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ANANTAPUR | THURSDAY | 27 AUGUST 2020



Messi ends 19-year affair with Barcelona

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Vijayawada: The AP Special Enforcement Bureau arrested 133 government officials in 106 cases related to illegal trade in illicit liquor and sand in the last five months. The SEB in total arrested 50,172 persons in 36,996 cases since May, 2020 and seized 2.43 lakh litres of illicitly distilled liquor, 37,202 lakh litres of fermented jaggery wash, 1.35 lakh kg of black jaggery, 17,072 litres of beer, 2.55 lakh litres of IMFL and 37,025 kgs of ganja. SEB commissioner Vineet Brijlal, in a video conference here on Wednesday revealed this.

Elephant Suvarna's newborn calf at the Bannerghatta Biological Park in Bengaluru has been named Sudha after Infosys Foundation chairperson Sudha Murthy to acknowledge her contribution towards the cause of wildlife conservation. — PT

“That means Sri Lanka will not do anything harmful to India’s strategic security interests,” said Colombage, who was the chief of the Sri Lanka Navy between 2012-14 and later became a foreign policy analyst mostly on the Chinese initiatives in Sri Lanka and the immediate region. Colombage said that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa would have an India first approach as the key to strategic security. “Lanka cannot afford and will not afford any country to use it as a staging area to do anything against another country – especially India,” he said. —PTI

A fire mishap led to a panic situation at the Covid-19 ward in Government General Hospital, Anantapur, late on Tuesday night. Hospital records and an old X-ray plant were gutted in the fire caused due to an electric short circuit. No one was injured in the mishap.

The fire started in the records room of the II ward. Flames reached near the Covid ward, where

over 20 patients were being treated. Timely intervention by fire crews averted a major mishap. Patients on the ID ward were shifted to other wards and provided necessary medical treatment. Some of them were treated for respiratory

Official sources said records room was situated in the ID ward of the Government General Hospital. Fire broke out in the records room due to short circuit in the old and

and hospital superintendent Dr. Ramaswamy Naik reviewed the situation post the fire mishap.

Andhra Pradesh registered a single-day spike of 10,830 Covid-19 cases scaling up the overall tally to 3,82,469 and 81 deaths taking the toll to 3,541 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities released the Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of

Covid as t closer

P. Praveen Kumar, a B.Tech final year student in a private engineering college, said, "We face the risk of getting infected with Covid-19 from the stage of transport to exam centre and back to our homes or hostels. Some of my friends who appeared for a competitive exam in Karnataka were infected with the virus. We want the government to take more precautionary measures to help us not to fall victim to Covid-19."

Hospitals found collaboration beneficial as they can ramp up beds by several times and treat patients with mild infections at the centres, while admitting those with severe infection in hospitals.

ray machine ospital

RECORDS ONE-DAY CORONAVIRUS CASES

■ Full report on Page 3

IN BRIEF

AP power firms willing to add staff

FROM PAGE 1

Underlining the ratio of allocation specified in AP Reorganisation Act, counsel for AP power sector companies submitted that they will be adding employees beyond their threshold if the 584 employees are not being relieved to Telangana. The Supreme Court adjourned the matter by two weeks for further hearing.

Gang hijacks truck, robs mobiles

Tirupati: A suspected interstate robbery gang chased, intercepted and hijacked a container, carrying a consignment of mobile phones worth of ₹6 crore near Nagari in Chittoor district in the late hours on Tuesday. This came to light on Wednesday after the driver lodged a police complaint. According to Nagari circle inspector Rajasekhar, the container was carrying mobile phones from Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu to Mumbai via Nagari. When the container crossed the TN border check post, around 6-7 miscreants intercepted the truck. They attacked the driver, threw him out and drove away in another route. The gang later shifted the mobile phones into another vehicle and left the truck close to the highway near Puttur. The driver claimed that the gang took away ₹6 crore worth of 7,500 mobile phones. Nagari police booked a case and started an investigation. The CI reached the check post near Tiruttani and verified the CCTV footage.

YSRC demands judicial capital

Kurnool: Denouncing 'anti-development' attitude of TD president Chandrababu Naidu, YSRC leaders took out a candle rally here on Wednesday evening demanding immediate implementation of three capital Act. YSRC Kurnool parliamentary constituency president B.Y. Ramaiah said that the Kurnool should be made judicial capital immediately.

AADHAAR CARD FORGERY FOR WELFARE SOPS

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

Forging of Aadhaar cards for government schemes was unearthed in Guntur on Wednesday.

The police arrested eight youngsters for illegal change of age in their Aadhaar cards making them eligible for government schemes like YSR Pension, YSR Cheyutha and others. The eligible age limit for YSR pension scheme is 60 years. Fraudsters are changing people in the age group 55 to 59 to 69 years of age. The age bracket for YSR Cheyutha is 45 years. Fraudsters are increasing the age of underage persons to apply for the scheme.

Addressing a press conference in Guntur on Wednesday, Guntur urban SP, R.N. Ammi Reddy said that the police arrested Avula Tirupathi Reddy, Adapala Sai, S.K. Khajia, Raghavarapu Sai Seshu, Annapureddy Saikumar, Nissankarao Sivannarayana, Ganapa Venkata Nagi Reddy and Polisetty Durga Prasad for forging Aadhaar cards.

The accused rented a room in the city complex market in Guntur and made rubber stamps forging signatures of concerned authorities. They appointed agents to bring ineligible beneficiaries in the age group of 55 to 59 and change their age to 60 years to render them eligible for the YSR pension and further changed the age for YSR Cheyutha to 45 years.

The police seized laptops, an iris camera, biometric iris scanners, finger scanners, colour printers, rubber stamps, and ₹22,000 cash from the shop. SP Reddy said that the fraudsters used to collect ₹3,000 - ₹5,000 from each person to change their date of birth in the Aadhaar card from each person. He said that according to primary investigation, the police found this gang changed the age of nearly 200 to 500 people in their Aadhaar cards, hence further investigation is under progress. He said that special teams were formed to probe the involvement of others in the Aadhaar card scam.

SP Reddy appreciated circle inspector R. Suresh Babu, sub inspector Sk. Md. Miraj and police staff for unearthing the Aadhaar card scam.



Police arrests farmers and Opposition leaders near CRDA office who were seeking annuity for the lands pooled for capital city in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Women lay siege to CRDA office demanding annuity

Amaravati women arrested, bid to gherao APCRDA office foiled

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

Pro-Amaravati farmers on Wednesday laid siege to the APCRDA office, demanding the release of annuity arrears here on Wednesday. They alleged that the government was pushing them into financial crises by stopping annuity. The police rushed to the spot and took into custody the protestors. Farmers' leaders warned that they would intensify the agitation if the government failed to release annuity arrears of Amaravati farmers. They also demanded continuation of Amaravati as capital of the state and vowed to continue the movement till the government climbed down on the proposed shifting of the capital to Visakhapatnam.

The women protestors belong to Mandadam, Thullur, Velagapudi and adjacent areas of Amaravati led by Congress leader Sunkara Padmasri. Amaravati Women JAC leaders Akkineni Vanaja and others came to the APCRDA office at Vijayawada and tried to enter the office. When the police did not allow them, they squatted on the road, demanding release of pending annu-

ity. They said that they had given up their agriculture lands for capital Amaravati and previous government promised to pay them annuity. But the YSRC government stopped annuity payments. They alleged that the 'adamant' attitude of the government forced them towards starvation.

