

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 20 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 4
Tithi: Thuvithiyai
Star: Puram
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.43 am
Zohar: 12.19 pm
Asar: 3.21 pm
Maghrib: 6.30 pm
Isha: 7.44 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.27 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 6.58 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.45 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+68,129)	(+963)
28,34,755	53,978

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,795)
TN: 3,55,449 6,384

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,24,47,309

DEATHS

7,87,264

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES 213

worldometers.info

Lashkar commander among 3 militants killed in J&K encounters

Srinagar: A top Lashkar-e-Tayyaba commander was among the three militants killed in two encounters with the security forces in Kashmir on Wednesday, police said.

A militant was killed in an encounter in Shopian, while two ultras — including LeT commander Naseer-u-din Lone, who was involved in the killing of six CRPF personnel earlier this year — were killed in a gunfight in Kupwara, police said.

Heavy rain batters

Delhi-NCR, throws life out of gear

New Delhi: Submerged underpasses, waist-deep water on roads, fallen trees and electricity poles gave the residents of Delhi and its satellite cities of Gurgaon and Noida a rough time on Wednesday as heavy rains started pounding the national capital and its adjoining areas since early morning. Throughout the day, people and vehicles waded through waterlogged roads to reach their destinations and traffic moved at snail's pace in many places.

Six Afghan refugees killed in clash in Pak

Peshawar: At least six Afghan refugees, including five brothers, were killed in a clash between two Afghan groups over a dispute on payment of electricity bill at a refugee camp in northwest Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to police, two Afghan groups fired at each other after a dispute over payment of electricity bill in Haripur district.

COUNTER POINT



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

STATE | 3

Covid-19 follow up clinic opened by health min



NATION | 4

Bhushan wants to file review plea against SC order



SPORT | 8

Rafael has full faith in Chennaiyin FC project



Pranab condition worsens with lung infection

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

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

Bus 'hijacked' with passengers on board in UP's Agra

Agra (UP), Aug. 19: A privately-operated bus with passengers on board was "hijacked" by recovery agents of a finance company in Uttar Pradesh's Agra on Wednesday morning, officials said.

The incident took place in the Malpura police station area when the bus was en route to Panna in Madhya Pradesh from Gurgaon in Haryana, according to the police. Senior Superintendent of Police Babloo Kumar said three people who got off the bus informed the police that representatives of the finance company had boarded the vehicle. — *PTI*

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

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

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

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

The court also asked Maharashtra Police to assist the probe and handover all the evidence collected in the case so far to the CBI. The apex court ruled out any wrongdoing by Mumbai Police, saying that records of the case produced before it "does not prima facie suggest any wrongdoing". It, however, added that "their obstruction to the Bihar Police team at Mumbai could have been avoided since it gave rise to suspicion on the bonafide of their inquiry".

The top court also upheld

SC's KEY OBSERVATIONS

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

Sushant Singh Rajput's family and admirers are waiting for the outcome of the probe. To stop floating speculation, an impartial probe is the need of the hour. The outcome of the probe will be a measure of justice for Sushant's father, who lost his only son.

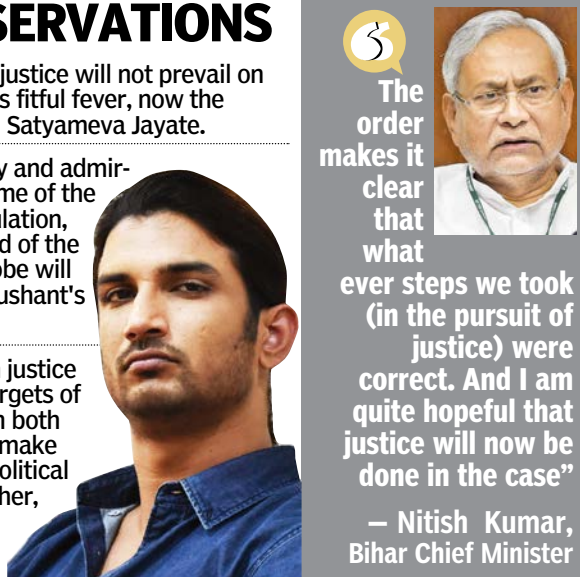
Unbiased probe will result in justice for the innocents who are targets of vilification campaign. When both states (Bihar, Maharashtra) make acrimonious allegations of political interference against each other, the legitimacy of the probe comes under a cloud.

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

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

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

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



The order makes it clear that what ever steps we took (in the pursuit of justice) were correct. And I am quite hopeful that justice will now be done in the case"
— Nitish Kumar, Bihar Chief Minister

Bihar parties happy with central probe

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, AUG. 19

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

After the verdict was announced on Wednesday Bihar CM Nitish Kumar in a tweet said that "action taken by Bihar police and the state government's decision to hand over the case to CBI has been termed as correct by the Supreme Court". "Few people tried to give political colour to the whole issue but the state government saw it as a matter related to justice only. I am confident that after the verdict CBI will begin a probe soon", he added.

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

and Bihar police.

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

"Supreme Court order transferring the case to the CBI has raised hopes for getting justice for Sushant Singh Rajput. The order vindicates the Bihar police stand that it was acting as per the law and constitution". Bihar DGP Guptaeshwar Pandey said.

Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi also welcomed the court's verdict. In a tweet, he said, "We welcome the decision of Supreme Court to allow CBI to continue with its probe in Sushant death case on the basis of FIR filed by Bihar police. Our stand vindicated".

Cabinet nod to national recruitment agency

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved creation of a National Recruitment Agency (NRA) to conduct an online Common Eligibility Test for selecting candidates for majority of central government jobs, an official statement said.

Briefing the media on the Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar said it was a historic decision that will allow job-seekers take one common test and save costs and time spent on writing multiple exams. The NRA will set up examination centres in every district of the country to help youths, especially women, from rural and far flung areas of the country, as they won't be required to travel to another place



“It was a historic decision that will allow job-seekers take one common test and save costs and time spent on writing multiple exams”

— PRAKASH JAVADEKAR, I&B minister

to take recruitment tests, the statement issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

At present, "candidates have to appear in multiple examinations conducted by multiple agencies. Apart from the examination fees, candidates have to incur additional expenses for travel, boarding, lodging. A single examination would reduce the financial burden on candi-

dates to a large extent", it said.

A Common Eligibility Test would enable these candidates to appear once and apply to any or all of these recruitment agencies for the higher level of examination. This would indeed be a boon to all the candidates, the statement said. On an average, 2.5-3 crore candidates appear in each of these examinations, it said. — *PTI*

T'puram, Guwahati, Jaipur airports to be leased out

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal for leasing out airports at Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram through public-private partnership (PPP) for a period of 50 years.

