

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI THURSDAY 20 AUGUST 2020



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**Pope: Rich can't get priority for vaccine, poor need help**



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**Stars get back to work, Kareena & Ayushmann face the camera again**



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**WINDOWS**  
PSG's Marquinhos celebrates with Neymar after scoring a goal during the Champions League semifinal between RB Leipzig and Paris Saint-Germain in Lisbon on Tuesday. ■ Report: Page 8 — PTI

## Govt clears award of 3 airports to Adani Group

**New Delhi:** The Centre on Wednesday cleared award of airports at Jaipur, Thiruvananthapuram and Guwahati to the Adani Group that won these in an auction last year. Union minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters that the Airport Authority of India (AAI) will get an upfront amount of ₹1,070 crore from handing over the airports to the private developer. These airports will be re-developed in a public private partnership mode. Full report on Page 7

## Hemkund Sahib to open on Sept. 4

**Dehradun:** The annual pilgrimage to Hemkund Sahib will begin on September 4, late by three months due to coronavirus pandemic. However, it will be mandatory for devotees to carry a Covid-19 negative certificate with them issued not more than 72 hours earlier.

## Over 64K Covid cases in 24 hours

**New Delhi:** More than 64,500 fresh cases and nearly 1,100 deaths were reported in the country due to novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking India's overall cases to 27.67 lakh and deaths to 52,889, as per Union health ministry's morning data. Full report on Page 4

## COUNTERPOINT



Thanks to the government for arranging a city tour for us every year!

## WEATHER

Max: 35°C  
Min: 26°C  
RH: 80%  
Rain: 8.2mm

Forecast: Rainfall

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Bhadrapada Suddha Dwitiya till 2.12 am (Friday)  
**Star:** Purvaphalguni till 11.49 pm  
**Varjyam:** 9.19 am to 10.46 am  
**Durmuhurtam:** 10.14 am to 11.04 am; 3.15 pm to 4.05 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 1.30 pm to 3 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.56 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.53 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 6.55 PM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 7.28 AM**

## Sushant suicide: SC nod to CBI to probe all angles

*Obstruction to Bihar Police gave rise to suspicion, says SC*

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stamped its approval on the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) taking over the investigation into Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's mysterious suicide and asked it to also probe any other case relating to the actor's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

Taking recourse to its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and saying that there was "no impediment in according nod to the ongoing investigation by CBI," the single-judge bench of Justice Hrishikesh Roy referred to the "acrimonious allegations" of political interference being levelled by Maharashtra and Bihar governments against each other. The "legitimacy of the investigation has come under a cloud" and there is reasonable

When truth meets sunshine, justice will not prevail on the living alone, but after life's fitful fever, now the departed will also sleep well. Satyameva Jayate.

— Justice Hrishikesh Roy

apprehension of "truth being a casualty and justice becoming a victim," the court said.

Delivering the verdict, Justice Roy said, "When truth meets sunshine, justice will not prevail on the living alone, but after life's fitful fever, now the departed will also sleep well. Satyameva Jayate."

The court also asked Maharashtra Police to assist the probe and handover all the evidence collected in the case so far to the CBI. The apex court ■ Turn to Page 2

## Dubey case: SC dismisses plea against commission

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed a plea seeking scrapping of a three-member judicial commission, led by former apex court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan, to inquire into the encounter of gangster Vikas Dubey.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde said the allegations of bias made by the petition-

er against members of the commission merely on the basis of newspaper reports and are liable to be rejected. The bench said the allegation that the brother of the chairman of the commission is a legislator and that the member of the commission is related to the IG of Police are not sufficient to come to the conclusion that it would lead to bias. — PTI

## Aasu plans new outfit to halt saffron surge

**MANOJ ANAND**  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 19

In a possible first step towards forming a new political party in the state, the All Assam Students Union and Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad on Wednesday set up an 18-member prominent citizens' committee to suggest ways to handle the academic, social, economic and political discourse to protect the state's indigenous people. AASU general secretary Lurin Jyoti Gogoi said the people wanted a permanent solution to burning issues after the regional party formed in 1985 destroyed the state's dignity. The idea of forming a new outfit to counter Assam's saffron surge had arisen during the anti-CAA protests.

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

Five former Congress MLAs from Manipur, including a nephew of former CM and senior Congress leader Ibobi Singh, who recently joined the Assembly and the party, on Wednesday joined the BJP. The BJP claimed its state government had the support of 34 MLAs in the Assembly, which has effective strength of 47 as there are 13 vacancies.

The BJP-led coalition government had won the trust vote by 28-16 on Monday after eight Congress MLAs, including the five who joined the BJP, skipped the Assembly session defying the whip. Those who joined the BJP are Henry



■ TRUMP TRAILS BIDEN in polls but just one incumbent Prez has been defeated in 4 decades

"It is the honor of my life to accept the Democratic Party's nomination for President of the United States of America," Mr Biden said on Twitter. Mr Biden was helped

## Decision after MHA reviewed deployment

## Govt: 10K troops to be withdrawn from J&K

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The Centre on Wednesday ordered "immediate" withdrawal of about 10,000 paramilitary personnel from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

This is the biggest de-induction of these forces after additional troops were rushed to the UT post the abrogation of the Article 370 of the Constitution. They said the decision was taken after the ministry of home affairs reviewed the deployment of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) in the UT.

The home ministry had last withdrawn 10 CAPF companies from the UT in May, while 72 such units were taken out in December last year.

A senior official told PTI that a total of 100 CAPF companies have been ordered to be withdrawn "immediately" on Wednesday and they



▶ The forces were deployed in Jammu and Kashmir in August last year as a precautionary measure when the Centre ended the state's special status and bifurcated it into two Union Territories.

have been asked to revert to their base locations in the country.

As per the directions, a total of 40 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and 20 each of the Central Industrial Security Force, the Border Security Force and the Sashastra Seema Bal, will leave J&K this week.

A CAPF company has an operational strength of about 100 personnel.

"The units that are being withdrawn are deployed both in Jammu and Srinagar. It was felt

that the counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist grid is intact in the UT and these additional units that were sent in last year can be de-inducted giving them the much required rest, recuperation and training," a senior CAPF officer said.

Also, he said, with winter soon setting in, it would have been an onerous task to keep these units in make-shift and temporary dwelling units especially in the Kashmir valley region. — PTI

## Pranab health declines, has lung infection



**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The health condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee

has declined as he has developed a lung infection, the Army's Research and Referral Hospital said on Wednesday. The former President, who was admitted to the hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10, continues to be on ventilatory support. — PTI

■ More on Page 3



Vehicles stuck in a heavy traffic jam on waterlogged Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway near Hero Honda Chowk after heavy rains in Gurgaon on Wednesday. Life was thrown out of gear in the millennium city as a three-hour-long spell of heavy rain on Wednesday caused flash floods and disrupted electricity supply. ■ Report on Page 2 — PTI

## Passengers safe, bus missing UP: Loan recovery agents hijack bus with 34 passengers

**Agra/Lucknow, Aug. 19:** A privately-operated bus with 34 passengers on board was hijacked by loan recovery agents of a finance company in Uttar Pradesh's Agra on Wednesday morning, officials said. The incident took place in the Malpura police station area when the bus was en route to Panna in Madhya Pradesh from Gurgaon in Haryana, according to police. Additional chief secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said the bus driver, staff and passengers are safe.

Senior superintendent of police, Agra, Babloo Kumar, who called the finance-related hijacking "audacious", said around 10:30 pm, eight-nine young men in two SUVs intercepted the bus near Dakshin bypass. They claimed they were from the company that had financed the bus and

asked the driver to get down. When he ignored them, "the men in SUVs chased and overtook the bus, got into it and forcibly brought down the driver and the conductor. They told the passengers to not scream and assured them that no harm will be done to them."

He said the driver and the conductor of the bus were taken in one of the SUVs and dropped off in Kuberpur area on the highway around 4 am after which they approached the local police for help. "The finance company had illegally seized the bus. The driver, staff and passengers are safe. The bus owner died yesterday (Tuesday) and his son is conducting the last rites," he said in a statement that did not mention the whereabouts of the bus. — PTI

## Hotels, weekly markets will be allowed to open in Delhi

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** Hotels and weekly markets in the capital will be allowed to open as authorities ease more restrictions to revive the economy amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority

or DDMA decided on Wednesday.

The proposal to open gyms was not approved in the meeting headed by Lt Governor Anil Bajjal who leads the DDMA. Delhi government sources said. — Agencies

■ More on Page 2

**NRA will be a specialist body bringing state-of-the-art technology and best practices to recruitment for Central government jobs.**

The Centre has sanctioned ₹1,517.57 crores to set up the NRA. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that it "will prove to be a boon for crores of youngsters. Through the Common Eligibility Test, it will eliminate multiple tests and save precious time as well as resources".

The NRA will conduct the CET online to screen and shortlist candidates for Group B and C (non-technical) posts. It can be taken by graduates and those who passed the secondary and higher secondary board exams. It can be taken from anywhere in the country and will thus help rural candidates who have to travel long distances to take any exam.

## FB BIAS CASE

## Tharoor, Dubey send breach of privilege notice to each other

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The political slugfest over the Facebook row intensified on Wednesday with Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who as head of a parliamentary panel wants to summon officials of the social media platform, and BJP member Nishikant Dubey filing breach of privilege petitions against each other before the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Mr Tharoor, who heads the parliamentary panel on information technology, alleged that Mr Dubey made "disparaging remarks" on social media over his decision to summon a panel meeting to discuss the alleged "misconduct" of Facebook.

Hitting back, Mr Dubey, who is a member of the panel, suggested in his plea that Mr Tharoor was using the committee's platform for politics and that he decided to call Facebook officials to "satisfy the ego" of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who had alleged that the BJP and RSS are controlling the social media platform.

In his letter to Speaker Om Birla, Mr Tharoor referred to the *Wall Street Journal* report which claimed that Facebook refused to apply hate speech rules to certain ruling party politicians and underlined the serious nature of allegations made against the social media platform and its far-reaching implications on the citizens' right to information.

Mr Tharoor said he sought to convene the committee's meeting as part of the normal course of discussions on "safeguarding citizens' rights and prevention of misuse of social/online news media platforms". Despite this, Mr Tharoor alleged Mr Dubey "insultingly criticised" his decision to do so.

"The contemptuous words used by... Dubey have cast aspersions on the intent and integrity with which I fulfil my duties as an elected representative...", he said. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

2 ISIS OPERATIVES  
PLEAD GUILTY  
BEFORE COURT

**New Delhi:** Two persons on Wednesday pleaded guilty before a Delhi court in a case of criminal conspiracy by the ISIS to establish its base in India by recruiting Muslim youths through different social media platforms in order to carry out acts of terrorism in the country.

Accused Abu Anas and Najmul Huda made the submission before the court, which was scheduled to hear arguments on the quantum of punishment for six other accused who had earlier pleaded guilty in the case, their advocate Gausar Khan said. Special Judge Parveen Singh, meanwhile, Wednesday deferred for August 24 the hearing on the quantum of sentence for the six accused — Mudabbir Mushtaq Sheikh, Mohammad Shareef Moinudeen Khan, Asif Ali, Mohammad Hussain Khan, Syed Mujahid and Mohammad Azhar Khan — who pleaded guilty earlier. While pleading guilty, the accused told the court that they were remorseful for the acts alleged against them, and undertook not to indulge in similar acts and activities in future. They said they wanted to return to the mainstream society and rehabilitate themselves. The accused are having clean antecedents, even their conduct in jail are satisfactory and there is nothing adverse against them... the accused are pleading guilty voluntarily without any pressure, their plea said. — *PTI*

Man involved in  
firing arrested

**New Delhi:** The Delhi Police has arrested a 20-year-old man who was involved in recent incidents of firing for extortion, police said on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Ashish, a resident of Village Bakkarwala. He is the son of infamous car jacker Manoj Bakkarwala, they said. Police received information that Ashish, who was involved in recent incidents of firing, would come near Ram Chowk, Rohini between 4 am to 5 am to meet his associates, a senior police officer said. "Thereafter, a trap was laid and one person was spotted on a scooter around 4.20 am. When police intercepted his scooter, he left the vehicle, whipped out pistol and fired at police. Police also fired and one bullet hit on the leg of the accused, following which he was apprehended," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said. — *PTI*

SC nod to CBI  
probe into  
Rajput's suicide

**Continued from Page 1** ruled out any wrongdoing by Mumbai Police, saying that records of the case produced before it "does not prima facie suggest any wrongdoing". It, however, added that "their obstruction to the Bihar Police team at Mumbai could have been avoided since it gave rise to suspicion on the bonafide of their inquiry".

The top court also upheld the FIR registered in Patna by Sushant's father, K.K. Singh, accusing his son's girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, and five others of abetment to suicide, cheating, criminal breach of trust, criminal intimidation and wrongful confinement.

The court's order came on Ms Chakraborty's plea seeking transfer of the FIR to Mumbai Police. Mr K.K. Singh and the Bihar government had moved a caveat opposing the transfer. However, while the matter was pending, on the request of the Bihar government the investigation into the Patna FIR was handed over to the CBI.

Ms Chakraborty was the live-in partner of the late actor and had moved to her own flat in Mumbai a few days before the actor allegedly committed suicide on June 14, 2020.

Pointing to the need for "fair, competent and impartial investigation" so that all the speculations could be put to rest," the court said that even for Ms Chakraborty, it will be the desired justice as she had herself called for a CBI investigation.