Ms Padmasri lamented that women facing financial crisis due to non-payment of annuity, came to the APCRDA office, but the police behaved rudely with them by arresting them forcibly. She demanded unconditional release of the arrested women and farmers.

CPM state secretary P. Madhu, party leaders Ch. Babu Rao and V. Srinivas Rao consoled arrested women and farmers in Suryaraopeta police station. Mr Madhu objected to the arrests of Amaravati protestors and demanded immediate release of annuity and unconditional release of the arrested protestors. CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna recalled the minister for municipal administration's promise to pay annuity to Amaravati farmers. He claimed that the lands acquired for capital city were still in the control of the government.

Jagan shattered dreams of Naidu, benamis, says Sajjala

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

Government adviser (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu who did nothing during his five-year tenure, turned a villain out to stall Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's endeavour to develop the state. He claimed that ₹59,000 crore was spent on welfare activities in the past 14 months. "Unable to digest this, TD is trying to defame the YSRC government through baseless allegations," he said.

All that the former CM did in Amaravati was to create a make-believe virtual capital just in order to help his cronies and benamis. "The Jagan government is helping the Amaravati farmers and it is evident from the fact that the people of Mangalagiri voted against Lokesh. If at all there is any destruction, it is that the Chief Minister has done to the dreams of

YSRC government deserves full credit for effectively handling the Covid-19 pandemic by conducting tests on a wider scale. He claimed that all the systems of meeting the people's requirements are being handled effectively

Naidu's benamis who wanted to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor farmers of the region," he remarked.

The government adviser said Mr Naidu was living in a virtual world away from reality and blind to the welfare schemes being implemented by the government.

YSRC government deserves full credit for effectively handling the Covid-19 pandemic by conducting tests on a wider scale and the recent floods. He claimed that all the systems of meeting the people's requirements are being handled effectively by Jagan Mohan Reddy government and in the past 14 months the govern-

ment has disbursed welfare schemes worth ₹59,000 crore to the people.

Mr Ramakrishna Reddy asked, "If Naidu is afraid of contacting Covid-19 and is staying away in Hyderabad, why is his son Lokesh who is a youngster also hiding there. He stated, "It is but diversionary tactics that Naidu is employing every day by speaking against the government and the Chief Minister by being blind to reality."

Mr Ramakrishna Reddy said that old-age pension of ₹2,250 was being given on the first day of every month at the door-step of the beneficiaries. Amma Vodi, Cheyutha, Asara are a few schemes intended to benefit a large section of the poor. "If any lapses are pointed out in implementation of welfare schemes, the Chief Minister himself is intervening to get them rectified. A thorough CM like Mr Jagan should be disapproving to Mr Naidu, who is desperately trying to find some blemish in the government," observed Mr Ramakrishna Reddy.

Lokesh blames govt for auto-rickshaw driver's death

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 26

Telugu Desam national general secretary Nara Lokesh has blamed the government for the death of an auto-rickshaw driver, whose video taking the state to task for steep hike in liquor prices, went viral on social media some time ago.

It may be recalled that one Om Pratap, hailing from Kanduru village of Somala mandal in Chittoor district, had made the state government and Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy butt of jokes for hiking the prices of liquor. The video had gone viral and ruffled the feathers of those in political circles in the state. On Monday, the auto-rickshaw driver died at his residence in Kanduru village due to some ailments as claimed by his family members.

The former minister on Tuesday took to Twitter and demanded a probe into the death of the man. Mr Lokesh alleged that the man, who questioned the government's 'anti-people' liquor policy, received several threats from ruling party leaders.

Mr Lokesh said in his tweet that: "Dalit youth Om Pratap has been martyred for questioning on social media the way the YSRC government is robbing people in the name of banning alcohol."

● Somala PS sub-inspector Lakshmikanth, he said that the deceased's family claimed that it was a natural death due to some medical ailments and he didn't end his life.

"Om Pratap died in Kanduru village, Somala mandal, Punganur constituency, Chittoor district due to police harassment and threats by YSRC leaders to kill him. A probe should be held into Om Pratap's death."

"The YSRC leaders behind this incident should be severely punished. Do Dalits have no right to question the government? I strongly condemn the Jagan Reddy government's attack on Dalits," another tweet said.

When *Deccan Chronicle* contacted Somala PS sub-inspector Lakshmikanth, he said that the deceased's family claimed that it was a natural death due to some medical ailments and he didn't end his life.

"On receiving information, we visited the house of the deceased and enquired with his family members. They claimed that Om Pratap died due to some ailments. Based on the allegations from various quarters, we asked the family to lodge a complaint if they have any suspicions over his death, but insisted that he died due to illness," Mr Lakshmikanth said.

Naidu urges DGP to probe death of Dalit youth in Chittoor

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday urged director general of police (DGP) Gautam Sawang to order a high-tam level inquiry into suicide of a Dalit youth, Om Pratap of Chittoor district.

In a letter to the DGP, Mr Naidu stressed the need to check the call list of Om Pratap's phone to find out who threatened to kill him, prior to his extreme step. It was because of threats from some ruling YSRC leaders that the Dalit youth ended his life. The TD chief said that it was saddening to witness the spurt in attacks on Dalits under the present government.

It was equally disheartening to see police inaction on one hand, and a section of officials in the department conniving with ruling party leaders to attack, harass and threaten Dalits on the other.

"It is with a heavy heart

that I would like to bring to your notice about the sad suicide case of Om Prathap belonging to Bandakadapalli of Kanduru village, Somala mandal in Punganuru Assembly constituency. Om Prathap used to earn his livelihood by driving an auto-rickshaw in Madanapalle town. He had recorded his frustration with the YSRC government on a video and the same was circulated widely across Telugu states."

The TD chief said that the ruling party leaders in general and minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, representing Punganuru constituency, in particular, reportedly plunged into action and made several threatening calls to Om Prathap. He said it was essential to check the call list of the deceased and demanded an inquiry by a high-level committee into the spate of attacks against Dalits across the state in general and the suicide of Prathap in particular.

GOVT SILENT ON MILLERS CHEATING PADDY FARMERS, SAYS SOMIREDDY

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, AUG. 26

Former minister and TD senior leader Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy accused the government of not taking action against middlemen and rice millers fleecing farmers on the pretext of moisture in the paddy. Speaking to media persons here on Wednesday,

he said only ₹9,800 was being paid for one 'putti' (850 kg) of fine variety of paddy (Masoori) as against the minimum support price (MSP) of ₹15,980 announced by the government.

He alleged that the government was encouraging farmers to raise Nellore Masoori variety (NLR3354) promising an MSP of ₹15,720.

YSRC dubs Amaravati agitation a hoax

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

YSR Congress MLA, Karanam Dharmasri, termed opposition leader, N. Chandrababu Naidu's Amaravati agitation a hoax and criticised Left Parties for supporting the vicious campaign started by Mr Naidu to help his supporters in land deals.

Speaking to media here on Wednesday, Dharmasri slammed Naidu for claiming the protest by some people in Amravati region was a state-wide movement and said Naidu's political drama is motivated only to ensure that the land prices don't fall in the region.

Dharmasri said that it is also proved that Naidu

cheated the farmers of Amaravati region by not fulfilling the promises he made to them.

Slamming the CPI for supporting Naidu and his benamis and acting contrary to Karl Marx, Dharmasri said, "It seems that the CPI changed its name from communist party of India to Chandrababu party of

India. While Chief Minister, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, is striving for the development of all regions by decentralising administration, it is ridiculous on the part of Naidu to project the Amaravati agitation as a national issue."

