


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | 15 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

 **Max:** 28.0°C
Min: 24°C
RH: 32%
Rainfall: 23.7 mm
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
28/24 °C

COVID-19 COUNT




CASES	DEATHS
(+66,849)	(+1,011)
25,25,144	49,134

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,921)	(+9)
TS: 88,396	674
(+ 8,943)	(+97)
AP: 2,73,085	2,475

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 2,12,06,883
 DEATHS 7,59,824
 COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shrawana Bahula Ekadasi till 2.14 pm
Star: Mrigashira till 6.34 am
Variyam: 3.07 pm to 4.45 pm
Durmuhurtam: 6.02 am to 7.43 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HUIJI CALENDAR
Zulhijja 24,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.15 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.15 pm
Maghrib: 6.50 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.31 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.51 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.56 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.20 PM

COUNTER POINT



Are you sure he is our minister?

IN BRIEF

India can give fitting reply: Prez

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday said while India believes in peace it is also capable of giving a befitting response to any attempt of aggression as shown by its troops in Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh after "some in our neighbourhood", a veiled reference to China, tried to carry out their "misadventure of expansion". In his address to the nation on the eve of the 74th Independence Day, he spoke about the 'Aatmanirbhar' initiative and allayed fears of foreign investors saying India's self-reliance means being self-sufficient without alienating or creating distance from the world.

SWARNA | TRAP

Victims died of asphyxia in smoke filled rooms Rooms locked, patients couldn't flee

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

Family members of some of the victims of the fire mishap at Swarna Palace Hotel, which housed the Covid care centre of Ramesh Hospitals, have alleged that doors of rooms in which their relatives were being treated were locked from outside to prevent them from moving out and spreading the infection. This prevented them from

escaping, and most of them died of asphyxia in their own rooms. Ten persons died in the pre-dawn fire at the hotel on August 9. Majji Ashok, the youngest son of Majji Gopi, who died in the fire, said, "My father died due to inhaling noxious gas in his room. We could not make out any burns on his body. My father became very sensitive after testing positive for Covid-19. Thus, we admitted him to Ramesh Hospitals hoping for best treat-

ment and recovery. But we have lost him forever." Narasimha Swamy lost his elder sister G. Venkata Jayalakshmi, who was in Room 208 and nephew Pawan, who was in Room 203, residents of Kandukur, to the fire mishap. He alleged, "Fire personnel were alerted 30-40 minutes late after the fire erupted on the ground floor. I thought that my nephew, being a youngster, might have escaped. But he too was found dead in his

room. Fire personnel saved patients from the third floor as patients managed to step out of their windows. They never bothered to break into all rooms to look for survivors." One of the deceased was retired SI Sunkara Babu Rao. His son-in-law Amaresh said, "I recollect doctors telling us that doors of rooms in the hotel will be locked from outside, so that Coronavirus patients do not go out and infect others."

NATION | 4

Ashok Gehlot wins trust vote in Rajasthan



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WORLD | 5

Don stokes false birther theory about Harris



SPORTS | 6

Tata Group expresses interest to sponsor IPL



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HC EXTENDS STAY ORDER ON THREE CAPITALS G.O.

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

The AP High Court extended the status quo order on the three capitals and APCRDA repeal bills to August 27. The court had earlier issued status quo till August 14 on the two bills and heard the petitions on Friday.

The government sought lifting of the status quo orders but the HC, rejecting the plea, extended it to August 27 and postponed the next hearing on the same day. The 65 petitioners, in which a majority is Amaravati farmers, while welcoming the extension expressed hope about getting justice eventually.

■ Page 2: Master plan can't be basis, says state

INDIA, CHINA FOUGHT IN MAY, JUNE, SAYS ITBP

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

Indian and Chinese troops clashed brutally at multiple times in May and June at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, a fact that emerged on Friday after the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) recommended 21 names of its men for gallantry medals. They faced the Chinese during face offs and skirmishes in May-June 2020, some of which lasted for 17-20 hours. ITBP D-G S.S. Deswal said the force has recommended 21 Gallantry medals and 294 DG Gallantry Commendations for ITBP personnel.

Bhushan guilty of contempt: SC

'Unfair' criticism of judiciary must be dealt with firmly, says top court; Sentence Aug. 20

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, AUG. 14



Prashant Bhushan

The Supreme Court on Friday held activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of "criminal contempt" for lowering its dignity and authority by questioning, via his tweets, the functioning of the top court in the last six years under the present Chief Justice, Sharad A. Bobde, and his predecessors. The court fixed August 20 for his sentencing.

Holding that the tweet in question was "malicious" and based on "distorted facts", a bench comprising Justice Arun Mishra, Jus-tice B.R. Gavai and Justice Krishna Murari said that the tweet had the "effect of destabilising the very foundation" of the judiciary. The country's top court has taken exception of that part of Mr Bhushan's June 27 tweet in which he said that the SC has played a substantial role in allowing the destruction of democra-

cy in the past six years, since 2014, and questioned the role of the last four Chief Justices in particular in allowing it. The court said that in its "considered view" the tweet "undermines the dignity and authority of the institution of the Supreme Court and the CJI and directly affronts the majesty of law." "There is no matter of doubt that the tweet tends to shake the public confidence in the institution of judiciary," it said. The "scurrilous/malicious attacks" by Mr Bhushan are not only "against one or two judges but the entire Supreme Court in its

functioning of the last six years."

The court said that the "scurrilous allegations, which are malicious in nature and have the tendency to scandalise the court are not expected from a person, who is a lawyer of 30 years standing." Saying that the tweet is not "fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary, made bona fide in the public interest," the court said while rejecting Mr Bhushan's contention that his criticism was bona fide and in public interest.

Justifying its firm stand in holding Mr Bhushan guilty, the court said that an attack on the SC does not only tend to erode the confidence of an ordinary litigant in it, but similarly tends to impact the confidence of judges across the country in the SC. The court let off Twitter, accepting its explanation that it was an intermediary.

■ More reports on Pg 4

CM reiterates resolve to help farmers with Rythu Bharosa

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has reiterated that his government is committed to helping farmers through Rythu Bharosa Kendras

(RBKs). He asserted that while RBKs will address all issues of farmers, warehouses and cold storage units will be built keeping in view the future needs of farmers. During a review meeting, he said warehouses

and Individual Quick Freezers should be developed keeping in view the future demands of farmers. "Food processing should begin from village level and every mandal should have a cold storage unit."

India tally 25 L+, Shah -ve, Kerala ministers isolated

DC CORRESPONDENTS with agency inputs THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

India's Covid-19 tally crossed the 25 lakh mark on Friday, taking just eight days to add five lakh cases. A total of 66,849 new cases were registered, taking the total to 25,25,114, of whom about 18 lakh have recovered. The toll stands at 49,134 with 990 deaths added during the day.

Union home minister Amit Shah, who was undergoing treatment for Coronavirus at a private hospital in Haryana, said he has tested negative. Shah, 55, will be in home isolation for a few days. He had tested positive on August 2.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and three ministers, K.K.

Shailaja, A.C. Moideen and V.S. Sunil Kumar, on Friday tested negative for the Coronavirus, hours after quarantining themselves as they came in the primary contact list of the Mamallapuram collector who has contracted the virus.

Three other ministers, Assembly Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan, Chief Secretary Dr Vishwas Mehta and DGP Loknath Behera also went into self-quarantine.

Collector E. Gopalakrishnan had interacted with the Chief Minister at the Kozhikode airport a day after the Air India Express aircraft crash on August 7. Malappuram district SP U. Abdul Kareem, the assistant collector and 20 employees of the collectorate had tested positive for Covid-19.

SPB IMPROVES AFTER BULLETIN SCARES FANS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

After a medical bulletin on the health of singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam issued by a hospital in Chennai where he was being treated for Covid-19 said he was in a critical condition caused concern among his fans and followers, his family on Friday evening announced that he was in much better shape than he was earlier in the day. His son S.P. Charan said the singer was seriously unwell but had recovered.

■ Full report on Page 3

TUNGABHADRA RESERVOIR BRIMS

Anantapur, Aug. 14: With inflows from upstream parts of Western Ghats, water level at Tungabhadra reservoir

reached 92 TMC ft as against its capacity of 100.85 TMC ft.

■ Full report on Page 3



Happy Independence Day!