The court noted that the inquiry conducted under Section 174 CrPC by the Mumbai Police was limited to suicide and was not a probe under Section 157 of the CrPC which the Bihar Police was investigating, i.e. abetment to suicide.

# Delhi-NCR receives heavy rainfall, temperature drops ■ Similar downpour likely today

## Traffic jams, flooding: Rains throw life out of gear

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

Following the heavy rainfall in the national capital and surrounding areas on Wednesday morning, waterlogging and traffic movement at snail's speed was reported in various major areas. For hassle-free commuting, the Delhi Traffic Police issued an advisory for the people informing them about the routes with heavy jams.

The rains flooded many streets across the city, turning them into small rivers. The traffic came to a virtual standstill at key stretches. Many parts of the city were completely inundated after just a few hours of rain. The pictures and videos of vehicles stuck on waterlogged roads and people wading through waist-deep water were widely shared on social media.

According to the Delhi Traffic Police, waterlogging was reported at BRT near Central School, Badarpur to Ashram, Badarpur flyover underpass, Sarita Vihar flyover underpass, Dhaura Kuan towards AIIMS carriage-way, Moti Bagh flyover underpass, MB Road near



People take refuge on a submerged car as vehicles ply on waterlogged Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway near Narsinghpur in Gurugram on Wednesday. — *PTI*

Batra Hospital, Palam Flyover and Chhata Rail. "Mayur Vihar Phase-2, Sarai Kale Khan to DND, Sashi Garden to Kotla, Seemapuri to Dilshad Garden underpass, MB Road at Maidan Garhi, MB Road at Anuvrat Marg, Apsara Border were also reported to have waterlogging," said the police.

Following the rainfall, the Delhi Traffic Police also alerted commuters to

## Waterlogging chokes Noida after heavy rains

**Noida, Aug. 19:** Several roads stretches and residential areas of Uttar Pradesh's Noida were submerged in water on Wednesday after a spell of heavy rains that threw life out of gear for residents. Residents also complained of water entering base-ments of high-rise build-

ings. Many people took to social media to share pictures and videos of the rain fury, with ankle to knee-deep water at places, while some alleged mismanagement by government agencies over the problem.

Waterlogging also impacted commercial sec-



Vehicles damaged after a public school wall collapsed due to heavy rains at Saket in New Delhi. — *PTI*

avoid specific stretches of roads where traffic congestion has been witnessed.

"Traffic is heavy in the carriage-way from Lajwanti flyover towards Dhaura Kuan due to breakdown of a cluster bus near Lajwanti flyover. Motorists heading towards Dhaura Kuan are requested to take Mayapuri Chowk as alternative route," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted on its Twitter.

In another tweet, the Delhi Traffic Police asked commuters to avoid the stretch from Liberty Cinema towards Punjabi Bagh due to heavy traffic congestion.

"Traffic is affected at Pul Prahladpur underpass due to water logging," the Delhi Traffic Police said in another tweet.

Meanwhile, Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the regional forecasting centre of the India Meteorological Department, said that Delhi recorded moderate rains till 11:30 am.

"More rains are very likely as the day progresses," he added. The Ayanagar weather station recorded 63.1 mm rainfall between 2:30 am and 11:30 am.

The Saffarjung Observatory, which provides representative figures for the city, recorded 29.8 mm rains. The Palam, Lodhi Road, and Ridge weather stations gauged 45 mm, 25.8 mm and 42.5 mm precipitation respectively during the period.

Rainfall recorded below 15 mm is considered light, between 15 and 64.5 mm is moderate and above 64.5 mm is heavy.

# Hotels, weekly markets to re-open, gyms to stay shut

## Delhi recorded 1,398 new coronavirus cases in 24 hours, taking the tally in the city to over 1.56 lakh

SANJAY KAW  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Tuesday allowed the hotels in the national capital to reopen for business as part of the resumption of economic activities under Unlock 3.0. The decision was taken during a DDMA meeting, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal.

The DDMA also allowed weekly markets to resume on a trial basis. The organisers and vendors at these weekly markets will have to ensure proper social distancing and necessary Covid-19-appropriate measures. However, gym-

nasiums and yoga centres cannot open in Delhi as of now. A decision on this will be taken at a later stage in another meeting of the SDMA.

While restaurants in Delhi were allowed to reopen partially on June 8, the DDMA clearance to hotels is likely to serve as a further boost to the stalled hospitality industry

trial period of weekly bazaars, which provide employment to 5 lakh poor families, is likely to be anywhere between one week to 10 days..

Following the decision, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said: "The corona situation in Delhi is much better now. Now, the economy of Delhi has to be brought on track. For this, we had already proposed opening all the

hotels in Delhi, which was rejected by the Central government. We again requested the central government, and we are happy that now the proposal of the Delhi government has been approved. Now all hotels in Delhi will be opened. At the same time, the weekly market will be opened on a trial basis. In the meantime, everyone must exercise precautions and follow social distancing."

The Kejriwal government had been advocating the reopening of hotels, gyms and weekly markets in the national capital since the start of Unlock 3.0 in the country. It had sent a proposal for this to Mr Bajjal, citing the decline in the number of Covid-19 cases in the national capital. The LG's office had indicated that relaxations such as allowing local weekly markets and gymnasiums to operate may lead to a resurgence in the number of cases and, therefore, rejected the AAP government's insistence on that count.

Delhi, which had a high number of cases of covid-

19 has seen a sharp decline in the last month. According to the last one week's data, the city on an average is getting 1,033 cases every day. On Wednesday, Delhi had 1,398 new cases while 1,320 people recovered from the virus. There are 11,137 active cases in Delhi. There have been 4,235 deaths due to the disease and a total of 1.56 lakh people have tested positive for the deadly virus.

To tackle the growing number of cases, the government had attached some hotels with hospitals to meet the demand for beds. However, with the decline, these hotels were de-linked.



Depositors of Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank protest outside the Reserve Bank of India building in New Delhi on Wednesday. — *PTI*

# Ex-football coach arrested for stealing cellphones of players

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

A former football coach has been arrested for allegedly stealing the mobile phones of the whole team of Delhi United Football Club from dressing room at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, police said on Wednesday.

The accused has been identified as Shekhar Pathak, a resident of Pandav Nagar. The accused wanted to take revenge for his removal from position of coach, they said.

On March 13, police received information regarding the theft of 12 mobile phones and purses containing around Rs 10,000 of the team of the Delhi United Football Club, a senior police officer said.

Enquiry revealed that one dressing room was allotted to the team of Delhi United Football Club. All players kept their belongings in the cabins of

the dressing room, police said. However, when they returned after completion of the match, their cabins were found ransacked. All the players found that their mobile phones and purses have been stolen, the officer said.

"During investigation, police checked all the CCTV cameras in JLNS premises and all the stolen phones were kept on surveillance. The security as well as management staff of JLNS was thoroughly enquired about any suspicious person coming in or out from dressing room," Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

After couple of months,

one of the stolen phones was detected to be switched on. The person having the phone was interrogation who told police that Pathak sold him that mobile and he returned it to him after the accused failed to show the original receipt of that mobile phone, police said.

Later, the accused was arrested from his house. Nine mobile phones were recovered from his possession, the DCP said.

Pathak was a district level football player and played almost six years from 2004 to 2010 in Lions Club Football Team. He started his career as a Football Coach in March 2011. Students of Nehru Stadium hired him as a coach where he continued from 2011 to 2013, police said.

In 2013, on the complaint of one of the coaches for not being punctual in the ground and sincere towards his duty, he was removed from the post of coach, the DCP said.

## 43-year-old woman killed by live-in mate

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

A 43-year-old woman was allegedly killed by her live-in partner in east Delhi's Madhu Vihar area, police said on Wednesday.

The victim and her partner, identified as Kallu, were staying at a rented house in west Vinod Nagar and the incident took place on Tuesday night, they said.

The couple was in a relationship for the last three months and had been living together for a while now, police said. She sustained a head injury which the police suspect was caused due to the impact of blunt object with which she was hit.

The woman was taken to a nearby hospital where she was declared brought dead, said Jasmeet Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (east).

# Metro launches new smart card for smooth travel

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

Delhi Metro commuters will now be able to avail the facility of a new type of smart card which comes with an auto top-up feature. This will enable the commuters to recharge the card automatically at automatic fare collection gates at the metro stations, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) announced on Wednesday.

DMRC Managing Director Mangu Singh said, "This initiative is in line with the DMRC's commitment towards supporting the digital drive to promote cashless transactions among the Delhi Metro commuters. This new feature empowers a commuter to get their smart card auto topped up which will help them to have seamless travel without worrying about top-up from time to time".

The smart card is available for customers through the application called "Autopoe". It will offer auto top-up functionality whenever the value of the card goes below ₹100 and will automatically recharge the card with ₹200 at the fare collection

gate itself. The amount will be auto-debited from the customer's linked card or bank account the next working day.

The feature assumes significance at a time when there are new travel protocols which call for social distancing and contactless services due to the ongoing pandemic. The DMRC, however, clarified that irrespective of the new card, the existing smart cards owned by the commuters will continue to remain valid in the same manner as they used to be.

This new measure will eliminate the need for queuing up at the metro stations to recharge the smart card. Generally, even in case of online recharges, the card needs to be presented to add value machines for the store value to get validated; "Autopoe" eliminates the AVM layer as well.

# Gahlot flags off 30 new vehicles of transport dept's enforcement wing

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** Delhi transport minister Kailash Gahlot on Wednesday flagged off 30 new vehicles of the department's enforcement wing currently carrying out a drive against polluting vehicles in the city.

Flagging off the fleet of vehicles from Rajghat cluster bus depot, he said the enforcement wing has been an active participant in all major road safety and environment-related initiatives in Delhi, including

in both the editions of the odd-even drive.

Even during the Covid-19 lockdown, it dutifully monitored movement of people within the city, he said.

"We are adding 30 more vehicles to the transport department for strengthening our enforcement duties. I also urge all vehicle users in Delhi to be aware of their duties as responsible citizen and ensure compliance with road safety rules and pollution guidelines.

"Together, let us strive for a cleaner and safer Delhi," the minister said.

The enforcement teams of the transport department are currently issuing challans to vehicle owners without proper pollution under check (PUC) document. The fine has been raised to ₹10,000 under the amended Motor Vehicle Act. The enforcement wing has 50 teams deployed across Delhi to check more than 120 entry points with neighbouring states. — *PTI*



## SHORT TAKES

### Peace Party leader held over remarks

**Bahraich:** A Peace Party leader was arrested for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Hindu gods and goddesses, the police said on Wednesday. The leader was arrested after registration of a case against him on people's complaint that his social media post had the potential to disturb communal harmony, said city circle officer T.N. Dubey. Peace Party's district president Mohammad Shakeel Khan was arrested on Tuesday. He had made indecent remarks against Hindu gods and goddesses on social media, he added. Mr Dubey said the case against Mr Khan was registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act. Mr Khan has been remanded in judicial custody after his arrest, he said. — PTI

### 15-yr-old raped by 5 people in Tripura

**Agartala:** A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by five persons in Tripura's Sepahijala district, the police said on Wednesday. The five persons forcibly took the girl to a jungle near Dewan Bazar area and raped her while she was returning from her elder sister's house on Sunday night, the police said. The girl informed her parents about her ordeal on Monday and they lodged a complaint at Bishrampur police station on the same day. The police has arrested one person on the basis of the complaint while the rest four are absconding, an officer said. The girl is admitted at Bishramganj hospital. The arrested person was produced before a local court which remanded him to five-days judicial custody. Meanwhile, parents of a 17-year old girl at Teliamura in Khowai district lodged a police complaint on Tuesday against a man for raping their daughter repeatedly and also blackmailing her. The accused was arrested on Wednesday, the police said. — PTI

## India, China likely to hold fresh talks over Ladakh today

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** India and China are expected to hold a fresh round of diplomatic talks on Thursday to carry forward the disengagement process to resolve the over three-month-long border standoff in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the developments said. The virtual talks are scheduled to be held under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs, and both sides are expected to deliberate on ways to ensure early implementation of the disengagement process, they said. The Indian delegation at Thursday's talks is likely to be led by Naveen Srivastava, joint secretary (East Asia) in the external affairs ministry, they said. In the last round of WMCC talks on July 24, the Chinese side was headed by Hong Liang, director general of the department of boundary and ocean affairs under the Chinese foreign ministry. After the talks, the ministry of external affairs had said both sides

agreed that an early and complete disengagement of the troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in accordance with bilateral agreement and protocols was essential for overall development of bilateral relations. Following the diplomatic dialogue, armies of the two countries held the fifth round of Corps Commander-level talks on August 2 with an aim to expedite the disengagement process. However, the disengagement of troops from the friction points in eastern Ladakh has not moved forward as expected by India, according to military sources.

At the military talks, the Indian side insisted on complete disengagement of Chinese troops at the earliest, and immediate restoration of status quo ante in all areas of eastern Ladakh prior to May 5 when the standoff began. — PTI

## WOMAN POSES AS IPS OFFICER, HELD FOR DUPING FINANCE FIRM

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 19

A young woman was on Wednesday arrested by the Uditnagar police in Odisha's Rourkela city for reportedly cheating a finance company by posing as an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. The accused, identified as Sarmistha Behera, a resident of Bhadrak's Dhamnagar, was held from City Bazaar square.

According to the Uditnagar police, the 30-year-old woman claiming herself as an IPS officer had availed a loan from a finance company to buy a Royal Enfield bike from a showroom on August 11. She had reportedly produced a fake identity card of IPS officer to secure the credit. The finance company raised suspicion when the cheque submitted by the woman to avail the motorcycle got bounced.

