

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | SUNDAY | 30 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 33.0°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 32%
Rainfall: 23.7 mm
Forecast: Cloudy.
Max/Min temp.
32/25 °C



NATION | 5

Ahead of polls, Nadda meets MPs from Bihar



WORLD | 7

Trump calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual

SPORTS | 8

Hamilton takes pole position at Belgian GP



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COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+76,140)	(+950)
35,35,435	63,641
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+2,751)	(+9)
TS: 1,20,166	808
(+10,548)	(+82)
AP: 4,14,164	3,796

CASES AROUND THE WORLD	
2,50,59,992	
DEATHS	
8,44,109	
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES	213
worldometers.info/coronavirus	

ASTROGUIDE	
Sarvari; Dakshinayana	
Tithi: Bhadrappa Shudha Dwadasi till 8.22 am	
Star: Uttarashada till 1.53 pm	
Variyam: 6.05 pm to 7.46 pm	
Durmuhurtam: 4.49 pm to 5.38 pm	
Rahuakalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm	
HIJRI CALENDAR	
Muharram 10, 1442 AH	
PRAYERS	
Fajr: 5.25 am	
Zohar: 1.30 pm	
Asar: 5.00 pm	
Maghrib: 6.35 pm	
Isha: 8.15 pm	
SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM	
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.53 AM	
MOONRISE TODAY 4.34 AM	
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.03 PM	

COUNTER POINT	
	The car will suit Indian conditions more!

IN BRIEF	
RIL buys Future for ₹24,713 crore	
New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries on Saturday announced the acquisition of Future Group for Rs 24,713 crore to bolster its fast growing retail business.	
"Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries, will acquire the retail and wholesale business and the logistics and warehousing business from the Future Group as going concerns on a lump sum basis for lumpsum aggregate consideration of ₹24,713 crore," the company said in a statement.	

DALIT | TONSURED

Victim was called to enquire about stolen mobile

Telugu Big Boss' wife arrested

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 29

The police on Saturday arrested seven persons including Madhu Priya, the wife of Big Boss fame N. Nutan Naidu for beating up and tonsuring a Dalit youth P. Srikanth, at their house.

A senior police officer said there was no evidence of Nutan Naidu's involvement and his name had therefore not been included in the crime diary.

"Investigation is on and if his involvement is proved, his name will also be



Police releases the CCTV footage of the Dalit victim being tonsured in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

included," he said. It was reported that Srikanth had resigned on August 1.

He was called to Nutan Naidu's home to ostensibly discuss the theft of a cell-

phone. When he reached there, he was restrained and tonsured.

Pictures of Srikanth with a bleeding injury on the scalp was uploaded on social media.

Visakhapatnam police commissioner Manish Kumar Sinha released Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) footage of the incident at Nutan Naidu's house.

The CCTV footage, however, had gone viral hours after the incident on Friday.

■ Page 2: Accused booked under SC/ST Act

GRIEVING RAINA LEAVES IPL, CSK CRISIS WORSENS

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

There seems to be no end to Chennai Super Kings' IPL-13 misery. After Friday's Covid-19 shocker, the franchise suffered a double whammy on Saturday when senior batsman Suresh Raina pulled out of the tournament citing personal reasons, and another player — Ruturaj Gaikwad — tested positive. With this, the team's Covid-19 tally stands at 13, forcing the organisers to put the league fixtures on hold.

Fast bowler Deepak Chahar had tested positive on Friday along with 11 others from the support staff and social media team.

Raina, who returned to India on Saturday morning, hasn't given any reasons for his IPL exit. However, speculation is rife that the recently retired international cricketer is grieving a family member who passed away unexpectedly. The sudden spurt of Covid-19 cases in the CSK camp is believed to have added to his mental agony.

■ Another report on Page 8

Tunnel from Pakistan



Border Security Force personnel stand near a tunnel, originating from Pakistan, beneath the Indo-Pak international border fence, in J&K's Samba district on Saturday. The force has launched a major search operation in the area to look for other such hidden structures that aid infiltration.

K'taka data on TB river affects AP

Study on Tungabhadra dam shows river has more water

HOSKOTE NAGABHUSHANAM | DC
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 29

Silt Study Report-2016 has been prepared by Tungabhadra Board has made startling revelations with regard to storage capacity in the Tungabhadra reservoir.

The pending report, awaiting clearance at the Board meeting in the presence of three states members and representatives along with the Central team, shows huge variations compared to earlier studies, including an increase in capacity instead of reduction due to silt.

According to the report, available exclusively with *Deccan Chronicle*, the water storage capacity was assessed to about 105 TMC ft in the study conducted in 2016.

The 2008 study stated that the storage capacity in the reservoir of the TB dam was 100.50 TMC ft.

Even as engineers from Karnataka reportedly managed reports in the previous years, those from Andhra Pradesh and the government failed to identify the unfair reports.

However, the 2016 report has brought to light the entire episode.

■ Page 2: Mumbai-based firm conducted survey

COVID-HIT STATE TO RISE ON BACK OF AGRICULTURE

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 29

At a time when economy of Andhra Pradesh has been hit hard by Covid-19, agricultural sector seems to be bucking the trend, thanks to favourable rains, easy availability of agricultural inputs, and reverse migration of state's labour force.

With AP witnessing normal to excessive rains, agricultural operations have picked up in most areas of the state. Officials are hoping this would revive economic activity in AP, as agriculture contributes to 34 per cent of the state's GDP.

Except the three districts in north coastal Andhra, sowing operations started throughout the state. Srikakulam is the only district that has recorded deficit rainfall. The other two districts, Vizianagaram and Visakapatnam have received normal rainfall, while all the remaining districts recorded excessive rainfall.

■ Page 2: AP hopes rains will boost growth by 3.25%

Cong writes to Facebook over its quid pro quo deal with BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched a scathing attack against the Centre over the BJP's alleged links with Facebook and WhatsApp.

"America's Time magazine exposes WhatsApp-BJP nexus: Used by 40 Cr Indians, WhatsApp also wants to be used for making payments for which Modi Govt's approval is needed. Thus, BJP has a hold over WhatsApp," he

tweeted. The article said Facebook failed to check hate speech, including some comments by BJP leaders that violated their protocols.

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal has once again written a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, demanding a probe into the alleged "bias" and interference of the social media giant's India leadership team in the country's electoral democracy.

The BJP took a swipe at the Opposition party saying any organisation that does not work to its liking is accused of acting under BJP-RSS pressure.

The Congress leader said that the party is "compelled to write again in a short span of time because of further information and revelations made public" through a new article in a media publication, which makes "three points that are alarming and violate both the spirit and the law of operations of foreign companies in India".

Mr Venugopal, citing the article in his letter, claimed the BJP was allowed to exercise control over WhatsApp's India operations in return for a possible licence for its payment operations, which is critical for the future of the messaging app.

A massive political row broke out after a recent report by the *Wall Street Journal* alleged that senior FB executives had opposed applying hate speech rules to posts by certain BJP leaders.

Unlock 4 allows political rallies

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
HYDERABAD, NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

It may take a day or two before a decision is announced on resumption of Metro Rail services in Hyderabad.

Though the Union home ministry on Saturday announced that Metro Rail services could be resumed from September 7, as part of Unlock 4.0, it was learnt that a decision on when these trains will begin running again in the city will be taken after a review by the state government.

Any decision will be taken only after weighing the pros and cons and the Covid-19 situation in the city. The first priority is safe

ty, an official said.

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, the Hyderabad Metro Rail services were transporting on an average 4,90,000 people per day. Delhi Metro, which intends to start services on September 7, has planned on limiting the number of people in lifts and longer halting time for trains to allow physical distancing.

In its Unlock 4 guidelines, the Union home ministry said political, social and religious congregations of up to 100 people will be permitted from September 21. Unlock 4 will come into effect from September 1 and will continue till September 30.

■ Page 4: Schools, colleges to stay closed

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IN BRIEF
Jagan to visit Idupulapaya

Kadapa: District collector Chevuri Harikiran has directed officials to make arrangements for the two-day visit of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to Idupulapaya on September 1 and 2 to pay homage to his father and former CM Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy on his 11th death anniversary. He held a review meeting with superintendent of police K.K.N. Anburajan and other officials to discuss the arrangements for the CM's visit. According to the tentative schedule, Mr Jagan will reach Kadapa airport in the afternoon on September 1 and leave for Idupulapaya by a special helicopter. In the morning next day, he will reach the YSR Ghat with family members and pay tributes and perform prayers.

JS TO FILE COUNTER ON 3 CAPITALS

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

Jana Sena will soon file a counter affidavit in the AP High Court on the state government's move to trifurcation state capital.

The High Court has asked political parties to file their counter-affidavits while hearing a batch of petitions filed by farmers from the Amaravati region, challenging state's move to shift administrative capital to Visakhapatnam and judicial capital to Kurnool. In this backdrop, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan held a teleconference with senior party leaders here on Saturday to seek their opinion on the issue.

SIMHACHALAM LAND ISSUE WILL BE SETTLED

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 29

The government is very keen to settle the Simhachalam Devasthanam land disputes. The issue was clearly explained to the Chief Minister along with the Rajya Sabha member V. Vijaya Sai Reddy for an amicable response benefitting to the common people and the Simhachalam Devasthanam, said the Minister for Tourism M. Srinivas Rao. Once the decades-old Simhachalam lands issue is settled, not only the Devasthanam but thousands of common people and their families would be happy to lead their lives, the minister said.

After visiting the Simhachalam Appanna temple on Saturday, while interacting with media, the minister said that once the issue of the five village lands issue is sorted, the temple management would get huge amounts of revenue and the common people would also be happy.

RLIS IS TIT FOR TAT PROJECT, SAYS TG

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 29

BJP MP T.G. Venkatesh, founder of the Rayalaseema Hakku Aikya Vedika, said that all irrigation projects taken up in Telangana state post bifurcation are in trouble as they lack clearances from regulatory authorities.

The Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme (RLIS) was the only project taken up by AP after the state bifurcation but Telangana state has dragged it to court. "It is a tit for tat," he said as meddling in one project made the continuance of several irrigation projects in Telangana state untenable. They run the risk of being sealed," he said.

"AP government is showing mercy to Telangana state. If they go aggressively, all projects taken up by Telangana state will be sealed," Venkatesh added.

In the AP Reorganisation Act, no project was sanctioned to Telangana state but it went on taking up projects without having any authority to do so in drawing river waters, Mr Venkatesh said.

Only after AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy took up projects on the Krishna river did things start moving. Telangana state Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has been taking up the sudden shift in the AP government's stand on Krishna waters, particularly the Krishna. Telangana state contends that the Rayalaseema scheme was beyond the purview of river-sharing.

