

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 9 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 26°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 2.1 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 25
Tithi: Sashti
Star: Revathi
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.41am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.28 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.49 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+65,156)	(+875)
21,52,020	43,453

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,883)
TN: 2,90.907 4,808

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,97,03,102

DEATHS

7,27,025

213

worldometers.info

CB-CID seeks custody of three arrested in Lankan gangster's death

Coimbatore: The CBCID, investigating the death of Sri Lankan gangster, Angoda Lokka, has filed a plea in a court here seeking seven days custody of three people arrested in connection with the case. The agency filed the petition before the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court on Friday evening seeking their custody for interrogation.It is likely to come up for hearing on Wednesday, police sources said. Madurai-based lawyer Sivakami Sundari, Dyaneshwaran and a Sri Lankan woman Amani Thanji have been arrested for their alleged role in getting Lokka a Aadhaar card in the name of Pradeep Singh by forging the documents.

Wednesday, police sources said. Madurai-based lawyer Sivakami Sundari, Dyaneshwaran and a Sri Lankan woman Amani Thanji have been arrested for their alleged role in getting Lokka a Aadhaar card in the name of Pradeep Singh by forging the documents.

Kerala asks TN to release water from Mullaperiyar dam in a phased manner

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government Saturday asked the Tamil Nadu government to release water from Mullaperiyar through the tunnel to Vaigai Dam in a phased manner when the water level reaches 136 feet in view of the heavy rains received by the Idukki district. ■ **Full report: P3**

COUNTER POINT



No need for a villain and his gang... our heroine and her family will play those roles too!

Small TN temples, mosques to open

Chennai, Aug. 8: The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday announced that small temples with an annual income below ₹10,000, mosques, dargah, churches and other religious places in the corporation areas will be opened for worship from August 10.

Also, driving schools across the state shall function from August 10 adhering to the standard operating procedures (SOP) to be released by the government. Temples and other reli-



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

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Dhoni will retire when he is outrun: Manjrekar



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Black box of ill-fated Kozhikode flight found; toll climbs to 18

DC CORRESPONDENTS
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/
KOZHIKODE/NEW DELHI,
AUG. 8

The black box of the ill-fated Air India Express flight AXB1344 was recovered on Saturday even as the toll in the mishap rose to 18 with a passenger succumbing to injuries. As many as 23 passengers are in critical condition in various hospitals of Kozhikode, officials said.

There were 174 passengers, including 10 infants, two pilots and five crew members on board the aircraft at the time of the accident.

The deceased include the pilot, Capt. D.V. Sathe, co-pilot Akhilesh Kumar, and four children — three girls and a one-year old boy.

Two girls were aged two and the other was five.

The Centre and state governments announced compensation of ₹10 lakh each for the families of those who died in the crash.

“Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) and Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) of the ill-fated aircraft have been retrieved. AAIB (Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau) is conducting investigations.”

Union civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who arrived in Kozhikode to take stock of the situation and implementation of the relief measures, tweeted.

An official of the

₹10L COMPENSATION ANNOUNCED

The Kerala government announced ₹10 lakh compensation to the families of those who died when the ill-fated Air India Express flight veered off the runway while attempting to land at the Karipur and Union civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced an interim relief of Rs 10 lakh to the families of those who died in the crash.

Families of the deceased pilots of the Air India Express plane that crashed have been escorted to Kozhikode.

Captain Deepak Sathe who died along with 17 others had survived an air crash in the early 1990s when he was in the Air Force and was hospitalised for six months, his cousin said. Sathe had suffered multiple injuries on his skull in that incident, but due to his strong will power and passion he cleared the test and started flying again.

● **The CVR keeps a recording of all the conversations taking place in a plane's cockpit while the DFDR has record of flight data such as airspeed, altitude and fuel flow**

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the DFDR and CVR, which jointly make up the “black box” in an aircraft, will be sent to Delhi for further investigation.

The CVR keeps a recording of all the conversations taking place in a plane's cockpit while the



Dubai-based Indian expat Shemir Vadakkan Pathappiriyam is exhausted by overjoyed as all the seven members of his and his brother's family survived the crash.

People stand by the debris of the Air India Express flight that skidded off a runway while landing in Kozhikode on Saturday. — PTI

SPECIAL: P5

DFDR has record of flight data such as airspeed, altitude and fuel flow. Mr Puri said the weather conditions on Friday evening were unfavourable because of heavy rain and the pilot seems to have tried to bring the aircraft to a halt on the runway but it skidded, leading to the tragic accident.

The AIE flight from Dubai overshot the table-top runway at the international airport in Kozhikode while landing in heavy rain, fell into a valley 35 feet below and broke into two parts on Friday night.

The AAI also said the pilot “attempted first landing on runway 28 but

could not sight the runway and subsequently carried out a missed approach (known popularly as go-around) and requested for runway 10”, adding that at the time of the second attempt at landing, it was raining and the reported visibility was 2,000 metres.

Sources said the DGCA is also examining the runway condition, pace of repair and maintenance work at the airport including the runway.

It is understood that the DGCA had earlier asked the Kozhikode authorities to carry out maintenance work at the airport. However, the works were not carried out effective-

Plane landed 1 km beyond tricky runway threshold

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 8

The ill-fated Air India Express flight IX-1344 — that crash-landed amid heavy rain at Kozhikode (Calicut) airport in Kerala on Friday evening killing 18 people on board so far including the two pilots — had touched down near taxiway ‘C’ which is approximately a distance of 1,000 metres from the beginning of runway 10 which has a total length of 2,700 metres, the Airports

Authority of India (AAI) that operates the airport said on Saturday, citing information from the Air Traffic Control (ATC).

The AAI also said the pilot “attempted first landing on runway 28 but could not sight the runway and subsequently carried out a missed approach (known popularly as go-around) and requested for runway 10”, adding that at the time of the (second attempt at) landing, it was raining over the airfield while the reported visibili-

ty was 2000 metres.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation (Independent Charge) Hardeep Singh Puri, who reached the crash-site at Kozhikode airport on Saturday morning, took stock of the situation and announced an interim relief of ₹10 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased, ₹2 lakh to each of those seriously injured and ₹50,000 to each of those who suffered minor injuries in the accident “over and above” other compensation.

Rahul raps Centre on Asha workers strike

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

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

“ASHA workers take health protection to homes across the country. They

are truly health warriors, but today they are forced to go on strike for their own rights,” Mr Gandhi tweeted in Hindi.

“The government was mute already, but now maybe blind and deaf also,” the former Congress president said tagging a media report about workers under the ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist), anganwadi, and National Health Mission being on a two-day nationwide strike

from Friday.

The two-day nationwide strike by almost 6 lakh Asha workers has been called by central trade unions against the Centre for not providing adequate assistance — lack of safety equipment, delay in pittance — amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Asha workers have played a significant role in contact-tracing, carrying out surveys and organising awareness schemes for the coronavirus in India.

Palaniswami said in a statement here.

The state government has already allowed public worship in small temples, mosques, darghas, churches in panchayat, town panchayat and municipality areas, he said.

The Chief Minister called upon the public to adhere to the SOP and contain the spread of Covid-19.

The government had already issued SOP for opening places of worship, he added. — PTI

5,883 fresh cases test Covid positive

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 8

With 118 persons succumbing to Coronavirus, the total number of fatalities in Tamil Nadu so far went up to 4,808 though new infections stood at 5,883 on Saturday.

Chennai had 986 new cases and 20 deaths while the adjoining districts reported high numbers — Chengalpattu 425 with 8 deaths, Kanchipuram 284 with 4 deaths and Thiruvallur 391 with 6 deaths. Other districts with high rates of new cases were Theni 452, Thoothukudi 247 and Virudhunagar 246.

Attributing the low rates of infections in Chennai to the various efforts made by the government in controlling the spread of Covid-19, Corporation Commissioner G Prakash said the recovery rate was now 87.5 per cent.

