctors and police officials have a lot of stress. The stress of managing Covid-19 patients, post-Covid-19 complications, fears of contracting of the disease and seeing their colleagues and patients suffer has caused a lot of anxiety and panic-related stress, especially in doctors.

Doctors are finding themselves at the forefront of fighting the virus but the support from the society as a whole is lacking.

Some of them are not able to cope with medical problems caused by virus and circumstances raised by society.

Police officials who have been at the forefront controlling crowds during lockdown and post-lockdown and falling prey to the virus are also facing mental health problems. They too are suffering from panic and anxiety attacks as they have seen their colleagues, friends and near and dear ones succumb to the virus.

These close encounters have left a mark on many of them who are trying to cope and come back to their old selves but are unable to understand why it seems impossible.

Dr Preeti Swaroop, president of Hyderabad Psychiatric Society, explains, "To accept that you are having a mental health issue is very difficult for 95 per cent of the people. The pandemic has got each and every segment, class and creed of people stressed. Everyone is suffering but to agree that you are suffering and seek help is not acceptable to many.

Professionals top the list as they have been hurt the most. What we find is that instead of immediately seeking help, there is denial and resorting to escape routes like alcohol. When there is no solution, only then are they opting for consultants. The numbers that

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

High levels of anxiety leading to sleeplessness, weight loss, irritation, anger and mood swings are being noted in people who are well but worried about getting Covid-19. These people are suffering from worry leading to 'worried well syndrome.'

A large number of people who are constantly reading updates on virus, new findings on the disease and also the manner in which it is spreading

around are also unconsciously inculcating fear and panic, of which they are not aware.

When they see a case around them, they are so scared that they are socially isolating themselves and not connecting or emoting.

Some of them have even gone so far as to get a full body check-up done twice in the last six months to rule out the presence of the virus.

This excessive worry and fear is also taking a toll on their health with

weight loss and sleeplessness noted as symptoms of this syndrome.

Several experts state that this segment also requires counselling and they have to re-connect with their near and dear ones to cope in these times.

This is the toughest as their unwillingness to accept that they are suffering from a mental health problem is high and that is a major challenge in identifying and treating them, say mental health professionals.

approach us are very low."

While guidelines by the central government on mental health issues during the pandemic have been issued, the state government has not been able to reach out with information. Information to people on mental health problems, symptoms, signs to look out for and steps to seek help are missing.

Tele-consultation help and seeking an appointment are being done by the Indian psychiatric society but there is a need to reach out more.

Mental health professionals are being asked to devise methods to reach out to maximum people as the pandemic will leave a long term impact on the mental health of individuals.

● **WHILE GUIDELINES** by the centre on mental health issues during the pandemic have been issued, the state government has not been able to reach out with information. Information to people on mental health problems, symptoms, signs to look out for and steps to seek help are missing.

## TS didn't comply with NHRC award in 2018

**From Page 1**

It directed that the video cassette/CD of the autopsy, if any, may be sent to the authority concerned.

The Human Rights Commission had awarded the compensation on September 12, 2018, but the government did not comply with the orders of the commission.

On several reminders of the commission, the Chief Secretary submitted that the recommenda-

tions of the National Human Rights Commission have been submitted to the competent authority for orders and the same is awaited which may take some time.

A prayer was made to grant three months time for taking necessary action in the matter.

However, no communication has been received to the Commission thereafter.



## IN BRIEF

## Extension of lake boundary sought

**Warangal:** The NH-163, between Telangana's capital Hyderabad and Bhupalapatnam in Chhattisgarh, got submerged in flood water at Jangalapally. The movement of traffic was hit due to the situation. Vehicles are moving with caution in this route resulting in slow traffic movement. Inspecting the area, Mulugu MLA Danasari Anasuya alias Seethakka said the diversion was due to the backwaters of Ramappa Lake and the overflowing Jangalapally lake on either side of the road. Stressing the need to extend the boundary wall of the Ramappa lake, Seethakka said the situation could turn the highway into a reservoir if not addressed immediately. The state government must act fast as nearly 10 villages in the surrounding areas, including Mulugu, Papaiahpally, Bandarupally, Singarakuntapally, Narsapuram, Incherla, Jangalapally and others are facing the danger of inundation, Seethakka said. She also noted that the Ramappa lakewould soon be turned into a reservoir and if precautions like extended bund and low-water level are not ensured, it could pose a danger to hundreds of acres of agricultural land.

## Covid deaths reach 74 in Nizamabad

**Nizamabad:** The total Coronavirus positive cases reached up to 2,435 in Nizamabad and most of the affected are youth. The medical and health officials said that around 1,155 persons, aged between 10-40 years, were infected with the virus in the district so far. As many as 799 men and 397 women tested positive for Coronavirus in the district. Over 1,254 patients are under home isolation and 216 have been admitted to hospitals. As many as 74 people died due to Covid-19 in Nizamabad district. Meanwhile, Kiwi hospital at Khaleelwadi, Silverline hospital in Saraswathinagar got permission to treat Covid-19 patients in Nizamabad. The DM&HO said that Covid-19 designated hospitals should display the charges of treatment and explain to the Coronavirus patient and his/her attendants before treatment. Serious action will be taken, if private hospitals collect more than prescribed charges for Covid-19 treatment, he said.

## Bhadradri ex-priest succumbs to Covid

**Bhadrachalam:** Koti Ramakrishnamacharyulu, 80, who worked as chief priest in Sitarama-chandra Swamy temple in Bhadrachalam passed away due to Covid-19 on Tuesday. Sitaramacharyulu, who worked in the temple as chief priest from 1958 to 2008, was an ardent devotee of Lord Rama. He organised Sitarama Kalyanam 50 times. He also was the chief priest for Srirama Pattabhishekam done once in 60 years in the temple. He dedicated his life to Lord Rama and used to chant 'Sriramanama' all the time. The temple authorities and other priests paid tributes to him. He tested Covid-19 positive 15 days back and joined in Gandhi hospital in Hyderabad for treatment.

## Biker with pistol frightens people

**Nirmal:** People in Bhainsa were frightened finding a pistol with a man who came from Maharashtra on Tuesday. According to sources, a person riding a bike fell down as he lost control of the speeding vehicle on the outskirts of Bhainsa town and people found a pistol hidden at his hip. On information, the police rushed to the spot and seized the weapon from the man who became unconscious after falling on the road. Police told the people that the pistol was a dummy one and not real and that the man was admitted to a hospital.

## No pandals for Ganesh Chaviti

**Khammam:** The government asked the Hindus as well as Muslims to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi and Moharram in their houses and not conduct programmes in open places in view of Covid-19. Khammam police commissioner Tafseer Iqbal said that there was no permission to set up Ganesh pandals in the limits of police commissionerate. "The decision not to allow Ganesh pandals was taken keeping public health in view. The Covid-19 is spreading fast in all areas and setting up pandals is not proper," he said. The people can perform puja during the festival on Aug. 22 in their houses. Organising puja programmes amidst gathering is not advisable in Corona time. He warned of strict action against the violators.



Municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao speaks to a patient undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at MGM hospital in Warangal on Tuesday. He told the patients not to panic but be brave as it will help in faster recovery. Dressed in overall PPE, he enquired the inmates if they were receiving proper treatment and care in the hospital. He said 150 additional beds were being arranged inside MGM Hospital for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, along with ventilator and oxygen facilities. The dedicated Covid-19 facility on the premises of Kakatiya Medical College would be inaugurated soon.

## KTR: Illegal structures led to Warangal floods

₹10 cr sanctioned for construction of drainages

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 18

Minister for IT, Municipal Administration and Urban Development K.T. Rama Rao on Tuesday inspected the flood-affected areas in Warangal along with health minister Etela Rajender, panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, tribal welfare minister Satyavathi Rathod and chief whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar.

He visited the Nayeem Nagar nala and spoke to the people affected by the flood. They told him that their provisions also got submerged in the rain water. The minister asked the district administration and the corporation officials to provide them with the essentials.

He said the floods were caused because of the illegal structures built along the nala. He said permanent steps would be taken to ensure such a situation does not repeat again.

All the illegal structures in the city would be demolished and the public must cooperate with the officials in this regard, he said.

The ministers also inspected several flood-hit areas like Sammaiah

Nagar, Peddammagadda, Waddepalli 100-feet road, Bhadrakali lake, etc. He announced that ₹10 crore would be sanctioned for constructing drainages in the city.

Earlier, Mr Rao conducted an aerial survey of the city and identified the extent of the damage.

He toured the city in a bus along with all the other ministers and public representatives. He walked in the affected areas and interacted with the locals there.

Inspecting the Bhadrakali lake, he said more sluice gates should be set up as the existing two sluice gates are not enough to let the water out faster. He asked district collector Rajeev Gandhi Hanumanthu to give him a report on the amount of water inflow to the Bhadrakali lake.

GWMC commissioner Pamela Satpathy said the two sluice gates were set up based on previous rainfall of 180 cm but the lake experienced a rainfall of 270 cm this year.

The minister reviewed the steps being taken for flood relief measures and also on the Covid-19 treatment with officials and public representatives.

## Oppn leaders put under house arrest

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 18

In view of the IT minister's visit to Warangal, police, as a precautionary measure, arrested several opposition party leaders, including BJP Warangal Urban district president Rao Padma and District Congress Committee president Naini Rajender Reddy, to avoid any untoward incidents.

Police personnel visited the houses of the leaders on Tuesday morning and asked them not to leave their house. Constables were also made to stand guard outside.

Condemning the move, BJP district president Rao Padma said the TRS was muzzling the voice of the opposition party leaders.

"Several colonies got inundated in Warangal because of heavy rains. KTR has come after the rains stopped and the flood subsided. The police have arrested us during his visit as they do not want us to even explain the situation to the minister. We are being

threatened of arrests at every step. The TRS government is much more tyrant than the Razakars," she said.

She also said, "Even though the people in the city are suffering a lot due to the floods, Chief Minister K. Chandra-shekar Rao has not made visit but sent his son instead. That is because KCR has made several promises to the people of the city four and half years back during the municipal corporation elections. He made promises like ₹300 crore special funds in Budget, giving ₹3,000 crore to the city in three years, etc. However, he has not fulfilled any. He is afraid the people would question him. Today, KTR too would make promises and leave. The TRS government is only making empty promises."

DCC president Naini Rajender Reddy called it undemocratic to arrest leaders to stop them from questioning the government. TRS is trying to escape answering the public, he said.

## Revenue, police staff involved in relief works

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, AUG. 18

The district officials of revenue and police departments alerted village-level officials to actively take part in the relief measures and rescue operations following the flood

situation in old Adilabad district.

Police personnel actively participating in the relief measures and helped the villagers in crossing the rivulets and streams flowing to the full with the flood water. They also rescued youth stranded in the

floods.

Adilabad SP and in-charge SP of Asifabad and Nirmal districts Vishnu S Warriar is coordinating with the local police officials and monitoring the flood situation and relief measures.

Police is extending serv-

ices to help the people reach their villages crossing the swollen rivulets and villagers who are disconnected from the other neighboring villages due to floods.