## Nod to leasing out of 3 more airports

Adani group to run Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram airports through PPP mode

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal for leasing out airports at Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram through public-private partnership (PPP) for a period of 50 years. Adani Enterprises had won the rights to run six airports including these three — the other three being Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Mangalore — through the PPP model after a competitive bid-

ding process in February 2019. In July 2019, the Union Cabinet had approved the proposal for leasing out Ahmedabad, Mangalore and Lucknow airports to Adani Enterprises. At a press conference after a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar said the Cabinet has approved the proposal for leasing out Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram air-

ports through the PPP model. "The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is not giving these airports permanently to the private operator. After running them for 50 years, the private

operator would be handing over the airports back to the AAI," said the minister. At present, all aforementioned six airports are owned and managed by the government-run AAI. The environment minister said the AAI will receive ₹1,070 crore as an upfront amount from the private operator for leasing the airports at Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and this fund will be used to develop air-

ports in smaller cities. "Another benefit of leasing these airports is that passengers will get good services," Mr Javadekar noted. Eight months after the Cabinet approval, Adani Enterprises signed the concessionaire agreement with the Airports Authority of India on February 14 this year for operation, management and development of airports at Ahmedabad, Mangalore and Lucknow. — PTI

## Sharpshooter plotting to kill Salman Khan nabbed

**Faridabad, Aug. 19:** The Faridabad police has arrested sharpshooters for allegedly plotting actor Salman Khan's murder. The arrested sharpshooter — Rahul alias Sanga aka Baba belonging to Bhiwani district along with 3 others — had carried out the recce to know the actor's movements. The police has also seized guns from them. The police revealed that the murder was plot due to resentment against Khan over blackbuck poaching. DCP of Faridabad, Rajesh Duggal said, "The police has arrested sharpshooter Rahul of Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Questioning revealed that he travelled to Mumbai in January to conduct a recce of actor Salman Khan's apartment on Bishnoi's orders due to resentment against Khan over blackbuck poaching." The accused also confessed to other murders. — Agencies

## Pranab develops lung infection, still on ventilator

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** The health condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee has declined as he has developed a lung infection, the Army's Research and Referral Hospital said on Wednesday.



Pranab Mukherjee

The 84-year-old former president, who was admitted to the hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10, continues to be on ventilatory support, doctors attending to him said. However, his son and former MP Abhijit Mukherjee said his father is showing "positive signs of improvement". Pranab Mukherjee was operated for removal of a clot in his brain and has been in a coma ever since. He also tested positive for Covid-19. "There has been a decline in the medical condition of Shri Pranab Mukherjee as he has developed features of lung infection. He continues to be on ventilatory support and

is currently being managed by a team of specialists," the hospital said in a statement. In a tweet, former member of Parliament Abhijit Mukherjee said his father's vital parameters are under control. "With all your good wishes and sincere efforts of the doctors, my father is stable now! His vital parameters continue to remain under control and manageable! Positive signs of his improvement are noticed. I request you all to pray for his speedy recovery," he said. Pranab Mukherjee was the President of India from 2012 to 2017. — PTI

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited	
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001 O/O SE/TL Circle, PSPCL, Patiala, Flat No. 11, Officer's Flats, Shakti Vihar, PATIALA-147001 Tel. No. 96461-11060 Email ID: tl.circle.pspcl.pta@gmail.com	
(Open E-tender notice)	
E-Tender Notice for	Shifting/Raising/Modification of 66 KV Banur Mubarkpur Line from the premises of M/s Chandigarh Royale City Promoters Pvt Ltd, Banur.
E-Tender Enquiry No. 188/TL/PTA/2020-21	
Completion Period 3 Months from the issue of Work order	
Tender Cost 1180/- and EMD 14,500/-	
Last date & time for downloading of e-tender	16.09.2020 Up to 05:00 PM
Last date & time for up-loading of e-tender	17.09.2020 Up to 11:00 AM
Date and time for opening of Tenders	18.09.2020 at 11:30 AM
Note : Details of NIT may be download from website <a href="https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/">https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/</a>	
The tender shall be accepted only through online mode.	
In case tender process is not completed due to any reason, no corrigendum will be published in newspapers. Details regarding corrigendum may be seen on <a href="https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/">https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/</a>	
C-261/2020 RO : 106545	
Superintending Engineer / TL Circle PSPCL Patiala	

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION	
	General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person <b>Name:</b> Ram, <b>S/o</b> Unknown <b>R/o</b> Unknown <b>Age</b> : About 40 years, <b>Height:</b> 5'7", <b>Face:</b> Long, <b>Complexion:</b> Wheatish, <b>Built:</b> Normal, <b>Wearing:</b> Blue & white colour stripped T-shirt and brown colour pant has been found dead at near C-86, Prayavaran Complex, Saket, New Delhi on 16.08.2020. In this regard a case vide DD No. 97A dated 16.08.2020 has been lodged at Police Station Mehrauli, New Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for 72 hours in the mortuary of Jai Prakash Narayan Apex Trauma Centre Hospital, New Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this dead found person may kindly inform to the following:- <b>SHO</b> <b>P.S. Mehrauli, New Delhi</b> <b>South Distt. Delhi</b> <b>Ph. 011-26645050, 26643200</b>
DP/169/SD/2020	



Remembering

# Shri Rajiv Gandhi

(20th August, 1944 – 21st May, 1991)

former Prime Minister of India  
on his

## 76<sup>th</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY



"He believed in the power of India. His vision of the 21st century shaped the destiny of our nation. His dreams enabled the realization of the rising aspirations of our people. Let us remember Rajiv Gandhi today with the promise of translating his conviction into the shared reality of the new India he saw for all of us."

- Capt. Amarinder Singh  
Chief Minister, Punjab



## SHORT TAKES

## Highest 1-day count of Maha Covid cases

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra on Wednesday reported 13,165 new Covid-19 cases, highest one-day count, taking its tally to 6,28,642, while 346 fresh deaths pushed the toll beyond the 21,000-mark, a health official said. The previous single-day highest was 12,712 coronavirus cases, recorded on August 12. The state reported 346 deaths, taking the fatality tally to 21,033, said the health official. Also, 9,011 patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the tally of recovered coronavirus patients to 4,46,881, he said. There are 1,60,413 active cases in the state at present, the official added. Mumbai reported 1,132 new cases and 46 deaths, taking its tally to 1,31,542 and the toll to 7,268. The number of active cases in Mumbai stood at 17,914, he added. — PTI

## Pandit Jasraj to be cremated today

**Mumbai:** Mortal remains of Indian classical vocalist Pandit Jasraj, who passed away on Monday following a cardiac arrest at his home in New Jersey, would be brought to Mumbai on Wednesday, his family said in a statement. The 90-year-old music doyen, who belonged to the Mewati Gharana, was in the US when the coronavirus-led lockdown was announced and decided to stay back in the country. "Pandit Jasraj ji's mortal remains will arrive in Mumbai on Wednesday, 19 August," the family said in the statement. According to Pritam Sharma, media coordinator for the family, Pandit Jasraj's "antim darshan" will be held on Thursday at his Versova residence, followed by the last rites which will take place at Pawan Hans Crematorium, Vile Parle. The classical vocalist will be cremated with state honours and be given a 21-gun salute, Sharma added. — PTI

## Postal official sets self on fire in Bihar

**Muzaffarpur:** A post official set himself on fire inside his office in Bihar's Muzaffarpur on Tuesday, police said. The incident happened at a post office located on the RDS College campus, they said. Sanjay Kumar Sinha, aged around 45, locked himself inside the office and set himself on fire, police said. He was a resident of Khesrahi village in the Patepur police station area in Vaishali district and was posted as the assistant postmaster here, the officer said. Police have found a suicide note from the spot. There was no one at the spot when the it happened, police said. A friend of Sinha informed the police about the incident after he went to the post office on being told that his family could not reach him over the phone. — PTI

## Maha inter-district bus services soon

**Mumbai:** The Maharashtra government on Wednesday allowed resumption of inter-district bus services of the state transport corporation. The decision has been taken keeping in mind the Ganesh Chaturthi festival which begins from August 22. According to the state government's directive, passengers would not require an e-pass, permission or approval for inter-district travel in the MSRTC buses, but the transport undertaking will issue standard operating procedures for such travel. The buses will begin plying between districts and to the interior villages but will run on a lower frequency and will follow the Standard Operating Procedures in place for control of coronavirus pandemic.

## 4 held for hoisting 'Khalistani' flag

**Chandigarh:** The Haryana Police has arrested four miscreants for allegedly hoisting a flag with "Khalistan Zindabad" written on it at a village chaupal under Kalanwali area of Sirsa district. The incident had taken place on August 15, a Haryana Police spokesperson said on Wednesday. The four were arrested on charges of trying to disrupt peace, brotherhood and communal harmony, he said. The arrested accused were identified as Rupinder Singh, Yudhvir Singh and Gurjeet, residents of village Singhpura in Haryana and Aman Sharma of Talwandi Sabo in Punjab. — PTI

## Bihar DGP hails SC decision

Rhea has no 'aukat' to comment on chief minister, says top cop

**Patna, Aug. 19:** Bihar director general of police Gupteswar Pandey on Wednesday said that the Supreme Court's decision to transfer Sushant Singh Rajput's death case to the CBI vindicates Bihar Police's stand that it was doing things in accordance with the law and the Constitution.

His comments came after the apex court upheld the transfer to the CBI of an FIR, lodged at Patna against actress Rhea Chakraborty and others for allegedly abetting the suicide of the actor. It said that the Bihar government is competent to transfer the case to the central agency for investigation. "I am happy with the apex court's order transferring the case to the CBI as it has further raised the hope for getting justice for Sushant



With the verdict, the country came to know that the Bihar Police was doing nothing wrong in it. The fact of the matter is that it was carrying out its job with right intention to ensure justice for Sushant Singh Rajput.

— Gupteswar Pandey, Bihar DGP

Singh Rajput... The apex court order vindicates the Bihar Police's stand that it was doing things in accordance with the law and Constitution, Mr Pandey told reporters soon after the order was delivered. "With the verdict, the country came to know that the Bihar Police was doing nothing wrong in it. The fact of the matter is that it was carrying out its job with right intention to ensure justice for Sushant Singh Rajput, he said. There were, however,

some people who were feeling "uneasy" as they might get exposed, he added. "I can't tell you about the time-frame (on completing the probe). It may take one month, three months or more. This is a high-profile case, which the entire nation is closely watching, and a professional investigation agency is carrying out the probe on the directive of the apex court. I am quite confident that truth will come out finally," Mr Pandey said. Further, he said that it

was Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar who supported a CBI probe into the actor's death case and this kept the hope alive for justice for Rajput. "Rhea Chakraborty does not have 'aukaat' (stature) to comment on Bihar chief minister," he said.

Chakraborty had challenged the Bihar government's jurisdiction in the matter and sought transfer of the case from Patna to Mumbai. She had also alleged that the Bihar government's action was inspired by the upcoming state polls.

K.K. Singh, the actor's 74-year-old father, had lodged an FIR with Rajiv Nagar police station in Patna last month, nearly 40 days after his son was found hanging from the ceiling at his residence in Mumbai on June 14. — PTI

## Sushant case: Autopsy docs get threats

**Mumbai, Aug. 19:** Doctors who signed the autopsy report of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput are now receiving a torrent of abuse, threats and allegations.

Screen-shots of the autopsy report which had names and mobile numbers of the five doctors from Cooper Hospital here have found their way to social media as conspiracy theories about Rajput's death began to do the rounds.

While the doctors were unavailable for comment, president of the Medical Legal Association of Maharashtra, Dr Shailesh Mohite, said they were receiving abusive phone calls and messages for the last few days.

Some media reports said that callers accused the doctors of taking bribe to "suppress" the truth in the report.

— PTI

## Nitish says his govt stand on actor death case vindicated

NAYEAR AZAD  
PATNA, AUG. 19

The Supreme Court verdict allowing the CBI to probe the death case of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput has raised the political temperature in Bihar.

After the verdict was announced on Wednesday Bihar CM Nitish Kumar in a tweet said that "action taken by Bihar police and the state government's decision to hand over the case to CBI has been termed as correct by the Supreme Court".

"Few people tried to give political colour to the whole issue but the state government saw it as a matter related to justice only. I am confident that after the verdict CBI will begin a probe soon", he added.

The apex court's verdict in the Sushant Singh Rajput case has come amid the ongoing tussle over the jurisdictional

## CBI should carry out proper probe at the earliest: Cong

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** With the Supreme Court upholding a CBI investigation into the "unnatural death" of Sushant Singh Rajput, the Congress on Wednesday said the agency should carry out a proper probe into the actor's death, and asserted justice will not be delivered by the BJP-JDU making statements for "political gains".

issue between the Maharashtra and Bihar police.

The state government had recommended CBI probe into the case after Sushant Singh Rajput's father filed an FIR against actress Rhea Chakraborty, her family and six others for abetment of suicide of his son and fraud.

Bihar deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi also welcomed the court's verdict.

Congress spokesperson Shaktisinh Gohil accused the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government of trying to take political advantage of the issue in view of the upcoming Assembly polls.

Gohil said the party has repeatedly demanded that there should be a proper investigation in the case and the bereaved family should get justice. — PTI

In a tweet, he said, "We welcome the decision of Supreme Court to allow CBI to continue with its probe in Sushant death case on the basis of FIR filed by Bihar police. Our stand vindicated".

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, however, created a flutter in the political circles by claiming that it was his party which demanded a CBI probe into the case.