Rabi crop yields increase despite adverse conditions

Paddy output during Rabi has been nearly 28,04,130 metric tonnes in 2019–20

VADREVU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, AUG. 29

In spite of facing adverse conditions like scarcity of water, paddy yields during the Rabi season have been increasing over the past two years in the Godavari delta of East and West Godavari districts.

Paddy output during Rabi has been nearly 28,04,130 metric tonnes during 2019–20 in both the Godavari Districts against 27,03,654 metric tonnes in 2018–19 Rabi. Official sources say though there was water scarcity, a good harvest was received because of efficient water management.

"There were no pest attacks. We also utilised the available water efficiently owing to which crop yields have been increasing for the past two years," said West Godavari district agriculture joint director Gouse Begum. She said farmers had been educated about proper water management. Yields have been good with an average production of 43 bags and in some areas people even harvested 60 bags. She, however, said some tail-end areas got low yields as sufficient water could not reach them. However, the overall yield has been good.



A paddy field in Nellore district.

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1,66,395 hectares in 2018–19 Rabi and the yield was 13.26 lakh tonnes. In 2019–20 Rabi, paddy was cultivated in 1,66,900 hectares and the yield was 14 lakh metric tonnes.

Leaders of farmers' association say though agricultural yield has been satisfactory, they faced considerable problems when it came to purchase of paddy by the government.

In West Godavari district, paddy was sown over

Crops yields to be high this yr

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 29

With 51.6 mm excess rainfall during the current season and sizable inflows into Somasila dam with water reserves being 40 tmc ft as on date, agriculture officials are expecting that paddy will be cultivated over more than 2.75 lakh hectares during the ensuing Rabi season in Nellore district.

There are high hopes on yields too, as there has been significant increase in the output of paddy and

groundnut during Kharif and Rabi seasons last year.

According to assistant director of agriculture Anitha, paddy, groundnut and pulses had been raised on 2,66,900 hectares in Rabi last year. The overall paddy output was 15.50 lakh metric tonnes and the quantity was 7,000 kg per hectare.

In case of Kharif this year, paddy has been cultivated in 84,077 hectares and the overall output has been 5.5 lakh metric tonnes and quantity per hectare was 6,545 kg.

AP HOPES RAINS WILL BOOST GROWTH BY 3.25%

From page 1

AP's rainfall data was available with the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Vijayawada.

In 2018–19, agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors contributed to 34 per cent, 23 per cent and 43 per cent of the economy, registering a growth of 2.9 per cent, 0.8 per cent, and 6.6 per cent respectively over the previous year.

AP Agriculture Mission vice chairman M.V.S. Nagi Reddy hoped that with good rains, agricultural sector this year will log a growth of 3.25 per cent. Andhra Pradesh harvested a record food grain production of 180.54 lakh tonnes in 2019–20. It is hoped that it will reach 183.63 lakh tonnes during 2020–21. The target for Kharif season is 95.28 lakh tonnes and for Rabi it is 88.35 lakh tonnes.

Mr Nagi Reddy said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is also the chairman of AP Agriculture Mission, is keen on increasing the arable land available in the state.

Financial and investment support extended to farming community will have a positive impact on the state's economy, he maintained. The vice chairman said ₹3,615 crore have been allocated under YSR Rythu Bharosa, ₹3,000 crore to Price Stabilisation Fund and ₹1,100 crore for providing interest subvention on farmer loans.

'98 DSC qualified await good news

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 29

Teachers has not changed due to the lethargic attitude of bureaucrats and politicians, Srinivas alleged.

Some of the candidates have died waiting for their jobs. "Currently, there are not many of those selected in the mega DSC in 1998 who have been asking for appointments. Their number is around 500 in Telangana state and around 1,000 to 1,500 in Andhra Pradesh. But the issue remained unresolved," Srinivas said.

S.K. Khasim, vice president of the DSC Sadhana Samithi, said, "We left no stone unturned. We submitted representations multiple times to N. Chandrababu Naidu, K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Jagann Mohan Reddy."

The then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy had asked officials concerned to sort out the matter. After his sudden death, the issue headed nowhere.

In the 2014 Assembly elections, Chandrasekhar Rao promised to resolve the issue. In 2016, he invited us to Pragathi Bhavan and had a discussion for over two-and-a-half hours, assuring us that he would resolve the problem.

According to 1998 DSC Sadhana Samiti president K. Srinivas, the revision of cut-off marks triggered litigation with the involvement of school education officers and certain politicians.

He said largescale irregularities took place in the selections in Nalgonda, Khammam, Karimnagar and Warangal districts and huge amounts of money changed hands, which resulted in merit candidates being shunted out.

Since the time the results were out in 1999, till date, 98 per cent of the candidates who were selected based on merit have not been appointed.

The merit candidates approached the then AP Administrative Tribunal which ruled in their favour on December 4, 2009. When the government did not act on the order, they moved the High Court.

A division bench of the High Court in November 2011 directed the government to give postings to the petitioners.

Last year on September 5, Teachers Day, a single judge of the Telangana High Court slapped a jail sentence and fine on district educational officers (DEOs) of Khammam, Warangal, Karimnagar and Nalgonda for contempt of court, said Srinivas.

Despite the intervention of courts, the fate of the

There are around 2,000 candidates waiting for jobs in Andhra Pradesh and many of the candidates have crossed the age limit and some have died.

During the Covid-19 crisis as many as 25 candidates died, Somashekhar said.

He said there are no cases pending with regard to AP candidates. He said the then Telugu Desam government had constituted an MLCs committee to find a solution to the problem, but it clubbed the issue with DSC 2008 candidates which resulted in further complicating the problem.

The MLC committee pointed out that 4,534 qualified candidates of DSC 1998 suffered losses due to the litigation, but it found only 36 candidates eligible for posting. After the survey, it found only six candidates eligible for posting.

Mumbai-based firm held survey

From page 1

Mumbai-based RV Associates conducted a survey for 60 days in 2016 when the dam was full and also when the water level hit rock-bottom. The Tungabhadra Board had spent ₹2 crore towards the study on silt in the reservoir. The agency report mentioned that the water storage level in the reservoir was 105 TMC ft. However, Karnataka objected to the variation from the previous reports and its impact on water allocations for dependent states. The study report is pending with the Board because of objections by Karnataka government.

The TB dam, an interstate project to cover AP and Karnataka, was constructed with a capacity of 132.47 TMC ft in 1953. The dam is 49.39 metres

high. The left canals emanating from the reservoir supplies water for irrigation entirely to Karnataka. Two right bank canals are constructed—one at low level and the other at a higher level serving irrigation needs of Karnataka and Rayalaseema. Hydro power units are installed on canal drops. The reservoir water is used to supply water to downstream barrages Rajolibanda and Sunkesula located on the Tungabhadra River. The identified water use from the project is 220 TMC ft by the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal. Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh received 151 TMC ft and 79 TMC ft water use entitlement, respectively.

Increased silt formation into the dam hit storage capacity in the past four decades.

YSRC SC CELL CALLS FOR PROTESTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

YSR Congress SC Cell has called upon Dalits to stage state-wide protests on August 1 against Chandrababu Naidu's 'attempts' to create hurdles to welfare schemes and politicizing Dalit issues.

The YSRC SC Cell meeting was held in party central office at Tadepalligudem on Saturday condemned 'false' propaganda of the Telugu Desam against the YSR government.

YSR MLA Meruga Nagarjuna said they would protest.

TD HOLDS YSRC GOVT RESPONSIBLE FOR PENDURTHY TONSURE INCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

for the Dalits, Babu said that the Dalit fraternity is not going to believe in the false propaganda that is being put forth by some media houses supporting Naidu. He alleged that some corporate units are trying to boost the image of Naidu among the masses but AP people would not trust Naidu for his disastrous rule of five years at any cost.

Continuing protest 'foul' play in the death of Dalit autorickshaw driver Om Pratap of Punganur in Chittoor district, TD chief Chandrababu Naidu demanded that the government disclose the call data of the deceased. Mr Naidu on Saturday accused the YSR Congress government and police of trying to cover up atrocities against Dalits by using threats and inducements to silence the victims' families.

Addressing video-conference with party Dalit leaders, the TD chief said that there were many suspicions over the death of Om Pratap and disclosure of his call data would bring the truth to light.

Alleging that Naidu was crucial to unravel the mystery behind the death, he observed and demanded that police reveal it so that those who made threatening calls could be identified.

Stating that a series of atrocities against weaker sections were taking place in the past 15 months, the former CM said that the ruling YSRC leaders were behaving without fear of law.

He warned that TD would not keep silent and continue its agitation till the persons guilty in these atrocities were punished.

Meanwhile, TD politburo member Varla Ramaiya wrote to DGP Gautam Sawang, demanding an inquiry into the man's

death as well as tonsuring of a Dalit youth in Pendurthy

Visakhapatnam by film producer Nutan Naidu's wife on Saturday.

atrocities on Dalit sections in Andhra Pradesh.

He said even the latest instance of tonsuring Dalit youth Srikanth at Pendurthy near Visakhapatnam is due to failure of the YSR Congress in dealing firmly with such earlier instances.

Court of Andhra Pradesh at Amaravati, if they were given the opportunity to opt between the two states.

The petitioners in the case, said that they would like to work from — Telangana state or AP.

Anticipating the division of the High Courts, the

combined High Court had issued a circular in November 2018 asking employees to choose where they would like to work.

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IN BRIEF
AU Engg alumni gesture

Visakhapatnam: Old students of Andhra University Engineering College have come forward to construct a hostel building at a cost of ₹1 crore. The alumni of AU Engineering College inked an MoU with the management on Saturday to construct the hostel building which can accommodate 150 students on the new campus with a modern kitchen, dining hall and reading room. Principal of AU Engineering College Prof. Peri Srivinasa Rao and president of AU Engineering College Alumni M.V. Rao signed an MoU and exchanged the papers. M.V. Rao said that with the cooperation of the old students of AU Engineering College, the hostel building would be constructed with all latest amenities.

AKNU exam schedule released

Rajahmundry: Adikavi Nannaya University (AKNU) released examination schedule for undergraduate and post-graduate courses on Saturday. University Vice-Chancellor Mokka Jagannadh Rao said that final semester examinations will be held from September 14. Exams for the students who have backlog will be held from September 25. He said that 23,000 final-year degree students and 4,200 PG students will appear for the examinations in East and West Godavari districts. Examinations for degree final-year science stream students will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and arts students from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The seating arrangements for candidates would be made in accordance with the Covid-19 guidelines and only 12 students would be accommodated in each room. Screening test and wearing of masks are mandatory for students, the V-C said.

AP records 10,548 new Covid cases

Out of 62,064 samples tested, 10,548 tested positive

**SAMPAT G.
SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

With no let up in surge of Coronavirus infections, Andhra Pradesh has registered 10,548 new Covid-19 cases, scaling up the tally to 4,14,164, apart from 82 deaths, taking the death toll to 3,796 in the last 24 hours.