Speaking to the media after reviewing Coronavirus prevention work at Ayannavaram, he

● **“Doctors and nurses who died after picking infections while treating coronavirus patients would be paid a compensation of ₹50 lakh as promised earlier. The central government had agreed to provide for the money through insurance,” Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said**



said that an average of 12,000 RT-PCR tests were being done in Chennai every day. ‘Yesterday over 14,000 tests were done,’ he said.

The Corporation aspired to bring down the positivity rate to 6 per cent by this month and subsequently to 5 per cent, he said. Presently the positivity rate is 8.5 per cent, while it was 15 per cent two months back.

Containment zones that were about 1000 at one point of time had been brought down to 24 now, he said.

Even the death rate had been brought down to 2.1 per cent and would soon be reduced to 1.5 per cent,

Prakash said adding that nowadays hospitals did not wait for test to admit people suffering from breathlessness and it had brought down fatalities.

Doubling trend which was five days in the initial stages of the pandemic was brought down to 64 days last month and 72 days now, he said.

On facilities, the Commissioner said that of the 17,500 beds in Covid Care Centres only 3,300 were occupied and the rest were remaining vacant. He said that the present norms like wearing of facemask, social distancing and washing of hands would have to

be followed for another three or four months to wipe out the virus.

The restrictions on e-passes had been relaxed for two categories of applications — one work related for all and two for allowing guest workers to return, he said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, told the media in Salem that doctors and nurses who died after picking infections while treating Coronavirus patients would be paid a compensation of ₹50 lakh as promised by him earlier. The Central government had agreed to provide for the money through insurance, he said, replying to a question.

Only the families others involved in Coronavirus related work, for whom the compensation was earlier announced as ₹10 lakh, would get a compensation of Rs 25 lakh and a job for a family member, he clarified.

Kerala landslide: Toll rises to 26

Thiruvananthapuram/Idukki, Aug. 8: The death toll in the massive landslide that destroyed a row of 20 houses of tea estate workers in the high range Idukki district of Kerala on Saturday climbed to 26 with 11 more bodies being recovered from the debris,as efforts were on amid continuing rains to locate those missing.

In his press meet at Thiruvananthapuram, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said 11 bodies were recovered from the site of the landslide at Rajamala while three are yet to be identified. This is in addition to the 15 bodies recovered on Friday.This brings the death toll in the landslide at the tea plantation to 26. — PTI



I-DAY REHEARSAL

Chennai City Mounted Police officers wearing face masks take part in a first rehearsal ahead of the upcoming Independence Day parade in front of the secretariat on Saturday

— DC

SHORT TAKES

₹ 9.62L gold seized from air passenger

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

The customs department on Saturday seized 198 grams gold valued at ₹9.62 lakhs from a passenger in Chennai airport. The passenger, Mohammed (32) had arrived at the Chennai airport from Dubai on an Air India Express, evacuation flight, Chennai customs tweeted. Based on suspicion, the man was intercepted at the exit and his personal belongings were checked. Six Gold coins weighing 198 grams were found in his phone case. The gold coins were seized by the officials under the customs act of 1962. An investigation is underway.

Man kills employer for not paying salary

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

A 38-year-old man has been allegedly killed by his employee, a labourer, for not paying the latter his pay for three days in Chengalpet on Friday. The accused, Ramesh Kumar (35) surrendered before the Thalambur police after stabbing his employer, a building contractor, Raghu alias Ragothaman (38), a native of Thiruvannainallur in Villupuram.

Raghu had come to Chennai two months back after he lost his job in Villupuram due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. He got a contract to renew the Thalambur Panchayat office building in Chengalpet and employed a few workers including Ramesh Kumar. Police said Raghu did not pay Ramesh Kumar for the last three days. On Friday, when Ramesh Kumar asked for his dues the latter allegedly abused him and refused to pay him.

The accused in a fit of rage pulled out a knife and stabbed Raghu continuously. He let the latter die and fled the spot. Ramesh Kumar later surrendered at the Thalambur police station with the murder weapon. He told police that he killed his employer as he held back his salary.

Police rushed to Raghu's house in Hanuman Nagar and found him lying in a pool of blood with stab injuries in his abdomen. Police sent his body to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem. Thalambur police registered a murder case and are investigating the incident.

Jyothika donates ₹25 lakh to Thanjavur GH

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR AUG 8

Film actress Jyothika has donated ₹25 lakh to Rajah mirasudhar government hospital at Thanjavur to purchase equipment for paediatrics ward. Film director Saravanan handed over the cheque for ₹25 lakh to Dr Maruthu durai, Dean in charge of Thanjavur medical College hospital on behalf of Aharam foundation founded by Jyothika and her actor husband Surya on Saturday. Saravanan told presspersons that Jyothika felt the need for donating to the hospital when she visited Thanjavur long time back. The donation is in public interest, he said.

HC shocked over getting e-passes thru brokers

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 8

Expressing shock over the incidents of getting e-pass through brokers by paying money ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 2,000, and also about cut throat corrupt officials in the system, the Madras high court has said they are like cruel blood thirsty wolves and they should be dealt with iron hand.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and V.M.Velumani made the observation while passing interim orders on a Habeas corpus petition filed by C.M.Sivababu, president, Tamil Desiya Makkal Katchi.

In his petition, Sivababu sought a direction to the authorities to produce the detainees S.Soundarya, aged 15 years, Keerthana, aged 14 years, Pushpa, aged 15 years, E.Sandhya, aged 15 years, Sumithra, aged 15 years and P.Parameswari, aged 13 years, illegally confined by the M/s Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners Pvt Ltd., in Tiruppur district and its men at the company's premises and set them at liberty.

Noting that most of the adolescent children were brought during the pandemic period to work in M/s Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners company and no proper e-passes have been obtained, the bench said this is a classic case, which would demonstrate as to how corrupt government servants utilize any situation to make illegal gain. World is affected with the worst pandemic and it came to a grinding halt and people were asked to remain at home for more than two months. Slowly, the lockdown is being lifted. While easing out restrictions, for travel of the people in cases of emergencies, the epass system has been introduced by the governments. The



instant case is only a tip of an iceberg and throughout the state, there are allegations that there are brokers available for getting e-passes and persons, who apply through due process are unable to get and the rate ranges from Rs 500 to Rs 2,000. Media has widely reported about the instances of getting e-passes by payment to authorities. This aspect has to be looked into seriously by the government, the bench added.

The bench said for the past few months, people are unable to do their work or travel from one place to another for various purposes and they are put to untold misery. Though the government is not responsible for the present position, some of the corrupt officials, who are involved in issuing e-passes are bent upon making booty even in this worst scenario. "It is very shocking to know about such incidents and also about cut throat corrupt officials in the system. They are like cruel blood thirsty wolves and they should be dealt with iron hand". In this regard, the bench said Yarn Spinners company has to file an affidavit as to how they have been able to bring children to work in their company premises without getting proper e-pass from Tiruvannamalai to Tiruppur, the bench added.

Conduct raids on companies to end child labour

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 8

Insisting that the police authorities, labour department and child welfare committees should be very vigilant and conduct raids at the companies regularly to eradicate child labour, the Madras high court has directed the child welfare committee, to hand over 46 adolescent children and 2 child labourers found to be working in a company at Tiruppur district and rescued by the committee, to their parents.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and V.M.Velumani gave the directive on a HCP filed by C.M.Sivababu, President, Tamil Desiya Makkal Katchi, which sought a direction to the authorities to produce 6 girl children aged between 13 to 15 years, illegally confined by the M/s Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners Pvt.Ltd in Tiruppur district, before the court and set them at liberty.