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IN BRIEF

AP Cabinet meeting on August 19

Vijayawada: The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet meeting will be held on August 19 at 11 am in Secretariat first block at Velagapudi. Chief Secretary to the AP government, Neelam Sawhney, issued a circular to all government departments informing them about the Cabinet meeting and directed them to prepare required reports and information. The Cabinet meeting will be headed by Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, and important issues will be discussed in the meeting. Recently, Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a meeting of AMRDA and decided to develop Amaravati as legislative capital.

GOVT HAS NO RIGHT TO SELL AMARAVATI LANDS, SAYS NAIDU

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG 14

Telugu Desam chief N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday strongly objected to the continuing 'misinformation campaign' by the ruling Jagan government that the previous TD regime had not brought any development but only showed 'graphics' to the people on Amaravati as capital.

Expressing anguish at the reports about the plans of YSRC government to sell Amaravati buildings and lands, Naidu claimed the government had no right to sell Amaravati lands.

DEVINENI DEMANDS RESIGNATION OF FINANCE MINISTER

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

Former minister and Telugu Desam senior leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao on Friday alleged that the YSRC government was systematically destroying the comprehensive financial management system brought in by the previous TD regime for transparency and accountability in state financial management. He demanded the resignation of finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, asking him to take the responsibility for the ₹649 crore double payments made to contractors and several others.



Secretariat premises is illuminated on the occasion of 74th Independence Day celebrations at Velagapudi on Friday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

UK, Vizag AMTZ to jointly fight Covid

Indian med-tech start-ups invited to apply by Aug. 31

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 14

UK government and Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) signed a MoU for manufacture and supply of ventilators and other essential medical equipment to fight Covid-19 under a ₹5.6 million deal. Both the parties have invited innovative Indian med-tech start-ups to apply by August 31 to be a part of the new manufacturing support programme.

Select start-ups will be hosted at AMTZ's MediValley incubation centre, receiving financial, technical and infrastructure support necessary to make their equipment market-ready. The programme is part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed recently between the UK Government and AMTZ. The MoU aims to

● Dr Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner to AP and TS said the fight against the pandemic required a global response. New partnerships born in these times of adversity have a chance to make a difference and the potential to grow into something even bigger, he said.

boost med-tech collaboration between the two countries by creating direct research and development linkages between UK companies and AMTZ's manufacturing and testing facilities, and to the wider Indian healthcare market.

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adversity have a chance to make a difference and the potential to grow into something even bigger, he said.

Dr Jitendar Sharma, Managing Director and CEO, AMTZ said the Zone was happy to sign a memorandum of understanding with the British High Commission for encouraging innovations in medical devices, particularly on those products that are necessary for fight against Covid.

Through this partnership, British High Commission and AMTZ aim to encourage a number of innovators and provide them with technical, technological, financial, entrepreneurial and strategic hand-holding enabling them to leapfrog from idea to innovation and from a start-up to an established enterprise.

CM INAUGURATES HOSPITAL AT NANDYAL

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC KURNOOL, AUG. 14

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy inaugurated Udayananda private hospital at Nandyal town on Friday.

The CM inaugurated the facility through a video link from his camp office at Tadepalli, said finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy. The new health facility will serve the health needs of local people with ultra-modern infrastructure, he added.

Nandyal MP Pochu B. ramananda Reddy, collector G. Veera Pandian, SP K. Fakkeerappa, MLAs Silpa Chakrapani Reddy, Silpa Ravichandra Kishor Reddy, Katsani Rambhupal Reddy and others participated.

Covid-19 care permit to Ramesh Hosp cancelled

Ramesh hospitals staffers move city court for bail

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

The five-member probe panel led by joint collector (Development) L. Siva Sankar has found fault with management of Ramesh Hospitals, which had hired Swarna Palace as a Covid Care Centre. A major fire mishap at the hotel-turned-hospital last Sunday had caused the death of 10 Coronavirus patients, who were among those undergoing treatment at Swarna Palace.

The inquiry team found that Ramesh Hospitals had flouted government norms in admitting patients for providing treatment at the hospital and its hired premises.

A fallout of the report is Vijayawada district collector A. Md. Imtiaz cancelling the permission granted to Ramesh Hospitals for treating Covid-19 patients under Category-A. The hospital authorities have been directed not to admit any Covid-19 patients hereafter until further orders.

The probe panel submitted its preliminary report to the collector here on Friday. It made several key observations, including the hospital charging patients in excess of government-recommended rates in providing treatment to Covid-19 patients.

Based on the report, the district medical and health officer has served a notice to Dr. Ramesh Cardiac and Super Speciality Private Limited, Vijayawada, pointing out that it violated Rule (9) of AP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

The bail petition of the three accused Ramesh hospitals staffers in the Swarna Palace hotel fire mishap case was heard in a local court in the city and the next hearing is scheduled to be held on Monday.

Earlier, police arrested them from the Ramesh hospitals after registering a case following death of 10 patients in a fire at the Covid-19 care centre at the Swarna Palace hotel being managed by Ramesh Hospitals after finding lapses in patient safety.

Sent to judicial remand for 14 days at the sub jail in Machilipatnam, they moved the local court in the city for bail. Meanwhile, police filed a petition in the court seeking police

custody of them.

Ramesh Hospitals' managing director also moved an anticipatory bail petition in the city court and the next hearing is scheduled to be held on Monday.

In a related development, police interrogated former MP, Rayapati Sambasiva Rao's daughter-in-law, Dr. Mamatha, who works in Ramesh Hospitals in Guntur, for six hours.

Asserting that she was working in Ramesh hospitals in Guntur and looks after operations there, Dr. Mamatha said she did not have any role in Ramesh hospitals, Vijayawada.

Her advocate, Gangiseti Uma Shankar, was critical of the police for subjecting her to six hours of interrogation when she herself was convalescing from a Covid-19 infection.

Allopathic Medical Care Registration and Regulation Rules by collecting exorbitant rates and non-display of rates charged for each type of service provided by the hospital.

The notice underlined that G. O. MS No. 77 dated 08/07/2020 had been violated by collecting exorbitant fees for every admission. It pointed to also admitting Covid-19 patients in Metropolitan Hotel and M5 Hotel without obtaining permission from district authorities.

It directed the hospital management to be present before the DMHO Camp Office at Old GGH Campus on August 30 to answer in writing to the charges.

The probe panel ordered the Swarna Palace hotel management to transmit its answer to the charges before the appointed day of hearing of the case. It allowed the hotel management to be represented by an authorised person or legal practitioner.

Further, the notice directed the hospital authorities to surrender their certificate of regis-

POLICE ARE NOW PEOPLE-FRIENDLY, SAYS DGP SAWANG

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

DGP Gowtham Sawang said that the police department is turning people-friendly with innovative measures implemented under a new policing concept.

He was speaking after inaugurating a two-day training programme on 'Transformational policing: Putting people first' at Guntur on Friday.

He said that transformational policing is intended to bring about comprehensive changes in the vision.

The DGP said that he made many changes in the department and they were in tune with the wishes of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Master plan can't be basis, says state

From Page 1

● The state government contended that there cannot be any legitimate expectations on the basis of a master plan, which could be modified at any time.

● In any event, even if there was any legitimate expectation, it has to make way for protection of public interest. It also stated that the state's economic capacity is a relevant criterion for continuance of an earlier decision in public interest and bona fide rational grounds, prevalent in the present instance.

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Referring to the contention of the promissory estoppel, as the decision was not taken arbitrarily

but on the basis of various studies that were carried by various expert bodies.

The counsel for the state government pointed out that the subject matter of the legislation is within the competence of the State legislation. It was pointed out that all the contentions, including Section 5 of AP Reorganisation Act, are untenable.

Several advocates representing the majority petitioners appealed to the court to hear arguments in person in the open court instead of through video conference. They

said they are facing a number of audio technical problems online.

Dwivedi said it was not possible to appear in person due to the travel restrictions in the wake of the Covid pandemic. He is presenting the arguments from Delhi.

Meanwhile, AP Congress Committee coordination committee member and Amaravati Women JAC leader Sunkara Padmasri welcomed the extension of status quo. She said that the fight of Amaravati farmers was legitimate and claimed that YSRC government cannot shift the Capital from Amaravati due to constitutional rights of farmers.

She asked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to resolve Amaravati issue by inviting local farmers for talks in order to arrive at an amicable win-win understanding.



Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Government of India



74th Independence Day

Independence Day Greetings to all fellow citizens

Jai Hind

“15th August is a day to pay homage to all those greats who worked hard for India's freedom. Their struggles continue to give strength to millions. Independence Day is an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to build an India that would make our respected freedom fighters proud.”

- Narendra Modi

dayp 2020/11/30/018/2021

Independence Day Ceremony at the ramparts of Red Fort to be live telecast by Doordarshan 6:25 a.m. onwards



SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
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Details of the Tender Notice of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Corrigendum No.01/2020 Dt.13.08.2020

Corrigendum No.01/2020, dt.13.08.2020 to the following e-Tender Notice Nos. tender nos. & name of the works.

SI No.: 1 Tender No.: EnHM/BZA/CMCC-BZASTN/2020, dt.03.08.2020
Tender notice Nos.: DRM/EnHM/BZA/04/CMCC-BZA&OBHS-17208/2020, dt.03.08.2020
Name of the work: Comprehensive mechanized cleaning contract for Upkeep and Maintenance of Vijayawada station inclusive of its allied works for a period of 730 days.
Tenders to be closed on: 02.09.2020

Modified conditions have been incorporated in the tender document. Hence revised tender document has been uploaded. Bidders have to submit their offers accordingly as per the revised conditions. Please note.

The corrigendum No.01, dt.13.08.2020 uploaded in official web site www.ireps.gov.in

Please note that the remaining terms and conditions of the above Tenders notice / bid documents stands good.

Divisional Railway Manager, EnHM,Vijayawada

e-Tender Notice No. DRM/Works/ BZA/17/2020 Dt.12.08.2020

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites E-Tenders for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned against each.

SI No.: 1 Tender No.: E-20-North-2020
Name of work: Proposed to facilitate accommodation for women RPF, which includes Furniture, Toilets etc., at Rajahmundry. Tender value (₹): 60,51,350/- EMD (₹): 1,21,000/-
Cost of Tender document (₹): 5,000/-
Period of completion: 6 (Six) months
Date of closing: 04.09.2020

SI No.: 2 Tender No.: E-21-North-2020
Name of work: SW-I: (a) Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam section-Complete Track Renewal (Primary) by TRT machine from Medapadu Depot on Up line for total length of 39.65 kms in Sr.DEN/North/BZA jurisdiction.(b) Complete Track Renewal (Primary) by Manual method on Up line for a total length of 3.102kms in Sr.DEN/North/BZA jurisdiction. SW-II: Vijayawada-Visakhapatnam section- Through Renewal of Switch Expansion Joints- 74 sets in Sr.DEN/North/BZA jurisdiction. Tender value (₹): 3,94,62,240/- EMD (₹): 3,47,300/-
Cost of Tender document (₹): 10,000/-
Period of completion: 12 (Twelve) months
Date of closing: 09.09.2020

SI No.: 3 Tender No.: E-21-South-2020
Name of work: Gudur-Vijayawada section: Repairs to cess and side slopes on Up & Dn lines between UPD-KRV stations in SSE/P.Way/OGL section of ADEN/OGL sub-division. Tender value (₹): 1,11,91,643/- EMD (₹): 2,06,000/-
Cost of Tender document (₹): 5,000/-
Period of completion: 6 (Six) months
Date of closing: 04.09.2020

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in" before the date of tender closing to note any changes/corrigenda for any tender.

Divisional Railway Manager, Works,Vijayawada

e-Tender Notice No.B/E EGS/05/ 2020-21 Dt.12.08.2020

For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites e-Tender for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned below.

SI No.: 1 Tender No.: B/E 29/EGS/13/2020-21
Name of work: Electrical power supply arrangements for replacement of amplitude Modulates single section digital axle counters system with high availability single section digital axle counters (20 sections) over ELURU & NUZVIDU stations. Tender value (₹): 221792/- EMD (₹): 4400/-
Cost of Tender document (₹): Nil
Period of completion: 45 days
Date of closing: 04.09.2020

SI No.: 2 Tender No.: B/E 29/EGS/14/2020-21
Name of work: 1) Machilipatanam-Construction of Ancillary shed for stacking of Lenin at C & W/MTM. 2) Rayanapadu - Provision of various passenger amenities at Rayanapadu satellite station - Electrical arrangements. Tender value (₹): 3396500/- EMD (₹): 67900/-
Cost of Tender document (₹): Nil
Period of completion: 60 days
Date of closing: 04.09.2020

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in" before the date of tender closing to note any changes / corrigenda for any tender

Divisional Railway Manager, Electrical,Vijayawada

Chief Administrative Officer, A0964 Const.,Secunderabad
For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

IN BRIEF

MLA attends patient's funeral

Tirupati: Allaying fears among people that one may contract Covid-19 by attending the last rites of an infected person, Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy and Municipal Commissioner P.S. Girisha set an example by taking part in the funeral of an infected man. The MLA and Commissioner attended the funeral of the Covid-19 victim at the Govinda Dhamam eco-crematorium complex in Tirupati on Friday. The two were seen standing at a distance as the body was brought inside the complex. Both later lifted the body into the cremator and were seen wearing masks and a face shield with no other protection.

Heavy rains to hit coastal AP

Visakhapatnam: With the formation of a low-pressure area over north-west Bay of Bengal, heavy to moderate rains have been predicted for the next 48 hours in the coastal districts. There have been rains in the north Coastal region for over 12 hours. According to reports, heavy rains are likely in several areas, particularly north coastal and Godavari districts. The condition of the sea will be rough to very rough and strong winds are predicted from westerly during the next 48 hours. The low pressure is expected to be well-marked on Saturday.

MP writes to Modi on nitrate

Vijayawada: Narasaraopeta YSRC MP, Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, wrote a letter to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to take measures for the safety of people by shifting ammonium nitrate stocks to safer places from Visakhapatnam and Chennai. He wrote that the people of Visakhapatnam in particular, and the people of Andhra Pradesh in general, are really worried because one can find storage of huge stocks of ammonium nitrate in Visakhapatnam at any given point of time. The city has oil tanks of HPCL, the Indian naval establishment, arms depots, a naval airbase, sea base and Visakhapatnam is one of the most populous cities of Andhra Pradesh, wrote Devarayalu, adding that the imported chemical is stored in private godowns and nobody knows whether they are strictly following safety protocols prescribed. He expressed feared that even a small quantity of ammonium nitrate can prove to be disastrous.

Endowments lands for lease

Vijayawada: In order to bring commercial lands in urban areas in the state that have been lying idle into use, the department of endowments, AP, has decided to lease them out in a transparent manner. The endowment commissioner, P. Arjun Rao, asked officials to first identify such lands in urban areas in the state that have not been in use.

State registers 8,943 Covid cases, 97 deaths, toll 2,475

East Godavari continues to lead with 1,146, followed by 987 in Chittoor

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

Offering some relief to the state health authorities, AP has registered a slight dip in coronavirus infections with 8,943 new cases taking the total number to 2,73,085 and 97 deaths taking the death toll to 2,475 in the last 24 hours, after days of almost 10k cases.

The state health authorities issued the Covid-19 bulletin here on Friday stating that out of 53,026 samples tested, 8,943 individuals have tested positive.

Out of a total of 27,58,485 samples tested so far in the state, 1,80,703 infected patients have been discharged after recovery, while 89,907

infected patients are still undergoing treatment at various hospitals in the state.

Among the new confirmed infections, East Godavari continues to lead with 1,146, followed by 987 in Chittoor, 956 in Kurnool, 885 in Visakhapatnam, 762 in Prakasam, 748 in West Godavari, 669 in Nellore, 548 in Vizianagaram, 547 in Srikakulam, 530 in Kadapa, 527 in Guntur, 338 in Krishna and 300 in Prakasam.

With regard to cumulative Covid-19 positive cases, East Godavari is the highest with 38,292, followed by 32,012 in Kurnool, 28,096 in Anantapur, 24,940 in Guntur, 23,402 in Visakhapatnam, 22,077 in West Godavari, 21,519 in

● Out of a total of 27,58,485 samples tested so far in the state, 1,80,703 infected patients have been discharged after recovery, while 89,907 infected patients are still undergoing treatment at various hospitals in the state.