Adani Enterprises had won the rights to run six airports including these three — the other three being Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Mangalore — through the PPP model after a competitive bidding process in February 2019. — *PTI*

RELIGIOUS PROCESSION



Sikh devotees take part in Nagar Kirtan procession at Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple) on the occasion of the 416th anniversary of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in Amritsar on Wednesday. — *PTI*

Centre to withdraw 10,000 troops from J&K

● A senior official told PTI that a total of 100 CAPF companies have been ordered to be withdrawn 'immediately' on Wednesday and they have been asked to revert to their base locations in the country

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and 20 each of the Central Industrial Security Force, the Border Security Force and the Sashastra Seema Bal, will be taken out from Jammu and Kashmir by this week. The CRPF has been asked to make arrangements for air lifting of these units to Delhi and other locations, they said.

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

"The units that are being withdrawn are deployed both in Jammu and Srinagar. It was felt that the counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist grid is intact in the UT and these additional units that were sent in last year can be de-inducted giving them the

much required rest, recuperation and training," a senior CAPF officer said.

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

With the latest de-induction, the lead counter-terrorist force CRPF will have a strength of about 60 battalions (about 1,000 personnel in each battalion) in the Kashmir valley apart from very few units of the other CAPFs. — *PTI*

Tharoor, Nishikant Dubey seek breach of privilege proceedings against each other

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

Tharoor, who heads the parliamentary panel on information technology, alleged that Dubey made

"disparaging remarks" on social media over his decision to summon a panel meeting to discuss the alleged 'misconduct' of Facebook.

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

SHORT TAKES

Madras Week at PII

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Press Institute of India is organising three events as part of the Madras Week celebrations 2020.

The events are as follows: August 22, Saturday, 7 pm Gujili: A Century of History. A lec-dem by Nivedita Louis and Monali Bala (Zoom ID: 624 516 7143/ Passcode: madras).

August 25, Tuesday, 7 pm Temples of Chennai. A presentation by Chithra Madhavan (Zoom ID: 862 9052 6416/ Passcode: 583391).

August 30, Sunday, 7 pm Coming Alive: Madras in Pictures. A presentation by Ramesh Raja (Zoom ID: 862 6953 4980/ Passcode: 882468).

Girl student commits suicide over Neet fear

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 19

A 19-year-old girl student committed suicide by hanging herself allegedly over fear for the upcoming Neet even as DMK leader M.K. Stalin urged the state and central governments to drop Neet to avoid further student deaths.

Ravichandran, a government employee residing at RS Puram East Venkatasamy Street, said his daughter Suba Shree was preparing for Neet for the past couple of years. Suba Shree had last year scored 451 marks in Neet and got eligibility to join BDS. However, she was very keen on pursuing medicine and joined a private academy to appear for Neet for the second time.

Following the pandemic, the date for Neet was postponed and the sudden announcement on Neet in September triggered a panic that allegedly made Suba to commit suicide by hanging herself in the ceiling fan in her room on Tuesday evening while her parents were out.

RS Puram police sent the body to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital.

Singanallur MLA N. Karthic of the DMK along with party cadres visited the house of the deceased on Wednesday and expressed the condolences of their party leader M.K. Stalin. Stalin in a statement said that people should remove this government that fails to value the life of young students.

Police have lodged a complaint and started further investigation.

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Forty Ganesh-idol making units sealed in Kanchipuram

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Tension gripped Kanchipuram's Ayyampettai after the district administration and police sealed 40 lord Vinayaka-idol making units on Wednesday. Ten persons, who blocked the Chengalpet-Kanchipuram road, were arrested.

According to police, the Ganesh-idol making units were sealed based on the orders from Kanchipuram district collector P. Ponniah. The units were shut down as they had flouted government's rule by making huge idols. Only idols up to height of 3 feet are allowed to be installed at homes, as per government guidelines.

On Tuesday morning, Walajabad tahsildar Mithra Devi sealed 40 units in Ayyampettai with the help of police. Following this, around 50 persons from the village, blocked the Chengalpet-Kanchipuram road and staged a protest against the shutdown of the units.



Locals block the Chengalpet-Kanchipuram road and stage a protest against sealing of idol-making units on Wednesday.

A minor scuffle broke out between the protestors and the police. On being alerted, Kanchipuram DSP Manimegalai and sub-collector Saravanan reached at the spot and held a talk with the protes-

tors. They pacified the protestors and asked them to disperse to avoid law and order issues. The protestors dispersed in a few minutes, police said. However, 10 persons were arrested by the police, on

a complaint by Ayyampettai VAO under the charge of deterring public servants from discharging his duty. Investigations are underway.

Two arrested for burglary in house of doc on Covid duty

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Two persons who allegedly looted cash and jewellery from the house of a doctor in Perumbakkam near Pallikaranai have been arrested by the police.

The two looted valuables from the house of Dr Indhumathi, in Radha Nagar first main road in Pallikaranai police limits, police said.

According to police, Indhumathi is a doctor in a private hospital in the city. Since she serves in the hospital's Covid ward, she stayed alone at the house in Perumbakkam.

On August 11, Indhumathi left for the hospital and returned home the next day. Upon reaching home, she found

■ Pallikaranai police said that they have nine pending cases against Kamalakannan in Pallikaranai police station and he has around 50 pending cases against him in the city police stations. He had been involved in hundreds of thefts in the city and suburbs in the last 25 years. Police are investigating him.

the door open. She found that the money and jewels, including gold and silver kept in the house, were missing. She lodged a complaint with the Pallikaranai police. She stated that around 40 sovereigns gold jewelry, Rs

75,000 in cash and some silver ornaments were stolen. The police registered a case and scrutinized the CCTV cameras installed in the area to track down the accused.

Police found two men on a motorbike, loitering in the area on the night when the theft happened. With the help of the vehicle registration number, police traced the duo, who allegedly confessed to having stolen from the doctor's house.

The two men identified as Kamalakannan, 60, a history-sheeter from Sholinganallur and Kumar, 44 were arrested by the police. In all, 40 sovereigns of gold, 500 grams silver and a two-wheeler, which they brought with the cash looted from the house, were recovered.

Mass prayer for SPB by Kollywood

From P1

Meanwhile, Bharathiraja, a long time friend of the singer, said the entire film fraternity would observe a one minute silent prayer at 6 pm on Thursday and then play a song sung by Balasubrahmanyam praying for his speedy recovery.

"Let's all pray to mother nature to give SPB to us," he said in a statement. Music directors Ilaiyaraaja, A. R. Rahman, actors Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan and others, lyricist Vairamuthu, directors, musicians, members of Film Employees Federation of South India, producers, theatre-owners, distributors besides billions of SPB fans across the world would sing SPB songs at their places and pray for his recovery, he said.

Amid pandemic, online fund-raisers help needy

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

As people continue the struggle against Covid-19 across the country, online fundraising platforms are doing a yeoman service for the vulnerable community in the city.

Many fundraising start-ups have opened their platforms free of cost in order to attract more donors and make help available to the needy as quickly as possible.

Milaap, a fundraising platform which was used extensively for raising funds for relief work during the Chennai floods, has announced a zero per cent platform fee since Independence Day.

"Since the pandemic situation unfolded, we have witnessed an unprecedented wave of generosity from people to help lakhs of people in distress. We made our platform free for all relief-related fundraisers in the upcom-

ing festive season as a token of gratitude," said Anoj Viswanathan, co-founder and president of Milaap.

