

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAHMUNDRY | SUNDAY | 30 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 34.0°C
Min: 25.0°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: 6.1mm

Forecast: Humid and Overcast.
Max/Min temp.
34/25 °C

COVID-19 COUNTE

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: Bhadrapada Shuddha Dwadasa till 8.22 am
Star: Uttarashada till 1.53 pm
Varjyam: 6.05 pm to 7.46 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.49 pm to 5.38 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Muharram 10, 1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.15 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.38 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.18 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.30 PM

COUNTER POINT



The car will suit Indian conditions more!

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 slump sale 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



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

MANDATORY TEST FOR COVID CAUSES HEARTBURN

VADREVI SRINIVAS | DC KAKINADA, AUG. 29

Getting a Covid-19 test done before doctors attend to other ailments is becoming an increasingly painful exercise for people. Even those with simple fever or cold are subject to Covid test.

According to S. Veerababu of Peddapuram, his father was suffering from fever and cold and doctors advised him to get the Covid-19 test.

They went to Peddapuram Area Hospital but testing facilities were not available there. Subsequently, when they went to the Primary Health Centre in the nearby Peddapuram, the hospital staff said that the tests are held in other areas.

"I approached village Volunteers who took copies of Aadhar Card and mobile number and made arrangements for the test next day," he said. Many are facing such hardships. People are unaware where the covid-19 test will be conducted and therefore, they are moving from hospital to hospital for that purpose.

■ Page 4: No need to fear, say med officials

NATION | 5

Ahead of polls, Nadda meets MPs from Bihar



WORLD | 7

Trump calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual

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Hamilton takes pole position at Belgian GP



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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.

— PTI

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. Rajasekhara 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 trifurcate 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. Srinivasa 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 Simhardi 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 Hakkula 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. Chandrababhanu Naidu 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. 28

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.

In East Godavari, paddy was sown over 1,63,384 hectares in 2018-19 and 13,77,654 metric tonnes of paddy was harvested. In 2019-20, paddy was cultivated on 1,66,524 metric tonnes and paddy production was 14,04,130 metric tonnes. Officials said close monitoring and low pest attacks have increased the crop yield.

In West Godavari district, paddy was sown over



A paddy field in Nellore district.

● **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.

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.

Crops yields to be high this yr

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, AUG. 28

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.

Disclose call data of Dalit youth: Naidu

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

Continuing protest 'foul' play in the death of Dalit auto-rickshaw 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 the post-mortem on the youth was carried out secretly, Mr Naidu said that the police snatched the victim's cell phone from the family members. "Call list 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 Ramaiah wrote to DGP Gautam Sawang, demanding an inquiry into the man's

YSRC calls Naidu anti-Dalit

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

YSR Congress refuted allegations of Telugu Desam about increased attacks on Dalits and alleged that Dalits were oppressed in AP during the TD government. It challenged Dalit leaders of TD to question TD leader, N. Chandrababu Naidu, about atrocities against Dalits during his regime.

YSRC MLA, T.J. R. Sudhakar Babu, on Friday alleged that Naidu and his cronies were conspiring against Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, conducting a politically motivated campaign with false allegations about attacks on Dalits.

Alleging that Naidu was shedding crocodile tears

TD HOLDS YSRC GOVT RESPONSIBLE FOR PENDURTHY TONSURE INCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

Telugu Desam national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Saturday held Jagan Mohan Reddy government solely responsible for rising incidence of attacks, tonsures and

death as well as tonsuring of a Dalit youth in Pendurthy

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.

Claiming that during TD rule, Dalits were expelled from Garikaparru village for installing an Ambedkar statue, a Dalit woman was attacked in Jerripottulapalem and there were many iattacks on Dalits, Babu said that Jagan, by contrast, gave homes to 54,000 people belonging to suppressed communities in Amaravati.

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.

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

ACCUSED BOOKED UNDER SC/ST ACT

From page 1

Apart from Madhu Priya, the others registered were T. Indira Rani, Ch. Varahalu, I. Ravi Kumar, Saleem Bala Gangadhar, M. Jhansi and K. Sowjanya. The Pendurthy police booked them under the IPC and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The case was shifted to the special court for SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) court.

Assistant commissioner of police, SC/ST Cell- I has taken up the investigation. He visited Nutan Naidu's home and seized the tonsured hair and a wood stick and iron rod used in the incident.

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 Tadepalli on Saturday condemned 'false' propaganda of the Telugu Desam against the YSRC government. YSRC MLA Meruga Nagarjuna said they would protest.

'98 DSC qualified await good news

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

Teachers who were selected in 1998 are still fighting to get their jobs for the last 22 years. They hope against hope that Chief Minister K. Chandrababhanu Naidu and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will resolve their issue before Teachers Day next week.

The then government in undivided AP had conducted a mega district selection committee (DSC) recruitment in 1998 for around 40,000 teacher vacancies. The results were out in 1999 and around 5,000 candidates were notified as qualified.

During the notification, the government had announced 50 marks as cut off for OC, 45 for BC and 40 for SC, ST and physically challenged candidates under GO No 221. Later, the qualifying marks were revised as 45, 40 and 35 respectively under GO No 618 in view of non-availability of candidates under the reservation quotas. The government has prescribed 85 marks for the written test and 15 marks for the interview.

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

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. Chandrababhanu Naidu, K. Chandrababhanu Rao and Jagan Mohan Reddy.

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

"In the 2014 Assembly elections, Chandrababhanu 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."

After the High Court slapped contempt notices on the DEOs of Khammam, Warangal, Karimnagar and Nalgonda, the DEOs of Nalgonda and Karimnagar gave appointments to seven candidates. P. Somashekhar, president of USR 1998 DSC Teachers' Association, said Jagan Mohan Reddy had assured the candidates of resolving the problem during his padayatra before the elections in Gannavaram.

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 confusion.

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 Tungbhadra 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 Tungbhadra 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.

TS HC directs AP, TS High Courts to pay 1:1 to court staff

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA HYDERABAD, AUG. 29

In a rare incident, a division bench of the Telangana High Court has imposed costs on the Telangana High Court and AP High Court over the matter of bifurcation of court employees.