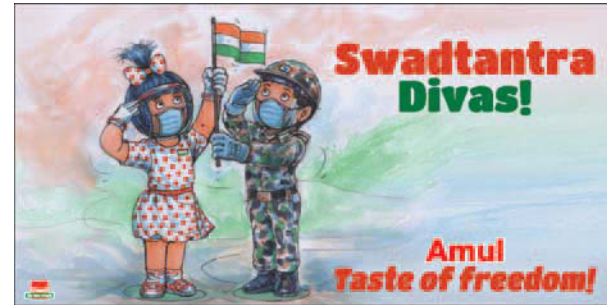
Chittoor, 16,169 in Nellore, 16,133 in Kadapa, 13,320 in Srikakulam, 11,783 in Krishna, 11,684 in Vizianagaram, 10,763 in Prakasam, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

However, East Godavari tops also in the rate of recovery of Covid-19 infected patients as 22,260 have recovered so far, followed by 22,556 in Kurnool, 21,517 in

Anantapur, 16,882 in Guntur, 16,761 in Visakhapatnam, 16,623 in West Godavari, 12,779 in Chittoor, 10,721 in Nellore, 9,941 in Kadapa, 8,409 in Srikakulam, 7,554 in Krishna, 6,685 in Prakasam, 5,120 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The state continues to witness deaths of Covid-19 infected patients in the last few days. 12 patients died in Kurnool, 10 each in Chittoor, East Godavari, Guntur, West Godavari and Nellore, six each in Kadapa, Prakasam, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam, three in Vizianagaram and two in Krishna.

Among the deceased, Kurnool is highest with 276, followed by 275 in Guntur, 258 in East Godavari, 220 in Krishna, 215 in Chittoor, 209 in Anantapur, 193 in Visakhapatnam, 180 in West Godavari, 156 in Srikakulam, 152 in Prakasam, 131 in Nellore, 106 in Vizianagaram and 104 in Kadapa.



Covid patient dies under suspicious circumstances

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

A Covid-19 patient undergoing treatment in NRI hospital at Mangalagiri died under suspicious circumstances on Friday.

Vanga Naga Murali, 66, from Maruthinagar, Guntur, was infected by the virus and admitted to NRI hospital for treatment on August 4.

He reportedly jumped from the third floor of the hospital on Thursday night and died due to severe injuries on Friday.

But the police suspected that he might have fallen from the third floor of NRI Hospital on Thursday night and died while undergoing treatment in ICU on Friday.

Mangalagiri rural circle inspector, Seshagiri Rao, said that the patient might have fallen from the third

floor while he was walking towards the washroom from his bed.

He was a diabetic, had high blood pressure and was struggling to sleep properly for the past few days. He informed his son Srikanth on Thursday night about this while talking to him over the phone.

The son pacified him saying that he will be discharged within two days after testing negative.

Unfortunately, he was grievously injured when he fell from the third floor. While the doctors immediately shifted him to ICU, he died while undergoing treatment on Friday morning.

The police registered a case based on the complaint of his son, Srikanth, shifted the body to the mortuary for a post-mortem and started further investigations.

APEAMCET TO BE HELD FROM SEPT. 17

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

New schedules for AP common entrance tests announced on Friday under which EAMCET will be held from September 17 to 25 in Andhra Pradesh.

Earlier, the EAMCET was scheduled to be held from July 27 to 31 but due to the pandemic, it was cancelled. Minister for education, Audimulapu Suresh, released the new schedule

for EAMCET, APECET, APICET, APEdCET, APLAWCET, APPECET and APPECET.

Pointing out that the AP state council of higher education has finalised the revised schedule for conducting the AP Common Entrance Tests 2020, Suresh said that the EAMCET exam will be conducted from September 17 to 25.

The AP-ICET exam will be conducted on September 10 and 11.

Gov appeals for plasma donation

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 14

Andhra Pradesh Governor, Biswa Bhushan Harichandan, appealed to recovered Covid-19 patients to come forward and donate plasma to help save the lives of infected patients.

He also called upon people to strictly follow guideline to avoid the spread of Covid-19.

In a statement issued here on Friday to mark the 74th Independence Day celebrations, Mr Harichandan asked the people to avoid unnecessary travel, maintain social distance, wash hands with soap or sani-

tiser and wear masks while moving in public places to prevent the spread of Covid-19 virus.

Conveying ID greetings to the people of Andhra Pradesh, Mr Harichandan said that it was a day to remember of all the great patriots whose sacrifices made it possible for the people to enjoy the fruits of freedom today.

He called for a re-dedication to the ideals of truth, non-violence, peace, solidarity and brotherhood which inspired our national struggle for freedom.

Mr Harichandan has decided not to hold the 'at home' function.

Balu's health condition improved, says his son

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 14

After a medical bulletin on the health of legendary playback singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam issued by a hospital in Chennai where he was being treated for Covid-19 said he was in a critical condition caused concern among his fans and followers, his family on Friday evening announced that he was in much better shape than he was earlier in the day.

Balasubrahmanyam's son S.P. Charan, and sister S.P. Vasantha said that the singer was seriously unwell earlier on Friday but had recovered. Charan told the media in Chennai that his father's condition had improved under the care of the doctors. There is no cause for concern

and he will get better, Charan said.

Vasantha said her brother's will power was strong and with the prayers of all his well-wishers and God's grace, he will recover soon and come back home safe and sound.

Earlier, news of the sudden deterioration of the health one of the India's greatest playback singers was announced in the afternoon by the hospital where the singer had admitted himself on August 5.

The hospital had said, "There has been a setback in the health of Thiru S.P. Balasubrahmanyam," and his condition had deteriorated on August 13 and he was moved to the ICU. The hospital had added that Balasubrahmanyam was "on life support" and that his condition was critical.



Parents, unions unhappy over reopening of schools

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 14

Majority of parents are reluctant about sending their children to schools that are scheduled to reopen on September 5, as the number of Covid-19 positive cases are rapidly increasing as of now.

Even teachers are unsure if they will be able to cope up with the situation. Majority of schools in the state have a large number of students. Ensuring that the students are wearing masks and maintaining social distancing between themselves appears an impossible task for them. In fact, the state government has not yet released any guidelines on functioning of schools in the wake of Coronavirus pandemic.

All educational institu-

tions in the state have remained shut since March 23 after lockdown was imposed. Since then, however, the lockdown has been lifted in phases and right now it is Unlock 3.0. The central government has not allowed places of mass gathering to open, such as cinema halls or temples. Comparatively, educational institutions face an equal risk, if not more.

A. Madhusudan and Girija, parents of 5th and 6th class students, say, "We welcome the state government's initiative of re-opening schools. But in the present scenario, when the number of Covid-19 cases is rising, who will ensure that students are in a safe environment? How can we send our children to schools without knowing about these aspects? Education is very important, but not

at the cost compromising the safety of children," they said.

Meanwhile, majority of the teachers, including those affiliated to Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation (APTF) and United Teachers Federation (UTF), are worried about reopening of schools from September 5, as the deadly virus is still not in control. "We are not against the government's decision. We are ready to attend duties at any time. However, it is a difficult task to ensure that students are continuing to wear masks and maintaining social distance. Instead of teaching, the prime responsibility of teachers will be to ensure that students do not mingle with each other. If something goes wrong, parents will hold us responsible," one of the leaders of APTF told.

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MOTHER HELD FOR THROWING NEWBORN INTO BUSHES

DC CORRESPONDENT VIZIANAGARAM, AUG. 14

The police on Friday arrested a 20-year-old student for abandoning her newborn baby boy by throwing him into the bushes. They also have taken her mother into custody for assisting her in the ghastly act.

The woman hails from Rellivalasa village under the Pusapatirega police station limits in Vizianagaram district. She abandoned the boy soon after the birth on August 5.

The 20-year-old woman is a student who lived in Vizianagaram Town for a few months preparing for competitive examinations. She fell in love with her distant relative in Vizianagaram, and they both wanted to get married once they settled in life.

Since the woman stayed alone in Vizianagaram Town, a courtship between the two resulted in a pregnancy.

Later, the woman went to her village and disclosed the matter to her mother. The mother kept her in a separate room in the house and told the neighbours that she was seriously preparing for examinations.

She delivered the baby late on August 4 evening. A few days after the delivery, the two went to the local farm pond and threw the baby into the bushes.