Born2Win Social Welfare Trust for transgender persons, established in 2013 in Chennai, have already raised Rs 3 lakh through their platform since April and distributed it to at least 3,000 needy people across the state.

Swetha Sudhakar, founder of the trust, said that they started the initiative as people from her community were unable to go back to work even after the lockdown was lifted. We have been raising funds to help transpersons in Chennai and in other districts including Namakkal, Kovilpatti, Villupuram and Tiruchir.

"There are lot of people in the transgender community who do not have ID cards issued by the government. There are

elderly people who are sick and cannot work. The online platform helped us to raise funds since it has wider reach to find out donors," Swetha said.

Praising the service of the fundraising platforms, Dr Revathi Raj, a renowned paediatric haematologist in Chennai, said that small acts of kindness made by donors through fundraising platforms could make a great impact on the medical care a patient gets. Most of the responsible fundraising platforms provide dignity, hope, and voice for the voiceless in this pandemic period, she added.

Priyanka, an IT professional in the city, recollects how fundraising platforms helped her sister Sindhu to undergo a liver transplant at the right time. "It saw donations pouring in from 3,207 supporters amounting to Rs 36 lakh," she said.

Get well soon



Members of the transgender community pray for the speedy recovery of popular singer S.P. Balasubrahmanyam in the city on Wednesday.

— DC

"I invite everyone to be part of the mass prayer," he said and recalled that when M. G. Ramachandran, the then Chief Minister was hospi-

talised in the 1980s a similar prayer was held and the leader recovered.

"Similarly we will pray for the recovery of SPB now. Let's join irrespec-

tive of caste, language or creed for SPB. His voice should be heard again. Let's come together and pray," Bharathiraja said.

21-gun salute to cop who died of corona

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 19

The last rites of a 30-year-old police constable who died of corona were performed by the members of TMMK on Wednesday in Coimbatore.

Constable Mia Hajudeen 30, a native of Pollachi-Anamalai, was attached

to Tirupur- Kama-naick-enpalayam police station. Hajudeen was admitted to Coimbatore Medical College Hospital on Tuesday morning after showing corona symptoms. He died within five hours of admission without responding to treatment.

His last rites were per-

formed at Coimbatore-Tipu Sultan Hyder Ali graveyard premises by the members of TMMK wearing PPE suits with a 21 gun shots salute by police department as a homage.

Hajudeen is survived by wife Nisha Parveena, 25, and 18-month-old son Mufash.

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

A 23-year-old man, in relationship with a woman, was killed allegedly by her former partner and relatives near Kattankulathur on Tuesday night.

Police gave the name of the victim as Niranjan, 23, a resident of Manthoppu in Tambaram. He was a tattoo artist. Six persons, including the woman have been taken in for investigation, police said.

According to police, the victim was in love with Amalavathy, 25 alias Amala. She lived with her parents in Kattankulathur since the demise of her

Sources said, before getting married, she was in love with a Dinesh, 31, who lived in the same area. However, Amala's parents refused to accept them and forced her into marriage

husband. Sources said, before getting married, she was in love with a Dinesh, 31, who lived in the same area. However, Amala's parents refused to accept them and forced her into marriage.

Police said Amala recently befriended Niranjan via Facebook application. They developed a love relationship over months. However, the love affair was not liked by Dinesh and Amala's family. Over the last few months, the issue had led to frequent fights among Dinesh, Amala and her family.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday night, when Niranjan was riding his bike between Chengalpet and Tambaram, he was intercepted by a car at around 8 pm near Kattankulathur. Five persons got down from the car with wooden logs. On seeing them,

Niranjan abandoned the bike and started to run. The assailants however, caught him. They smashed his head with a rock and fled the spot.

On receiving information, the Maraimalai Nagar police rushed to the spot to find Niranjan dead. His body was sent to the Chengalpet government hospital for a post-mortem.

Police registered a murder case and arrested Dinesh, Sabarinathan, 19, brother of Amala, and their accomplices Arun, Balaji and Gokul. Police also brought in Amala for investigation. Further inquiries are underway.

6 more die of corona in Pondy; toll mounts to 129

Members of all students' federation protest against New Education Policy at Saidapet on Wednesday.

— DC

Puducherry, Aug.19: Six people, including a 26-year-old woman, succumbed to COVID-19 while 368 fresh infections were recorded in Puducherry on Wednesday, taking the overall tally to 8,762.

Director of Health and Family Welfare S Mohan Kumar said in a release that 368 new cases were reported after examination of 1,235 samples during the last 24 hours.

The Director said 8,762 overall COVID-19 cases included 3,321 active cases. While 5,312 patients recovered and were discharged the total fatalities, including six reported on Wednesday, were 129. The six people who died during last 24 hours had co-morbidities and were in the age group ranging between 26 and 80 years.

Of them three were male patients and an

equal number of female patients, the Director said. The Department of Health has conducted examination of 58,325 samples so far and of them 48,158 samples turned out to be negative. Results of examination of remaining samples were awaited.

Puducherry region accounted for 328 of the total 368 cases followed by 36 in Yanam and four in Karaikal.

— PTI



1,906 teaching posts for OBCs vacant: UGC

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has stated that out of the 3,280 faculty member posts earmarked in the Other Backward Castes (OBC) category, 1,906 remained vacant in 40 central universities across the country.

While replying to questions raised by Gowd Kiran Kumar, University of

Hyderabad under RTI -2005, the UGC last week revealed that currently 1,374 faculty members, appointed in the OBC category, are working in the 40 central universities as on April 1, 2020.

The total sanctioned strength of teaching posts in the OBC category are professors 313, associate professors 735 and assistant professors 2,232.

Out of these only 9 professors, 38 associate professors

and 1,327 assistant professors are currently serving in the central universities and 304 posts of professors, 697 associate professors and 905 assistant professors remained vacant.

Reacting to this sorry state of affairs, educational expert P.B. Prince Gajendra Babu said as per the Constitutional Provision and the Office Memorandum of the Central Government, the

universities and other establishments are supposed to bring down the benchmark till a concerned reserved category post is filled. The Education Ministry must immediately issue necessary guidelines to clear the vacancies.

It may be noted that earlier this year, Rajya Sabha member and former additional solicitor general P. Wilson of DMK approached the Supreme Court asking for

OBC reservations in the all India quota for medical seats to be implemented.

The apex court asked the petitioners to move the Madras High Court, which asked the Centre to form a committee with the Tamil Nadu government and the Medical Council of India to chalk out the manner in which reservations for Other Backward Class candidates could be implement-

ed for medical seats in the all India quota.

The UGC has failed to answer questions raised by Gowd Kiran Kumar with regard to country's premier IITs, NITs, IIMs and Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research stating the details may be obtained from the concerned central universities as they are also separate public authority covered under RTI Act.

Lensmen downcast on photography day

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG. 19

As the world observed World Photography Day on Wednesday, for a large array of professional photographers here in the hills, wherein many of them rely on the tourists to carry on with their trade, the day was gloomy due to Covid-19 crisis. They are now looking up to the government for sops to re-start their business.