The SP said local police are actively involved in relief and rescue opera-

tions to deal with the flood situation in the Kumarambheem Asifabad district.

Vishnu S Warriar said people can call to 100 number seeking police help in an emergency and also can contact control room number 7901674795.

## Co-option polls: Cross voting gives jolt to TRS

PULI SHARAT  
KUMAR | DC  
PEDDAPALLI, AUG. 18

The Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) received a shock in the co-option elections of the Sultanabad municipality in Peddapalli district when two of its councilors voted against the party's decision.

Out of the four co-option posts, the TRS won three and Congress bagged the other seat in the elections held here on Monday in accordance with the new Panchayat Raj Act under supervision of municipal chairperson Mutyam Sunitha.

As many as 28 members had filed their nominations.

Out of 15 divisions in Sultanabad municipality, the TRS had won nine seats and the Congress six in the municipal elections. Peddapalli MLA

Dasari Manohar Reddy of the TRS participated in the election as an ex-officio member, taking the TRS strength to 10. With this, the TRS was in a position to win all the four posts.

The MLA proposed the candidature of Mongani Radha and Alencki Srinivas in the general category and Fathima and Syed Sajid in the minority category. The Congress nominated Gottam Mallaiah in the general category and Mobin in minority category.

During counting, it was found that Radha and Fathima had got all the 16 votes. Srinivas and Sajid of TRS and Mallaiah and Mobin of the Congress got eight votes each.

This was because the Congress, under the leadership of former MLA Vijayaramana Rao, gained the support of municipal vice chairperson Birudu

Samatha and councillor Gajula Lakshmi of the TRS, who are against their MLA Manohar Reddy.

Further, Vijayaramana Rao promised that the Congress members will vote for both the women TRS candidates, if they voted in favour of Congress nominees.

As both male candidates had got eight votes each, officials decided to go for a toss to pick the winner. In the toss, Congress candidate Mallaiah won the general category seat while Sajid of the TRS won in the minority category.

The TRS is shocked that even though it had complete majority, it was unable to win all the four seats. Further, had TRS MLA Manohar Reddy not used his vote as ex-officio member, the Congress party could have taken another co-option post.

## Villagers warned of swollen rivers in Adilabad district

PILLALAMARRI  
SRINIVAS | DC  
ADILABAD, AUG. 18

Adilabad district administration has warned people of villages along banks of rivers Godavari, Pranahitha and Penganga to be careful as these rivers are receiving heavy inflows owing to widespread rains in the upper catchment areas of Maharashtra.

Farmers, who have taken up cultivation along the rivers, are worried that their crops may be lost if the water levels in the three rivers rise further. River levels have been ris-

ing all along the courses of Godavari, Pranahitha and Penganga in mandals of Jainad, Bela, Tamsi, Luxettipet, Mancherla, Jaipur, Chennur, Kotapalli, Bejjur, Sirpur (T), Dahegam and Penchikalpet in erstwhile Adilabad district.

Officials have lifted eight gates of Yellampalli project and are releasing water downstream. Three gates of Kumarambheem project, two gates of Kadam project and three gates of Vattivagu project have also been lifted to release excess water downstream.

District officials of Adilabad, Kumaram-

bheem Asifabad, Nirmal and Mancherla have swung into action to ensure that there is no loss of human life. Arrangements have been made to evacuate people in case flood waters enter villages along the course of the three rivers.

The rivulet at Bangaruguda in Adilabad mandal is flowing over the road, thereby disrupting traffic. Asifabad zilla parishad chairperson Kova Laxmi and MLA Atram Sakku visited Gundivagu in Asifabad mandal warning people against venturing into rivulets and streams for fishing.

## SRSP receives heavy inflows

NARENDER  
PULLOOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 18

The Sriramnagar project, the lifeline to north Telangana districts, has been filling fast as it received an inflow of 79,766 cusecs on Tuesday.

Heavy downpour in united Nizamabad and Adilabad districts, flood water from catchment areas in Maharashtra state improved inflow to River Godavari, resulting in huge inflows into the SRSP in the last 48 hours.

The project has reached 1081.00 feet on Tuesday evening as against its full reservoir level (FRL) is 1091.00 ft.

Water storage has also reached 55.238 tmc ft on

Tuesday against its gross storage capacity is 90.313 tmc ft.

However, inflows gradually decreased to 59,998 cusecs on Tuesday evening. The SRSP officials continued to release 880 cusecs of water as outflow from Kakatiya, Laxmi canals. Evaporation losses were put at 498 cusecs and drinking water needs under Mission Bhagiratha scheme would use up 152 cusecs.

The SRSP officials are monitoring the flood situation with their counterparts in neighbouring Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, people thronged to SRSP dam for a glimpse of water-level in the reservoir. It is

expected that flood water may continue till Wednesday morning. People got relief from incessant rains on Tuesday as there was no rain in the district.

On the other hand, Kamareddy district collector A. Sharath visited Pocharam reservoir in Nagredidypet mandal at Kamareddy-Medak district border on Tuesday.

He directed the irrigation officials to monitor the flood situation.

He said that visitors should not be allowed to the reservoir as water level may increase soon. Irrigation officials said that Pocharam reservoir may reach its full reservoir level within a couple of days.

## Cotton in 13,085 acres damaged

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 18

The heavy rains in Warangal Rural district caused severe damage to cotton crop on which farmers pinned hopes this year.

In Nekkonda mandal alone, 18,285 acres of various crops got damaged due to rains affecting 9,900 farmers, a preliminary report said.

Paddy in 4,043 acres, cotton in 13,085 acres, chilli 125 acres, soya beans in six acres, red gram in 53 acres got washed out in the floods.

Narsampet MLA Peddi

Sudharshan Reddy assured the farmers that the state government would compensate them for the loss. Those who lost their houses because of the heavy rains would also be compensated, he assured.

"The central government must consider this as a national disaster as several states were affected by floods. We demand an immediate survey to estimate the loss incurred by special central teams. The centre holds as much responsibility as the state to help the distraught farmers," he said.

## DO NOT POLITICISE NATURAL DISASTER, SAYS DASYAM

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 18

According to the IMD officials, Hanamkonda has experienced the highest rainfall in the country of 223 mm on August 15 and 16 and this has been considered as a natural calamity, said Government Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar.

He said such huge amount of rainfall has never been experienced earlier in the city. Under these circumstances, officials are facing challenges in providing relief



Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar

but the state is doing everything it can to reach out to the people. "However, the political parties in the state are politicising the issue needlessly. Instead they must help in the rescue operations and boost the morale of those affected," he suggested.

## Floodwater receding at Bhadrachalam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
BHADRACHALAM, AUG. 18

The officials and people heaved a sigh of relief after the water-level in River Godavari at Bhadrachalam came down to 52 feet Tuesday.

The water-level that touched 61 feet started receding from Monday night. The floodwater from various rivulets, Indravathi, Taliperu, Palemvagu, Gubbalamangi, Gundlavagu, Cheekupallivagu and Lottipittalagandi, reduced on Tuesday.

The floodwater from Medigadda reservoir itself came down to 7.70 lakh cusecs from 9.70 lakh cusecs on Monday. The present discharge of flood water at Bhadrachalam is 13 lakh cusecs and the floodwater in 40 villages in seven mandals of Bhadrachalam division is also receding.

It was decided to continue 34 rehabilitation centres for a couple of days keeping the water-level in view.

The water-level is above the second warning mark of 48 feet. The officials

were asked to concentrate more on checking epidemic diseases as Covid-19 is spreading fast.

Collector M.V. Reddy asked officials to conduct health camps in flood-affected villages and take up sanitation programmes there. "Bleaching powder and sodium hypochloride should be sprayed in all streets in the affected villages. The proactive plan of the government worked well and the officials are able to shift the people from the affected villages in advance", he said, adding that the people too extended their full cooperation in the operation. Additional collectors were deputed as special officers for each three mandals to monitor the flood situation, he said. Godavari river breached the 60-feet mark seven times in the last fifty years.

The water-level at Bhadrachalam touched to 63.9 feet on June 22, 1976, 63.5 feet on August 17, 1983, 75.6 feet on August 18, 1986, 70.8 on August, 24, 1990, 66.9 on August 6, 2006, 61.6 on August 3, 2013 and 61 feet on August 17, 2020.

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)		
'E' Procurement Notice No.18/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.18-08-2020		
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
1	Supply of Workers on Out sourcing Basis for Town Planning Section, Development of Besant Road, CC Roads in Goparaju Ramachandra Rao Street, Raghava Reddy Road, Bavaji Peta, Prasanthi Nagar, H.B Colony Internal Roads, CC Roads & Water Supply lines in Patta Lands, CC Drain Bhanu Nagar, Renewal of BT Road to Sangeetha Kalasala Road, Land Scape Hard Scapes works in HB Colony Park, O&M of 150 TPD Capacity of Solid Waste Management, End to End Shoulders with Paver blocks to Nirmala Convent Road, Engaging of 4000 Litrs capacity 8 Nos. of water tankers and 4 Nos. of water spray tankers, Providing water supply distribution and pumping line to Gunadala Municipal Employees Layout VMC (16 Works)	1563.79
Contact: Superintending Engineer (Works & Projects), VMC, Vijayawada-520 001 Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ <a href="http://www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in">www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in</a> Download of bid documents - 20-08-2020 @ 4.00 P.M. Last date / time for receipt of tenders - 03-09-2020 up to 4.30 P.M. Sd/- For COMMISSIONER		



## SHORT TAKES

RAILWAYS JUSTIFIES  
HIKE IN PLATFORM  
TICKET RATESDC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 18

The Railways on Tuesday tried to justify a hike in platform ticket rates by saying this move is to control crowd at the stations in view of Covid-19 and the hike will be reviewed post-pandemic.

"Instructions have been issued to divisional Railway managers to take local decision to increase platform ticket fare to desist non serious persons from entering stations and maintain social distancing at the stations during Covid-19 pandemic. This decision will be reviewed post pandemic," said a Railway official.

The justification came following a tweet by Congress leader Digvijay Singh in which he posted photographs of two platform tickets — one during 2011 when the Congress-led UPA government was in power, and another of this month. "The cost of platform ticket that was ₹3 in Congress regime has now become ₹50. During Congress, Railways was under government while now under BJP it is privatised," Digvijay Singh tweeted. (sic)

DOCTORS REMARK  
AIMED AT W.H.O.,  
CLARIFIES RAUTSONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, AUG. 18

After being condemned over remarks on doctors, Shiv Sena leader and party spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Tuesday said that he did not intend to insult doctors, his statement was in reference to the WHO. Last week, Raut had said that he prefers consulting compounders as they are more knowledgeable than the doctors. Following this, the Indian Medical Association (Thane branch) has written a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray demanding Raut's resignation.

According to the letter, they are looking up to government and politicians to stand with them during the pandemic. "The healthcare workers are working at great risk not only to themselves but also risking their dependents, spouses, children and aged senior citizen parents. At this critical time, we would look up to the government and senior politicians to stand with the frontline workers," the letter said.

It further added, "We are aghast that a senior politician like Sanjay Rautji would say that compounders know more than doctors. We condemn this behavior and ask for his resignation." Replying to the doctors, Raut said, in a clarification, that his comments were misconstrued and that his remarks were in reference to the WHO.