Claiming that Jagan chose Visakhapatnam as executive capital as it gen-

erates a revenue of ₹3 lakh crore at present and can generate ₹6 lakh crore in the near future, Dharmasri further claimed that Visakhapatnam has rail, sea and air connectivity. He questioned as to why Naidu was against decentralized development and opposing Vizag as executive capital.

TRADITIONAL | SAVVY

Each bird costs about ₹5 lakh to import from Netherlands, special WA groups for racing

Pigeon racing catching up among Kurnool youth

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC KURNOOL, AUG. 26

Pigeon racing is catching up with youths in Kurnool as they brace to rear and nurture birds of special breed for a long-haul flight of up to 500 km. The city has a long history of pigeon racing, said an enthusiast.

Kurnool Homing Pigeon Association (KHPPA) has presented 500-km race award to Khaza, 350-km awarded

to Riyaz, 250-km award to Parveen and 150-km award to Ibrahim. Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan, a pigeon race enthusiast himself, said that the sport has been practised in Kurnool for quite a long time. It was during the Kurnool nawab rule in 18th century that pigeons were trained to send messages to as far as Gooty fort, Mysore, Srirangapatnam and other areas. KHPPA office-bearer Riaz said the association current-

ly has 21 pigeon racing enthusiasts as members with seven dedicated founders of the body. Explaining how the birds are trained to come back even from hundreds of kilometres of distance away, Riaz said that pigeons have to be trained for 10-km laps. "Say if a bird has to come back from Hyderabad to Kurnool, it has to be trained everyday for a 10-km stretch in incremental distance so that it can remember geography

well for homecoming. Homing pigeons use low-frequency sound waves that emanate from just about everything to mentally map their environments and navigate back to their lofts.

● Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan, a pigeon race enthusiast himself, said that the sport has been practised in Kurnool for quite a long time

Homing pigeons navigate through visual landmarks by following familiar roads and other man-made features, making 90-degree turns and following habitual routes, much the same way that humans navigate, said Parveen, vice president of KHPPA.

Pigeon races are sometimes considered unethical, particularly when they involve betting. KLHP members said theirs is purely love of pigeons and cultivating their skills to fly. It is

addictive, said another member. A pigeon lover spends ₹5.5 lakh to import a racing pigeon from Netherlands. It is known to fly back home from 1,500 km distance. Racing pigeons are auctioned and the going rate is anywhere between ₹10,000 and ₹1 lakh and above. There are special WhatsApp groups for racing pigeons, said Riaz.

Pigeons participating in racing.



IN BRIEF

₹2L cheque given to 2 cops families

Kadapa: Kadapa SP Karur Karunapathi Nagendra Kumar Anburajan gave cheques of ₹2 lakh each to the two bereaved families of Armed Reserve head constable K. Varaprasad and civil head constable S. Ismail who recently died of ill health. The SP consoled the bereaved families at the district police office here on Wednesday. The SP assured both the families of help from the police department.

CHITTOOR JUDGE'S CASE TAKES NEW TURN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHITTOOR, AUG. 26

Chittoor-based junior civil judge, S. Ramakrishna, who is under suspension and recently in the news for filing a petition in AP High Court alleging conspiracy to defame judiciary, alleged that the government had resorted to vendetta by restricting his physical movement.

His petition eventually led to the High Court appointing a retired Supreme Court judge to probe into the allegations of attempts to defame the judiciary and several serving judges of High Court and Supreme Court.

The fresh controversy began with B Kothakota mandal executive magistrate and tahsildar serving prohibitory orders against him and his neighbour D Venkata Reddy with whom Ramakrishna had a dispute over the pathway leading to his residence.

The civil matter took a political turn when Ramakrishna made allegations that he was physically assaulted by YSRP men at the behest of Minister P Ramachandra Reddy and his brother Dwarakanath Reddy, an MLA.

According to the order served by Tahsildar D. Hari Kumar on Monday, both Ramakrishna and Venkat Reddy are indulging in frequent quarrels in recent days and overpowering each other by claiming rights over the pathway by adopting violent methods and destroying peace in the village. Also, they both filed cases against each other at B. Kothakota PS on July 15.

The Tahsildar mentioned in his order that the SI of B. Kothakota has reported that Ramakrishna and Venkat Reddy are likely to take possession of the disputed pathway by indulging in violent activities and requested issue of orders u/s 145 Cr. PC, prohibiting both parties from entering the disputed path.

Meanwhile, Ramakrishna, in a video on Wednesday, alleged that he was confined to his house as the orders which prohibited him from the pathway is the only way for them to come outside of their house.

He said that he and his family members are being starved due to orders.

WALT AIR RLY DIVISION INVENTS ROOM SANITISER

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 26

The Diesel Loco Shed (DLS) of Waltair Railway Division has made another invention to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. The DLS, Waltair, has successfully fabricated Remote Controlled UVC room sanitiser initially for railway use.

The UVC equipment has been fabricated with existing resources including condemned pedestal fan stand and by fixing two 36 W UVC lamps along with a remote control unit. The equipment can sanitise a room of 400 Sq.Ft and is working with latest UVC technology.

The UVC is strongly absorbed by RNA and DNA bases leading to molecular structural damage through a photodimerisation process. This results in virus inactivation, such that they are no longer able to replicate. Two such equipment have already been supplied to the Divisional Railway Manager office and railway hospital, said Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Diesel) S.K. Patro.

For effective usage, it is to be used for 30 minutes in large rooms of size 400 sqft, and for small rooms, 15 minute operations would be enough. This works with latest Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation technology.

This type of similar equipment is popularly being used in US and there is 100 per cent results with the equipment. The total cost for the equipment is below ₹10,000 only. The equipment can also be operated with remote before going and coming into the chambers, the officer added.

Ready to care

Newly appointed nursing staff get their appointment letters from the King George Hospital authorities inside KGH in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

AP records single-day spike of 10,830 cases

Out of 34,18,690 samples tested, 2,86,720 were discharged

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

AP registered single-day spike of 10,830 new Covid-19 cases scaling up the tally to 3,82,469 and 81 deaths taking the toll to 3,541 in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities have released Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday reporting that out of 33,968 samples tested, 10,830 individuals have tested Covid-19 positive. Out of 34,18,690 samples tested so far in the state, 2,86,720 patients have been discharged after recovery while 92,208 patients are undergoing treatment.

Among new confirmed Coronavirus infections, East Godavari continues to lead with 1,528 followed by 1,168 in Nellore, 1,156 in Visakhapatnam, 1,065 in West Godavari, 913 in Chittoor, 786 in Prakasam, 745 in Kurnool, 728 each in Anantapur and Kadapa, 618 in Srikakulam, 564 in

7 SECRETARIAT STAFF TEST +VE

Vijayawada: Seven employees working in various departments at AP Secretariat have tested Covid-19 positive on Wednesday.

A senior government official said that among the infected persons, those who were showing symptoms of the infection had been referred to government hospital for health care while those who were asymptomatic had been advised to go for home isolation.

Vizianagaram, 532 in Guntur and 299 in Krishna.