Releasing the Covid-19 bulletin here on Saturday, state health authorities reported that out of 62,024 samples tested, 10,548 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Of the 36,03,345 samples tested so far in the state, 3,12,687 patients have been discharged after recovery, while 97,681 patients are still taking treatment in various hospitals of the state.

Among the new Covid-19 infections, East Godavari continues to top with 1,096 cases, followed by 1,038 in Kurnool, 991 in Kadapa, 988 in Visakhapatnam, 870 in Prakasam, 864 in Anantapur, 863 in West Godavari, 813 in Chittoor, 791 in Kurnool, 715 in Vizianagaram, 635 in Guntur, 522 in Srikrakulam and 362 in Krishna.

With regard to cumulative Coronavirus infections too, East Godavari tops with 56,930 cases, followed by 43,248 in Kurnool, 39,460 in Anantapur, 35,194 in Visakhapatnam, 34,985 in West Godavari, 34,765 in Chittoor, 34,670 in Guntur, 28,566 in Nellore, 24,747 in Kadapa, 22,236 in Srikrakulam, 21,425 in

Prakasam, 19,301 in Vizianagaram, 15,742 in Krishna, 15,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of Covid-19 infected patients after treatment has also been good in East Godavari with 38,425 recoveries, followed by 36,031 in Kurnool, 33,220 in Anantapur, 29,707 in West Godavari, 27,747 in Visakhapatnam, 26,740 in Guntur, 25,632 in Chittoor, 22,035 in Nellore, 18,176 in Kadapa, 15,862 in Srikrakulam, 13,086 in Krishna, 11,629 in Prakasam, 11,502 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Chittoor has registered the highest number of 15 deaths, followed by 11 in Nellore, eight each in

East Godavari and West Godavari, six each in Anantapur and Guntur, five each in Prakasam and Visakhapatnam, four each in Srikrakulam and Vizianagaram and two each in Kadapa and Krishna.

State health authorities have discharged 8,976 Covid-19 infected patients after recovery from various hospitals in the last 24 hours in the state.

AP has so far carried out Covid-19 tests on 67,478 samples per one million population, registering a Covid-19 positive rate of 11.49. Maharashtra has tested 31,543 samples with positive rate of 18.99 and Telangana has tested 30,645 samples with a positive rate of 9.75.

Corona warriors to be felicitated

**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

The Madya Vimochana Prachara Committee to felicitate health warriors for their relentless services during the Corona crisis. MVPC chairman Vallamreddy Lakshmana Reddy said that as many as 27 health warriors were selected from 13 districts of the State and they would be felicitated by MVPC on September 1 on the occasion of 11 death anniversary of Dr YS Rajasekhar Reddy.

Mr Lakshmana Reddy recalled that the then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy introduced 108 Ambulance service in AP state and present chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy strengthened the programme further to provide health services to everyone.

He praised the services of 108 Ambulance services during the time of Covid-19. He said that 27 health warriors relentlessly served putting their lives at risk to save the lives of Coronavirus positive

patients in 13 districts of AP state. Mr Lakshmana Reddy said that the principal advisor to the government, Ajay Kallam, Special Enforcement Bureau director PHD Ramakrishna, AP Beverages Corporation MD Vasudeva Reddy, Guntur district collector I. Samuel Anand Kumar would participate in the programme. He added that besides felicitation, MVPC would present appreciation letters to 27 Corona warriors recognizing their services.

The TTD is organising Ankurarpanam on August 30, for the three-day Pavitrotsavam festival slated from to be held from 31 August to 2 September, at the Sri Padmavati Ammavari Temple in Tiruchanoor. The Pavitrotsavam is an annual festival held to ward off the ill-effects of any lapses committed by either the Arachakas and the temple staff or the devotees during the year-long activities in the temple.

As part of the festival, Pavitra Pratishta is held on 31 August, Pavitra Samarpama on September 1 and Purnahuti program on September 2. Given the Covid-19 restrictions, all the programmes and events will be conducted in Ekantham inside temple. Meanwhile, the Pavitramala Samarpama ritual was performed on Saturday morning.

Woman files case against hospital

**MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

A woman lodged a complaint with the Vijayawada police and district collector alleging that she was charged a huge amount to treat her Covid-19 infected husband.

She alleged that a private hospital in Vijayawada collected ₹15 lakh to treat her husband and he died due to the negligence of the hospital.

Sarala Ramineedi from Rajahmundry lodged a complaint against Liberty hospital, Vijayawada in Patamata police station seeking stern action against the hospital management for medical negligence and charging exorbitant fees and medical negligence that led to the death of her husband, R. Srinivas Rao, on August 23.

Narrating her horrific story of how the hospital doctors and staff negligence had claimed the life of her husband, Ramineedi said,

"On August 10, he began to suffer from fever and was rushed to the hospital in Rajahmundry where his oxygen levels started dropping. After informing my father, he was brought to Vijayawada for treatment and with the help of oxygen support he was admitted in Liberty hospital on the same day."

Dr Y Ravi Prasad examined

Srinivas and said that they would treat him and the fee was a six lakh package. The doctor said that Srinivas will be kept on C-PAP (a high flow oxygen machine). For the first two days, the doctor said that Srinivas was doing well and on the third day, he said that the antiviral drug, Remdesivir, was needed. He increased the package to Rs 15 lakh as IVIG (intravenous immunoglobulin) was necessary for treatment.

Her husband was complaining that the treatment was not good and the medical care was not proper in the hospital, says Ramineedi. When she asked the doctor, chastised her stating it was anxiety on her husband's part.

On August 21, Rao was gasping for his breath as there was an interruption in the flow of oxygen and a nurse noticed and addressed the problem. She said that on August 22, the oxygen flow equipment turned out to be faulty and the staff could not provide alternate equipment. She lamented that even the doctor arrived three hours after the staff informed him about the faulty oxygen flow machine.

The doctor declared Rao dead even before testing his pulse. She said that the hospital does not have necessary medical equipment like CT Scan, X-ray.

CONGRESS WRITE LETTERS SEEKING JUSTICE TO WHISTLEBLOWER

**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

AP Congress Committee president Dr Sake Sailajanath wrote letters to NHRC, AP High Court and AP Human Rights Commission alleging harassment of whistleblower doctors by AP government with criminal cases for sounding alarm for the improvement of facilities

5 ARRESTED FOR ILLEGAL TOBACCO TRADING

**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

The Guntur police arrested five people for illegal trading of banned tobacco products. They seized tobacco products worth ₹10 lakh and two vehicles worth ₹6 lakh in Auto Nagar. The police arrested Bollisetty Kameswara Rao, Potuboina, Ashok Yadav, Kapilavai Tirumala Karthik, Gidugu Eswarla and Mantri Srinivasa Rao at Harika Godown.

Mr Ammi Reddy said that the accused were involved in illegal trading for the past four months in Guntur and hence, the police conducted raids and seized the banned material

TELUGU DAILY SERVED LEGAL NOTICE

**DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29**

The state government has issued legal notice to Andhra Jyothi for publishing an alleged defamatory report against two district collectors.

The notice issued by K. Srinivas Reddy, state public prosecutor, to the Telugu daily on Saturday, stated that the article was nothing but calumny and vilification of the collectors to suit vested political interests. The legal notice sought an unconditional apology with direct reference to the defamatory publication within seven days from the receipt of the notice. Otherwise, appropriate steps as per law would be taken against the daily, without any further notice, it said.

Mr Srinivas Reddy said that the article was libelous and nothing short of a scathing attack on the respected official branch of the executive bureaucracy, which strives hard for the rule of law, and implementing government's welfare programmes in order to alleviate the sufferings of the poor.

The doctor declared Rao dead even before testing his pulse. She said that the hospital does not have necessary medical equipment like CT Scan, X-ray.

70 FULL BOTTLES OF K'TAKA LIQUOR SEIZED

in hospitals during Corona times. He alleged that CID registered a case and issued notice to AP Congress vice president Dr G Gangadhar for awakening the government about poor amenities to doctors.

He said that Dr G Gangadhar, a noted doctor in Vijayawada, was slapped notice for expressing his opinion in a news channel on April 16, 2020.

Masala and K9 chewing tobacco worth ₹10 lakh and two vehicles worth ₹6 lakh in Auto Nagar. The police arrested Bollisetty Kameswara Rao, Potuboina, Ashok Yadav, Kapilavai Tirumala Karthik, Gidugu Eswarla and Mantri Srinivasa Rao at Harika Godown.

Mr Ammi Reddy said that the accused were involved in illegal trading for the past four months in Guntur and hence, the police conducted raids and seized the banned material