ASSAM TO GIFT  
SCOOTY TO 22,000  
GIRL STUDENTSMANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 18

Assam government on Tuesday announced to gift a scooter to 22,000 girls who passed class 12 examination with first division from the state board this year under the Prayagn Bharati scheme of the state government.

Announcing that each scooter will cost something in between ₹50,000 and ₹55,000, Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that they had announced this scheme in the state budget to which they are going to implement now.

"22,000 girl students had secured first division marks in the higher secondary examination and we will now gift a scooter to every single one of them so that they can travel to their respective colleges," said the education minister clarifying that students will not be able to sell the gift for next three years.

Informing that department has decided to hand over the scooter to the students by October 15, the minister said that the government, however, will not provide the cost for registering the vehicles and helmets.

He also announced that each teacher, professor, and every other employee associated with the educational institutions of the state government will have to go for the compulsory Covid-19 test from August 21.

"From the Aug. 21 of this month till Aug. 30, all the employees associated with the education sector shall be compulsorily tested for the Covid-19 for the well-being of the students," he said.

## Back to work



Guest workers, returning from their native places, wait to get tested for Covid-19 as they arrive at Anand Vihar in New Delhi on Tuesday during Unlock 3.0. Meanwhile, workers cured of the virus have been inducted by the West Bengal government as members of "Covid-19 warriors club" to provide a healing touch to patients undergoing treatment for the infection in different hospitals in the state. — PTI

Sterlite: Madras HC  
upholds govt's orderJ. STALIN | DC  
with agency inputs  
CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The Madras high court has upheld an order of the Tamil Nadu government, directing permanent closure of Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi district over pollution concerns.

The company described the verdict as "temporary setback" and said it would look into all legal options available to it while political leaders and others welcomed the judgement.

A division bench comprising Justices T.S. Sivagnanam and V. Bhavani Subbarayan dismissed the petitions filed by Vedanta Limited, which sought a direction to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board to facilitate the immediate opening of its Sterlite Plant in Thoothukudi by immediate de-sealing of the plant with restoration of supply of electricity.

The bench also declined to entertain a plea from

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

Vedanta had approached the high court in February 2019, seeking to reopen the Sterlite plant which was closed following a May 23, 2018 order issued by the TNPCB in the backdrop of violent protests against the unit that left 13 people dead in police firing on May 21 and 22.

It had filed the petition in the high court as suggested by the Supreme Court which had on February 18, 2019 set aside the National Green Tribunal order that allowed opening of the Sterlite Plant.

Several people hailed the high court judgment in Tuticorin in southern Tamil Nadu by distributing sweets and bursting fire crackers.

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam welcomed the ruling, saying it reflected the thoughts of crores of people.

Ashok Lavasa resigns as EC,  
to join ADB as vice president

Sends resignation to Rashtrapati Bhavan, requests to be relieved on Aug. 31

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Ashok Lavasa, who was next in line to head the poll panel, on Tuesday resigned as Election Commissioner and would soon be joining the Asian Development Bank as vice president, sources said.

Lavasa, the sources said, has sent his resignation to Rashtrapati Bhavan and has requested to be relieved on August 31.

He would be joining the Philippines-based ADB sometime in September, they added.

He was named the bank's vice president last month. "The ADB has appointed Ashok Lavasa as vice-president for Private Sector Operations and Public-Private Partnerships," the multilateral lending agency had said in a statement last month. "He will succeed Diwakar Gupta, whose term will end on

August 31."

Lavasa, who would have retired in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), is the second election commissioner to step down from the poll panel before the completion of his term.

The last time an election commission put in his papers was in 1973 when CEC Nagendra Singh was appointed a judge in the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

His resignation comes at a time when the Election Commission is preparing to hold Bihar assembly polls amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Lavasa, a career bureaucrat, joined as Election Commissioner on January 23, 2018, and being senior most on the poll panel would have become CEC in April next year after the term of incumbent Sunil



Ashok Lavasa

Arora ends.

Lavasa still has over two years left in his term at the Election Commission of India and as CEC, he would have conducted Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur, and Goa, among other states.

His premature exit puts his colleague Sushil

Man arrested  
for ₹712cr fake  
invoices scamAKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 18

The GST Enforcement Squad in Odisha has busted a racket involved in generating fake invoices worth ₹712 crore and passing bogus Input Tax Credit of ₹129 crore over multiple transactions routed through different chains. The squad arrested the kingpin of the racket, Kashmir Kumar Agrawal, director of Madhumita Steels Industries Private Limited, from Sambalpur. Sources said Agarwal was under the scanner of state GST Enforcement Squad for a very long time but he used to change his address frequently from Rourkela to Haryana to Sambalpur.

Some of the accused involved in the racket were arrested earlier.

Subsequently, by tracking the chain of fraudulent transactions followed by the scrutiny of suspected e-bill transactions and collection of intelligence, physical inspections, Agrawal was

arrested. Proprietors of these fake firms admitted that they were neither doing any business nor making any purchases/sales in the name of these firms. They said the transactions reflected in their returns were only paper transactions without any actual receipt and supply of goods.

"All of the accused categorically admitted that they had neither deposited nor withdrawn any amount from the bank account opened in the name of their firm. The banking transactions in the name of the firms had been undertaken by the mastermind by misutilising the signed cheque book and RTGS forms taken from persons in whose name registration had been taken fraudulently and in some cases by forging their signature," a member of the squad said.

It was also revealed following the investigation that the accused has transferred a huge amount of money to different firms without having any business transactions with them.

● **LAVASA, WHO** would have retired in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner, is the second election commissioner to step down from the poll panel before the completion of his term.

● **HIS PREMATURE** exit puts his colleague Sushil Chandra next in the line of succession.

Chandra next in the line of succession.

According to the provisions of the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, an EC or the CEC can tender his or her resignation addressed to the President.

Lavasa had made headlines during the 2019 Lok

Sabha elections when he gave a dissenting note to the Election Commission of India (ECI) giving a clean chit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on allegations of violating the Model Code of Conduct.

Three members of the Lavasa family including his wife had come under the scanner of the Income Tax Department for alleged non-declaration of income and disproportionate assets.

The family members had denied the allegations.

An MBA degree holder from Southern Cross University in Australia, and MPhil in Defence and Strategic Studies degree from the University of Madras, Lavasa, a 1980 batch IAS officer of Haryana cadre, also worked as Finance Secretary. — PTI

## ED records statement of Sushant's father

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 18

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday recorded statement of K.K. Singh, father of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in connection with the money laundering probe in the backdrop of the actor's untimely death.

The officials sought details of the actor's finances and relation with the family and his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty. Chakraborty's lawyer Satish Maneshinde meanwhile put out a statement alleging that the actor's

sister groped her following a party in April 2019, straining relations between her and the actor's family.

The 74-year-old father was sent a questionnaire at his Patna residence and the officials said that further questions could be asked if needed. The ED till now has recorded statement of Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik, father Indrajit Chakraborty, Rajput's business managers, chartered accountants, house helps and Rajput's flat mate Siddharth Pithani in connection with the sui-

cide. The officials said that they would also record statements of other family members of Rajput.

Maneshinde's statement meanwhile mentioned, "Rhea's financial documents which clearly shows the falsity of allegations, has been handed over to the ED. She has not received a single transfer from Sushant's account. The IT returns have been examined by the police as well as the ED. Neither of them have found anything incriminating."

The probe is getting murkier by the day with a series of sensational alle-

gations being made by the actor's family and Chakraborty against each other. The row hit a new low after Maneshinde's statement mentioned Chakraborty having been groped by Rajput's sister Priyanka.

"In the initial months of their relationship, when Rhea had visited Sushant's house, his sister Priyanka and her husband Siddharth were living with him. On one night around April 2019, Rhea and Priyanka had gone out to a party. Priyanka consumed copious amounts of alcohol

and was behaving inappropriately with men as well as women at that party."

"Upon returning, Sushant and his sister continued drinking alcohol while Rhea retired for the night as she had a shoot the next morning. Rhea was asleep in Sushant's room when she suddenly awoke to find Priyanka had got into bed with her and was groping her. Rhea was extremely shocked and demanded that she leave the room immediately. Subsequently, Rhea herself left the house," the statement said.

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

## Malayalis gear up to celebrate Onam

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANNAHPURAM, AUG. 18

With Malayalis biggest annual festival Onam round the corner, the government has directed the district collectors and SPs in Kerala to take adequate safety measures in the wake of unprecedented increase in Covid-19 cases in the state.

Onam festive season will begin on August 22. The auspicious main festival known as "Thiru Onam" will be on August 30. All the nine days leading to Thiru Onam are celebrated by Malayalis.

Kerala had the biggest single day spike in Covid-

19 with 1,725 cases on Monday. The total number of cases reported in the state so far stands at 46,140 as on Monday.

Against this backdrop, the district collectors have been asked to convene meetings of traders and businessmen to ensure that strict safety measures are enforced to check Onam rush. The Malayalis go on a shopping spree during Onam festive season.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has listed a few dos and don'ts for Onam celebrations. No individual or groups will be permitted to organise Onam festivities in public places or offer Onam feast in the open.

The shops will not remain open for shopping till 10 pm-11 pm as in the past. There will be no late night shopping with shops and business establishments downing their shutters by 7 pm.

Some of the hotels and restaurants will be allowed to function till 9 pm complying with safety norms. However, the government will encourage home delivery of food items including Onam feast.

The government has given strict directions to flower traders to take adequate measures while bringing in consignments. Flowers are an integral part of the festival as peo-

ple, communities, residents associations and various organisations make *athapoo* or floral carpets marking the arrival of Onam festival. Arrangements are also being made to test people arriving in the state for Onam festival season.

The strict restrictions imposed by the government may lead to the scaling down of the celebrations this time, but people here say safety measures will not dampen the Onam spirit of Malayalis in any way.

Meanwhile, as many as 10 persons who took part in the rescue operations after the air crash at Kozhikode international

airport have tested positive for Covid-19.

More than 200 people from Kondotty who took part in the relief and rescue work were subjected to tests. Earlier, 20 officials of the Malappuram district administration including collector, assistant collector and district SP tested positive. These officials had supervised the relief, rescue operations besides treatment of injured in hospitals.

Soon after the mishap and rescue operations, health minister K.K. Shailaja had appealed to all officials, security personnel and local residents who took part in the rescue work to get tested.

Swapna, UAE  
officials got ₹3.60cr  
commission: EDGILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 18

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

This was disclosed by the Enforcement Directorate which had earlier questioned Swapna Suresh. The Life Mission project costing ₹18 crore was meant for providing flats to those families which lost their homes in floods.

The ED said of the ₹18 cr for the project, ₹3.60 cr was given as commission which was shared by Swapna, top brass of UAE consulate and an Egyptian national at the consulate.

The deal was to pay 20 per cent of the project cost as commission for getting the funding sanctioned for the project.

The commission issue has come as a major embarrassment for the ruling Left Democratic Front government as the Life Mission is its flagship programme aimed at providing homes to landless and homeless families in the state.