East Godavari has been badly affected with more number of cumulative infections as it registers 53,567 followed by 40,845 in Kurnool, 36,948 in Anantapur, 32, 308 in Guntur, 32,717 in

Visakhapatnam, 32,244 in West Godavari, 32,205 in Chittoor, 25,443 in Nellore, 22,411 in Kadapa, 20,104 in Srikakulam, 18,661 in Prakasam, 17,471 in Vizianagaram, 14,650 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

Rate of recovery of infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 35,564 followed by 33,661 in Kurnool, 30,672 in Anantapur, 26,658 in West Godavari, 25,855 in Visakhapatnam, 25,210 in Guntur, 23,029 in Chittoor, 19,344 in Nellore, 16,496 in Kadapa, 14,325 in Srikakulam, 12,397 in Krishna, 10,644 in Prakasam, 9,970 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

East Godavari has reported death of 11 Covid-19 infected patients followed by nine in Prakasam, eight each in Chittoor and Kadapa, six each in Anantapur and

West Godavari, five each in Kurnool, Nellore, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram, four each in Guntur and Srikakulam.

Chittoor district has registered highest number of cumulative death of 360 infected patients followed by 354 in East Godavari, 350 in Guntur, 299 in Anantapur, 270 in West Godavari, 262 in Visakhapatnam, 252 in Prakasam, 242 in Kurnool, 238 in Nellore, 220 in Srikakulam, 185 in Kadapa and 149 in Vizianagaram.

The state health authorities discharged 8,473 patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

AP has carried out Covid-19 tests on 64,020 samples for one million population and has recorded the positive rate of 11.19 while Maharashtra has tested 29,713 samples with positive rate at 18.97 and Telangana has tested 25,981 samples with positive rate at 10.64.

7 private hospitals to treat Kadapa patients

NAGESWARA RAO BALLEDA | DC
NKADAPA, AUG. 26

The district authorities hope that the covid patients will get more options for the medical aid through private medical hospitals.

Besides, the five government hospitals present working for the Covid patients treatment there were seven private hospitals in the district under Arogyasri that came forward to treat the Covid-19 patients.

Actually, even during the lockdown period, until a few days ago, not a single private hospital in the district came forward to treat Covid patients. Although there are 30 hospitals registered under the Arogyasri scheme across the district, no one has come forward to provide treatment to corona patients.

Eventually, the deputy chief minister Amjad Bhasha and collector Chevuri Harikiran took the initiative to talk to the

■ CM Jagan directed the collectors to see to it that more private hospitals provide treatment to Covid patients under Arogyasri. With this, some more of the 30 hospitals under Arogyasri in the district have also applied to the state for permission to treat Corona patients

managements of some private hospitals and persuade them to provide treatment to the covid patients. With this, covid patients are currently being treated in 7 private hospitals in the district.

Recently, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the collectors to see to it that more private hospitals provide treatment to Covid patients under Arogyasri. With this, some more of the 30 hospitals under Arogyasri in the district have also applied to the state government for permission to treat Corona patients.

It is hoped that if all these are approved, it will be possible to provide better treatment to the corona patients in the district.

Through Sanjeevini buses and other medical teams diagnosed positive patients will be initially admitted into the 12 quarantine centers which have treated the positive patients. Patients with critical conditions and those who have difficulty breathing properly will be admitted in the respective private hospitals. Those who feel the need for urgent treatment in compulsory at hospitals are also allowed to be admitted directly to the hospitals under Arogyasri.

Sri Madan Multi Speciality hospital, Harsha super speciality hospital, Priya Bhavan hospitals in Proddatur are treating corona patients. Sri Mohan hospital, Rama Srikrishna Hospital, Komma Hospital and Sri Tirumala Hospital in Kadapa are also treating corona patients under Arogyasri.

‘Withdraw CID case against doc’

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 26

AP Congress Committee vice-president Dr G. Gangadhar objected to the CID notice issued to him for pointing out at lack of facilities to doctors in government hospitals.

He lamented that there was no freedom of speech due to undemocratic situation in the state. He said that he had raised the issue concerned over the safety of doctors and health staff, who were working amidst the dangerous Corona crisis.

APCC president Dr Sake Sailajanath, vice president N. Tulasi Reddy and other leaders demanded withdrawal of case against Dr Gangadhar.

Mr Gangadhar said that CID issued notice to him to appear for inquiry on

August 30 regarding his comments on the absence of masks, PPE kits and other essentials to the doctors treating Covid patients.

He defended that he spoke to one vernacular channel about the plight of doctors on April 16, 2020. He said that there were only 10 PPE kits in Anantapur district and similar condition prevailed in other districts in the state on April 16. He spoke about the same and sought the government to take measures for the betterment of protection to the doctors.

He said that he suggested the government to take the private health sector into their control to use as Covid facilities to treat Corona patients but his suggestion was not heeded.

Covid victim's gold missing

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 26

Gold ornaments of a woman who succumbed to Covid at VIMS Hospital in Visakhapatnam were missing. A TV channel reporter from Kurupam in Vizianagaram district said his mother-in-law was admitted to VIMS Hospital with Covid infection on Monday and she died the following evening. He said all the gold ornaments that she wore at the time of admission were found missing when the body was brought to Kurupam on Wednesday.

She wore Mangalasutra weighing 3.5 tola, a ring and a nose bud. Except for the nose bud, all were missing. He said when he asked for ornaments, the doctors told him that he could collect them after the body reached home. However, suspecting something might have gone wrong, the reporter and other family members told the sanitation staff to open the pack but they refused. Finally, when the body arrived,

there was no gold.

“Thefts are being reported at regular intervals in the hospital. We advised the family to lodge a complaint with the police,” said VIMS director Dr V. Satya Varaprasad.

He said it could have been the handiwork of sanitation workers and male nurses who kept quitting after working a week fearing contracting the virus. New people are replacing them. It is becoming difficult to keep track of these employees.

He said CCTV cameras were installed in main halls and wards but not in places where the dead bodies were being packed.

Taking advantage of the shadow zone, these people are indulging in robberies.

In one incident, passport and other valuable documents of an NRI were thrown into garbage and in another, gold ornaments were recovered from the packing material. In both the cases, theft was accused, the director said.

CAPCO to sue corporate hospitals

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 26

The Confederation of Andhra Pradesh Consumer Organisations (CAPCO) has decided to sue the private and corporate hospitals for fleecing Covid patients, taking advantage of the emergency situation.

Chairman of the Confederation Prof Hanumanthu Lajipathi Rai, former V-C of Dr BR Ambedkar University and consumer activist, said cases would be filed in all the consumer fora in the 13 districts against these erring health institutions.

He said it was unfortunate that the private corporate hospitals were taking advantage of the health emergency and fleecing even the poor patients.

He said as per the Consumer Protection Act of 2019, the hospitals can be penalised and compensation paid to the patients.

“I am waiting for one complaint so that we can move forward and send notices to the hospitals. The CAPCO will fight the cases in the Consumer Forum on behalf of the

patients,” Prof. Rai said.

Even if the hospitals fail to give the receipts, cases could be filed based on the case sheet and summary report. If the hospitals refuse to part with both these documents, still cases could be filed, Prof Rai said.

He said soon after the lockdown was announced, the price of masks shot up from ₹15 to ₹150 and ₹200. The hospitals began charging ₹1 lakh per day from people creating a fear among them.

Even a private ambulance owner is also charging ₹10,000 for a 2 km ride from the patients.

The government, invoking Section 188 of 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act, should intervene and regulate the treatment prices and cost of the equipment so that the hospitals would desist from profiteering, the activist added.

The chairman also suggested that the government should take action against the hospitals refusing admission and the management of private crematorium grounds for refusing to accept the dead bodies for cremation or burial.

PLASMA THERAPY SAVES 60 PATIENTS IN NELLORE

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 26

Medical officers in Government General Hospital here credited plasma therapy for the survival of several critical Covid infected patients with comorbidities in the recent past.

