

SHORT TAKES

**Gautam Buddha Nagar
Covid toll reaches 44**

Noida: After a gap of 25 days, Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded one more fatality linked to Covid-19 on Wednesday taking the death toll in the district to 44, official data showed. The district also recorded 89 new patients, pushing its caseload to 7,376, while the active cases stood at 926, according to the data released by the Uttar Pradesh Health Department for 24 hours. Also, 62 more patients got discharged during the period. According to the data, the district has reached 14th position in the state in terms of active cases. So far, 6,406 patients have recovered from Covid-19 in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the third-highest among districts in Uttar Pradesh after Lucknow (16,597) and Kanpur Nagar (9,596), it showed. With the latest death, the mortality rate among positive cases in the district rose slightly to 0.59 per cent from 0.58 per cent on Tuesday, according to official statistics. The recovery rate of patients dropped slightly to 86.84 per cent from 86.86 per cent on Tuesday. — PTI

**Car damaged over
extortion tiff, 1 held**

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has arrested a person, along with his associates, for allegedly damaging the car of a man who refused to pay extortion amount in west Delhi's Ramesh Nagar area, police said on Wednesday. The accused has been identified as Anmol Magoo, a resident of Kirti Nagar, they said. On Tuesday around 4.30 am, information was received at Kirti Nagar police station regarding the damage to a car. On enquiry, it was ascertained that the assailants came in a white Creta car. One of them allegedly damaged a Mercedes C-Class car with a rod and later, they fled from the spot, a senior police officer said. Main accused Magoo was previously involved in a case. He is the grandson of local Congress leader late Ram Magoo. His blood sample has been preserved and further investigation is underway, police added.

**5 held in Gr. Noida
with 6 kg cannabis**

Noida: Five suspected drug peddlers were arrested after nearly six kg cannabis was seized from their possession in separate incidents in Greater Noida, police said on Wednesday. Four of them are residents of adjoining Ghaziabad district, they added. Vaibhav Chawla was held near the Ek Moorti roundabout, under the Biskrah police station area, after 1.2 kg cannabis was found in his possession, the officials said. Accused Akash and Suraj, both residents of Ghaziabad, were held with 2.2 kg cannabis near Chhijarsi, under Phase 3 police station area, they said. Besides the contraband, an illegal firearm was also seized from them and their motorcycle impounded, according to the police. Two accused, Abhishek and Nitin, both residents of Ghaziabad, were held near Ginger Hotel by officials from Phase 3 police station late on Tuesday night, they said. The duo was in possession of 2.4 kg cannabis, the police said. All five accused have been booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and sent to jail, the police added. — PTI

**Fire at toy factory
in Noida, none hurt**

Noida: A fire broke out at a toy-making company in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on Wednesday and gutted some property, officials said. However, no one was injured in the blaze that took around 2 hours to be doused, they said. The incident was reported from the industrial Sector 63 around 3 pm and fire-fighting is underway, an official from the local Phase 3 police station said. Around a dozen fire tenders were deployed to control the blaze in the multi-storey building located in the D block of the sector, and the fire was brought under control by 5 pm, the official said. There was some damage to the property and the amount of damage incurred was being assessed, a policeman said. Prime facie it appears that a short circuit may have sparked the fire but a probe is underway. — PTI

**Daily 20,000 Covid-19 tests being conducted, will be doubled within a week, says Kejriwal
Reduced fear led to lesser tests, surge in cases: Experts**

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Reduced fear of Covid-19 among the public coupled with festivities and heavy rains led to lesser number of people coming for tests, experts on Wednesday said in view of fluctuating figures in daily coronavirus tests in Delhi in August. Their comments come after Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday warned against complacency and urged people to get themselves tested if they observe coronavirus symptoms while asserting that Covid-19 tests in Delhi will be doubled to 40,000 per day within a week. According to the data, the number of tests in Delhi witnessed a decline

in August as compared to July. The authorities conducted over 2.58 lakh Covid-19 tests in Delhi between August 1 and 15, whereas the figure stood at over 3.13 lakh in the same period in July, according to data. Between July 16 and 31, over 2.96 lakh tests were conducted in Delhi. Between August 16 and August 25, the total number of tests stood at over 1.71 lakh while the figure between July 16 and July 25 stood over 1.92 lakh. Addressing an online media briefing, Kejriwal said at present, 20,000 tests are being conducted per day in the city. He also warned people against complacency and

said that more and more people should get themselves tested if they observe coronavirus symptoms. "Due to this overconfidence, some people think they will recover even after they have symptoms. They do not realise that if they do not get tested in time, they end up infecting many people around them eventually. People can avail of testing for free in any government hospital or government dispensaries," he said. He asked people to get themselves tested, wear masks, and practice social distancing. During his briefing on Wednesday, Kejriwal said 1,693 coronavirus cases were reported

Due to overconfidence, some people think they will recover even after they have symptoms. They do not realise that if they do not get tested in time, they end up infecting many people around them
— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

in the last 24 hours. Delhi on Tuesday recorded 1,544 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the city's tally to over 1.64 lakh cases, while the death count from the disease

mounted to 4,330. August 1 saw over 18,000 tests being conducted, while the figures on subsequent days — August 2 (12,730), August 3 (10,133) and August 4 (9,295) were significantly lower than the average number of tests being conducted on a daily basis, which is 20,000. The numbers picked up later and on August 5 when over 16,000 tests were done. Between August 6 and August 9, the number of tests exceeded 20,000 per day with August 8 seeing 24,592 tests. Testing was ramped up in Delhi in the month of June with the government introducing rapid antigen tests from June 18.

Between July 1 and July 12, the national capital saw over 9,000 RT-PCR tests being conducted daily with July 6 and July 7 being the only two days when the number of RT-PCR tests was below the 9,000-mark. In fact, on July 2, the number of RT-PCR tests (10,978) exceeded the number of rapid antigen tests. Dr. Manoj Sharma, Senior Consultant, Medicine and Incharge at Medeor Hospital Qutab Institutional Area, said the hospital witnessed lesser footfall of patients for coronavirus tests on some days due to the incessant rains which led to flooding in some areas and also on days when there

were festivals or holidays like Independence Day, Janmasthami among others. "Earlier, there was a lot of panic and even for minor symptoms people were coming to hospitals. But now, they know that if they have minor symptoms, they think they will recover. There is some taboo attached to it. They think that authorities will put up sticker outside their home and their neighbours will come to know," he opined. Dr. Alpana Razdaan, Lab Head, Genestrings Lab, concurred with Sharma, and said the number of patients coming for tests has gone down. — PTI

**Sisodia reiterates
demand for NEET,
JEE postponement**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday reiterated his demand that medical and engineering entrance exams NEET and JEE be postponed and the Central government work on alternative methods for selecting students. "They (Centre) are saying protocols will be followed. Following the same protocols that the Centre wants 28 lakh students to follow, lakhs of Indians have tested positive," Sisodia told reporters. He said the Union home minister tested positive for coronavirus despite staying in a very safe environment, and that many other leaders including Delhi health minister have also contracted the contagious disease. "So many top leaders have got infected with Covid-19 despite taking all precautions. So, how can we take the risk of sending 28 lakh students to exam centre and be assured that they will not be infected," Sisodia asked. The Joint Entrance Examination (Main) and the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) will be conducted in September as scheduled, the Ministry of Education officials had said on Tuesday, amid a growing chorus for postponing the crucial tests in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Manish Sisodia

On Tuesday, Swedish teen climate change campaigner Greta Thunberg also threw her weight behind postponing the exams in view of the pandemic. "It's deeply unfair that students of India are asked to sit national exams during the Covid-19 pandemic and while millions have also been impacted by the extreme floods. I stand with their call to #PostponeJEE_NEETinCOVID," she said in a tweet. Members of the Congress' youth wing staged a protest near the Shastri Bhawan here on Wednesday, demanding postponement of the JEE and NEET exams in view of the coronavirus pandemic. While the NEET is planned on September 13, engineering entrance exam JEE Main is scheduled from September 1-6. Around 9.53 lakh candidates have registered for JEE-Mains and 15.97 lakh students have registered for NEET.

**BJP demands
resumption
of Metro
train services**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

The Delhi BJP on Wednesday advocated the resumption of Metro train services in the city, with its president Adesh Gupta meeting Union housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Puri over the demand. Gupta, who met Puri along with the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said the demand to restart Metro train services in the national capital was raised at the meeting. Earlier, at a press conference, the Delhi BJP chief said, "Metro trains should be operated with proper standard operating procedures and guidelines in view of the commuting problems being faced by Delhiites since the Delhi government's transport system has failed." There was no immediate reaction from the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Gupta's comments. Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal had recently demanded the Centre to allow resuming Metro train services in the city. Gupta also alleged that while the number of coronavirus cases is again increasing in Delhi, the focus of the AAP is to strengthen its support base in Uttarakhand and Punjab.

**Delhi riots case: Sharjeel Imam
sent to 4-day police custody**

New Delhi, Aug. 26: A Delhi court Wednesday sent JNU student Sharjeel Imam, arrested under the stringent anti terror law -- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, to four days police custody in a case related to communal violence in north east Delhi in February. Imam, arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi police on Tuesday, was produced on Wednesday before the court through video conferencing. Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat allowed the custodial



Sharjeel Imam

interrogation of Imam. Delhi Police had sought his custody for five days. The PhD student at the Jawaharlar Nehru University's (JNU) Centre

for Historical Studies was arrested in the case under the anti-terror law for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy" in connection to the riots in north east Delhi during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in February. Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.



People are silhouetted against the setting sun as clouds gather in the sky over the Raisina Hills in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

**2 cash van staff arrested for
₹20L fraud, ₹6.69L recovered**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

Delhi Police has arrested two employees of a cash van along with their associate in Okhla area for embezzling ₹20 lakh after they lost huge amounts in gambling. Police said that they have also recovered ₹6.69 lakhs from the possession of the trio. The accused have been identified Virendra Singh (22), a resident of Jail colony in Umaria, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Anurag Singh Rajawat (21), a resident of district Bhind (MP) while their associate has been identified as Rohit Agarwal (25), a resident of Chota Bazar Datia (MP). Police said that both Anurag and Virendra worked as custodian in SIS Cash services Private Limited. According to R.P.

Meena, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Southeast district, on August 20, Rajesh Sangwan, who works with the SIS cash services private limited told police that during checking auditor of company found shortage or ₹20,07,300 in six ATMs of ICICI Bank. A case under section 406 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Okhla Industrial Area police station and investigation was taken up. During investigation, duty roster and other records of SIS Cash Service Private Limited were checked and was found that two employees Anurag Singh Rajawat and Virendra Singh were the common custodian when cash was filled in these 06 ATMs, said the DCP.

**SDMC leaders threaten
stir over 'pending' funds**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

South Delhi mayor Anamika on Wednesday announced that civic leaders will stage a protest on September 10 demanding release of due fund from AAP government. Ms Anamika alleged that the Arvind Kejriwal government has in an organized way cut the funds of the civic body year after year and in the current scenarios she is left with no option but to take a begging bowl and go to the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal house to demand funds. "They keep saying that allow us to rule MCD, I know they want to get power in MCD but I want to tell them that they should not make the staff suffer,

education suffer, health sector suffer because they want to come to power," she said. According to her, in the current financial year there is a due of 11,100 crore itself. Deputy chairperson, SDMC standing committee, Tulsi Joshi said that the Delhi government has decreased grants in almost all overheads and sanitation, health and dengue control schemes are prominent. "SDMC spends ₹100 Crore on Dengue control every year while the Delhi Government provides ₹36 Crores. SDMC makes annual expenditure on salary of Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBC) is ₹25 Crores while the Delhi Government provides only ₹8 Crore," added Ms Joshi. Leader of the house of SDMC, Narendar Chawla said that in the dharna all councilors of the ruling party will raise their voice to protest the attitude of the Delhi Government, which has been politicising the issue of funds allocation to SDMC with an aim to badly paralyse it and milk political gains out of the mess.

**Punish cop
for beating up
youth: DCPCR**

New Delhi, Aug. 26: The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights has asked the police to lodge an FIR against those seen in a purported video which showed a constable beating up a youth with a baton in southwest Delhi as another policeman stood nearby. The child rights body has sought an action taken report by September 1. The Delhi Police had initiated a probe in the matter on Tuesday, officials said, adding that the youth's age and the date of incident have not been ascertained yet. The Commission said it "strongly condemns such apathy and high-handedness of the police officials". — PTI

**'BJP leaders involved in
anti-dengue drugs scam'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday alleged that ruling BJP in the municipal corporations are indulged in corruption with the help of civic officials. The AAP senior leader and MCD in-charge, Durgesh Pathak said that the BJP leaders of the MCDs had been involved in a scam of purchase of anti-dengue medicine used for fogging in a very planned manner. According to Mr Pathak, BJP leaders first

pressurised then MHO Arun Bansal to sign the drug procurement file, then suspended him on July 3, 2019. Refuting the allegation, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the company Hindustan Latex Limited from which concerned medicinal purchase was made is a Kerala based government company and the statement of Mr Pathak and his party clearly shows their lack of knowledge of facts. "Their political behaviour is too childish," Kapoor said.

