

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
ANANTAPUR | FRIDAY | 28 AUGUST 2020



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**Rhea claims threat to life, seeks police protection**



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
## WEATHER

 **Max:** 35.0°C  
**Min:** 18°C  
**RH:** 57%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 35/18 °C

## COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+79,351)	(+1,087)
33,83,517	61,685
covid19india.org	
STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS	
(+2,795)	(+8)
TS: 1,14,483	788
(+10,621)	(+92)
AP: 3,93,090	3,633

## CASES AROUND THE WORLD

 **2,44,85,143**  
**DEATHS**  
 **8,32,541**  
**COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES**  
 **213**  
worldometers.info/coronavirus

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Bhadrapada Shuddha Dasami till 8.39 am  
**Star:** Moola till 12.39 pm  
**Varjyam:** 11.03 am to 12.39 pm; 10.25 pm to 12.03 am (Saturday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.34 am to 9.23 am; 12.42 pm to 1.31 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 10.30 am to 12 noon  
**HUJRI CALENDAR**  
**Muharram 8, 1442 AH**  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.31 am  
**Zohar:** 12.26 pm  
**Asar:** 4.28 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.05 pm  
**Isha:** 7.21 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.52 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.38 PM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 7.34 AM**

## COUNTER POINT



Only 30% of MPs are attending the House, the rest are working from home!

## BRIEF

### SC disallows Muharram rallies

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Thursday declined to pass any order on a plea by a Shia Muslim cleric Syed Kalbe Jawad, seeking permission for taking out Tazia processions on the occasion of Muharram, observing that the community will again invite accusation of contributing to the spread of Covid-19 as had happened in the case of Tablighi Jamat meeting. CJI Sharad A. Bobde, heading a bench with Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian, said, "You're asking for vague directions for the country for this community... It is not possible to give general directions. It will create chaos and a particular community will be targeted for spreading Covid-19." — DC

## Cloudburst in Kullu



Mangled remains of vehicles after being washed away due to cloudbursts in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh on Thursday. — PTI

# 50 Great Andamanese tribe people left, 10 +ve

**Port Blair, Aug. 27:** Ten members of the dwindling Great Andamanese tribe in the Andamans have tested positive for the Coronavirus, officials said on Thursday, fuelling concerns about the safety of the group and other indigenous people in the remote archipelago.

Six of the 10 have recovered and are in home quarantine, while the rest are undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

Just over 50 Great Andamanese people survive and live on a tiny island where the government looks after their food and shelter.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands with a population of some 4 lakh people reported 2,268 Coronavirus cases so far with 37 deaths.

Authorities sent a team of health officials to Strait Island on Sunday after six members of the tribe tested positive recently in Port Blair, where they have government jobs.

Sanjiv Mittal, a senior government officer for tribal welfare, said the authorities were doing their best to keep all the members safe and healthy.

Anthropologists and activists for isolated tribal communities say more than 5,000 Great Andamanese lived in the islands when British settlers arrived in the 19th century. Hundreds were

# Covid tally may cross 4L in state

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27**

With there being no let-up in the rise in the number of Covid-19 positive cases, despite the best of efforts, Andhra Pradesh is likely to cross the four lakh mark on Friday.

Health officials released Covid-19 bulletin on Thursday reporting that the state has registered 10,621 new cases taking the overall tally to 3,93,090. With 92 deaths, the toll has risen to 3,633 in the last 24 hours.

A total of 61,300 samples were tested during the day, and the total has reached 34,79,990. In all, 2,95,248 patients have been discharged after recovery while 94,209 patients are undergoing treatment.

killed in conflicts as they defended their territories from the British, and thousands more were wiped out in epidemics of measles, influenza and syphilis, according to Survival International, which campaigns for indigenous and tribal peoples and uncontacted peoples.

— AFP

# Covid boosts demand for spices from state

**V.K.L.GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 27**

With an individual's immunity playing a key role in dealing with Coronavirus, demand for Indian spices has increased both domestically and internationally after the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Massive publicity was

given to the use of spices in India, where people always consumed them almost daily.

However, with awareness about Indian spices doubling up, several countries across the world started importing these commodities, making their prices skyrocket.

■ Full report on Page 3

Among new confirmed Coronavirus infections, East Godavari continues to lead with 1,089 followed by 1,020 in Prakasam, 934 in Nellore, 928 in Chittoor, 926 in Guntur, 892 in West Godavari, 855 in Kurnool, 846 in Srikakulam, 844 in Kadapa, 815 in Anantapur, 593 in Visakhapatnam, 563 in Vizianagaram and 316 in Krishna.

East Godavari continues to be the worst affected with 54,656 cumulative positive cases followed by 41,700 in Kurnool, 37,763 in Anantapur, 33,234 in Guntur, 33,136 in West Godavari, 33,133 in Chittoor, 33,310 in Visakhapatnam, 26,377 in Nellore, and 23,255 in Kadapa.

■ Page 3: State records 11.5% positive rate

## STATE PAYS NO ATTENTION TO PLASMA THERAPY

**SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27**

Health officials involved in Covid-19 management seem to be ignoring effective promotion of plasma therapy to help save lives of coronavirus infected patients even as 80-90 patients are dying every day in Andhra Pradesh.

The reason for this is that no data is being maintained with regard to the number of recovered patients whose plasma could be collected. No consent letters are being taken from recovered patients at the time of their discharge.

■ Page 3: Plasma treatment can save many lives

# Centre blames God, tells states to borrow ₹2.3L-cr

## Presents 2 options to cover GST shortfall with RBI help

**MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, AUG. 27**

Blaming God for the shortfall in tax collections, the Central government on Thursday reneged on its promise to compensate states for the loss incurred by them on the account of switching over nationwide GST regime and asked state governments to borrow money to fund their operations.