The division bench comprising Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao and

Justice T. Amarnath Goud was dealing with a petition filed by retired employees of the then combined High Court at Hyderabad who retired prior to November 1, 2018. They said this denied them an opportunity to choose where 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.

The petitioners who retired before issuance of the circular, the petitioners in the case, said that they would have had an opportunity to work till the age of 60, which is superannuation age for employees of the High

● **the bench directed each of them to pay ₹3,000 to each of the petitioners**

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

They contended that the 'Appointed Day' (June 2, 2014) should be considered for giving options, not January 1, 2019, the day the

separate High Courts were constituted for the two states.

As their representations were rejected by both High Courts, the petitioners approached the Telangana High Court by way of filing the writ petition.

Giving relief to the petitioners, the bench of Justice Ramachandra Rao and Amarnath Goud said that this exclusion with-

out any valid reason was violative of Article 14 of the Constitution and also denied them fair and equitable treatment.

The court directed that the petitioners shall be notionally deemed to have rendered service in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh from January 1, 2019, till they attained the age of 60 years. The notional service shall be

taken into account for the purpose of calculation of their pensionary benefits.

Both High Courts have to pay the salary and other benefits with interest at 6 per cent to the petitioners in a 1:1 ratio. Imposing the costs on the Telangana and AP High Courts, the bench directed each of them to pay ₹3,000 to each of the petitioners within four weeks.



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 Srinivasa 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 Nannayya University (AKNU) released examination schedule for under-graduate and post-graduate courses on Saturday. University Vice-Chancellor Mokka Jagannadhana Rao said that final semester examinations will be held from September 14. Exams for the students who have backlogs 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.

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 Raminneedi 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, Raminneedi 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

CONGRESS WRITE LETTERS SEEKING JUSTICE TO WHISTLEBLOWER

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

AP Congress Committee president Dr Sake Sailajanth 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 alert 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 at Pedakakani mandal in Guntur district on Saturday.

Addressing the media at Pedakakani police station in Guntur on Saturday, the Urban SP R.N. Ammi Reddy said that the police seized Khaleja Pan

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.

27 AP CORONA WARRIORS TO BE FELICITATED ON SEPTEMBER 1

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

The Madhya 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

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 Srikakulam 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 Chittoor, 34,670 in Guntur, 28,566 in Nellore, 24,747 in Kadapa, 22,236 in Srikakulam, 21,425 in

by MVPC on September 1 on the occasion of 11 death anniversary of Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy.

Mr Lakshmana Reddy recalled that the then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara 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.

TELUGU DAILY SERVED LEGAL NOTICE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

The state government has issued legal notice to *Andhra Jyothy* 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 libellous 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.

70 FULL BOTTLES OF K'TAKA LIQUOR SEIZED

Nellore: The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) arrested three people and seized 70 full bottles of Old Admiral brandy apart from a car transporting them during vehicle inspection at LS Nagar Cross in Tirupati.

from them.

He said that the accused were transporting the banned products to the shops in Vatticherukuru, Amaravathi, Chebrolu, Prathipadu, Guntur.

The Urban SP said that the police led by CI U. Soban Babu of Pedakakani conducted raids along with other police officers. CI S.V. Rajasekhara Reddy, sub-inspector Y. Vinod Kumar, constables K. Bhikshu Naik, T. Samson, A. Rambabu, under the guidance of DSP Durga Prasad of Mangalagiri.

Prakasam, 19,301 in Vizianagaram, 15,742 in Krishna, 2,461 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 Srikakulam, 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 Srikakulam 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.

Ankurarpanam held for Pavitrotsavam

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 29

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 Pratishtha is held on 31 August. Pavitra Samarpana 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 Samarpana ritual was performed on Saturday morning after the Nitya puja as part of ongoing Pavitrotsavams at the Sri Govindarajaswami temple in Tirupati on Saturday.

Earlier, Snapana Tirumanjanam was performed at the temple Yagashala for the utsava idols of Sri Govindarajaswami and his consorts in the afternoon. Later, Pavitra Samarpana was done to the main idols, processional idols, Dhvajasthambham and the Sri Matham Anjaneya idol.



Medical staff collect swab from a boy for Covid testing at GVMC Model Primary School at Chinna Waltair in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— DC

Surge causes jitters to Nellorians

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 29

For the first time after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Nellore district recorded the highest number of 1538 new cases out of the 6743 samples tested during the last 24 hours ending at 9 am on Saturday. The unabated increase of cases has been causing jitters to the people of the district.

Going by the sharp rise in the numbers, authorities predicted a multi-fold increase in the number of

cases in the coming weeks while hinting that one person among every five is infected in the district.

According to the medical and health officials, the total number of positive cases are 29,782 and active cases are 7363 following the discharge of 22,419 infected persons so far. As many as 11 people succumbed to the virus, and 934 patients have been discharged during the last 24 hours.

Speaking to the media in Manubolu on Saturday, Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar

Woman throws 9 months old baby, leaps from flat

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 29

A woman threw her nine-month-old baby girl from the fifth floor of an apartment and later, she also jumped down from the building due to alleged harassment by her husband at Lakshmiapuram in Guntur on Saturday.

Locals and the police rushed to the spot and rushed Narra Manognya,

29, and her infant daughter Tulasi to a private hospital, where they died while undergoing treatment.

Pattabhipuram circle inspector B. Kalyan Raju said that both Manognya and her husband Narra Kalyan Chakravarthy worked in Hyderabad and came back to Guntur during the lockdown. The incident happened at Kamalesh Grand Apartments. The police

registered a case against her husband and started investigation.

The parents of Manognya said that she had complained to them about the harassment by her husband on several occasions and they tried to reconcile them.

However, vexed over repeated torture by Kalyan Chakravarthy, Manognya took the extreme step, they said.

3 persons die in road mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 29

Three persons died, and nine were seriously injured in a road accident on the national highway near Nemalinarayanapuram village of Tekkali in Srikakulam district. According to the police, 12 people were coming from Jharkhand to Visakhapatnam in a four-wheeler, which hit a lorry

near Nemalinarayanapuram.

