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Covid clouds Assembly session; members share virus travails

Several MLAs, MLCs skip proceedings

BENGALURU DHNS
 Shiny face shields, blue gloves and a small bottle of hand sanitizer welcomed legislators at the Legislative Assembly on Monday when the monsoon session started amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The welcome kit, comprising these three items, was mandatory for legislators to use. More than 60 MLAs have been infected with Covid-19, because of which there was sparse attendance in the Assembly hall. Glass shields attached to the seats separated the members, who were made to keep one seat vacant in between them. As per convention, obituary references were made to personalities from various walks of life who passed away in the recent months. Invariably, this provided a platform for mem-

bers to narrate their Covid-19 experiences. "Covid-19 is a dangerous disease," said Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, who recovered from the infection recently. "Those who haven't been infected should keep it that way. Those who get it face social boycott," he said, citing how he could not meet his wife and son when he was infected. Underlining the importance of wearing a mask, maintaining distance and using hand sanitizer, Siddaramaiah pointed at his party colleague D K Shivakumar, who was infected with Covid-19 recently. "Look at Shivakumar. He's become careful only after getting infected. Before that, he'd not care when we'd tell him to wear a mask," he said. Obituary references were made to 16 people, includ-



Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa speaks in the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

ing former president Pranab Mukherjee, Sira MLA B Sathyanarayana, former union minister M V Rajashekharan, Rajya Sabha member Ashok Gasti, former MLA M J Appaji Gowda among others. "Everyday, I pray to God that nobody should die of Covid-19," BJP's Araga Jnanendra said, remembering former Bhadravathi MLA Appaji Gowda. "I was infected with Covid-19 around the same time Gowda was. I knew him well. Those who knew him couldn't even attend his funeral," he said. The obituary motion also included a reference to the 20 Indian soldiers martyred at

Gulwan valley, Covid-19 warriors and victims, and those who lost their life during the recent floods. Proceedings of the Assembly were adjourned post noon to mark the demise of Sira legislator B Sathyanarayana, who passed away in August. It will convene at 10 am on Tuesday. In the Legislative Council, leader of the House Kota Sreenivasa Poojary and Opposition leader SR Patil condoled the demise of BJP MP Ashok Gasti. "It was indeed motivating to see a grassroots party worker elevated to the position of the MP," both Patil and Poojary remarked.

Minister, BJP MLA fight in Vidhana Soudha lounge

Municipal Administration Minister KC Narayana Gowda and BJP's Kadur legislator Bant Prakash "almost came to blows" at the Vidhana Soudha as the two had a verbal duel on Monday. The incident took place at the makeshift lounge on the first floor of the Vidhana Soudha, just before the start of the Assembly session. Those who witnessed the spat, said Gowda and Prakash "almost came to blows" before other legislators intervened to separate them. According to sources, Prakash complained that Gowda was disrespectful over some words pertaining to his Kadur constituency. "Prakash got the chief minister to sign on a constituency-related file that was related to

Gowda for further action. But, Prakash complained that Gowda was dilly-dallying and gave excuses to say he was busy. This led to an argument between them," a source said. Gowda, who was with the JD(S) before he jumped ship to the BJP and became a minister, played down his spat with Prakash. "I objected to his use of a particular word that was inappropriate," Gowda told reporters. "There are rules because of which files are delayed sometimes. It's not a big issue. Let's close this." Prakash, too, said it was "just a brother's fight." The incident was seen as a manifestation of the disgruntlement among a section of the ruling BJP MLAs over the style of functioning of some ministers.