At the 41st GST Council meeting on Thursday, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman cited a legal opinion from the Attorney General to claim that the Centre's legal obligation was only to compensate states for losses arising out of the GST rollout and not the revenue loss caused by Covid-induced economic slowdown.

The Centre has to pay ₹2.35 lakh crore to the states in the current fiscal. However, the Narendra Modi government argues that the loss to states on account of switching over the GST is ₹97,000 crore. The states agreed to relinquish their independent power to tax goods and services in lieu of the Central government's promise to make good the loss caused by joining the GST regime till 2022.

The minister said the Centre will not make good the shortfall from either its coffers or by borrowing on its balance sheet. She



**THIS YEAR we are facing an act of God which might even result in a contraction of the economy, to what percent I am not getting into that.**

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, finance minister**

asked the state governments to borrow ₹2.35 lakh crore

She, however, offered two options to the states — either to borrow ₹97,000 crore or ₹2.35 lakh crore through a special RBI window — and asked the states to inform her their decision within one week.

Explaining the options in detail, finance secretary A.B. Pandey said, "The first option is to provide a special borrowing window to states, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to provide ₹97,000 crore at a "reasonable" interest rate. This

money can then be repaid after five years by extending cess collections. While the other option is to meet the entire GST compensation gap of ₹2.35 lakh crore this year itself after consulting with the RBI."

This means the GST cess on luxury products and sin goods will continue for longer than year 2022.

Briefing to the media persons via a virtual conference soon after the 41st GST Council meeting, Ms Sitharaman, who heads the GST Council, said, the

# State to lose ₹200 crore in Mineral Corp silica extract

**N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, AUG. 27**

The AP Mineral Development Corp. (APMDC) has awarded silica sand mines in Nellore district to a private mining company, which will result in the loss of about ₹200 crore to the state exchequer.

The APMDC had recently floated a tender with tailor-made conditions and awarded 211 hectares of silica sand mines with total reserves of 84 lakh tonnes to the Hyderabad-based Avantika Constructions.

But, what was conveniently hidden was that the APMDC had grossly compromised state interests and fixed a lower base price to help the private mining company. Two years ago, it had called for bids for silica sand mines which are located in the same area and awarded the lease to a Nellore-based company which had offered the highest price of ₹300 per tonne.

"The APMDC should have fixed the base price of ₹330-₹360 per tonne with a five to 10 per cent escalation or at least fixed ₹300 but reduced it to ₹200 to benefit Avantika," official sources pointed out.

The APMDC laid down tailor-made conditions to

prevent participation by more bidders. This again defeated the spirit of the Chief Minister's insistence on relaxing the bid evaluation criteria to allow more companies to participate in the tenders which eventually will benefit the government.

The APMDC fixed a whopping three-year average annual turnover of ₹400 crore and specified that the bidder should have mined mineral worth ₹400 crore to ₹600 crore in the last seven years. Going by the general contract conditions of the Centre, the required turnovers fixed by the APMDC are way higher. "Had the corporation allowed more competition by fixing a lower turnover figure and fixed a higher base price instead of ₹200 per tonne, the state would have got at least ₹200 crore more," sources said.

When contacted, APMDC managing director M. Harinarayana said the tender was floated by his predecessor, who, according to the tender document, is V.G. Venkata Reddy. Harinarayana said he was not aware how the base price was fixed.

coronavirus pandemic was "an act of God" and an unforeseen factor that affected GST collections. "...This year we are facing an extraordinary situation. We are facing an act of God where we may even see a contraction," she said.

Finance ministers from states ruled by Opposition parties, however, rejected the Centre's offer and insisted that it must make good the loss incurred by the states due to the GST rollout.

## HC EXTENDS STAY ON 3 CAPITALS PLAN IN AP

**DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27**

The AP High Court has extended the 'status quo order' on the trifurcation of the state capital into three cities until further orders.

The High Court full bench, comprising Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari, Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy and Justice A.V. Sesha Sai, held a virtual hearing here on Thursday on a batch of petitions filed by the farmers and others opposing the government's move to relocate the administrative and judicial capitals to Visakhapatnam and Kurnool respectively from Amaravati and continuing the legislative capital at its present place.

During the hearing, the court said it intended to conduct court hearings physically unlike the present practice of virtual hearing due to prevalence of Covid-19, by following the protocol, maintaining social distancing and other norms from September 21.

■ Page 2: All political leaders get HC notices

# Statute bench to decide on SC sub-classification

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 27**

The Supreme Court on Thursday referred to a 7-judge Constitution Bench the question whether the State government could create sub-classification within the Scheduled Castes to ensure that they get the benefits of reasonable reservation within the permissible limit of 15 per cent reservation for SCs.

Referring the matter Justice Arun Mishra heading a five-judge Constitution bench with Justice Indira Banerjee, Justice Vineet Saran, Justice M.R. Shah and Justice Aniruddha Bose said that states are competent to create sub-classification so that benefits of reservation reach reserved categories.

■ Page 3: Conclusions varied with earlier 5-judge bench

## SATELLITE VISION

# AstroSat sees 'light' from near start of universe

**PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC NELLORE, AUG. 27**

India's first multi-wavelength satellite AstroSat, which has five X-ray and ultraviolet telescopes working in tandem, has detected extreme ultraviolet (EUV) light from a galaxy called AUDFs01 that is located 9.3 billion light years away from Earth in

the constellation of Fornax in the southern sky.

The finding is expected to help our understanding of the early universe.

AUDFs01 is located in what is called the Hubble eXtreme Deep Field (XDF), which contains about 5,500 galaxies, some as old as 13.2 billion years. The universe is estimated to be 13.7 billion years old.

According to Isro, the

XDF is a small patch of sky about the width of a full moon and was delineated by combining 10 years of photographs taken by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope (HST).

The discovery of EUV was made by an international team of astronomers led by Dr Kanak Saha of the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA),

Pune, and reported in *Nature Astronomy*.