Stating that Nilgiris is the land to learn photography, G. Jayaseelan, former president of the Nilgiris Photographers Association, said that with the shutting of hill borders and restrictions on holding functions due to the pandemic, the photography profession has almost come to a standstill stopping the regular income flow to the photographers and studio owners.

"We understand the difficult situation. The gov-

"We understand the difficult situation. The government should come forward to look into the plight of the photographers in the hills and evolve mechanisms to bail them out. Financial assistance as well as interest-free loans are the need of the hour for the photographers to re-start their trade"

ernment should come forward to look into the plight of the photographers in the hills and evolve mechanisms to bail them out. Financial assistance as well as interest-free loans are the need of the hour for the photographers to re-start their trade," Jayaseelan elaborated.

A. Ravi, another photographer here, said that life has now become a misery for photographers with the future looking gloom. "The photography industry in the Nilgiris is yet unable to see any light at the end of tunnel," he added.

SHORT TAKES

OPS reviews
TNSCB workDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam reviewed the functioning of the Slum Clearance Board work in a meeting with all officials on Wednesday. An official press release said that Panneerselvam reviewed all the schemes undertaken by the department, including the 'Housing for All' project, and urged the officials to expedite the work with a view to completing it before the deadline.

Kiran Bedi for
intervention of
Modi, Shah on
med colleges issue

Puducherry, Aug. 19: Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi on Wednesday sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah to bring all private medical colleges onboard to treat the Covid-19 patients.

In a WhatsApp message, she said people were suffering from the pandemic and her appeals to bring the medical colleges onboard to treat the patients have fallen on deaf ears.

"Hence, I'm seeking the intervention of the Prime Minister and Home Minister," she said.

"No small place has so much in medical care as Puducherry has, yet it is not able to galvanise all," she said.

Bedi further said, "If we take one (private) medical college under the Disaster Management Act, all the rest will come in line." There are seven private medical colleges in Puducherry and a government medical college besides the centrally administered Jipmer. — PTI

Farmers seek
release of more
Kudamuruti waterDC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, AUG. 19

The farmers of Thirukattupalli and Thiruvaiyaru areas staged a demonstration in front of the PWD assistant engineer's office at Thiruvaiyaru on Wednesday demanding release of water from the Kudamuruti river to save the Kuruvai crops in 8,000 acres which are drying up without water.

Kudamuruti river branches out from the Cauvery at Thirukattupalli and irrigates Thirukattupalli, Konerirajapuram, Manathidal, Karuppur, Naducauvery, Thiruvallam, Kandiur, Thiruvadhakudi and Arasur.

According to Sukumaran, a farmer who led the agitation, the Kudamuruti can release 2,600 cusecs of water. But, only 50 cusecs are released by PWD. Following the agitation, PWD engineers promised to release more water.

Customs dept appraiser held in bribery case,
CBI recovers ₹1 cr cash during searches

New Delhi, Aug 19: The CBI has arrested an appraiser of the customs department in a case of alleged bribery of Rs 7 lakh which led to recovery of a total of Rs 1 crore cash during searches at multiple locations in Chennai and Delhi, officials said. Saurav Sharma, who was the customs appraiser at Inland Container Depot (ICD) in Tuglakabad and presently posted at the office of Chief Commissioner Customs, Chennai, was taken into custody along with customs house agent Neeraj, middleman Ram Krishan Mishra and a private person Kishore Kumar, they said. According to the officials, the CBI had got to know that after Sharma's transfer to Chennai, he had been allegedly collecting his pending

bribes for favours granted during his ICD tenure. A case of corruption was registered against Sharma. He and his contacts were put under surveillance to verify inputs about his nefarious activities, they said. The intelligence developed by the CBI showed that after his transfer to Chennai, Sharma was allegedly pursuing private parties and a few officials regularly for payment of pending bribes in lieu of import consignments cleared by him during his tenure at ICD in Tuglakabad, officials. "It was also alleged that various parties had been approaching the middleman to pursue their pending matters with the said appraiser," CBI spokesperson R K Gaur said. — PTI

People coming to Chennai to be isolated

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Chennai corporation has made arrangements to identify people coming into Chennai from other districts and states and isolate them properly with a view to controlling the spread of coronavirus in the city.

In a review meeting at Ripon Buildings, presided over by Harmander Singh, additional chief secretary of municipal administration and water supply department, it was mentioned that on August 18 alone 18,823 persons had been allowed to come into Chennai out of the total 18,853 applicants

after the relaxation of norms for issue of e-pass.

"Those people should be monitored, isolated and watched over," Harmander Singh said, adding that those who come for work in factories and offices should be identified and officers concerned should ensure

that they were quarantined.

He called for severe action with the help of the police against those from containment areas who did not wear face masks and the commercial establishments and offices that violated social distancing norms.

The spread of the virus was now in control in view of the various measures taken by the Corporation like conduct of fever camps, door-to-door survey to identify people with Covid-19 symptoms, increasing testing and providing treatment and also contact tracing.

Follow up clinic



Health minister C. Vijayabaskar along with health secretary J. Radhakrishnan inspects newly opened Covid-19 follow up clinic at RGGGH on Wednesday.

Covid-19 follow up clinic
opened by health minDC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

A Covid-19 follow up clinic was opened on Wednesday at the Rajiv Gandhi government general hospital to provide follow up consultation and treatment for those recovered from coronavirus infection.

Patients, particularly those who were in ICU or admitted for more than two weeks or whose lung infections were revealed

by CT Scan and those with comorbidities like high blood pressure and diabetes can contact the centre four weeks after their discharge, health minister C. Vijayabaskar said.

He said long term effects like lung diseases, paralysis, heart attack, diabetes, urinary disorders, depression and fatigue were possible in coronavirus patients. In Tamil Nadu 3,49,654 persons had been infected by Covid-19 and

2,87,787 of them (83%) had been fully cured.

The newly opened centre would function all week days other than Sundays from 7 am to 2 pm and is equipped with a waiting room, examination room, doctor's room, counselling centre, facilities for registration, blood sample collection, ECG, CT scan, diet advice, yoga and plasma donation registration.

Stalin questions nomination of Umanath

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

DMK President M K Stalin questioned the nomination of Umanath, managing director of Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation, to the committee to be set up by the Centre to decide on providing 50 reservation for OBCs in the seats surrendered by Tamil Nadu for



the All-India Quota in the admission for medical and dental courses.

When the verdict of the

Madras High Court, under which the committee had to set up, clearly stated that the State Health Secretary would be part of the four-member committee, the nomination of Umanath seemed to have some ulterior motives behind it, Stalin said in a statement on Wednesday.

Accusing Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami of playing a double on the

issue, Stalin pointed out that the State government had gone on appeal against the verdict.

Warning the government against spoiling the right for reservation obtained through an united fight put up by all the political parties in the State, Stalin said the judgment was an important one in the history of social justice.

A slew of relief from CM fund

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced a slew of financial aid from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for various victims of disasters and ₹5 lakh relief to the family of P. John Kennedy, a reporter with a private television channel in Nagapattinam, who died due to Covid-19 on Monday.