The baby boy was rescued by the locals hours later, and the police along with the officials of Integrated Child Development Services shifted the newborn boy to Gosha Hospital in Vizianagaram Town for better medical care.

The police said that when they carried out the investigation, the woman, along with her mother, surrendered before the police and confessed the crime on Friday.

The woman was charged under Sections 75 (punishment for cruelty).

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SHORT TAKES

MUKHERJEE REMAINS CRITICAL, SAYS DAUGHTER

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The condition of former president Pranab Mukherjee remains critical but has not worsened, his daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee said on Friday.

Doctors attending on the 84-year-old former president at the hospital said his condition remained unchanged on Friday morning. Mukherjee was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi cantonment on Monday and was operated for the removal of a clot in the brain.

He had also tested positive for Covid-19. "The condition of Pranab Mukherjee remains unchanged this morning (August 14, 2020). He is under intensive care and continues to be on ventilatory support. His vital parameters are presently stable," the hospital said in a statement.

The former President's daughter took to Twitter after the medical bulletin, saying his condition has not worsened. "Without getting into medical jargons, whatever I could understand from the last two days is that though my dad's condition continues to remain very critical, it hasn't worsened. There's little improvement in his eyes' reaction to light," she said.

Pranab Mukherjee served as the 13th President of India from 2012 to 2017.

U.P. LEGISLATOR ARRESTED IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, AUG. 14

MLA from Gyanpur in Uttar Pradesh Vijay Mishra who had earlier feared his encounter death at the hands of UP police, was on Friday arrested in Agar district of Madhya Pradesh. The lawmaker who was reportedly on his way to Rajasthan after paying a visit to Mahakal temple in Ujjain was arrested at Tanodia in Agar district, police said.

"Tip off by UP police led to the MLA's arrest", Indore range inspector general of police Rakesh Gupta said. A team of UP police reportedly reached Agar late in the night to take custody of the MLA, police sources said.

The lawmaker was scheduled to be produced in a local court in Bhadohi district in UP on Saturday, sources said. The MLA who was wanted by UP police in several cases including the one related to a property dispute in UP, had earlier circulated a video in social media accusing UP police of conspiring to kill him in encounter.

ELEPHANT KILLS FOREST RANGER IN MP

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, AUG 14

An elephant deployed in tiger tracking in Panna tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh on Friday attacked the local forest ranger B.R. Bhagat, leading to his death.

The pachyderm which had been deployed in tiger tracking in Hinouti range of Panna tiger reserve for the past one week suddenly became aggressive and killed the forest officer with his tusks, official reports reaching here said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed shock and grief over the death of the forest officer. Territorial fight between the two tigers in the area last week had led to death of one and injury to the other.

The Panna tiger reserve authorities had launched an exercise to track the wounded tiger for its treatment.



A 4,000 sqft Tricolor rangoli made by students and teachers of a private engineering college in Bengaluru on Friday as part of the 74th Independence Day celebrations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver his seventh straight Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Saturday - an address that comes amid the Coronavirus pandemic, a border standoff with China and a slew of reforms by the government under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

— PTI

Shaurya Chakra for 3 Army officers for J&K operations

Officers who fought Chinese troops may get gallantry awards on R-Day

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

Three Indian Army personnel — Lt Colonel Krishan Singh Rawat, Major Anil Urs and Havildar Alok Kumar Dubey — have been conferred with the prestigious Shaurya Chakra for counter terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian Army personnel who have courageously fought Chinese troops in Eastern Ladakh, particularly in Galwan Valley are likely to be given gallantry awards during Republic Day in January.

They don't figure in the gallantry awards list for

Independence Day.

Wing Commander Vishak Nair, from the Indian Air Force, has also been conferred with the Shaurya Chakra on the eve of Independence Day. President Ram Nath Kovind has approved 84 awards and decorations to the Armed Forces personnel and members of the Paramilitary Forces.

The awards include one Kirti Chakra, nine Shaurya Chakras, five Bar to Sena Medals (Gallantry), 60 Sena Medals (Gallantry), four Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry) and five Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry). Major Anil, from

Maratha Light Infantry laid an ambush on receiving intelligence that terrorists in the ambush.

Lt Colonel Rawat, Sena Medal, from the elite Special Forces was team leader of a mission oriented team, deployed along the LoC in J&K for conduct of counter infiltration and counter terrorist operations.

On receiving inputs about infiltration attempts by terrorists, he led his team to a 36 hours search and kill ambush, in a tough terrain and under difficult weather conditions near LoC.

He and his team killed four terrorists during the operation.

He challenged a group of terrorists who were trying to break the cordon and killed one category A++ terrorist despite coming under indiscriminate fire from them.

He further prevented other terrorists from escaping and facilitated his team to tighten the cordon.

His courageous action led to elimination of all four terrorists.

Havildar Alok, from Rajput Regiment 44 battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles, was deployed as a stop in the inner cordon during an operation last year in June in a village in J&K.

He challenged a group of terrorists who were trying to break the cordon and killed one category A++ terrorist despite coming under indiscriminate fire from them.

He further prevented other terrorists from escaping and facilitated his team to tighten the cordon.

His courageous action led to elimination of all four terrorists.

FADNAVIS TO PLAY ACTIVE ROLE IN BIHAR POLLS

New Delhi, Aug. 14: Former Maharashtra chief minister and senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis is set to play a key role in his party's preparation for the Bihar Assembly polls, a significant development that comes amid some disquiet in the saffron alliance in the state.

BJP sources said Fadnavis has been roped in by the party leadership for the poll preparedness and had recently attended a Bihar core committee meeting of the party.

"He has already begun his work and will play an active role. A formal announcement regarding his responsibility may be made later by party president J.P. Nadda," a BJP source said.

The development also comes at a time when Bihar and Maharashtra governments have been trading charges over the handling of Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case.

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, AUG. 14

In what Assam police claimed its pursuit to make Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area free from illegal arms, security forces on Friday, a day before the Independence day, recovered huge cache of arms and ammunitions from Udalguri district of Bodoland Territorial Council.

Informing that the operation was conducted jointly by Udalguri and Guwahati police, security sources said that the cache of sophisticated weapons belonged to NDFB.

Guwahati Police Commissioner Munna Prashad Gupta, who is also the ADGP of the Special Branch of Assam Police, told reporters that based on source information, Guwahati police conducted a search operation

along with Udalguri police at several places in Udalguri district and recovered the arms, ammunition and explosives on Thursday night.

The arms were recovered from multiple locations of Udalguri district where the police found them kept hidden underground.

However, no arrests have been made so far in this connection and investigation is on.

Earlier, police had also recovered a huge cache of

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However, no arrests have been made so far in this connection and investigation is on.

Earlier, police had also recovered a huge cache of

arms and ammunition in Kokrajhar, Baksa and Chirang district.

All these weapons belong to various faction of NDFB which recently surrendered in mass, security sources said, adding that NDFB factions were suspected to have not surrendered their entire inventory.

Meanwhile Assam is already on alert ahead of Independence Day. Several militant outfits of the region have given a call to boycott the Independence Day celebrations.

The Intelligence agencies have warned that these outfits may try to carry out subversive activities to make their presence felt.

The Army, Police and the paramilitary forces are intensifying their operations and carrying out frisking and checking at various parts of the state.

INDIA: PULLBACK PROCESS IS COMPLEX

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 14

India on Friday termed the process of disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as a "complex" one that requires "re-deployment of troops by each side towards their regular posts on their respective sides of the LAC" but added significantly that this can be "one only through mutually agreed reciprocal actions".

While reiterating its expectation that China would "sincerely work" with India towards the objective of complete disengagement and de-escalation, New Delhi — in a clear message to Beijing — also reaffirmed that "the state of the border and the future of our ties cannot be separated".

Bhushan verdict unfortunate, say legal experts

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The Supreme Court's Friday verdict holding Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary was termed as "unfortunate" by legal experts who said the activist-lawyer was only exercising his freedom of expression.

Senior advocates Vikas Singh and Arvind Datar said those tweets could have been inappropriate but does not attract the charge of contempt of court.

However, taking a different stand, senior advocate Ajit Sinha, said it was for the court to decide and there's no point making any comment on the verdict.

It was Supreme Court's domain, he said.

Singh, former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), said what the apex court ruled was not right.

"I do not approve what he said. It may be inappropriate, but it was a part of his free speech. It was not right what the court held today," he said.