This team includes scientists from India, Switzerland, France, the United States, Japan and the Netherlands.

Since UV radiation is absorbed by the Earth's atmosphere, it can only be observed from space.

"AstroSat was able to achieve this unique feat because the background

noise in the UVIT (Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope) aboard the AstroSat detector is much less than the ones on the HST," said Dr Saha in a note.

"This is the first time that star-forming galaxies have been observed in this extreme UV environment," Ravindranath, former group head, Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, told

*Deccan Chronicle*.

"The discovery is significant in terms of enhancing our understanding of the universe's early galaxies that are found only at extreme UV wavelengths, and the findings could help explain the origin of light post Big Bang," Ravindranath said.

■ Page 3: Search focused on astronomical objects



## IN BRIEF

## ALL POLITICAL LEADERS GET HC NOTICES

FROM PAGE 1

The court directed the government to file its reply on the petitions by September 11 and the petitioners to file their replies by September 17 and posted the case for September 21.

In another development, the High Court served notices to the Chief Minister, ministers and also to leaders from Telugu Desam and the BJP based on petitions filed by farmers on the trifurcation of the capital.

The farmers' contention in their petitions was that the present ruling party members made laws leading to trifurcation of the state renege on their earlier commitment to support the development of Amaravati as AP's capital city.

More than 100 petitions have been filed on the same issue so far.

## FREE COURSES ON SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

The Andhra Pradesh state skill development corporation (APSSDC), with the cooperation of Indian institute of remote sensing (IIRS), Indian space research organisation (ISRO) and department of space, is offering free online courses on satellite-related technologies in the field of remote sensing, geoinformatics and global navigation satellite system (GNSS) technology and their applications in natural resources monitoring, environmental and disaster management.

Krishna district skill development officer, E. Thammaji Rao, said that the courses offered under the 66 IIRS outreach programme on global navigation satellite system are open to students (undergraduate - final year, and postgraduate - any year - technical), scientific staff of central/state government/faculty/researchers at universities/institutions and start from September 14 to 24 from 4 pm to 5.30 pm.

The advantage of these free, online course is interactive virtual sessions with experts from IIRS-ISRO, said Rao, adding that an e-class account to watch online and offline sessions is available and after the completion of course, candidates will be given e-certificates based on 70 per cent attendance and an online exam conducted by IIRS.

Registrations are open for the 66 IIRS outreach programme, said Rao, asking interested candidates to register on the website: <https://www.iirs.gov.in/EDUS> AT-News and make good use of the free online courses.

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Ambati Krishna Reddy

## YSR LOYALIST APPOINTED GOVT ADVISER

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, AUG. 27

Ambati Krishna Reddy, a YSR family loyalist, has been appointed adviser (agriculture) to government with cabinet minister rank.

Principal secretary to the government, Praveen Prakash, issued orders for the appointment of Krishna Reddy on Thursday. He hails from Tippalur of Yerraguntla mandal. He was frontrunner for ZP chairman post but he opted out as Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy chose former MLA Akepat Amranath Reddy for the job. Mr Krishna Reddy has been loyal to the YSR family since the beginning of his political career.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launches web application on fisheries department at the camp office on Thursday. Minister Seediri Appalaraju and other officials are also seen.

## Govt will ensure MSP for aqua products, says CM

Jagan wants Janata Bazaars to take off by next year

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to ensure minimum support price for aqua farmers.

After returning from Bengaluru on Thursday, he held a review meeting with fisheries and animal husbandry department in his camp office.

He told the officials that aqua farmers should get MSP, IQF (individual quick freezing) and cold storage facilities. "These facilities, which will help farmers to store their produ-

ce and protect themselves from middlemen exploitation, should be linked to Janata Bazaars," he said.

The government has set up Market Stabilisation Fund and spent ₹3,200 crore to save tobacco farmers from middlemen, he said and suggested that officials should devise similar methods to protect the interests of aqua farmers. "During my pada yatra farmers told me how they were being exploited by syndicates from seed, feed to processing industries. We have to show an alternative to the farmers and must provide them

infrastructure to store their products till they get proper price so that they would not be forced into distress sale."

The CM instructed that by next year Janata Bazaars should start functioning. He said that godowns at village level, cold storages at mandal level along with grading and primary food processing units would be coming up.

Mr Jagan said that suggestions should be taken from Amul while buying cattle for beneficiaries under YSR Cheyutha. Amul help should also be taken in matters of feed, rearing

and other technical aspects.

"YSR Aasara will be launched on September 11. Under Cheyutha 22.8 lakh women have benefit and under Aasara another 90 lakh women will benefit. We should provide them a sustainable livelihood. There should not be any compromise on buying livestock."

Minister for animal husbandry S. Appalaraju, special chief secretary, animal husbandry and fisheries, Poonam Malkondai, and other officials took part in the review meeting.

## Yanamala blames Jagan for poor Niti Aayog exports rank to state

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

Leader of opposition in the Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Thursday termed it unfortunate that the state stood at 20th place in the latest Exports Preparedness Index 2020, released by the Niti Aayog. The 7th position occupied by AP among eight coastal states in the country reflected the utter failure of the Jagan government's policies, he remarked and added that Niti Aayog also pulled up the government for lagging behind in exports preparedness even though the state has a long coastline with a potential for development.

Mr Ramakrishnudu said that the neighbouring Telangana secured 6th rank in overall exports even though it has no coastline, whereas AP with 11 minor ports and one major port did disappointingly. Among the southern states, Andhra Pradesh was placed at the bottom in terms of performance. All this was because of total negligence of the industrial sector by the YSRC since it came to power, he observed.

Mr Ramakrishnudu alleged that in the past 15 months no worthwhile industrial policy was forthcoming even as overall development of the state was alarmingly low, he said and alleged that the industrial policy introduced by the previous TD regime was shelved out of political vendetta, resulting in the present sorry state of affairs. He claimed no investor was coming forward to set up industries.