In the incident, all the 12 people were injured, and they were shifted to Tekkali hospital. While undergoing treatment, one person died in the hospital. While shifting, two more, who were seriously injured, died on the way to Srikakulam. The other nine were undergoing treatment in Tekkali hospital, and their condition is said to be safe.

Immersion to be held at I Town PS jetty

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, AUG. 29

The jetty at Salt Creek, opposite I Town police station in Kakinada city has been allotted to immerse the Ganesh idols on August 31.

The Kakinada RDO A.Chinni Krishna said that there were no huge idols in the city during this Vinayaka Chaturthi as awareness was created to keep the celebrations low-profile in view of the pandemic.

Devotees can immerse their idols near the Jetty on or before 6 pm on August 31 by maintaining social distance and wearing masks. He said that groups would not be allowed for the programme and sanitation

arrangements will be made for it.

Meanwhile, Nagara Ganesh Utsava Samithi gave up his indefinite fast stir for immersion programme after the RDO's announcement. However, Samithi President Duvvuri Subrahmanyam and Honorary President Dusralapudi Ramana Raju expressed concern over selection of 'the Jetty'.

The samithi demanded the government should allow the immersion of idols in Vinayaka Sagar at Salt Creek where the idol immersion programme was done for the past three decades.

Mr Subrahmanyam and Mr Ramana Raju expressed their resentment and staged a stir at Vinayaka Sagar on Saturday,

Paddy brokers caught paying meagre price

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 29

Kovur MLA Nallapareddy Prasannakumar Reddy caught hold of two paddy brokers for paying mere Rs 10,000 for Putti (850 kg) as against the government fixed MSP of ₹15,579 at Munulapudi village in Buchireddypalem mandal on Saturday.

Visibly angry against the brokers and a section of the millers for cheating the farmers, Prasannakumar Reddy instructed the Sub Inspector of Buchireddypalem to seize the three lorries belonging to the brokers and also alerted

the district authorities about the fraud.

The legislator said he has been directly going to the farms where harvested paddy is collected by brokers or millers to check whether they are paying MSP.

"I was shocked when I found out that a broker has paid only ₹12,000 for Putti but shown the purchase price as ₹16,000 on the bill and he even forged the signature of the farmer at Vavilla village in Vidavalur mandal on Friday" Mr Prasannakumar said lamenting over the situation.

MLA LAUNCHES APP FOR GRIEVANCES

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 29

In a novel way to reach out to people and ensure quick redressal of grievances, Piler MLA Chintala Ramachandra Reddy launched a QR-based web application-integrated to the MLAs' personalised android-based app, that can build a direct connectivity between the legislator and the people.

The app was developed by Mr Ramachandra Reddy's son Sai Krishna Reddy with the help of a data scientist Venkat Reddy. Sai Krishna Reddy has developed the QR-based web application titled "Manamlpiluru.in", which is

integrated with the MLA's personalized android app.

The legislator said that the application has created a platform for him to connect with the public and they can also submit their grievances.

It also features government projects-related data, appointments and digitized letters. Mr Reddy said "the idea has come into action when the pandemic accelerated the need for contactless communication." Initially, we thought this app bridges the gap - zero contact and addresses issues at the doorstep during this pandemic. But as days went by, our lead developer Venkat Reddy, made me realize the long-term potential it holds."

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)		
'E' Procurement Notice No.20/VMC/AE/2020-21, Dt.29-08-2020		
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
1	Operation & Maintenance of Jakkampudi 20 MLD STP, Construction of CC Drains and Re grading the existing drains in 62 & 64th Divisions, Development of Food Street in Red Circle to MG Road, Repairs & Maintenance of CVR Flyover from YSR Colony Jn to Kabela Road Jn, Central Divider Christurapuram, BT Pavement to Loyola garden Sentini Hospital to Sriirams Avenue, Development of UDA Colony Park in Rajiv Nagar 58th Division, BT Roads & Water Supply to Shiridi Sai Nagar, Adarsh Nagar, Prasanthi Nagar, Foot paths to Christurapuram main road Amma Kalyana Mandapam road in VMC (10 Works)	974.60
Contact: Superintending Engineer (Works & Projects), VMC, Vijayawada-520 001 Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in		
Download of bid documents starts from - 02-09-2020 @ 04.00 P.M.		
Last date / time for receipt of tenders from - 16-09-2020 up to 4.30 P.M.		
Sd/- For COMMISSIONER		

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

VITTAL SHASTRI | DC
HUBBALLI, AUG. 29

The dispute between Kannadigas and Marathas over the installation of a statue of freedom fighter Rayanna in Peeranawadi 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 Peeranwadi 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, Shivrāj Singh Chouhan, made an aerial survey of Hosangabad to assess the flood situation.

Road communications between Bhopal and Sagar and Narasingshpur 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-nation 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 currently,” 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.

On August 4, 2019, the leaders of J&K’s regional parties including NC and People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and their allies in Congress and CPIM had met at Mr. Abdullah’s residence along Srinagar’s Gupkar Road and signed a joined statement named as ‘Gupkar Declaration’ through which they vowed to protect the special status, identity and autonomy of J&K and fight tool and nail attempts to split it up.

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

RESCUE | MISSION

Marooned man airlifted by chopper

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, 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

Mourner shot at



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

Ahead of polls, Nadda meets MPs from Bihar

BJP asks MPs to visit 60 panchayats each to ensure win

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 29

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Saturday met party MPs from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha from Bihar at the party headquarters to review the party’s preparedness for the coming crucial Assembly polls in the state. The BJP, which is a junior coalition partner in the state government led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s JD(U), has asked its MPs to visit atleast 60 panchayats, two each day, not in their own constituencies to meet people and also work to ensure the victory of NDA candidates, whether it is of their own party or alliance partners — JD(U) and LJP. Nadda

● **WHILE NADDA** is likely to visit the state in the second week of next month, former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis is expected to visit Patna on September 6.

had recently announced that the NDA will go to polls under the leadership of Kumar and exuded confidence that the ruling coalition will retain power. Bihar will be the first state that will go to polls in October-November amid the global pandemic Covid-19. While Nadda is likely to visit the state in the second week of next month, former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, who is likely to get a key

role in the election committee, is expected to visit Patna on September 6, when the BJP could officially start the seat-sharing talks with allies.