BJP appoints 250 ward presidents

**AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26**

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta on Wednesday announced the first list of 250 presidents of mandal (ward) units, of which 80 per cent are new faces, as part of the ongoing organisational restructuring in the party. All the mandal presidents in the list are below 45 years of age as per the party policy, Delhi BJP media cell head Ashok Goel said. "Among the new ward presidents, 55 belong to OBC, 36 SC and 20 women categories. There are around 200 new faces

and 50 have been repeated," he said. Party leaders said the names of remaining mandal presidents will be announced soon. There are a total of 280 ward units of

the BJP in Delhi. The party is also expected to declare the names of new state office-bearers and presidents of 14 district units in the next few days, they said. Goel said the process for selecting ward presidents involved an extensive feedback exercise through party-appointed observers. Nearly 4,500 party leaders, including former and current ward presidents, councilors, legislators, parliamentarians and state office bearers, were consulted and their feedback was taken for each ward, he said. However, a section of

party leaders alleged that the feedback process was "manipulated" and "hard-working" workers were denied their due in many cases. "There is resentment among such hardworking workers and they may register their protest at the party office," said a senior Delhi BJP leader privy to organisational restructuring. The BJP's central leadership has appointed its national general secretary Arun Singh and Mahila Morcha president Vijaya Rahatkar as observers for organisational restructuring of the Delhi unit.

SHORT TAKES

2 killed as heavy rains lash Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Fear of flood loomed large over parts of Odisha on Wednesday as heavy rains, triggered by a low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal, battered the state, submerging low-lying areas, snapping road links and claiming at least two lives. While all the 30 districts received rainfall of varying intensity since Tuesday, very heavy showers were recorded in nine districts, causing water-logging in many low-lying areas, Special Relief Commissioner, P.K. Jena said. The average rainfall of the state in the 24 hours was 76.6 mm, while the nine districts recorded more than 100 mm rainfall. Kendrapara recorded 168.3 mm rainfall, followed by 162.3 mm in Subarnapur, 146.5 mm in Jagatsinghpur, Boudh (133.3 mm), Keonjhar (124.8 mm), Mayurbhanj (122.2 mm), Bhadrak (117.0 mm), Jajpur (115.0 mm) and Cuttack (102 mm), he said. — PTI

Building collapse toll reaches 16 in Maha

Mumbai: With the recovery of two more bodies early on Wednesday, the death toll in the building collapse incident in Maharashtra's Raigad district mounted to 16, officials said. The Raigad police on Wednesday arrested an RCC consultant of the building in connection with the incident. He is one of the five persons booked in the case, they said. The five-storey building — Tareq Garden — in Mahad town, around 170 kms from Mumbai, collapsed on Monday evening. According to a police official, the rescue operation was called off around 11.30 am on Wednesday. Fifteen persons died after being trapped under the rubble, but one person had died of a heart attack at a local hospital late on Monday night, hours after he was injured in the incident, he said. — PTI

MPSC exams put off due to Covid-19

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Cabinet on Wednesday decided to postpone all exams being conducted by the state Public Services Commission (MPSC) in view of the Covid-19 situation. The revised schedule for the exams will be announced later, state chief secretary Sanjay Kumar told the council of ministers during its meeting. "The examinations are being deferred due to the Covid-19 pandemic," he said. The government also announced the ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to kin of each person killed in the Mahad building collapse incident. In another decision that will come as a relief for property buyers, the state Cabinet has decided to slash stamp duty on sale deed documents by 3 per cent from September 1 to December 31, 2020. — PTI

14,888 corona cases in Maha in one day

Mumbai: Maharashtra on Wednesday reported a single-day highest spike of 14,888 coronavirus cases which took the case count to 7,18,711, a health official said. The previous highest increase in the cases was 14,492, recorded on August 21. On Wednesday, the death toll in Maharashtra due to the pandemic reached 23,089 with addition of 295 fatalities. On the other hand, 7,637 patients were discharged from hospitals, taking the number of recovered cases to 5,22,427. There are 1,72,873 active cases in the state now, the health official said. In state capital Mumbai, 1,854 new cases and 28 deaths were reported during the day. The total number of Covid-19 cases in the city thus rose to 1,39,537 and death toll to 7,505. — PTI

K'taka Covid cases breach 3 lakh mark

Bengaluru: Covid-19 infections breached the three lakh mark in Karnataka, while the death toll crossed 5,000 as the state on Wednesday reported 8,580 new cases and 133 fatalities, the health department said. The day also saw 7,249 patients getting discharged after recovery. Bengaluru Urban accounted for the maximum numbers in fresh cases with 3,284. As of August 26 evening, cumulatively 3,00,406 Covid-19 positive cases have been confirmed in the state, which includes 5,091 deaths and 2,11,688 discharges, the health department said in its bulletin. — PTI



Pranab Mukherjee

Docs: Pranab still in coma, renal function 'deranged'

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Former President Pranab Mukherjee continues to be in deep coma and his renal parameters are "slightly deranged", the hospital treating him said on Wednesday. Doctors attending to 84-year-old Mukherjee said he continues to be on ventilator support.

He was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10, where he was operated for removal of a clot in the brain. Thereafter, he developed a lung infection and is being treated for the same.

The former President had also tested positive for Covid-19 at the time of his admission, the hospital said.

"Shri Pranab Mukherjee is being treated for lung infection. His renal parameters are slightly deranged since yesterday. He continues to be in deep coma and on ventilator support," a statement from the hospital said.

Mr Mukherjee was the 13th President of India from 2012 to 2017.

Mr Mukherjee's daughter and sonregularly tweet updates on their father's health. — PTI

PIL seeks naming of govt nominees to mosque trust

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

Two Uttar Pradesh lawyers have moved the Supreme Court seeking appointment of Sunni Muslim nominees of the Central and Uttar Pradesh governments on the trust set up for the construction of a mosque and structures for other activities at Ayodhya on the lines on which three government nominees were put on the trust for construction of the Lord Rama's temple at Ramjanmabhoomi at Ayodhya.

The top court by its November 9, 2019, judgment while giving entre 2.77 acres of Ram Janmabhoomi site on which once stood Babri Masjid for the construction of Lord Rama's temple had given five-acres of land to Sunni Central Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque in Ayodhya.

By the said judgment, the top court had directed the inclusion of three government nominees on the trust that will undertake the construction and management of the Lord Rama's temple.

The petitioner lawyers — Shishir Chaturvedi and Kamlesh Kumar Shukla had filed the PIL early this month and is yet to be listed.

23 ministers/MLAs Covid+ve before Punjab House session

National Covid-19 tally rises to 32.34 lakh

AGE CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHANDIGARH, AUG. 26

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday said that twenty-three ministers and MLAs were coronavirus positive two days before the Vidhan Sabha session on August 28.

He gave the figure during a video conference convened by Congress president Sonia Gandhi with the chief ministers of seven Opposition-ruled states to discuss various issues.

With this, the CM tried to emphasise that the scenario was not conducive for holding physical examination for JEE-NEET.

The chief minister, however, did not disclose how many of Punjab MLAs and ministers have recovered so far.

As of today, two days before the scheduled Punjab Vidhan Sabha session, 23 ministers/MLAs were Covid positive, said

Ex-Assam CM Gogoi tests Covid+

Guwahati: Former Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi said on Wednesday that he has been diagnosed with Covid-19.

The veteran Congress leader urged all those who came in contact with him recently to get tested.

"I have been tested Covid-19 positive yesterday. People who came in contact with me during the last few days, should go for Covid test immediately," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, the number of recoveries of Covid-19 patients in the country exceeds the active cases by 3.5 times on Wednesday.

India's Covid-19 tally, meanwhile, rose to 32.34 lakh with 67,151 more people tested positive in the last 24 hours, while the death toll from the disease



His wife Dolly Gogoi has tested negative, party sources said.

Doctors have advised the 85-year-old politician to stay in home isolation, a party spokesperson said.

Mr Gogoi, who represents the Titabor Assembly segment in Jorhat, is the 13th Assam legislator to be diagnosed with Covid-19. — PTI

climbed to 59,449 with 1,059 new fatalities being reported during the period.

According to the union health ministry, the single day recovery figure has been more than 60,000 since many days and with recovery of 63,173 Covid-19 patients in the last 24 hours has resulted in the cumulative recoveries of 24,67,758 people.

Maha and Tamil Nadu secure the second and third place Guj tops NitiAayog's export index

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

Gujarat has topped the Niti Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2020 followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in the second and third place respectively, among the coastal states. The report was released by the government think tank on Wednesday.

According to the report, six of eight coastal states feature in the top ten rankings, indicating the presence of strong enabling and facilitating factors to promote exports.

Among the landlocked states, Rajasthan has performed the best, followed by Telangana and Haryana.

Uttarakhand, followed by Tripura and Himachal Pradesh notched top spots among the hilly states, while among the union territories, Delhi has performed the best, followed by Goa and Chandigarh.

The index said that Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are two landlocked states that had initiated several measures to promote exports. Other states facing similar

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socio-economic challenges can look at the measures taken by Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and try to implement them to grow their exports, it noted.

Speaking at the launch of

Odisha govt slashes syllabi of Class 1 to 12

AGE CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 26

Bringing an end to all speculations, the Odisha government on Wednesday announced slashing of the syllabuses of Class 1 to 12 students for 2020-21 academic sessions by 30 per cent. The development comes after the Central Board of Secondary Education syllabus for classes 9 to 12 was reduced by 30 per cent this year due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The decision to rationalise the syllabus has been taken on the recommendation of three syllabus committees of state Council of Education, Research and Training, Board of Secondary Education and Council of Higher Secondary Education," state school and mass education minister S. Dash said.

The current crisis in Sino-Indian relations "is surely the most serious situation after 1962", External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar has told a news website, while acknowledging that "the quantum of forces currently deployed by both sides at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is also unprecedented". The EAM also said that the "difficulties" in Sino-Indian ties "may well undermine" the Asian Century.

The two countries had fought a border war in 1962. The EAM's comments come amid continued Chinese military intransigence in withdrawing to the positions of April this year in the Ladakh sector. The EAM's remarks also seems at odds with recent comments made by Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong who had described the deadly Galwan valley clash in mid-June between troops of the two sides in the Ladakh sector as a "brief moment from the perspective of history".

In an interview to a news website ahead of the formal launch of his book — *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*, EAM Jaishankar said, "This is surely the most serious situation after 1962. In fact, after 45 years, we have had military casualties on this border. The quantum of forces currently deployed by both sides at the LAC is also unprecedented."

Mr Jaishankar added, "I am not minimising either

Sino-India crisis is most serious since 1962: MEA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

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The seriousness or the complex nature of the current situation. Naturally, we have to do what it takes to secure our borders. ... But when it comes to finding a solution, this must be predicated on honouring all agreements and understandings. And not attempting to alter the status quo unilaterally. ... That is why we tell the Chinese side clearly that peace and tranquillity in the border areas are the basis for the relationship.

It may be recalled that India has also mobilised a significant number of troops with heavy weaponry near the borders with China in response to the Chinese military build-up. India is also clear that it will not agree to any unilateral change of the LAC by China.

The EAM further remarked, "What I have said is that the ability of India and China to work together could determine the Asian Century. But their difficulties in doing so may well undermine it."



A devotee whispers a wish in the ear of an idol of Hindu deity Ganesha, as part of a ritual on the occasion of Ganesha Chaturthi in Bikaner on Wednesday. — PTI

CPI & CPM to forge tieup with grand alliance in Bihar

Patna, Aug. 26: Left parties — CPI and CPI(M) — on Wednesday announced that they will forge an electoral alliance with the Grand Alliance in Bihar to ensure defeat of ruling NDA in the Assembly elections due in October-November.

The left parties' in-principle decision to contest state Assembly elections with the Mahagathbandhan was taken after a delegation comprising leaders of CPI and CPI(M) met Bihar RJD president Jagdanand Singh here.

The two parties were represented by their state secretaries — Ram Naresh Pandey and Awadhesh Kumar — in the meeting.

THE COMMUNIST Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (CPI (ML)) has three MLAs in the current Assembly, while CPI and CPI(M) does not have any representation in the House

Former chief minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's headed Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM) had recently announced that it was leaving the Opposition coalition in the state.

The two leaders were not sure about CPI(ML) joining the coalition, but said they would certainly like to bring them for a broad and

comprehensive alliance.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) (CPI (ML)) has three MLAs in the current Assembly, while CPI and CPI(M) does not have any representation in the House.

The ruling NDA in the state comprises JD(U), BJP and LJP.

"A delegation of leaders from CPI and CPI(M) met state RJD president Jagdanand Singh at latter's party office and had a detailed discussion on forging electoral alliance with Grand Alliance to jointly fight assembly polls for defeating NDA in the state," CPI's Bihar secretary Ram N. Pandey said. — PTI

Bihar polls: Nadda calls meeting of all state MPs

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Gearing up for the Bihar Assembly polls, BJP president JP Nadda has called a meeting of all the party MPs from the state on Saturday to finalise its poll strategy, sources said on Wednesday.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the party is actively working to prepare itself for the Bihar polls, expected to be held around October-November, and using virtual platforms to reach out to people and stay in touch with its cadre on the ground. Senior BJP leaders, including Nadda, has addressed people in Bihar via virtual rallies.