Devotees offer prayer at the Golden Temple on the occasion of the 416th anniversary of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in Amritsar on Wednesday. — PTI

## Trouble in Pawar clan far from over

Parth tweets in favour of SC verdict

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
MUMBAI, AUG. 19

Problems in the Pawar family are far from over. Soon after the Supreme Court decided to hand over the Sushant Singh Rajput case to the CBI, Parth Pawar tweeted "Satyameva Jayate", which means truth shall prevail, without making any reference to the case. Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar had called Parth "immature" for seeking CBI investigation in the case last month and said that he gives no importance to his grand-nephew's opinions.

Meanwhile, reacting to the Supreme Court order, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said some political leaders from Maharashtra have maligned Mumbai police's image, while the BJP accused the government of not letting the police to do impartial investigation.

Senior BJP leader and former state minister Ashish Shelar said that

the 'hidden hands', that have been misguiding the police investigation, will now be exposed. "Thank you to the Supreme Court. Jail time for 'Pub & party gang' who enjoyed illegally, while 15,000+ Mumbai-kars died in lockdown! Note-Justice will be done," Mr Shelar said in a tweet.

Reacting to the verdict, Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that the Maharashtra government needs to introspect on the way it handled the case. "A decision that boosts faith in the judiciary system! Maharashtra Government now needs to, introspect on the way they handled this case. Now, we expect justice in #SushantSinghRajput case and for his fans," the former state chief minister tweeted.

However, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut told reporters that Maharashtra has always been at the forefront of fighting for truth and justice.

## BJP leader shot dead in Dhanbad

**Dhanbad (Jharkhand) Aug. 19:** A 40-year-old BJP leader was shot dead by motorbike-borne gunmen just after he got down from his vehicle at Dhanbad on Wednesday, police said.

Satish Singh, who was the vice-president of the party's Kendua unit in Dhanbad city, was talking on his mobile phone when two men, with their faces covered, came from behind on a motorbike, shot him on the head from point blank range and fled.

When Singh was taken to a hospital, doctors declared him brought dead. The incident was captured on a CCTV camera installed in a nearby house. "We have started an investigation. The killers will be arrested soon," city superintendent of police R. Ramkumar said. — PTI

## ■ Phase-2 clinical trial over, parl panel told Covid-19 vaccine soon if govt decides: ICMR

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** A top ICMR official told a parliamentary panel on Wednesday that phase-two clinical trial of two indigenously developed Covid-19 vaccine candidates have almost been completed and emergency authorisation of a vaccine could be considered if the Centre decides so.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Director General Balram Bhargava informed members of the parliamentary standing committee on home affairs that the vaccine candidates developed by Bharat Biotech, Cadila and the Serum Institute of India are at different stages of trial, said an MP present in the meeting.

The Covid-19 vaccine candidates coordinated by Bharat Biotech and Cadila are nearing completion of phase-two trials.

The one being handled by the Serum Institute of India and developed by Oxford University will enter phase-2 (b) trials this weekend for which 1,700 patients have been identified at 17 centres across the country, the MP said.

According to MPs who attended the meeting, when asked how long people will have to live with the pandemic, Bhargava replied that normally the final trial takes about six to nine months but if the government decides, an emergency authorisation could be considered.

Responding to queries by the panel about the saliva test cleared by FDA in the US for rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2, Bhargava said informed that taking samples from gargled water is already under consideration and further details will be available soon, said another MP who attended the meeting.

Members of the parliamentary committee cutting across party lines complemented the ICMR in particular and the medical fraternity in general for their committed role in fighting the pandemic.

They appreciated the ICMR for its pioneering role in coordinating the scientific and medical

## CBI team likely to visit Mumbai today

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** After getting a nod from the Supreme Court to probe actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, a team of CBI officials is expected to visit Mumbai on Thursday.

"The CBI sleuths will collect all evidences pertaining to the Sushant Singh Rajput's death case from Mumbai police", sources said adding a team of forensic experts will also visit the crime scene on Friday. The CBI has already registered an FIR against Rhea Chakraborty and others in connection with the actor's death after the Centre accepted Bihar Government's recommendation to transfer the probe in the matter from Patna. An FIR was registered in Patna on a complaint filed by KK Singh, Rajput's father, under sections related to abetment to suicide. Rajput was found dead at his Mumbai residence on June 14.

The CBI has collected relevant material from the Bihar police and has also spoken to some stakeholders in the case, they said.

"The investigation related to death of Sushant Singh Rajput is continuing. A CBI team will visit Mumbai in due course for further investigation. Other details cannot be shared at this stage," CBI Spokesperson RK Gaur said.

Rajput, 34, was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 and since then Mumbai Police was probing the case but was yet to file an FIR in the case.

The top court's verdict came on a plea filed by actress Rhea Chakraborty who sought transfer of an FIR, lodged against her and six others at Patna by Rajput's father accusing them of abetting the actor's suicide, to Mumbai.



An artisan makes an idol of Lord Ganesh ahead of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Kolkata on Wednesday. — PTI

## AASU plans new political outfit to halt saffron surge

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, AUG. 19

In what is said to be a step towards formation of a new political party in the state, the powerful All Assam Students Union (Aasu) and Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) here on Wednesday formed a committee of prominent citizens to suggest them future course of actions to handle the academic, social, economic and political discourse to protect the future of the indigenous people of the state.

The two powerful students organisations in a joint press conference announced the formation of an 18-member committee which will suggest measures and course of action to defend the rights of indigenous people of the state.

Aasu general secretary Lurin Jyoti Gogoi, who is in the forefront of the student leaders advocating formation of a new political party ahead of 2021 assembly polls, said that the people of the state wants permanent solution to the burning issues of the state after the regional party which was formed in 1985 destroyed all the dignity of the state and the indigenous people. He reiterated that the people want an uncompromising power in the

■ AASU general secretary Lurin Jyoti Gogoi, who is in the forefront of the student leaders advocating formation of a new political party ahead of 2021 assembly polls, said that the people of the state wants permanent solution to the burning issues of the state

state which would solve the issues of the state and therefore the advisory committee has been formed jointly by Aasu and AJYCP for the safety and security of the people of the state.

The committee will have eminent litterateur and former Rajya Sabha member Nagen Saikia, and Padma Shree awardee and writer-journalist Arup Kumar Dutta as the members.

The other prominent members are former Meghalaya governor Ranjit Shekhar Mooshahary, who was also the director general of NSG, BSF and DGP of Kerala, an National Award-winning filmmaker Jahnu Barua, also a Padma Bhushan awardee, among others, the students leader said.

Aasu adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya who was also present said that the political injustice and betrayal by the government has put the people in quandary.

## Girl kills self for fear of NEET exam

**Coimbatore, Aug. 19:** Fear of upcoming NEET examination has allegedly led a girl student to commit suicide at her residence here, police said on Wednesday.

The 19-year old resident of East Venkatasamy Road was preparing for NEET, scheduled to be held in September, for the past few months and was found depressed.

The girl took the extreme step as she was scared of the approaching the exam, they said. The teenager was found hanging in her room on Tuesday evening by her mother, who immediately lodged a complaint with the police.

The Supreme Court had on Monday dismissed a plea seeking postponement of JEE (Main) April 2020 and NEET-Undergraduate examinations, which are scheduled to be conducted in September, amid spurt in number of COVID-19 cases, saying precious year of students "cannot be wasted" and life has to go on. — PTI

## ■ Secondary ailments post Covid recovery raise concern Over 64,500 cases, 1,100 deaths in 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

More than 64,500 fresh cases and nearly 1,100 deaths were reported in the country due to novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours taking India's overall cases to 27.67 lakh and deaths to 52,889, as per Union health ministry's morning data.

However, the overall figures by Wednesday evening raced past 27.86 lakh and deaths crossed 53,000 according to COVID19India.org. Health ministry officials

said India has tested more than 8 lakh Covid-19 samples for the 2nd consecutive day and the cumulative testing as on date has reached 3,17,42,782. Tests Per Million too have seen a sharp rise to 23,002 while positivity remains stable at around 8 per cent.

"With a strong resolve to rapidly increase the number of tests done per day to touch 10 lakh/day testing capacity, 8,01,518 samples were tested in the last 24 hours... The sustained level of high testing has played a key role in India's increas-

ing rate of recovery, widening gap between the recovered and active cases, and also progressively declining fatality rate," officials said.

The total recoveries from Covid-19 have now reached 20,37,870 in the country, taking the recovery rate to 73.64 per cent. However, with several persons reporting secondary ailments triggered by Covid-19 post recovery has raised serious concerns about the post treatment care needed by the Covid-19 patients and the possibility of re-

infection. According to American scientist and a prominent cardiologist Dr Eric Topol, there are no documented reinfections. "For the respondents claiming there are documented SARS-CoV2 reinfections, that is exceedingly hard to prove, requires a BSL-3 lab, culture +, live virus. No reports to date," he said. Dr Topol further said Covid-19 virus is evolving very slowly, so making neutralising antibodies and vaccines have a better chance to succeed.



# THE ASIAN AGE

20 AUGUST 2020

## MP govt's job quotas: Dangerous, desperate

The Madhya Pradesh government's move to reserve all state jobs for sons of the soil, so to say, is dangerous and unprecedented. It is unprecedented because though there have been similar, discriminatory, measures recently taken by various state governments — Andhra Pradesh has blocked industrial jobs, Karnataka gives priority to Kannadigas, Maharashtra reserves some jobs for people residing there for 15 years and Uttarakhand recruits local inhabitants to some posts — no state had earlier placed 100 per cent of its jobs in a particular segment in the reserved category.

The measure may be unconstitutional under Article 19(1)(d) (right to freedom of movement), Article 19(1)(e) (right to residence) and Article 16(2) that states "no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against, in respect of any employment or office under the state". Only Parliament can enact residence- and employment-based laws, but the power does not extend to state governments.

**'Son-of-the-soil' debates are typically framed as a conflict between the individual citizen's 'liberal' right to freedom of movement and the collective 'democratic' right of the people of a state to self-determination. The binary projected here is a false one.**

The MP chief minister's announcement is also in violation of the Supreme Court's landmark judgment in the 1992 Indra Sawhney versus Union of India case. The court had ruled that the total number of reserved seats cannot exceed 50 per cent of jobs available.

Clearly, legal rectitude was the last thing on the mind of CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan when he made this pronouncement. The ruling party is facing indifferent prospects in the impending bypolls in the state. These bypolls, which will elect MLAs to 24 Assembly seats, are crucial for the party to retain its majority in the state legislature. Hence this crude appeal to identity, and

insecurity, growing in a Covid year that has seen massive retrenchment.

However, though expedient, this appeal is problematic and will prove detrimental to the interests of everyone in the long run. "Son-of-the-soil" debates are typically framed as a conflict between the individual citizen's "liberal" right to freedom of movement and the collective "democratic" right of the people of a state to self-determination. Except that the binary projected here is a false one.

The Indian economy is a single entity that is characterised by regions and cities functioning as hubs of certain trades and professions, having an edge over others based on the prior availability of natural and human resources, initial access to specialised skills and related infrastructure development. It is imperative for governments, therefore, to let citizens travel, train and work at these hubs not only so as not to deprive them of their right to develop their own expertise but also to ensure flow of talent for achieving the best GDP. Second, the rationale behind economic protectionism makes a limited sense but only when borders restrict the inward flow of goods and resources into the state and the outward flow of its people for business and employment. Three, place of birth and domicile reservations principally militate against the government's own vision of a single market for which it implemented the controversial Goods and Services Tax.

It is indeed ironical that a ruling party which has enthusiastically extended domicile rights for land as well as jobs to non-locals and Central employees in Jammu and Kashmir so far safeguarded as special rights and privileges under articles 370 and 35A is seen following the exact opposite policy in another state. It will no doubt set a dangerous precedent in these increasingly socially divisive times that will not serve our economy well either.

## Court snub to Vedanta

Not many court verdicts bring cheer to a state. So, if the Madras high court telling the Vedanta group that it cannot reopen its Sterlite Copper plant in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi evoked merriment in various spheres, including politics, there is a history. Right from its inception, the mega smelter project has been embroiled in legal tangles, besides earning public ire. Despite a well-oiled PR machinery whirring continuously, the company could not endear itself to the local people, who had been opposing it. Besides, the environmentalists were also at its jugular.

The unprovoked, calculated police firing at peaceful protestors on May 22, 2018, that left 13 innocent persons dead, however, came as the last straw in changing the public perception all over the state. Sterlite Copper became a symbol of state tyranny for the people, who had earlier seen it as a typical "environment versus development" row. For, the company's closure in 2010 following a high court order was due to alleged violation of pollution control norms and the 100-day public protest that culminated with the police firing, too, was started against alleged degradation of the environment.

But the vignettes of the 2018 police action, beamed live on television, impelled the people to see Sterlite Copper as evil, all its propaganda on making India self-reliant on copper or the plethora of livelihood opportunities it offered for locals notwithstanding. That was why the local people, who had anyway vowed not to let the company open again, welcomed Tuesday's verdict as justice rendered to the sacrifices of the 13 martyrs.

On the flipside, Sterlite Copper's history has made many fear its emergence like a phoenix as in 2013 when the Supreme Court allowed its reopening with a fine of Rs 100 crore under the 'polluter pays' doctrine. That the EIA 2020 seeks to enforce such doctrines and the BJP was the only political party that did not welcome the high court verdict only adds to their concerns.