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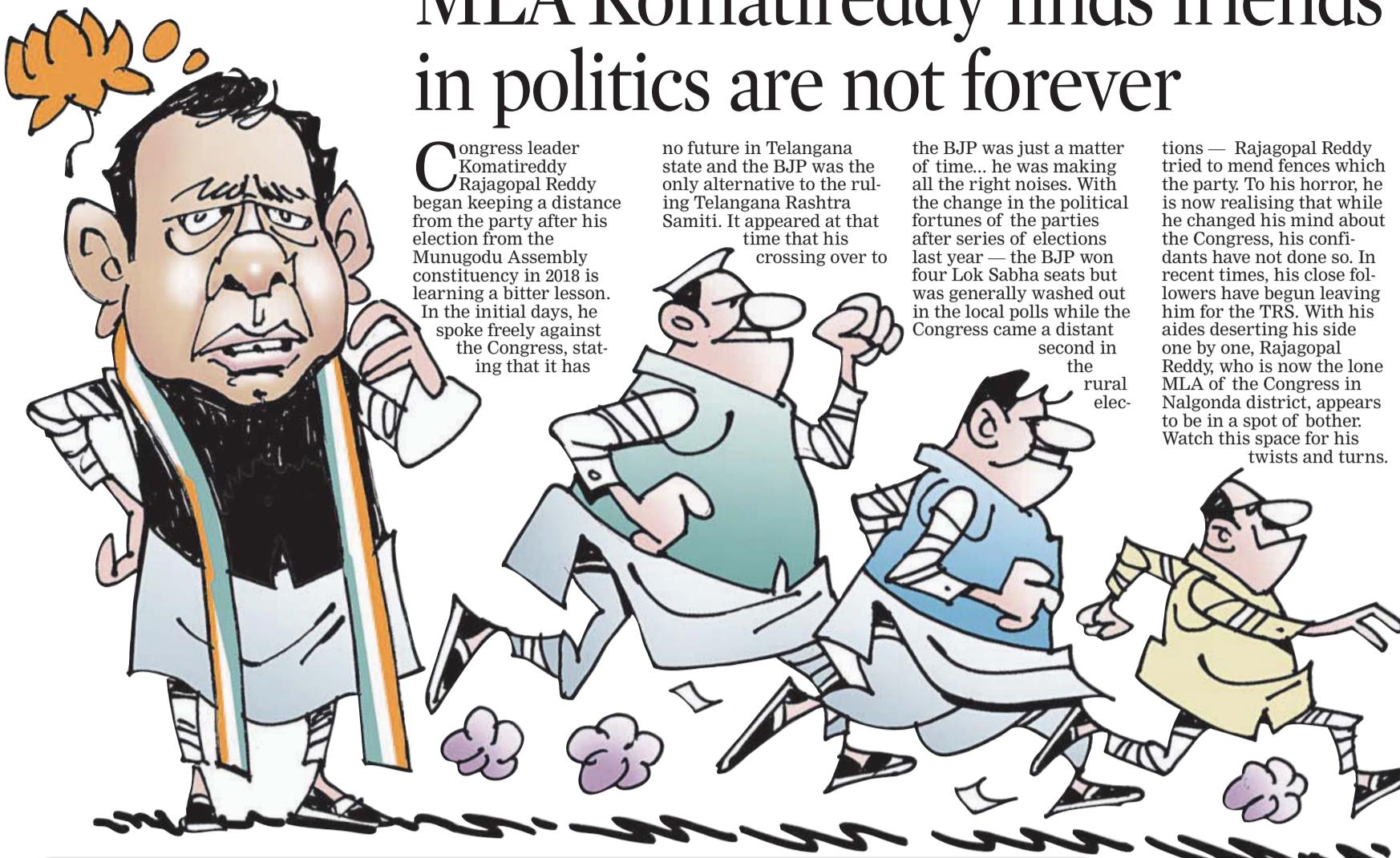
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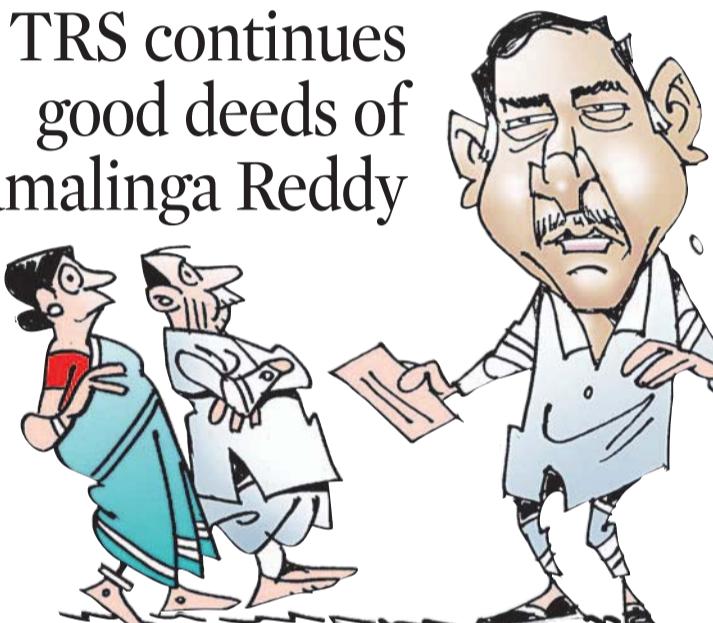
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MLA Komatireddy finds friends in politics are not forever



TRS continues good deeds of Ramalinga Reddy



The TRS has clearly to get over the death of senior TRS MLA Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy. On the day he died, TRS boss K. Chandrashekhar Rao went to the MLA's home to pay homage and broke down on seeing the body of his longtime colleague. This last week, it was the turn of finance minister T. Harish Rao to turn emotional. It all happened when Harish Rao was presenting cheques under Kalyan Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes to beneficiaries at the Dubbaka Assembly constituency, which Ramalinga Reddy used to represent. The cheques distributed by Harish Rao had been signed by Ramalinga Reddy during his lifetime. Harish Rao with tears in his eyes said that it was an unfortunate and painful moment in his life. While recalling the role of Ramalinga Reddy in the Telangana statehood movement and his close association with the MLA, Harish Rao assured the people that he would fulfil the promises made by his close friend. The legacy appears set to continue with the TRS deciding to nominate a family member of Ramalinga Reddy to contest in the ensuing byelection.

REGION

NO NEED TO FEAR, SAY MED OFFICIALS

FROM PAGE 1

However, the medical and health officials said that there is no need to suffer. Covid-19 East Godavari District Nodal Officer B.V.V. Satyanarayana said that designated testing centres have been set up in 60 Primary Health Centres and two to three PHCs have been attached to these designated centres. If patients are symptomatic and suffering from fever, cold or other symptoms, they can get the tests in any nearby PHCs as emergency kits have been given to every PHC. "People should call '104' and it will be registered online or the people can register their names in Arogyasri Sethu App and make a request for the test in the app. '104' staff would make arrangements for the test. Supervisory officials are closely monitoring the progress," he said.

B.V.V. Satyanarayana said that designated testing centres have been set up in 60 Primary Health Centres and two to three PHCs have been attached to these designated centres.

Pvt engineering colleges terminate, deny salaries

Private employees wonder as to how to support their families

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

- As no employee comes forward to lodge a complaint out of fear of getting into trouble, some managements are taking advantage of it and flouting the norms.
- Owners of some colleges are using reimbursement money for personal purposes

Dumped mercilessly by private engineering colleges after years of loyal service, employees have turned to the state government for help. While some of them have been removed without so much as notice, those few lucky who have their jobs are not being paid salaries and support from managements to those suffering from Coronavirus is hardly forthcoming.

Facing an uncertain future with the Covid-19 pandemic decimating job opportunities, they wonder as to how to support their families.

Managements of some private colleges have not paid salaries to employees for months on the pretext of financial crisis, while some are making partial payments. While colleges argue that there is not much money to pay salaries, as far as work is concerned, they

have enough to keep the faculty to the grindstone. They are also made to do work unrelated to their job like making arrangements for inspection of NAAC and other agencies. They are finding every ingenious way to avoid paying salaries. There are some managements which have declared 'no-work-no-pay' rule.

As some universities have given directions to colleges to start online classes and make arrangements for holding annual exams, the managements have instructed the lecturers to give assignments and project work to students.

The employees say that they don't mind doing anything for their colleges as

long as they get their salaries. They are also ready for partial salary payments because they are desperate.

A private engineering college located near Vijayawada terminated the services of a professor, who has a PhD from an IIT, without notice even after availing her services for nearly eight years. She is the only breadwinner in her family. Two assistant professors and a few non-teaching staffers were also shown the door.

Similar is the situation in several other private engineering colleges where the managements have laid off a good number of teaching and non-teaching staff. The employees say that though the state govern-

ment released fee-reimbursement dues to the tune of ₹3,600 crore to these colleges and the managements are using their services to persuade parents to pay the differential fee, they are either being denied wages totally or being paid partially, causing severe hardships to them.

A senior faculty member in a private college said, "When some of our employees approached the management seeking financial help for Covid-19 treatment, the response was cold."

AP Private Engineering Colleges Management Association state president N. Ram Kumar said, "We have been appealing to the managements to be sympathetic to their employees. We are going to witness new challenges in the higher education system in the days ahead and we require the services of our employees. We will take the woes of employees to the notice of the government soon."

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES TO STAY CLOSED

FROM PAGE 1

Schools, colleges and educational and coaching institutions will remain closed for students till September 30, with some relaxations for students of classes 9 to 12 to go to school to clarify doubts. States may permit up to 50 per cent of teaching and non-teaching staff to be called to the schools at a time for online teaching or tele-counselling and related work.

The Centre said that state governments shall not impose any local lockdown outside the containment zones without prior consultation with the Centre. This bears significance as sporadic and weekend lockdowns have been implemented by various state governments across the country.

The permission to hold political and other gatherings comes ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, which are due in October-November.

Cinema halls, swimming pools, entertainment parks, theatres and similar places will remain shut and international air travel of passengers, except as permitted by MHA, will not be allowed.

Open-air theatres will be permitted to open with effect from September 21. Higher education institutions only for research scholars (Ph.D.) and post-graduate students of technical and professional programmes requiring laboratory and experimental works will be permitted by the department of higher education (DHE) in consultation with MHA.

This bears significance as sporadic and weekend lockdowns have been implemented by various state governments across the country. The permission to hold political and other gatherings comes ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, which are due in October-November.

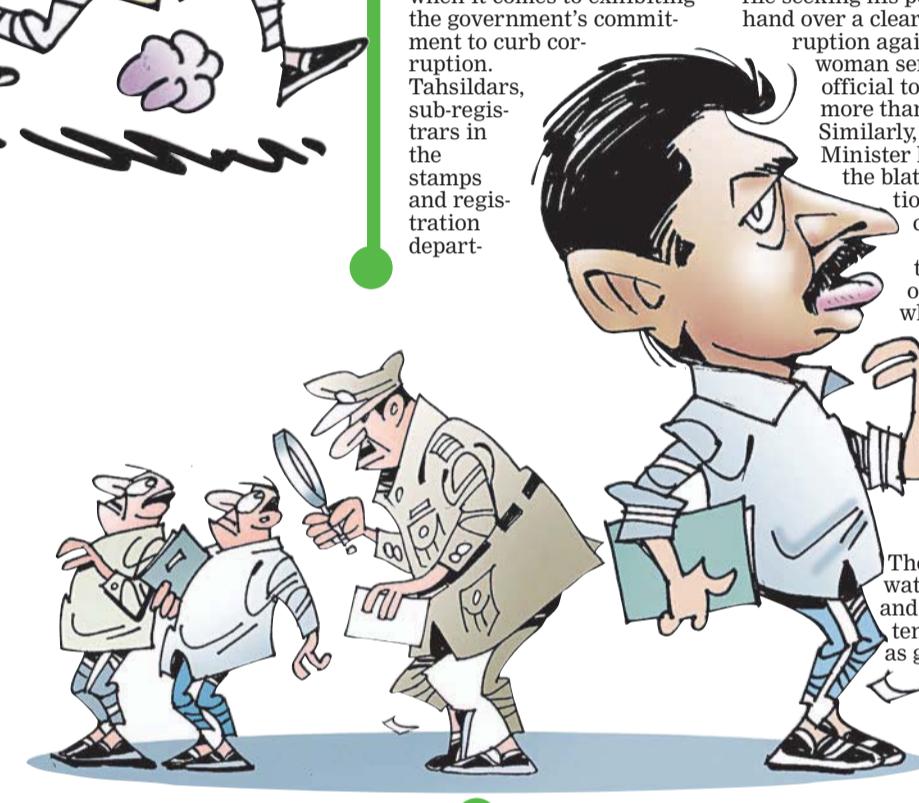
Jagan's pat for daughter, a message for rivals

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy rarely talks of personal and family matters in public. He surprised everyone the other day when he turned sentimental and announced his enhanced commitment to complete the Vedadri irrigation project for which he laid the foundation stone on his wedding anniversary. However, the First Family makes it an exception whenever Jagan's elder daughter excels in academics. They let the world know about her entry into the London School of Economics earlier, and now into one of the world's leading business school, Instead, in Paris. A bright student, family members say, she made it to prestigious institutions purely on merit. Besides pride, it's also a message to the heirs of other top political leaders who too studied in top educational institutions but their entry was by questionable means.