During the meeting, BJP MPs were asked to address at least one virtual rally at Shakti Kendras (booths) and reach out to as many prominent people in every district, highlighting Central government and state government’s achievements. BJP MPs have also been asked to observe Prime Minister Narendra Modi birthday on September 17 as ‘Seva Divas’ and the birth anniversary of party ideologue Deen Dayal Upadhyaya next month in a big way.

For the Prime Minister’s

monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat in September, BJP leaders have been asked to make sure that arrangements are made at every booth in the state for the karyakartas and locals, while keeping in mind the social distancing norms and guidelines against Covid-19. Nadda held a separate meeting with Union ministers, including Ravi Shankar Prasad, Giriraj Singh, Ashwini Chaubey and Nityanand Rai. During the meeting with the party MPs, general secretary B.L. Santosh, general secretary and state’s in-charge Bhupendra Yadav, Bihar organisational secretary Nagendra and state unit chief Sanjay Jaiswal also attended.

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 SAOO | DC
CUTTACK/JAIPUR, 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.

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

Reports from Jaipur district said at least 26 breaches occurred in Brahmani,

Baitarani, Kharasrota 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.

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 retalliated 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 Miral 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.

Didn’t mean to hurt Tharoor: Suresh

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 29

Congress chief whip in the Lok Sabha and working president of the Kerala Pradesh Congress committee, Kodikkunnil Suresh, has expressed regret over his ‘guest artiste’ jibe against Shashi Tharoor.

Saying his words were not meant to hurt or belittle Tharoor and he had only expressed his annoyance against the letter written by 23 leaders to Sonia Gandhi on the organisation revamp. Suresh expressed regret after facing widespread criticism in social media mainly from party workers.

“If he feels hurt by my statements, I regret keeping the party interest

above everything else but at the same time strongly differ with the stand taken by him on various issues,” Suresh, Congress MP from Mavelikkara and one of the seniormost Dalit leaders, added. A section of youth 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.

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

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 29

A day after doubling appointment letters to 5,319 teachers for primary and upper primary schools, Assam education minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that all schools across the state will reopen from September 1.

However, for the first 15 days, teachers will focus on sanitisation of their respective school premises and informal classes

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

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.



DECCAN
Chronicle

30 AUGUST 2020



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

The pandemic
kissiquette

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 bargaining, 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. Kissiquette. 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, 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?



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

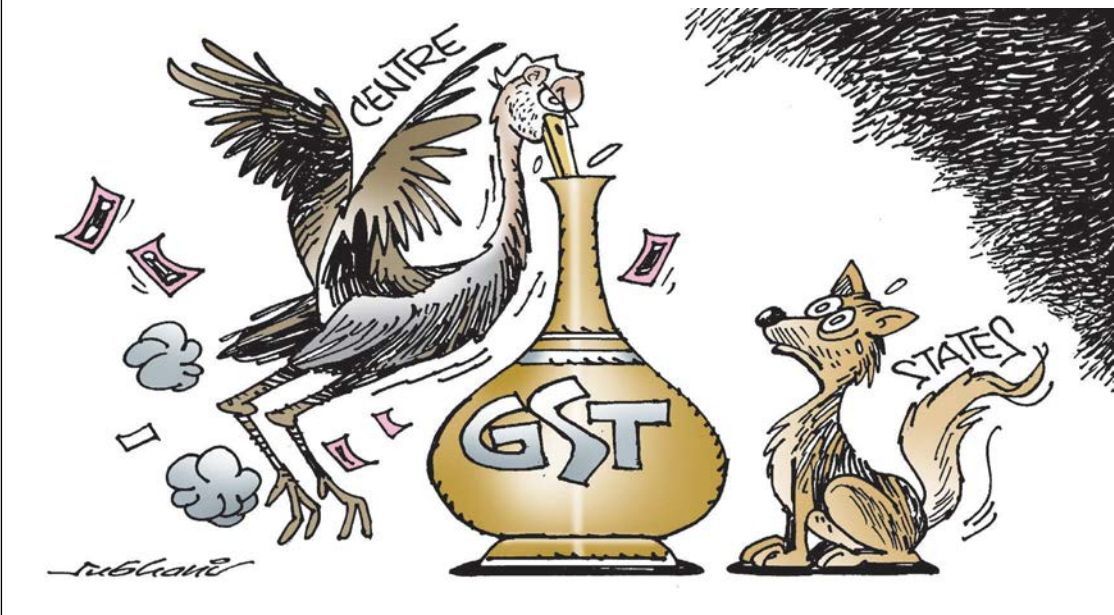
2) Whose idea was it to start blowing kisses on Zoom? In these long months of webinars, only one person has, thus far, ended a session by actually planting a smacker on the screen. But nearly everyone now blows kisses at it. The problem with virtual kisses is that they're so indiscriminate. You cannot 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 of it all bother you? While the planted smacker may have been the only one, several people in their inelegant attempt to throw kisses from too close to the screen have thwacked it instead, jolting the session to a premature close. Of course friendly chats shouldn't stint on kisses blown, but strangely, younger, single 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 Austen 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 x'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 carrying 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 @shreyasenan.*

Subhani

Is Modi govt ready for
Biden-Harris sarkar?

K.C. Singh

The naming of Kamala Devi Harris, an Indian-American senator from California, as Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's running mate, elicited more excitement in the United States and of course in Chennai and elsewhere in India than in ruling BJP circles. When the external affairs ministry's spokesman was asked why no congratulatory message had gone from Prime Minister Narendra Modi or anyone in Cabinet, he incredulously replied that India doesn't interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Why then, one could ask, did Mr Modi serenade President Donald Trump at the "Howdy Modi" Indian diaspora rally in Houston in September last year? Or goad the crowd by shouting "Abki baar...", awaiting the roaring reply of "Trump sarkar". South Block's nervousness is understandable as external affairs minister S. Jaishankar quarreled with a US congressional committee demanding Indian-origin Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal be excluded for her critique of the Indian government's majoritarian politics. Senator Kamala Harris and other influential Democrats rallied to berate Mr Jaishankar. Ms Harris is, in any case, known human rights crusader.