### THE ASIAN AGE

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Sanju Verma



## Modi govt has a modern and mature outlook on gender

Last year, on International Women's Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invoked the indomitable spirit of Nari Shakti by reaffirming how India fully endorsed the United Nations in its "think equal, build smart, innovate for change" motto with regard to women's empowerment. Again, during one of his inspiring Mann Ki Baat speeches in October 2019, Mr Modi recounted real life anecdotes of ordinary women who chose to do extraordinary things to make a difference to others' lives. Mr Modi shared the story of Major Khushbu Kanwar who is considered "Bharat ki Laxmi" by many; Khushbu is the daughter of a bus conductor and she led the all-women contingent of the Assam Rifles. Narrating another motivating story, Mr Modi spoke about a 92-year-old woman who had been providing free drinking water to travellers at Gwallor railway station for many years. During his Vijaydashmi address in October, Prime Minister Modi said, "In the last nine days we worshipped Ma Durga. Taking that

spirit ahead, let us always work towards furthering empowerment, as well as the dignity of women. During Mann Ki Baat, I had spoken about 'Ghar ki Laxmi' and 'Bharat ki Laxmi'. This Diwali, let us celebrate the accomplishments of our Nari Shakti. This can be our Laxmi puja."

On August 15, 2020, in keeping with his women-centric governance model, Mr Modi pointed out that now women have an opportunity to have permanent employment in the Indian Army and Indian Navy, something that was unthinkable earlier. He added, "Whenever women got an opportunity, they made India proud. The country is now determined to provide equal opportunities of self-employment and employment to women. Now, women are also working in coalmines. Our daughters are scaling heights by flying fighter planes."

But if there was one thing that stirred the imagination of 1.38 billion people more than anything else, it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unabashed acknowledgement

from the ramparts of the Red Fort of how 6,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras had provided around five crore sanitary pads at ₹1 to poor women in rural India. Despite all the bombast about 21st century women, the harsh reality is that even in the most educated, elite, modern and seemingly civilised societies, menstruation is often a topic that is taboo. It should not be, but it has come to be a source of embarrassment, with men squirming at the very mention of the word "menstruation". Hence, for Mr Modi, an international leader of towering reputation, to openly embrace and mainstream the issue of women's hygiene is not mere symbolism. By doing what he did, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a strong message. From defining the nation's first menstrual hygiene protocol, amending the Medical Termination Pregnancy Act of 1971, giving women reproductive rights over their bodies and increasing the foetal gestation period from 20 to 24 weeks, welcoming more women recruits in the NCC, to criminalising the inhuman and unconstitutional practice of instant

triple talaq and setting up a committee to explore an increase in marriageable age from 18 to 21 years for women, the Modi government has truly exhibited a bold, woman-friendly approach which is both mature and modern.

Banning commercial surrogacy, which led to mushrooming of illegal IVF and surrogacy clinics, was yet another bold move by the Modi government. Now, only married Indian couples, who have been together for a minimum of five years and been deemed medically unfit by a doctor or practitioner to conceive children naturally, will be allowed to depend on a surrogate. The move now makes it difficult for people to run a "rent a womb" business and exploit women in the economically weaker sections, who are often left in the dark about their rights.

Women's empowerment is not just about gender equality. It also means more jobs, higher safety, protection of the girl child and, most importantly, just "letting women be". If there is one leader who has recognised women for what they are and who

they are, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Whether it is providing free cooking gas via the famous PM Ujjwala Yojana to over 8.5 crore poor households, financial inclusion via 22 crore new bank accounts for women only from a total of 40 crore Jan Dhan accounts, the Mahila Shakti Kendras to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development or the Mahila-E-Haats for facilitating direct contact between vendors and buyers, the Modi government has always been ahead of the curve. The government's holistic approach in making Beti Bachao Beti Padhao a reality is best amplified by the fact that out of 25 crore loans given under the Mudra Yojana, 70 per cent of the beneficiaries have been women. The entrepreneurship ecosystem for women has taken a massive leap of faith under Mr Modi and this is just the beginning, with a lot more to come.

*The writer is an economist, chief spokesperson for BJP's Mumbai unit and bestselling author of 'Truth & Dare' — The Modi Dynamic*

Subhani



## 'Lockdown generation' at risk: Save their jobs



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Sahil, a South Delhi manicurist, is back at work. His salon reopened in June. He did not get his salary for April and May, during the lockdown, when the parlour was shut. Now he has some work, but no regular salary. The footfalls are too few, his bosses say. Sahil has to make do with just 30 per cent of the amount the customers pay for his services. "My earnings at the end of the month barely cover my expenses. But I have no choice, I have to come to work just to keep my "job", he says, from behind a mask and a face shield. Sahil is in his twenties, single and lives with his family. He concedes that he is relatively lucky. Without family support, he says, he wouldn't have been able to survive in Delhi on his current earnings.

Sahil could well be the face of the "lockdown generation". In the time of the pandemic, his story is all too common. According to recent data from the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), one of India's leading business information companies, 17.7 million regular salaried jobs were lost in April alone this year.

By July, that figure had shot up to 18.9 million, CMIE data shows. The CMIE data analysis underlines a grim fact during Unlock 3.0. The economy has been opening up in a phased manner since June, and some of the "jobs" are coming back, but the "recovery" has been largely in informal jobs. More and more young people find themselves in Sahil's situation. "While salaried jobs are not lost easily, once lost they are also far more difficult to retrieve," CMIE notes.

The beauty industry, one of the largest job-generators in this country during pre-coronavirus

times, is one among many sectors that has been badly hit. Even rich customers are wary of spending much time inside parlours though the staff wear protective gear and safety protocols are maintained. Many back alley parlours in urban India have shut down. The bigger parlours that have survived are functioning at 30-40 per cent of their staff strength. More than a dozen beauty salon workers died by suicide during the lockdown, according to reports in the media. The All India Hair and Beauty Association, which has around eight lakh salon professionals, have launched a "Save Salon India" campaign.

The grim data about job losses and further casualisation of the workforce in a country where only 21 per cent have regular salaried jobs bears out an unsettling reality.

While the elderly have absorbed the worst of the health impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, the young are likely to be disproportionately absorbing its economic and social impacts in the times to come.

A recently released report by the International Labour Organisation and the Asian Development Bank titled "Tackling the Covid-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific" estimates that in India, the job losses will affect at least 4.1 million youths.

Construction and agriculture have witnessed the major job losses among seven key sectors, the ILO-ADB report pointed. In India, two-thirds of firm-level apprenticeships and three quarters of internships were completely interrupted during the pandemic, the report said. Huge chunks of the service sector have also been gutted — hotels, restaurants, beauty parlours, wholesale and retail, real estate and

many other businesses are severely hit and millions of workers, especially the young, are seeing their dreams going up in smoke.

Those who have been laid off or are desperately looking for jobs are being asked to start their own businesses, but just how easy is it to follow that prescription and how are women faring in the current context?

A recent article by academics Dipa Sinha and Sonu Mitra in the *Leaflet* makes some pertinent points. "The post-Covid stimulus package focused majorly on easing credit availability for the MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) through these schemes. For example, the Covid package announced by the Government of India includes ₹50,000 crores in equity infusion for MSMEs, almost ₹3,00,000 crores in collateral-free loans for MSMEs and other businesses, and two per cent interest subvention on Mudra Sishu loans — 68 per cent of these beneficiaries being women. However, it does not mention special provisions for women-owned micro-enterprises or the sectors which have a concentration of women's businesses," say Sinha and Mitra. Further, as the authors point out, "the emphasis of the announcements remains on easing loans and credit rather than providing access to markets, which becomes crucial in the post-lockdown scenario. It is not only the disruption in supply, but the slackening of overall demand within the economy, which can potentially lead to closures of many such small businesses, especially for women — who are anyways perceived as 'secondary earn-

ers' within a household."

Analysing the distribution of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis is needed for the targeted policy intervention to help the most affected and more vulnerable sections of the population. Providing income support to workers and enterprises is an immediate policy concern, argue Basit Abdullah and Kashif Mansoor, research scholars at the Centre for Development Studies in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram, in a recent report for the Azim Premji University. "It is important that the youth are not long-term unemployed since it affects their future career prospects and earning potential. Massive short-term training and skill development programmes for youth along with social protection expansions will increase the chances of them finding employment in growing sectors post the pandemic. This will help limit the long-term effects of the pandemic on the youth labour market," the authors advocate.

The ILO has warned that young people could well be left behind in large numbers as the world finally emerges from the pandemic and that the initial shock to young people will last a decade or longer than a decade.

For India, a country with a dominantly young population, this is a terrifying scenario with political and social repercussions. India's economy was already in a slow-down mode. The lockdown knocked it down further. If there are no policies and initiatives specially targeting the youth — the lockdown generation — or if they are not followed through, and young people go without jobs for long stretches, the famed demographic dividend would turn upside down and morph into a demographic disaster.

We simply cannot let that happen.

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.*

### LETTERS

#### OLDER BRIDES?

Great initiative by the PM vis-a-vis raising the marriage age of women. It will decrease maternal and child mortality, and prove beneficial to the health of the mother and child. Though India has made great strides in this chapter, anaemia among adolescent and child mothers and the vicious cycle of intergenerational stunting and malnutrition continues to cast its dim shadow on the well-being of our society. Raising the marriage age will also psychologically free women to pursue jobs and higher studies as well as incentivise families to let their daughters to do the same which in turn will benefit society.

Satywan Saurabh Hissar, Haryana

#### FOR HERITAGE

ON AUGUST 20, the Supreme Court is to start hearing plea challenging the Central Vista project. The central vista redevelopment plan, as it is called, has angered historians, conservationists, former bureaucrats and others who say that the move will rob the country of its heritage and valuable public space. The 3.2-km stretch from the main gate of Rashtrapati Bhawan to India Gate features some of India's most iconic landmarks and valuable environment. With the country fighting coronavirus pandemic it is most inappropriate time to spend ₹20,000 crore on this project. Congress leader Shashi Tharoor is right in calling it a postposable luxury and suggesting that the money must instead be used to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.

M.C. Joshi

Lucknow

#### SHAME, FACEBOOK

AS A COLLEGE-GOER, I know for a fact that people in my age group get their news from social media platforms. We've seen social media as a space that's free of restrictions, but also one that caters to some sort of decorum. Hate speech is a vicious, never-ending cycle. It is of utmost importance to have certain rules in place. It is, however, unfair when you bend the rules to favour a few. When a company as huge and established as Facebook is seen openly favouring a political party, an internal inquiry is the need of the hour. I support the Congress Party's letter to CEO Mark Zuckerberg who should set his house in order.

Subhashini Ramasamy Mumbai



## IN BRIEF

**Mali coup leaders pledge poll**

**Bamako:** Mali's president said Wednesday he had resigned to avoid "bloodshed" after he was detained in a military coup, whose leaders pledged new elections to resolve a spiralling political crisis in the fragile West African nation. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's government had been beset by months of protests over economic stagnation, corruption and a brutal Islamist insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives. Rebel soldiers took Keita and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse into custody on Tuesday afternoon and drove the pair to a military base on the outskirts of Bamako.

**Kabul rocket hit: Death toll at 3**

**Kabul:** A rocket attack that struck Kabul this week as the city marked Afghanistan's Independence Day killed at least three people, including two members of President Ashraf Ghani's honour guard. Fourteen rockets were fired into central Kabul on Tuesday as the country celebrated the 101st anniversary of its independence, with one of the missiles slamming into the compound of the Arg presidential palace. Interior ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said three people, including two government employees, had been killed in the strike. Another six honour guard members were wounded when the rocket hit the palace compound shortly after Ghani had wrapped up his ceremonial duties. The Arg palace is in a highly fortified area of the capital.

**Norway expels Russian diplomat**

**Copenhagen:** Norway's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday expelled a Russian diplomat linked to the case of a man jailed on accusations of spying for Russia, officials said. "We have today informed the Russian ambassador that one of his employees is unwanted in Norway and has been asked to leave the country. This is because the person in question has performed actions that are not compatible with his role and status as a diplomat," Siri R. Svendsen said. It was unclear whether the expelled diplomat was the Russian intelligence officer that Norwegian authorities said was meeting with the suspected spy in an Oslo restaurant when he was arrested on Saturday. The accused man has not been officially identified beyond that he is a Norwegian national in his 50s who was born abroad. However, Norwegian broadcaster NRK identified him as Harsharn Singh Tathgar.

**ASTEROID COMES CLOSEST EVER TO EARTH**

**Washington, Aug. 19:** An asteroid the size of an SUV passed 1,830 miles above Earth, the closest asteroid ever observed passing by our planet, NASA said Tuesday.

If it had been on a collision course with Earth, the asteroid — named 2020 QG — would likely not have caused any damage, instead disintegrating in the atmosphere, creating a fireball's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) said in a statement.

The asteroid, which was about 10 to 20 feet long, passed above the southern Indian Ocean on Sunday at 0408 GMT.

It was moving at nearly eight miles per second, well below the geostationary orbit of about 22,000 miles at which most telecommunication satellites fly. The asteroid was first recorded six hours after its approach by the Zwicky Transient Facility, a telescope at the Palomar Observatory at the California Institute of Technology, as a long trail of light in the sky.

The US space agency said that similarly sized asteroids pass by Earth at a similar distance a few times per year.

But they're difficult to record, unless they're heading directly towards the planet, in which case the explosion in the atmosphere is usually noticed — as in Chelyabinsk, Russia in 2013, when the explosion of an object about 66 feet long shattered windows for miles, injuring a thousand people.

One of NASA's missions is to monitor larger asteroids (460 feet) that could actually pose a threat to Earth, but their equipment also tracks smaller ones.