Plasma was administered to 73 patients since August 5 and majority of them are recovering except 9 patients, authorities said.

Superintendent of Government General Hospital Dr Sudhakar Reddy credited Plasma Therapy for the survival of a critical Covid patient, Noorjahan 55 (name changed) of Nellore.

“Apart from Corona, the patient is obese and also ailing from diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney related issues from a long time. She was in a critical condition when we administered plasma after our efforts to save her failed and the initiative led to her survival,” said Dr Sudhakar Reddy, adding that the recovery is a miracle of sorts.

He claimed that 5 Corona infected persons recuperated after Plasma therapy in the GGH so far.

Dr Sudhakar thanked district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu for his initiative in obtaining equipment to collect Plasma from the donors on war footing.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, the Collector said Plasma therapy is giving good results while pointing to recovery of 60 odd patients after administering Plasma in various hospitals in SPSR Nellore district.

He appealed to the patients cured from Corona to come forward to donate Plasma to save the infected from the dreaded virus.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Red Cross Society, Nellore unit, P. Chandrasekhar Reddy said 75 persons donated Plasma so far and they have provided the same to 73 patients who are undergoing treatment in different hospitals.

He said that except 9 patients, all others are showing improvement and 15 were already discharged.

Stressing that donating plasma is similar to donating blood, Mr Chandrasekhar Reddy said only the plasma portion of the blood is collected.

The other components (red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets) are returned to the donor automatically during the collection process, he noted.

Mr Reddy also urged the recovered Covid infected persons to donate Plasma while stating that only 400 ml Plasma is collected from each donor and it will not have any bearing on the health condition.

FARMERS DEMAND ₹80 CRORE MARKFED DUES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, AUG. 26

AP Farmers Association district general secretary Gali Chandra demanded that the state government to immediately look into the payment of ₹80 crore to farmers for Bengal gram, red gram and turmeric purchased through Markfed.

He alleged that irregularities occurred at every step of the procurement of crops which the state government had started in a big way.

He alleged that the YCP activists have exploited the farmers during procurement. The state government has announced that it will buy Bengal gram, red gram at the MSP announced by the central government. There is an inordinate delay in the payment of dues to the farmers, he said, adding that it has been more than six months since their crop was bought.

This, he said, was increasing the interest burden on farmers' pre-harvest loans.

He expressed concern that the support price announced by the government was not being paid to farmers most of the times. He said it was unfair for the ruling government to demand commissions from the farmers.

IIT-Tirupati inks MoU with CFTI, Mysore

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, AUG. 26

IIT-Tirupati and Central Food Technological Institute (CSIR-CFTRI), Mysore have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for scientific collaboration in a virtual event held here on Wednesday.

The MoU between the two premier institutes in the country allows for exchange of faculty and scientists, collaboration on research projects and joint guidance of stu-

dents. Speaking at the event, Director of IIT Tirupati Prof K.N. Satyanarayana said that Food Technology and Precision Agriculture is one of the thrust areas of the institute due to its national relevance. Although our country is primarily agriculture driven, very few premier institutes focus on agriculture and food technology.

Andhra Pradesh is historically known as the rice bowl of India, while Chittoor district produces about 25% of mango pulp in the country

and has many food processing industries.

The technological and engineering knowhow of IIT and domain specific expertise of CFTRI will allow for innovation in automation of the food industry and reduce its dependency on imports of food processing equipment.

Dr Raghava Rao, Director of CFTRI stressed on the inherently interdisciplinary nature of food engineering. Thus, the collaboration between CFTRI and IIT will allow them to leverage on each other's strengths, he added.

SHORT TAKES

MUKHERJEE STILL IN DEEP COMA: HOSPITAL

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.

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

VEDANTA MOVES SC AGAINST HC ORDER ON STERLITE

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Mining giant Vedanta moved the Supreme Court on Wednesday against the Madras High Court order refusing to allow reopening of its Sterlite copper unit at Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, which has been closed since May 2018 over pollution concerns.

The Tamil Nadu government has already filed a caveat in the top court seeking to be heard in the matter, before any order is passed in the matter.

On August 18, the Madras high court had rejected the plea of the company seeking to reopen the copper plant.

Accepting the state pollution control board’s stand that the firm’s operations were behind pollution, the court had said safeguarding the environment received primacy and economic considerations could have no role to play in such matters.

The high court had upheld the orders of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB), directing closure of the unit in May 2018.

Vedanta had approached the High Court in February 2019, seeking to reopen the Sterlite plant which was closed following a May 23, 2018 order issued by the TNPCB against the backdrop of violent protests against the unit which left 13 people dead in police firing on May 21 and 22, 2018.

NCB FILES CASE AGAINST RHEA, OTHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 26

In yet another twist to the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide probe, now the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has registered a fresh case in connection with allegations of drugs consumption and peddling at his Bandra residence where he was found hanging on June 14. The case has been filed against Rajput’s girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty and some others based on the technical evidence and some text messages that were exchanged between her and alleged suppliers.

The NCB is now the third federal investigative agency probing this case apart from the ED and the CBI. The case has been filed based on some text messages mentioning Chakraborty and Rajput smoking marijuana and some other drugs. A team from Delhi NCB along with their counterparts in Mumbai will probe the narcotics angle. The statements of the actor’s staffers have also hinted of Chakraborty allegedly possessing banned narcotic substances beyond the quantity of personal consumption, hinting towards alleged peddling.

Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) grilled Rajput’s flatmate Siddharth Pithani for the sixth time on Wednesday. The questioning comes in light of disclosure of discrepancies in the statement of Pithani, cook Neeraj Singh and domestic help Deepesh Sawant. Another team of the CBI also visited the Cooper Hospital and questioned the doctors, who conducted an autopsy on the deceased actor’s body. The officials would revisit the videography and documentary details of the autopsy.

“The teams of CBI are working in close coordination with the ED and NCB in connection with the new developments in the probe,” said an officer privy to the probe.

Flood fury continues



A temple is submerged in the flooded Ganga following heavy rainfall at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi on Wednesday.



A flooded fire service station after heavy rains in Jammu on Wednesday. Police rescued 15 nomadic people, belonging to different families, after they were caught in flash floods in the Ujh river.

NO END TO ATROCITIES

STUDENT RAPED BY SCHOOL MANAGER IN GORAKHPUR

Gorakhpur, Aug. 26: A Class 7 student was allegedly raped by a manager of her school, who also made a video of 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 to her family. The girl’s father informed the 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.

Earlier on August 16, a teenage girl was reportedly raped and singed with cigarette butts by two men in the Gola area.

—PTI

MAN RAPES MINOR, FORCES HER TO MARRY HIM: POLICE

Muzaffarnagar, Aug. 26: A man has been booked by police for allegedly raping a minor sister of his elder brother’s wife and then marrying her by threatening her and her mother before giving her triple talaq.

On a complaint by the victim’s mother, belonging to a village under Budhana police station of Muzaffarnagar district, accused Momin has been booked under section 376 of the Indian Penal Code, sections 3 and 4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and Sections 9, 10 and 11 of the Prevention of Child Marriage Act.

After the registration of the case against him, Momin has gone missing but the police have launched a manhunt to nab him, said Budhana police station in-charge K.P. Singh.

In her complaint to the police, the victim’s mother said that her elder son-in-law’s brother Momin had visited their house in January this year and stayed with them for a few days during which he raped her minor daughter, said SHO Singh.

After returning to his home, he along with his parents began threatening the mother-daughter duo to marry the minor girl to him, the SHO said, adding the woman married her daughter to Momin under duress in February this year.