Mr Nadda has called a meeting of all the BJP MPs from Bihar on August 29 to deliberate on the coming Assembly polls in the state, sources in the party said.

Besides the MPs, BJP general secretary and the party's Bihar election in-charge Bhupender Yadav will also attend the meet, they added.

The BJP has involved former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis in its preparations for the Bihar polls, whereas former Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das has held virtual meetings with party workers from the extremely backward classes (EBCs). — PTI

Cutting of mountains to build roads is being done irresponsibly: Panel member 'SC panel' warns against Char Dham project

Dehradun, Aug. 26: Members of the Supreme Court-appointed panel have warned against continuing with the haphazard excavations on mountain slopes in Uttarakhand as part of the ambitious Char Dham road project, saying it would be a Himalayan blunder.

Nearly 900 km of roads are to be built to provide round-the-year connectivity to the famed Himalayan temples of Uttarakhand as part of the project whose founda-

tion stone was laid by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.

While two scientists of the panel set up to look into environmental aspects of the project warned that excavations are being done in an unscientific way, its chairman said the implementing agencies including the Public Works Department, National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited and Border Roads

IMPLEMENTING including the Public Works Department, National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited and Border Roads Organisation are doing their job in a highly irresponsible manner.

Organisation are doing their job in a highly irresponsible manner. "They have ignored our suggestions on identifying

vulnerable slopes, doing hill cutting after making proper arrangements for dumping the muck, building footpaths and planting trees along the roads that fall under the project," Ravi Chopra, chairman of the panel said.

The hill cutting on the slopes is being done irresponsibly with the muck rushing down into forests, fields and houses in the absence of a proper disposal mechanism, he said.

The committee has submitted its recommenda-

tions to the ministry of environment and forest (MoEF), ministry of road transport and highways (MoRTH) and the Supreme Court in July to rectify the mistakes being committed in implementing the project.

"Excavations under the project are being done in an unscientific way without taking into consideration the geological constraints of the mountainous terrain," Navin Juyal, a geologist and member of the committee told PTI. — PTI

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Sd/-
Chief Executive Officer.

SHORT TAKES

'Revenue down, no support from Centre'

Jaipur: Alleging lack of support from the Centre amid the economic crisis caused by coronavirus, Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday urged Congress president Sonia Gandhi to lead a delegation of Opposition CMs to the Prime Minister or President to discuss the issue. Mr Gehlot gave the suggestion during a virtual meeting of Gandhi with chief ministers of Opposition-ruled states to discuss a range of issues faced by them. The Rajasthan CM also accused the Centre of doing nothing at a time when the revenue collection has declined and people are suffering. Everyone knows what economists are saying but the Centre "did nothing except holding video conferences", he said, claiming that the Union government did not consider their suggestions. — PTI

UP: SSB inspector shoots himself

Mahrajgan: A Sashastra Seema Bal inspector allegedly shot himself with his service revolver at a border outpost in Uttar Pradesh's Mahrajganj on Wednesday, an official said. The incident took place at the Bairiya Bazar outpost of the SSB's 66th Battalion when other jawans were having breakfast, in-charge Commandant Jeet Lal said. The victim has been identified as 29-year-old Vishwajeet, a resident of Himachal Pradesh. Vishwajeet was first rushed to a nearby Primary Health Centre and then to a hospital at Nautanwa where doctors declared him brought dead, Lal said. — PTI

BJP, SP workers clash in Kannauj

Kannauj: BJP and Samajwadi Party workers allegedly clashed during the filing of nominations for a cooperative bank poll here on Wednesday, the police said. Workers of both parties had gathered in large numbers at the Gwal Maidan branch of the Sahkari Gram Vikas Bank for the nominations to a representative's post, police said. In the meantime, Samajwadi Party MLA from Kannauj Sadar Anand Dohre and former MLA Kalyan Singh arrived there with their supporters. Both sides had a heated debate and clashed, the police said. The Samajwadi Party alleged that the BJP workers stopped them from filing nominations and tore their papers, leading to the incident. No one was injured in the incident. SDM (Sadar) Apurva Yadav pacified workers of both sides. — PTI

NEET: States to move SC

■ **Continued from Page 1**

anything then it is punya (virtuous)?" He also noted while his state was gradually emerging from the lockdown, schools were shut.

Four Congress CMs — Amarinder Singh (Punjab), Bhupesh Baghel (Chhattisgarh), Ashok Gehlot (Rajasthan) and V. Narayanasamy (Pudu-cherry) — who attended the meeting claimed several of them had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi but there was no response. Even Ms Banerjee said she had written to the PM. Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren was, however, of the view that a meeting should first be sought with the Prime Minister before moving the court.

The Congress president reportedly wanted to invite Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan to the meeting, but there was strong opposition from the Congress in Kerala. An invitation did go to Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, but sources said he had declined. The JEE is due to be held September 1 to 6 and the NEET exam is to be held on September 13. The Supreme Court had last week rejected a petition by 11 students from 11 states who had asked for the exams to be deferred.

Mrs Gandhi requested the West Bengal chief minister, who had first proposed a joint appeal by the states in the Supreme Court, to work with Capt. Amarinder Singh and other CMs on the legal issues. She said whatever steps had to be taken in the interest of students should be taken unitedly. The Congress also announced protests by its state units.

Punjab CM asks A-G to coordinate with counterparts on JEE-NEE plea 'No need to put students at risk'

Chandigarh, Aug. 26: Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday asked his state Advocate General to coordinate with his counterparts in other opposition-ruled states for filing a collective review petition in the Supreme Court, to seek deferment of the NEET-JEE exams.

He gave directive to A-G Atul Nanda following a video conference meeting convened by Congress president Sonia Gandhi with the chief ministers of seven opposition-ruled states to discuss the key issues, including delay in GST compensation release, the farm ordinances and the new education policy.

"There was no time to seek time from the Prime Minister to discuss the issue," Capt Singh said in response to a suggestion to this effect.

"Let us all get together to move the Supreme Court for postponement of the exams, which are threatening the lives of lakhs of students, he said.

He suggested that the JEE-NEET (Joint Entrance Exam & National Eligibility and



NSUI members display placards during a hungerstrike in protest against the alleged cruel and irresponsible decision of the government to call for University exams amid Covid-19 pandemic in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Entrance Test) and other professional exams like medical and law could also be held online and there was no need to put the students at risk, according to a government release.

Stating that what the states were seeking was not the moon but their own dues, the CM also suggested that a delegation of all the opposition-ruled chief ministers should

meet the prime minister to press for release of GST (Goods and Services Tax) compensation and financial assistance to fight coronavirus.

"We have given all the powers of taxation to him through the GST, and now they say they may not be able to pay. So how do we run our states? he asked.

He called upon the opposition-ruled states to work

together and fight for their rights. The CM also said his government will be setting up a committee soon to assess the impact of the new education policy on the state's education system and finances.

"Every state has its own system, which the Government of India failed to take into account before announcing the policy, he said. — PTI

14L aspirants download admit cards

Any further delay will have serious repercussions: IIT-Delhi director

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Over 14 lakh admit cards for the medical and engineering entrance exams — NEET and JEE — were downloaded after the National Testing Agency (NTA) released them on Wednesday, even as the issue was discussed extensively during a meeting of chief ministers of non-BJP ruled states who decided to jointly move the Supreme Court to seek deferment of these exams.

The issue, which has been a matter of intense public discourse for past few months, has evoked contrasting views with many backing the holding

NEET & JEE

of the tests fearing that it may lead to a zero academic year for students, and the Opposition and activists demanding their postponement in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The issue also took political undertones on Wednesday with opposition leaders attacking the Central government.

While the NEET is planned on September 13, engineering entrance exam JEE Main is scheduled from September 1-6. Around 9.53 lakh candidates have registered for

JEE-Mains and 15.97 lakh students have registered for NEET. These exams have already been deferred twice. While JEE-Main was originally supposed to be held from April 7-11 and postponed to July 18-23, NEET-UG was originally scheduled for May 3, then pushed to July 26. Over 14 lakh students have already downloaded admit cards for engineering and medical entrance exams JEE-Mains and NEET scheduled in September, according to the officials of NTA, which released the admit cards for these exams on Wednesday, signalling that

there may not be any further deferment.

However, there are many others who believe delaying the exams further may lead to the loss of an academic year for lakhs of students. IIT Delhi Director V Ramgopal Rao said any further delay in conducting entrance exams JEE and NEET will have "serious repercussions" on not only the academic calendar but also the career of bright students. "The consequences of postponing these exams any further can have serious repercussions on IIT academic calendars," he said. — PTI

COVID CURBS CM Mamata announces a slew of relaxations

Kolkata, Aug. 26: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday announced a slew of relaxations by allowing flights operation from six Covid hotspot states thrice a week and permitting metro and suburban train services to resume.

She also announced extension of closure of educational institutes till September 20 and complete lockdown across West Bengal on September 7, 11 and 12, saying Covid cases are rising in many places.

Ms Banerjee said her government is willing to allow one-fourth of suburban trains services and full Metro Railway services with adequate safety protocols, including social distancing from September 1.

"We have received several requests to resume flight operations from six Covid hotspot states. So from September 1, flight services from these six coronavirus-hit cities can operate thrice a week," she said after a Cabinet meeting.

To combat the spread of coronavirus, the state government had imposed a ban till August 31 on passenger flights to Kolkata from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Nagpur and Ahmedabad.

"Schools, colleges and other educational institutes would remain closed in the state till September 20. The other existing restrictions would be in place. There would be complete lockdown in the state on September 7, 11 and 12. In some areas of the state cases are increasing," she said. Ms Banerjee said regarding resumption of train services; the railways' authorities should speak with the state government officials to work on the modalities. — PTI

School staff rapes girl in Gorakhpur

Gorakhpur (UP), Aug. 26: A Class 7 student was allegedly raped by a manager of her school, who also made a video of the her and threatened to post it on social media if she reported the matter to anyone, police said here on Wednesday.

Police said the incident took place on July 30 when school manager Harendra Yadav (38) called the 15-year-old girl to his house. The accused is on the run and police have registered a case against him.

The police station in-charge of the area was removed from the post and attached to the Police Lines for failing to take the case seriously and not informing high officials regarding it.

According to police, the accused made a video of the student and started blackmailing her. He threatened to post it on social media if she disclosed the incident to anyone, police said.

The manager blackmailed her saying her father would kill her if she told him about the incident. Police said the accused asked the girl to live at his house in the city and study from there.

After a few days, the girl, however, disclosed it

Rape: FIR against newspaper owner

Indore: The Madhya Pradesh police has registered three FIRs in Indore against six people, including 68-year-old owner of a Bhopal-based newspaper, in connection with alleged rape of three minor girls, an official said on Wednesday. The FIRs were registered against Pyare Miyan aka Abba and five of his accomplices on Tuesday.

to her family. The girl's father informed police but the accused could not be nabbed.

Later, the girl's father met SSP Joginder Singh. A case was lodged against the school manager for rape and under provisions of the POCSO Act, but due to the elapse of time after the incident, the accused managed to escape.

Gorakhpur's Gola Circle Officer Shyamdev said the girl complained to police that she was raped on July 30 by the manager at his home.

A case has been registered and police are searching for the accused, he said. — PTI

Drug angle: NCB registers case against Rhea, others

'Deleted messages indicate dealings in banned drugs'

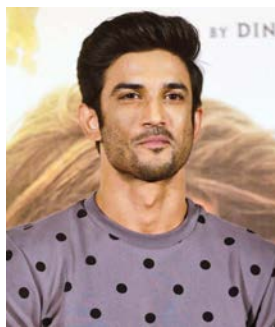
AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Wednesday registered an FIR against actor Rhea Chakraborty and others under several sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The move comes after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) — which is probing a money laundering angle into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and questioned Chakraborty — referred some evidence to the CBI and the NCB about her alleged links to banned drugs. However, Chakraborty's lawyer denied the charge.

Sources said, "The FIR by the NCB has been registered under sections 20 (b), 28 and 29 of NDPS Act, which makes possessing, selling of drugs a crime".

The alleged narcotics dealing links are connected to the criminal probe being conducted in the death of Sushant Singh Rajput (34), who was found hanging at his duplex flat in Mumbai's Bandra area on June 14. The NCB is now the third



Sushant Singh Rajput

federal investigative agency probing this case apart from the ED and the CBI.

The ED, which is probing a money laundering angle into the death of Rajput, recently questioned Rhea Chakraborty, and obtained "deleted WhatsApp messages" allegedly indicating dealings in banned drugs from her phone. Rhea has been questioned by the ED about these suspect drug deals and her statement on these allegations has been recorded by it under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), sources said. Her lawyer Satish Manehsinde had vehemently denied the allegations made against the 28-year-old actor.