Only the small fish fall in graft net in AP

The rhetoric against corruption by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and head of the watchdog agency, ACB chief and high-profile cop P.S.R. Anjaneyulu, is selective like any of their predecessors. Middle-level officials are sitting ducks when it comes to exhibiting the government's commitment to curb corruption. Tahsildars, sub-registrars in the stamps and registration depart-

ment and assistant engineer-level officials in various public works departments are raided and media managers of the government make a big news out of it. The successive governments, however, have not gone beyond these levels and Jagan is no exception. He is sitting on a file seeking his permission to hand over a clear case of corruption against a woman senior IAS official to the ACB for more than a year. Similarly, the Chief Minister has ignored the blatant violation of tender conditions when some top leaders of his party who are very close and known for their fund mobilising capacity are the beneficiaries. The Vizag water supply and silica sand tenders stand as glaring examples.



2 UIDAI centres see lakhs of grievances

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 29

Tough Times to correct Aadhar updates.

No cooperation between UIDAI & State Government.

It is hell to attend the central located Aadhar card centre to correct and update the information. It is foolish arrangements that the centrally located centres for the grievances of the lakhs of people, said V. Srinivasa Rao and Swapna who are trying to update their Aadhaar cards in Visakhapatnam for the past one-month.

Mothers along with their children and old people are facing tough time to get their Aadhaar cards updated.

"I verified with the staff and other officials. After the information that the Mee Seva centres have been misusing the powers, the UIDAI has started centralised Aadhaar card centres in Andhra Pradesh at Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam. There is no information about the problems being faced by the people at the Aadhaar centres. I am arranging an immediate review meeting on the issue on Thursday to look after the issues at the Aadhaar card centres," said joint collector Venugopal Reddy, who is the in-charge of Aadhaar card issues in Visakhapatnam.

Meanwhile, the people are saying that two centres are not sufficient and demanded for more at other places. There is no drinking water facility, no security guards to maintain the queue at the centres.

"I have enquired about the issue. The UIDAI people are saying after giving information to the state government only they have started the centrally located Aadhaar centres to correct their information.

With the huge rush from the public the employees of the UIDAI, are restricting the permission and issuing tokens to attend the services.

COVID | HEROES

Two techies working from home since the lockdown leading

Youth win laurels for selfless service

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, AUG. 29

A team of youth, led by two engineering graduates, has been helping Covid-19 patients and their families under the guidance of Red Cross Society at the General Hospital (GGH) here for the past two months.

The two techies include Shaik Rahul, a software professional with Capgemini at Bangalore but working from home since the lockdown and S. Sai Teja, a mechanical engineer working in a firm at Krishnapatnam. Both of them changed their work schedules to be available for

public service at GGH. Both belong to Leguntapadu village in Kovur mandal of SPSP Nellore district. Inspired by their societal orientation, eight friends joined hands with them.

The team's availability has come in handy for GGH authorities when they wanted to make ready three floors exclusively for corona patients following the sudden spurt in positive cases. Rahul and Teja jumped into action along with their team to fix fans and other electrical fittings when electricians declined to come fearing infection. Besides providing snacks and water bottles to the

patients coming to GGH, the team also keeps a tab on the middlemen loitering around and prevents them from fleecing the kin of patients who succumb to corona patients while disposing of bodies.

For instance, the team caught hold of a middleman apart from an MNO when they collected Rs 4,000 from the relatives of a deceased for arranging an icebox to keep the body at GGH two days back. With the help of forensic wing in-charge and Deputy Superintendent of GGH Dr Z. Sasikanth, they made the MNO return the amount to the victims and arranged to shift the body to the burial

ground. "Most of the people coming to GGH are unaware as to where to go for admission. Covid test, inpatient or outpatient wards and mortuary. We guide them and help them," Rahul said.

Rahul and Teja lamented the stigma attached to Covid patients even among their own children while pointing to several instances where they handled patients because the kin were scared of coming close to the patient. "There is no threat if we are wearing safety gear and maintain six feet distance from those infected. There are instances where we went into Covid wards

along with patients with safety gear", they said adding that counselling has become a major activity for them now. Incidentally, parents of Rahul, Teja and their friends never stopped them from helping Covid patients through the virus threat looms large in the region, Teja said.

The latest activity of the team is to visit the homes of those who have recovered after Plasma therapy and record their versions to enable the administration to give wide publicity to plasma donation.

Chairman of Red Cross Society P. Chandrasekhar Reddy praises the two and their team.

This bears significance as sporadic and weekend lockdowns have been implemented by various state governments across the country. The permission to hold political and other gatherings comes ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, which are due in October-November.

With the huge rush from the public the employees of the UIDAI, are restricting the permission and issuing tokens to attend the services.

SHORT TAKES

110-YEAR-OLD WOMAN RECOVERS FROM COVID-19

GYLVESTER ASSARY
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 29

In Malappuram district, a 110-year-old woman was cured of Covid-19. The patient, Pathu, who tested positive on August 18, was discharged from Manjeri medical college on Saturday after successful treatment.

The oldest patient to have been cured from infection in Kerala so far, health minister, K.K. Shailaja, congratulated the medical team which treated Pathu. "It's a proud moment for all of us," she added.

On Saturday, Kerala reported 2397 new Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of cases to 71,701. Of the 71,701, 23,277 are active cases. The state also reported six deaths taking the toll to 280 while 2225 people recovered from the infection.

RAYANNA STATUE DISPUTE GETS RESOLVED

VITTA SHASTRI | DC
HUBBALLI, AUG. 29

The dispute between Kannadigas and Marathas over the installation of a statue of freedom fighter Rayanna in Peenawadi village of Belagavi taluk was settled amicably after the intervention of district incharge minister Ramesh Jarkiholi and additional director general of police Amarkumar Pande.

The Marathas agreed not to remove the Rayanna statue installed by the Kannadigas at Peenawadi circle on Friday morning. The Kannadigas agreed not to harm the Shivaji statue situated at the venue.

Rural development and panchayat raj minister K.S. Eshwarappa, who visited the disputed place on Saturday, has assured that he will persuade home minister Basavaraj Bommai to withdraw the cases lodged against both Kannada and Marathi activists over the issue.

ARMY RESCUES PEOPLE IN FLOOD-HIT MP

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, AUG. 29

The army has been called in to rescue people in marooned areas in Madhya Pradesh's Hosangabad district following flash floods in the Narmada caused by heavy downpours in the region over the last 24 hours. The river was flowing nine feet above its danger level in the district.

"The army has been called in to evacuate the people in marooned areas in the district. Besides, the national disaster response force (NDRF) teams have already been pressed into service to rescue the people in flood-hit areas," Hosangabad divisional commissioner, Rajnish Srivastav, said.

Chief minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, made an aerial survey of Hosangabad to assess the flood situation.

Road communications between Bhopal and Sagar and Narasinghpur and Chhindwara have been cut off as the flooded Narmada breached bridges and national highways at several places in the region.

INDIA WITHDRAWS FROM 'KAVKAZ 2020' IN RUSSIA

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

India has withdrawn from the multi-national military exercise 'Kavkaz 2020' in Russia next month as China was one of the participating countries.

India did not want to participate in a military exercise with China at a time when armies from the two countries are involved in a stand-off in eastern Ladakh for the last three months.

Pakistan is also participating in the exercise. Some 20 countries are participating in this exercise, including Iran and Turkey. The exercise is being held in the Astrakhan region of southern Russia from 15-27 September, 2020. The military exercise is part of a four-year exercise cycle of the Russian army and the name is based on the region where it is being held.

Kavkaz was last held in 2012 and 2016.

As per the earlier plan, India's participation in the exercise was to be a company level strength (180 troops from an infantry battalion plus elements of other arms) along with elements of IAF and observers from the Indian navy.

INDIA RECORDS SINGLE DAY SPIKE OF 76,140 NEW CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

India once again recorded a single-day spike of 76,140 cases of Coronavirus taking the country's overall infections till now to 35,35,435 out of which 27.12 lakh people have recovered. Such high numbers come at a time when the government is planning to restart metro train services, call the Monsoon Session of Parliament, hold medical and engineering entrances and university exams.

It is learnt that the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha may either function on alternate days or have staggered timings.

Maharashtra with close to 15,000 fresh cases saw a new high while Andhra Pradesh (10,621) and Karnataka (9,386) too registered large numbers of cases in the last 24 hours. The total number of deaths recorded due to the deadly virus in one day was 1,057 taking overall fatalities to 61,529 according to the union health ministry.

According to COVID19India.org, the total cases in India by Saturday evening were over 35 lakh and deaths over 63,000.

There are 7,62,950 active cases of Covid-19 in the country.

The Union health ministry pointed out that in the past five months, more than three-fourth of Covid-19 cases have recovered and less than one-fourth are active now. "The number of recoveries is nearly 3.5 times the active cases of Coronavirus infection beyond," health ministry officials said.

Uttar Pradesh on Friday reported 77 Covid-19-related deaths, taking the death toll in the state to 3,294, while 5,447 new cases pushed the infection tally to 2,13,824.

NC meets to discuss political state in J&K

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, AUG. 29

National Conference (NC)'s high-power political affairs committee met here on Friday to discuss the overall political situation prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir and chalk out strategy towards seeking restoration of its special status and statehood.

The meeting, the first held since the Centre abrogated Article 370 and bifurcated J&K into two Union Territories (UTs) in August last year, authorised its president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah to garner support for 'Gupkar Declaration' beyond its signatories.

A statement issued by the NC said that the meeting authorized Mr. Abdullah "to widen the acceptance of the 'Gupkar Declaration' among all the sections in Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh". It added, "The participants applauded the efforts of the party president towards bringing different political voices on a single platform for the restoration of J&K's honour which was undemocratically, unilaterally and unethically rescinded on August 5 last year".

Last week, the leaders of NC, PDP, Peoples Conference, Awami Na-

Mourner shot at



A youth lies injured hit by multiple pellets when the J&K police used force to disperse a Muhamarram tazia procession in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday.

— PHOTO COURTESY: A LOCAL RESIDENT

3 militants, one jawan killed in Pulwama fight

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 29

Hours after the security forces gunned down four Al-Barq Mujahedin militants and captured a fifth one in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district on Friday evening, a similar fire fight occurred in neighbouring Pulwama leaving three more militants dead. One Army jawan was also killed in the second clash, the officials said here.

A spokesman of J&K police said on Saturday that its counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG) together with the Army's 50 Rashtriya Rifles and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'s 182 and 183 Battalions launched a cordon-and-search operation in Pulwama Zadoora village overnight.

"During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given the opportunity to surrender. However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party, which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the spokesman said.