● **THE ED** said the deal was to pay 20 per cent of the project cost as commission for getting the funding sanctioned for the project.

● **THE CONGRESS-LED** Opposition UDF has demanded a high-level probe into the commission issue.

According to ED, Swapna had also received ₹70 lakh in 2019 from a company which was awarded the contract for visa stamping at the consulate.

Besides she reportedly used to get 1000 dollars for every kg of gold smuggled through her.

Meanwhile, the Congress-led Opposition UDF has demanded a high-level probe into the commission issue.

At a press conference here, Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala said that the Chief Minister cannot shy away from his responsibility as commission was sought for a government sponsored project.

He said the Chief Minister needs to give an explanation to the people as to how Swapna Suresh became part of official delegations headed by him to foreign countries.



## IN BRIEF

**457 cases linked to church: S. Korea**

**Seoul:** South Korean health officials said Tuesday that they have found 457 Coronavirus cases linked to a huge Seoul church led by a bitter critic of the country's president, driving an alarming surge of infections in the greater capital area. Kwon Jun-wook, director of South Korea's National Health Institute, said outbreaks at the Sarang Jeil Church and elsewhere have pushed the country into the biggest crisis yet since the emergence of Covid-19. He said a failure to slow transmissions in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, home to nearly 26 million people, could create a situation comparable to the "miserable scenes of the United States or European countries."

**2 existing drugs can prevent virus: Study**

**Boston:** Two existing drugs inhibit SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, from infecting human cells in the lab, a study has found. According to the study, published in the journal PNAS, both drugs, vacuolin-1 and apilimod, originally developed years ago, target a large enzyme called PIKfyve kinase. Before this study, little was known about this enzyme's role in Covid-19 infection, the researchers said. The work, which will need to be replicated in human trials, suggests a potential new target for Covid-19 therapies, they said. "Our findings show that targeting this kinase through a small-molecule antiviral against SARS-CoV-2 may be an effective strategy to lessen the progression or seriousness of Covid-19," said study co-senior author Tomas Kirchhausen, a professor at the Harvard Medical School (HMS) in the US. Kirchhausen said he discovered vacuolin-1 16 years ago, while apilimod was developed by a company called LAM Therapeutics.

**Chocolate firm glitch dusts Swiss town**

**Berlin:** Residents of a Swiss town got a bit of a shock when it started snowing particles of a fine cocoa powder after the ventilation system at a chocolate factory malfunctioned. The Lindt & Sprüngli company confirmed local reports Tuesday that there was a minor defect in the cooling ventilation for a line for roasted "cocoa nibs" in its factory in Olten, between Zurich and Basel. The nibs, fragments of crushed cocoa beans, are the basis of chocolate. Combined with strong winds on Friday morning, the powder spread around the immediate vicinity of the factory, leaving a fine cocoa dusting. The company says one car was lightly coated, and that it has offered to pay for any cleaning needed — but hasn't yet been taken up on the offer. Factory production was able to continue as normal and the company says the particles were completely harmless to people or the environment.

**CHINA CONSIDERS IMPOSING TARIFFS ON OZZIE WINE**

**Canberra, Aug. 18:** China on Tuesday began investigating whether Australia is dumping wine in a trade dispute that further strains relations between the countries and could shut the biggest export market for Australian wine.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce said the anti-dumping investigation involved wine in containers of 2 liters (68 fluid ounces) or smaller imported from Australia from Tuesday.

The Australian government denied subsidizing exporters. "We do find this deeply troubling, concerning and perplexing given Australia's wine industry is not subsidized to export and it's certainly not dumping product on the world market," Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said. "Now it's for China and Beijing to explain the rationale behind these actions and why they have moved to that stage of an investigation."

China's only other anti-dumping investigation of Australian products effectively closed the China market to Australian barley in May through crippling tariffs. Australia is appealing that decision.

The investigation of Australian wine exports, which made 1.1 billion Australian dollars (\$795 million) from the Chinese market last year, could take between a year and 18 months.

# Trump govt imposes new Huawei limits

**Washington, Aug. 18:** The Trump administration is further tightening restrictions on China's Huawei, seeking to starve it of crucial components by cutting off all access to US technology.

"We don't want their equipment in the United States because they spy on us," Trump said. "And any country that uses it, we're not going to do anything in terms of sharing intelligence."

The Commerce Department's new rules, rolled out Monday, will further block Huawei from accessing chip technology. Washington cut off Huawei's access to US components and technology, including Google's music and other smartphone services, last year.

Those penalties were tightened in May when the White House barred vendors worldwide from using US technology to produce components for Huawei.

A Huawei executive said this month that the company has started running out of processor chips to make smartphones as a result of those sanctions, and may have to stop production of its own advanced chips. But the Commerce Department said Monday that more restrictions were needed because Huawei has "continuously tried to evade" the earlier sanctions by using technology supplied by third parties.

The new rule is designed to block Huawei's access to commercially available chips made with tools acquired from the US "The new

**SENATE CONDEMNS CHINA'S HOSTILITY TOWARDS INDIA**

**Washington, Aug. 18:** A bipartisan US Senate resolution has condemned China's use of military force to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and called for a diplomatic solution to the issue.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff in several areas along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh since May 5. The situation deteriorated after the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed.

The Chinese side also suffered casualties but it is yet to give out the details. The resolution, introduced by senators John Cornyn and Mark Warner, commended India for taking steps to secure its telecommunications infrastructure from Chinese security threats and also supported bilateral and multilateral partnerships, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), to promote a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

— PTI

rule makes it clear than any use of American software or American fabrication equipment to produce things through Huawei is banned, and requires a license," Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said.

— PTI

## #MilkTeaAlliance to aid Thai protest

**Bangkok/Hong Kong, Aug. 18:** As Hong Kong pro-democracy advocates voiced support for Thai anti-government protests at the weekend, they used the hashtag #MilkTeaAlliance.

In Bangkok, flags representing Hong Kong and independence for Taiwan appeared on a sign bearing the tag at the biggest demonstrations in years.

And in Taipei, dozens of people gathered to back the Thai protests and give weight to a nascent community of cross-border youth movements pushing for democracy at home and uneasy with China's growing regional power.

"This is the first physical expression of the Milk

Tea Alliance," said Thai student Akawat Siripatanachok, 27, who helped organise the show of solidarity in Taipei joined by Hong Kong activists, a Chinese dissident and Taiwan students.

"We don't want to just talk about it online. We want a pan-Asian alliance for democracy" A hashtag that began in April as a backlash to Chinese nationalist attacks on a Thai celebrity for a perceived slight to China shows signs of turning into a bigger movement uniting like-minded activists.

Why milk tea? The light-hearted name represents a shared passion for sweet tea drinks in Thailand, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

— Agencies

## China's swollen river triggers flood alert

**Shanghai, Aug. 18:** China's biggest river, the Yangtze, and several of its tributaries have risen to dangerous levels after days of heavy rain, forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes and triggering an unprecedented emergency response alert.

China has seen unusually high levels of rain this flood season, with south-west and central regions in the Yangtze river basin bearing the brunt of flooding.

The Ministry of Water Resources said on Monday that 38 tributaries on the upper reaches of the Yangtze were now higher

than their warning levels, 19 dangerously so.

The southwestern province of Sichuan, which includes a major upstream section of the Yangtze, has raised its flood emergency response to its highest level, the first time it has ever done so, with its rivers overflowing and villages and farmland inundated.

The Qingyi river, an upper Yangtze tributary, had seen its worst flooding in a century. Sichuan's flood control authority said, with the city of Yaan forced to evacuate more than 36,000 people as the river burst its banks on Monday.

— PTI

**ANIMAL | SHELTER**

## 20-year-old apes Samson and Bobby in Java suffer from malnutrition

**Jakarta, Aug. 18:** Two critically endangered orangutans have been rescued from captivity on Indonesia's Java island and sent to a rehabilitation centre on Borneo to assess whether they can be released back into the wild, a conservation group said. "Samson" and "Bobby", both male and estimated to be around 20 years old, were suffering from malnutrition when they were removed from an amuse-

ment park and a private family home, according to a statement from International Animal Rescue (IAR).

The two Bornean orangutans had been identified as being illegally held in captivity in October last year before a rescue was arranged, said Darmanto, the head of Indonesia's nature conservation agency in Central Java.

The orangutans, who had been held in cages, have

## Lukashenko must go



Belarusian opposition supporters gather for a protest rally in Minsk, Belarus. More workers in Belarus joined a widening strike on Tuesday as they press for the resignation of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has extended his 26-year rule in an election the opposition says was rigged.

— AP

## LITHUANIANS VOTE FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS

**Vilnius, Aug. 18:** Lithuania's parliament voted for economic sanctions against neighboring Belarus on Tuesday, saying the presidential election there mustn't be internationally recognised. "We are sending a strong message to the world today," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said after lawmakers approved the sanctions on a 120-0 vote with two abstentions. Nineteen of the 141 parliament members were absent.

The document adopted by lawmakers in the Seimas, Lithuania's national legislature, also calls for an international rejection of the legitimacy of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection. Both the European Union and the US have called the presidential election in Belarus EU foreign ministers have rejected the election results and last week began drawing up a list of officials in Belarus who could face sanctions.

— AP

# Democratic Convention kicks off with a call to defeat Trump

Michelle Obama scorches Don, says 'vote for Biden like our lives depend on it'

## Don retweets Biden's disputed audio call

**Washington, Aug. 18:** The Democratic National Convention kicked off with a call to unite the US — in the wake of widespread nationwide protests against racism and the deadly coronavirus that has taken a toll on the country's economy — by defeating President Donald Trump in the November 3 elections.

Leading the charge was the former first lady Michelle Obama, who described the nation as "deeply divided". "We live in a nation that is deeply divided... If we have any hope of ending this chaos, we have got to vote for Joe Biden like our lives depend on it," Obama said in her video address as she concluded the first day's proceedings of the convention whose theme was 'We the People.'

The four-day convention is being held virtually in view of the Coronavirus that has so far killed over 1,70,000 people and infected 5.4 million in the US. The convention would formally nominate Biden, 77, as the party's presidential candidate and Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris, 55, as his running mate. Harris, the first-ever woman of colour and first-ever American of Indian and African descent to be nominated as a vice-presidential candidate by a major political party, made a few brief appearances during the first night as part of the former presidential candidates' address.



● **IF TRUMP** is reelected, "all the progress we have made will be in jeopardy", former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said as he accused the president of being negligent to the pandemic which has resulted in job losses of 30 million people.

Harris was a presidential aspirant until last year before she dropped out of the race because of lack of popular support. "We all ran for president motivated by the same reasons," said Harris who is scheduled to address the convention on Wednesday. "Donald Trump does not understand who we are as Americans. He really doesn't," she said in another brief remarks as speakers after speakers at the convention slammed the president for his policies, which they alleged has divided the country.

If Trump is reelected,

"all the progress we have made will be in jeopardy", former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders said as he accused the president of being negligent to the pandemic which has resulted in job losses of 30 million people. According to Senator Cory Booker, who was also a presidential aspirant, "We've got one shot to make Donald Trump a one-term president, and that shot is right now." Another former presidential candidate Senator Amy Klobuchar alleged that Trump is trying to divide people and is also not responding to the coronavirus pandemic and the significant needs of the US economy.