Centre needs to spend more, not lend more: Rahul

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday attacked the government over the state of the economy and said it needs to give money to the poor to restart the economy through consumption.

Mr Gandhi said "distractions" through media won't help the poor or make the "economic disaster disappear".

His attack on the government came after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Tuesday that demand in the economy will take quite some time to mend and that an assessment of aggregate demand during the year so far suggests that the shock to consumption is severe.

"RBI has now confirmed what I have been warning for months. Govt needs to spend more, not lend more," Gandhi said.

"Give money to the poor, not tax cuts to industrialists. Restart economy by consumption," the former Congress chief tweeted.

In its latest annual report, the RBI said "deep-seats and wide-ranging" reforms are needed to regain losses



Rahul

and return to the path of sustainable economic growth.

Batting for the students taking the NEET-JEE exams, Mr Gandhi on Wednesday urged the Central government to listen to their grievances and find an amicable solution.

The students have been demanding postponement of the medical and engineering entrance exams in view of the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the country.

Mr Gandhi said the NEET-JEE aspirants are worried about their health and future due to concerns about coronavirus infection and floods in Assam and Bihar.

"NEET-JEE aspirants are worried about their health and future. They have genuine concerns of fear of Covid19 infection, transport and lodging during pandemic and flood-mayhem in Assam and Bihar," he said on Twitter. "GOI must listen to all stakeholder," he said. — PTI

Cong panel to formulate stand on key ordinances

New Delhi, Aug. 26: The Congress on Wednesday formed a five-member committee to discuss and formulate the party's stand on key ordinances promulgated by the government.

The committee has former finance minister P Chidambaram, Digvijaya Singh and Jairam Ramesh, besides Amar Singh and Gaurav Gogoi, as its members.

The committee has identified five-member committee to discuss and formulate Congress party's stands on key ordinances promulgated by the central government," a statement by AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said. — PTI

Woman fined ₹25K over false rape complaint

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 26

The Bombay high court imposed a fine of ₹25,000 on a woman for filing a false rape complaint against her boyfriend, as it struck down the case after she filed a petition saying she did not wish to pursue the matter. The HC on Tuesday directed the woman to pay ₹25,000 to the Maharashtra Police Welfare Fund within four weeks.

A division bench of Justices R.D. Dhanuka and V.G. Bisht said if the fine is not paid, then its order quashing the FIR against the man shall stand vacated.

The woman had registered an FIR against her boyfriend at Nalasopara police station in Palghar district on March 16, alleging that he had drugged and raped her.

Last month, the complainant, however, approached the high court seeking to quash the case, saying she had filed the FIR under pressure from her family.

ICMR says its Twitter handle 'compromised'

New Delhi, Aug. 26: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said on Wednesday evening that its Twitter account has been "compromised" and it was taking necessary steps to rectify the issue. According to sources, it was observed that certain tweets criticising the government were "liked" from the ICMR's official Twitter handle. The matter was brought to the notice of ICMR officials by some Twitter users, they said.

"ICMR has observed that the Twitter account of the organisation has been compromised. We are taking necessary steps to rectify the same," the apex research body said. — PTI

Choksi moves HC against 'Bad Boy Billionaires'

New Delhi, Aug. 26: The Delhi high court Wednesday asked video streaming platform Netflix whether it can provide pre-screening of documentary, *Bad Boy Billionaires*, to Mehul Choksi, an accused in the nearly \$2 billion PNB scam. Justice Navin Chawla orally asked the counsel for Netflix to consider granting pre-screening to Choksi and cut short the controversy. The court listed the matter for further hearing on August 28.

Choksi, the promoter of Gitanjali Gems, and his nephew Nirav Modi are



■ **Bad Boy Billionaires**, which is scheduled to be released in India on September 2, takes a look at controversial cases of infamous businessmen Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Subrata Roy and Byrraju Ramalinga Raju.

accused in the ₹13,500 crore Punjab National Bank fraud case. Choksi left the country last year and was granted citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda.

The documentary, *Bad Boy Billionaires*, which is scheduled to be released in India on September 2, is described on Netflix platform as "This investiga-

tive docuseries explores the greed, fraud and corruption that built up — and ultimately brought down — India's most infamous tycoons."

It takes a look at controversial cases of infamous businessmen Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Subrata Roy and Byrraju Ramalinga Raju. Advocate Vijay Aggarwal, repre-

senting Choksi, sought postponement of the documentary's release. He said Choksi saw the trailer and has been receiving phone calls from across the world asking him whether he was part of the documentary and seeking comments. "Thereafter, the petitioner (Choksi) discovered that one of the persons seen speaking in the trailer was one Mr Pavan C. Lall who had written a book titled *Flawed: The Rise and Fall of India's Diamond Mogul Nirav Modi* where also the petitioner's name had been commingled with Nirav Modi's," the plea said.

Aggarwal said he was not seeking a stay on the release but was asking that the documentary be shown to him prior to its release. During the hearing, senior advocate Neeraj Kishan Kaul, representing Netflix Inc and Netflix Entertainment Services India LLP, said the web series is on many people like Nirav Modi and only two minutes are devoted to Choksi.

He said a general mandamus to regulate Over The Top (OTTs) cannot be passed and submitted that due to insufficient time he could not get instructions on the matter. — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

27 AUGUST 2020

Economy in freefall, govt must act quickly

Ever since the coronavirus pandemic broke out in India, there have been two board suggestions to deal with its economic fallout — one, the government should increase its spending to keep demand alive, and two, a highly indebted government should merely remain a facilitator and let the demand improve gradually. The Narendra Modi government chose the second option and announced debt-based initiatives to provide immediate succour to people.

Economists like Raghuram Rajan and others have suggested the government to open its purse strings to support the demand. Similarly, this newspaper too had argued for immediate cash support to people. An official report released by the Reserve Bank of India on Tuesday lends its weight to the argument for the creation of demand by the government spending as private non-discretionary expenditure has all but collapsed.

According to the RBI, private spending has taken a hit particularly for transport services, hospitality, recreation and cultural activities.

A cut in corporate tax announced by the government in September 2019 has also failed to serve its stated purpose. The saving in corporate tax was utilised by the companies to service debt and build up cash balances.

Behavioural restraints, the central bank claims, may prevent the normalisation of demand for these activities. Since these sectors contribute in a big way to the job creation, a contraction in private spending in these activities would deprive livelihood of lakhs of people which, in turn, would impact the overall consumption and demand in the country.

While noting that rural demand has fared better, the RBI has attributed it to the government's initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan which helps in generating employment in rural areas, and increased wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). A similar protective cover, however, was absent for the poor in urban areas, which have been affected the most, both by coronavirus and its

economic fallout.

The RBI report also highlighted that a cut in corporate tax announced by the government in September 2019 has also failed to serve its stated purpose. The saving in corporate tax, the central bank said, was utilised by the companies to service debt and build up cash balances rather than restart the capital expenditure cycle. This fear was expressed by many who suggested a cut in income tax instead of corporate tax to address the economic slowdown last year. The government, however, turned a deaf ear to their suggestions. The statements in the RBI report have now come as a vindication for them.

To raise money for crucial public investment, the RBI suggested sale of government assets in steel, coal, power, land, railways and major ports. However, the government's intent to privatise state-run non-strategic enterprises has remained only on paper for various reasons. We must recall that the Jawaharlal Nehru government had entered into business to set up mega-industries because the private sector of the day lacked the wherewithal to fund such projects. Her political motives aside, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had nationalised banks to provide institutional credit to poor — a purpose that is already served. Now it is high time the government reorients its thinking and becomes a catalyst for economic growth 3.0.

Begging to forgive

The Supreme Court judges, hearing the arguments in the contempt case against civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan the other day, were at their generous best when they advised the latter to apologise for his tweets critical of the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice of India (CJI), for which he has been found guilty and awaiting his punishment "cheerfully".

Justice Arun Mishra, heading the bench, suggested to Mr Bhushan that he utter the "magical" word "apology" and go to the category of Mahatma Gandhi. The judge was apparently not satisfied with either of the two statements of Mr Bhushan: in the first, he quoted Mahatma Gandhi and said he sought no mercy and no magnanimity of the court while in the second he said he will be committing contempt of his conscience and the Supreme Court if he tendered an insincere apology.

Ordinary mortals are not supposed to question the judicial wisdom of the learned judges but one wonders if it is true about historical facts, too, and whether Justice Mishra got the traits of the Mahatma and Hindutva icon V.D. Savarkar mixed up when it comes to apologising. Isn't it that Mahatma Gandhi used to go on fasts doing penance not for his sins but for what he thought were the sins of others, as mentioned by Justice B.R. Gavai who sat alongside Justice Mishra and Justice Krishna Murari on the bench? Or did the judge mean that Mr Bhushan must apologise for the sins of perhaps the CJs who, he alleges, watched as Indian democracy got weakened? On the other hand, archival documents show that Savarkar, jailed by the British for his role in the freedom movement, went on an apologising spree and got himself freed from the cellular jail in Andaman. Justice Mishra will hopefully set the record straight while pronouncing the order sentencing Mr Bhushan, for we can't take too many liberties with history.

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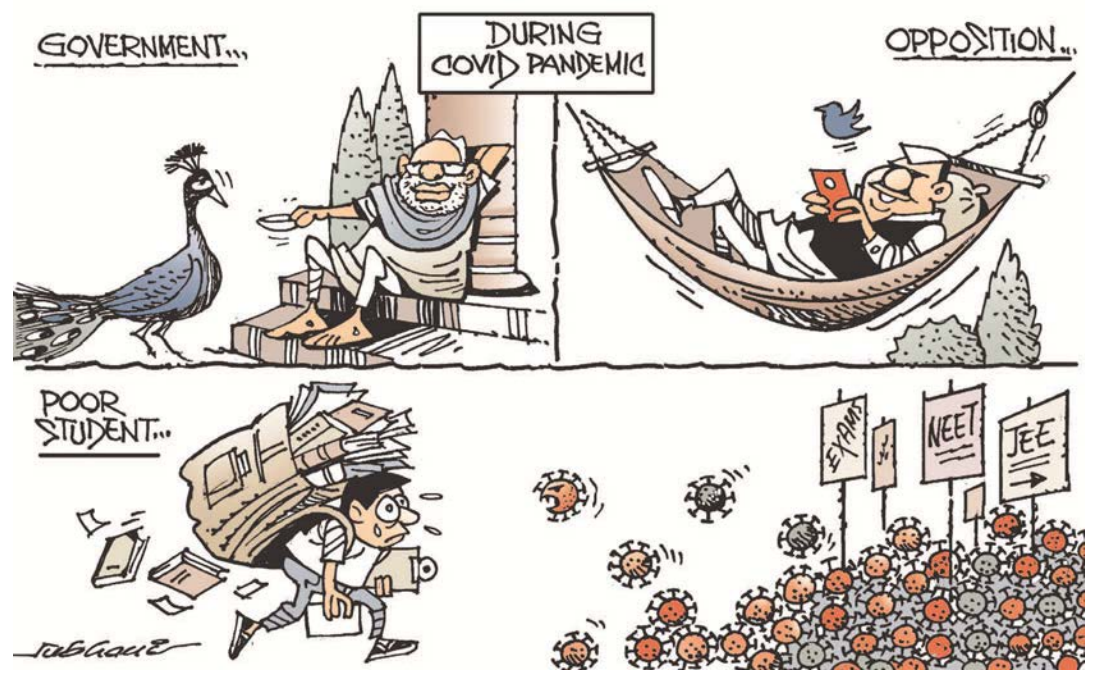
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Subhani



After Covid devastation, India to need rebuilding



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

India Post has just delivered two bank statements posted in late May. This is not the only instance of delay and/or damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Its devastation recalls Rabinindranath Tagore's deathbed despair about British rule in India: "When the stream of their centuries' administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth they will leave behind!"

If the pandemic does end in two years, as World Health Organisation director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus predicts, it will leave behind a ramshackle India. This week's suicide of a five-member Madhya Pradesh family is another tragedy highlighting the despondency that grips much of India. Most social and welfare institutions were already creaking on March 25 when India ground to a halt. Everything has deteriorated since then, with the government too busy scoring points against China and Pakistan to bother with ordinary folk. Covid-19 is no respecter of rank, but as Raghuram Rajan, the Reserve Bank's former governor, says, it is "an 'anti-Robin Hood' that hits the poor even harder on every front".

The first charge on the government is to improve a scandalously decrepit healthcare system. Better infrastructure would have mitigated the worst effects of the pandemic. Instead, the suspicion is that the facts have been brushed under the carpet to conceal the derelict state of rural hospitals, the acute shortage of doctors, enlistment of ayahs as nurses and sweepers and

bearers as paramedics. Medicines and equipment are in short supply. No wonder Microsoft's Bill Gates bluntly rejected the official figure for Indian (and African) fatalities, saying: "The true number... is probably much higher." He expects millions more in India and Africa to die and thinks more than 90 per cent of those deaths will be caused by the knock-on effects.