He added that the three Hizb-ul-Mujahideen cadres killed in the clash have been identified as Adil Hafiz, Arshid Ahmed Dar and Rouf Ahmed Mir-all residents of Pulwama.

In the encounter, Army jawan Prashant Sharma received critical injuries. He was evacuated to Srinagar's 92-Base Army Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries later.

Defence spokesman, Colonel Rajesh Kalia said Sepoy Sharma "was in the lead element of his party when it came into contact with the terrorists during a specific search operation launched in village Zadoora." An Army jawan suffered gunshot wounds.

19 MOURNERS INJURED IN PELLET FIRING

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, AUG. 29

At least 19 mourners were injured when the police fired teargas canisters and pellet shotguns to disperse a Muhamarram tazia procession in Srinagar's Bemina area on Saturday. The hospital sources and witnesses said that 12 of the injured were hit by pellets and that the condition of, at least, one of them who received multiple pellet entrance wounds in the face is stated to be critical.

The police burst teargas canisters to disperse the Shia mourners also in Shalimar area on the outskirts of the City later during the day.

However, a large number of mourners took to the streets in congested Gaur Kadal area of the summer capital and amid chanting of slogans and rhymes in praise of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred along with 71 of his family members and companions in the Battle of Karbala (Iraq) in October 680 began intense self-flagellation. The witnesses said that the police and other security forces watched them from a distance and did not try to interfere unlike at Bemina and Shalimar.

The police authorities said that only "mild force" was used against groups of people at a couple of places after they violated restrictions in force in parts of Srinagar in view of the COVID-19 and tried to take out tazia processions, ignoring the appeals of the authorities.

Didn't mean to hurt Tharoor: Suresh

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG. 29

above everything else but at the same time strongly differ with the stand taken by him on various issues," Suresh, Congress MP from Mavelikkaraand one of the seniormost Dalit leaders, added. A section of younger Congress leaders had also come out in support of Tharoor.

In a Facebook post, Suresh said the crux of the criticism against Tharoor was related to his views against the Congress party's well-stated positions. "We have differences over the manner in which he takes stands on various issues without discussing them first in party fora. But the criticism should not be construed as personal because these are in the realm of political debates," he said.

Sushant case: CBI grills Rhea for 2nd day in a row

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 29

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) grilled Rhea Chakraborty for the second day in a row on Saturday in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide.

Chakraborty is the prime accused in the case of abetment to suicide and cheating filed by Rajput's father. She was escorted to the DRDO guest house by a team of Mumbai police. The CBI also questioned others in connection with the suicide on Saturday.

The officials had grilled Chakraborty on Friday

for more than 10 hours in connection with her monetary details and bank transactions. The CBI also questioned Rajput's flatmate Siddharth Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh, domestic help Keshav, manager Samuel Miranda and accountant Rajat Mewati on Saturday.

Separate teams are questioning the suspects to weed out discrepancies in the sequence of incidents. Rajput's father has accused Chakraborty of allegedly swindling at least ₹15 crore from the actor's bank account. The ED is hence studying the monetary transactions of the

actor and Chakraborty.

"The family will also be questioned at a later stage on the same lines. Chakraborty may also be questioned again if needed," said an officer privy to the probe.

On Friday, Rhea had sought police protection for her family citing hounding by the media and others. A police escort vehicle was provided to her, who dropped her to the CBI office at DRDO guest house in Santacruz.

Apart from the ED and CBI, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is also investigating the narcotics angle in the case.

Mahanadi river breaches at Banki in Odisha

AKSHAY KUMAR
SAAO | DC
CUTTACK/JAJPUR, AUG. 29

Thousands of people were on Saturday marooned and hectares of agricultural lands got submerged as the river Mahanadi breached at Bhagipur under Banki block in Odisha's Cuttack district.

According to sources, initially, a breach measuring around five-foot wide was

formed which later widened to around 60-foot causing a heavy flooding in the area. This is the second time after 1982 when the embankment of the state's major river caved in.

Vehicle movement on many routes disrupted as roads and bridges were submerged by the flood water.

Reports from Jajpur district said at least 26 breaches occurred in Brahmani and Subarnarekha flowing above their danger marks.

Baitarani, Kharasota and Jalaka river systems, causing serious damage to standing crops and vegetables.

As many as seven human lives have been lost and two others have gone missing in the last three days. Several cattle and goats were reportedly washed away in the floods in north Odisha as major rivers like Budhabalanga and Subarnarekha flew above their danger marks.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Pradeep Kumar Jena said 46 sluice gates of Hirakud dam were opened as the upper catchment areas of the Mahanadi received huge rainfall in the last 24 hours. The SRC stated that the inflow into Hirakud reservoir had increased by more than 1 lakh cusec and the water level is rising by 8 cm every hour. "While over 8.9 lakh cusec water is entering the Hirakud reservoir, more than 7.2 lakh cusecs of water is being discharged through 44 of the 64 sluice gates of the dam. The water level at Hirakud Dam stood at 626.37 ft as against the full reservoir level of 630 ft," Jena said. Till last reports came in, over 8.95 cusecs of water is flowing at Mundali barrage in Cuttack district which is likely to go up to 10 lakh cusec by Saturday evening.

ASSAM SCHOOLS TO REOPEN FROM SEPT. 1, SAYS STATE EDUCATION MIN

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 29

will start from September 15. Moreover, the government will also distribute free masks for the students.

Informing that teachers who had tested negative in mandatory Covid-19 tests will start coming to schools from September 1, Sarma told reporters it was decided to carry out massive sanitisation of the school premises. "We have also decided to allot a fund to the schools for sanitisation of schools," said the minister.

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC
BHOJPAL, AUG. 29

A man perched atop a tree for nearly 24 hours on a marooned island in a Madhya Pradesh district was on Saturday rescued by a helicopter. Madhu Kahar (31), resident of Belkhada village in Chhindwara district, had gone fishing along with his friends to the nearby

island formed by the Pench river on Friday morning.

The island was completely submerged when water from Machgaon dam was released, leaving him and his friends stranded there.

While his friends swam to safety, he climbed a tree in the marooned island to prevent him from being washed away by the flood water.

A team of the national disaster response force

(NDRF) rushed to the area after receiving reports on the plight of the man. The NDRF team, however, could not approach him due to strong current of the water in the area. Later, he was airlifted by a chopper,

the state revenue control room here said, quoting reports from the Chhindwara district collector's office.

The man was taken to a local government hospital

for a medical checkup.

Chhindwara has recorded eight inches of rain in the last 24 hours.

● WHILE HIS friends swam to safety, he climbed a tree in the marooned island to prevent him from being washed away by the flood water.

● THE MAN was taken to a local government hospital for a medical checkup.

● CHHINDWARA HAS recorded eight inches of rain in the last 24 hours.

RESCUE MISSION

Island in MP submerged with water from Machgaon dam

Marooned man airlifted by chopper

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC
BHOJPAL, AUG. 29

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DECCAN Chronicle

30 AUGUST 2020



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

The pandemic kissquette

The new normal has brought with it new priorities, new rules of engagement, and a new or rarely-used-before vocabulary, which includes 'Coronavirus' itself, wfh (bet you thought it a swear word at first — I did!), lockdown, flattening the curve, and social distancing. We all now know the two-metre rule, though we don't seem to be able to abide by it (what's with all the barging, People?). We've also been advised not to hold hands, hug or kiss, except in our bubbles. Since kissing from two metres away is a physical impossibility, this rule isn't hard to maintain except for politicians and cheats, viz. often one and the same. The rags are full of scandals about British politicians caught with their pants two metres down, in bubbles that don't appear to be theirs, because the lockdown rules have eluded them (though they made them themselves). Yet, for many of us the pandemic rules of engagement are no more baffling than those we had to contend with before, such as the etiquette around kissing, aka. Kissquette. Having had two children, and perfectly aware of how they came about, it's not romantic or affectionate smooching that perplexes, but the formal, impersonal, performative variety, practised with relative strangers. For example —

1) How many kisses before one can disengage? Us plebs would have it at one, if at all. But if you're part of the fashionable set, it is at least two, on either cheek. This, I understand, is French (not to be mistaken for French kissing which doesn't involve cheeks at all). At other times, they will complete their pair of kisses and lean in for a third. The Swiss Kiss, I believe. This is fraught with danger. Will they or won't they? Will you offend them by stepping away too soon or unwittingly end up molesting them by moving in for an unwanted third? As a writer and a reclusive one, this is more stress than I can handle,



Bruderkuss: Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker kiss on the 30th-anniversary celebrations of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic, in 1979

especially at festival time, when the literary fraternity morph into showbiz luvvies, rushing into the arms of their peers, no matter how often they've stabbed each other in the back. At one such, I found myself in a sticky situation when having kissed me twice, the well-known author surfaced for air, but did not appear to have finished. Very much the novice, at both literary fests and social snogging, I became so unnerved by the ticking time bomb of our face-off, I found myself holding up my half-eaten biscuit and squeaking, "Want my cookie?" They did not, nor my company thereafter. Which settled that, but left me no wiser about how many kisses are too many. Or why not a wave, smile, or namaste instead?

2) Whose idea was it to start blowing kisses on Zoom? In these long months of webinars, only one person has, thus far, ended a session by actually planting a smacker on the screen. But nearly everyone now blows kisses at it. The problem with virtual kisses is that they're so indiscriminate. You cannot blow kisses selectively. It has to be to everyone in the 'room' or not at all. Or go to extraordinary lengths to ensure you're left at the end with the right people, the kissable people. Or shut down screens, open up other screens, kiss the wrong people. Gaah. What if, outrageous though it might sound, a blown kiss for you is not a thing of air and inconsequence but an affirmation of actual affection? And blowing kisses to all and sundry smack of hypocrisy? If that's making heavy weather of something slight, doesn't the awkwardness fit all better you? While the planted smacker may have been the only one, several people in their inelegant attempt to throw kisses too close to the screen have thwarted it instead, jolting the session to a premature close. Of course friendly chats shouldn't stint on kisses blown, but strangely, younger, singler friends tell me that romantic assignations, much of which has moved online, have turned out terribly chaste. That there's no va-va-voom in Zoom, no Tinder kegs are lit, and blowing of any sort hardly happens. Through time and tide and many conversations, slow and steady wins the kiss. Like the amours conducted through epistles in the pages of an Auster classic.

3) But what would Jane have made of kissy emojis and the many curious crosses in texts? Oh I've learnt to mirror them exactly when writing back, in the hope no one guesses I haven't a clue what they mean. I get that they're kisses of course, and a convenient way of expressing affection in writing, because how many of us have time to compose sonnets? Yet, how many emoji hearts are too many? What colour should they be? If it's a kissy emoji, should it wink, for example, if your feelings are true? How about those pesky little exes, I mean t's; when are they in excess? I was led to believe a Capital X denoted passion till the many messages from my 102-year-old great-aunt-in-law, each caring giant X's, convinced me otherwise. Similarly, when is it "love", and when "luv"? Whatever it is, I must have got it wrong hundreds of times, and offended as many as I've scared!