The bench said pursuant to its directions, the Superintendent of Police, Tiruppur, Assistant Commissioner of Labour, Tiruppur along with Child Welfare Committee officials jointly raided the Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners company and during the raid, though there was no child labour found, totally, there were 331 workers, out of whom 133 were adolescents aged between 14 to 18 years, brought from various districts, especially from Tiruvannamalai, to work in the company. However, Premalatha, chairperson, Child Welfare Board, Tiruppur submitted that already, a raid was conducted on July 28, 2020, by the Joint Director of Industrial Safety and Health, Tiruppur along with other officials, based

SALIENT POINTS

■ The bench said, "The incident which is said to be happening in the Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners company is only a tip of an iceberg as hundreds of such companies are located in Tiruppur, Coimbatore and Erode districts and it is being said that child labour is rampant in these districts and the circumstances and the living conditions in which the children are made to work are not appreciable. Therefore, the police, labour department and CWCs of these districts should be very vigilant and conduct raids regularly to eradicate child labour. Unless, the authorities are vigilant and cautious, this kind of problem cannot be prevented. In any event, this is a social menace affecting the entire society

on a complaint received through Child Helpline and during that raid, out of 95 workers (25 male, 22 female, 4 adolescent male, 42 adolescent female, 2 child labourers), two child labourers were found to be working. Though a few adolescents have shown interest to continue with the work in the company, others were not willing as the working conditions were not proper and they were also not properly paid. Even food and water charges were deducted from their salary and though they were assured a sum of Rs 8,000 per month, they were paid only Rs.5,000. Therefore, they were rescued and kept at 'Sneha Child Home' in Tiruppur and thereafter, they were sent to the respective districts to be handed over to their parents. This court also enquired some of the adolescent children working in the company, who were produced before this court through video conferencing. Though they have stated that they do not have any difficulty and

and this issue also has to be addressed simultaneously".

■ The bench said it was really pathetic to hear the stories of children, who, for the sake of their family, have come to work even without going to school. Parents should take care of their children and owing to their helplessness, they cannot send their children to work when the government was providing education free of cost and also, free food apart from scholarships. Parents should make utmost use of the incentives and facilities provided by the government instead of sending their wards to work at such a tender age depriving them of their right to education and a bright future, the bench added.

They were comfortable working in the company, it has to be noted that they were school going children and it was not known as to how they were entrusted with work when they have to go to school. This issue has to be gone into, the bench added.

The bench said the tactics adopted by the Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners company seems to be to get the children through brokers during the summer vacation months, namely, April-May and engage them to work in the company and pay the wages on the promise that they will be simultaneously given education by the company itself so that they will not miss the chance to pursue their higher education. On verification, though the children stated that they were being educated, it was not known as to how they can be educated while working. The statement of the children only goes to show that they have been tutored to speak in such a manner before this court, the bench

added. The bench said it was also brought to the notice of this court that some of the children who have written the plus-2 examination were unaware that the results have been declared. When that was the position, it was very difficult to believe that the company was providing education to them. The chairperson, Child Welfare Board, Tiruppur and the official, who represented on behalf of the labour department has brought to the attention of this court that though the company has got license to engage only 250 employees, more than 331 persons were found to be working, that too, most of them were adolescent employees. It was stated that most of the adolescent children were brought during the pandemic period to work in the company and no proper e-passes have been obtained.

Besides no Covid test has been done for the children and no fitness certificate in respect of the children engaged has been pro-

duced at the time of inspection. It was not known as to how without proper e-passes, it has been possible to bring the children from one district to another district. It only implies that if money was paid, the authorities would bend and flout the Rules and without e-passes, people were traveling by bribing the authorities, the bench added.

The bench said the Superintendent of Police, Tiruppur district, who was present before this court through video conferencing submitted that an FIR has been registered in Cheyyur police station under sections 269 and 271 IPC against the managing director and the general manager of the company and the same was recorded, the bench added and posted to August 20, 2020, further hearing of the case.

The bench said, "The incident which is said to be happening in the Chennaiyappa Yarn Spinners company is only a tip of an iceberg as hundreds of such companies are located in Tiruppur, Coimbatore and Erode districts and it is being said that child labour is rampant in these districts and the circumstances and the living conditions in which the children are made to work are not appreciable. Therefore, the police authorities, labour department and child welfare committees of these districts should be very vigilant and conduct raids regularly to eradicate child labour.

Unless, the authorities are vigilant and cautious, this kind of problem cannot be prevented. In any event, this is a social menace affecting the entire society and this issue also has to be addressed simultaneously".

One gang member lands in police net

■ Gang strikes terror in Kovai suburbs, evades police for over 20 days

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
COIMBATORE, AUG 8

Police claim to have nabbed one of the notorious trouser-clad thieves involved in serial burglary attempts in the city's suburbs in the last 20 days.

Police identified the accused as Veeramani (42) from Gudalur in Nilgiri district. Sources said, a gang of four persons daringly roamed residential areas and attempted burglaries in Sulur, Irugur, Singanallur and Peelamedu late in the night, many a time striking houses even where CCTV cameras were installed, and house owners present in the houses. Despite videos of the

gang going viral on social media, police failed to nab the gang.

Finally, four special teams were deployed to nab the gang. But, the gang did not stop. For the last 20 days, there was a series door breaking incidents every other day.

Meanwhile, late on Friday night, the same gang made an attempt in a house equipped with CCTV cameras near Peelamedu. Angered that their bid failed, the gang entered a neighbouring house by breaking its doors near Singanallur SIHS Colony, and made away with jewels and cash at knife-point. Within an hour, the gang had moved to Irugur-Poonga Nagar, and made attempts in two houses.

On an alert, Singanallur police rushed to the spot and verified CCTV footages. One of the victims had noticed a tattoo on a gang member, and this info was shared to the special teams.

Meanwhile, in early hours of Saturday, one of the special teams patrolling near SIHS Colony found a man roaming near a private school, and questioned him. While doing so, a cop found the man having a tattoo in his hand. But, before they could confirm, the man escaped and ran into a dark abandoned land nearby, covered with thick vegetation. However, after great struggle, police arrested him. Investigations are on.

GOVERNMENT DOCTORS DEMAND PAY HIKE

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

Even as Covid-19 continues to take a heavy toll on human life in the state, the government medical practitioners have demand a pay hike.

Sending a letter that posed 10 questions to the Health Minister, the Service Doctors and Post Graduates Association (SDPGA) said that despite other states increasing salaries of the government doctors considering the pandemic situation, the Tamil Nadu government has still not woken up in spite of doctors undertaking fast thrice.

The government is not taking any action to increase the salary despite the doctors working hard to provide proper care to Covid-19 patients.

The minister had declared in the Assembly that the demands of the government doctors would be addressed as soon as possible. After the minister failed to keep his promise, the doctors were pushed to a fast unto death, calling a statewide strike in October last year. Now the government has to answer why the long pending demands of the doctors are not fulfilled as yet even after a senior doctor laid down his life for the cause, the association said.

In the current situation of a large number of doctors getting infected by Covid-19, the demands of the doctors should be addressed', it said.

The SDPGA also reminded the minister of Madras high court's remark that the government doctors in the state were paid less. The high court had directed the government to give the due payment to the doctors. Why doesn't the government show the same compassion?

Krishna Jayanthi nearing



A visitor at Krishna dolls exhibition cum sales at Poompuhar Showroom on Anna Salai on Saturday.

—DC

Cuddalore to get Covid master control room

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 8

The Cuddalore district administration will soon set up a high-tech Covid-19 master control room in the collectorate to coordinate among various stakeholders, including doctors, revenue officials, health workers, police and other officials, engaged in the fight against the virus. The master control room staff will also coordinate with 12 district-level micro management advisory committees and keep a close watch on CCTV's established in hospitals, quarantine centres, containment zones and the two-way video communications facilities being established for redressal of grievances and to improve the services.

As on August 7, a total of 4,445 persons were infected with the virus in the district, 2,394 discharged from hospitals, 1,999 persons under treatment, including home treatment, and 52 positive patients died.

Soon after assuming office on July 1, collector Chandra Sekhar Sakhamuri formed 12 special committees to wage war against the virus in the rural areas.

■ "The officials are working round the clock to identify virus-infected people. The health infrastructure, including labs and hospitals, has been enhanced to provide quality treatment to all"

Following the direction of Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and industries minister M.C. Sampath the district administration has been engaged in early detection and treatment of infected people. "The officials are working round the clock to identify virus-infected people. The health infrastructure, including labs and hospitals, has been enhanced to provide quality treatment to the affected people", the collector said.