Singh's view was shared by Datar, who termed the verdict as unfortunate, and did not agree with the finding that what Bhushan had said amounted to contempt of court.

It is unfortunate what the apex court decided today. Whatever he said was his freedom of expression and I do not think it amounts to contempt to court, Datar said.

— PTI

Yechury says verdict weakens democracy

New Delhi, Aug. 14: The Supreme Court judgement on Friday holding activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his tweets has weakened India's Constitutional democracy, alleged CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

The SC held Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary saying they cannot be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary made in the public interest.

Holding that Bhushan attempted to scandalise the entire institution of the SC, the top court said, "If such an attack is not dealt with, with requisite degree of firmness, it may affect the national honour and prestige in the comity of nations."

"Whether one agrees with the precise formulation of Prashant Bhushan's tweets or not, the SC judgement convicting him of contempt is alarming."

ing. It brings into the ambit of contempt, bona-fide criticism of the role played by SC as a Constitutional authority," Yechury said.

"The judgement will prevent open and free discussion on the role of the Supreme Court in India's democracy. This weakens India's Constitutional democracy," he said in a series of tweets.

He also said that the judgement also brings within its scope, genuine criticism of its present day functioning and approach.

"Hitherto, such statements were protected speech under Article 19 (1)(a) under the Constitution and were not considered contemptuous," he said.

A bench of Justices Arun Mishra, B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari said: "The tweets which are based on the distorted facts, in our considered view, amount to committing criminal contempt."

— PTI

Gehlot govt wins confidence vote

Jaipur, Aug. 14: The Ashok Gehlot government won a confidence vote in the Rajasthan Assembly on Friday, ending for now the threat triggered by a rebellion within the Congress ranks in the state.

The motion of confidence moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal was passed by voice vote, an expected win after the return of the 19 dissident Congress MLAs led by Sachin Pilot to the party-fold. During the discussion, Pilot said he will fight for the Congress as its "strongest warrior".

Replying to the debate on the motion, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot criticised the BJP, accusing it again of trying to bring down his government. "I will not let the government topple at any cost even if you make all attempts," he said.

Gehlot said the crisis had come to an end in a beautiful manner and this had hurt the Bharatiya Janata Party.

What was done in Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Madhya Pradesh? Elected governments are being toppled and democracy is under danger," he said.

Without taking names, he alleged that a Union minister was involved in the conspiracy to topple his government, saying this had become clear after some audio clips surfaced. The indirect reference was to Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who has earlier rejected the Congress allegation.

The BJP had earlier said it will move a no trust motion against the government, but called off the move after the Congress itself announced that it will seek a floor test.

Referring to his seat being changed - earlier he sat next to Gehlot as the deputy CM - Pilot said he is now placed at the 'border' between his party and the opposition in the House. "Who is sent to the border? The strongest warrior is sent," he said.

Congress, BJP spar over Kamal Nath's I-Day speech

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, AUG. 14

The ruling BJP here on Friday took a jibe at former chief minister and Congress veteran Kamal Nath for addressing people on the eve of Independence Day, reminding him that August 14 is Pakistan's Independence Day.

The remark by BJP spokesman Hitesh Vajpayee has invited sharp reactions from the Congress which described

the observation as 'mischievous and unfortunate'.

Congress spokesman Narendra Singh Saluja cited the customary address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day by President of India and said he was surprised that the BJP leaders have no knowledge about Independence Day eve addresses by public figures. In his twitter post, Vajpayee wondered if Nath was going to wish Pakistan on its Independence Day by addressing people of MP on

the day.

Nath, in his address, recounted the achievements of his government during its short tenure of 15 months, saying he endeavoured to change the profile of Madhya Pradesh to turn the state into an investment destination.

Nath said his government that fell in March had initiated steps to establish 'gaushalas' or cowsheds in every panchayat, besides undertaking various social welfare measures.

SOUR | TIES

Accused browsed internet to find out methods to execute plan

Kerala youth poisons family for property

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 14

A 22-year-old youth was arrested in Kasargod district of Kerala on the charges of poisoning his 16-year-old sister to death by feeding her ice cream laced with poison and also attempting to kill his parents using the same method.

The police said that the accused Albin Benny had allegedly planned to wipe

out the entire family for inheritance and lead a lavish life with his girlfriend.

While his sister Anne Mary Maria died on August 5, their parents Olikkal Benny and Bessy were also admitted to a hospital after they consumed the ice cream. However, both recovered.

The accused had earlier planned to mix rat poison with chicken curry to kill his sister. However, with the plan not working, the accused browsed the inter-

net to find out other methods for executing his plan and subsequently got the idea of mixing poison with ice cream.

Albin prepared the ice cream at home for carrying out his plan. After having ice cream, Anne Mary started vomiting and also had diarrhoea. She died in a local hospital and everyone suspected it to be death due to food poisoning.

However, the incident took a new turn when

traces of rat poison were found in the post-mortem report which led to suspicion.

Though the accused tried to mislead the family and doctors that he had also consumed the ice cream, on diagnostic tests carried out by health officials no traces of poison were found in his body.

According to locals, the accused had a strange personality. He used to spend time alone and seldom

interacted with the neighbours.

After completing plus two, Albin had secured a job in a hotel in Kottayam district. However, due to Covid-19 lockdown he returned home. He was glued to his mobile phone most of the time, chatting with his girlfriend for long hours. Albin was brought to his house on Friday for evidence collection during which he narrated the entire sequence of the crime.

IN BRIEF

Powerful landslide kills 11 in Nepal

Kathmandu: Eleven bodies were recovered Friday after a landslide tore down a village in north-central Nepal, police said, as rescuers dug through mud to find another 27 missing. Mud and stone came hurtling down on the remote hillside village in Sindhupalchowk district in early Friday morning. At least 37 houses have been damaged by the disaster, local police official Madhav Kafle said. "Search and rescue is under way in coordination between the army, police and armed police force," Kafle said. Helicopters are being used to reach the remote site after the landslide blocked roads.

Ex-spy endangers Saudi royal secrets

Riyadh: A former Saudi intelligence czar's lawsuit in the US courts makes a host of incendiary claims, including that the powerful crown prince tried to have him killed, and threatens to spill more royal secrets. A source close to the Saudi royal court has shrugged off Saad Aljabri's 107-page lawsuit filed last week, insisting that the former spy chief himself faced serious allegations of corruption. But the case, lodged after Riyadh detained two of Aljabri's adult children without charge, threatens to become a public slanging match that could pull aside the curtain on the kingdom's Shakespearean power plays. The lawsuit marks the first time a former top official has legally challenged Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and, if true, exposes what observers call a violent government campaign to snare overseas rivals and critics.

Virus delays SA circumcision rites

Port Elizabeth: South African 17-year-old Sinoyolo was looking forward to becoming a "man" this year. His uncle had made arrangements for him to travel to the mountains overlooking the South African city of Port Elizabeth in December for his initiation. Known in the local Xhosa language as "Ukwuluko", the secretive rite of passage marks a boy's transition into adulthood. Every June and December thousands of initiates between 15 and 17 years old spend at least three weeks secluded in the bush, where they are circumcised and taught to be responsible men. But this year, for the first time in living memory, the ritual has been called off because of the Coronavirus. "If we send them there and find that one boy is positive (for the virus), it means all 20 of them will be infected," said Afra Msutu, a Xhosa chief. "When you go to the mountains and get circumcised, for the first seven days you are very vulnerable," he added, noting that initiates stay in close quarters with access only to a traditional doctor.

US SEIZES BITCOINS USED TO FUND MILITANT GROUPS

Washington, Aug. 14: The Justice Department has said that it has seized millions of dollars from cryptocurrency accounts that militant groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State, relied on to finance their organisations and violent plots. Law enforcement officials on Thursday said the groups used the accounts to solicit donations, including by trying to raise money from the sale of fraudulent personal protective equipment for the Coronavirus pandemic. Officials described it as the largest-ever seizure of virtual currency funds related to terrorism.

It's also part of a broader Justice Department goal of disrupting the financing of extremist organisations, including those designated as foreign terror groups. Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin are favoured for illicit transactions because they are perceived as hard to trace, and one of the groups singled out on Thursday explicitly encouraged donations by telling potential contributors that the money trail would be difficult for law enforcement to untangle, the department said.