What then would be Biden-Harris government's foreign policy priorities and their impact on India-US relations, tailored by Modi government to keep Mr Trump's ego massaged. A diaspora assemblage at Houston, followed by lakhs gathered at Ahmedabad, provided Mr Trump the stage

to indulge in populist self-gratification, while irritants like trade were side-stepped. Mr Trump in turn ignored anti-CAA agitation, including rioting in parts of New Delhi as he settled at Rashtrapati Bhavan for the farewell banquet.

James Traub, in *Foreign Policy* magazine, quotes Colin Kahl, then vice-president Joe Biden's national security adviser in 2014-16, that three issues will dominate a Biden administration's agenda. One, the inter-connectedness of the world and global existential challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic; two, democracy at threat across the world; and three, with ongoing power transition between nations the return of great power competition. Mr Biden had earlier this year written in *Foreign Affairs* that the contest between democracy-liberalism and autocracy-fascism did not end in the last century. It lurks in the future again. Mr Biden plans a "Summit for Democracy" in the first year of his presidency. But his vision for resurrection of liberalism and democracy, centres on Europe. By instinct an "Atlanticist" his priority would be revival of European alliance that Mr Trump has scorned. James Traub tellingly remarks: "On many issues, emerging-world democracies like India and Brazil feel much more like the problem than a part of the solution". The smothered voices of liberalism in India would agree.

Many recent books have analysed worldwide democratic recession, seen in Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Brazil, etc. Even autocrats like Russia's Vladimir Putin and Chi-

na's Xi Jinping have eliminated term limits on their rule. *How Democracies Die* by Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky analyses the malaise. The authors conclude that "Trump's rise may itself pose a challenge to global democracy". Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Barack Obama presidency, US governments maintained a broadly pro-democratic foreign policy, except where strategic interests were dominant. But globalisation de-industrialising the US and the rush of immigrants created by Syrian crisis, with greater effect in Europe, and through America's porous southern border created the conditions for the rise of a populist leader playing on the sense of marginalisation of the working and middle-class white majority. The authors' conclusion, written before the pandemic hit the US, is that only President Trump's gross failure would create public disgust and desire for political reform, as happened after Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974. Weighing against this is dominant social media spreading unbridled bigotry, slanted news and prejudice.

America's founding fathers created foolproof institutions and separation of powers to counter power grab by either the executive, legislature or judiciary. They also mandated unwritten shared beliefs and practices that enabled those institutions to work. Two cardinal principles prescribed were mutual tolerance and institutional forbearance. Similar traditions were nurtured in Jawaharlal Nehru's India. Breached in the US, and progressively so in India, these ideals surrendered to highly polarised politics once Newt Gingrich in 1989 gained control over Republicans in two houses of US Congress. Institutional legitimacy of the US Congress got degraded, paving the way for the anti-establishment presidency of Mr Trump. Treating mainstream

media as illegitimate interlopers, attacking political opponents to not just defeat but destroy them and stealing mandates by gerrymandering or vote suppression, as Mr Trump is attempting by attacking postal ballots, or as in India by forming defection-based governments even after losing mandates. All these are signs of slow strangulation of liberal democracy.

New Delhi may today downplay Prime Minister Modi's unwise public political dalliance with Mr Trump, but the latter's campaign is merrily using videos of the Houston and Ahmedabad joint rallies in their publicity blitz to woo Indian-American votes, who mostly favour Democrats. According to Pew Research, Hindus constitute about 51 per cent of the two million-odd diaspora voters, others being Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. Will the diaspora be drawn to Democrats' promises on immigration laws, health insurance and a fairer economic order or accept Mr Modi's endorsement of a divisive, pro-rich Mr Trump, hoping he is better for India?

US voters are living through mishandled pandemic, economic chaos and racial tension caused street violence. Mr Trump is getting traction fanning the white majority's law and order fears, while promising a vaccine and economic turnaround is around the corner. US leadership is critical for addressing vital issues like climate change, anti-globalisation paranoia affecting global trade and investment, and an aggressive China. On November 3 will be known whether a reforming and pro-democracy Biden wins, compelling majoritarian populists globally to reflect and perhaps change, or the US sees the return of disruptive, autocratic and "America First" Trump.

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

LETTERS

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 officialdom will have to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 protocols.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

NEET and JEE could be a 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 finished to save the academic year.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

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 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 Kumbigram airport near Silchar at about 2.35 pm for Gauhati, its next stop. An aerial search by an Indian Air Force helicopter 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 Kumbigram.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle
Force helicopter 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 Kumbigram.

‘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 Shahnawaz 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 Brecently 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 Sharanam 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

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 royalty 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-defence. 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

Stockholm, Aug. 29: Protesters threw stones at police and burned tyres in southern Sweden late on Friday, authorities said, hours after an anti-Muslim Danish politician was blocked from attending a Quran-burning rally nearby.

About 300 people were on the streets of Malmö with violence escalating as the evening wore on, according to police and local media.

The demonstration was connected to an incident earlier in the day in which protesters burned a copy of the Islamic holy book, police spokesman Rickard Lundqvist told Swedish tabloid Expressen.

Rasmus Paludan, who leads the far-right Danish anti-immigration party Hard Line, was due to travel to Malmö to speak at that event, which was being held on the same day as weekly prayers for the Muslim sabbath.

But authorities preempted Paludan's arrival by announcing he had been banned from entering Sweden for two years. He was later arrested near Malmö.

"We suspect that he was going to break the law in Sweden," Calle Persson, spokesman for the police in Malmö said.

"There was also a risk

Anti-racism protest crowds flood US

Washington, Aug. 28: 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.

"Sent back and banned

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

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 Tatyana 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 accreditations extremely worrying. "If true, it is another sign that this regime is morally bankrupt and the only way it will attempt to cling onto power is by fear and intimidation," she said in a statement.

— 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 Sithijirawattanukul — 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

Don calls Biden a 'low-IQ' individual

Trump asserts he will win in November polls

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." Much as he did Thursday at the White House, Trump claimed to be singlehandedly protecting the country from Democratic anarchists.