Nearly 16 per cent of population have been affected in 2,400 habitations in the village panchayats. Village vigilance committees have been formed under the leadership of panchayat president and VAOs, panchayat secretary, police person-

nel and two others included in the committee. The committee monitors everyone in the village including differently abled persons and reports to the authorities regularly.

The collector said fever camps are being conducted at nearly 100 places every day to detect the virus and asymptomatic patients at an early stage. Emphasis has also been given to Focus Testing and Contact Tracing for more than a month and door to door surveillance is being conducted. The administration has completed health surveillance of 5.2 lakh households of the total 6.90 lakh households and collected their medical history details. These details are passed to health committees which advise the people to improve their immunity and distribute medicines.

All taluk hospitals, headquarter hospital, Rajah Muthiah Medical college hospital, Chidambaram, government and private colleges and NLCIL hospitals were converted as Covid-19 hospitals. Lab facilities also increased to detect the new cases. Nearly 1,200 samples are collected from people for testing every day.

Sangam era artefacts, pottery unearthed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

A remote village in Villupuram district will soon become a hotspot of archeologists. Among others rare earthen pot including black and red potsherds and pieces of amphora were unearthed indicating the existence of a medieval human settlement in the area. The artefacts and pottery were found at Kodukkur near Tiruvakkarai in Villupuram district. Evidence indicate this was a thickly populated township.

The rare artefacts were found during an excavation carried out by a team of researchers led by Government Arts College, Villupuram on the banks of the Sankarabarani river. The artefacts include black and red ware, conical shaped bowls, part of amphoras, various types of jars and lids with intricate carvings. They were found spread in an expanse of 50 acres of agricultural land on the southern bank of the river. The site is located close to the National Fossil Wood Park in Tiruvakkarai.

The site was found by a team of researchers led by D. Ramesh, assistant professor of History, Government Arts College, Villupuram. The site came to light when a group of workers were working to set up a brick kiln unit on the land belonging to one Jayabalan.

Ramesh said a preliminary excavation revealed that red ware, black ware were scattered in the area. The team also found bones, parts of amphora and big bricks similar to the one found in Keezhadi and Adichanallur in Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu. The evidence suggests that this area must have been a site inhabited by humans of the Sangam period.

He said while Kodukkur village is located on the south of the Sankarabarani river, Tiruvakkarai, known for fossil wood, is located on the northern side of the river.

Some of the artefacts found at the archaeological site in a village near Tiruvakkarai in Villupuram district.



>>>

SHORT TAKES

Minister opens new building in medical college

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, AUG 8

Testing has been increased to track Corona infection in the state, and so far, 30.88 lakh persons have been tested, said State minister for health Dr C Vijayabhaskar, here on Saturday.

The minister inaugurated the Centenary Arch of the Ophthalmology department, Thanjavur Medical College at Rajah Mirasudhar Government Hospital, here. The arch, a compound wall and a visitors room have been constructed at a cost of Rs 50 lakh donated by R Vaithilingam MP, from his local area development fund.

The minister said that Tamil Nadu accounted for the maximum number of testing among other states. The recovery rate is also good in the state, and so far 2,27,578 persons have been cured of Corona and sent home. In Thanjavur district, 2,634 persons have been cured. A total of 4,000 beds are in use for treating Corona patients in the district, of which 1,400 are at the Thanjavur Medical College Hospital. If required, the number of beds can be increased to 10,000 for which arrangements have already been made.

Plane crash: Man from Nilgiris in Kerala hosp

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG 8

One person from Gudalur in the Nilgiris bordering Kerala, who was seriously injured in the plane crash at Kozhikode air port on Friday night, is under ICU care in a hospital in Kerala, while three others from the Nilgiris, escaped with minor injuries.

The five-year-old kid Md. Zidan Faisalbabu, her mother Shanjia Faisalbabu (23), residents of Mochikandy area in Padanthorai limits in Gudalur on the Nilgiris border, and another woman passenger Shala Shajahan (23), resident of Pallipadi hamlet in Gudalur, who travelled in the ill-fated plane, are learnt to have escaped with minor injuries. They are still in Kozhikode.

Attempts made by DC to contact them over phone went in vain as they did not respond to the call. While Shanjia went to Dubai with her kid to be with her husband who is working there, and was returning with her kid on Friday, Shala too was



returning after visiting her husband who is employed in Dubai.

This apart, one Abdul Kabir (40), who also returned in the same plane was seriously injured and hospitalised in Kerala. His brother, Noufal, talking to Deccan Chronicle, said that Kabir is employed as a pharmacist in Dubai. He was returning to his native in Pandanthurai village limits in Gudalur for a long holiday. He is admitted to the Moulana hospital at Perintalmanna near Malapuram in Kerala. He underwent a surgery on Saturday to correct some neuro-muscular disorders. Another surgery will be done on Sunday to correct some fractures in his upper and lower limbs. I visited him at the hospital on Saturday evening," added Noufal.

TN leaders mourn victims of air crash

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam were among the leaders in Tamil Nadu who condoled the death of the 18 persons who were killed when an Air India flight operated under the Vande Bharat scheme overshot the runway at Kozhikode in Kerala on Friday night.

Saddened to hear about the crash of the flight from Dubai to Kozhikode, Palaniswami said in a statement on Saturday while Panneerselvam tweeted that he was shocked and prayed to Lord Almighty for the quick recovery of those injured in the crash.

"Shocked to hear about the Air India plane crash in Calicut that was bringing home Indians who were stranded abroad due

● **Panneerselvam tweeted that he was shocked and prayed to Lord Almighty for the quick recovery of those injured in the crash**

to #COVID19. I offer my sincere condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in this tragedy and hope for a speedy recovery for the injured," Stalin said in his tweet. PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss and BJP state president L Murugan expressed their grief over the twin tragedies that shock Kerala. Ramadoss pointed out that the landslide caused by the heavy rains in Kerala killed 18 Tamils, while Murugan said that those returning home would have come with dreams.

Water harvesting plans, dam across Pandiyar vital: Expert

DC CORRESPONDENT
OOTY, AUG 8

WWF-India, adviser, N Mohanraj, a name in the conservation arena in the country, advocated that the government should look into avenues to harvest water that is surplus due to heavy downpour during the SW monsoon, especially, the August rains that pave way for inland pisciculture, irrigation and hydro-power generation.

Saying that disruptions in the water currents and atmospheric factors due to global warming have rendered the SW monsoon ineffective during the months of June and July in recent years in the Nilgiris, Mohanraj said that the SW monsoon picks ups only when there is depression in the sea or cyclone that often results in torrential rains in a short period of time.

"Both Avalanche and

● **Most of the overflowing waters from the Nilgiris, drain down to Bhavanisagar in Erode, helping in irrigation**

Upper Bhavani, major catchment areas in the west of Nilgiris, are geographically located at the ridge of the Nilgiris - Kerala border on the upper plateau.

The SW monsoon clouds that rise from the Arabian sea, generally travel up to Nilambur belt in Kerala at an average height of 80 meters in the air, and then suddenly rise to 2,200 meters in the Nilgiris border, and begins to pour in the Upper Bhavani and Avalanche.

This is the reason why these two places receive heavy rainfall, when torrential rains lash the Nilgiris. This rain phenomenon extends up to Gudalur and Pandalur belts, in the north-west of the Nilgiris, bringing heavy rains in a short duration of time," he explained.

Most of the overflowing waters from the Nilgiris, drain down to Bhavanisagar in Erode, helping in irrigation. Some good flow, including the overflowing Pandiyaar and Punampuzha rivers, on the west of the Nilgiris drains down on the west of Gudalur to Kerala. Now, both TN and Kerala governments should think about a joint project of constructing a dam in the Gudalur - Kerala border, across these two rivers to store water and use it for hydro-power generation, as well as to sustain inland fisheries, he suggested.