## STATE GOVT SLASHES COVID TEST RATES

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

The state government reduced rates for Covid-19 tests in private NABL and ICMR-approved labs through an order issued here on Thursday.

Accordingly, testing of each sample sent by government will cost ₹1,600 as against ₹2,400 earlier. In case individuals approach labs for Covid-19 test, they will be charged ₹1,900 per test compared to the old rate of ₹2,900.

The state government mentioned in its order that the decision was taken in view of increased availability of kits and reduction in their cost. The high cost of Covid-19 tests proved an obstacle for more people to go for screening. The state government cut down the rates.

## YSRC DARES TD TO PUBLIC DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT IN STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

YSR Congress MLA and party official spokesperson Gudivada Amaranath on Thursday challenged the Telugu Desam to a public debate on development in the state during the previous and current governments.

Refuting allegations of poor performance of the YSRC rule in the past 14 months, he claimed that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was relentlessly working for the welfare and development of the state despite the Coronavirus crisis. "But TD chief Chandrababu Naidu and leaders of other parties are trying to mislead people through baseless allegations," he asserted.

The MLA said Mr Naidu

had no right to speak against the CM who disbursed ₹60,000 crore to weaker sections despite financial constraints.

Mr Amaranath lambasted Mr Naidu and his friendly media for distorting apex court verdict on the special leave petition filed by the state on three capital Bills. "Government is able to contain Coronavirus, but there is no cure for TD virus."

Mr Amarnath denied media reports that the state guesthouse in Visakhapatnam fell within protected Thotlakonda Buddhist sites. "The protected area at Thotlakonda is limited to an extent of 120 acres, and the land allotted for the government guest house is 5 km away from the Buddhist sites," he clarified.

● In the jostling between the police and villagers, a constable was injured and an auto was damaged. Another team led by additional SP Gowtam Sali arrived soon and seized ₹5,35,150 cash, 35 cars, 38 mobile phones and 6 motorbikes from the gamblers. They booked cases against the gamblers and organizers, the additional SP said.

A police source said that based on information three police teams raided

along with his brothers live in Alur town.

Claiming that he had zero tolerance for law-breakers, the minister directed the police to take action according to the law and not spare anyone indulging in illegal and unlawful activities.

Karnataka was also served to the gamblers. The police arrested 32 persons and organisers Narayana, Sreedhar and Ajaya. Kurnool SP Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said that they will not spare anyone found violating rules no matter how powerful and influential they may be. It is learnt the organisers are close to minister Jayaram.

Labour minister Gumanur Jayaram, in a statement, denied that he or his family members had anything to do with the gambling activities. He said that his family

along with his brothers live in Alur town. Claiming that he had zero tolerance for law-breakers, the minister directed the police to take action according to the law and not spare anyone indulging in illegal and unlawful activities.

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## TD urges NCSC for probe into attacks on Dalits

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

The Telugu Desam has lodged complaint in National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) alleging an increase in attacks on Dalits in Andhra Pradesh and demanded a high-level inquiry into the suicide of Dalit youth Om Pratap.

TD Politburo member Varla Ramaiah on Thursday complained to the NCSC that the ruling YSRC leaders' vindictive action was responsible for Om Pratap's death in Chittoor district.

Mr Ramaiah wanted stringent action against the ruling party leaders so that they would not indulge in further atrocities against weaker sections. He said Om Pratap expressed his opinion on the policies of the government in a video which went viral on social media. He alleged that the ruling party leaders in the Punganur Assembly segment threatened the youth, who was an autorickshaw driver. Unable to bear the trauma, he had ended his life.

The TD leader appealed to the NCSC to mark Andhra Pradesh as a special state because of the ongoing attacks and atrocities on weaker sections. He sought a probe into the series of attacks on Dalits.



Varla Ramaiah

● TD politburo member Varla Ramaiah alleged that the ruling party leaders in the Punganur Assembly segment threatened the youth, who was an autorickshaw driver. Unable to bear the trauma, he had ended his life.

## Don't politicise our kin's death, family tells Naidu and Lokesh

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 27

The family of Punganur-based Dalit autorickshaw driver threatened to file a case against Mr Naidu if he continues to drag their family into the issue and politicise the death.

residence on Monday due to some medical ailment, which both his family members and local police endorse.

Subsequent to this, TD president Naidu shot off a letter to AP DGP on Wednesday and also to NHRC alleging that the auto driver died due to harassment by ruling party leaders.

Mr Naidu went on to allege that ruling party minister Peddreddy Ramachandra Reddy forced the Dalit driver to commit suicide for criticising Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The TD chief went on to demand a high-level probe into the matter.

Reacting to this, Om



Merugu Nagarjuna

● YSRC MLA Merugu Nagarjuna said Naidu's anti-Dalit approach was evident in his statement, "Will anyone be willing to be born in a Dalit family."

● He said that a book can be written about the atrocities committed against the Dalits during the Naidu regime, he said and claimed that Naidu kept quiet when a Dalit woman was disrobed on the streets in Visakhapatnam district.

## YSRC: Dalits lived in fear during TD rule

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

The YSRC refuted allegations of Telugu Desam about increase of attacks on Dalits in the past 14 months.

Ruling party MLA Merugu Nagarjuna on Thursday said that TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had no right to speak in favour of Dalits as they were victimised when he was the chief minister. This was more in Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, and Nellore and in his native Chittoor district, but Mr Naidu had never bothered about them. He said 364 Dalits were ostracised during Mr Naidu's regime in East Godavari district when they went to install a statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar.

The MLA said Mr Naidu's anti-Dalit approach was evident in his statement, "Will anyone be willing to be born in a Dalit family?"