The victims of the landslide in Kerala's Munnar



where estate workers hailing from Tamil Nadu bore the brunt of a massive landslide that buried their colony were also announced relief. Families of those who lost

their lives in the mishap on August 6 would receive Rs 3 lakh each and those who grievously injured would get ₹one lakh each, an official press release said.

Among the others whose families would be handed over ₹one lakh each from the Chief Ministers' Relief Fund is Thirumurthy, a havildar of Border Security Force, who died in Jammu and Kashmir on July 31. He hailed from Pullavarayan Kudikadu village in Tiruvallur district and the Chief Minister had earlier announced a government job for a family member.

The others victims are Saravanakumar of Alathur village in Tiruvallur district, who died when a tree fell on him while riding his motorbike, Mariappan of Taramangalam in Salem district, who had a fatal fall from a tree and Riyas of Purasawalkam in Chennai who fell from a building while selling tea and died.



Coimbatore collector K. Rajamani gives the appointment order to a woman for a job in survey department on Wednesday.

— DC

2 mins pitch for Tiruchy
as second capital of TNR.VALAYAPATHY DC
TIRUCHY, AUG. 19

To counter the claim of Revenue Minister R. B. Udhayakumar and Co-operation Minister Sellur Raju that Madurai should be made the second capital of Tamil Nadu, Tourism Minister Vellamandi Natarajan and Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Minister Ms.Valarmathi

raised their voice for making Tiruchy the second capital as it was a dream of their political mentor, the late Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran.

Mr. Natarajan and Ms.Valarmathi made their claim while distributing free facial masks to the family card holders at a function under the presidency of Tiruchy Collector S.Sivarasu at Tiruchy on

Wednesday. The ministers appealed to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to make Tiruchy the second capital to fulfil the dream of MGR.

Mr. Natarajan said Mr Palaniswami has ordered for the supply of two facial masks each to 6.74 crore family members of 2.08 crore family cards at an estimated cost of ₹35.14 crores, across the state.

Jewellery store
temporarily closed
as over 50 staff test
corona positive

Coimbatore, Aug. 19 : Police have registered a case against the management of a leading jewellery store here under the Epidemics Diseases Act, as 58 workers there tested Covid-19 positive in the last two days.

According to police, a customer was tested Covid-19 positive on Sunday last, following which nearly 90 workers there had undergone testing and the results showed 58 tested positive in the last two days.

The jewellery shop was temporarily closed for violating the Act, they said. All those infected by the virus were admitted to different hospitals and Covid Care Centre in the city. With over 50 people contracting the infection, the health department appealed to customers who had visited the shop in the last one week to undergo testing.

— PTI

CM urges Centre to hike milling
copra MSP to ₹125 per kilogram

Chennai, Aug 19: The present Minimum Support Price of ₹99.60 per kilo for milling copra would not be adequate and it should be increased to at least ₹125 per kg, Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Wednesday urged the Centre.

The government of Tamil Nadu, while communicating its views on the price policy for Copra 2020 season, had on January 23 this year suggested ₹105 per kg for milling copra, he said in a letter to Union Minister for Agriculture, Narendra Singh Tomar. "At present, market rate in Tamil Nadu and nearby states prevails between ₹100 to ₹110 per kg. Hence, taking the above challenges into consideration, it is felt that the present MSP for milling copra of ₹99.60 per kg will not be adequate to compensate their cost of production," he said. The Central government fixed the MSP for crops like paddy, ragi and pulses at 150 per cent of

The Central government fixed the MSP for crops like paddy, ragi and pulses at 150 per cent of the cost of cultivation.

The coconut farmers also need to be given adequate price for their produce, in order to enable them to overcome the increasing costs of production in the background of seasonal adversities, pest attacks and rising input costs. The lockdown due to pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the coconut farmers, who have to incur additional cost due to scarcity of labour and challenges in transportation. "Hence, I request you to kindly consider revision of the Minimum Support Price for milling copra from Rs 99.60 to at least Rs 125 per kg for the current 2020 copra season, for safeguarding the interest of coconut growers," Palaniswami urged.

— PTI

eSanjeevani records over
56K tele-consultations in TN

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The 'eSanjeevani' digital platform of the Union government has provided two lakh tele-consultations, the health ministry said on Wednesday.

This milestone was achieved in 10 days only since August 9 when Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan presided over a review meeting with states and Union territories to commemorate the completion of 1.5 lakh tele-consultations.

The top five states which have been utilising the e-health services being offered through this platform are Tamil Nadu

(56,346 consultations), Uttar Pradesh (33,325), Andhra Pradesh (29,400), Himachal Pradesh (26,535) and Kerala (21,433). Andhra Pradesh leads in having the most HWC-medical college interactions with 25,478 consultations while Tamil Nadu leads in the OPD services with 56,346 consultations.

In a short span of time since November 2019, tele-consultation by 'eSanjeevani' has been implemented by 23 states (which covers 75 per cent of the population) and other states are in the process of rolling it out "In what can be seen as a

big push for the 'Digital India' initiative of the prime minister, the eSanjeevani platform has proved its usefulness and easy access for the caregivers and the medical community, and those seeking healthcare services in the time of COVID-19," the ministry said. The eSanjeevani platform has enabled two types of telemedicine services -- doctor-to-doctor (eSanjeevani) and patient-to-doctor (eSanjeevani OPD) tele-consultations. The former is being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC). — PTI

SHORT TAKES

PRANAB
MUKHERJEE'S
HEALTH DECLINES

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

The 84-year-old former president, who was admitted to the hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10, continues to be on ventilatory support, doctors attending to him said.

However, his son and former MP Abhijit Mukherjee said his father is showing "positive signs of improvement".

Pranab Mukherjee was operated for removal of a clot in his brain and has been in a coma ever since. He also tested positive for Covid-19.

"There has been a decline in the medical condition of Pranab Mukherjee as he has developed features of lung infection. He continues to be on ventilatory support and is currently being managed by a team of specialists," the hospital said in a statement.

In a tweet, Abhijit Mukherjee said his father's vital parameters are under control. "With all your good wishes and sincere efforts of the doctors, my father is stable now! His vital parameters continue to remain under control and manageable! Positive signs of his improvement are noticed. I request you all to pray for his speedy recovery," he said.

PREZ ACCEPTS
ASHOK LAVASA'S
RESIGNATION AS EC

New Delhi, Aug. 19: President Ram Nath Kovind has accepted the resignation of Ashok Lavasa as Election Commissioner, a notification by the Ministry of Law and Justice said on Wednesday.

Lavasa had on Tuesday sent his resignation as Election Commissioner to the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"The President is pleased to accept the resignation tendered by Ashok Lavasa, Election Commissioner with effect from the 31st August, 2020," the notification said.

Lavasa was next in line to head the poll panel. He would soon be joining the Asian Development Bank as vice president, sources said.

He would be joining the Philippines-based ADB sometime in September, they added.

"The ADB has appointed Ashok Lavasa as Vice-President for Private Sector Operations and Public-Private Partnerships," the multilateral lending agency had said in a statement last month.