Kerala asks TN to release water

THIRUVANANTHPURAM,
AUG. 8

The Kerala government Saturday asked the Tamil Nadu government to release water from Mullaperiyar through the tunnel to Vaigai Dam in a phased manner when the water level reaches 136 feet in view of the heavy rains received by the Idukki district. In a letter, Kerala Chief Secretary Vishwas Mehta asked his Tamil Nadu counterpart to inform the state government 24 hours prior to opening of the shutters.

"The state is receiving heavy rains especially in the Idukki district. The water level in the catchment area of Mullaperiyar has been steadily rising. The water level, which was at 116.20 feet on August 3 is up to 131.25 feet by 2 pm on August 7," Mehta said in

his letter. He also pointed out that the Met office has issued a red alert for Saturday and Sunday in the district indicating extreme heavy rainfall and currently the inflow to the dam is 13,257 cusecs of water and the outflow through the tunnel is 1,650 cusecs. The Kerala government also informed the neighbouring state that within the last 24 hours, Mullaperiyar Dam and Thekkady received 19.8 cm and 15.7 cm of rainfall respectively and the water level went up by seven feet during this period. In the letter sent to TN Chief Secretary K Shanmughan, Mehtasaid say per information provided by the Executive Engineer of MI Division at Kattappana, the surplus shutters of Periyar dam was capable of releasing 1,22,000 cusecs

POLICE ISSUE ADVISORY ON COMPLETE LOCKDOWN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

The police have issued an advisory to residents on the complete lockdown to be implemented from Saturday midnight till Monday morning.

It is said in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the state government had announced the complete lockdown. Residents were requested to avoid venturing out unnecessarily or gather on streets without personal distancing.

Vehicles will not be allowed on roads, exemptions include those meant for milk distribution, medical purpose, emergency and funeral cause. Private vehicles meant for Print and Electronic Media are exempted.

Other vehicles plying without reasons will be seized under section 144 Criminal Procedure Code for violating conditions. For this purpose, 193 Police Traffic check posts have been established all over the city. This regulation will be followed on all Sundays till the end of this month.

For any queries, the traffic control room may be contacted through landline Nos.044-23452330 / 044-23452362 and cell phone No. 9003130103.

Rebel legislator Ku Ka Selvam challenges DMK

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

Questioning his suspension from the DMK, rebel MLA Ku Ka Selvam refused to subject himself for an enquiry unless the charges made against him were elaborated and the suspension revoked, putting the party high command in a Catch 22 situation.

Accusing him of violating party norms for meeting cadre and leaders of another party went against natural justice because former DMK president M. Karunanidhi had met BJP leader A B Vajpayee and party founder C. N. Annadurai himself had acknowledged that 'the jasmine in the other man's garden too has its

fragrance,' Selvam said in his reply to the show cause notice.

Selvam, who represents the Thousand Lights constituency in the state Assembly, was suspended and issued the show cause notice after he called on the BJP national president J. P. Nadda in New Delhi on August 4 and also went to the BJP State headquarters in Chennai the next day.

However, Selvam had been claiming that he had not joined the BJP and that he would continue to serve the people as an MLA, besides levelling charges against the manner in which the DMK was being run.

In his reply on Saturday, he refused to answer the charges against him, saying that they were vague

and he wanted clarifications on them. He accused the DMK high command of pre-judging him as guilty and placing him on suspension without even asking for his views.

He wanted the party to spell out the 'untrue things' that he had been accused of saying and also what the 'defamatory' statements that he had allegedly made to attract the action against him.

To put it otherwise, Selvam had indirectly challenged the DMK to expel him.

For, if the party throws him out, he can save his MLA post, whereas he would attract the provisions of the anti-defection law and lose his membership in the Assembly if he leaves the party on his own.

AIADMK'S MEMBERSHIP DRIVE BEGINS

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

A massive enrolment drive has been initiated by the AIADMK for its various affiliated organisations and the party district secretaries have been urged to collect the membership forms from the headquarters and have them submitted with the necessary membership fee on time.

An announcement from the AIADMK party coordinator O Pannarselvam and joint coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Saturday said that the affiliated organizations were launched by former Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa and that more members should be enrolled into them.

They also called up members and functionaries of the party at all levels starting from Ministers to those at the grassroots to work towards enrolling members in all the affiliated organisations - the youth wing, young women's wing, Puratchithalavi Amma Peravai and MGR youth wing.

● **Enrolment drive for its affiliated organisations**

Stalin wants NEP to be halted

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 8

DMK president M. K. Stalin urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to halt the implementation of National Education Policy 2020 in the "best interest of our students".

"DMK has always worked to ensure inclusive & quality education for all. NEP 2020 threatens to undo this progress by undermining Tamil language and identity," he said in a tweet.

Earlier, in a letter to the Prime Minister and Union Human Resources Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, he urged them to redraft the policy and take it through the parliamentary session to reaffirm the country's parliamentary democracy and federalist governance and to ensure its inclusiveness.

Stalin wanted them to reinstate a consultative process to bring all relevant stakeholders from the states and centre on board to discuss and critically analyze this policy that affects the lives of citizens in every corner of our country.

"Education is a critical and contextual subject that is best addressed through decentralized, state-level interventions.

Even the founders of our nation had recognized the role of state governments in education and assigned it to the state list in the Constitution of India," he said.

The shifting of education to the concurrent list during the Emergency in 1976 was done to allow the Centre to share the responsibility of legislating on education related matters along with the States, he said, adding that former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi had fought against the decision in 1976 and continued to fight to reverse till his last breath.

Today, the unilateral move by the central government to have a larger say on education policy has serious repercussions to the idea of federalism, he said.

"The proposed policy threatens the progress made in educational attainment, access and quality in the country by undermining not just the authority of States but also setting up additional barriers to social justice and equity in our country. The one size fits all approach in this policy create unnecessary additional barriers for students from all parts of the country and all backgrounds to access education," Stalin said.

Change in southwest monsoon pattern plays havoc in Nilgiris

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG 8

For the third consecutive year, torrential rains in the month of August in the Nilgiris have emerged as a new phenomenon with the advancing SW monsoons. It is true that the SW monsoon stretching between June and September, always brings copious rainfall to the Nilgiris. The rains would generally be moderate to heavy in the months of June and July, but its intensity would begin to fade from August to pave for the autumn tourist season here, that commences in September.

However, in the last three years, June and July rainfall was less than normal. But, sudden and heavy rains mostly in the first week of August, would compensate for the rain deficit of the preceding months. Though the average rainfall for the first seven days in August for Nilgiris district is 57 mm, this year the Nilgiris received 444 mm of rains in the first week of August. In 2019 also, the Nilgiris received 525 mm of rains in the first week of August. In 2018, rainfall was heavy during the second week of August. This year also, for the third consecutive year, August rains have proved to be heavy and disastrous, uprooting trees and disrupting power. However, the rains accounted for only minor landslips and mud slips in a few places in Gudalur and Kundah belt.

This new phenomenon leaves one wondering about its consequences if the same pattern happens to continue



Banana crops damaged by recent rains in Gudalur belt in western Nilgiris. (Below) A landslip that occurred at Emerald valley near Ooty.

in future also. M. Kumaravel, field officer, CPR Environment Education Centre here, said that this is the reflection of macro-climate change due to global warming.

"As of now, it appears that due to climate change, meteorological factors responsible for normal SW monsoon is affected to some extent, resulting in late monsoon, and the sudden spurt in rains in August. This pattern will affect agriculture pattern and aquatic ecosystem, as heavy rains and floods would lead to more silting. It may take a long time for this new phenomenon of heavy rains in August to change itself by nature, or we need to adapt to this type of change in the SW monsoon pattern. A lot of research needs to be done on this," he added.