He stated that according to National Crime Records Bureau records, the state stood in fourth place in atrocities committed against the weaker sections during the TD government. He further stated that it was during Mr Naidu's rule that there was a social boycott of Dalits.

A book can be written about the atrocities com-

mitted against the Dalits during the Naidu regime, he said and claimed that Mr Naidu kept quiet when a Dalit woman was disrobed on the streets in Visakhapatnam district.

Mr Nagarjuna said the sincerity of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy can be seen from the fact that even policemen were not spared when they were involved in atrocities against Dalits.

He said all the corporations in the state have people from weaker sections as members.

He asked why Mr Naidu and his cronies were against house site pattas being given to 30 lakh weaker section families. He lamented when the Chief Minister proposed to give pattas to 54,000 Dalits in Amaravati region, it was opposed by Mr Naidu.

Mr Nagarjuna stated, "When the Chief Minister wanted English medium to be introduced in schools from the primary school level so that Dalits can also have an opportunity to get good jobs, it was opposed by Mr Naidu. As many as 1,40,000 youth belonging to the weaker sections secured jobs following the establishment of village and ward secretariats and the Chief Minister wishes to install a huge Ambedkar statue in the heart of Vijayawada."

Pratap's uncle Ramana and brother Om Prakash, speaking to media on Thursday, urged TD leaders not to politicise their family matter.

"Om Pratap died as he was ill and bedridden at his residence for a week before breathing his last on Monday. But because of the video, Mr Naidu and his son are trying to politicise the death. It is also wrong to bring out the caste factor into this," the two kin of the deceased said.

Condemning Mr Naidu's allegations against Mr Peddreddy as baseless, they maintained that the minister had helped several families in their village, including Om Pratap's family. They all belong to YSRC and will continue to support the party until their last breath.

They threatened to file a case against Mr Naidu if he continues to drag their family into the issue and politicise the death.

## CPM demands CM to control veg prices

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 27

The communist party (Marxist) (CPM) demanded that the government take measures to control the continuing increase in vegetable prices.

CPM leader Ch. Babu Rao lamented that the prices of all vegetables is increasing daily and people are facing extra financial burden during a pandemic. The CPM team visited various places of the city and inquired about the vegetable prices on Thursday.

Earlier, one kilo of most vegetables was about ₹10 to ₹20 according to variety and quality but now the minimum price of any vegetable has increased to ₹50 per kg said Mr Rao, adding that people have to eat vegetables, green leaves and fruits for

immunity to cope with the coronavirus but the high prices of vegetables, essential commodities and fruits are denying the public nutritious food.

Criticising both central and state governments as competing with each other to increase prices of petrol and diesel and further taxes, this is the main cause for increase of vegetable prices, said Rao.

Objecting to the imposing of profession tax on petty traders by the government, Mr Rao asked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, to take measures towards restraining the increasing prices, direct purchase of vegetable and fruits by the government from farmers and selling the same on justifiable prices through rythu bazaars to people in this time.



## SHORT TAKES

SEARCH FOCUSED  
ON ASTRONOMICAL  
OBJECTS

FROM PAGE 1

AstroSat, India's first multi-wavelength satellite, was launched on September 28, 2015, on a PSLV-XL. It is the first dedicated Indian astronomy mission aimed at studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical and UV spectral bands simultaneously.

Astronomers have been looking for sources that reionised the early universe and the search is focused on the earliest astronomical objects, especially the new small galaxies. Observing the ionising radiation from these early sources is next to impossible because the EUV photons are usually absorbed in space.

The absorption decreases in the later epoch, and we have a chance to detect such photons but it is still like a lottery, said coauthor Dr Akio Inoue, professor of Waseda University, Japan. Co-author Dr Anne Verhamme, professor at the Geneva Observatory, Switzerland, said the data from AstroSat allows scientists to refine the scenario of cosmic reionisation.

Dr Saha from the IUCAA who led this research said, "We knew it would be an uphill task to convince the international community that UVIT has recorded extreme-UV emission from this galaxy when more powerful HST has not." The article is available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-020-1173-5>.

STATE RECORDS  
11.3% POSITIVE  
RATE

FROM PAGE 1

There were 20,950 new Covid cases reported in Srikakulam, 19,681 in Prakasam, 18,034 in Vizianagaram, 14,966 in Krishna, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

The rate of recovery of Covid-19 infected patients has been good in East Godavari with 36,476 cases followed by 34,350 in Kurnool, 31,546 Anantapur, 27,770 West Godavari, 26,560 Visakhapatnam, 25,620 Guntur, 23,819 Chittoor, 20,209 Nellore, 17,038 Kadapa, 14,848 Srikakulam, 12,601 Krishna, 11,043 Prakasam, 10,473 in Vizianagaram, 2,461 from other states and 434 foreign returnees.

With regard to deaths, Kurnool registered the highest number of 13 followed by 11 in Nellore, 10 in East Godavari, nine in Chittoor, seven each in Kadapa and West Godavari, six each in Anantapur, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam, five in Guntur, four each in Krishna, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram.

Andhra Pradesh has conducted Covid-19 test on 65,168 samples per one million population and recorded Covid-19 positive rate at 11.30. Maharashtra tested 30,411 samples with a positive rate at 18.92 while Telangana tested 27,535 samples with a positive rate at 10.32.

PARAMOUR ROLE  
SUSPECTED IN  
WOMAN'S MURDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, AUG. 27

A 25-year-old woman was murdered, and the body was dumped on the road by some unidentified persons in Kavali on Thursday. The woman identified as Shakeela is working in a textile shop in Kavali.

Her body was found outside a house at Puchchalapalli Street. The locals said that she is a regular visitor to the house.

According to the police, Shakeela had married one Khader Basha of Ulavapadu in Prakasam district in 2015, and she has two children from the marriage.