Indian-origin Democratic politician Sara Gideo, who is running for US Senate seat from Maine, said with Biden in the White House and a Democratic Senate, the US can build back its economy and its communities even stronger.

— PTI

## Sikhs, Hindus endangered minorities in Afghanistan: US Cong resolution

**Washington, Aug. 18:** Describing Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan as "endangered minorities", a resolution introduced in the US Congress has sought to resettle these persecuted religious communities from the war-torn country to America. Introduced in the House of Representatives last week by Congresswoman Jackie Speier and co-sponsored by seven others, the resolution sup-

ports refugee protection for Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, noting the "systematic religious persecution, discrimination and existential danger" faced by the members of these communities.

"Sikhs and Hindus are indigenous but endangered minorities in Afghanistan, numbering approximately 700 out of a community that recently included over 8,000 members," the resolution

stated.

The resolution supports resettling Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan in the US under the United States Refugee Admissions Programme pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act. Expressing concern for the safety of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, the resolution condemns all terrorist attacks, religious persecution and dis-

crimination against members of these communities in the war-ravaged country. Noting that Islamic militants attacked a gurdwara in Kabul on March 25, killing 25 worshippers, including a four-year-old girl, the resolution said that the terrorists made further attempts on the lives of the survivors before and after the funeral ceremony held for the victims.

— PTI

## ACCURACY ISSUE WITH COVID-19 TESTS, SAYS FDA

**Washington, Aug. 18:** Potential accuracy issues with a widely used Coronavirus test could lead to false results for patients, US health officials warned. The Food and Drug Administration issued the alert Monday to doctors and laboratory technicians using Thermo Fisher's TaqPath genetic test. Regulators said issues related to laboratory equipment and software used to run the test could lead to inaccuracies. The agency advised technicians to follow updated instructions and software developed by the company to ensure accurate results.

The warning comes nearly a month after Connecticut public health officials first reported that at least 90 people had received false positive results for the Coronavirus. Most of those receiving the false results were residents of nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

A spokeswoman for Thermo Fisher said the company was working with FDA to make sure that laboratory personnel understand the need for strict adherence to the instructions for use.

— Agencies





## DECCAN Chronicle

19 AUGUST 2020

### Let them skip JEE, for their own good

With the Supreme Court's indiscriminate status quo on the JEE and NEET entrances taking effect, a logistical nightmare stares at the authorities. Parents are happy that their children will not "lose" a year and will be availing of the best opportunities. They forget that the rules of both the NEET and JEE allow students to take it multiple times and it is commonplace for many to give up a year anyway in order to take it twice. In these unprecedented circumstances of a Covid year, should not the health of their children have been the parents' priority? But then, the deadly virus has so far only been known to hit other people. Denial is comforting.

So the governments at the Centre and in the states must now be seen working to ensure that the examinations do not become another source of the spread. For this, they have to plumb the best practices from around the world and then adapt them here. Sadly, given our high population and low per capita income leading to anxiety for our children's future financial security, the emphasis on a job-oriented STEM education is paramount leading to a manic make-or-break college entrance system unparalleled in the world. Hence not many examples of these practices exist. While 17 lakh students have registered for NEET, 11 lakh youngsters will be writing the JEE. Only a limited number of exam centres are present in a state. Not every district has an exam centre. The students will be accompanied by their parents on these outstation trips where they will arrange for overnight stays in hotels and at relatives' residences, raising infection chances.

As far as holding of exams is concerned, so far it has been seen that the level of precautions taken and screening done at centres are dismal. The World Health Organisation now holds that the Coronavirus is airborne. Patients, too, may be asymptomatic. Asymptomatic patients will inevitably be seated in the exam hall next to uninfected for three hours. More alarmingly, there will be cases of students coming to take the exam with a light fever, sparked by stress or common cold, and they will be made to take the exam in isolation alongside those who may be having the virus. An online exam would have solved this crisis, but neither the government nor the court displayed the requisite pro-activity. The only option that remains now is for parents, themselves, to let their child skip the exam. The government, which can still step in, is unlikely to, seeing as it has consistently opposed the entrance postponements.

So that relief is available to all, 11 students from various parts of the country had moved a petition in the Supreme Court. But god forbid, if the student "wastes" their year frivolously, studying science or engineering/medicine in less prestigious colleges and institutes or, in the worst case scenario, in pursuits other than the most heavy-duty academics. "These students are all 21-22-year-olds. Can you believe they will not be going out," solicitor general Tushar Mehta submitted before the court. The government had also cited, not so accurately, that the entire country is "working".

The court, therefore, in its uncontested wisdom, declined the students' prayer. After all, is there a precedent that the esteemed Indian judiciary took into account a child's argument? Even if, in the process, it has jeopardised the child's right to health and their right to life. For their own good.

### Flashpoint in Belarus

Over three decades after the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated shortly afterwards, Belarus' embattled President Alexander Lukashenko, who ruled his country — once part of the Soviet empire — with an iron hand for over a quarter century, is being taught a lesson on the meaning of "people power". After claiming victory in the August 9 election, he faced nine days of continuous protests demanding he leave for rigging the results, with even some police and intelligence personnel deserting him. Mr Lukashenko, described by many as "Europe's last dictator", stood firm at the outset, but after open heckling by factory workers in Minsk on Monday, who demanded he "step down", seemed to indicate he might be open to sharing power. He suggested a referendum be held to change constitutional provisions so that a fresh election could take place, but this concession seems to have come too late, with the demonstrators demanding that he just go. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the Opposition leader who fled into exile in neighbouring Lithuania two days after the election, claims that she won by a 60-70 per cent margin, and said she is ready to take over and lead the country, but Mr Lukashenko vowed he won't quit "under pressure". He even said: "Until you kill me, there will be no other elections." One hopes he hasn't forgotten the fate of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena.

The embattled leader may have hoped Russia, Belarus' powerful eastern neighbour, might come to his rescue and he spoke to President Vladimir Putin several times, but Moscow's intervention seems unlikely. President Putin promised help in case Belarus faces an external threat, but the threats Mr Lukashenko faces are internal. There is little anti-Russian sentiment in Belarus, and most people speak Russian, so rather than prop up the unpopular President, Mr Putin might try to "manage" the transition. An invasion, like in Ukraine some years ago, would also trigger fresh Western sanctions, something Russia might wish to avoid. The European Union has called an emergency virtual summit on Wednesday, as it explores how to help Belarus in its hour of need.

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Subhani



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



Sanjay Kumar

The seven-decade-long journey of electoral politics in India has both sweet and sour memories. The sweet memories of India's electoral journey could be documented as the increasing participation of Indian voters in the numerous elections held so far to form governments at three levels — central, municipal/panchayat and state. The sweet memories could also be remembered as an upsurge in electoral participation of the marginalised. It can also manifest as a reasonably high degree of trust shown by Indians in institutions vital for the functioning of the government. But in this journey of sweet memories have also existed some bitter experiences — elections being violent at times, an expanding role of muscle (dabang) and the role of money power. Though trust in institutions remains high, the trust in elected representatives (MPs, MLAs and sarpanchs) has declined over the last few decades. This is largely due to frequent defections of leaders from one party to another, signalling the declining role of ideology in Indian politics.

Since Independence, Indians have exercised their franchise 17 times to elect the national government. These elections over the years have witnessed increasing participation of voters. The first Lok Sabha elections witnessed a high turnout of 61.1 per cent and the second in 1952 witnessed a higher turnout of 62.2 per cent. But after that, for a very long time, the turnout at Lok Sabha elections remained below 60 per cent, barring exceptions. It increased to 66 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and touched 67 per cent during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The state Assembly election witnessed a much higher

turnout compared to the Lok Sabha election and the last few decades witnessed a significant increase in this parameter. Due to constituencies being much smaller and campaigns being personalised, local body elections have witnessed a much higher turnout compared to the other two levels of elections.

Although women got their voting rights along with men, they lagged far behind men in exercising it. Earlier, many of them did not come out to vote resulting in a big gender gap in turnout. But turnout amongst women has increased significantly during the last few Lok Sabha elections. The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and during the 2019 Lok Sabha election men and women voted in equal proportions — shoulder to shoulder — the biggest story of the Indian elections so far. Youth, too, have begun to participate much more actively in elections now. Dalit and adivasi voters, who were earlier missing from the long queues on the voting day up until the mid-1990s, have also started voting in much bigger numbers.

The beauty of Indian elections has been that all its verdicts have been acceptable to both the winner and the loser. Some elections resulted in the incumbent getting re-elected, while there have been other instances when the ruling party lost

**Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. In the previous Parliament, this number was 34 per cent.**

**The gap between male and female turnout that used to be 9-10 per cent got narrowed down to 1.6 per cent in the 2014 elections and in the 2019 elections men and women voted in equal proportions**

badly. This trend has been visible in all the three types of elections. There have been contestations and counter-contestations about how free and fair the elections were, especially in the 1990s when elections, including many state Assembly elections, were marred by violence, but in spite of all that, results were accepted gracefully. There has been discomfort about the use of the electronic voting machine (EVM). Political parties suspected these machines could be tinkered with, but all these issues come to a rest once results are declared. Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy over election results. Political parties have shown a great deal of maturity in this respect, but the credit should also go to the Election Commission of India.

Question have been asked about the EVMs, but results have gone in favour of and against all political parties at some point of time — no party can complain of being at the receiving end all the time. In election after election, both at the national and state levels, Indian voters have shown a great deal of maturity, voting back only the government that worked for the people. Were it not the case, the government would not have changed eight times at the national level. Between 1952 and 2019, of the 363 Assembly elections held, the ruling party got re-elected 188 times and was defeated 175 times.

But unfortunately, this is not the whole story of the Indian elections.

The aim of being in politics has almost entirely shifted from serving the people (*seva bhaav*) to be in power to make money by using political position and political pressure. Elections have become far more expensive now compared to the past. An ordinary man has no place in present-day politics. Not that one can win election only by using money power, but the importance of money for contesting an election has increased enormously. A very large number (almost 30 per cent) of all contestants during the 2019 Lok Sabha election owned property worth more than ₹1 crore. It is important to note that 86 per cent of elected MPs have assets worth more than ₹1 crore. The story remains the same for the state Assembly elections.

Even more disturbing to note is that a large number of elected representatives both in Parliament and the state Assemblies have criminal cases pending against them. Based on their own declaration of pending cases, 43 per cent of the current Parliament has criminal cases pending against them. This is not unique of the current Parliament, 34 per cent MPs of the earlier Parliament had criminal cases pending against them, too. This number stood at 24 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, for the Lok Sabhas of 2004 and 2009. If women's turnout is the biggest success story of the Indian elections, criminalisation of politics is its darkest.