Principal scientist at the Indian Institute of Soil and Water Conservation and Research Centre here, Dr P Raja, said that only in a few places where upper vegeta-



tion is lost or eroded, landslips have occurred during the recent rains. Heavy rains for a short period of time may not be enough to tilt the balance and stability of the slopes. That's the reason why there was not much landslides and landslips this time. If similar pattern of rains continue for some more time, then we can

expect landslides. These heavy precipitations in short duration only help rivers and streams to swell, ultimately filling the reservoirs.

Ground water table recharge is minimal during this type of rain. The heavy flow of storm water in the upper slopes will account for upper soil erosion, if vegetation is thin there, he noted.

Elephant tramples man in Kovai

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG 8

A 20-year-old migratory labourer was trampled by a wild elephant near Periya-Thadagam in the city's suburbs in the early hours of Saturday.

Police said, Bapul Husain, native of Assam, was staying near Periya-Thadagam, and was working in a brick kiln as labourer. Meanwhile, in the early

hours of Saturday, Bapul Husain had gone to the backyard of the kiln covered with thick vegetation to attend nature's call, without noticing a lone wild elephant standing very close to him, inside a nearby bush.

The elephant came running towards Bapul Husain, and before he could run, the animal seized him with its trunk and flung him 20

feet away. He sustained serious injuries including his head. On hearing his screams, his friend came running and they chased the elephant and rushed Bapul to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH). Despite treatment, Bapul died around 9:30 am on Saturday.

Thadagam police have registered a complaint. Further investigations are on.

PONDY CM WARNS PRIVATE MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITALS OF ACTION IF THEY DON'T ADMIT COVID-19 PATIENTS

Puducherry, Aug 8: Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Saturday warned the government would take over private medical colleges in the union territory if they did not cooperate by admitting COVID-19 patients in their hospitals.

Government hospitals were doing their best to ensure that coronavirus patients were taken care, he said at a virtual press conference. "We need the cooperation of seven private medical colleges as the number of infections has been on the rise now," he added.

The chief minister said the managements of these colleges had accepted at one stage the plea of the government to make their hospitals available for admission of COVID-19 patients. "But there are

still some colleges who do not pay heed to the government's repeated pleas to make the facilities in the colleges and hospitals available for patients referred by the government," he added. "If these colleges played a hide-and-seek game in honouring their commitment, the government would not hesitate to take over the institutions and there would be no other option. This measure would be in the larger interest of saving patients," the Chief Minister said.

Expressing concern over the rise in the number of cases in Puducherry in the last few days, Narayanasamy said the infected patients had to be given immediate treatment. The government had earmarked Rs 1.2 crore from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund

and Covid-19 fund to purchase around 50,000 RTPCR equipment to test swabs.

He said presently government hospitals in Karaikal, Yanam and Mahe had to rely on government facilities in neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala for testing, adding it took three days to a week to get the results. The chief minister further said the government had decided to set up testing facilities in hospitals in these three regions to speed up the process. He criticised the "negligence and careless attitude of people in adhering to safety norms" and said it had resulted in the rise in coronavirus cases. Narayanasamy said he had received reports that people gathered in large numbers at temples. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

KERALA RECORDS SINGLE-DAY SPIKE IN VIRUS CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

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

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

COVID: KARNATAKA REPORTS BIGGEST SURGE

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Saturday reported the highest single-day spike of over 7,000 cases and 93 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 1,72,102 and the toll past the 3,000 mark, the health department said.

The day also saw 5,006 patients getting discharged after recovery.

Out of the 7,178 fresh cases reported today, 2,665 were from Bengaluru Urban alone.

The previous single day high was recorded on August 6 with 6,805 cases.

As of August 8 evening, cumulatively 1,72,102 Covid-19 positive cases have been confirmed in the state, which includes 3,091 deaths and 89,238 discharges, the health department said. *PTI*

JAIPUR COPS TOLD TO PROBE PHONE TAPPING RUMOURS

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

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

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

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

25-YEAR-OLD FILES RAPE CASE AGAINST ODISHA COP

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 8

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

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

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

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

SSR DEATH CASE: RHEA RELEASES TEXT MESSAGES IN HER SUPPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

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

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

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

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

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



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

Munnar landslide toll rises to 23; 43 trapped

12 out of 81 plantation workers on tea estate were rescued

GILVESTER
ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 9

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

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

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

Karnataka flood claims 12 lives

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

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

their own lives amid heavy rains.

It was a humongous

landslides in hilly areas of Kodagu and Chikmagalur.

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

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

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

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

Rahul hits out at govt over Asha workers' strike

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

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

“ASHA workers take

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

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

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

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

being on a two-day nationwide strike from Friday.

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

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

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

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

States told to focus on recoveries

SHASHI BHUSHAN DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

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

The Union Health ministry, meanwhile, pointed that focused efforts have resulted in the recovery rate rising to 68.32 per cent. With a single-day rise of 61,537 cases, the country's coronavirus tally has reached 20,88,611 while the death toll rose to 42,518 with 933 fresh fatalities being reported in a day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

J&K chief secy sparks row over ‘corrupt’ ministers

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 8

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

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

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

Reacting sharply to his remarks, People's

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

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

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

Young patients in TS at higher risk

DC CORRESPONDENTS
HYDERABAD, VIJAYAWADA
AUG. 8

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

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

Of the deaths, those attributed to Covid-19 is at 46.13 per cent and due to co-morbid conditions 53.87 per cent. This is because those in the age

group of 31 to 40 years have 25 per cent and those in 21 to 30 years have 22 per cent of the infection. Those in the younger age groups are severely affected and fatality rate in this age group is also high.

As many as 10,080 new Covid-19 positive cases were registered in Andhra Pradesh on Saturday, taking the tally to 2,17,040 even as the death toll went up by 97 to touch deaths rising toll to 1,939.

Among new cases, Kurnool has been badly affected with 1,353 cases followed by 1,310 in East Godavari and 998 in Visakhapatnam.

Among total active cases where the patients are taking treatment, East Godavari has recorded 13,794 followed by 9,480 in Kurnool and 8,694 in Visakhapatnam.



Arjun Ram Meghwal

UNION MINISTER WHO ENDORSED ‘BHABHI JI PAPAD’ POSITIVE

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, who had recently endorsed ‘Bhabhi ji papad’ claiming that the snack will help prevent Coronavirus, himself tested positive for the deadly contagion on Saturday. As per reports, Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs he currently admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi.

With this, Meghwal becomes the fourth Union minister to have tested positive for coronavirus. Earlier in the day, Union Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Chaudhary also tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Jodhpur.

— *Agencies*

CHANGING | ROLE

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

Most of J&K adjusted to Art 370 abrogation

Harsh V. Pant

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Block Development Councils held for the first time in the history of Jammu and Kashmir in October 2019 with a record 98.3 per cent voter turnout.

This has brought in new voices and new actors into the political arena, away from the stranglehold of a few families who dominated local politics.

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

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

SHORT TAKES

AAI CHIEF: WILL TAKE ACTION AFTER PROBE REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

AI EXPRESS SAYS 3 RELIEF FLIGHTS SET UP FOR PEOPLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

INDIAN CONSULATE TO BE OPEN FOR INFO ON AI CRASH

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

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

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

AIR ASIA ABORTS TAKE OFF AT RANCHI AFTER BIRD HIT

Ranchi, Aug. 8: An Air Asia India aircraft departing for Mumbai on Saturday morning aborted its take-off at Ranchi airport after encountering a bird hit, said the airline spokesperson. This incident occurred a day after an Air India Express flight from Dubai with 190 people onboard overshot the runway at Kozhikode airport in rainy conditions and went down 35 feet into a slope before breaking up into two pieces, killing at least 18 people. "AirAsia India aircraft VT-HKG operating from Ranchi to Mumbai as flight 15-632 encountered a bird hit during scheduled departure at 11.50 am, today, 8th August 2020," stated the airline spokesperson.

Plane shook, there was loud noise

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

Kozhikode, Aug. 8: Several injured passengers of the ill-fated Air India Express flight from Dubai which overshot the runway and crashed at the airport here are yet to get over the horror moments that took them close to death.

"We did not realise what really happened other than the flight was shaking," said Ramshad, who was injured.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ved forward.