The legal action, which included undercover law enforcement work and a forfeiture complaint filed in Washington's federal court, is meant to deprive the organisations of funds needed to buy weapons and develop fighters, Assistant Attorney General John Demers said in a conference call with reporters announcing the case.

Don stokes false birther theory about Harris

Washington, Aug. 14: US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he had heard Democratic vice-presidential running mate Kamala Harris was not eligible to serve, stoking a false claim echoing the baseless "birther" theory he promoted about Barack Obama.

At a White House news conference, Trump was asked about "claims circulating on social media" that Harris was not eligible and whether he could say she met the legal requirements for vice-president.

"I heard it today that she doesn't meet the requirements. And, by the way, the lawyer that wrote that piece is a very highly qualified, very talented lawyer. I have no idea if that's right," Trump said. "I would have assumed the Democrats would have checked that out before she gets chosen to run for vice-president," he said.

"But that's a very serious — you're saying that — they're saying that she doesn't qualify because she wasn't born in this country," but in Kenya. Even after Obama submitted a copy of his birth certificate that showed his birthplace as Hawaii, Trump alleged it was a fake. During his 2016 election campaign, Trump finally dropped his claims.

The reporter replied that Harris was born in the United States but her parents might not have been permanent residents at the time.

Trump appeared to be referring to a Newsweek op-ed by a conservative law professor wrongly claiming the California senator was not eligible to serve as vice-president or president because of the immigration status of her parents when she was born.

Harris was born in Oakland, California in 1964 to a father from Jamaica and a mother from India.

Trump earned national political prominence by promoting the "birther" lie that Obama, America's



Donald Trump

TRUMP SAYS U.S. WILL COLLAPSE IF BIDEN IS ELECTED

Washington, Aug. 14: President Donald Trump has said that the US would collapse and become the world's laughing stock if the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee Joe Biden wins the November 3 presidential elections.

Trump said Biden's proposed policies were not good for the country.

"Today, we saw Joe Biden continue to politicise a pandemic and to show his appalling lack of respect for the American people. That's what it is. At every turn, Biden has been wrong about the virus, ignoring the scientific evidence and putting left-wing politics before facts and evidence," Trump told reporters on Thursday at the White House.

"The world will be laughing and taking full advantage of the United States if Joe Biden ever became President. Our Country would Collapse!" Trump said in a tweet.

"Sleepy Joe opposed both the China and the Europe travel bans. You know that. He opposed the China travel ban that I instituted very early and the Europe travel ban that I instituted quite early. If I listened to his advice, hundreds of thousands more people would have died. This is according to many people," the president said. —PTI

first black president, was not born in the United States. —AFP

US to host Kosovo talks next month

Pristina, Aug. 14: Kosovo and Serbia leaders will meet at the White House next month as Washington renews its effort to tackle their troubled relationship after an earlier summit fell through, officials said on Friday.

The former Balkan war foes were supposed to meet in the US in June but the talks were aborted after Kosovo President Hashim Thaci cancelled his trip to face an indictment from special prosecutors in The Hague for war crimes linked to the late 1990s conflict.

More than 20 years after that war, the neighbours still have a tense relationship, with Serbia refusing to recognise the independence that Kosovo, a former province home to an ethnic Albanian majority, declared in 2008.

While Brussels has been leading negotiations between the two sides for nearly a decade, the US has recently sought a

more publicly active role under Richard Grenell, a special envoy appointed by President Donald Trump. "We are happy to announce that the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia will meet at the White House for a negotiation on September 2," Grenell wrote on Twitter.

Kosovo Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti confirmed his attendance and said the summit would focus on "major projects that will change the economic perspective of Kosovo and the region".

Speaking on television, Serbian President Vucic also said his side would "take part in the talks and the topics will be related to the economy." Grenell, a former ambassador to Berlin who has ruffled feathers in Europe with his brash and blunt style, has previously faced accusations of complicating the EU-led process to bring Belgrade and Pristina to an accord. —AFP

Belarus fights back

Members of the Belarusian diaspora and Ukrainian activists burn flares and hold a banner with the Pahonia coat of arms during a rally in support of Belarusians protesting against rigged presidential elections, outside the Belarusian embassy in Kiev on Friday. The main challenger in Belarus' disputed presidential election called for mass weekend rallies and workers were walking off the job on August 14 as defiance mounted against strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko. —AFP

World leaders hail Israel-UAE pact as Palestinians cry foul**Israel pledges to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands**

Jerusalem, Aug. 14: World leaders voiced hope Friday that a historic deal between the UAE and Israel could kickstart moribund Middle East peace talks, even as the Palestinians and some of their allies denounced the move to normalise ties as a betrayal of their cause.

Announced by US President Donald Trump on Thursday, it is only the third such accord Israel has struck with an Arab country, and raised the prospect of similar deals with other pro-Western Gulf states.

The deal sees Israel pledge to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands, a concession welcomed by European and some pro-Western Arab governments as a boost for hopes of peace.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed Israel was not abandoning its plans to one day annex the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements across the occupied West Bank.

News of the agreement was broken by Trump, in a tweet hailing a "Huge breakthrough".

He said leaders from the two countries would sign the deal at the White House in around three weeks, evoking memories of previous US-mediated Middle East accords. It could also help boost Trump's reelection hopes

Tehran, Aug. 14: Iran and Turkey lashed out at their regional rival the United Arab Emirates on Friday over its decision to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel in a US-brokered deal, accusing it of betraying the Palestinian cause.

Iran's Foreign Ministry called the deal a "dagger that was unjustly struck by the UAE in the backs of the Palestinian people and all Muslims." Turkey said the peoples of the region "will never forget and will never forgive this hypocritical behaviour" by the UAE. The UAE, which has never fought Israel and has quietly been improving ties for years, said the

agreement put a hold on Israel's plans to unilaterally annex parts of the occupied West Bank, which the Palestinians view as the heartland of their future state. But the Turkish Foreign Ministry said the UAE had no authority to negotiate with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians or "to make concessions on matters vital to Palestine." The agreement would make the UAE the first Gulf Arab state — and the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan — to have full diplomatic ties with Israel.

The Palestinians say the deal amounts to "treason" and have called on Arab

and Muslim countries to oppose it. The historic deal delivered a key foreign policy victory for US President Donald Trump as he seeks re-election and reflected a changing Middle East in which shared concerns about archenemy Iran have largely overtaken traditional Arab support for the Palestinians.

Trump has predicted that other countries in the region will follow the UAE's lead. Israel, the UAE and other Gulf countries that view Iran as a regional menace have been cultivating closer ties in recent years. Turkey has had diplomatic relations with Israel for decades. —PTI

in the November US polls. The Palestinian leadership rejected the deal as a "betrayal" of their cause, saying they would withdraw their ambassador from the Emirates.

Following on Friday prayers in Jerusalem, worshippers outside the Al-Aqsa mosque walked on pictures of UAE strongman Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. In the West Bank city of

Nablus, people set fire to pictures of Sheikh Mohamed, Netanyahu and Trump.

In Ramallah, office worker Jihad Hussein said: "The Palestinian people have been stabbed in the back by the Emirates leadership."

Establishing diplomatic ties between Israel and Washington's Middle East allies, including the oil-rich Gulf monarchies, has

been central to Trump's regional strategy to contain Iran, also an arch-foe of Israel.

Under the deal, Israel and the UAE "agreed to the full normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates", according to a joint statement on Thursday evening by Trump, Netanyahu and Sheikh Mohamed. They added that Israel

Resolution on Chinese aggression against India introduced in US

Washington, Aug. 14: A bipartisan group of two influential US senators has introduced a resolution in the Senate, condemning Chinese military aggression to change the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India and calling for a diplomatic solution.

Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff in several

areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh since May 5. The situation deteriorated after the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in which 20 Indian Army personnel were killed and an unconfirmed number of Chinese soldiers died.

The resolution was introduced by Senator John Cornyn, Republican Senate Majority Whip, and Senator

Mark Warner, ranking member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, on Thursday.