He will succeed Diwakar Gupta, whose term will end on August 31.

Lavasa's term in the EC would have ended in October 2022 had he become the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). He is the second election commissioner to step down from the poll panel before the completion of his term.

HOLY MACE OF
KAILASH YATRA
RETURNS ABODE

Bhaderwah (J&K), Aug. 19: The holy mace of Kailash Yatra returned to its abode here after traditional rituals at a 14,700 feet high lake in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Wednesday.

The annual yatra to Kailash Kund (lake) was restricted to a small group of priests and devotees this year due to the threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The three-day pilgrimage began on August 16 when a group of priests left for Kailash Kund with the *Charri Mubarak* (holy mace) from the ancient Vasuki Nag temple at Gatha here. The yatra was joined by half a dozen 'Charis' enroute. After night halts at Hayan and Ramtund on August 16 and 17, the officials said the 'Charri Mubarak' reached Kailash Kund on August 18, where the pilgrims took a bath in the lake to take the blessings of Lord Shiva and Vasuki Nag.

According to the local belief, Kailash Kund was the original abode of Shiva but he gave it to Vasuki Nag and went to live at Manmahesh in Bharmour in Himachal Pradesh.

After performing the age-old rituals at Kailash Kund, the mace reached back to its abode on late Tuesday night and was received by enthusiastic followers of Lord Vasuki Nag, the official said.

They said the officers from police and civil administration also joined the holy mace from Sungli village to Vasuki Nag Temple at Gatha.

Five ex-Cong
MLAs join BJP
in Manipur

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 19

Five ex-Congress MLAs from Manipur, including nephew of former chief minister and senior Congress leader Ibobi Singh, who recently resigned from the state assembly and the party, on Wednesday joined the BJP.

The BJP claimed that the state government has the support of 34 MLAs in the Assembly, which has effective strength of 47 as there are 13 vacancies.

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

Those who joined the BJP included Henry Okram, nephew of former Ibobi Singh, Paonam Brojen, Oinam Lukhoh Singh, Ngamthang Hao-kip, and Ginsuanhau Zou.

Joining the saffron fold at the BJP headquarters in presence of state chief minister N. Biren Singh,

the former MLAs were welcomed by the national general secretary and the party's pointsman for the North-East Ram Madhav and vice president Baijayant Panda.

Madhav, who accused the Congress of trying to unsettle the popular NDA government in the state said there is no threat to the N. Biren Singh government and claimed that the NDA government will not only complete its tenure but will be re-elected by majority. After joining the saffron fold, these five former MLAs met BJP president J.P. Nadda.

"Manipur faced Congress' bad governance for 15 years. In 2017, BJP-led coalition government was formed and in the last 3.5 years, Manipur has become one of the fastest growing states in the North-East. It has witnessed 16 per cent GDP growth, it was chosen by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the 'Ghar Ghar Jal' project, additional 3,000 crore has been sanctioned for the roads," Madhav said.

Student bodies in Assam
form panel to seek counsel

Aasu, AJYCP seek advice on action to defend the rights of indigenous people

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 19

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

The two powerful students organisations in a joint press conference

announced the formation of an 18-member committee which will suggest measures and course of action to defend the rights of indigenous people.

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

He reiterated that the

Rain hit



People take refuge on a submerged car as vehicles ply on waterlogged Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway near Narsinghpur in Gurugram on Wednesday. Incessant rains lashed the national capital on Wednesday, submerging low-lying areas in waist-deep water and bringing traffic on key roads to a grinding halt.

— PTI

Bhushan wants
to file review plea
against SC order

New Delhi, Aug. 19: A day before the scheduled hearing on quantum of sentence, activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan who has been held guilty of criminal contempt for his two derogatory tweets, moved the Supreme Court seeking deferment of the proceedings till a review petition is filed and considered.

The top court on August 14 held Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his derogatory tweets against the judiciary saying they cannot be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary made in the public interest.

The apex court had said it would hear on August 20, the arguments on the quantum of sentence to be awarded to Bhushan in the matter.

A contemnor can be punished with simple imprisonment of up to six months or with a fine of up to ₹2,000 or with both.

Bhushan in his application stated that he intends to file a review petition against the order of August 14 after studying it in detail and seeking appropriate legal counsel as the ramification of the said order is of grave constitutional significance, in particular on the right to free speech.

The applicant would file the same within the limitation period of 30 days from date of the judgment, as he is entitled to under Order 47 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013. Hence, it is prayed that, in view of the same, the hearing on the sentence as fixed on August 20, 2020, vide the order of August 14, 2020, be deferred till the consideration of the review by this Court, he said in the application filed in the

JUSTICE KURIAN
JOSEPH BACKS
BHUSHAN

New Delhi, Aug. 19: Former Supreme Court judge Justice Kurian Joseph on Wednesday came out in support of Prashant Bhushan and said contempt cases against him raised substantial questions of law which should be heard by a constitution bench.

Justice Joseph also said that a person convicted by the top court in a suo-motu case should get an opportunity for an intra-court appeal.

Under Article 145 (3) of the Constitution of India, there shall be a quorum of minimum five Judges for deciding any case involving substantial questions of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution. In both the suo motu contempt cases, in view of the substantial questions of law on the interpretation of the Constitution and having serious repercussions on the fundamental rights, the matters require to be heard by a Constitution Bench, Joseph said in a statement.

— PTI

contempt case which was taken suo motu cognizance by the top court.

Bhushan submitted the deferment of the said hearing would be in the interests of justice in view of the underlying public policy with respect to safeguarding liberty of a citizen under Article 21 till such time as his first appeal (in this case the review petition) is considered.

— PTI

TABLIGHI JAMAAT:
ED CONDUCTS
MULTI-CITY RAIDS

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted multi-city searches in connection with a money laundering case filed against Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad Kandhalvi, trusts linked to the Jamaat and others, officials said.

They said various premises in Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad and a few other locations are being raided to collect evidence. The central probe agency had filed a money laundering case in April against Maulana Saad and others after it took cognizance of a complaint against these entities.

Tharoor says BJP MP's comments
are disparaging, gives notice

New Delhi, Aug. 19: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who heads the parliamentary panel on information technology, has given a notice for breach of privilege against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, alleging that he made "disparaging remarks" on social media over his decision to summon a panel meeting to discuss alleged "misconduct" of Facebook.

In his letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Tharoor took strong objection to Dubey's remarks on Twitter that "the Chairman of Standing Committee does not have the authority to do anything without discussion of the agenda with its members".

Tharoor said Dubey accused him of champi-

oning his political party's "agenda without authorisation by the Committee and Speaker".

Dubey's remarks came after Tharoor had said on Sunday that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology would like to hear from Facebook about a media report on its conduct and what it proposes to do about hate speech in India.

Anguished over "disparaging" remarks made by Dubey against his decision to call a meeting of the panel, Tharoor said it amounted to breach of privilege of his position as an MP and Chairman of the standing committee.

"The matter pertains to the disparaging remarks made by Dubey on a social

media platform regarding my decision to summon a Committee meeting to discuss the alleged misconduct of Facebook and seek clarity on the measures that it intends to undertake to curb the spread of hate speech and fake news," Tharoor said.