"It's really cool to see a small asteroid come by this close, because we can see the Earth's gravity dramatically bends its trajectory," said Paul Chodas, the director of the Center for Near-Earth Object Studies at NASA.

**Protest in Palestine**

Palestinian youth burn an Israeli flag as they protest against the United Arab Emirates decision to normalise ties with Israel, in the village of Turmus Aya near the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah on Wednesday. — AFP

**Oz PM: Make vaccine mandatory as race to develop it gathers pace**

**Sydney, Aug. 19:** Australia's leader called Wednesday for Coronavirus immunisations to be mandatory, wading into ethical and safety debates raging around the world as the race to develop a vaccine gathers pace.

Almost 30 potential vaccines are currently being tested on humans across the globe in hope of ending a pandemic that has now killed more than 775,000 people and infected nearly 22 million, according to an AFP tally.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he wants all 25 million Australians to get the jab after the country secured access to a vaccine currently under development by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

"There are always exemptions for any vaccine on medical grounds, but that should be the only basis," he said.

Nations are scrambling to develop an immunisation or gain access to one of a handful of contenders in the final stages of clinical trials.

Upping the ante, Russia on August 11 said it had developed the world's first vaccine offering "sustainable immunity", and was in the final stage of human testing.

But the announcement was met with scepticism by the World Health Organization, which said it still needed a rigorous review, and scientists say it has been approved without large-scale trials.

Among the competitors, Brazilian health regulators on Tuesday gave the

**Iran surpasses 20K confirmed deaths from the Coronavirus**

**Tehran, Aug. 19:** Iran surpassed 20,000 confirmed deaths from the Coronavirus on Wednesday, the health ministry said the highest death toll for any Middle East country so far in the pandemic.

The announcement came as the Islamic Republic, which has been struggling with both the region's largest outbreak and the highest number of fatalities, went ahead with university entrance exams for over 1 million stu-

dents. Iran is also preparing for mass Shiite commemorations later this month.

Iran suffered the region's first major outbreak, seeing top politicians, health officials and religious leaders in its Shiite theocracy stricken with the virus. It has since struggled to contain the spread of the virus across this nation of 80 million people, initially beating it back only to see it spike again beginning in June.

Still, international experts remain suspicious of Iran's case counts. Even researchers in the Iranian parliament in April suggested the death toll is likely nearly double the officially reported figures, due to undercounting and because not everyone with breathing problems has been tested for the virus.

Iran reported its first case and death on the same day in February the Midwest's first outbreak of the virus. — Agencies

**Finland imposes tight border curbs**

**Helsinki, Aug. 19:** Finland has removed most EU countries from its "green travel list", with only arrivals from a handful of states now able to enter the country without restrictions, the government announced on Wednesday.

The tougher rules, aimed at halting the spread of the Coronavirus, mean

that only people coming from Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania will now be allowed into Finland without proving they have a valid reason for travel and self-isolating for two weeks.

Arrivals from Georgia, Rwanda and South Korea continue to be freely permitted. — AFP

green light to the final stage of trials on a vaccine by Johnson & Johnson.

The US pharmaceutical firm will test its drug on 7,000 volunteers in Brazil, authorities said, part of a

group of up to 60,000 worldwide.

South Africa, meanwhile, will launch clinical trials of a US-developed vaccine with 2,900 volunteers this week. — AFP

**Pope: Rich can't get priority for vaccine, poor need help**

**Vatican City, Aug. 19:** Pope Francis on Wednesday warned against any prospect that rich people would get priority for a coronavirus vaccine.

"The pandemic is a crisis. You don't come out of it the same — either better or worse," Francis said, adding improvised remarks to his planned speech for his weekly public audi-

ence. "We must come out better" from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pope said.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the Pope said, the world can't return to normality if normal means social injustice and degradation of the natural environment. He said: "How sad it would be if for the Covid-19 vaccine priority is given to the richest."

He also said it would be scandalous if all the economic assistance in the works, most of it using public funds, ends up reviving industries that don't help the poor or the environment.

"The pandemic has laid bare the difficult situation of the poor and the great inequality that reigns in the world," he said. — AP

**BRAZIL NOD TO FINAL TESTS OF J&J VACCINE**

**Rio de Janeiro, Aug. 19:** Brazilian health regulators said Tuesday they had approved Johnson & Johnson's experimental vaccine against the new Coronavirus for the final stage of clinical trials, the fourth vaccine to receive widespread testing in the hard-hit country.

The US pharmaceutical company's subsidiary Janssen will test the vaccine on 7,000 volunteers across seven states in Brazil, part of a group of up to 60,000 worldwide, health regulator Anvisa said in a statement.

It said the test would be a randomized, controlled, double-blind Phase 3 trial, or large-scale testing on humans — the last step before regulatory approval. "Another vaccine study has been approved in Brazil, which is a very important development," Anvisa official Gustavo Mendes said in a video on the regulator's website.

Brazil has become a key testing ground in the search for a vaccine against Covid-19, since the virus is still spreading fast in the country.

The South American nation has the second-highest number of infections and deaths in the pandemic. — AFP

**Biden nominated to take on Trump****Party convention says Don's chaos will end**

**Milwaukee, Aug. 19:** US Democrats nominated Joe Biden as their 2020 presidential candidate on Tuesday, offering the Washington veteran as a "man of courage" who would sweep away the "chaos" of four years under Donald Trump.

Viewers tuning in to Day 2 of the four-day Democratic National Convention saw presenters affirm Biden's character and leadership while drawing a sharp contrast with the brash Republican scrambling to remain in the White House after November's election.

In an unprecedented and elaborate roll call vote that took place entirely online due to the Coronavirus pandemic, all 50 states and seven territories announced their vote tallies that cemented Biden's role as the party flagbearer.

It was a diverse array of politicians, everyday Americans and even some of Biden's erstwhile rivals who helped nominated the 77-year-old Biden.

"Well thank you very, very much, from the bot-

tom of my heart," a beaming Biden said in a live video link.

"It means the world to me and my family," he added, reminding viewers he will deliver a formal acceptance speech on Thursday at the conclusion of the four-day jamboree.

The nomination was a formality as he had already won the majority of the more than 3,900 delegates back in June.

The roll call came on Day 2 of the mostly virtual Democratic National Convention aimed at celebrating the party's candidate and welcoming independents and frustrated Republicans into their political movement to oust Trump from the White House.

The proceedings included a series of presentations by party leaders past and future who unleashed their own arguments against the White House incumbent and urged voters to rally around Biden.

The lineup featured 95-year-old president Jimmy Carter, who served one term from 1977, and 1990s commander-in-chief Bill

Clinton, who warned that the Trump White House is swirling with chaos instead of the competence necessary to address the nation's crises.

"At a time like this, the Oval Office should be a command center. Instead, it's a storm centre. There's only chaos," Clinton said.

"Just one thing never changes — his determination to deny responsibility and shift the blame," Clinton said. "The buck never stops there."

The night's emotional underpinning was delivered by Jill Biden, who closed out the night with a compelling profile of the man she married in 1977.

The educator from Pennsylvania delivered a personal, high-stakes prime-time testimonial describing how the personal tragedy of the death of Biden's first wife and daughter in a 1972 car crash has shaped him.

"How do you make a broken family whole?" she said. "The same way you make a nation whole. With love and understanding — and with small acts of compassion." — AFP

**HK bars AI flights till Aug.-end after passengers test Covid +ve**

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** Hong Kong has banned Air India flights till the end of August after some passengers on one of its flights recently tested Covid-positive post arrival, the government official said.

"The Hong Kong government has banned all Air India flights till August-end," the official added.

Air India did not respond to the PTI's request for comment. The airline had said on Twitter on Monday: "Due to restrictions imposed by Hong Kong Authorities, AI 310/315, Delhi Hong Kong Delhi of 18th August 2020 stands postponed. Next update in this regard will be intimated soon. Passengers may

please contact Air India Customer Care for assistance."

Besides India, a pre-flight Covid-19 negative test result certificate is mandatory for all passengers coming from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa and the United States, according to the Hong Kong government's rules. An airline operating a flight to Hong Kong from any of these nine countries has to submit a form before departure stating that all passengers onboard have Covid-19 negative certificates. — PTI

**EU leaders talk crisis in Belarus**

**Brussels, Aug. 19:** EU leaders held an emergency video summit Wednesday to discuss the crisis in Belarus, as the country's exiled opposition chief urged them to reject President's disputed reelection. France, Germany and EU Council President Charles Michel have all urged Lukashenko's close ally Russia to push for dialogue to end the crisis peacefully, after security services brutally broke up peaceful demonstrations calling for the long-ruling strongman to quit.

The EU is already working on a new round of sanctions against Belarus, targeting those involved in allegedly fixing the August 9 vote and in the bloody repression of protests, which have shaken Lukashenko's grip on the ex-Soviet republic as never before.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that his country could intervene in the crisis and this week warned against "unacceptable" foreign interference in Belarus or pressure on its leadership. As the meeting began, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the EU "cannot accept the result of these elections" and called for "resolute and concerted" action.

"Our message to the regime is clear: violence is unacceptable, political prisoners must be released and human rights must be respected," he tweeted. "Dialogue must lead to a solution that reflects the vote of the people". Lukashenko's claim to victory in the election with 80 percent of the ballot sparked the largest demonstrations in Belarus since it gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, a 37-year-old political novice who fled to neighbouring Lithuania after claiming victory in the vote, called on EU leaders "not to recognise these fraudulent elections". — Agencies

**IMRAN: PAK FUTURE LINKED WITH CHINA**

**SHAFIQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 19**

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that Pakistan's future was linked with China. In an interview with a Pakistani television channel, he said it should be clear that "our future is tied to China which has stood by Pakistan through thick and thin." He said that both countries recognised each other's importance and were further strengthening mutual ties. Unfortunately, Western countries are using India against China, he added. He said Chinese President Xi Jinping was scheduled to visit Pakistan in May this year but his visit was delayed due to the coronavirus outbreak. His visit is now expected towards the end of the year, Mr Khan said.

The PM said Israel would not be recognised until a just and fair solution to the Palestinian problem is given.

**Keith Melton, an espionage historian, took four decades to find the crime instrument****MURDER | WEAPON**

**Washington, Aug. 19:** The ice axe that was plunged into Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky's skull during his gruesome murder in Mexico on August 20, 1940 is today among the prized exhibits at Washington's International Spy Museum.

It took Keith Melton, an espionage historian for the CIA, nearly four decades to find it — as well as to figure out why the assassin sent by Joseph Stalin, Ramon Mercader, used the axe to kill Trotsky.

Melton, who combed the world to amass the collection of ingenious and

macabre tools of the black arts of spying that fill the museum, had his eye on finding the weapon since the 1970s.

It had disappeared shortly after the assassination. Following clues from Mexico to Moscow and countries in between, Melton repeatedly came up empty-handed. "I like detective hunts. This really is one that challenged me," he said. As he searched, he also focused on a mystery: Why choose an ice axe?

An experienced mountaineer, Mercader was handy with the tool, also known as a piolet.

But just shooting the 61-year-old revolutionary would have been easier, after several failed attempts crafted by the Russian NKVD, or secret police.

Trotsky never left his small compound in the Mexican capital where he went into exile, protected by a handful of armed guards. But Mercader gained entry to the revolutionary's small entourage as the lover of a New York Trotskyite, who believed he was a left-leaning son of a wealthy Belgian diplomat — a cover designed by the Russian NKVD, or secret police.

After moving to Mexico

● **RAMON MERCADER, the assassin, gained entry to the revolutionary's small entourage as the lover of a New York Trotskyite, who believed he was a left-leaning son of a wealthy Belgian diplomat — a cover designed by the Russian NKVD, or secret police.**

City, over time Mercader could enter and leave the compound without being searched. Shooting Trotsky was one option, but it risked noise that could

make escaping difficult.

Then, weeks before the planned act, Melton says, Trotsky installed a new metal gate at the entry controlled by an electric switch in the guard booth.

That meant Mercader would have to kill Trotsky quietly and instantaneously with the ice axe's jagged pick, so that he could walk out, the guards unsuspecting. "I had a rare ability to handle the piolet, since two blows were sufficient for me to crack through an enormous block of ice," Mercader told police afterward. Where to get one in Mexico, though? As it tur-

ns out, the son of the owner of Mercader's residence had one, and so he stole it.

Mercader cut the long handle down by half, and entered the compound on the day of the attack hiding it — along with a backup pistol and knife — under a raincoat.

It did not go as planned: The axe went 2.75 inches deep into Trotsky's skull but did not immediately kill him. The victim shouted and struggled, the guards were alerted, and Mercader was captured.

Trotsky died in hospital the next day. And, after

being displayed at a police press conference, the grisly weapon disappeared.

Over the years, Melton saw numerous axes purported to be the original, including one on display in a Prague museum. But none were the right brand or model, from the Austrian maker Werkgen Fulpmes.

Finally, in 2005, the daughter of a former Mexican police officer, Ana Alicia Salas, revealed she had kept the axe under her bed for years. It matched perfectly, and Melton eventually bought it for his collection — for how much, he won't say. — AFP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,614.79	0.22
Nifty 50	11,408.40	0.20
S&P 500*	3,394.42	0.14
Dollar (₹)	74.82	-0.07
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.28	-0.96
Euro (₹)	89.41	-0.54
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,269*640	1.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.32	-0.14
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.008	0.022
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.654	-0.015

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

GST Council to discuss states' compensation

The GST Council is likely to meet on August 27 to discuss the compensation payout to states and the opinion of the attorney general on the legality of market borrowing to meet revenue shortfall. Sources said the 41st meeting of the council would be a single agenda meeting on states' compensation to be held via video conferencing. Besides, a full-fledged meeting of the Council would be held on Sept. 19.