However, she left him following family disputes after two years. After leaving the marriage, she had a relationship with a person running a mutton stall in Kavali. Allegedly, the man was also unhappy with her because of her relationship with another man.

● After leaving the marriage, she had a relationship with a person running a mutton stall in Kavali. Allegedly, the man was also unhappy with her because of her relationship with another man.

Fire staff, equipment  
insufficient for safety

## Mere warnings and notices are not enough to deal

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 27

With inadequate personnel and equipment, the state government is not in a position to enforce fire safety in schools, hospitals, cinema halls, industries and other places, where most people congregate. Experts in the field, who have gone through several reports of fire mishaps and their causes, are of the opinion that mere warnings and notices are not enough to deal with the situation. Unless the enforcement wing is strengthened, people will take shortcuts.

Thousands of industries, hospitals and educational institutions have come up over the years. But the strength of fire services personnel has not increased proportionately. So is the case with fire-fighting equipment.

TEMPLE TRUST  
MEET DEFERS  
LAND LEASE

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 27

The trust board of Simhachalam Devasathanam, which listed several important proposals in the virtual meeting held in the temple premises on Thursday, deferred the land lease issue and the rest of the enlisted items except for the appointment of an officer on special duty. Chair-person P. Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju, executive officer D. Bharamba and other members, were present in the meeting.

In the 10-point agenda, the main discussion veered around the lease of 16 acres of prime land to the private agencies for establishing commercial complexes that could fetch revenue for the temple, which is now starving for funds due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The board members talking to the reporters after the meeting said that they proposed that the issue of lease needed to be discussed more in-depth before letting out prime properties to private parties.

Executive officer D. Bharamba said that the government had issued specific guidelines.

● Government reports reveal that 240 of the 690 fire accidents in 2018 were due to electrical short-circuit.

● The recent Swarna Palace incident and other mishaps were the result of a short circuit.

The industrial city of Visakhapatnam has four staff in GVMC fire wing and the fire services department has a limited number of personnel. "One fire unit with 15 personnel is needed for every 50,000 population as per norms. But the Visakhapatnam district has only four units with 200 personnel for a population of 50 lakh and one unit in Paderu that covers the entire agency," district fire officer B.V.S. Ram Prakash said.

As a result, many establishments are functioning without even applying for fire NoCs. Half of those who have NOCs have not renewed them. Surprisingly, hospitals have turned out to be most erring institutions. Around 250 of them have no fire NOC, according to the GVMC fire wing.

"Only one of the 42 petrol bunks has applied for renewal of NoC. Bunk owners claim as they are covered under the Explosives Act, there is no need for them to take a fire NoC," regional fire officer at GVMC Niranjana Reddy said. Of the 16 industries, which have been served notices, only 10 applied for renewal. Among residential hotels, only six of the 17 hotels have sought renewal. Similarly, of the 600 private schools, only 248 have applied for NoC, Reddy said.

Apart from shortage of personnel, the fire department has no sufficient equipment to fight fires. Pharma city has 80 manufacturing units, but there is only one fire tender. When fire broke out at Visakha Solvents, foam and fire tenders were sourced from nearby PSUs.

Attributing major fire mishaps to short circuits, a retired fire officer said the government should deploy an agency to check electrical wiring before granting permission to run the industry or factory, instead of later blaming fire services department. The recent Swarna Palace incident and other mishaps were the result of a short circuit.

Government reports reveal that 240 of the 690 fire accidents in 2018 were due to electrical short-circuit.

Plasma treatment  
can save many lives

FROM PAGE 1

No cumulative data is made available about the positive patients, who successfully recovered after undergoing plasma therapy and there is no information on whom and where to approach to avail plasma therapy.

Unlike the widespread publicity given earlier informing the people about whom to approach in case they find symptoms of Covid-19 and about swab tests, there is no such initiative as regards plasma therapy except that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy recently announced a financial incentive of ₹5,000 to each plasma donor. A section of state health authorities is unhappy over the way officials are ignoring the promotion of plasma therapy despite its proven results.

In the Kakinada government general hospital, a professor from Pondicherry brought his 77-year-old father residing locally and received plasma from a donor and got it transfused in a private hospital. His father is recovering well. A doctor too got plasma from a donor at the

hospital and had it transfused to his grandmother successfully. So far, five donors have come forward and registered at the hospital to donate their plasma.

A senior state health official said, "If the concerned authorities take up a campaign to motivate and encourage Covid-19 infected and recovered patients to donate their plasma, it can save the lives of many patients."

On the other hand, the Indian Red Cross Society has started promoting the donation of plasma. The response has been quite encouraging as nearly 200 donors have registered with it for donating plasma. Srikakulam, East Godavari and Nellore districts are found to be active in attracting plasma donors. Indian Red Cross Society AP branch chairman Dr A. Sridhar Reddy said, "We are receiving more number of calls for convalescent plasma at our blood banks and we are also requesting Covid-19 recovered patients to register and donate their plasma so that it will help other patients whose lives can be saved through plasma therapy."



Medical staff collects swab for Covid-19 test in Vijayawada on Thursday.

● AP is having 2,95,248 Covid-19 infected and recovered patients at present and of them, only those who completed 21 days from the time of discharge are eligible to donate plasma. So far, 3,633 patients have succumbed to the virus.

● IRCS advises people to call at their toll free no. 18004251234 for plasma as a few donors are registered at some of their blood banks in the state.

Conclusions varied with  
earlier 5-judge bench

FROM PAGE 1

The Constitution bench referred the matter to a 7-judge bench as its conclusions were at variance with the conclusions drawn by an earlier five-judge bench in 2004 on the similar issue.

The 2004 judgment is also known as E.V. Chinnaiah judgment. It was a case of *E.V.Chinnatah vs. State of Andhra Pradesh*. The Constitution bench in its order said, "We endorse the opinion of a Bench of 3 Judges that E.V. Chinnaiah is required to be revisited by a larger Bench; more so, in view of further development and the amendment of the Constitution, which have taken place."