And he again said that the coronavirus, which has killed more than 1,80,000 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

Harris 'not competent' to be US Prez: Don

Washington, Aug. 29: Kamala Harris is "not competent" to be president, US President Donald Trump has said as he launched an attack on the Indian-origin senator's credentials for the top post.

Addressing his supporters at a Republican campaign rally in New Hampshire on Friday, Trump said he would support seeing a female president in the US but suggested that his daughter and senior White House adviser Ivanka Trump would be a better candidate for such a role.

Harris, 55, was a presidential aspirant until last year before she dropped out of the race because of lack of popular support. Harris returned to political limelight after Joe Biden, the Democratic Party's presidential candidate, picked her as his running mate in the November 3 election.

Born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, Harris is the first Indian-American and first

● **THE COMPANY** that owns the Trump International Hotel in Vancouver has filed for bankruptcy.

● **ACCORDING TO** the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada, TA Hotel Management Limited Partnership filed for bankruptcy on Thursday. Records show the company has CDN\$4.7 million (US\$3.59 million) in liabilities and CDN\$1.1 million (US\$840,000) in assets.

● **THE FIRST** meeting of creditors is expected on Sept. 16.

woman of colour to be picked by a major American political party for the top post. "You know I want to see the first woman president also, but I don't want to see a woman president get into that position the way she'd do it, and she's not competent," Trump said.

— AFP

more personal attacks on his rival.

"We are all that stand between the American people and the left wing mob," he said. "If you want to save democracy from the mob, then you must vote to defeat an extremely poor candi-

date." To cheers and laughter, Trump, 74, described 77-year-old Biden as "weak" and "the worst candidate ever put up by the Democratic party." As he has before, Trump claimed falsely that Biden, a lifelong Catholic, is "against God."

— AFP

Matt Hancock warns of extensive lockdowns

London, Aug. 29: England could face "national action" and "very extensive local lockdowns" in the event of a winter Coronavirus wave, the government said Saturday, with a "worst-case scenario" of 80,000 deaths.

"A second wave is clearly visible in other parts of the world," Health Secretary Matt Hancock told Saturday's Times newspaper.

"Cases go up again, and we have to use very extensive local lockdowns or take further national action. We don't rule that out but we don't want to see it." Britain has been one of the country's hardest hit by the disease, with over 41,000 dead, but has eased lockdown restrictions recently as hospitalisations and deaths dropped. But cases have ticked up in recent weeks and the government is worried about another wave of the virus arriving during flu season.

Although more restrictions could be re-introduced, schools would likely remain open, according to a report prepared for the government by the Sage scientific advisory group and aired on BBC's Newsnight late Friday.

By November "policy measures would be put in place to reduce non-household contacts to half of their normal pre-March 2020 levels," it said.

The report found 85,000 more could die across Britain, with more than 80,000 in England alone, in a "reasonable worst-case scenario."

— AFP

Berlin braces for 'anti-Corona' demo

Berlin, Aug. 29: Thousands of Coronavirus sceptics are set to descend on Berlin on Saturday for a mass protest against pandemic restrictions that was allowed to go ahead after a bitter legal battle.

Police said they will turn out in force and strictly monitor compliance with mask-wearing and social distancing, with Berlin police chief Barbara Slowik warning that if the demonstrators do not adhere to virus safety rules, police will clear the area "very quickly".

"We will not be able or

willing to watch tens of thousands assemble and create infection risks," she added.

Berlin city authorities had previously decided not to allow the Saturday demonstration to go ahead, fearing that the estimated 22,000 protesters would not keep a distance of 1.5 metres apart or comply with face mask requirements.

The ban sparked outrage from organisers and their supporters who flooded social media with angry messages vowing to protest anyway, with some even calling for violence.

— AFP

HK MASS VIRUS TEST PLAN HAMPERED BY SWIRLING CHINA DISTRUST

Hong Kong, Aug. 29: Hong Kong's plan to offer free Coronavirus tests to all residents has become swept up in the festering political debate dividing the city, where many remain deeply distrustful of both local leaders and China.

Billed as a benevolent public health initiative made possible with Chinese help, the city-wide tests are set to start on Tuesday in an attempt to stamp out a third wave of infections that have swept through the densely populated financial hub.

But the involvement of

doctors and companies from the mainland has sent the rumour mills into overdrive and compounded fears of Beijing's surveillance state, while many health experts in the city have questioned the efficacy of a mass testing programme.

On the authoritarian mainland, biometric data forms a crucial part of China's vast security dragnet and many Hong Kongers fear mass testing will lead to widespread DNA collection — something local authorities have strenuously denied.

— AFP

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 ulcera-

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

But the urgency of 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 candidates include powerful chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga, viewed by many as a frontrunner, and current defence minis-

ter Taro Kono, a social-media-savvy former foreign minister who is seen as something of a long-shot.

One woman is among those expected to stand so far: Seiko Noda, a former cabinet minister whose chances are thought to be slim.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

Humpy helps India reach final

Chennai: Koneru Humpy took the spotlight as she beat Monika Socko in a nervy tie-break to help India pip Poland in the semifinals and reach the summit clash of the FIDE Online Chess Olympiad on Saturday. After the two teams won one round each in regular play, world rapid champion Humpy was pitted against Socko for the Armageddon (a tie-break), and the Indian beat her rival in style with black pieces to clinch a spot in the final. India will play the winner of the other semifinal between Russia and the USA, in the summit clash on Sunday. It was, however, not an easy job for the Indian team as they lost the first round 2-4 before bouncing back strongly in the second with a crushing 4.5-1.5 win. Humpy did the rest in the match-deciding tie-break. Viswanathan Anand came into his own with a much-needed win over Jan-Krzysztof Duda in 78 moves in the second round after losing to his opponent in the first round. — *PTI*

Djokovic in final, Osaka withdraws

New York: World number one Novak Djokovic battled into the ATP and WTA Western & Southern Open final despite a neck problem while Japan's Naomi Osaka withdrew from the tournament after reaching the final due to a left hamstring injury on Saturday, just two days before the start of the US Open. Djokovic was treated twice by a trainer for neck issues but rallied to defeat Spanish eighth seed Roberto Bautista Agut 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/0). He will face Milos Raonic in Saturday's final after the Canadian eliminated Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (7/5), 6-3. The world number 10's withdrawal means meaning Victoria Azarenka takes the title by walkover. "I'm sorry to have to withdraw today with an injury. I pulled my left hamstring yesterday in the second set tiebreak and it has not recovered overnight as I had hoped. This has been an emotional week and I want to thank everyone for the outpouring of support," Osaka said in a statement. — *AP*