But a few weeks after taking the minor girl to his home, Momin gave her triple talaq and left her back with her mother, said the SHO, after which the fatherless child approached Childcare Helpline, which referred the matter to the police.

The police subsequently got a complaint from the mother of the minor child and booked the accused, he said.

—PTI

Phase 2 human trial of Oxford vaccine begins

25 candidates will be given the vaccine in next seven days

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 26

The Phase-2 human trial of the Oxford Covid-19 vaccine candidate, being manufactured by the world’s largest vaccine maker Serum Institute of India (SII), began at a medical college and hospital on Wednesday.

Two male volunteers were administered the vaccine at Pune’s Bharti Vidyapeeth Medical College and Hospital at around 1pm.

The SII has selected 15 sites in India to conduct the phase-2 trial of the vaccine. “Doctors at the hospital administered the first shot of the ‘Covishield’ vaccine to a 32-year-old man after his reports of Covid-19 and antibodies tests came out negative,” said medical director of Bharti Vidyapeeth’s Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr Sanjay Lalwani.

Another 48-year-old male volunteer was also given the vaccine, he added.

Five volunteers had enrolled for the trial after the doses were received from the SII on Tuesday. Before administering the vaccine, doctors checked their temperature, blood pressure and heart beats.

“The Covid-19 and antibodies tests were conducted on all the five volunteers. Of them, the reports of three volunteers’ antibodies tests came positive.

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 26

The Odisha government on Wednesday announced reducing the syllabus of Class 1 to 12 students for 2020-21 academic session 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, Odisha. The state-specific important subjects which students need to know have not

● **SCHOOLS IN ODISHA** will remain closed till end of the Durga Puja vacation. This was announced by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday.

● **THE ANNOUNCEMENT** came following a review meeting chaired by the CM.

● **EARLIER, IT** was speculated that the government may open schools from September 1 with strict compliance of the Covid-19 regulations.

been omitted from the syllabus,” state school and mass education minister Samir Dash said.

The minister said that the decision was taken keeping in view the current Covid-19 situation. If the schools open anytime soon, a fresh decision on the syllabus would be taken.

“The district education officers will intimate the headmasters of schools in this regard to teach the students according to the reduced syllabus,” Dash said.

After announcement of syllabus rationalisation, students and educationists expressed mixed feelings of approval and disappointment over the delayed decision.

A student of Rourkela said, “Reduction of syllabus is a welcome step but the delayed decision may hamper our course of studies this year. Had the rationalisation been effected a month or two earlier, it would have benefited us more.”

“The rationalisation of the syllabus is very ambiguous as there is doubt whether students will be able to complete the rest of their courses in due time,” said a teacher in Bhubaneswar.

Lalwani, in all, 25 candidates will be given the vaccine in the next seven days. The vitals of the two volunteers were observed for half an hour after the vaccine jab.

“The volunteers were

allowed to go home. They will be monitored by our team. There are no issues so far,” he said, adding that the vaccine dose will be repeated on both the volunteers after one month.

Covid claims 1,059 lives in 24 hrs

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

The number of recoveries of Covid-19 patients in the country exceeded active cases by 3.5 times on Wednesday.

India’s Covid-19 tally, meanwhile, rose to 32.34 lakh with 67,151 more people testing positive in the last 24 hours, while the toll 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 for many days and the recovery of 63,173 patients in the last 24 hours has resulted in the cumulative recoveries of 24,67,758 people.

“This has contributed to the rapidly widening chasm between the number of percentage recovered and percentage active cases further. As many as 17,60,489 people have

recovered more than the 7,07,267 active cases,” it said. The record high recoveries have ensured that the number of active cases which is the actual caseload, comprises only 21.87 percent of the total cases. The steadily declining Case Fatality Rates stands at 1.84 per cent on Wednesday.

“Early identification of the infections through timely and aggressive testing has played a pivotal role in India’s strategy to

fight the pandemic as the cumulative testing reached 3,76,51,512 with more than 27,000 Tests Per Million. In the last 24 hours 8,23,992 tests were conducted,” said the Union Health Ministry.

The ministry pointed that 7-day average rolling numbers of tests per day indicate the determined, It may be noted that there are a total of 1,540 labs today which includes 992 government labs and 548 private.

PEACE ACCORD Deadline not to be extended as talks on substantive issues have concluded

Centre firm on Sept. deadline for Naga accord

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 26

The Centre is firm on its September deadline to conclude decades old Naga peace talks by signing the final peace accord in which all the stakeholders would be the signatory.

Pointing out that the first deadline for concluding the Naga peace talks was October 31, 2019 which was extended on the request of NSCN (I-M) leadership, authoritative security sources in the ministry of home affairs told this newspaper that the Central government was not going to extend the deadline further from September as talks have concluded on all the sub-

stantiative issues.

Asserting that the Central government has already spelled out to the Naga leadership that what the issues are on which the Centre can agree or not, security sources said that no one can blackmail the government at gun point.

“The ball is now in the court of stakeholders, they can avail the opportunity to be the part of historic Naga peace accord,” said security sources clarifying that majority of the stakeholders of Nagaland including Naga tribal groups and the Naga National Political Groups (NNPG) have given their consent for signing the peace accord.

● **THE BALL** is now in the court of stakeholders, they can avail the opportunity to be the part of historic Naga peace accord, security sources said.

Admitting that NSCN (I-M) leadership was still camping in New Delhi, security sources said that they have been kept engaged in meetings with Intelligence Bureau officers though most of the substantive issues of the NSCN (I-M) have also been settled.

Admitting that NSCN (I-M) was insisting on demand of a separate flag and constitution, security sources said that they

have been advised that they can hold talks on some of these rhetorical issues even after signing the peace accord.

It is significant that there has been a paradigm shift in the process of talks after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014 as ongoing Naga talks was made “inclusive” from its old format of “exclusive”.

Pointing out as to how Naga talks started “exclusively” with NSCN (I-M) in 1997, security sources said that for several years, other stakeholders were not included.

Though the NSCN (K) had also signed a ceasefire agreement for a brief period, no formal talk was held

with the outfit.

Informing that immediately after assuming the office of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi took a stand that the talks would have to be inclusive, security sources said that he also directed that all the stakeholders should be taken on board for permanent solution of the Naga political issues.

“The government’s stand is now very clear. The government is of the view that it would not be possible to find a permanent solution to the problems only by talking to one rebel group. The government wants that all the rebel groups as well as the elected representatives and tribal bodies will have

to be taken on board,” security sources said.

Disclosing that a section of NSCN (I-M) leaders did not like the idea of engaging the other rebel groups in the peace process, security sources said that even they have not agreed as yet to sit with the other rebel factions and stakeholders together for talks.

“But the government is firm that there will be only one peace accord with all the rebel groups. The government is also keen that the leaders of the tribal groups of Nagaland should also be the part of the accord,” sources said adding that ground work has started to conclude the Naga peace accord against all the odds.



B.S. Yeddyurappa

BJP MLAs SAY BSY’S SON IS FUNCTIONING AS ‘SUPER CM’

SHILPA P. | DC
MYSURU, AUG. 26

The Congress on Wednesday said that a few BJP MLAs have written to the BJP high command levelling serious allegations against the Karnataka Chief Minister’s son.

KPCC spokesperson M. Lakshman released copy of the letter to the media which is reportedly sent by seven BJP MLAs to their party high command. The letter alleges that B.S. Yeddyurappa’s son B.Y. Vijayendra is functioning as “Super CM”.