"We cannot revisit E.V. Chinnaiah being Bench of coordinate strength. We request the Chief Justice to place the matters before a Bench comprising 7 Judges or more as considered appropriate," said the order passed by the Constitution bench.

Speaking for the Constitution bench, Justice Mishra said, "The State Government is conferred with the power to provide reservation and to distribute it equitably. The State Government is the best judge as to the disparities in different areas. In our opinion, it is for the State Government to judge the equitable manner in which reservation has to be distributed. It can work out its methodol-

ogy and give the preferential treatment to a particular class more backward out of Scheduled Castes without depriving others of benefit."

Holding that the Scheduled Castes were not a "homogeneous" group and the "entire basket of fruits" cannot be permitted to be usurped by few castes within Scheduled Castes who are already adequately represented and belonged to creamy layer.

Having said this, the court said that the scavenger class also known as Balmikis "remaining more or less where it was" and referred to various reports pointing out that the "disparity within Scheduled Caste is writ large".

Holding that State government were competent to create sub-classification, the entire issue has now been referred to a 7-judge Constitution bench because in 2004 an earlier 5-judge Constitution bench had said that Parliament alone was competent to interfere with the scheduled caste list that is issued by the President under clause (1) of Article 341.

A five-judge Constitution bench comprising Justice N. Santosh Hegde, Justice S.N. Variava, Justice B.P. Singh, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice Hotoi Khetoh Sema had on November 5, 2004, had held that the State Legislature is not competent to make any law to bifurcate the

Presidential list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as once put in the Presidential List, the said castes become one homogeneous class for all purposes under the Constitution.

The 2004 judgment had also said that any "sub-classification" of the Scheduled Castes would violate Article 14 and that only Parliament, not the state legislature, can include or exclude castes deemed to be Scheduled Castes from the Presidential List.

Today's judgment is rooted in the Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act enacted by the Punjab assembly and notified on October 5, 2006, by the State government in 2006.

Under the 2006 Punjab law, 50 per cent of the vacancies of the quota reserved for Scheduled Castes were earmarked for Balmiki and Mazhabi Sikhs subject to their availability by providing first preference to them from amongst the scheduled caste candidates.

This law was struck down by the Punjab & Haryana High Court on March 29, 2010.

Thereafter, it travelled to the Supreme Court where a three-judge bench on August 20, 2014, while doubting the 2004 judgment referred the matter to the five-judge constitution bench and framed three questions to be adjudicated.

'JAGAN SHOULD  
FOCUS ON LAW  
AND ORDER'

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, AUG. 27

Pradesh Congress working president Tulasi Reddy asked the Chief Minister to immediately focus on maintaining law and order in his own Pulivendula constituency.

He said the 'vile culture of cutting down sweet orange and banana trees belonging to rivals and striking at their economic roots was increasing in Pulivendula constituency'.

He alleged that rivals on Wednesday cut down 160 two-year-old sweet orange plants belonging to a man called Nimmakayala Shiva of Teliki village in Simhadripuram mandal. On June 21, 1,200 banana and 25 sweet orange plants were felled on the farm.

Man tries to chop  
off wife's hands

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, AUG. 27

A 24-year-old man, suspecting his wife's fidelity, attempted to kill her and chop off her hands and legs at Devaramitta in Srikalahasti of Chittoor district on Thursday. The accused has been identified as Pasupuleti Venkatesh, who had been married to P. Durga, 18, for six months now.

According to the sub-inspector Sanjeev Kumar, last night, Venkatesh suspected his wife of infidelity after she told him that she wanted to leave him

and marry someone else. After an altercation between the two, Venkatesh attacked her with a knife and tried chopping off her hands and legs.

Hearing Durga's cries, neighbours rushed to her rescue and took her to the government hospital in Srikalahasti. She was subsequently moved to a private hospital in Nellore where her condition is said to be critical. The CI Reddy rushed to the spot and collected the details. A case has been registered, and Venkatesh was taken into custody.

## 131 LITRES OF NDP LIQUOR SEIZED

Tirupati: The Chittoor II town police on Thursday arrested three people in connection with the illegal transportation of 131.32 litres of non-duty paid liquor into the state, near the Iruvaram junction located on the outskirts of Chittoor city.

Tirupati poised  
for a 250-km  
sewage network

● Nearly 75,000 households, which were left out of the existing network, will also be connected to it

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 27

The Municipal Corporation of Tirupati (MCT), in the hope of easing public discomfort, is now exploring trenchless technology to revamp the two-decade old underground drainage system (UDS), which presently covers only 30 per cent of households in the city.

Besides revamping the existing network and filling the gaps, MCT is also augmenting use of horizontal directional drilling method for laying new sewage lines without disturbing the traffic and creating a new network, connecting more than one lakh households.

According to officials, a detailed study carried out by the Corporation engineers has identified that there was a need to create 250 kms of new sewage network in the city. The first sewage network here was designed in 1994 and it took nearly five years to create a 70.46-km long network, connecting nearly 25,000 households to the sewage system.

At present there are 9,400 manholes, out of which only 13 per cent are clean. The proposed plan is expected to fill all the gaps in the sewage network and resolve the problem of constant flooding due to malfunctioning of

manholes. Nearly 75,000 households, which were left out of the existing network, will also be connected to it.

"The trenchless technology will not only facilitate repair on old sewer lines but also creates a new network. This involves horizontal drilling below the road surface and relatively small holes are needed, so it does not require excavation on the road and vehicles can ply without causing any inconvenience to the traffic," said P.S. Girisha, MCT Commissioner.

The project was initiated after the Tirupati Smart City Corporation Limited finalised the decision for laying the new sewage pipelines. The corporation has reportedly sought permission from the state government for spending ₹90 crore on this project.