I know I no longer need worry in this pandemic if in-the-flesh salutations involve one kiss or three (hurrah). And if biscuits are misplaced in such transactions, there's clearly more for me (double hurrah). Yet the question stands: how much performative love is too much (or too little), and why wasn't I sent the explanatory memo everyone else got? If you know the answers to these, especially the correct number of kisses, please drop them into an envelope and send to The Editor, *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad.

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures*. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenhan.

'23 vs 23': Is affable Ahmed the 'villain' of the piece?

Favouritism stink

It's 23 versus 23. On the face of it, the Congress power struggle is between the 23 dissenters and the Gandhis but a closer look would reveal something additional. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Manish Tiwari and others have problems more with AICC treasurer Ahmed Patel than with Sonia or Rahul. The grudge against otherwise affable Patel is that he is pushing his favourites at all levels of the Congress hierarchy. Since Patel's residential address in New Delhi is 23, Mother Teresa Crescent, Congress insiders are dubbing the leadership challenge as 23 versus 23.

New kid on the block

The BJP's nominee for a Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha seat, Zafar-ul Islam, has a past in the Congress. The BJP spokesman who got his nomination for the remaining term of the late Amar Singh from Uttar Pradesh [in Rajya Sabha bypolls, the ruling

party gets the numerical strength] was a part of the Congress social media team till 2014. Zafar, then an investment banker, had joined Deependra Singh Hooda's team and functioned from 15, Gurudwara Rakabgunj Marg, when he became disillusioned with the grand old party. There has been no looking back since. It is a different matter that not everyone in the BJP is happy over the rise and rise of Zafar-ul Islam. Veteran Shah Nawaz Hussain was a contender for the Upper House berth.

Interminable wait?

Call it a Covid-19 impact but in the coming Parliament session, Central Hall will be out of bounds for journalists and ex-MPs. The Lok Sabha Speaker has already constituted a panel to look into criteria for issuance of Central Hall passes. Cynics believe by the time the panel submits its report there will be a new Parliament building in the central vista. The panel, headed by TV personality Rajat Sharma, has not



By WAQYANAWIS

been meeting as its chairman wants to discuss issues online while most members feel a physical, offline discussion would be suit-

able. Emails are being exchanged to work out a consensus. Meanwhile, senior journalists who have passes in the Long and Distinguished (L&D) category are most exercised over the delay.

Azad's motivations

The Congress disquiet has rattled many, particularly the manner in which Ghulam Nabi Azad has turned dissident. Azad's term is ending in early 2021 and there is no sign of renomination. At present Azad is the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, enjoying the perks of a Union minister. There is likelihood that Mallikarjun Kharge, who was the Congress leader in the Lok Sabha during 2014-2019, may get the job in the Upper House. Some Congress insiders see more in Azad's defiance pointing that he has been the only former J&K chief minister who was not booked or detained under the Public Safety Act after the abrogation of Article 370. There is also talk of misuse of the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands (Vesting of

Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001, popularly known as the Roshni Act during Azad's chief ministerial stint. Investigations into the land transfers subsequently said to have found that land in Gulmarg and elsewhere in the valley had been given over to ineligible beneficiaries.

Surrender to Sangh

BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia was recently at the RSS headquarters in Nagpur. It prompted Digvijaya Singh and a number of Madhya Pradesh Congress leaders to twist a notable Buddhist chant, *Buddham Sharana Gachchami*, to "Sangham Charanam Gachchami". In the original chanting, the disciple supposedly surrenders to the Buddha, the awakened one but in the perverted form, Scindia is accused of taking a shelter in RSS.

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

TRIPLE WHAMMY

It's a triple whammy on the people — Demonetisation in 2016, GST in 2017 and now Covid-19. They have led us to the brink of economic abyss. In the GST meeting, the FM conveniently blamed God for Covid. However, the damages by the other two factors were purely Modi-made. GST and demonetisation failed.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

VIZAG AS CAPITAL

YSRC MP V. Vijaysai Reddy's assertion that 'Nobody can stop executive capital in Vizag', (DC, Aug. 29) is a gross contempt of Court's status quo ruling. In other words he is instigating the public against the court's ruling. Such statements are unbecoming of a Rajya Sabha member.

Someswar
Visakhapatnam

FINAL YEAR EXAM

Now, the Supreme Court has upheld that universities and colleges need to conduct the semester examinations by September 30. To conduct the exams smoothly, the officiodom will have to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 protocols.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

NEET and JEE could be an daunting task for the government in a pandemic. To write them, students and parents are in for testing times as public transport, hotels and lodges are not operational. The pandemic is unlikely to come under control in a few months. So postponing the exams may not be the better choice. With proper precautions the exams must be finalised to save the academic year.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagram

NATIONAL HERO?

Sushant Singh Rajput is not a national hero to get so much attention. He was a budding artiste who at the most may have a cursory reference in media. His case is treated as if Atlas has shrugged.

D.S.P. Rao
Kakinada

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

IA plane with 38 missing

CALCUTTA, Aug. 29
An Indian Airline Fokker Friendship is missing while on a flight from Imphal to Calcutta with 38 people, including a crew of five aboard according to the Airlines sources here.

The plane lost contact with the ground control about eight minutes after taking off from Kumbhigram airport near Silchar at about 2.35 pm for Gauhati, its next stop. An aerial search by Indian Air Force heli-copter was called off at night fall. A

DC-3 plane leaves Calcutta at 5 am tomorrow to resume the search. The 30-minute flight from Silchar to Gauhati passes over thickly wooded mountainous terrain in North Cachar and Mikir Hills, where the weather is normally cloudy at this time of the year. The passengers including three women and one, then of them had boarded the plane at Imphal and the remaining 25 at Kumbhigram.

IN BRIEF

Kansas girl's killer is 5th execution of 2020

Terre Haute: A Kansas girl's killer on Friday became the fifth federal inmate put to death this year, an execution that went forward only after a higher court tossed a ruling that would have required the government to get a prescription for the drug used to kill him. Questions about whether the drug pentobarbital causes pain prior to death had been a focus of appeals for Keith Nelson, 45, the second inmate executed this week in the Trump administration's resumption of federal executions this summer after a 17-year hiatus.

New Orleans pianist Ronnie Kole dies

New Orleans: Ronnie Kole, an acclaimed New Orleans pianist who performed across the globe, has died. He was 89. His death on Thursday night was announced on his website and the Ronnie Kole Entertainment Facebook page. The cause of death was not released. Kole was a Chicago native. In interviews, he said he suffered from a heart condition as a child and was discouraged from playing outdoors. He began learning piano from an aunt and considered himself largely self-taught. He went on the road at 16, he told WWL-TV. A master of a variety of musical styles, he performed for six presidents. He also played a rollicking version of "Amazing Grace" when Pope John Paul II visited New Orleans in 1987.

Royal bros reunite to unveil Diana's statue

London: Britain's Princes William and Harry, believed to have become estranged from each other as the latter stepped back from frontline royal duty to move to the US, are expected to reunite to unveil a statue in memory of their late mother, Princess Diana, to mark her 60th birth anniversary next year. Kensington Palace issued a rare joint statement on behalf of the royal brothers on Friday to announce that the memorial will be revealed in the Sunken Garden of Kensington Palace on July 1, 2021. The statue had been commissioned by William, the Duke of Cambridge, and Harry, the Duke of Sussex, the second and sixth in line to the British throne, respectively, a few years ago as a permanent memorial on the grounds of the palace in central London which was their late mother's home.

Nevada man to be 1st virus reinfection in US

Reno: Nevada officials are reporting what may be the first documented case of coronavirus reinfection in the United States, following similar reports earlier this week from Hong Kong and Europe. A 25-year-old Reno man with mild Covid-19 symptoms initially was found to have the virus in April, recovered and tested negative twice, and then tested positive again in June. He was much sicker the second time, with pneumonia that required hospitalization and oxygen treatment.

Genetic tests from each episode showed that viruses were similar in major ways but differed in at least 12 spots that would be highly unlikely from natural evolution of the bug if the man had it continuously rather than being infected a second time, said Mark Pandori, director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory.

KENOSHA LAWYER SAYS TEEN ACTED IN SELF-DEFENCE

Kenosha, Wis., Aug. 29: A high-profile lawyer representing the 17-year-old boy charged with killing two protesters and wounding another during demonstrations on the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin, said on Friday that his client had acted in self-defence. Atlanta-based attorney Lin Wood said video footage of the altercation would vindicate Kyle Rittenhouse despite what he described as misinformation being spread by the media.

"Kyle Rittenhouse acted in self-defense. Murder charges are factually unsupportable. An egregious miscarriage of justice is occurring with respect to this 17-year old boy" Wood said on Twitter.

Rittenhouse, who prosecutors say traveled 30 miles (50 km) to Kenosha from his home in Antioch, Illinois, before the shooting at about 11:45 p.m. on Tuesday, is charged with six criminal counts, including first-degree homicide and attempted homicide.



Smoke billows from burning tyres and pallets and fireworks as a few hundred protesters riot in the Rosengard neighbourhood of Malmö, Sweden. — AP

Riot in Sweden after Danish leader banned from Quran-burning rally**Anti-racism protest crowds flood US**

Washington, Aug. 29: Tens of thousands of protesters demanding an end to racial injustice and police brutality thronged the US capital on Friday, signaling a renewed groundswell of anger gripping the nation following a white officer's shooting of African-American Jacob Blake.

Crowds flooded the National Mall for a mass march marking the anniversary of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr's historic "I have a dream" speech on August 28, 1963. Friday's demonstration was dubbed "Get Your Knee Off Our Necks," in reference to George Floyd, who suffocated beneath the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis in May, igniting the most wide-

spread civil unrest in the country in decades. Al Sharpton, the civil rights activist who gave the eulogy at Floyd's funeral, told the crowd it was time for a "new conversation" with America. "We need to have a conversation about your racism, about your bigotry, about your hate, about how you would put your knee on our neck while we cry for our lives," he said.

Often fighting back tears, relatives of Floyd, Blake and Breonna Taylor — a black 26-year-old shot dead by police in her own apartment last March — took turns addressing the sea of people, who repeatedly called out the victims' names in response. — AFP

that his behaviour... would pose a threat to society."

But his supporters went ahead with the rally, and three people were then arrested for inciting racial hatred. Paludan later put up a scathing message on Facebook.

"There was also a risk

from Sweden for two years. However, rapists and murderers are always welcome!" he wrote.

Paludan last year attracted media attention for burning a Koran wrapped in bacon — a meat that is anathema for Muslims. — AFP

STUDENT LEADER DEFIES THAI'S ROYAL TABOO

Pathum Thani: When university student "Rung" calmly read out 10 demands to reform Thailand's monarchy before thousands of protesters at a pro-democracy rally this month, she defied the country's biggest political taboo.