The reason is that people are expendable for our political masters. They will spend money for the greater glory of what they see as India but not for the ordinary run of Indians. Outsize statues, massive temples, ostentatious religious rituals, state-of-the-art fighters and luxury aircraft for VIPs matter more than the millions of impoverished Indians. Few, if any, good schools are run by the government. The best of them are either Christian missionary institutions or private enterprises.

Understandably, spending on healthcare was low in colonial times; but the colonial norm becomes criminal negligence when governance is by a supposedly nationalistic Bharatiya Janata Party whose leader swears by "Atma Nirbhar Bharat", or self-reliant India. Within the abysmally small pie of medicare spending, the government's share is a shameful 26 per cent, 74 per cent being provided by private investors who are in it for what they can get out of it. The charges have gone up in a once-smart, expensive and superbly professional foreign-managed nursing home that is now Indian-owned while the food, cleanliness and staff care have deteriorated. Amenities like toi-

let paper and towels are no longer provided. The owners themselves fly to Switzerland or the United States for treatment.

Since much of the investment in healthcare is left to market dynamics, private medical facilities proliferate only where people can pay. State expenditure is confined largely to areas where it can benefit the rich and influential or impress foreigners. The need for a healthcare delivery system that is available, accessible and affordable to all is ignored. So are the need for healthcare infrastructure, healthcare education, manpower, workforce, health insurance and medical equipment.

India's bed density is under one while China, with its much larger population, provides more than three beds per thousand. Despite the highest number of medical colleges, India has the lowest number of doctors per thousand of population and is in the middle - fifth out of seven - in the number of nurses per 1,000 people. India also has the lowest number of care providers — 1.9 per thousand.

Medical equipment is another problem that the pandemic has exposed and highlighted. Personal protective equipment is sometimes charged for without being provided. The government's claim of adequate imports supplemented by a spurt in the domestic manufacture of nearly 4.5 lakh PPE kits per day does not seem to meet the needs of all frontline workers,

Many other aspects of decline deserve attention. India has slipped to 150th place in the health and survival list, to 149th in terms of economic participation and opportunity, and to 112th place for educational attainment.

while nearly one-third of respondents in a recent survey reported that N-95 masks were not available. "One of the surprising and important findings is the lack of formal training on PPEs", a leading doctor is quoted as saying. Over half these workers had not received any training at all, while a fifth reported that they had taught themselves.

Of course, many other aspects of decline deserve attention. India has slipped to 150th place in the health and survival list, to 149th in terms of economic participation and opportunity, and to 112th place for educational attainment. It has also fallen four places to 112th in terms of the gender gap, now grovelling among the bottom five in terms of female participation in economic life.

Underlying it all is an erosion of confidence; confidence in the self (*atma-vishwas*), and confidence in the elected government's ability to deliver. A survey shows that 62 per cent of parents will not send their children to schools even if they were to reopen next week. The survey also found that only six per cent of respondents would visit a theatre. There is obviously little faith in the government's ability to check infection in schools and theatres.

The challenges are on a variety of fronts. A beginning can be made with healthcare for that bears closely on the peril that still threatens to decimate the nation. But there can be no cure without official recognition of all that is wrong, of the extent to which policy has fallen short of public expectations. Alas, our leaders remain blissfully complacent that they have not failed the country because the colonial-style culture of governance does not say that the rulers owe anything to the ruled.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

₹2,000 DEMONETISED?

Not printing the ₹2,000 note for one year by the Reserve Bank of India and withdrawing it from banks and ATMs is another, silent, demonetisation. However, the common man is not affected by the absence of the big note, because it is not useful for routine transactions. Currency in denominations of ₹10, ₹50, ₹100 and ₹500 are the ones in use. In addition to these, for the convenience of people, the RBI must release new ₹25 and ₹250 notes, after withdrawing the ₹20 and ₹200 notes.

J. Vijay Kumar
Secunderabad

ONLY ACTORS

BERLINALE'S decision to award the Silver Bear to the best actor, male or female, conveys that acting is not contingent upon sex but the actor's skill. Can you imagine separate awards for male and female film directors? Gender-segregated award categories, seemingly harmless, is just a dissembled form of bias. Virginia Woolf wrote in her feminist manifesto, *A Room of One's Own*: "Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation." Berlinale has decimated the aforementioned protection, setting an excellent example for other film festivals and award juries.

Saundarya Jain
New Delhi

JIMMY'S FEAT

TURBANS OFF to Jimmy Anderson on becoming the first fast bowler to reach 600 wickets in Test cricket. The Englishman got to the milestone by scalping Pakistan captain Azhar Ali in the rain-marred third and final Test at the Ageas Bowl to join retired spinners Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne and Anil Kumble in the "600 club". Anderson also picked his 29th five-wicket haul to draw level with Glenn McGrath. Only Sir Richard Hadlee is ahead with 36 Test fifters to his name. Kudos!

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Bookworm
Prasad
Shrivastav
Book Review

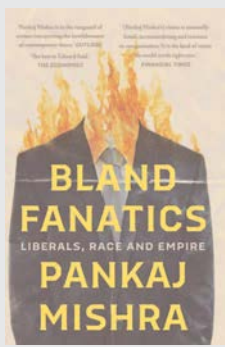


Glib and bland: Liberalism's illiberal legacy

In case you thought that Joe Biden's election — as it looks now — was going to save the world by getting rid of the reckless but also unfocused authoritarian Donald Trump, then you probably need a small dose of reading from the collection of Pankaj Mishra's essays, *Bland Fanatics: Liberals, Race and Empire*. It's pretty clear that despite adoption of some of his party's progressive wing's platforms — on health or on student loans, for instance — Biden and team remain committed to returning to the normalcy of the liberal Anglo-American project, as Mishra might call it. Which means returning to the very normalcy that created our post-liberal tribalism in the first place: a liberalism that deviates far from what John Stuart Mill enunciated in *On Liberty*, and evolved to a globalism that built upon imperialism and slavery (and its descendent modern-day racism) and that demands, in the name of individual freedom, an atomised slave of corporate-capitalist free-marketers. That does not solve the problem, only postpones it till we get a crueller version of Trump or his local counterpart.

This is why it is important to read Mishra, though these 16 essays, written over the decadal span of the 2010s, is not something you can imbibe in the course of a sitting (you'd need 16 sittings, at least). It's an at-times enjoyable intellectual stone-throwing at liberalism and some of its icons since Fukuyama's so-called "end of history", such as Niall Ferguson or the *Economist*, a 175-year-old weekly that is consistently wrong in its predictions despite its comprehensive Oxonian chronicling of the planet. To be clear, Mishra does not lob his Molotov cocktails at liberalism from the right, even though he is not a communist. Yet if ever a new framework is to arrive, the first step is to dismantle the ideology that pretends to be humanity's saviour at the "centre" of things, and that is liberalism.

The title comes from something that cold warrior and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in 1957: "Among the lesser culprits of history are the bland fanatics of western civilisation who regard the highly contingent achievements of our culture as the final form and norm of human existence." Mishra, of course, intends to promote these



BLAND FANATICS: LIBERALS, RACE AND EMPIRE

By Pankaj Mishra
Juggernaut
218pp
₹599

"bland fanatics" from the status of lesser culprits.

The first guilty party is Niall Ferguson who, after all, justified the 2003 Iraq War as an effort not just to "make the world safe for capitalism and democracy", but also proposed an "Anglobalisation" of the world to civilise the natives. "I am a fully paid-up member of the neo-imperialist gang," Ferguson said, as he called upon the Americans to ensure the sun never set on the Anglo-American empire. It was an intellectual midwifery of the White Supremacy movement — which had been lingering in the shadows for several post-WWII

decades. For his troubles he was given a position at Harvard University.

Then Mishra goes on to eviscerate "intellectual Islamophobia", a project in which standard-bearers from the *Financial Times* to Martin Amis have participated, constantly raising fears of "Eurabia", unmindful of the fact that for most Muslims in Europe, choices are dictated not by their readings of the Holy Book, but by their experience of globalised economies and cultures. Mishra asks us to keep remembering that the most meaningful reason for World War I: "the religion of Whiteness". He eviscerates Salman Rushdie for rejecting, post the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, the very mix of politics and literature that his 1989 novel had exemplified, where "the personal is the geopolitical".

Mishra writes about Woodrow Wilson, credited with pushing global peace and the creation of the now-defunct League of Nations, and how that US president's ideas were driven by a need to preserve white supremacy both in his own nation and in the globe throughout (ironically his rhetoric spawned many a freedom fighter in Asia). He

decries colonialism and modern globalism for expecting the Third World to adopt the ways and means of Europe and America without experiencing their stages of development.

Mishra loves Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* and its depiction of the social darwinism in Mumbai's largest slum; this same social darwinism has now been formalised in India's polity, in the way that White Supremacy has been in the USA's, reminding us that all the social turmoil and cruelty that have horrified us in the past few years are things that were always already there — things we politely, as liberals, shut our eyes to.

There is a well-deserved take-down of Jordan Peterson. And so on, till the essays wind up with "England's Last Roar": how a moment of reckoning has long been postponed, of an "ex-imperialist country with dwindling material" but "an antique assumption of power and self-sufficiency", that is broken. Mishra quotes Orwell: "A generation of the unteachable is hanging upon us like a necklace of corpses." Hmm. Perhaps liberalism is the last revenge of the colonised.

IN BRIEF

Probe Navalny case: Johnson

London: Britain will back an independent investigation into the suspected poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Wednesday. "We need a full, transparent investigation into what happened. The perpetrators must be held accountable and the UK will join international efforts to ensure justice is done," he said. Johnson's intervention comes as the 44-year-old Kremlin critic was being treated in a Berlin hospital after falling ill on a flight in Siberia last week, and mounting concern from Western powers.

NZ mosque attack: Tarrant to be mum

Christchurch: Brenton Harrison Tarrant told a New Zealand judge Wednesday he will not speak in his defence at his sentencing hearing for the mass shooting of worshippers at two Christchurch mosques. Tarrant had the opportunity to speak Thursday, the final day of a hearing which has seen 90 survivors and family members talk about the pain of the March 2019 attacks. Earlier Wednesday, a woman speaking about her beloved father brought many people in the courtroom to tears. Sara Qasem said she wonders if, in his last moments, her father was frightened or in pain, and wishes she could have been there to hold his hand.

Pak rain, Afghan flood: 190 dead

Karachi/Kabul: Three days of monsoon rains have killed at least 90 people and damaged at least a 1,000 homes across Pakistan, the country's national disaster management agency said Tuesday, as another spell of heavy rain lashed the port city of Karachi. Streets and homes were flooded with sewage water in Karachi, where the drainage and sewage systems are outdated. Heavy flooding has killed at least 100 people and injured scores of others as heavy rains drenched northern and eastern Afghanistan. Provincial spokeswoman Wahida Shahkar, said the number of casualties may rise as rescue teams were still working to locate people buried under destroyed houses.

Pak rejects two FATF-linked bills

Islamabad: Pakistan's Opposition-dominated Senate has rejected two bills related to the tough conditions set by the FATF, jeopardising the government's efforts to escape from being blacklisted by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. The move drew a strong reaction from Prime Minister Imran Khan who accused the Opposition leaders of trying to save their illegal money. The Anti-Money Laundering (Second Amendment) Bill and the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Waqf Properties Bill, passed by the National Assembly a day before, were rejected through a voice vote by the Senate on Tuesday.

SUMMERS MAY BE TOO HOT FOR HUMANS

London, Aug. 26: Many live in developing countries, and do jobs that expose them to potentially life threatening conditions. These include being out in the open on farms and building sites or indoors in factories and hospitals. Global warming will increase the chances of summer conditions that may be "too hot for humans" to work in. When we caught up with Dr Jimmy Lee, his goggles were steamed up and there was sweat trickling off his neck. An emergency medic, he's labouring in the stifling heat of tropical Singapore to care for patients with Covid-19. There's no air conditioning — a deliberate choice, to prevent the virus being blown around — and he notices that he and his colleagues become "more irritable, more short with each other". And his personal protective equipment, essential for avoiding infection, makes things worse by creating a sweltering 'micro-climate' under the multiple layers of plastic. "It really hits you when you first go in there," Dr Lee says, "and it's really uncomfortable over a whole shift of eight hours — it affects morale." One danger, he realises, is that overheating can slow down their ability to do something that's vital for medical staff — make quick decisions.

Belarus summons Nobel Laureate

Nobel Literature Prize winner for 2015 and the opposition's Coordination Council's presidium member Svetlana Alexievich, who was summoned for questioning as a witness in a criminal probe over the setting up of the council that seeks to oversee a peaceful transition of power, arrives at the Investigative Committee in Minsk on Wednesday. Alexievich said she refused to answer investigators' questions. "I am completely calm. I do not feel guilty. Everything we are doing is legal and necessary," she said after arriving at the Committee's headquarters with other members of the presidium. She left shortly afterwards, saying she had invoked her right not to testify against herself and that the council's only goal was "to unite society".