Kristoff wins first stage of Tour

Nice, France: Norway's Alexander Kristoff won the opening stage of the Tour de France on Saturday in a mass bunch sprint along the iconic Promenade des Anglais in Nice. UAE Team Emirates rider Kristoff takes hold of the race leader's yellow jersey following a stage littered with crashes on a slippery 154km loop around Nice, where the finish line was limited to just 100 spectators due to strict coronavirus health protocols. 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 shatter hopes of the world's greatest bike race making it to the Paris finish line in three weeks' time. — *AFP*

NBA playoffs set to resume

Washington: NBA playoff games are set to resume on Saturday, but players are determined to keep the focus on the fight for social justice and racial equality with the help from club owners and the league. NBA commissioner Adam Silver and National Basketball Players Association executive director Michele Roberts said in a joint statement on Friday that "All parties agreed to resume NBA playoff games on Saturday". Players and the league agreed to form a social justice coalition to address a broad range of issues including access to voting, promoting civic engagement and police and criminal justice reform. The announcement came on a third day of postponed NBA playoff games after the Milwaukee Bucks — shocked by the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin — refused to take the court on Wednesday for a scheduled Eastern Conference first-round matchup against Orlando in the NBA's Covid-19 quarantine bubble. — *AFP*

DOUBLE WHAMMY

Raina pulls out of IPL, virus count touches 13

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, AUG. 29

Over a dozen Covid-19 positive cases in the Chennai Super Kings camp and a surprise pullout 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 CSK in the opener but now that the M.S. Dhoni-led team'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," 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 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



Suresh Raina bats during a training session in Chennai in this file photo.

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 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 skipper 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 SEPT. 1

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.

KOHLI RETURNS TO NETS AFTER FIVE MONTHS

Dubai, Aug. 29: Indian captain Virat Kohli hit the nets for the first time in five months and so did his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma and a few other big names, beginning their preparations in earnest for the upcoming IPL in the UAE.

Despite coming off a long break, Kohli had a good hit in the nets which was also attended by South African pace legend Dale Steyn and RCB team director Mike Hesson, among others.

Hesson was seen interacting with both Kohli and Steyn. "Been 5 months since the last time I stepped onto the field. Felt like 6 days when I got into the nets. Great first session with the boys," Kohli tweeted.

In Abu Dhabi, Rohit led his team into the ground and even as he batted, his pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah ran in to bowl some quick deliveries and get back his rhythm.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan Royals' fielding coach Dishant Yagnik has recovered from COVID-19 and joined his team here ahead of the Indian Premier League after clearing two consecutive coronavirus tests.

— *PTI*

Banton sparkles before rain washes out 1st T20

Manchester, Aug. 29: England rising star Tom Banton made a fine 71 before Pakistan fought back in the first Twenty20 international at Old Trafford on Friday only for rain to reduce the match to a no-result washout.

England had threatened a huge total while the 21-year-old Banton was compiling his maiden fifty in four T20s at this level.

But his exit left England 109-3 and sparked a collapse that saw four wickets lost for 14 runs in 19 balls before rain fell with

England 131-6 off 16.1 overs.

The umpires held a lengthy inspection but decided shortly after 9:00 pm (2000 GMT) that the outfield was too wet to get the game back on.

But Banton, opening after Jason Roy was ruled out with a side injury, at least had a night to remember. "It was good fun," Banton told Sky Sports. "I struggled to begin with, they bowled quite nicely and then I just backed myself when the spinners came on."

— *AFP*

Hamilton dedicates pole to Boseman

Spa-Francorchamps (Belgium), Aug. 29: Lewis Hamilton delivered two successive record breaking qualifying laps to claim his sixth Belgian Grand Prix pole position and a record-increasing 93rd of his career with a flawless demonstration of speed on Saturday.

The championship leader clocked a best lap in one minute and 41.252 seconds in the final seconds of a session that he dominated in a personal tribute to the Hollywood film actor Chadwick Boseman, who died on Friday. His Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas was second, to complete another 'black

● It was Hamilton's fifth pole in seven races this year, a feat he said he had wanted to achieve in memory of Boseman whose life had been an inspiration to Hamilton.

arrows' front row of the grid, but he was more than half a second adrift of Hamilton's pace.

It was Hamilton's fifth pole in seven races this year, a feat he said he had wanted to achieve in memory of Boseman whose life had been an inspiration to Hamilton.

"Today was a very, very clean session for me and the end of the lap was getting better and better. We did such a lot of work for this in the back-ground."

Max Verstappen, who trails Hamilton by 37 points in the drivers' title race, took third place for Red Bull ahead of Renault's Daniel Ricciardo, who aborted his final lap, and Alex Albon in the second Red Bull. After winning last year's race, Charles Leclerc and his Ferrari team-mate Sebastian Vettel were eliminated during Q2 and will start Sunday's race from 13th and 14th positions.

— *AFP*



Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton celebrates as he stands on his car after securing his 93rd pole position during the qualifying session at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Spa on Saturday ahead of the Belgian Grand Prix.

— *AFP*

NATIONAL SPORTS | DAY

Players receive awards virtually

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 Ratnas 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, while star wrestler Vinesh Phogat (Khel Ratna) and shuttler Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (Arjuna) had to pull out of the ceremony after testing positive for the Coronavirus.

The other three Khel Ratna winners — table tennis player Manika Batra, Paralympic gold-medallist Mariyappan Thangavelu and women's hockey team captain Rani Rampal — attended the ceremony.

While Batra logged in from Pune, Thangavelu

and Rampal joined from the Bengaluru SAI centre.

President Kovind applauded as names of the attending awardees were called out and their achievements cited as is the convention.

Missing, however, was the grandeur of the Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall.

Sports minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday defended his government's decision to confer a record 74 National Sports Awards this year, including an unprecedented five Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna honours, a move which faced severe criticism from all quarters.