The BJP MLAs have reportedly accused him of indulging in corruption involving ₹5,000 crore by raising 15 per cent commission or VST (Vijayendra Service Tax) to get government work done.

Lakshman did not reveal the names of those seven BJP MLAs. He, however, released a list of 31 people who are working as B.Y. Vijayendra’s team.

Addressing a press meet in Mysuru, Lakshman said that in that letter, the BJP MLAs have stated, “78-year-old Yeddyurappa has only been a constitutional and “technical” Chief Minister. Taking the advantage of his old age, his son and BJP vice-president Vijayendra is functioning as ‘Super Chief Minister’. Vijayendra and his family members, their children, grand children and others are running a parallel, alternate 4G (fourth generation) state government like a private limited company in corporate style by forming a club of 31-members. And they are getting government work done for commission.”

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah had termed Congress-led Siddaramaiah government as 10 per cent government, but now Vijayendra is raising 15 per cent commission for getting government work of contractors, brokers, middlemen done. While the Chief Minister says that they are not getting expected GST share to state from the Central government to take up certain developmental works, he has maintained silence on this VST (Vijayendra Service Tax),” he said.

● **THE CONGRESS** released a copy of the letter reportedly written by BJP MLAs to BJP high command levelling serious allegations against Karnataka CM, his son.

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 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 centre stage 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

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

TRUMP WISE LIKE AN 'ULLU' TWEET GOES VIRAL

Washington, Aug. 26: Language is a funny thing, one thing can have two very different meanings in different cultures.

This was correctly proven by American conservative political TV commentator and presenter Tomi Lahren when she posted a video on Twitter thanking the Indian-American community for supporting Trump.

But this video while showing her support had her say a word in Hindi, as a means to appeal to the Indian-American community and their vote base, kind of backfired on her. Lahren came out to support Trump on Twitter and in her video said that, "Trump 2020 is all about keeping America great. Because President Trump is wise like an owl, or as you guys would say in Hindi — I hope I'm pronouncing this right — President Trump is wise like an 'ullu'. I hope I said that right."

The Indian side of Twitter or at least the Hindi speaking ones were left in splits over this hilarious mistake and many couldn't turn away from the irony of it all.

People jumped to comment and quote tweet it.

— Agencies

POMPEO'S RNC SPEECH: PROBE BY DEMOCRAT

Washington, Aug. 26: A House Democrat has opened an investigation into Mike Pompeo's controversial decision to address the Republican National Convention by breaking the longstanding precedent of sitting US secretaries of state avoiding partisan politics. Representative Joaquin Castro, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, said in a statement that the "American people deserve a full investigation".

— PTI

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 vic-

tim'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. "They're a militia," Beth said. "They're like a vigilante group." Cellphone video of at least two of the shootings was posted online.

— AP

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 Chinese city saw months of protests after the government announced its intent to pass an extradition bill that would have allowed criminal suspects to be sent to the mainland to stand trial.

Anger over the bill, seen as an infringement on the

former British colony's freedoms, sparked huge demonstrations that at times descended into violence between police and protesters, and rallies continued even after the bill was shelved. China later passed a sweeping national security law, which has been viewed as an attack on the "one country, two systems" framework under which the city has been governed since its return to China in 1997.

— 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.

Kiyooki 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.

— Agencies

Career Chronicle

Global Steel Company, a fast-growing RDSO approved steel fabrication unit situated at Kucharam, Medchal Hyderabad is in the business of making Steel Girders, Heavy structural fabrication, PEB and multistorey steel buildings. In the pursuit of expanding the business the company is looking forward to recruit following professionals immediately.

1. **Dy. Manager/ Manager/ General Manager - Production (B.Tech/ BE):** Having 10-15 years' experience in any RDSO approved fabrication unit or any heavy structure fabrication unit.
2. **Manager/ DGM - Finance & Accounts (CA/ CA Inter/ M.Com):** 5-7 year experience in similar position of a mid-size company of repute.
3. **Dy. Manager/ Manager HR & Administration (Dip/ Degree in HR):** Min. 5-7 years' experience in the field of HR & administration in any reputed industry.
4. **Dy. Manager/ Manager - Purchase/ Store (BBA/ MBA):** Having min 5-7 years' experience in purchase/ store function in similar company of repute.
5. **Production/ Quality Control Engineers (BE/ DT):** Min 3 years' experience in fabrication of heavy steel structures and Pre-Engineered Buildings.
6. **Project Coordinator (BE/ B.Tech. Civil/ Mech):** Having 5-7 years' experience as project coordinator in any fabrication unit involved in making steel bridges.
7. **Engineer - Quality Documentation (BE/ B.Tech):** Having 3-5 years' experience in quality documentation related to RDSO and other government departments.
8. **CNC cutting/ drilling machine operators:** (10+2/ ITI) Fresh or 1-3 years' experience in operating the CNC machines.

Remuneration will be as per qualification and experience along with performance linked incentives. Interested candidate may send their complete bio data with position applied along with recent photograph, current and expected salary to career@globalpeb.com

Interested candidate may send their complete bio data indicating position applied along with recent photograph, current and expected salary to career@globalpeb.com.

DECCAN Chronicle

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. 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 factors, 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 CJIs 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.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

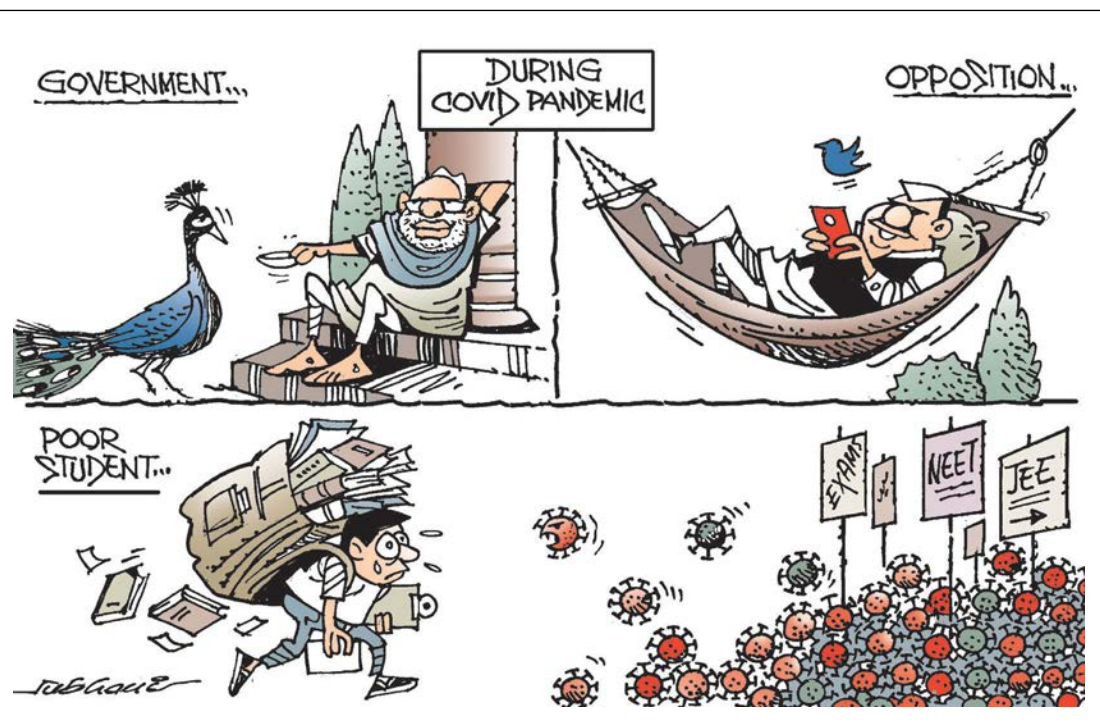
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Subhani



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 Rabinranath 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,

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

JEE AND NEET

It's unfair that students are asked to sit for national exams during the Covid-19 pandemic while millions are affected by extreme floods. Exams should be conducted when the situation improves. Please postpone the.