— AFP

Kin laud Don achievements, urge voters to re-elect him

New York, Aug. 26: US President Donald Trump's family took centrestage at the Republican Convention, passionately rallying behind him and highlighting his political, economic and foreign achievements as they urged American voters to re-elect him for a second term.

So far, first lady Melania Trump, president's sons Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump and daughter Tiffany Trump have addressed the Republican National Convention. His another daughter and senior adviser Ivanka Trump, 38, will speak on Thursday, the last day of the convention.

President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence will be challenged by the Democratic Party's presidential nominee Joe Biden and his Indian-American running mate Senator Kamala Harris.

"Donald is a husband who supports me in all that I do. He has built administration with an unprecedented number of women in leadership roles and has fostered an environment where the American people are always the priority. He welcomes different points of view and encourage thinking outside of the box."

"I know I speak for my husband and the family when I say we are so grateful that you have trusted him to be your president and we will be honoured to serve this incredible country for four more years," the First Lady said in her

Pompeo: Only Prez can tackle China's 'predatory aggression'

Washington, Aug. 26: President Donald Trump is the only person who can take on China and its "predatory aggression", US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has told the American people.

He also said that President Trump will not rest until he brings the Communist nation to justice for spreading death and economic destruction in America and around the world through the Coronavirus. Pompeo on Tuesday deviated from his own advice and broke the longstanding precedent of sitting US secretaries of state avoiding partisan politics to urge Americans to re-elect President Trump on November 3 if they want to keep the country safe.

In his address to the Rep-

ublican National Convention from Jerusalem, Pompeo, who is leading the Trump administration's vocal attack on China and its aggressive moves in recent times against India and in the strategic Indo-Pacific region, said that President Trump has taken bold initiatives in nearly every corner of the world.

"In China, he has pulled back the curtain on the predatory aggression of the Chinese Communist Party. The president has held China accountable for covering up the China virus and allowing it to spread death and economic destruction in America and around the world. And he will not rest until justice is done," the top American diplomat said.

— PTI

address to the Convention Tuesday from the Rose Garden on Tuesday.

Melania, 50, said that Americans need Trump to be their president and commander-in-chief for four more years. "He's what is best for our country. We all know Donald Trump makes no secrets about how he feels about things. Total honesty is what we as citizens deserve from our President."

Whether you like it or not, you always know what he's thinking, and that is because he's an authentic person who loves this country and its people, and wants to continue to make it better," she said.

Addressing the Convention's first night on Monday, Donald Trump Jr, 42, said Trump's America is "a land of opportunity, a place of promise."

"I was fortunate enough

to grow up in a family that could afford the best schools and the finest universities, but a great education cannot be the exclusive right of the rich and powerful. It must be accessible to all. And that's why my dad is pro school choice. That's why he's called education access the civil rights issue, not just of our time, but of all time," he said.

— PTI

2 Oppn lawmakers arrested in Hong Kong

Hong Kong, Aug. 26: Hong Kong police arrested 16 people Wednesday on charges related to anti-government protests last year, including two opposition lawmakers.

Pro-democracy legislators Ted Hui and Lam Cheuk-ting announced their arrests on social media. Posts on Lam's Twitter account said he had been arrested on charges of conspiring with others to damage property and obstructing justice during a protest in July 2019.

The tweets said he has

also been accused of rioting on July 21, 2019. That was the day a group of more than 100 men clad in white attacked protesters and passengers with steel rods and rattan canes in a subway station. Protesters and many from the opposition camp have accused the police of colluding with the attackers, as they arrived late to the scene and did not make arrests that night.

A post on Hui's Facebook page did not make clear the exact charges he was facing. The chairman of

the Democratic Party in Hong Kong, Wu Chi-wai, called the arrests of Lam and Hui "ridiculous". Lawmaker James To said the arrests amounted to political persecution. The two were arrested along with 14 others - aged between 26 and 48 years old — in relation to protests last year, according to a police official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to the press before an official statement had been released.

The semi-autonomous

the international community in shipping's clean energy transition.

Impossible? Not at all. Most of Japan's largest shipping lines are already members of the Getting to Zero coalition, a global alliance of 110 maritime companies working to get zero-emission, non-fossil fuel, cargo ships into commercial operation by 2030. Mitsui O.S.K. Lines is one of them.

Under the leadership of Kazuyoshi Akaba, Japan's Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is aiming to launch a zero-emission ship even

Former Indian athlete kills wife, mom in US, held

Washington, Aug. 26: Iqbal Singh, a former Asian Championship bronze medalist for India, has been charged with murder in the US after he chillingly admitted to killing his wife and mother, according to media reports. Singh, 62, from Delaware County in Pennsylvania called police on Sunday morning to admit his crime. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted officials as saying.

When police arrived at Singh's home in Newtown Township, they found Singh covered in blood, suffering from self-inflicted stab wounds. Inside were the bodies of the two women, the report said.

Singh was charged on Monday with first- and third-degree murder, court records show, and remained in custody, denied bail given the nature of the charges.

There was no indication that he had hired an attorney, it said. The former shot-putter won a bronze medal at the 1983 Asian Athletics Championship,

which was held in Kuwait. This remained the biggest achievement of his sporting career before he moved to the US. He was working as a taxicab driver, US media reports said.

Singh was taken to an area hospital for the treatment of self-inflicted injuries, where he remains in police custody, *NBC News* reported. At Singh's home on Rockwood Road, police found his mother, Nasib Kaur, lying unresponsive on the first floor with her throat slit. Singh's wife, Jaspal Kaur, was found upstairs, similarly wounded. Both women were pronounced dead at the scene, according to the affidavit of probable cause for his arrest. The motive in the slayings was unclear.

"At this point, there's been no previous criminal contact with this individual and so the mystery of why this happened is still a mystery," *CBS Local* quoted Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer as saying.

— PTI

CAMBRIDGE UNIV'S VACCINE RACE TO FIGHT ALL CORONAVIRUSES

London, Aug. 26: The University of Cambridge on Wednesday confirmed plans to begin trials of a potential new vaccine not only against Covid-19 but all coronaviruses that may spill over from animals to humans in the future. The new vaccine candidate, DIOS-CoVax2, uses banks of genetic sequences of all known coronaviruses, including those from bats, believed to be the natural hosts of many relatives of human coronaviruses.

A vaccine that clears all trials can then be delivered pain-free without a needle into the skin through a spring-powered jet injection.

"Our approach involves 3D computer modelling of the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) virus' structure. It uses information on the virus itself as well as its relatives SARS, MERS and other coronaviruses carried by animals that threaten to spill over to humans again to cause future human epidemics," said Professor Jonathan Heeney, head of Laboratory of Viral Zoonotics, University of Cambridge. "We're looking for chinks in its armour, crucial pieces of the virus that we can use to construct the vaccine to direct the immune response in the right direction," he said.

— PTI

Kenosha shooting: 2 people shot dead

Kenosha, Aug. 26: Two people were shot to death and another was wounded during a third night of protests in Kenosha over the police shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, and authorities Wednesday hunted for a possible vigilante seen on cellphone video opening fire in the middle of the street with a rifle.

The gunfire was reported just before midnight, and Sheriff David Beth said one victim was shot in the head and another

in the chest, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported. The third victim's wounds were not believed to life-threatening. He said that investigators had reviewed footage of what happened and that he was confident a man would be arrested soon. Beth told the *Journal Sentinel* that armed people had been patrolling the city's streets in recent nights, but he did not know if the gunman was among them.

— AP

Oil spill: Japan must wean ships off fossil fuels

Port Louis, Aug. 26: Japan's Wakashio oil spill in Mauritius was an entirely avoidable tragedy.

On July 25, the bulk carrier vessel, owned by Nagashiki Shipping and chartered by Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, grounded off the coast of the small island nation of Mauritius. Fuel oil from the ship started to leak on August 6 and is now destroying one of the most beautiful places on Earth, along with the livelihoods of the people who live there. The spill has put the biodiversity within Mauritius lagoons at risk, including the mangrove forests, coral reefs and many unique and endangered species.

Kiyoaki Nagashiki, CEO of Nagashiki Shipping and Junichiro Ikeda, CEO of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines have publicly apologised for the environmental disaster. But apologies will not take back the damage done to the people and ecosystems of Mauritius. As long as ships are powered by oil, there will be spills.

To make right on this tragedy, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe should accelerate the drive to get all Japanese owned ships off fossil fuels entirely and lead

the international community in shipping's clean energy transition.

Impossible? Not at all. Most of Japan's largest shipping lines are already members of the Getting to Zero coalition, a global alliance of 110 maritime companies working to get zero-emission, non-fossil fuel, cargo ships into commercial operation by 2030. Mitsui O.S.K. Lines is one of them.

Under the leadership of Kazuyoshi Akaba, Japan's Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism is aiming to launch a zero-emission ship even

earlier, by 2028. The Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, or MLIT, is exploring several viable clean energy options, including "green" hydrogen produced with renewable energy — hydrogen produced from fossil fuels has no benefit for the climate.

Last month, Japan's container shipping line Nippon Yusen, also known as NYK Line, joined the Hydrogen Council a global CEO-led coalition. In February, Japanese automaker Toyota Motor delivered a fuel cell system to the Energy Observer — the first boat to sail around the world using hydrogen generated on board from solar and wind power. The University of Tokyo is leading a project on automated wind-assisted propulsion on cargo ships. And other Japan-based maritime companies are developing solar and wind propulsion, and hydrogen on cargo ships. What's holding back all this private sector innovation from widespread commercialisation is the lack of an ambitious, clear, comprehensive zero-emission shipping regulatory framework from the Japanese government.

— Agencies

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 39,073.92 | 0.59 |
| Nifty 50 | 11,549.60 | 0.67 |
| S&P 500* | 3,468.22 | 0.71 |
| Dollar (₹) | 74.3 | 0.04 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 97.68 | 0.42 |
| Euro (₹) | 87.76 | 0.07 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 51,963*210 | 0.40 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 45.82 | -0.04 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.203 | 0.047 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 0.711 | 0.029 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Pension Payment Order can be kept in DigiLocker

Pension Payment Order can now be stored in 'DigiLocker' by the central civil pensioners, an official statement said. The move comes after the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare noticed that several pensioners, over a period of time, misplace the original copies of their PPO. In the absence of their PPO, these pensioners have to face innumerable hardships at various stages of their retired life.

Premium phones boost Xiaomi's June qtr profit



Xiaomi Corp reported better-than-expected profit after cracking the Chinese market for high-end smartphones and growing its share of overseas markets. The smartphone maker more than doubled net income to 4.49 billion yuan (\$716mn) in the June quarter. Sales rose 3.1 per cent to 53.5 billion yuan. Xiaomi also kept its top position in India in the quarter even though the country's smartphone shipments halved.

Paytm to hire over 1,000 in new segments

Paytm said it is in the process of hiring over 1,000 people across various roles over the next few months as it expands its operations, including segments like financial and wealth management services. Paytm is in the process of hiring over 1,000 engineers, data scientists, financial analysts among other positions for tech and non-tech roles. "The company...is heading for a rapid expansion," a statement said.

Uber launches auto rentals in major cities

Uber launched an on-demand 24x7 Auto Rentals service in India. The service allows riders to book an auto and its driver for several hours with the liberty to make multiple stops along a journey. The service is now live in Bengaluru and is available in Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Pune. Prices start at Rs 169 for a one-hour/ 10 km package with the option of selecting from multiple hourly packages, Uber said.

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Charges only on net liability from Sept. GST: Govt foregoes ₹46K cr in interest

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 26

The government has decided to forego Rs 46,000 crore of unpaid interest on delayed GST payment by notifying on Wednesday that the interest will be charged on net tax liability, and not on gross liability, with effect from September 1. Now it will have to be seen whether the government would refund those businesses which have already paid the interest on gross liability for the last three years.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has notified September 1, 2020 as the date from which interest would be charged on net tax liability. Industry had earlier this year raised concern over the board's directive for recovery of about Rs 46,000 crore of unpaid interest on delayed GST payment, based on gross tax liability.

"... no recoveries shall be made for the past period as well by the Central and State tax administration in accordance with the decision taken in the 39th Meeting of GST Council. This will ensure full relief to the taxpayers as decided by the GST Council," the CBIC statement had said.

A decision on charging the interest on net tax liability was taken by the 39th GST Council meeting in March. It was then decided that the amendment will be effective from July 1, 2017, and law would be amended

STORMY GST COUNCIL MEET LIKELY

New Delhi, Aug. 26: The GST Council meeting on Thursday is likely to be a stormy affair as opposition-ruled states unite to pressure the Centre to give them the promised compensation for loss of revenue arising from the implementation of GST.

The 41st meeting of the council, to be held via video conferencing, has just one agenda for discussion—making up for shortfall in states' revenues, sources said.

The options being explored are market borrowing, raising cess rate or increasing the number of items for levy of compensation cess.

Discussion on correction in inverted duty on certain goods like textiles and footwear is also likely, they said.

Chief ministers of opposition-ruled states got together on Wednesday to devise a common strategy on the issue. —PTI

retrospectively.