*The writer is a professor at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and a political analyst. Views expressed are personal.*

**Unlike in many countries where there are major disputes around election results, in India we never had any similar dispute and government formation has never been held up due to controversy**

#### LETTERS

#### JASRAJ, THE LEGEND

Congratulations *Deccan Chronicle* for such a beautiful tribute to Pandit Jasraj (*Voice that enthralled millions for decades is silent now, Aug. DC, 18*). Panditji left us on Monday. The tribute gave so much of information about Panditji. He used to perform in Hyderabad for three days free of charge in November every year in memory of Pandit Motiram and Pandit Maniram who were court singers with the Nizam. Every year, he would bring a famous artiste who would perform along with him. Hereafter, November would be a forlorn month for us.

S. Vidyadhar  
Hyderabad

#### FLOODS IN THE STATE

The cause of floods in Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy and other main towns like Warangal is encroachments of lakes (*Lakes are shrinking due to encroachments, warns HC, DC, Aug. 18*). This is the negligence of local bodies for allowing constructions without verifying the title of the land thoroughly. There is every need to form strict rules and formation of teams to visit the places. When a permission is granted near any lake and if it is found to be violating the green norms, officials must be held responsible.

Dr Malkaiah  
Hyderabad

#### WELL DONE, DHONI

I feel that the performances of veterans like Sunil Gavaskar, Gundappa Vishwanath, Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar are like pieces of poetry — some short and some long. But the performance of M.S. Dhoni is like classical poetry. When he is on the cricket field he looked like Arjuna in the field of Kurukshetra, the Pandava who could fight with both hands just like Savvasachi. Unfortunately, his live classical performance has come to an end. Good luck, dear Dhoni.

B.K. Satyanarayana  
Hyderabad

#### Scooter plant in public sector soon

NEW DELHI, Aug. 18 The Government has decided to set up a Public sector unit for manufacturing 100,000 scooters annually with foreign collaboration because

50 YEARS AGO IN  
DECCAN  
Chronicle

was readily available. This was informed by Industrial Development Minister Dinesh Singh to both the Houses of Parliament today.

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## India builds UN team ahead of 2021-22 stint at Security Council

India will take over as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in January 2021. The government has begun preparations by deciding to upgrade India's diplomatic presence at the UN. The Indian delegation is being strengthened with the appointment of an additional deputy permanent representative and a counsellor to solely handle Security Council matters.

According to sources, 1999-batch Indian Foreign Service officer R. Ravindran, who is joint secretary (Central and West Africa) will join the Indian Permanent Mission in New York in the rank of additional deputy representative. He served in the office earlier under Hardeep Singh Puri, who is now minister for civil aviation, urban development and commerce, but who headed the mission when India was a non-permanent mem-

ber in 2011-2012.

Ravindran's colleague Pratik Mathur, who is from the 2007 batch, and is deputy secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), will be a counsellor. Both IFS officers will join the mission before the 75th UN General Assembly opens next month. The India mission is currently headed by T.S. Tirumurthi, with Nagaraj Naidu as deputy permanent representative. It is also said that external affairs minister S. Jaishankar will be keenly following India's stint at the Security Council with regular monthly reviews.

#### DISCRIMINATORY RETIREMENT PRACTICES?

At a time when the Covid pandemic has forced states to tighten their finances, the Tamil Nadu government has decided to increase

retirement benefits for retired senior officials. Citing petitions from the IAS Officers' Association and senior bureaucrats, it has permitted an additional ₹10,000 monthly servant allowance to all retired chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries.

The move is bound to raise eyebrows since many other states with strained finances have been forced to hold back the dearness allowance of government officials and pushed back pension grants. Barely two months ago, the government had increased the retirement age of babus from 58 to 59 years, ostensibly to postpone the huge pension burden it would face. More recently, the government has given retiring chief secretary K. Shanmugam a three-month extension.

According to sources, the state government has based the order on

a similar order by neighbouring Karnataka, in 2015. Then Karnataka had allowed chief secretaries and additional chief secretaries a servant allowance of ₹6,000 plus telephone and medical allowances over and above the pension and other benefits of the retired babus.

#### BITTER MEDICINE

Manipur has a qualified doctor as the state's new chief secretary. Senior IAS officer of the Manipur cadre, Rajesh Kumar who was additional chief secretary, has succeeded J. Suresh Babu who superannuated from government service. Incidentally, Babu was also a doctor who became a civil servant.

Mr Kumar's appointment comes in the backdrop of a demand from several student organisations in

the state to appoint a "qualified state native" to the post of chief secretary. Kumar, who is an IAS officer of the 1988 batch, is not. Once Mr Kumar's appointment was announced, some organizations are now demanding that the decision be reviewed. The state government, however, has shown no sign of acknowledging this demand.

With the students upset over what they term as "denial of rights of the native communities" by the state government, Mr Kumar as the new chief secretary may have to apply a healing balm to the "hurt" sentiments of the student community first, besides getting down to discharging his own considerable administrative duties.

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quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,528.32	1.26
Nifty 50	11,385.35	1.23
S&P 500*	3,391.16	0.27
Dollar (₹)	74.76	0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.40	-0.44
Euro (₹)	88.95	-0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,856▲1,182	2.15
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.36	-0.01
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.011
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.669	-0.014

Govt may give MSME status to dealers: Gadkari

The government is considering according MSME status to dealers, as this will enable them to avail of benefits offered to micro, small and medium enterprises, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said. "Regarding MSME, we are thinking now of giving MSME status to dealers," Gadkari said. The minister also reiterated his appeal to major industries to clear the outstanding dues to MSMEs in a timely manner.

Porsche drives in 718 Spyder, 718 Cayman GT4



The German luxury sports car-maker Porsche said it has launched new 718 Spyder and the 718 Cayman GT4 models in India with a starting price of Rs 1.59 crore and 1.63 crore, respectively. The two super cars get six-speed manual transmission options to retain the genuine flavour of managing shifts. Both cars hit 100-kmph mark in just 4.4 seconds and while its top speeds are hardly road legal, they can hit 301 kmph.

Data, AI can add up to \$500 bn to GDP: Nasscom

Data and AI could add \$450-500 billion to the GDP by 2025 and drive India's vision of inclusive development, a Nasscom report said. If India acts quickly, it can be a leader in building a holistic data utilisation and AI effort. A coordinated programme across all five building blocks—strategy, data, technology stack, talent and execution—is required to capture the opportunity, the report said.

Axis Sec. floats platform to trade in US stocks

Axis Securities announced the launch of a platform -- Global Investing -- that will provide an opportunity to its customers to invest in the US stock markets. For this, Axis Securities has partnered with Vested Finance, an online investment platform, the brokerage house said. Investors can buy or sell shares of companies like Facebook, Apple, Netflix and Google or invest in theme-based baskets or ETFs, it added.



Job gains in June look like a blip Five million more lose jobs in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

An additional five million salaried jobs were lost in July, taking the total job losses for the salaried class since the lockdown that began in late-March to 18.9 million. The job losses among the middle-class would make recovery of the economy harder.

An estimated 17.7 million salaried jobs were lost in April 2020. An additional one lakh jobs were lost in May. However, in June, 3.9 million jobs were re-gained, taking the total job loss to 13.9 at the end of June. But, the recovery was short-lived and another 5 million jobs were lost in July, finds a CMIE report.

On a net basis, the plight of salaried employees has worsened since the lockdown began. By July, their job losses rose to 18.9 million, making the salaried segment the worst affected by the lockdown.

"While salaried jobs are not lost easily, once lost they are also far more difficult to retrieve. Therefore, their ballooning numbers are a source of worry. Salaried jobs were nearly 19 million short of their average in 2019-20. They were 22 per cent lower than their level in the last fiscal year," said Mahesh Vyas, managing director of CMIE.

Aditya Narayan Mishra, director and CEO of CIEL HR Services, said, "Businesses have suffered



losses due to a decline in consumer demand. In order to stay afloat, they have tried to adjust their costs to match the decline. As a result, people in permanent as well as contractual roles have lost jobs. In the current scenario, it is not easy to get the jobs back."

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the job losses among the salaried class will make recovery of private consumption and the economic recovery tougher.

"Services had come to a standstill in the three months of lockdown. Though companies have restarted thereafter, MSME and logistics still remain disrupted," she said. According to Mishra, sectors like tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail are yet to recover and the recovery will take time and the job losses will take many months

to get back to normalcy. The salary growth among listed companies was in low single digits in the past two years. The job losses will further hit urban consumption.

"The premiumisation that has been happening in consumption will come off. Further, the middle-class is the largest consumer of electronic items and appliances and their demand will take a hit," said Shah.

Currently, the impact is not visible due to the pent up demand in the market. But the real impact on private consumption will be visible by December-January when the pent-up demand exhausts. "External demand or foreign direct investment or even government stimulus can ease things. Else, a recovery of consumption to its earlier 5 to 6 per cent levels will take another three to four years," said Shah.

HC restrains Emami from using Glow & Handsome

Mumbai, Aug. 18: The Bombay High Court, in a temporary order, has restrained FMCG firm Emami from selling any skincare product under the brandname containing the words "Glow and Handsome", saying that prima facie Hindustan Unilever (HUL) has used them first in its brands. Justice S. C. Gupta passed the order on Monday on an application filed by HUL under the Trade Marks Act, seeking an injunction against Emami from using the trademark Glow & Handsome.

HUL recently dropped the word Fair from its skin creams and renamed the men's skin cream as Glow & Handsome.

Emami claimed that it was the proprietor of this trademark, and was going to launch a skincare cream for men under the same name.

"... plaintiff (HUL) prime facie appears to be a prior adopter and user of the mark 'Glow & Handsome,'" the high court said in its order.

HUL had already launched its goods in the market with this trademark while Emami was still at the stage of adopting a process of launching its goods, the court noted. "Its (Emami) application for registration of that mark is also of a subsequent date," the order said.

Further, HUL had sufficiently advertised its new brand Glow & Handsome, said the court. —PTI

Auto firms asked to cut royalties to foreign parents

ADITI SHAH NEW DELHI, AUG. 18



The Union commerce minister has asked automakers to find ways to reduce royalty payments to foreign parent companies for use of technology or brand names in an effort to boost local investment and reduce outflows, two sources told Reuters.

In the country's competitive auto market, top-selling carmakers Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor's local unit pay millions of dollars in royalties to parent companies in Japan and South Korea for using their technology and brand to build and sell cars.

The minister, Piyush Goyal, in a meeting last week asked officials from groups representing carmakers and auto parts manufacturers to review such payments with a view to reducing the outgo, said people with direct knowledge of the discussions.

"The concern raised during the meeting was that the outflow is high, even for old technologies, and something should be done about it," said one of the sources.

The sources declined to be named as the talks are private. The ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

India, for years, has debated imposing stricter caps on royalty payments, which spiked after 2009 when foreign investment rules were eased and restrictions on such payments were removed. The country's markets regulator last year sug-

gested imposing curbs on payments exceeding 2 per cent of revenue. The limit was finally set at 5 per cent after complaints from some sectors and fears it may dissuade foreign firms from investing or sharing technology.

Recently, however, the government has made a renewed push to make the country a major manufacturing hub by encouraging domestic production and curbing imports. It also wants to increase local investment and reduce foreign outflows.

While India does not restrict the amount that can be paid as royalty, any payment by a locally listed company exceeding 5 per cent of revenues needs shareholder approval.