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI, AFP



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

PASSENGER TESTS +VE, RESCUERS ASKED TO GO INTO QUARANTINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

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

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

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

'Back home' selfie goes viral, but passenger dead

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AMID COVID, PEOPLE QUEUED UP TO DONATE BLOOD

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

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

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

Rescue operation by locals brings down casualties

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Govts announce ₹10L compensation

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

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

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

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

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

inspect the site of the mishap and the aircraft wreckage.

The experts will examine the CVR and DFDR to reach a conclusion on

what might have led to the tragic accident of Flight AXB1344.

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

As many as 23 passen-

gers are in a critical condition in various hospitals in Kozhikode.

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

Capt Sathe was to meet mom today

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

"He had last met his parents in March and was constantly in touch with them over phone. They had last spoken a day before yesterday," his nephew Dr Yashodhan Sathe said on Saturday. Captain Sathe lived with his wife in Mumbai. His mother Neela Sathe lives with her husband Vasant Sathe, a retired Colonel, in Bharatnagar locality of the city.

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

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



Captain Deepak Sathe

the family.

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

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

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

—PTI

SAFETY | LAPSES

Runway in poor state; dangerous to land during rain, tailwinds

DGCA, expert red-flagged airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 8

The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was examining the runway condition, pace of repair and maintenance work at the airport, sources said.

It is understood that the DGCA had earlier asked the Kozhikode authorities to carry out maintenance work at the airport. However, the works were not carried out effectively.

The DGCA had issued a showcase notice to the

director of the Kozhikode airport on July 11 last year after it found "various critical safety lapses" in different places, including the runway and the apron, according to PTI.

It pointed to cracks on the runway, water stagnation and excessive rubber deposits among other lapses in its show-cause notice.

The DGCA conducted the inspection after an Air India Express flight coming from Damman in Saudi Arabia had a "tail strike" while landing at the Calicut (Kozhikode) airport on July 2 last year, an official said.

On July 11, Kozhikode airport director K. Srinivasa Rao was issued a show-cause notice, stated another DGCA official. Asked if any action was taken against Rao after the notice, he said, "We had raised certain issues, which were duly complied with. The concerned officer (Rao) was reprimanded."

A PTI report said an aviation expert, Captain Mohan Ranganathan, had flagged concerns about Kozhikode airport runway in 2011. Flights landing on Runway 10 in tailwind conditions in rain at the Kozhikode air-

port endanger the lives of people onboard those flights," he had said in a communication to then civil aviation secretary Nasim Zaidi.

Ranganathan was then a member of the operations group of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Committee (CASAC).

"... in spite of the danger if the crew accept a landing in wet and tailwind conditions, their concept of ALAR (Approach and Landing Accident Reduction) is very poor," he had said. "... all the flights that land on Runway 10 in the

tailwind conditions in rain, are endangering the lives of all on board." With tailwind conditions, the descent of an aircraft at the time of landing might be affected.

Details about action taken by authorities concerned following the communication could not be ascertained.

Incidentally, four years ago, Air India Express had mentioned the Kozhikode airport in a list of India's "most beautiful airports and runways". It had mentioned that landing on the tabletop runway was a challenge for pilots.

DECCAN
Chronicle

9 AUGUST 2020



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

My first brush with a
'Madras autowallah'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subhani

Jaishankar's new vision
may face a reality check

K.C. Singh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

WELCOME STEP

The policy announced by RBI opening one-time window for firms and individuals to get their loans recast is certainly a welcome step. This should have been taken up long back. When the corona viral infection completely shattered the working of many firms and the possibility of the period of their revival could not be guessed, the RBI should have given freedom to the banks to immediately restructure the standard assets in consultation with the companies concerned. It should also have been on the basis of a fair assessment of the period of return to normal working by them instead of instructing the lenders to give moratorium to all loans irrespective of the present status of their functioning. Moratorium gives a temporary relief and companies cannot plan long-term. But restructuring gives the companies the confidence to start and continue working without fear of any repayment obligation.

V. Rajagopalan
Chennai

RESTRUCTURING
LOANS

YOUR EDITORIAL *RBI loan policy spells relief for borrowers* (Aug. 8) made useful reading. Money is an idea that gives confidence to people. But it is imperative that every penny is earned and the borrowers (including farmers) do not take things for granted. One expects that the restructuring of retail and corporate loans of banks being planned by RBI satisfies the canons of liquidity and profitability of banks in the short as well as the long-run and welfare of the borrowers too.

S. Ramakrishnasayee
Chennai

AIRPORT TRAGEDY

THE TRAGEDY at Kerala's Kozhikode International airport on Friday night involving Air India Express flight from Dubai which overshot the airport runway while landing and fell, leading to the death of passengers including two pilots while leaving several others injured is truly heart-wrenching. It was indeed a tragic day for Kerala. Even before the people came to terms with landslide tragedy at Munnar where more than 20 people were killed came the accident at Kozhikode airport. Being a table top airport carved out of a hill, landings have carried their own inherent risks. The only saving grace in this otherwise heart-rending tragedy is that the ill-fated flight didn't catch fire. It must be noted here that an aviation safety report in 2011 had already flagged the inadequate safety at the end of the runway of the Kozhikode airport. The report had pointed out the airport had 90 metre safety area at the end of runway which should be at least 200 metres.

M. Jeyaram
Sholavandan

When Somen Mitra shoved Amar Singh out of Kolkata

Miffed Uma turns up

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

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

fessing Congress faith in secularism.

Pilot intractable

There are so signs of truce in the Rajasthan Congress. The Ashok Gehlot government has dropped its charges, but rebel Sachin Pilot is reportedly still insisting upon the removal of Gehlot as chief minister. Peacemakers want Rahul, Sonia and Priyanka Gandhi to draft either Gehlot or Pilot into the AICC secretariat but both are unwilling. Rahul, who is set to return as AICC chief, is in particular opposed to the idea of jettisoning Gehlot as a pre-condition.

A quiet goodbye

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



By WAQYANAWIS

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

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

Celluloid patriotism

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

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

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

Just good neighbours

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

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

IN BRIEF

8 soldiers die in Somalia blast

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

2 Lebanese shot dead in Tehran

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

20 gunned down in Burkino Faso

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

9 KIDS KILLED IN YEMENI AIRSTRIKES

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

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

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

Beirut in protest mode, grief turns to rage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Israel's Lebanon aid offer unlikely to find takers

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

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

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

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

Hours later the government offered humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

"Israel has turned to Lebanon through interna-

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

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

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

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

astated parts of the Lebanese capital and killed hundreds.

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

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

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

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

EMBASSY: OVER 40 SYRIANS KILLED IN BEIRUT BLAST

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

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

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

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

Dutch envoy's wife dies in Beirut blast

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MPs resign after Beirut explosion

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

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

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

Gemayel criticised the reactions of several top politicians who argued the international aid effort following the disaster would be an opportunity to break the diplomatic isolation of Lebanon.

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

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

Yacoubian told the CNN news channel that she was urging the entire parliament to stand down. "As the MP of Beirut, I took the decision of resigning because I feel I'm a false witness in this parliament," she said. — *AP*

Mauritius declares crisis over oil spill

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ethiopian flooding displaces nearly 20K from their homes

Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Aug. 8: An official in Ethiopia's northeastern Afar region says heavy flooding has displaced some 20,000 people from their homes.

"The flooding has caused damages to properties and killed several dozens of animals," Kulsuma Burhaba Ali, deputy head of the region's disaster pre-

vention department, told the state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate.

"The flooding was caused as the Awash River overflows and affected 10 out of 17 counties in the region."

There was no word of any deaths. The official said an additional 51,000 people are in danger, but efforts are underway including airlifts by Ethiopia's military.

Dams fail, plants cropping up in lost Michigan lakes

Lansing (US), Aug. 8: Nature is returning to craters left from lakes drained by two dams that failed in May during torrential rain in mid-Michigan.