However, the CBIC has now said that the notification has been issued prospectively due to certain technical limitations.

"If the government is not recovering the unpaid interest of some businesses, it becomes imperative to refund to those who have already paid, from an equity point of view. But we will have to see whether the government will refund the interest already paid or not," said Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY.

It is possible businesses might seek a refund of the interest paid by them for the past three years based on the gross tax liability.

"Businesses are expected to approach the courts on this unjustified and illegal demand of interest basis the 'principle of estoppel'," said Rajat Mohan, senior

partner, AMRG & Associates.

In 2019, the Telangana High Court had upheld CBIC's stance that the interest was payable on gross tax liability. An interest of 18 per cent is levied on delayed tax payment. Net GST liability is arrived at after deducting input tax credit from gross GST liability. Hence, calculating interest on gross GST liability increases the payout burden on businesses.

According to Jain, the government will have to pay the refund if the court awards a judgement in favour of the businesses.

Rahul Bajoria, chief India economist, Barclays, said the government should look at simplifying the tax system than forcing businesses to take legal recourse for smaller tax components.

Shares of bike-makers ride high on GST cut hope

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 26

Auto stocks rallied, led by the two/three-wheeler manufacturers Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp and TVS Motors expecting cut in GST rate as the finance minister acknowledged the need to bring down the goods and services tax rate on two-wheelers, currently at the highest slab rate of 28 per cent.

The largest two-wheeler maker, Hero MotoCorp, gained 6.43 per cent on the BSE. Other gainers included Bajaj Auto (2.42 per cent), TVS Motor (4.88 per cent), Eicher Motors (1.47 per cent), Kinetic Engineering (4.55 per cent) and Atul Auto (2.96 per cent).

On Tuesday while addressing CII members, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman responding to a question about the need for lowering GST rates on two-wheelers, had said that this category is neither a luxury nor a sin good and hence merits a rate revision and this will be taken up with the GST Council.

Rajiv Bajaj, managing director, Bajaj Auto said that if the GST rates are lowered to 18 per cent from 28 per cent, the price of two-wheelers would fall by Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000.

Overregulation has led to 30-35 per cent increase in price, Bajaj said.

Need to grow at 8.5%, create 90 mn jobs by 2030 to avert stagnation: McKinsey

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 26

India's GDP will have to grow by 8 to 8.5 per cent annually and the country should create jobs for 90 million workers by 2030, else will risk a decade of economic stagnation, says a McKinsey Global Institute report.

Over the decade to 2030, India needs to create at least 90 million new non-farm jobs to absorb the 60 million new workers who will enter the workforce based on current demographics. An additional 30 million workers could move from farm work to more productive non-farm sectors.

For that to happen, India's GDP needs to grow by 8 to 8.5 per cent annually over the next decade or about double the 4.2 per cent rate of growth in fiscal year 2020.

If India fails to introduce measures to address pre-pandemic trends of flat employment and slowing economic growth, and does not manage the shock of the crisis adequately, its economy could make a decadal growth of just 5 per cent and absorb only about six million new workers. This will mark a decade of lost opportunity.

In order to recover to a high-growth path, India's sectoral mix would need to move toward higher-productivity sectors that also have the potential to create more jobs. Within individual sectors, a move toward new busi-



ness models that harness global trends could drive productivity and demand.

McKinsey finds that the manufacturing and construction sectors could achieve the largest acceleration in sector GDP growth relative to the past. In the coming decade, manufacturing productivity has the potential to rise by about 7.5 per cent per year, contributing more than one-fifth of the incremental GDP. Construction could add one in four of the incremental gross jobs. Both labour-intensive and knowledge-intensive sectors will have to sustain and improve on their past strong momentum.

India will also have to work now to grab opportunities presented by rising wages in other parts of Asia and trade conflicts to produce and sell more manufactured goods and services.

India would need to raise its competitiveness in high-potential sectors like electronics and capital goods, chemicals, textiles and apparel, auto and auto components, and pharmaceuticals and

medical devices, which contributed to about 56 per cent of global trade in 2018.

It needs to eliminate inefficiency in areas such as power, logistics, financial services, automation, and government services and look at value-creating market-based models. Automation of work and Industry 4.0 could bring greater efficiency.

The country also needs more large companies with revenues exceeding \$500 million that are significant drivers of growth and innovation. India has about 600 such firms.

The government has to introduce sector-specific policies to raise productivity in manufacturing, real estate, agriculture and food processing, retail, and healthcare. India has the potential to reduce land costs by 20 to 25 percent and increase the supply of land available for construction. The government could also consider reviewing the various laws on the books and examine options to improve labor-market flexibility.

Tata plots ambitious e-commerce foray

SARITHA RAI AUG. 26

Tata Group, the sprawling \$111 billion jewellery-to-salt empire, is getting a huge digital makeover.

The conglomerate is building an all-in-one e-commerce app for its swathe of consumer products and services, a person familiar with the matter said. The prototypes, which consolidate all of the group's consumer-facing businesses and existing online assets, are ready and a launch is expected by end-2020 or early 2021, the person said, asking not to be identified.

The Mumbai-based group is stepping up efforts to have a significant presence online in a market where internet users are forecast by Cisco Systems to reach 900 million by 2023. Most of them use smartphones to watch streamed content, shop and pay for purchases.

Tata is also seeking to catch up with rivals such as Amazon.com Inc, Walmart Inc's



N. Chandrasekaran

Flipkart and new entrant, billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd, who have unveiled grand plans for India. Reliance just finished raising more than \$20 billion from investors, including Facebook and Google, for its digital services platform, while Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has bet \$6.5 billion on growth in the world's second-most populous country.

Tata Digital chief executive officer Pratik Pal is in charge of building the app, the person

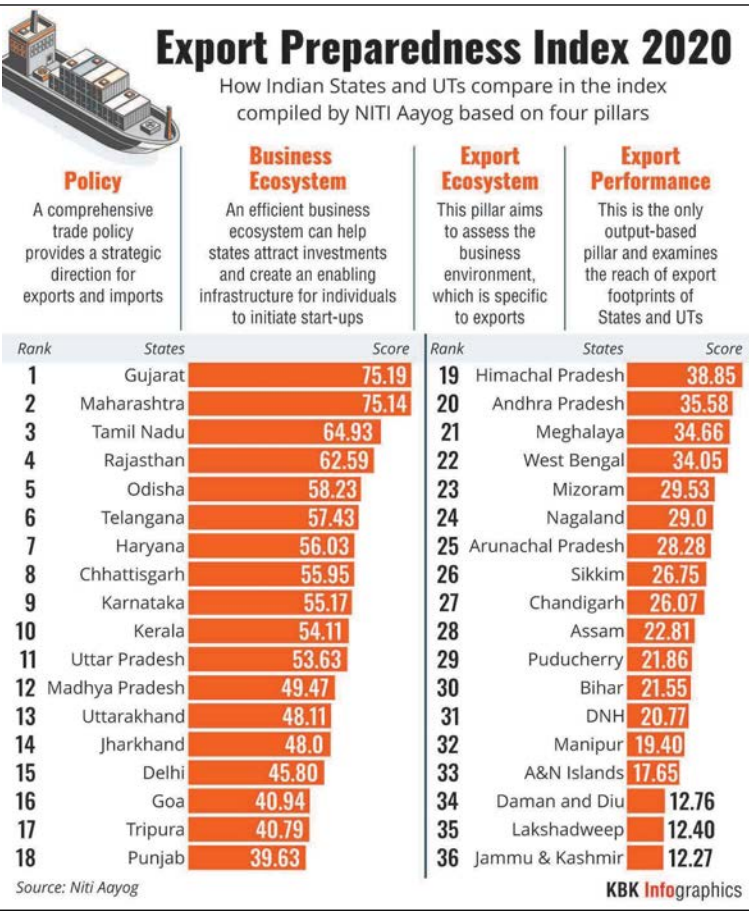
said. Pal has three decades experience at Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, where he was global head of retail, and helped with the digital transformation of some of the world's largest retail chains, including Walmart, Tesco, Aldi, Target Corp, Best Buy Co and Marks & Spencer Group.

A representative for Tata Group declined to comment.

The all-in-one app, reported first by the Financial Times, wants to capitalise on the scope and scale of the Tata Group, which also makes cars, air conditioners, smart watches and tea. It operates luxury hotels, airlines, utilities, an insurance business, departmental stores and a supermarket chain. In addition, it owns brands like Tetley and Jaguar Land Rover and runs Starbucks in India.

Natarajan Chandrasekaran, chairman of holding company Tata Sons and a long time CEO of TCS, is now championing the digitization drive.

—Bloomberg



High debt-GDP ratio to limit govt spend in 2020s: Report

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 26

India's general government debt-to-GDP ratio is likely to be at 80 per cent of GDP by FY30 and is unlikely to fall to the 60 per cent target even by FY40.

As per the estimates of Motilal Oswal Research, general government debt—Centre plus states—rose to 75 per cent of GDP in FY20 from 70 per cent in FY18. It is likely to reach 91 per cent of GDP in FY21. This would be the highest level since 1980. It may stay at less than 90 per cent of GDP up to FY23.

This surge in India's government debt-to-GDP ratio would restrict its ability to grow its spending significantly and support economic activity in the 2020s decade as it has done in the past few years.

India's general government debt-to-GDP ratio is likely to be at 80 per cent of GDP by FY30 and is unlikely to fall to the 60 per cent target even by FY40 without hurting GDP growth more seriously, the report said.

Gradual fiscal consolidation to lower the government debt-to-GDP ratio to 80 per cent of GDP by FY30 implies that primary spending by the general government is likely to grow at an average of 7.1 per cent in the 2020s decade. The average growth was 11.3 per cent in the 2010s decade. The faster the fiscal consolidation, the lower will be the government debt. But it will slow the growth in fiscal spending. This would have the potential to hurt real GDP growth further, creating a vicious circle, which would eventually make it more difficult to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio as planned.

Although the government debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to remain high, there is no fear of debt unsustainability or debt spiralling out of control.

The report also finds that the government support to real GDP growth in the 2020s decade would be lower than in the past few years.

Ducati Panigale V2 launched at ₹16.9 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 26

Italian luxury motorcycle brand, Ducati on Wednesday launched the all-new BS6 Panigale V2 superbike in the country priced Rs 16.99 lakh at pan-India showroom.

The new superbikes' rival is the BMW S 1000 RR, prices for which start at Rs 18.5 lakh.

The all new Panigale V2 is a beefy yet compact bike of essential design with clear-cut lines that convey power without compromising on the classic Ducati superbike flair. The new model replaces the 959 Panigale in Ducati's portfolio and is now the entry point into the manufacturer's supersport line-up.



NEW HONDA JAZZ COMES AT ₹7.5 L

Pune, Aug. 26: Japanese car giant Honda on Wednesday introduced the updated premium hatchback Honda Jazz to woo buyers during this ongoing festival season. The tweaked, petrol-only model start at Rs 7.50 lakh. "The refreshed new Jazz offers a stylish and sportier makeover, and the introduction of segment-exclusive Sunroof will add a new dimension," said Gaku Nakanishi, president & CEO at Honda Cars India, said.

—Michael Gonsalves

SHORT TAKES

Maguire found guilty, suspended

Manchester: Manchester United defender Harry Maguire has been found guilty of assault at a trial and handed a 21-month suspended sentence following his arrest after a brawl last week on the island of Mykonos, court officials in Greece said. Manchester United defender Harry Maguire was found guilty of assault at a trial on Tuesday and handed a 21-month suspended sentence following his arrest after a brawl last week on the island of Mykonos, court officials in Greece said. Two other defendants — including Maguire's brother Joe — were also found guilty on similar charges and handed 13-month sentences. The sentences for all three defendants were suspended for three years. Maguire issued a statement saying he will appeal. "I remain strong and confident regarding our innocence in this matter," Maguire said. "If anything, myself, family, and friends are the victims," he added. — AP

Serena succumbs, Djoker in quarters

New York: An out-of-gas Serena Williams crashed out of the Western & Southern Open on Tuesday, losing in three sets to 13th seeded Maria Sakkari 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in New York. The 23-time Grand Slam winner finished with a whimper at the end of the two-hour, 17-minute match as Sakkari clinched the victory with a backhand down the line. Sakkari, of Greece, advances to the quarterfinals of the no-spectator event where she will face Johanna Konta who cruised past Vera Zvonareva in straight sets 6-4, 6-2. Meanwhile, on the men's side, world No. 1 Novak Djokovic won his 20th straight match of 2020 with a hard-fought 6-2, 6-4 victory over Tennyis Sandgren. Djokovic, who captured the Australian Open in February, needed six match points to tough out the straight sets victory and reach the quarterfinals of the hardcourt tournament. Djokovic breezed through the final game by winning four straight points. — AP

Phil extends lead in his PGA debut

Ridgedale, USA: The hole Phil Mickelson considered the most important in the second round of his PGA Tour Champions career was not any of the eight he birdied but rather the only one on which he made bogey. He was 5 under after the front nine Tuesday at Ozarks National when he hit driver at the par-4 10th. The ball wound up in such heavy rough that Mickelson couldn't find it, forcing him to take a penalty stroke. He still wound up making a long putt to salvage bogey, and that gave him some momentum for the rest of the round. I was able to get right back to even par on the back side with a birdie on the next hole, and then I made a couple more coming in," said Mickelson, whose 7-under 64 left him 17 under. That was good for a four-shot lead over Tim Petrovic and Rod Pampling, who will be his playing partners for the final round. — AP

PAUL TOWERS HIGH TO MAUL MAVERICKS

Los Angeles: Paul George says his struggles are over as he scored a team-high 35 points on Tuesday to lead the Los Angeles Clippers to a dominating 154-111 playoff victory over the Dallas Mavericks. George rebounded from three sub-par performances to combine offensively with Kawhi Leonard and give the Clippers a 3-2 series lead. George opened up after the game about his struggles with coping inside the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida where the players have to adhere to strict health and safety measures and no spectators are allowed into the arena. George says after being in a "dark place" he has finally got rid of the demons and is ready to help the Clippers with their playoff run. — AP

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MESSY AFFAIR

Lionel says enough, wants to quit Barcelona

Barcelona, Aug. 26: After dozens of titles, hundreds of goals and countless records, Lionel Messi's spectacular career at Barcelona could be coming to an abrupt end. The divorce may turn ugly, too.