"Nishikant Dubey's derogatory remarks have not only brought disrepute to my position as a Member of Parliament and Chairman but also to an institution that mirrors the will of the people of our country," Tharoor alleged in the letter, a copy of which was also marked to Sunil Kumar Singh, chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Privileges, Lok Sabha.

Tharoor urged Birla to issue necessary directions to initiate proceedings

be advised by this committee."

The idea of launching a new regional political party to counter the surge of saffron party in the state had come into existence during the anti-CAA movements that had rocked the state. Apart from Aasu and AJYCP leaders along with those from Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti some prominent citizens, singers and artists had also stressed the need of a new political platform to take up the cause of indigenous people, allegedly compromised during the BJP regime.

On being asked if the students body was entering politics Mr Bhattacharya said, "The non-political nature of AASU and AJYCP will remain. Now, what we can do being in Aasu, that will

against Dubey for "committing a breach of privilege on multiple accounts and contempt of the House".

"I sincerely hope that stringent action is taken in this matter so that it serves as a deterrent to the occurrence of similar incidents in future and restores public trust in Parliament," the MP from Thiruvananthapuram said in the letter dated August 18.

Meanwhile, tagging a tweet on a media report about the rules and functioning of committees, Dubey on Wednesday tweeted, "In the last 11 years as an MP, I have neither violated any rules nor would I let anyone violate or abuse their power for their parties personal vendetta with agenda." — PTI

PPP | MODEL

Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram airports to be leased

Plan to lease 3 airports gets Cabinet nod

New Delhi, Aug. 19: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal for leasing out airports at Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram through public-private partnership (PPP).

Adani Enterprises had won the rights to run six airports — Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram, and Guwahati — through the PPP model after a competitive bidding process in February 2019.

In July 2019, the Union cabinet had approved the proposal for leasing out the other three airports — Ahmedabad, Mangaluru

and Lucknow — to Adani Enterprises.

At a press conference on Wednesday, Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar said the Cabinet has approved the proposal for leasing out Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram airports through the PPP model.

"The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is not giving these airports permanently to the private operator. After running them for 50 years, the private operator would be handing over the airports back to the AAI," said the minister.

Currently, the aforementioned six airports are

owned and managed by the government-run Airports Authority of India (AAI).

The minister said the AAI will receive ₹1,070 crore as an upfront amount from the private operator for leasing the airports at Jaipur, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and this fund will be used to develop airports in smaller cities.

"Another benefit of leasing these airports is that passengers will get good services," Javadekar noted.

Eight months after the Cabinet approval, Adani Enterprises signed the concessionaire agreement

with the AAI on February 14 this year for operation, management and development of airports at Ahmedabad, Mangaluru and Lucknow.

In June this year, the AAI gave three more months to the Ahmedabad-based company to take over the management of these three airports due to the Covid-19 situation.

This means the deadline for take over has been pushed from August 12 to November 12.

In a tweet, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, "In a momentous decision under the visionary leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi

Ji, the Union Cabinet has given its stamp of approval for leasing of 3 more airports at Jaipur, Guwahati & Thiruvananthapuram on PPP basis."

"PPP at these airports will not only help in delivery of efficient and quality services to the air passengers but will also help @AAI Official in enhancing its revenues & focusing on developing more airports at Tier-II & Tier III places," he added.

Puri had on Tuesday said that the Ministry of Civil Aviation would place a proposal for "further" privatisation of airports before the Union Cabinet on Wednesday.

— PTI

IN BRIEF

Mali coup leaders pledge poll

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

Kabul rocket hit: Death toll at 3

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

Norway expels Russian diplomat

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

ASTEROID COMES CLOSEST EVER TO EARTH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protest in Palestine

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

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

Sydney, Aug. 19:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Among the competitors, Brazilian health regulators on Tuesday gave the

Tehran, Aug. 19:

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

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

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

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

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

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

BRAZIL NOD TO FINAL TESTS OF J&J VACCINE

Rio de Janeiro, Aug. 19:

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

The US pharmaceutical company's subsidiary Janssen will test the vaccine on 7,000 volunteers across seven states in Brazil, part of a group of up to 60,000 worldwide. South Africa, meanwhile, will launch clinical trials of a US-developed vaccine with 2,900 volunteers this week. — AFP

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— AFP

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

Milwaukee, Aug. 19:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The lineup featured 95-year-old president Jimmy Carter, who served one term from 1977, and 1990s commander-in-chief Bill Clinton, who warned that the Trump White House is swirling with chaos instead of the competence necessary to address the nation's crises.

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

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

New Delhi, Aug. 19:

Hong Kong has banned Air India flights till the end of August after some passengers on one of its flights tested positive for Covid-19 post arrival, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

Passengers from India can arrive in Hong Kong only if they have a Covid-19 negative certificate from a test done 72 hours prior to the journey, according to rules issued by the Hong Kong government in July.

Moreover, all international passengers are required to take a post-flight Covid-19 test at the airport premises in Hong Kong.

"Some passengers who landed in Hong Kong on one of Air India flights recently tested Covid-positive post arrival," the government official said.

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

Air India did not respond to the PTI's request for comment.

The airline had said on Twitter on Monday: "Due to restrictions imposed by Hong Kong Authorities, AI 310/315, Delhi H o n g Kong Delhi of 18th August 2020 stands postponed. Next update in this regard will be intimated soon. Passengers may

please contact Air India Customer Care for assistance."

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

— PTI

EU leaders talk crisis in Belarus

Brussels, Aug. 19:

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

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that his country could intervene in the crisis and this week warned against

"unacceptable" foreign interference in Belarus or pressure on its leadership. As the meeting began, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the EU "cannot accept the result of these elections" and called for "resolute and concerted" action.

"Our message to the regime is clear: violence is unacceptable, political prisoners must be released and human rights must be respected," he tweeted.

"Dialogue must lead to a solution that reflects the vote of the people", Lukashenko's claim to victory in the election with 80 percent of the ballot sparked the largest demonstrations in Belarus since it gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

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

IMRAN: PAK FUTURE LINKED WITH CHINA

SHAFIQAT ALI | DC ISLAMABAD, AUG. 19

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

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

— AFP

Keith Melton, an espionage historian, took four decades to find the crime instrument**MURDER | WEAPON****Axe that killed Leon Trotsky now a museum exhibit**

Washington, Aug. 19:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After moving to Mexico

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

make escaping difficult.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Trotsky died in hospital the next day. And, after

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

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

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

— AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

20 AUGUST 2020

MP govt's job quotas: Dangerous, desperate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Court snub to Vedanta

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

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

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

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

Subhani



‘Lockdown generation’ at risk: Save their jobs



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ers’ within a household.”

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

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

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

We simply cannot let that happen.