Inter-ministerial meet on royalty payments soon



The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has convened an inter-ministerial meeting on royalty payments on Aug. 25, an official said. DPIIT secretary Guru-prasad Mohapatra will chair the meeting. Officials from commerce department, RBI and revenue department would participate in the deliberations. Earlier, a proposal was under consideration to impose some kind of limits on royalty payments.

Pvt placement of bonds up 22% in April-July

Companies raised Rs 2.57 lakh crore through issuance of bonds on private placement basis in the first four months of the ongoing fiscal, up 22 per cent from the year-ago period. According to Sebi data, companies listed on BSE and NSE garnered a total of Rs 2,57,387 crore during April-July, 2020-21. In comparison, listed firms raised Rs 2,08,795 crore in the first four months of 2019-20.

Dr Reddy's Lab launches Avigan in Indian market

Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd announced the launch of Avigan (favipiravir) 200 mg tablets in India. The launch is part of the global licensing agreement with Fujifilm Toyama Chemical Co Ltd that grants the Indian drug maker the exclusive rights to manufacture, sell and distribute the tablets in India, said M. V. Ramana, CEO of branded markets (India and emerging markets), Dr Reddy's Laboratories.

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■ Disease-specific policies suggested Health cover set to overtake motor

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 19

Health insurance has become the biggest line of business under the general insurance category and by the year end, it would overtake motor insurance, however the protection gap in tier-2 and 3 cities remains a concern as it has serious implications on the financial health of the poor, said the insurance regulator on Wednesday.

T Alamelu, member-non-life at the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) while speaking at a Ficci virtual health insurance conference suggested that insurers could focus on launching disease-specific policies to increase the customer base.

Citing the example of the huge sale of corona-specific insurance products, Alamelu said that as of August 14, a total of 7.50 lakh policies covering 10.28 lakh lives have been sold under Corona Kavach by insurers. The premium collected was Rs 215 crore. Under the Corona Rakshak policy which is a benefit-based health plan, insurers have sold 1.83 lakh policies covering 2.17 lakh lives and collected premiums of Rs 29 crore. This is in contrast to Aarogya Sanjeevani policy, a standard health insurance policy launched in April 2020 where insurers have sold only 72,000



policies and collected Rs 33 crore premium only.

"It just shows that there is a fear factor among the public so they are finding a lot of value in the Corona Kavach. It's a short-term policy and relatively cheaper, hence people are buying it in large numbers. Also, not many people have opted for the three-and-a-half-month tenure and most have opted for nine-and-a-half months, as they believe the virus is not going away any time soon," Alamelu said.

Covid-19-specific plans have tenure of 3.5 months, 6.5 months or 9.5 months.

Going forward, Alamelu said there is a need to re-think the way health insurance is sold and to ensure that the product creates more value for customers. "This is what the customer is looking for,"

Health insurance companies should focus on developing disease-specific policies to cover a larger population rather than

focusing only on healthy individuals, she added.

"Insurers could look at blending wellness with health insurance. For example, someone who has diabetes could be offered a health plan with a wellness element so that the policyholders are also motivated to stay fit," she said.

Speaking about the gap in health insurance Alamelu said that even as 27 lakh Indians have tested positive for Covid-19 so far, only 1.25 lakh health insurance claims have been filed. However, there is a rise in awareness as far as health insurance is concerned. Alamelu said there have been 131 new health products between March and now.

"We have almost 96 per cent people who have not claimed any health insurance under Covid-19. Having a minimal health insurance cover with exclusions is atleast better than having no medical cover," she added.

Iron ore's stunning rally faces challenge

ANNIE LEE AUG. 19

Iron ore's stunning rally this year, underpinned by China's demand for the steel-making raw material, risks slowing as miners ramp up output.

The industrial material blasted past \$120 a tonne this week, propelled by China's stimulus to prop up its pandemic-hit economy and supply disruptions that constrained output of the raw material.

Miners, who have gained from the more than 30 per cent jump in iron ore prices this year, now see the rally as unsustainable. BHP Group expects prices to ease from current levels while volatility remains. That's similar to view of top producer Vale SA, which said last month it doesn't see support for high prices in the short-to medium-term.

Iron ore demand from mills in China is likely to remain strong, analysts at ING Bank NV said in a note on Wednesday, adding that uncertainties over Brazilian supply in recent months has also been supportive for



the market. "But as these uncertainties subside, we would expect prices to ease," according to the note.

Supply from Brazil, which is in the grip of the coronavirus, has also been gradually picking up with 1.68 million tonnes shipped daily in the first 10 business days of August, an increase from 1.48 million tonnes a day in the 23 business days of July. Exports from Australia's leading port also hit a record July.

China's economic stimulus has raised hopes of a recovery in downstream activity, bolstering the outlook for iron ore demand. Crude steel output topped 90 million tonnes for a third straight month in July, and is on course to breach 1 billion tonnes this year.

—Bloomberg

Apple hits \$2 trillion mark in market cap

New York, Aug. 19: Apple Inc became the first publicly listed US company with a \$2 trillion stock market value on Wednesday, as Wall Street investors put aside challenges to its iPhone ecosystem in favor of bets it will only prosper more in the post-coronavirus world. Shares in the company have surged since blowout quarterly results in July that saw the iPhone maker eclipse Saudi Aramco as the world's most valuable listed company, up about 57 per cent in value so far in 2020.

The moves reflect growing investor confidence in Apple's shift towards relying less on sales of iPhones and other gadgets and more on services for its users, as well as a broad shift by big institutional investors during the coronavirus crisis.

With Amazon, Microsoft and Google-owner Alphabet, all now worth around \$1 trillion or more, the big US tech companies are together worth more than \$6 trillion.

Cupertino, California-based Apple surprised Wall Street as it was able to get loyal shoppers buy iPhones, iPads and Macs online even as several brick-and-mortar stores remained closed due to the coronavirus lockdowns in various states.

—Reuters

Auto parts firms see 30% fall in revenue in 2 years

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 19

The total revenues of the automotive component industry in FY20 fell 11.7 per cent to Rs 3.49 lakh crore (\$49.2 billion) from the previous year, the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (Acma) said on Wednesday.

Deepak Jain, president at Acma said that there will be about 25-40 per cent de-growth this year and a 30-35 per cent de-growth in two years.

The Acma, the apex body representing the auto parts sector, released the findings of its Industry Performance Review for FY20 on Wednesday.

"The revenues in June quarter was at 15 per cent level compared to the March quarter. Month-on-month, there is an improvement and we see this improving till the festive period. Nevertheless, over a two-year period, we are seeing a 30-35 per cent de-growth," Jain said.

The turnover of the auto component aftermarket (the segment where components are sold in the market freely, through shops) at Rs 69,381 crore (\$9.8 billion) in FY20 remained stable, while sales to original equipment manufacturers in the domestic market declined 17 per cent to Rs 2.87 lakh crore (\$40.5 billion), both over the previous year.

In FY20, imports and exports declined by 11.4 per cent and 3.2 per cent,



respectively. Imports stood at Rs 1.09 lakh crore (\$15.4 billion) and exports at Rs 1.02 lakh crore (\$14.5 billion).

"The automotive industry faced a prolonged slowdown in FY20, with vehicle sales in all segments plummeting significantly," Jain pointed out.

Subdued vehicle demand, investments made for transition from BS-IV to BS-VI emission norms, liquidity crunch, lack of clarity on policy for electrification of vehicles and slowdown in key export markets, among others, had an adverse impact on the performance of the components sector as also on its expansion plans, he said.

In the wake of the financial stress, the government in June, approved a Rs 20,000-crore aid package to the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector.

Several Tier -III companies from the auto component sector also bene-

fited from this initiative. Timely release of payments from the automakers helped tide over the crunch.

Jain said the revival in demand for vehicles since the second half of June has resulted in an uptick in demand for auto parts. Several two-wheelers and car makers have also witnessed demand jumping back to the pre-COVID levels, he said.

"With the unlocking of the economy, growth seems to be returning to the industry with uptick in vehicle consumption, especially in the two-wheeler, passenger vehicle and the tractor segments, although sales of commercial vehicles continue to be challenged," Jain said.

To allow for uninterrupted production in the automotive value chain, despite local lockdowns, Acma has recommended to the government to accord 'continuous production industry' status to the automotive industry.

World Bank says may project steeper growth contraction

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The World Bank on Wednesday indicated that it may further lower its growth projections for India and said critical reforms in key areas such as health, labour, land, skills and finance are needed to come out stronger from the Covid-19 crisis.

The World Bank had in May projected that the Indian economy will contract by 3.2 per cent in FY 2020-21 (April 2020 to March 2021) and rebound slowly in the next financial year.

"Further challenges

have emerged in recent weeks which are likely to weigh on the prospects in the near term. These risks include the virus continuing to spread; further deterioration in the global outlook; and additional strains projected on the financial sector.

"Keeping these factors in mind, a steeper contraction may be projected in the revised outlook that will be available in October 2020," it said in its India Development Update released on Wednesday.

It projected India's fiscal deficit to rise to 6.6 per

cent of GDP in FY21 and remain elevated at 5.5 per cent in the following year.

"The pandemic has afflicted India at a time when its economy had already been decelerating," the World Bank said. Defying a long-term accelerating path, real GDP growth moderated from 7.0 per cent in 2017-18 to 6.1 per cent in 2018-19 and further to 4.2 per cent in 2019-20.

"The outlook has now changed substantially, and the economy will likely contract in the current fiscal year," it said.

—PTI

Indian lockdown hurts Walmart global sales

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Walmart's international sales dipped 6.8 per cent in Q2 FY21, mainly due to the lock-down in India as well as that in Africa and Central America. However, since the lifting of the lockdown Flipkart's gross merchandise value has crossed pre-Covid levels.

Walmart International's net sales for Q2 FY21 saw a decline of 6.8 per cent to \$27.2 billion, the company

said in its results release. "Net sales included the effects of the government-mandated closure of the company's Flipkart business in India for a portion of the quarter, as well as similar actions in markets in Africa and Central America," the company said.

Changes in currency rates negatively affected net sales by about \$2.4 billion. Excluding currency, net sales would have been \$29.6 billion, an increase of 1.6 per cent.

Since the market reopened post lock-down, GMV at Flipkart has exceeded pre-Covid levels, says Walmart. Gross profit rate moved up 74 basis points due to reduced sales of fuel in the UK and limited operations of Flipkart.

The company's total revenue, however, witnessed an increase of \$7.4 billion or 5.6 per cent to \$137.7 billion. This was mainly driven by Walmart US' comparable store sales, which rose 9.3 per cent.

Marriott faces London lawsuit over data breach

KIRSTIN RIDLEY LONDON, AUG. 19

Marriott International, a leading hotel operator, is facing a London class action brought by millions of former guests demanding compensation after their personal records were hacked in one of the largest data breaches in history.

Martin Bryant, founder of technology and media consultancy Big Revolution, is leading the claim for English and Welsh-domiciled guests after more than 300 million customer records from Marriott's global database, potentially including passport and credit card details, were hacked between 2014 and 2018.

"I hope this case will raise awareness of the value of our personal data, result in fair compensation ... and also serve notice to other data owners that they must hold our data responsibly," he said in a statement.

The lawsuit, which seeks unspecified damages for loss of control of personal data, automatically includes guests who made a reservation for one of the former Starwood brand hotels—including Sheraton Hotels & Resorts and St. Regis Hotels—before September 10, 2018.

Bryant is represented by law firm Hausfeld and the case is funded by Harbour Litigation.

Around seven million British guest records were compromised by the hack, according to the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which last year proposed to fine Marriott 99.2 million pounds (\$133 million).

Marriott announced in 2018 that hackers had accessed its Starwood hotels reservation database and notified the FBI. Attorneys filed a lawsuit in a Maryland federal court within hours.—Reuters

FB health scarers get billions of views

ELIZABETH CULLIFORD AUG. 19

Misleading health content has racked up an estimated 3.8 billion views on Facebook Inc over the past year, peaking during the Covid-19 pandemic, advocacy group Avaaz said in a new report here on Wednesday.

The report found that content from 10 "super-spreader" sites sharing health misinformation had almost four times as many Facebook views in April 2020 as equivalent content from the sites of 10 leading health institutions, such as the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease



Control and Prevention. The social media giant, which has been under pressure to curb misinformation on its platform, has made amplifying credible health information a key element of its response. It also started removing misinformation about the

novel coronavirus outbreak that it said could cause imminent harm.

"Facebook's algorithm is a major threat to public health. Mark Zuckerberg promised to provide reliable information during the pandemic, but his algorithm is sabotaging those

efforts by driving many of Facebook's 2.7 billion users to health misinformation-spreading networks," said Fadi Quran, campaign director at Avaaz.

"We share Avaaz's goal of limiting misinformation, but their findings don't reflect the steps we've taken to keep it from spreading on our services," said a Facebook company spokeswoman.

"Thanks to our global network of fact-checkers, from April to June, we applied warning labels to 98 million pieces of COVID-19 misinformation and removed 7 million pieces of content that could lead to imminent

harm. We've directed over 2 billion people to resources from health authorities and when someone tries to share a link about COVID-19, we show them a pop-up to connect them with credible health information," she said.

Avaaz's report also said that warning labels from fact-checkers were applied inconsistently even when misinformation had been found to be false.

The report tracked how content from a sample of misinformation-sharing websites was shared on Facebook by interpreting available Facebook data between May 2019 and May 2020.