Backed by an arch-royalist military and shielded by draconian royal defamation laws, the superrich monarchy wields enormous influence in nearly every sphere of Thai society.

But 21-year-old Rung — real name Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul — said the Aug. 10 protest at Thammasat University outside Bangkok was "the right time" to ask for change, even though she risked arrest. "When I left the stage, I felt like I had expanded the boundaries ... raised the limits on how people can talk about the monarchy," the bespectacled sociology and anthropology student said.

The demands Rung announced that day included more transparency for the royal family's fortune and the abolition of the royal defamation law, which carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison per charge. — AFP

Many foreign journalists in Belarus lose accreditation

Minsk, Aug. 29: Belarusian authorities on Saturday withdrew the accreditation of several foreign media journalists, including AFP, ahead of the latest demonstration challenging the results of the presidential election.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994, is facing unprecedented protests since the disputed August 9 election in which he claimed a landslide victory with 80 percent of the vote. The opposition has rejected the results as manipulated and has organised two major demonstrations this month and called for a large-scale protest on Sunday.

Government spokesman Anatoly Glaz said the decision to revoke the media accreditations was taken on the recommendation of the country's counter-terrorism unit.

He did not specify how many journalists were affected by the measure, but foreign media including the BBC and Radio Liberty reported the withdrawal of accreditation of several of their journalists.

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry called me and informed me that my accreditation and that of one of my colleagues as BBC correspondents had been cancelled. They demanded that I return my card," journalist Tatjana Melnichuk said.

Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya has fled to neighbouring Lithuania, an EU nation, after claiming she beat the 65-year-old leader at the polls and calling for the protests.

She called news about the withdrawn media accreditation extremely worrying. "If true, it is another sign that this regime is morally bankrupt and the only way it will attempt to cling to power is by fear and intimidation," she said in a statement. — AFP

YOUNG BLOGGER MOBILISES PROTEST IN BELARUS

Warsaw, Aug. 29: fresh-faced 22-year-old blogger is using nothing more than his keyboard to run the main communications hub for protesters in Belarus as they mount an unprecedented challenge to the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko, often dubbed Europe's last dictator.

Stepan Svetlov is the founder of Nexta Live, a Telegram channel with 2.1 million subscribers that helps mobilise protesters and shares photo and video content from the demonstrations. "It started out as a school project," Svetlov said in an interview in the Polish capital Warsaw where he has been living in exile under police protection after having received death threats. — AFP

UAE FORMALLY ENDS ISRAEL BOYCOTT

Dubai, Aug. 29: The ruler of the United Arab Emirates issued a decree Saturday formally ending the country's boycott of Israel amid a US-brokered deal to normalise relations between the two countries. The announcement now allows trade and commerce between the UAE, home to oil-rich Abu Dhabi and skyscraper-studded Dubai, and Israel, home to a thriving diamond trade, pharmaceutical companies and tech start-ups.

The announcement further cements the Aug 13 deal opening up relations between the two nations, which required Israel to halt its contentious plan to annex occupied West Bank land sought by the Palestinians.

The state-run news agency said the decree formally ending the boycott came on the orders of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi. — AP

CONTEST FOR POWER**Right-hand man Suga, longtime anchor of government, seen as a possible successor****Japan succession race for PM kicks off**

Tokyo, Aug. 29: The race to succeed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe kicked off informally on Saturday, with several contenders announcing their plans to stand, a day after Japan's longest-serving leader announced his resignation.

Abe said he was suffering a recurrence of ulcerative colitis, the condition that forced him to cut short his first term in office, but that he would stay on until his successor is decided.

Exactly how the process will unfold was still unclear, with local media reporting on Saturday that several options were being considered.

Abe said he was suffering a recurrence of ulcer-

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party could opt for a more traditional leadership election, involving lawmakers but also members of the party nationwide.

The situation, as well as the constraints imposed by the coronavirus outbreak, could see the party instead

opt to poll only its lawmakers and regional representatives — a faster process.

A decision on how the election will be held, and when, is expected early next week, along with more clarity on who will stand for the post.

A few would-be candidates have already thrown their hats into the ring,

including party policy chief Fumio Kishida, a mild-mannered former foreign minister considered Abe's personal choice for successor, and ex-defence minister Shigeru Ishiba, who is seen as more popular with voters but commands less party support than some other candidates.

Finance Minister Taro Aso, himself a former prime minister and long considered a likely successor to Abe, has announced he will not stand.

Other possible candi-

Don calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual

Trump asserts he will win in November polls

Harris 'not competent' to be US Prez: Don

Manchester, Aug. 29: US President Donald Trump on Friday insulted his Democratic challenger Joe Biden as "low-IQ" and barely conscious in a New Hampshire speech reinforcing his strategy of painting himself as the defender of the country against socialist mayhem.

The speech, filled with hyperbolic and inaccurate descriptions of life under the Democrats, followed Trump's White House address to the Republican convention late Thursday where he warned that "no one will be safe in Biden's America."

Trump told the crowd assembled at the airport in Manchester, New Hampshire, that he was sure of victory on November 3.

"Does anyone have any doubt?" he asked to a chorus of support.

"I will have lost to a low-IQ individual. I don't want that. 'Sleepy Joe,' I don't want it," Trump said of the former vice president and longtime senator. "The guy doesn't know he's alive."

As he did Thursday at the White House, Trump claimed to be single-handedly protecting the country from Democratic anarchists.

And he again said that the coronavirus, which has killed more than 180,000 Americans already, was under control. "Hopefully we're at the end," he said.

The difference in New Hampshire, where he hosted a scaled-down version of his trademark pre-Coronavirus rallies, was that Trump was able to cut free with ad-libs and even

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SHORT TAKES

Barca reluctant to give up on Messi

Madrid: Barcelona is unwilling in its intention to keep Lionel Messi, who told the club earlier this week that he wanted to leave. Spanish media say Messi has contacted the club to try to resolve the situation, but Barcelona confirmed on Saturday that it will not negotiate to allow the Argentine great to depart before his contract ends next year. Earlier, Messi said he wanted to invoke a contract clause that allowed him to leave at the end of last season, but the club said the clause had already expired. Messi's contract, which ends in June 2021, has a buyout clause of 700 million euros (\$831 million). He has been with the club for nearly two decades, leading it to more than three-dozen titles and holding most of its individual records. — AP

Tour de France on amid virus threat

Nice, France: The Tour de France set off from the French Riviera on Saturday, two months later than planned and under the shadow of a Coronavirus pandemic which could still smother hopes of the world's greatest bike race making it to the Paris finish line in three weeks' time. Originally slated for June, stage one of the three-week epic over the peaks and plains of France rolled out of Nice for a 154km loop likely to end in the kind of mass bunch sprint on the iconic Promenade des Anglais which is tailor-made for a global TV audience tuning in from 190 countries. — AFP

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Double whammy

Raina aborts IPL for personal reason

C. SANTOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, AUG. 29

Over a dozen Covid-19 positive cases in the Chennai Super Kings camp and a surprise pull-out by Suresh Raina have sent shock waves across IPL teams based in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Even though the other teams have settled into their bubbles and begun training, the Covid-19 scare has raised serious doubts about the tournament, scheduled to start on September 19.

The BCCI is yet to announce the fixtures as different health protocols in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have complicated the scheduling issue.

As defending champions, Mumbai Indians were expected to take on Chennai Super Kings in the opener but now that the CSK's pre-tournament camp is in disarray, BCCI could give them extra time and rework the plan.

A top CSK official said the team is looking to start training by September 5, with those who tested positive expected to rejoin the bio-bubble later. As many as 13 from CSK have tested positive and all of them have been moved to a different hotel for a two-week isolation. "All the affected personnel as well as their close contacts are asymptomatic and have been isolated from other team members. They are being monitored by the IPL medical team," said a BCCI release without mentioning the name of the franchise or players.

FOCUS ON COUNSELLING

As Raina was reportedly 'worried' about the growing number of cases within the bubble and dealing with family issues, the



Chennai Super Kings star player Suresh Raina in action during a team practice session ahead of IPL 2020.

focus of the teams has now shifted to counselling their players.

A few teams, including the Super Kings, are said to have sought help from mental health experts to deal with the situation. "It's very important to survive in a bio-bubble where players have to cope with Covid-19 fear, isolation and anxiety. We sense that some players are not their usual self with so many restrictions and protocols to follow," a team official said.

Players have been constantly monitored through a gadget (a fob) which they are supposed to wear all the time.

Apart from that, they

have to feed their body temperature and symptoms in a mobile app on a daily basis.

FOREIGN PLAYERS JITTERY

A foreign player who is currently in the CSK bio-bubble has reportedly raised concerns over the pre-departure conditioning camp in Chennai which is believed to be the source of infection. A net bowler and a member of the social media team had to be left out of the contingent after they tested positive in Chennai.

CSK were the only team to organise a pre-departure conditioning camp for their Indian players at

the insistence of Dhoni. The 'jittery' foreign player has questioned the decision to hold the camp in a city that witnesses at least 1,000 new positive cases every day.

BHAJJI TO JOIN CSK CAMP ON TUESDAY

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh who opted out of CSK's conditioning camp in Chennai is expected to join the squad on September 1. He had withdrawn from the team's travel schedule because of personal reasons. Now, Harbhajan will undergo a six-day room quarantine upon arrival in Dubai before joining the squad.

Stars shine on Sports Day, honoured in online event

New Delhi, Aug. 29: India's sporting heroes were bestowed the annual national awards in an unparalleled online ceremony amid the Covid-19 pandemic during which athletes logged in from multiple cities to be honoured by President Ram Nath Kovind.

This year a whopping 74 were picked for the national honours, including an unprecedented five Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and 27 Arjuna awardees. Of these, 60 attended the virtual ceremony conducted across 11 Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres in various cities.

Cricketers Rohit Sharma (Khel Ratna) and Ishant Sharma (Arjuna) missed the ceremony due to their IPL commitments in the UAE, while star wrestler Vinesh Phogat (Khel Ratna) and badminton player Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (Arjuna) had to pull out of the ceremony after testing positive for the dreaded virus.

The other three Khel Ratna winners — TT player Manika Batra, Paralympic gold-medallist Mariyappan

Thangavelu and women's

were given ₹15 lakh, which is ₹10 lakh more than the previous sum.

The Dhrunacharya (Lifetime) awardees, who were earlier given ₹5 lakh, were awarded ₹15 lakh, while the regular Dhrunacharya came with Rs ₹1 lakh instead of ₹5 lakh.

Dhyanchand Awardees were given ₹10 lakh instead of ₹5 lakh. The strict Covid-19 protocol was in place. — PTI



Indian cricketer Deepti Sharma gestures as she accepts the Arjuna award on Saturday.


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