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

LETTERS

STERLITE IMBROGLIO

The Madras high court order to close down the Sterlite copper plant at Thoothukudi is a step in the right direction. It's a matter of concern that the unit was operating for over 16 years without valid consent from the Pollution Control Board, and for over 10 years without authorisation for hazardous waste management. This sorry state of affairs speaks volumes about the level of corruption in the regulatory bodies. No doubt the closure of the plant would result in loss of employment opportunities (direct and indirect), but then, we have to see which is the lesser of two evils. In fact, throughout Tamil Nadu, there are scores of manufacturing plants that are notorious for environmental destruction. The activists, in the same breath, should fight relentlessly to ensure that these units, too, are given the boot. Selective punishment is unfair.

P.G. Menon
Chennai

APT DECISION BY APEX COURT

APROPPOS YOUR report *SC rejects plea to transfer PM CARES funds to NDRF* (Aug. 19). While the PM CARES funds was initiated with the proposal of receiving financial contributions by individuals and organisations towards combating and relief measures for outbreak of pandemic, and there is no logical reason to dead that the Centre transfer these funds to NDRF (National Disaster Response Force). In fact, the funds contributed towards the pandemic need to be made transparent to the public. At a time when the country is battling Covid-19 virus, how can funds for one cause be utilised for other purposes. It's disgusting that even the allotment of funds towards pandemic is not used judiciously, sadly both state and central governments have been playing with the misery of people. .

Jacqueline Netto
Chennai

Sanju Verma



Modi govt has a modern and mature outlook on gender

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Barcelona name Koeman as coach

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

Nagal through to Last 8 in Prague

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

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

Former India goalie Maity dies

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

MAGIC HOLD ON TO UPSET MIGHTY BUCKS

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

Live on TV

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

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

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NINJA NEYMAR

Brazilian sends PSG into first ever Champions League final

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Tuchel hails 'incredible' PSG

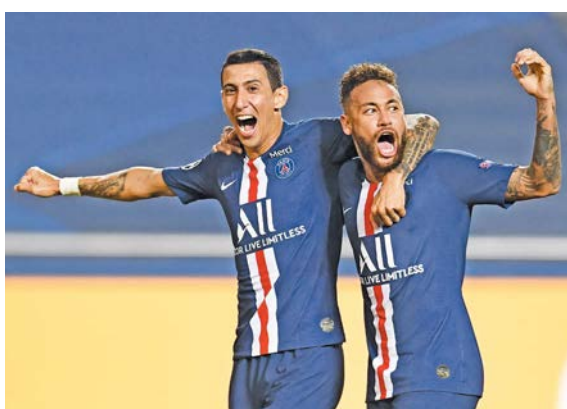
Lisbon, Aug. 19: Thomas Tuchel heaped praise on his Paris Saint-Germain side after they cruised into their first ever Champions League final, putting the French side on the brink of coveted European glory.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

obviously the biggest challenge of my career."

DI MARIA 'WON'T SLEEP' AFTER REACHING FINAL

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

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

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

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

COVID | SCARE

Sucha's ordeal while treatment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This is really disrespectful for a former athlete." Singh was one of the top quarter-milers in the 1970s and he won a hat-trick of titles in the Nationals from 1972 to 1974.

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

FIFA FORECASTS \$120 MILLION DROP IN INCOME

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

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

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

of 6.44 billion.

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

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

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

Dream11's fantasy to end in 2020?

IPL TITLE | RIGHTS

● **It is learnt that BCCI is in discussions with Dream11 to revisit their second and third year bids and wants them to increase the amounts.**

Sino-India border stand-off.

Sources said BCCI and Dream11 are still negotiating on the conditional three-year bid under which the company is supposed to pay ₹240 crore each in 2021 and 2022 if Vivo doesn't make a comeback with its yearly ₹440 crore deal.

"It was always clear that the highest bidder may not get the title rights (it was specified by the BCCI

before accepting the Expression of Interest from bidders)," a veteran BCCI official, privy to the development, told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "Having said that, Dream11 has bid the highest and are still favourites to get it, a few issues are still being ironed out before an official announcement comes," he added.

It is learnt that BCCI is in discussions with

Dream11 to revisit their second and third year bids and wants them to increase the amounts.

"If it's for only year 2020, then ₹222 crore works fine. But it was a conditional bid for three years. We still have our deal with Vivo on," he said.

"We haven't closed it as it's a pause. If we are getting ₹440 crore, why will we settle for ₹240 crore?" the official asked.

In this scenario, Dream11 has two options — either to accept a one-year or rather four months 13 days deal of ₹222 crore or increase the conditional amount for 2021 and 2022, which is their discretion. — *PTI*

Rafael has full faith in Chennaiyin FC project

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, AUG. 19

Brazilian midfielder Rafael Crivellaro who has extended his stay at Chennaiyin FC feels the two-time champions have to deal with the challenge of restructuring the team following the exit of coach Owen Coyle and star striker Nerijus Valskis. The duo recently joined rivals Jamshedpur FC.

"Every new season brings its own set of challenges, for teams at all levels in all leagues. And this will be something that our club will have to change and adjust to. I am sure other clubs will also have their own challenges to contend with. I have faith in the project at Chennaiyin, and I look forward to helping the team achieve success in the upcoming campaign," said the 31-year-old playmaker.

Crivellaro scored seven goals and had eight assists in his debut campaign in ISL. His goal against NorthEast United, struck from 55 yards, was a classic. Excerpts from an interview: **How would you rate your debut season with Chennaiyin FC?**

On a personal note, it was a very good season. I am very happy to have contributed with the assists and goals. I am glad that it played a crucial role in our comeback story last season. But despite that amazing run, we fell short in the final. So while the journey was



Rafael Crivellaro

unforgettable, the ending was unfortunate. But that is how football is. Overall, I am very happy with my first season in India.

You come from football's spiritual home. Are professional players in Brazil aware of ISL and do fans talk about your ISL performance back home?

Yes, the Indian Super League is definitely being followed by players and people associated with football in Brazil and other parts of South America. The ISL is a league that is growing and attracting a lot of talent. I am very happy to continue and help raise the level in the coming season.

Do you expect more professional players from Brazil to join ISL in future?

Hopefully yes. I don't know the exact number but I am sure a lot of talent from Brazil has players in ISL

already. It is definitely an interesting option for players to consider at various stages of their career. It is a competitive league with a robust level of football being played.

The next season will be held in Goa; behind closed doors...

The obvious disadvantage is that we will miss our fans dearly. But the fact that they are watching from home and supporting us with all their might, will provide motivation to us to push harder. And especially with life already challenging for various other reasons, like COVID-19, we want to become a reason to cheer for our fans. We want to bring a smile to their faces. In terms of the season, it will be a unique experience with special focus on health and safety unlike never before. We all need to adhere to the protocols to ensure the tournament is conducted in a seamless manner.

A few words on local talents, Edwin, Ganesh, and Pandiyan...

Not just Edwin, Ganesh and Pandiyan, but all the Indian players at CFC and the other clubs have incredible talent and potential. Having seen them up close, I must say I am very impressed. Their understanding and reading of the game is promising, and I am sure they can keep improving and get better in the years to come. The future is bright for Indian football.



Ravichandran Ashwin

PONTING WARNS ASHWIN AGAINST MANKADING IN IPL

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

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

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

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

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