—Reuters



## SHORT TAKES

## Barcelona name Koeman as coach

**Barcelona:** Barcelona will try to end one of the worst crises in club history with Ronald Koeman as their coach. Barcelona officially announced a deal with Koeman on Wednesday, a day after club president Josep Bartomeu had said the Dutchman accepted the coaching offer and only details needed to be sorted out. The official announcement comes five days after the team's humiliating 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinals. Barcelona said the former defender's deal runs through June 2022. Koeman replaces the fired Quique Setien, who stayed only 25 matches on the job after taking over from Ernesto Valverde in January. Barcelona said Koeman will be officially introduced later. — *AP*

## Nagal through to Last 8 in Prague

**Prague, Czech Republic:** India's top singles player Sumit Nagal advanced to the singles quarterfinals of the Prague Open with a come-from-behind win over lower-ranked Kiri Lehecka. Sixth seed and world number 127 had to battle hard to prevail 5-7, 7-6 (4) 6-3 in two hours and 21-minute second round contest of the Euro 137,560 clay court event.

Nagal is expected to meet three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka in the next round. The Swiss is up against Germany's Oscar Otte in his second round contest. Nagal is also competing in the doubles draw. The other Indians featuring in the doubles are Divij Sharan and N. Sriram Balaji. — *PTI*

## Former India goalie Maity dies

**Mumbai:** Former India goalkeeper Bhaskar Maity died at a Navi Mumbai hospital due to brain hemorrhage on Wednesday. Maity was 67 and is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. "He (Maity) passed away at around 6PM at the MGM hospital in Vashi following brain hemorrhage," his family friend Shashikant Prasad said. Maity represented India against Iraq during the 1978 Asian Games at Bangkok. He played for Maharashtra from 1975-1979 in the Santosh Trophy. He also played for Mafatlal Sports Club from 1974-80 and the Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers from 1981-82. After his retirement, Maity was made the coach of the RCF football team. All India Football Federation president Praful Patel expressed grief over Maity's demise. — *PTI*

## MAGIC HOLD ON TO UPEND MIGHTY BUCKS

**Los Angeles:** Nikola Vucevic tallied 35 points as the Orlando Magic upset the top seeded Milwaukee Bucks 122-110 in the opening game of their NBA Eastern Conference playoff series on Tuesday. The Magic got off to a quick start to seize a double digit lead then blunted a second-half rally by the Bucks, who boast the league's top player Giannis Antetokounmpo. Orlando came into the series as big underdogs against the NBA's best all-around team. Vucevic, of Montenegro, also had 14 rebounds and four assists. Terrence Ross finished with 18 points and six rebounds, while DJ Augustin added 11 points and 11 assists for Orlando, who shot 49 percent from the field and made 16 baskets from beyond the arc. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## CARIBBEAN PREMIER LEAGUE

St Lucia Zouks vs Barbados Trident from 7.30 pm; Trinbago Knight Riders vs Jamaica Tallawahs from 3 am (Friday). Both matches on Star Sports 1, 2, HD

## NBA PLAYOFFS

Miami Heat vs Indiana Pacers from 10.30 pm; Milwaukee Bucks vs Orlando Magic from 3.30 am (Friday); Los Angeles Lakers vs Portland Trailblazers from 6.30 am (Friday). All matches on Sony Six, HD

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## NINJA NEYMAR

## Brazilian sends PSG into first ever Champions League final

**Lisbon, Aug. 19:** Paris Saint-Germain are through to the final of the Champions League for the first time after goals by Marquinhos, Angel Di Maria and Juan Bernat saw them ease to a 3-0 win over RB Leipzig in a one-sided semi-final in Lisbon on Tuesday.

It was 2-0 at half-time, with the first two goals set up by Neymar, the Brazilian again outstanding at the Estadio da Luz, just as he had been in last week's quarter-final against Atalanta.

Bernat's goal came in the 55th minute and snuffed out any hopes Leipzig had of a comeback. They could not handle the world's most expensive player, or the many other outstanding performers in the PSG side, who no longer appear overcome by the sense of occasion that surrounds a Champions League knockout tie.

After seeming to invent ever more absurd ways to lose in Europe in recent years — the 6-1 loss against Barcelona in 2017 and last year's defeat by Manchester United in the last 16 stand out — despite all the investment by the club's Qatari owners, here they lived up to their billing.

"We wanted to make history and we did it," Di Maria told French broadcaster RMC Sport. "If we continue the way we played today, that could help us in the final."

Thomas Tuchel's team are the competition's first French finalists since Monaco in 2004.

Nine years after Qatar Sports Investments bought a moribund mid-table Ligue 1 team and began turning them into the untouchable force in France, they are now one game away from winning the trophy that really matters to them.

"It is a dream but I hope the dream doesn't end here tonight," said PSG's Qatari president, Nasser Al-Khelaifi.

There is little doubt that the context in Lisbon is helping. PSG have only needed to perform for 90 minutes instead of over two legs in the latter stages of this season's tournament, so badly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. — *AFP*



Paris Saint-Germain players celebrate their win at the end of the Champions League semi-final match against Leipzig at the Luz Stadium in Lisbon on Tuesday. PSG won 3-0. — *AFP*

## Tuchel hails 'incredible' PSG

**Lisbon, Aug. 19:** Thomas Tuchel heaped praise on his Paris Saint-Germain side after they cruised into their first ever Champions League final, putting the French side on the brink of coveted European glory.

"Incredible, that's why we're here to play in the final and to win," Tuchel told French broadcaster RMC.

"We showed our quality, our hunger, determination. A good mix which showed we deserved the win."

"The team showed once again the hunger two win, to play together, to suffer. They made the most of it."

PSG's easy 3-0 win over RB Leipzig at the Estadio da Luz in Lisbon showed all the composure on a big European occasion that they have lacked in recent seasons.



PSG's Angel Di Maria (left) celebrates with Neymar after scoring against Leipzig. — *AFP*

"I felt the pressure before the game, it wasn't easy. I have players who love the pressure of key matches. I'm never relaxed," said Tuchel.

"We know well that Bayern are the favourites, it will be difficult against Lyon, but we'll see. It's

obviously the biggest challenge of my career."

## DI MARIA 'WON'T SLEEP' AFTER REACHING FINAL

Angel Di Maria said he will find it difficult to sleep after scoring in PSG's victory over Leipzig to reach the final.

Di Maria claimed his side's second goal in a fixture played in a near-empty Estadio da Luz in Lisbon due to the coronavirus pandemic. "It's going to be hard to sleep tonight with the final on my mind," Di Maria told broadcasters RMC Sport.

"We're very happy. The team worked well, we succeeded in taking PSG to the final. Now we're in the final which is important for us and if we continue like today then it will help us for the final," he added.

The semi-finals included two sides each from Ligue 1 and Germany's Bundesliga and Di Maria said it underlined the standard of both competitions. "We have proven French and German leagues are high quality, same level as other leagues and we have to keep doing what we have been," he said. — *AFP*

## COVID | SCARE

## Sucha's ordeal while treatment

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** Asian Games medallist runner Sucha Singh has recovered from COVID-19 but not before a nightmarish experience while undergoing treatment.

Giving an account of his ordeal, Singh said it was "disrespectful" that an athlete, who has won laurels for the country, had to endure so much at this stage of life since he had to run from pillar-to-post to even get the test done.

Singh had won an individual 400m bronze in the 1970 Asian Games and was a part of the silver winning teams in 4x400m relay in the 1970 and 1974 Asian Games.

He had tested positive for coronavirus on August 4 but has now been discharged after another test on August 17 returned negative.

The septuagenarian, who was admitted to PIMS hospital in Jalandhar, said the treatment burnt a big hole in his pocket as he had to arrange ₹2.5 lakh with the help of his relatives.

"I had high fever and cough on the intervening night of July 25-26 and I consulted a doctor at a clinic. The fever and cough did not subside and after a few days I decided to get tested," Singh said from his home in Jalandhar.

But the ordeal began after that as he had to wait for two days to get the test done.

"I got the test done for which I paid ₹5000 at a hos-

● **Sucha Singh, who was admitted to PIMS hospital in Jalandhar, said the treatment burnt a big hole in his pocket as he had to arrange ₹2.5 lakh with the help of his relatives.**

pital (at Jalandhar). They sent me to Patel Hospital where for what was a two-hour test, I spent two nights there and had to pay ₹30,000.

"For recovery from coronavirus, I was admitted to PIMS Hospital on August 4. The next day, the staff asked me deposit ₹1 lakh before 12 noon for treatment and I did that," he said.

Singh said he had to borrow money from his relatives to pay the hospital bill.

"After one week they asked me to deposit another one lakh. I had to ask my relatives for help. They gave me the money and only then I could get discharged from the hospital. I have spent ₹2.5 lakh in total.

"This is really disrespectful for a former athlete."

Singh was one of the top quarter-milers in the 1970s and he won a hat-trick of titles in the Nationals from 1972 to 1974.

His son works in the US and daughter also studies near New York. — *PTI*

## FIFA FORECASTS \$120 MILLION DROP IN INCOME

**Geneva, Aug. 19:** FIFA forecast the pandemic will cause a 120 million drop in its revenue plan through the 2022 World Cup in a revised four-year budget published Wednesday.

Cost-cutting is also predicted to help offset a 200 million hit from being unable to stage a revamped Club World Cup in June 2021, when Europe and South America stage their postponed continental championships.

Still, FIFA said most World Cup broadcast and sponsor deals were already signed and should keep the same profit in the 2019-22 financial cycle, even on reduced income

of 6.44 billion.

The projected result before taxes and financial result of 100 million can therefore be confirmed, despite the impact of this pandemic on the match calendar and the global economy, soccer's world body said in notes accompanying its 2019 financial report.

FIFA has committed 328 million in extra grants from an emergency fund to ease soccer bodies through the pandemic crisis. More has been available for loans.

The knock-on effect is that FIFA forecasts reserves of no less than 1.6 billion after the World Cup in Qatar finishes in December 2022. — *AP*

## WOMEN'S | HOCKEY

## Camp resumes after a month

**Bengaluru, Aug. 19:** The Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita says the coronavirus-forced break provided them a perfect opportunity to self-evaluate and analyse life on and off the field as the national camp resumed here on Wednesday after a month.

Having completed their 14-day self-isolation period, the Indian senior men and women core probables resumed training with the national camp, which is expected to continue till September 30 at SAI South Centre.

"When you are a professional athlete, it gets really hectic sometimes... As such you don't really get the chance to introspect at length, but these few months and especially the past 14 days, I've had the chance to look back on a lot of things and understand myself better," said Savita. "What I've realised is that this is the only time I might get in my life where I can analyse a lot of things — personal and professional — and work towards bettering them... I totally believe that it has been one of the most important phases in my life."

Barring the six Covid-19 recovered male players, including skipper Manpreet Singh, all members of the men and women teams resumed training with light activities on Wednesday.



Savita

The six Covid recovered players including Manpreet, Suresh Kumar, Jaskaran Singh, Varun Kumar, Krishan B. Pathak and Mandeep Singh, who were discharged from a city hospital on Monday, are currently in self isolation inside the SAI campus here.

"We have to get back to full fitness so we will be including outdoor running, high-intensity workouts and a bit of stick-work to our schedule," Savita said. "We started today with an outdoor exercise session maintaining social distancing." — *PTI*

## WILL NOT ALLOW ASHWIN TO USE 'MANKADING': PONTING

**Melbourne, Aug. 19:** Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting says he will not allow senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin to employ the controversial "Mankading" dismissal during the upcoming IPL as "it's not within the spirit of the game".

Last IPL, Rajasthan Royals batsman Jos Buttler was run out on 69 while backing up at the non-striker's end, with Ashwin, then captaining Kings XI Punjab, whipping off the balls after the batsman stepped out of the crease before the ball was bowled. Ashwin will play for Delhi Capitals this year.

The dismissal is permitted under cricket's laws but viewed by some as going

against the spirit of the game. "I'll be having a chat with him about (Mankading), that's the first thing I'll do. That is going to be a hard conversation I will have with him. I think, even him, looking back now, probably he'd say it was within the rules and he's right to do it," Ponting said while speaking on 'The Grade Cricketer' Podcast.

"...watching that last season, as soon as it happened, I actually sat our boys down and said 'Look, I know he's done it, there'll be others around the tournament who'll think about doing this well but that's not going to be the way that we play our cricket. We won't be doing that'." — *PTI*



Ravichandran Ashwin

## DDCA mulls to name stand after Chauhan

**New Delhi, Aug. 19:** A proposal to dedicate a spectators stand at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground in the honour of late Chetan Chauhan will be discussed at the next Apex Council meeting of the DDCA, body's joint secretary Rajan Manchanda said on Wednesday.

Chauhan, who played 40 Test matches for India, breathed his last on Sunday, succumbing to Covid-19 related complications. He was a Delhi stalwart, who also served in various capacities at the DDCA from being a vice president, to chief selector. — *PTI*

## Ex-cricketer Kasturirangan no more

**Bengaluru, Aug. 19:** Veteran cricketer Gopalaswamy Kasturirangan died due to heart attack at his residence here on Wednesday.

"G. Kasturirangan passed away today morning. He died of heart attack at his residence in Chamarajapet," Karnataka State Cricket Association treasurer and spokesperson, Vinaya Mruthunjaya said.

Kasturirangan, 89, was a former cricketer-administrator and the BCCI curator. He had mostly played his matches for Mysore in Ranji Trophy as the right-arm medium pace bowler from 1948 to 1963. — *PTI*