B. Prem Kumar
Visakhapatnam

DISASTER AWAITED

It is appalling to read that APGENCO power plant on Srisaillam right bank, the largest producer of hydro-electric power doesn't have an NOC from the fire department (*DC, Aug. 26*). It is akin to an accident waiting to happen. Government needs to pull out all stops to reinstate the fire safety devices.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

CATCH-22 SITUATION

Now, Covid-19 is affecting pensioner parents with the arrival of adult 'kids' in families who have lost their jobs. It is parental obligation to manage them and their families by sharing the house and pension of elders. Equally imperative for returnees is to understand their parents age and limited finances.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

TAX COLLECTIONS

The new reforms in income-tax collection is a welcome sign. However, the core issue hasn't been resolved. The government's tax to GDP ratio is hit due to the pandemic and the urgency shown by the government to increase tax collection to reduce dependence on borrowing will be a huge blow on citizens.

Ratnaraj Jain
Rajahmundry

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Govt. move to ban communal bodies

NEW DELHI, August 26 The Union cabinet today approved draft legislation to enable Government to impose curbs on communal organisations.

This is sought to be achieved by an amendment to Section 153 A of the Indian Penal Code.

The object of the proposed legislation is to put down communalism.

The Cabinet also approved today the composition of the Agricultural Commission. It will be headed by Mr. C. Subramaniam.

Bookworm
Prasad
Shrivastav

Book Review

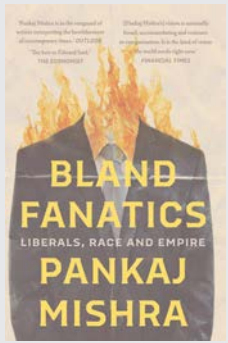


Glib and bland: Liberalism's illiberal legacy

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 midwifing 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.

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.



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

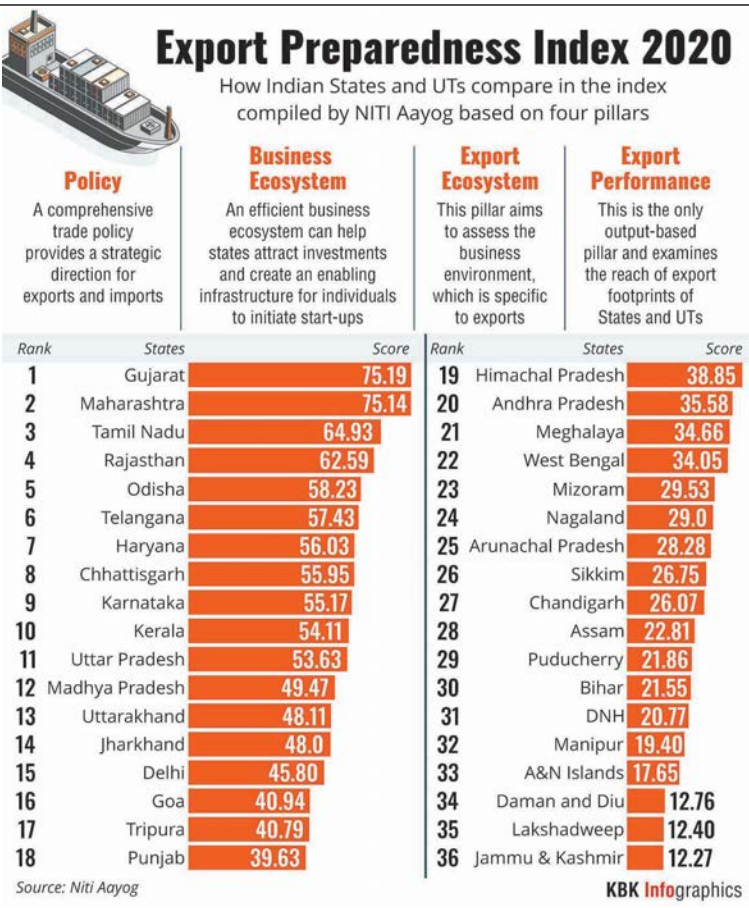
said. Pal has three decades experience at Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, where he was global head of retail, and helped with the digital transformation of some of the world's largest retail chains, including Walmart, Tesco, Aldi, Target Corp, Best Buy Co and Marks & Spencer Group.

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



Model tenancy law to get nod in a month: Secy

New Delhi, Aug 26: The government will approve the model tenancy law in the next one month and then send it to states/UTs for adoption, a reform aimed at boosting rental housing, housing and urban affairs secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Wednesday.

Addressing a webinar, he said the Centre would encourage states to adopt this model law. He hoped they would pass necessary legislations over the next one year. "We are bringing a very big reform. We are changing the tenancy law," Mishra said.

As per the 2011 census, he said, 1.1 crore homes were vacant as people fear giving them on rent.

The ministry had in July 2019 floated the draft model tenancy law, which proposes that landowners will have to give a three-month notice before revising rent. It advocated district collector as rent authority and heavy penalty on tenants for overstaying. —PTI

PMC Bank depositors survive on loans, charity

ABHIRUP ROY & ADITYA KALRA MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, AUG. 26

In February, 82-year-old Kishan Lal appealed to India's finance minister for help, saying in a Twitter message he was ready to donate his kidney and eyes if someone could help arrange funds to treat his daughter, who had a brain tumour.

The Lals had enough savings to tide over the medical crisis—more than Rs 25 lakh in Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank. But withdrawals are now capped at Rs 100,000 per depositor; up from Rs 50,000 earlier.

"I just borrowed money from wherever I could, I had to save my daughter," said Lal. "If I had access to my own money, I'd not have been ashamed."

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took control of PMC last September after it was accused of fraud and concealing non-per-



forming loans. PMC's top officials and the owners of a realty company that received the bulk of the loans were arrested.

The withdrawal cap has left many of PMC's over 900,000 depositors in deep difficulty. Some say they are struggling to clear loans or pay their children's school fees, while others say they depend on friends for their groceries.

The situation at PMC has also amplified concerns about the health of India's tens of thousands of co-operative banks, which have assets worth around \$220 billion, about 11 per cent of India's total banking sector assets.

These banks, many of which are tiny, are subject

to less stringent regulation than commercial banks and currently, over two dozen of them are facing lending or withdrawal restrictions by the RBI.

Asked about the delay in resolving PMC's problems, Jai Bhagwan Bhoria, an administrator appointed by the RBI to revive the bank, told Reuters: "The recovery is an ongoing process and it takes time in actual realisations due to legal steps and hurdles faced."

Many depositors said they were unaware of the differing regulatory structures for banks, and believed PMC was like any other commercial lender.

"If it was not safe, why did you name it a bank?" asked Pooja Chaudhary, 26, who said she had to struggle for hours last month to get custody of her father's body after a hospital refused to release it until she cleared medical bills. "My father died, and I couldn't even cry," she said. —Reuters

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. — AFP

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. — AFP

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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.

— AFP

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, a n d 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 ric 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. — AFP

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". — AFP

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.

— AFP

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. — AFP



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 twinkletal talisman 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. — AFP