Cornyn and Warner are co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus. The Senate resolution follows the passage of a similar resolution by the House of Representatives as part of the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) last month. "As a cofounder

of the Senate India Caucus, I know firsthand the importance of a strong relationship between the US and India. I commend India's commitment to standing up to China and maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is more important than ever that we support our Indian partners as they defend against Chinese aggression," Cornyn said. —PTI

AFGHANISTAN BEGINS TO FREE 400 PRISONERS

Kabul, Aug 14: Afghan authorities on Friday said they had started to release 400 Taliban prisoners, the final hurdle in long-delayed peace talks between the two warring sides, even as President Ashraf Ghani warned they were a "danger to the world".

The Afghan government and the Taliban are set to meet within days of the prisoner release being completed, in a move that has drawn widespread condemnation after it emerged many of the inmates were involved in attacks that killed scores of Afghans and foreigners.

A group of 80 prisoners was released on Thursday, said National Security Council spokesman Javid Faisal, tweeting that it would "speed up efforts for direct talks and a lasting, nationwide ceasefire".

The peace talks will be held in Doha, Qatar. —AFP

would "suspend declaring sovereignty" over occupied Palestinian West Bank areas — an idea proposed in Trump's controversial peace plan unveiled earlier this year.

Sheikh Mohamed stressed in a tweet that an agreement has been "reached to stop further Israeli annexation of Palestinian territories".

But Netanyahu insisted afterwards that he had only agreed to delay, not cancel, the annexations. The plans remained "on the table", he said.

On Friday the prime minister appointed his national security advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat to lead the negotiations with the Emiratis.

US Gulf allies Bahrain and Oman welcomed the annexation deal, and Egypt, the only other Arab country to have a formal peace treaty with Israel, praised a deal that would scrap annexation. Thanking them Netanyahu said the "peace treaty" with the UAE "is expanding the circle of peace".

The European Union said normalisation would benefit both Israel and the UAE, but foreign policy spokeswoman Nabila Massrali stressed the bloc's commitment to a two-state solution. "We are, of course, ready to work on the resumption of the negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians," she said. —AFP

NZ EXTENDS CITY LOCKDOWN TO STAMP OUT VIRUS

Wellington, Aug. 14: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern extended a lockdown in New Zealand's largest city on Friday, giving health authorities more time to trace and contain a strain of Coronavirus previously unseen in the country.

Ardern said stay-at-home orders would remain in force across Auckland until Aug. 26 in a bid to prevent a mystery outbreak from becoming a fully blown second wave.

Genomic tests indicated the latest infections were not the same strain of Coronavirus recorded in New Zealand earlier this year.

"This suggests it's not a case of the virus being dormant, or of burning embers in our community, it appears to be new to New Zealand," Ardern said.

She added that tests were also unable to link the outbreak to any cases among quarantined travellers from overseas. Since four people tested positive on Tuesday - the first cases of community transmission in 102 days — New Zealand has now detected a cluster of 30 virus cases. —AFP

SPACE | STUDY Mystery had enthralled skywatchers since the star began to lose luminosity last Oct.**Dust clouds dim bright star Betelgeuse**

Paris, Aug. 14: The sudden dimming of one of the Milky Way's orion stars, Betelgeuse, could be due to a dust cloud spewing up from its surface, astronomers said on Thursday.

The mystery has enthralled skywatchers since the star — part of the Orion constellation — began to lose luminosity last October, with some experts suggesting it could herald its explosion into a supernova.

But researchers working with the Hubble telescope

now have a clearer picture, seeing superhot plasma being unleashed from the star's surface, cooling in the outer layers of the atmosphere and eventually turning to dust.

"The resulting cloud blocked light from about a quarter of the star's surface," the European Space Agency said in a statement, adding that the star has since returned to its normal brightness.

"With Hubble, we see the material as it left the star's visible surface and moved out through the atmos-

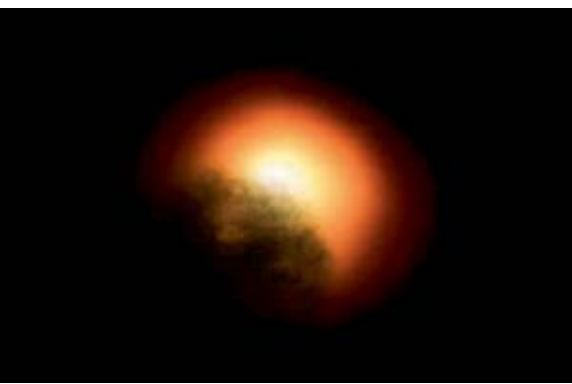
phere, before the dust formed that caused the star to appear to dim," said lead researcher Andrea Dupree of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in the

United States.

"We could see the effect of a dense, hot region in the southeast part of the star moving outward."

The researchers, due to publish their findings in The Astrophysical Journal, said they were not sure of the ultimate cause of the plasma eruption.

Betelgeuse, almost 1,000 times the size of the Sun, is 725 light years from Earth, meaning the event witnessed by the telescope happened around the beginning of the 14th century. —AFP



Picture of the Betelgeuse, one of the Milky Way's orion stars. —AFP



BIGGIES ON BOARD

Tata Group joins race to be IPL title sponsor

New Delhi, Aug. 14: Multinational conglomerate Tata Group has submitted its 'Expression of Interest' to become IPL title sponsor this year, joining education technology company Unacademy and fantasy sports platform Dream11 in a bid to replace Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for one season.

Friday was the last date of submission of 'EOI' to the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The IPL will be held from September 19 to November 10 in the UAE this year and the winning bidder will hold the rights for four months and 13 days.

Tata Group's entry into the fray makes the bidding war on August 18 very interesting as BCCI is expecting that the winning bid will not be much lower than Vivo's ₹440 crore annual contract even though the rights period is of a short duration.

"Yes, Tata Group has submitted their Expression of Interest to buy IPL title rights," a group spokesperson said.

A source in the BCCI earlier confirmed the submission of EOIs from the other two companies.

"The EOI doesn't have to mention the bid amount. It will be sent on August 18," the official said.

—PTI

● **Tata Group's entry into the fray makes the bidding war on August 18 very interesting as BCCI is expecting that the winning bid will not be much lower than Vivo's ₹440 crore annual contract even though the rights period is of a short duration.**



Chennai Super Kings players Piyush Chawla (from left), Suresh Raina, Monu Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Karn Sharma and Deepak Chahar fly on a special flight to Chennai on Friday.

CSK get their stars back at den

C. SANTOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, AUG. 14

Three-time champions Chennai Super Kings have stolen a march over their IPL rivals by managing to assemble their core team in the city for a five-day training camp starting on Saturday at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. The team will shake off the rust before they leave for Dubai on August 21. The 13th edition of the tournament starts on September 19 in the UAE.

Chennai Super Kings Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, his second in-command Suresh Raina, batsman Ambati Rayudu, bowlers Deepak Chahar, Piyush Chawla, Kedar Jadhav, Karn Sharma and

● **Chennai Super Kings flew in their top players via a chartered flight and are all set to resume training for the IPL. Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu were among the cricketers to arrive in Chennai on Friday.**

others arrived in Chennai by a chartered flight on Friday afternoon.

They headed straight to a star hotel where an entire block is reserved for the team. CSK officials and their social media team who will accompany the team to the UAE are also staying in the same hotel.

"The chartered flight had stopovers in Pune, Delhi, Ranchi and Hyderabad before bringing the players together to Chennai. All of them had tested negative at

their respective cities. There will be two more testings in Chennai — during camp — before they leave by another chartered flight to Dubai. All the foreign players will come directly to Dubai in batches," said a CSK team official.

Allrounder Ravindra Jadeja, who opted out of the Chennai camp due to personal reasons, will join the squad in Dubai.

Mini bubble at MAC

With players from the

three-times IPL champions set to begin their training on Saturday, the M.A. Chidambaram stadium has been turned into a bubble. Around 100 people, including Tamil Nadu Cricket Association staff, grounds-men, security and drivers, have been tested. The camp will be held behind closed doors.

"Even the media will not be allowed in. We have already handpicked net bowlers who will travel with the team to the UAE. Those players too were tested and none of them were positive. They are also staying in the team hotel. We have sent a car to Coimbatore to pick up N. Jagadeesan, Tamil Nadu wicket-keeper batsman," the CSK official said.

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ANTISEPTIC HAND Gel
INSTANT HAND SANITIZER

WITH GOODNESS OF ALOE VERA

Kills 99.9% GERMS

70% Alcohol

Safe & Effective

Safe on Hand

LASTING FRAGRANCE

200 ml

500 ml

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