Listed companies such as Maruti Suzuki and parts makers including Bosch, Schaeffler India and Wabco India typically pay royalties of 1-5 per cent to their foreign owners.

Maruti Suzuki paid Rs 3,820 crore (\$510 million) as royalty to its Japanese parent Suzuki Motor in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, amounting to 5 per cent of its revenue,

according to its annual report.

Privately owned companies such as Hyundai's local unit paid \$150 million or 2.6 per cent of revenue as royalties to its South Korean parent in fiscal 2019 and Toyota Motor's India arm paid \$88 million or 3.4 per cent of revenue to its Japanese parent, government data shows.

Royalty provision has been important in attracting foreign investments into various sectors in India, especially autos, said Vaibhav Gupta, partner at tax firm, Dhruva Advisors.

"Depending on the form in which the government brings back such caps ... it may impact the ability of auto companies to benefit from the use of foreign brands and technical know-how," said Gupta.

A February report by proxy firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services showed royalty paid by 31 leading Indian companies with foreign parents, including Maruti and Bosch, grew 9 per cent in fiscal year 2019 to total \$1.11 billion. —Reuters

Stock market at 5-month high on FPI buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 18

Sensex and Nifty-50 closed at fresh five-month highs after trading in narrow range for a month. Continued and higher foreign investor buying seemed to have helped boost sentiments.

A fall in fresh Covid-19 cases, further improvement in the recovery rate of infected persons, good monsoon rains and fresh government measures to support the economy were the triggers for the market gain, analysts said.

The Sensex gained 477.54 points or 1.26 per cent, closing at 38,528.32 and the Nifty-50 closed at 11,385.35, up 1.23 per cent or 138.25 points. The Nifty Midcap-50 Index closed 1.43 per cent up, outperforming the benchmark.

All sectoral indices on BSE and NSE registered gains, led by Realty index, which gained over 4 per cent and the Nifty Bank gained 2.16 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 1,134.57 crore.

Permanently seal Vedanta unit: HC

SUDARSHAN VARADHAN CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The high court on Tuesday refused to allow the re-opening of Vedanta's copper smelter in Thoothukudi, more than two years after it was closed because of pollution concerns that triggered violent protests.

The Tamil Nadu government ordered the smelter to be closed a week after 13 people died when anti-pollution demonstrations turned violent and police fired at protesters.

The Madras High Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea by the company seeking the smelter's reopening. "The doctrine of sustainable development, precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle needs to be applied," the court said.

"If applied, facts speak for themselves, petitioner needs to be closed and permanently sealed."

Tens of thousands of locals stormed the streets of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu on May 22, 2018, accusing Vedanta of polluting the environment. Police said they opened

fire as they were overwhelmed. The subsequent violence claimed 13 lives and injured over a hundred people. No policeman has been charged so far.

Vedanta has denied accusations of pollution, and called the decision to shut its plant a political response to the outrage over the police firing.

But the Madras High Court said in its 815-page judgment on Tuesday the shutdown "cannot be treated as knee-jerk reaction". The judgment is the latest challenge confronting Vedanta, which has also faced legal action over its operations in Zambia.

C. Aryama Sundaram, a lawyer for Vedanta, said the company plans to challenge the judgment in the Supreme Court, adding the judgment would raise India's copper imports.

The court downplayed this argument. "The petitioner has been consistently stating... requirement of copper in India cannot be met... The courts have held that when it comes to economy pitted against environment, environment will reign supreme," it said. —Reuters

Gulf to be focus region for India's food exports

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 18

The government has identified the Gulf region as a focus area to increase food exports. It will also set up export promotion forums for eight agricultural products, including rice, banana and mango.

As part of the agri-export strategy, the government will focus on development of "Brand India" to help penetration into new foreign markets as well as export of new products which translates into higher value realisation. The government has made a product market matrix containing a list of products which could be expanded in new geographies and a list of known markets which can be introduced with newer products.

The Gulf region has been identified as a focus destination to increase the market share. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are among the top 10 export destinations for India's farm produce. The Gulf countries are highly dependent on food



imports and imports make up about 80 to 90 per cent of their total demand. Though the Gulf region is a strong market for India, India caters to only 10-12 per cent of their total imports.

Further, the government has created export promotion forums (EPFs) to improve exports of eight products, including grapes, mango, banana, onion, rice, nutri-cereals, pomegranate and floriculture under the aegis of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda). India exports fruit worth Rs

5,638 crore and vegetables worth Rs 5,679 crore annually. However, its share in the \$208-billion world trade of fruit and vegetables is miniscule.

Each EPF will have exporters of the related commodity as its members along with official members representing ministries/departments of the central and state governments. Apeda chairman shall be the chairman of each of these forums.

The forums will meet at least once in every two months to discuss/ make recommendations on related issues.

Got proposals worth ₹12 L cr under PLI scheme: Prasad

New Delhi, Aug. 18: Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Tuesday said proposals worth Rs 12 lakh crore have been received under the new PLI scheme to boost electronics manufacturing, and some manufacturing lines have moved from China to India during the pandemic.

The minister for IT and communications, while speaking at an industry event, said, "...All the top mobile manufacturers and their contract manufacturers have applied in that (PLI) scheme, including five global champions and five national champions and collectively, they have promised to make mobile phone and components worth Rs 12 lakh crore in the coming five years, out of which they're going to export Rs 7 lakh crore (worth of items)."

—PTI

CCI may sell cotton to B'desh to trim stock

PRATIK PARIJA AUG. 18

India plans to sell cotton to Bangladesh to trim its bulging reserves following a slump in demand from textile mills in the top grower.

State-owned Cotton Corporation of India may export 1.5 million to 2 million bales of the fibre to the neighbouring nation to help reduce India's record surplus before the new crop begins arriving in October, said Pradeep Kumar Agarwal, chairman of the corporation. It generally sells cotton to local mills and traders at market prices, after buying from farmers at government-set minimum rates.

Higher sales from India may potentially increase reserves in top exporters like the US and Brazil and further lower global



prices that have fallen about 8 per cent this year as the coronavirus erodes demand for clothing. Global cotton consumption is set to drop about 15 per cent from a year earlier to 22.29 million tons in 2019-20, according to the USDA estimates.

Export prices will be decided by the two governments using the Cotlook index, Agarwal said. Industry researcher Cotlook Ltd's benchmark is a daily average of the five cheapest cash prices

in the world. "In any case, I can assure that it won't be lower than domestic prices," which have fallen about 20 per cent since the outbreak of the coronavirus, he said.

Cotton Corp plans to sell 500,000 to 700,000 bales of 170 kg each to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in the marketing year ending on September 30. The rest of the quantity will be shipped in 2020-21, Agarwal said in a phone interview. Bangladesh vies with China as the world's biggest buyer of cotton.

India is likely to have a record closing stockpile of 10.25 million bales by September 30, according to the Cotton Association of India, as domestic consumption may drop more than 20 per cent from a year earlier to 25 million bales in 2019-20, it said.

—Bloomberg

VIT AMONG TOP 9 INSTITUTIONS

Hyderabad, Aug. 18: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) has moved up the ranks in the 2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) of Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. The ranking, released on Aug. 15, places VIT in the 801-900 group this year, up from last year's 901-1000, among world universities.

VIT is the only private institution of India figuring in the Top 1000 List of the Shanghai Ranking, which also said VIT is one among the Top 9, out of 15, institutions of India. VIT entered this prestigious ranking in 2019.

VIT chancellor Dr. G. Viswanathan said this was result of the commitment of VIT faculty, research scholars and hardworking students towards quality in research.

Business NOTE



## SHORT TAKES

## Asian Boxing event postponed

**New Delhi:** The Asian Boxing Championship, which was to be held in India in November-December, has been postponed to next year owing to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the national federation's Secretary General Jay Kowli said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken at the Asian Boxing Confederation's (ASBC) Executive Committee meeting held online on Monday. "A postponement was proposed owing to the conditions prevailing because of the pandemic and it was accepted. India remains the host and the tournament will now happen in 2021," Kowli, who is a member of the ASBC EC, said.

"The 2021 window for it will be discussed in the next EC meeting in November," he added.

India last hosted the men's Asian meet back in 1980 in Mumbai before conducting the women's event in 2003 in Hissar.

The tournament became a combined event for men and women last year. "We have to be careful, the cases are on the rise everywhere. Unless it is definitive that there is a decline, it was thought best to put things on hold," Kowli said.

— PTI

## Historic first as 3 Indians at Major

**Royal Troon:** Indian women's trio of Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik will look to write a new chapter in Indian golf when they tee off at the prestigious Women's British Open on Thursday. This will be the first time that three Indians, men or women, teed up at the same Major. The young threesome will have family and friends with them at the famed Royal Troon golf course, even though there will be no spectators.

The 22-year-old Aditi, who often has her father on the bag, has her mother, Maheshwari, this time — she was also there at Scottish Open — while 19-year-old Diksha's father, Col Narendra Dagar will be as usual the duty of a caddie.

Tvesa, 24, has a friend and experienced European Tour pro, Kiran Matharu, as her caddie. "I have some experience of playing with the European players, especially at home at the Hero Indian Open, where I had my first Top-10 last year, but a Major in Scotland is a different thing altogether," said Tvesa, who will be making her Major debut here.

When she tees up on Thursday, Aditi will come one step closer to becoming the Indian with most Major starts. — PTI

## Barca fire coach, director post loss

**Madrid:** Barcelona have sacked Eric Abidal as sporting director, the club announced in a statement on Tuesday, a day after dismissing coach Quique Setien.

"FC Barcelona and Eric Abidal have reached an agreement for the ending of the contract that united them," the club said on its website.

Like Setien, Abidal, a former French international defender, has paid the price after Barca ended a season of internal conflict by surrendering the Spanish league title to Real Madrid and then suffering a humiliating 2-8 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

The decision was announced after an urgent board meeting summoned by president Josep Bartomeu in Barcelona. The club also announced new elections for March 2021.

## Live on TV

## CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Jamaica Tallawahs vs St Lucia Zouks from 7:30 pm; Guyana Amazon Warriors vs St Kitts & Nevis Patriots at 3 am (Thursday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

## NBA PLAYOFFS

Toronto Raptors vs Brooklyn Nets from 11 pm; Boston Celtics vs Philadelphia 76ers from 4 am (Thursday); Los Angeles Clippers vs Dallas Mavericks from 6:30 am (Thursday). All matches on Sony Six, HD

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMIFINAL

Bayern Munich vs Lyon from 12:30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## RoHIT for Khel Ratna

Vinesh, Rani among 5 recommended for top sports award

**New Delhi, Aug. 18:** Star cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, and women's hockey captain Rani Rampal were among an unprecedented five picked for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, while another unparalleled 29 were recommended for the Arjuna award by the sports ministry's selection committee here on Tuesday.

Paddler Manika Batra and Rio Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu were the other two recommended for the country's highest sporting honour by a 12-member selection committee. Rampal was a late addition to the initial list of four.

For the Arjuna, India pacer Ishant Sharma, recurve archer Atanu Das, women's hockey team player Deepika Thakur, kabaddi player Deepak Hooda, and tennis player Divij Sharan were among the 29 short-listed, an official source said after the selection committee's meeting here.