RIJIJU CONDOLES RAI'S DEATH

Rijiju on Saturday condoled the death of veteran athletics coach Purushottam Rai, who was to receive this year's Dronacharya award in the lifetime category.

Rai, who was to be bestowed the honour on Saturday and had even participated in the dress rehearsal for the first-of-its-kind virtual ceremony, died on Friday evening after suffering a heart attack in Bengaluru. He was 79.

— *PTI*

MASSIVE HIKE IN PRIZE MONEY OF RATNA, ARJUNA

New Delhi, Aug. 29: Sports minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday officially announced a massive hike in the prize money in four of the seven categories of the National Sports and Adventure Awards.

The prize money for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award has been increased to a whopping ₹25 lakh from the previous amount of ₹7.5 lakh, while Arjuna Award has been enhanced to ₹15 lakh from ₹5 lakh.

The Dronacharya (Lifetime) awardees, who were earlier given ₹5 lakh, will now be richer by ₹15 lakh, while Dronacharya (Regular) winners will be given ₹10 lakh instead of ₹5 lakh.

The prize money of Dhyan Chand Award has been increased to ₹10 lakh from ₹5 lakh. The hike will come into effect from this year.

— *PTI*

14-year struggle paid off: Dutee

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 29

● Dutee Chand was among 27 sportspersons to have been selected for the Arjuna Award. With this, she became the ninth Arjuna awardee from Odisha.

Ace sprinter from Odisha Dutee Chand, who was on Saturday conferred with the prestigious Arjuna Award for the year 2020, said her struggle had brought her 'sweet successes and recognitions'.

"My 14 years of struggle and hard work has brought me enough successes and recognition. This Arjun Award is a very special recognition for me. Every sportsperson cherishes a dream to get it in his lifetime," Dutee said while receiving the award from President Ram Nath Kovind.

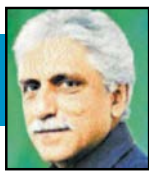
The athlete who in the past faced questions on her gender and was banned temporarily from international events thanked followers and supporters for standing by her during hard times.

She also took to micro-blogging site Twitter and wrote, "Grateful and proud of my journey till now. Lots to achieve still. Let's

get to work!"

The sprint queen of India was nominated for the award in the discipline of athletics. She was among 27 sportspersons to have been selected for the Arjuna Award. With this, she became the ninth Arjuna awardee from Odisha.

Earlier, eight sportspersons from Odisha have won the Arjuna Award. They include Minati Mohapatra (cyclist), Bijay Kumar Satpathy (weightlifter), Rachita Mistry (athlete), Dilip Turkey (hockey), Jyoti Sunita Kullu (hockey), Ignace Turkey (hockey), K. Ravi Kumar (weightlifter), and Pramod Bhagat (para-badminton).



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Star player Suresh Raina pulling out of the IPL for 'personal reasons' just a day after a clutch of people attached to the Chennai Super Kings squad in the UAE tested positive for Covid made it a double whammy for the franchise and the league.

On Friday evening, news emerged from Dubai that several from the CSK group had tested positive. Identities and precise number of those infected by the virus was not clarified by either the franchise or the

BCCI. In these excruciating circumstances this is neither smart nor desirable.

On Saturday afternoon, the BCCI finally put out an official release, confirming that 13 people associated with the tournament — players, support staff, management, etc — had tested positive. The release, however, did not still identify those afflicted.

Nor did the franchise (assuming CSK is the only affected party), which created more questions than were answered. Raina

returning home for reasons unknown exacerbated the situation.

The franchise was perhaps looking to do damage control, and the BCCI for a full status report before going public. Both understandable in ordinary circumstances. But secrecy in these times is an invitation to wild speculation.

The BCCI did clarify though that all 13 who tested positive "as well as their close contacts are asymptomatic and have been isolated from other team members". They will be attended to by the IPL medical staff.

This is in keeping with standard operating procedures.

That prompt action has been taken is also reassuring, but I still can't fathom the need to hide the identi-

ties of those infected. It tinges the situation unnecessarily with controversy. More importantly, it is unfair on everybody else involved in the tournament.

It is unclear what 'personal reasons' prompted Raina to return. There could be some other compelling grounds, but for argument's sake, it is perfectly reasonable if this was because of Covid-related anxiety too.

Since the time big time cricket resumed in June, players have been given the liberty to join a series/tournament or not, without fear of recrimination. Three West Indies players — Shimron Hetmyer, Darren Bravo and Kemo Paul — skipped the tour to England for personal safety.

Dread of the Coronavirus is not misplaced, and players cannot be faulted for prioritising their families and themselves over cricket. That elite athletes are immune to Covid 19 because of their supreme fitness, has been shown to be a fallacy.

Tennis world no.1 Novak Djokovic, among the fittest sportspersons on the planet, tested positive (along with some other players) during the ill-fated Adria Tour he organized a few months back.

Djokovic had cavalierly underplayed the Covid threat. Players on the Adria Tour mixed with spectators, in fact even attended after match parties where social distancing was completely disregarded. The consequences were harrowing.

This brings us back to the issue of the 13 people in the IPL who have tested positive in the UAE. How did this happen when they had cleared everything that the bio-secure bubble protocol demanded before leaving for the gulf a week back, as also in the time there subsequently before the calamitous tests on Friday?

Was it that the tests done in India or the earlier ones in UAE, were erratic? This is not impossible. Remember Mohammed Hafeez's flip-flop test results before he was cleared to join the Pakistan team to England? Was the problem then in the diagnostic analyses done earlier?

Or is it because these people came in contact with carriers of Corona in some

other way, which suggests a loophole in the bio-secure bubble, or a contravention of laid down SOPs? This becomes a far more serious issue if true.

Whatever the cause, events of the past couple of days should set alarm bells clanging violently in the BCCI. There clearly needs to be a more diligent implementation of the SOPs with the active and total participation of franchise owners/management, players, support staff et al. The vigil has to be strict, and even the most minor transgression — by anybody — has to be treated unsparingly.

If the problem is not arrested asap, the league itself could collapse. Worse, it would also imperil India's tour of Australia scheduled at the year-end.