But not always in a good way. "Shortly after the water receded, you could look out over the exposed bottom lands of the lake and it was like looking at the Sahara Desert," said Dave Rothman, a board member with the Four Lakes Task Force, which is looking to obtain the four dams as well as the two lakes that were not drained.

"That persisted on through about the middle of July. And then all that 90-plus degree weather that we had, then we started to get some rain and over the course of two weeks, the lake bottoms just mushroomed with plants."

Four Lakes Task Force wants to use eminent domain to gain ownership of four Midland-area dams — including the Edenville and Sanford dams that failed in the May 19 storms, sending water raging down the Tittabawassee River and

flooding homes and businesses. It hopes to restore the infrastructure and shoreline of Wixom and Sanford lakes and prevent homes from being lost to the eroding edges of what were once the lakes.

It has filed requests in the courts to obtain the dams. Under eminent domain, the owners, Boyce Hydro and and Boyce Hydro Power, could be ordered to sell the properties to the task force as the governmental body representing the counties, task force spokesperson Stacey Trapani said. — *AP*

Canada's last intact ice shelf collapses due to warming

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

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

Two giant icebergs

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

THREAT OF MELTING GLACIER TO ITALIAN RESORT EASING, SAYS MAYOR

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

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

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

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

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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5	1	6	9	7	2	3	8	4
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SU◆DO◆KU 2

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

8	1	6	5	2	9	4	7	3
4	9	5	3	6	7	2	1	8
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6	5	1	9	8	3	7	2	4
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2	8	4	6	7	5	1	3	9
3	7	8	4	5	2	6	9	1
1	6	9	7	3	8	5	4	2
5	4	2	1	9	6	3	8	7

Did you think the

SU◆DO◆KU

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

SHORT TAKES

Svitolina, Bertens
out of US Open

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

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

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

— AP

Tokyo Olympics
OC member +ve

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

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

— AP

Shakib all set to
resume training

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

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

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

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

— PTI

BOTTAS EDGES
HAMILTON FOR
POLE POSITION

Silverstone: Valtteri Bottas outpaced his Mercedes teammate and world championship leader Lewis Hamilton by the finest of margins on Saturday to claim a dramatic pole position for the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix. The Finn clocked a fastest lap in one minute and 25.154 seconds to beat the six-time world champion by only 0.063 in the final seconds of an enthralling qualifying session.

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FAST & FURIOUS

Dhoni will retire when he is outrun: Manjrekar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI



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

Biggies off the blocks for kit

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

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

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

It is learnt that Adidas

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

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

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

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

which makes these two companies the most sought after.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

CHAMPIONS | LEAGUE

City, Lyon blast
big guns away

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

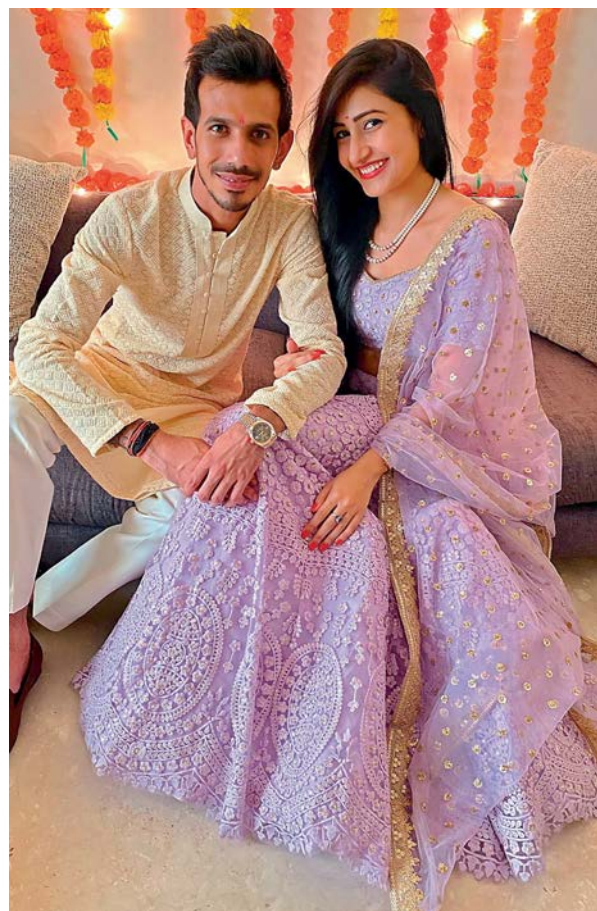
He levelled the scores on the night with a penalty of his own with two minutes left in the opening period before crashing a second home on the hour mark.

SARRI GETS THE BOOT
AS JUVE MANAGER

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

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

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



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

Buttler spearheads
England fightback

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

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

Only twice has a team chased more than 200 to win in the fourth innings of a Test at Old Trafford, with England making 294-4 against New Zealand in

2008 and 231-3 against the West Indies in 2004.

England, trying to end a run of losing the first Test in each of their last five series, were making steady progress at 96-1.

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

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

Will cherish moments with Coyle: Edwin

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 8

The departure of coach Owen Coyle and striker Nerijus Valskis came as a double whammy for die-hard fans of Chennaiyin FC. And players were not immune to feeling blue either. The duo are off to rivals Jamshedpur FC.

Despite joining the Chennaiyin ranks midway through the season, Irish coach Coyle had pulled off a dramatic turnaround. Coyle's arrival had brightened up the atmosphere in the dressing room.

Local hero Edwin Sydney Vanspaul who owes his successful debut season to Coyle is crestfallen, but he knows the importance of moving forward. It was Coyle who moved Edwin from wing-back to midfield and the TN player made the position his own.

"We had a great season and we were gelling together really well. I feel bad. But as a professional player, I need to accept it and move on. He has moved to a good club. I wish he brings out the same results over there.



Edwin
Sydney
Vanspaul

All I can do now is cherish those moments with him," said the 27-year-old Edwin.

Golden Boot winner Valskis, a Lithuanian, scored 15 goals and shared a good relationship with Indian players.

"He is a wonderful player and a person. I bonded well off the field, too. He will be missed, but again, all I can do is to wish him success," added Edwin.

Edwin's stupendous show in the ISL earned him a call-up to the national camp. National coach Igor Stimac was keen to see him at the camp (in March), but it couldn't happen owing to the lockdown.

"After an excellent season in ISL I was super

excited to go for the camp. I think I had rhythm, but I don't think I can say that now. I have been away from the game for too long," said Edwin, who is currently working as a multi-tasking staff in Income Tax.

Edwin, however, has been working out since the lockdown began in mid-March.

"Initially, I was at my hometown, Neyveli, with my family. I spent some quality time with them. I would go to the NLC ground near my home and workout. At times, athletes from other sports joined to and I learnt new workout techniques. I played badminton for recreation," he said.

SUPERMACHANS REQUEST
TRANSPARENCY FROM CFC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 6

Irked by Chennaiyin FC's lack of announcements regarding player signings ahead of the ISL 2020-21 season, the official fan club, Supermachans, has made an appeal to the franchise to be more proactive with fan engagements.

Supermachans posted an emotional letter on their social media handles, addressing it to Chief Technology Officer and Vice President, requesting them to be transparent about player signings and retention details.

"...irrespective of how the team performs, we stand by you (the club) and express our love and support for the badge. We, wholeheartedly, spend our time, money and effort for the club only because we treat it as our own," the letter says.

"Enough is enough. Please treat us as a recog-



nised fan club in these matters as well. Not that we expect in-depth details, but a heads up would be the least of expectations," it adds.

Supermachans said the fan club faces a lot of humiliation on behalf of the club.

"Even after doing so much for the club, we are treated like a random soul on the street when it comes to information..." the letters says.

The letter evoked mixed reactions as some didn't want the fan club to vent their anger on social media.

Decision to play IPL in UAE is a big deal



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

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

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

Indian cricket establishment were left wringing their hands in anxiety.

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

Strong behind-the-scenes negotiations over a pro-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

because of the pandemic.

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

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

In such hard times, this is a big deal!