Messi told Barcelona on Tuesday that he wants to leave after nearly two decades at the club, having grown unhappy after a trophy-less season ended with a humiliating loss to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

Barcelona confirmed that Messi sent the club a document expressing his desire to leave. But the club hinted that a legal battle could be coming and said it won't automatically grant the Argentina great his wishes.

Barcelona said it told Messi in response that it wants him to stay and finish his career at the club.

The dispute centers around a clause in Messi's contract.

Barcelona said the document sent by Messi referenced a clause allowing him to leave for free at the end of the season. However, the club said the deadline for triggering that clause expired in June and that it would seek legal advice.

Messi's contract also includes a 700 million euro (\$826 million) buyout clause.

"If Messi is to leave Barcelona by activating a release clause, then I hope the club (tries) to help, not hinder him," former England and Barcelona striker Gary Lineker said on Twitter.

If Messi can leave for free, he will have no shortage of suitors. However, only a handful of clubs could realistically afford to pay his wages even without a transfer fee with mega-rich Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester City widely seen as perhaps the most likely destinations.

The 33-year-old Messi has won a record six Ballon d'Or awards during his time at Barcelona as the top player in the world, and has helped the club win 10 Spanish league titles and four Champions League



Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi waves before the 54th Joan Gamper Trophy friendly football match against Arsenal at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona in this file photo taken on August 4, 2019.

— AP

crowns. Messi's announcement came 11 days after Barcelona's humiliating 8-2 loss to Bayern in the Champions League quarterfinals, one of the worst defeats in the player's career and in the club's history.

The defeat capped a difficult season for Barcelona the first without a title since 2007-08 and ignited one of its worst crises ever.

Messi had been outspoken about his dissatisfaction with some of Barcelona's decisions this season, talking about the team's problems and contesting club directors. Sporting director Eric Abidal, who was criticised by Messi, left the club last

week. Messi had been silent since the loss to Bayern, though, raising doubts about his future. The defeat may have been the tipping point for the playmaker. He and his teammates faced furious Barcelona fans who confronted them and criticised the team at the club's training centre after the squad returned from Portugal.

Club president Josep Bartomeu had said he was confident that Messi would finish his career with Barcelona, and that he was a crucial part of incoming coach Ronald Koeman's plans for the team. Koeman met with Messi last week and the

player reportedly told the Dutchman that he saw himself more out than in at the club at that moment.

The coach reportedly had already told other key pieces of the squad that they were not in his plans, including Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal, Samuel Umtiti and Ivan Rakitic.

After the loss to Bayern, Barcelona announced it would make profound changes to the first team and a wide-ranging restructuring of the club. The changes began with the firing of coach Quique Setin a few days after the Champions League defeat in Lisbon, and new presidential elections were called for March. — AP

MIFFED MESSI SAYS NO TO TRAINING

Madrid, Aug. 26: Lionel Messi informed Barcelona coaches he was not going to turn up to training on Wednesday, according to Barcelona's newly-appointed sporting director Ramon Planes.

Messi asked Barca Tuesday to leave the club he has been with for 20 seasons, since he was 13 years old.

"Messi informed us that he was not going to show up to training," Planes said during the official unveiling of Portuguese striker Joao Trincao.

"Messi, Planes insisted, in the first official club reaction to the Argentinian's want-away demand, was "important news. But what we think, and we've said it many times, is that we see Messi as a Barca player."

"Today Trincao arrives and we hope he will triumph alongside Messi," he added. — AP

CLUB FROM DOWN UNDER WANTS LIONEL

Sydney, Aug. 26: Footballing minnows Adelaide United issued a long-shot bid to entice superstar Lionel Messi to join its ranks Wednesday, touting the remote South Australian city as a coronavirus safehaven for playing and raising his family.

Writing a "Dear Lionel" letter, Adelaide United Director Ian Smith cited his state's "brilliant" schools, tourist attractions and world-class wines as reasons the Argentine should head Down Under. He also noted South Australia's success in containing the pandemic saying the state would be "safe for your young family". — AP

Jimmy's exploits clinch series win

Southampton, Aug. 26: England paceman Jimmy Anderson became the first fast bowler to reach 600 wickets in Test cricket, before the third and final Test against Pakistan finished as a draw on Tuesday, leaving the home side to celebrate a second series victory of the pandemic-disrupted summer.

Less than two hours of cricket were played on a rain-affected Day 5, with England taking just two of the eight wickets needed to win the match at the Rose Bowl after Pakistan resumed on 100-2 and trailing by 210 runs.

The big consolation was Anderson took one of them, removing Pakistan captain Azhar Ali to join retired spinners Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne and Anil Kumble in the "600 club" in Tests.

England won the series 1-0, with its three-wicket victory in the first test in Manchester followed by two drawn tests in Southampton.

It was a first series triumph over Pakistan since 2010 and a second of the summer after beating the West Indies 2-1.

Pakistan was 187-4 when the teams settled on a draw, with 27.1 overs bowled on Tuesday. Babar Azam was 63 not out. The first two sessions were washed out because of heavy overnight rain.

After England captain Joe Root took a high catch at first slip off Azhar to give Anderson his prized wicket on his 14th delivery of the day, the 38-year-old fast bowler was mobbed by his teammates.

Then Anderson took the ball in his right hand and with a cheeky smile saluted all sides of the Rose Bowl.

England coach Chris Silverwood applauded on the boundary edge.

Muralitharan (800), Shane Warne (708) and Anil Kumble (619) remain above Anderson on the all-time list of wicket-takers. — AP



England's James Anderson celebrates after taking the wicket of Pakistan's Azhar Ali, his 600th Test match wicket, on the fifth day of the third Test match at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, Southern England, on Wednesday.

— AP

Cricketers rain praise on James

New Delhi, Aug. 26: "Welcome to the club", said Anil Kumble, while Sourav Ganguly marvelled at the "greatness" as English pacer James Anderson's 600 Test wickets earned him a unanimous round of applause from some of the biggest names in Indian cricket.

Anderson touched the milestone on the fifth day of the drawn third Test against Pakistan when the 38-year old dismissed rival skipper Azhar Ali.

"Congratulations @jimmy9 on your 600 wickets! Massive effort from a great fast bowler. Welcome to the club," Kumble tweeted.

Anderson, speaking after the match, said he is bullish about crossing the 700-wicket mark.

Former India skipper and BCCI President Ganguly was among the stalwarts to laud Anderson's achievement, calling it an inspiration for younger fast bowlers.

"Well done James Anderson @jimmy9.. this milestone is just greatness..156 test matches as fast bowler is just unthinkable..u will make every young fast bowler believe that greatness is achievable," he tweeted.

India skipper Virat Kohli joined his illustrious compatriots to praise Anderson.

"Congratulations @jimmy9 for this outstanding achievement of 600 wickets. Definitely one of the best bowlers I've faced," he tweeted.

Anderson also claimed his 29th five-wicket haul in the third Test in Southampton and only the great Richard Hadlee has more among seam bowlers.

Talking about his 600 wickets, Anderson said: "I have worked really hard with my skills over the years and I am fortunate enough that I get to do it at the top level playing for my country."

— PTI

KINGS XI AND ROYALS KICK OFF NET SESSION

Dubai, Aug. 26: All Kings XI Punjab and Rajasthan Royals squad members, who arrived here last week, will have their first proper training session in months on Wednesday evening, having tested negative for Covid-19 thrice during their mandatory six-day quarantine.

To beat the searing Dubai heat, teams have opted to train in the evening. KXIP and Royals, who are based in Dubai, and Kolkata Knight Riders, who are in Abu Dhabi, were among the first batch of teams to arrive on Thursday.

Following the players' arrival, they were tested on day 1, 3 and 6 as per the BCCI Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and having cleared three tests, KXIP and Royals players are all set to resume training.

During the six-day quarantine, the players were not even allowed to step out of their rooms. — PTI

A FOX IN THE BOX

Lionel Messi was the teenage prodigy who blossomed into Barcelona's record scorer and is still operating at the highest level at 33. Here are the career highlights of one of football's all-time greats.

Barca academy

Messi, from Rosario in Argentina, was a diminutive 13-year-old and suffering from growth hormone deficiency when he joined the academy at Barcelona, who agreed to pay for his \$1,000-a-month treatment. Despite severe homesickness at the outset, Messi rose through the ranks and made his first-team debut aged 17 in 2004, becoming Barcelona's youngest goal-scorer later that season.

Olympic gold

Messi helped Argentina to their second straight men's football gold at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, winning all six of their games and conceding just two goals.

Messi, playing in a team that included Javier Mascherano and Angel di Maria, later described it as his most cherished title. The Olympic title remain's Messi's biggest achievement with Argentina, despite being their all-time top-scorer with 70 goals.

Ballon d'Or

Messi eclipsed Cristiano Ronaldo, then newly arrived at Real Madrid, to be named the world's best footballer by a record margin in 2009.

It capped a brilliant campaign where he inspired Barcelona to the Champions League trophy, scoring nine goals and sealing the 2-0 final victory over Manchester United with Barca's second goal. Guardiola's Barcelona also won the Copa del Rey and

La Liga, claiming the first treble in Spanish history. Messi picked up his sixth Ballon d'Or, another record, last December.

Muller time

Messi enjoyed a sensational 2011-12, setting a La Liga record of 50 goals in a season and scoring 73 in all competitions, breaking Gerd Muller's European record of 67.

Goals, goals, goals

Messi was just 24 when he broke Cesar Rodriguez's 57-year-old club record of 232 goals, smashing a hat-trick past Granada in March 2012.

He has gone on to amass 634 for his club, including a record 444 and unsurpassed 36 hat-tricks in La Liga. Messi also scored his 700th goal for club and country in June.

However, highlights have been in short supply this season for Messi and Barcelona, who finished without a trophy for the first time since 2007. — AP



A hero returns to shade barehanded

Madrid, Aug. 26: When Lionel Messi won an unprecedented sixth Ballon d'Or in December last year, the speculation had already begun over his career at Barcelona.

The 33-year-old Argentine footballing genius was increasingly unable single-handedly to rescue his imploding club, as he had done so often in the past.

Barcelona, despite lifting the La Liga title, had collapsed at the end of the 2018-19 season, losing a 3-0 semifinal lead, including two Messi goals, to Liverpool in the Champions League.

They then dropped the Copa del Rey final 2-1 to Valencia, where the Argentine was again on the scoresheet, this time though just a late consolation.

But all that paled in comparison to Barca's barren 2020, capped by a shocking humilia-

tion in Lisbon.

BAYERN EMBARRASSMENT

The abject 8-2 quarterfinal embarrassment against Bayern Munich in Lisbon 12 days ago meant a first season since 2007 without a trophy for Barcelona.

It marked the first time Barca had conceded eight goals in a game since losing to Sevilla 8-0 in the 1946 Spanish Cup.

But far more significant than that, it convinced the twinkletalman his final footballing years lay elsewhere.

The fallout was immediate. Coach Quique Setien was sacked after barely six months in charge while sporting director Eric Abidal was also dismissed.

Even the appointment of former Camp Nou fan favourite Ronald Koeman as head coach last week could not convince

Messi to stay. The Dutchman has indicated he will embark on a clear-out and, as 33 years old, Messi must feel he doesn't have time to wait.

SIMPLY IRREPLACEABLE

Barcelona have insisted in the past they had plans for coping with Messi's retirement, whenever it came, but the truth is their number 10 is irreplaceable.

He has spent his entire professional career with Barcelona, winning a club-record 33 trophies, including 10 La Ligas, four UEFA Champions Leagues, three Club World Cups and six Spanish Cups. Almost a decade on, Messi still harbours unfulfilled ambitions, including another Champions League crown and an elusive major trophy with Argentina to add to his 2008 Olympic gold. — AP