The 31-year-old Ishant has played 97 Tests and 80 ODIs for India, grabbing over 400 international wickets.

This is the first time in the history of awards that five athletes have been recommended for the top sporting accolade with the final decision resting on sports minister Kiren Rijiju.

In 2016, four athletes — star shuttler P. V. Sindhu, gymnast Dipa Karmakar, shooter Jitu Rai, and wrestler Sakshi Malik — were collectively given this award.

Rohit will only be the fourth cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar, just-retired Mahendra Singh Dhoni and current skipper Virat Kohli to be conferred with the Khel Ratna.

The committee, comprising the likes of Virender Sehwag and former hockey captain Sardar Singh, met at the Sports Authority of India headquarters here and finalised the names after deliberations that took up the first half of the day.

While Rohit has been recognised for his ever-rising accomplishments with the bat, Vinesh has been rewarded for her gold medals in the 2018 Commonwealth and Asian Games besides a bronze in the 2019 Asian



Rohit Sharma

## LIST OF AWARDEES

● **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award:** Rohit Sharma (cricket), Vinesh Phogat (wrestling), Manika Batra (table tennis), Rani Rampal (hockey), Mariyappan Thangavelu (para high-jumper).

● **Arjuna Award:** Atanu Das (archery), Shiva Keshvan (luge), Dutee Chand (athletics), Rankireddy Satwiksairaj and Chirag Shetty (badminton), Vishesh Bharguvanshi (basketball), Manish Kaushik and Lovlina Borgohain (boxing), Ishant Sharma and Deepti Sharma (cricket), Ajay Sawant (tent pegging), Sandesh Jhingran (football), Aditi Ashok (golf), Aakashdeep Singh and Deepika Kumari (hockey), Deepak Hooda (kabaddi), Kale Sarika (kho kho), Dattu Bhokanal (rowing), Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary (shooting), Madhurika Patkar (table tennis), Divij Sharan (tennis), Divya Kakran, Rahul Aware and Sakshi Malik (wrestling), Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting), Suyesh Jadhav (para athletics), Sandeep (para athletics) and Manish Narwal (Para shooting).

Wrestling Championships. Terming it as one of the biggest moments of her career, Vinesh promised to live upto the expectations associated with the award.

"It's a proud moment for me. It was a long wait but it was worthwhile. If God permits I would live up to the reputation associated with this award," Vinesh said.

Manika was recommended for her remarkable performance in 2018, a year during which she won the Commonwealth Games gold medal and Asian Games bronze in women's singles. — PTI

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## IPL TITLE | SPONSOR

## Fantasy platform gets Dream deal

**New Delhi, Aug. 18:** Fantasy gaming platform Dream11 on Tuesday won the IPL title sponsorship rights with a bid of ₹222 crore, replacing Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for a four and a half month deal.

Dream11 has been one of the IPL sponsors for a couple of years now.

"Dream11 has won the rights with a bid of ₹222 crore," IPL chairman Brijesh Patel said.

There is a possibility that Dream11 can stay till the 2022 IPL in case Vivo doesn't come back next year. Dream11 will be then paying ₹240 crore each for 2021 and 2022. This will make it an average of ₹234 crore per year for three years.

It is learnt that multinational conglomerate Tata group didn't place a final bid while two education technology companies — BYJU's (₹201 crore) and Unacademy (₹170 crore) — came second and third respectively.

Vivo and the BCCI suspended a ₹440 crore per year deal for this season owing to the border stand-off between India and China. The IPL starts on September 19 in the UAE, moved out of India due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year.

There are certain questions about Chinese company Tencent's investment in Dream11 but one of the BCCI insiders privy to the development said that it is less than 10 per cent.

Dream11 is an Indian company founded by Harsh Jain and Bhavit Sheth. "Dream11 stake-

holders, including its founders plus all 400 plus employees, are Indian," a BCCI source said. "Their Indian investors are Kalaari Capital and Multiples Equity. Even Dream11's product is available exclusively for use only by Indians. Only a single-digit percentage minority stake is held by Tencent," the official added.

However, as recently as last month, the BCCI's Anti Corruption Unit (ACU) had sought an inquiry against the company after it was reported that the platform had links to a fake T20 league which was held in a Punjab town but was live-streamed as a game in Sri Lanka.

The ACU investigations showed that kits used by players in the tournament had the Dream11 logo and the event was live streamed on FanCode. Both Dream11 and FanCode are part of Dream Sports group.

— PTI

## Milan Inter title clash for Europa

**Cologne (Germany), Aug. 18:** Romelu Lukaku did his bit but there will be no reunion between the Belgian and Manchester United in the Europa League final.

Lukaku's Inter Milan will be in Friday's final in Cologne after he and strike partner Lautaro Martinez took their combined tally for the season to 54 goals, each scoring twice in a 5-0 demolition of Shakhtar Donetsk.

Headers from Martinez in the 19th minute and Danilo D'Ambrosio in the 64th put Inter on course to play for its first major continental trophy since winning the Champions League in 2010 under Jose Mourinho. Martinez and Lukaku added three more goals in 10 minutes to make sure of the result.

Shakhtar was also trying to emulate past European glories after winning the UEFA Cup in 2009. The only remaining player from that team, goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov, was at fault for the opening goal.

Lukaku's 33-goal debut season in Italy has taken Inter back to a European final for the first time in 10 years, while Conte's men finished the Italian league season just a point behind Juventus. — AFP

## COVID IN | THE AIR

## VINESH PULLS OUT OF CAMP DUE TO SCARE

**New Delhi, Aug. 18:** Vinesh Phogat, the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for Tokyo Olympics, has pulled out of the national camp citing health safety concerns amid the Covid-19 pandemic, a decision which has irked the national federation.

The rescheduled national camp for Olympic weight category wrestlers is set to begin from September 1 in Lucknow (women) and Sonapat (men).

However, Vinesh is not comfortable travelling to Lucknow as she is fearful of her health amid the raging pandemic.

"I am not going to attend the camp. I am training everyday with coach Om Parkash, who follows the plan which my personal coach Woller Akos sends me every week. The situation is not good to travel to Lucknow," Vinesh said.

The 2019 World Championship bronze-medallist said she "falls sick very easily" so she does not want to take a chance with her health.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is not impressed with the reasons given. "The selection committee will decide if Vinesh will get exemption or not," said a WFI Assistant secretary Vinod Tomar. — PTI

## Shuttler Satwik strong &amp; steady

**MOSES KONDETY | DC**  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 18

For shuttler Rankireddy Satwiksairaj, sport came first, studies later. Strange it may sound as he was born to school teachers in Amalapuram, Andhra Pradesh. His father was a Physical Education Teacher and there lies the catch.

"I was always attracted to sports as a child and was OK in studies... would skip school to watch cricket though," he told this correspondent on Tuesday after being recommended for the Arjuna award.

Satwik was six when he started playing badminton, at the Officers Club at Amalapuram Indoor Stadium where his father used to coach. His interest gradually grew as he picked up well at the summer camps that followed. "I started playing at the district level and soon got selected for the state at the Under 13 level along with my first partner Krishna Prasad. We had surprised everyone by winning the first state tournament we participated in. That success gave us an entry into the 2011 Nationals in New Delhi, where we did decently well by making the quarterfinals," he says.

That was the turning point. "My family then made the decision for me, that I should pursue badminton. So in June 2012 we went to the Pullula Gopichand Badminton

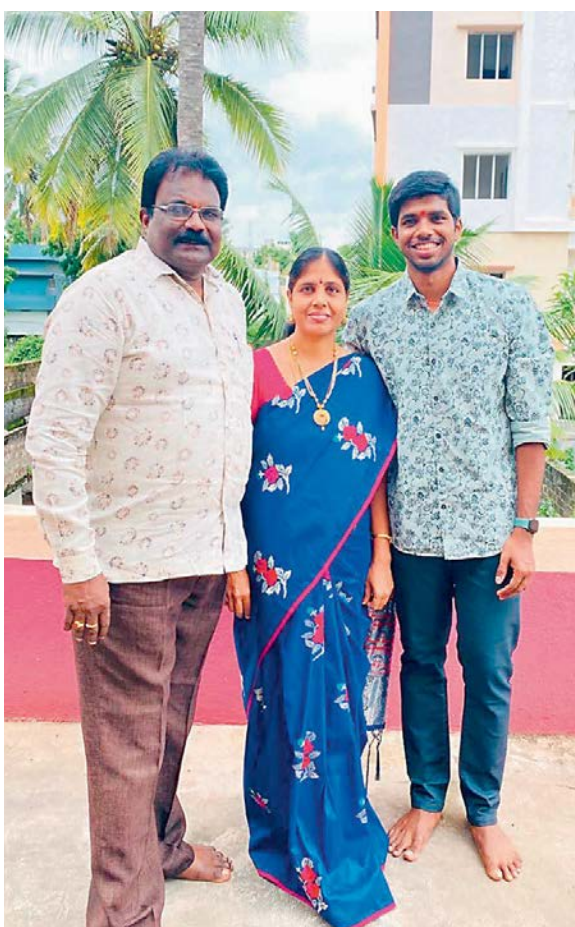
Academy in Hyderabad. Gopi Sir had asked us to come back later as the camp for the London Olympics was on. Then I went to Bhaskar Babu's badminton academy in Saroornagar, Hyderabad, and trained there for three months before joining PGBA full time," Satwik says.

That was the Under 13 level, and after playing the U-15s he shifted to doubles completely. "In 2016, doubles coach Tan Kim Her of Malaysia paired me up with Chirag (Shetty) on court and we've been together ever since," the 20-year-old says of his men's doubles partner.

They've had their starting problems though. "Communication was a hindrance initially. Gradually we developed an understanding on and off the court as well. We used to go out for dinners, share the room and little things even as we respected each other's personal space. Soon, we gelled well, grew very close and started winning tournaments," he says.

They share eight international trophies now.

But he was on seventh heaven when he first donned Indian colours. "My most memorable moment was when I first wore the India T-shirt at the Asian Junior Championship at Kudus in Indonesia in 2013-14... I was playing in the U-15 category then. It was an emotional moment for our entire family. I



Rankireddy Satwiksairaj (right) with his parents at his home in Amalapuram on his birthday last Thursday.

remember my brother was in tears," he recalls.

The next big feat was when we won the mixed team gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast, Australia. "To be on podium with other

teammates gave me goosebumps. That trip (to CWG) was truly special. To see all the great Indian achievers like Mary Kom and interact with them was such a thrill and gave me a high," says the six-footer.

## SPORTS AWARDS LIKELY TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY

**New Delhi, Aug. 18:** In a first, this year's National Sports Awards ceremony is likely to be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with all the winners logging in from their respective places to hear their names being announced on August 29.

The National Sports Day is celebrated on August 29, the birth anniversary of hockey wizard Dhyan Chand.

"The sports awards function this year is like-

ly to be an online function. As per the Government of India instructions, the awardees will also be announced on the morning of the day of the function," a sports ministry source said on Monday.

It also allowed athletes to self-nominate in view of the "difficulties" being faced by them in finding people who can recommend their names amid the lockdown.

— PTI