"The MCT has taken up laying of new sewage pipes up to 10 kms as a pilot project. The works will be completed within 15 days. Based on the outcome and after getting necessary approvals from the government, the project will be launched on a large scale", the official said.

## Covid-19 pushes up demand for Indian spices

V.K.L.GAYATRI | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 27

Demand for Indian spices has gone up both domestically and internationally after the outbreak of Coronavirus. Huge publicity to use of spices as home remedy in dealing with the virus has boosted their consumption. Widespread awareness about Indian spices doubling up as preventive medicine has led to several countries across the globe importing these commodities. As a result, their prices have skyrocketed.

The US, UK, Germany, Italy, Australia, Singapore, France, Canada, Arab countries and even China are among those importing Indian spices. A senior official of the Spices Board of India told *Deccan Chronicle*, "Cardamom, ginger, turmeric, coriander, cumin, pepper, nutmeg, lemon and tamarind are among the spices being exported from various ports, particularly from Mumbai and Tamil Nadu ports".

This apart, domestic consumption of spices has also increased several

● Prices of spices in the local markets have almost doubled

● Post Covid, there is a tremendous change in attitude of people

times. Spices are being used to make health concentrates to combat Covid-19. They are being consumed through food, milk and even tea.

Prices of spices in the local markets have almost doubled. Earlier, local consumers purchase only 50-100 grams of spices. Retailers used to sell sachets of spices for ₹10,

₹15 and ₹20. The same sachets are now selling for ₹20, ₹30 and ₹40, said K. Buchhi Babu, a vendor of spices. Good quality of tamarind (without seed) sold for ₹60-70 during January/February. This year it has touched ₹150.

Though there have been several studies regarding the importance of spices, including cardamom, ginger, turmeric, coriander, cumin, pepper, tulsi and nutmeg, certain foreign nationals avoided them because of their spicy nature. However, after Covid-19 terror, there is a tremendous change in

attitude of people across the globe. People have brought in spices into their daily food.

The Visakha Container Terminal (VCT) of Visakhapatnam Port is exporting red chilli, tamarind and turmeric to various countries. Every month, 8-10 TEU containers of tamarind and two TEUs of turmeric are being exported.

Though Yoga has acquired international recognition long ago, Indian-style herbal and Ayurveda medical practices are becoming popular only now.

## 8th century inscriptions found in Kadapa

NAGESWARA BALLEDA | DC KADAPA, AUG. 27

A student of History and Archaeology department of Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa, M.Vasudeva Reddy claimed to have found an 8th century inscription engraved on a dolomite slab in the fields of a farmer, B. Sivanarayana Reddy, at Chinnadudiyala village in Muddanur mandal.

The student and Dr Ramabrahmam Vellore, an assistant professor in the department, made further study of the inscription.

Seeking better understanding of the inscription, Dr Ramabrahmam approached the Director of Epigraphy,



Renati Chola Raju inscriptions

Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore. They finally came to the

conclusion that it was in archaic Telugu language and dated back to the

period when a Chola king ruled from Renadu. The inscription records gift-

ing of six parcels of land to a temple priest Sidiyamay at Pidukula village.

The inscription is readable up to 25 lines. The text on one side of the slab contains 11 lines and 12-25 lines on the other side.

After the 17th line, the letters fade away. Some of the text spoke of the need for upholding moral values, according to the assistant professor.

Vice-Chancellor of Yogi Vemana University Prof. Munagala Suryakalavathi suggested that Dr Ramabrahmam send a proposal to UGC to set up a project for exploration of 'unearthed inscriptions, sculpture and temples' in YSR Kadapa district.



## SHORT TAKES

## INDIA TELLS CHINA NOT TO ALTER STATUS QUO

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

India once again reiterated on Thursday that China should “not alter the status quo unilaterally” at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector, adding that “complete disengagement requires re-deployment of troops by each side towards their regular posts on their respective sides of the LAC” and “can be done only through mutually agreed reciprocal actions”.

New Delhi, however, indicated that it had faith that the issue could be resolved through diplomacy, referring to a recent utterance by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar that all Sino-Indian stand-offs in the past decade were “resolved through diplomacy”.

It may be recalled that Jaishankar had recently stated that the current crisis in Sino-Indian relations “is surely the most serious situation after 1962” and that “the quantum of forces currently deployed by both sides at the LAC is also unprecedented”.

This comes amid continued Chinese military intransigence in withdrawing to the positions of April this year in the Ladakh sector. It may also be recalled that India has also mobilised a significant number of troops with heavy weaponry near the borders with China in response to the Chinese military build-up. India is also clear that it will not agree to any unilateral change of the LAC by China.

## JAISHANKAR LIKELY TO ATTEND SCO IN MOSCOW

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday confirmed that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has received the invite to attend a scheduled meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)-member countries that will be held in Moscow next month.

The SCO is an eight-member predominantly Central Asian Grouping that comprises China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan became SCO members in 2017.

Jaishankar is bound to meet his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi during the meeting in case he travels to Moscow next month and this will then be the first time since the deadly Galwan valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops in mid-June that the foreign ministers of the two countries will be face-to-face.

However, both leaders have spoken to each other a few weeks ago on telephone and have also participated in the Virtual trilateral Russia-India-China foreign ministers' meet that had taken place a few weeks ago after that deadly clash in the Ladakh sector.

## SILVER BRICKS WORTH ₹40L SEIZED

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO | DC  
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 27

Silver bricks worth over ₹40 lakh allegedly smuggled from Berhampur in Ganjam district were seized by Andhra Pradesh police near Ichchapuram late on Wednesday night, reports from Berhampur said on Thursday.

Three persons were arrested by the cops in connection with the incident.

As per information, three youths — P. Suri Babu, Ijad Govinda and driver B. Narasinghamulu of Machilipatnam — were heading to AP from Berhampur in a car smuggling the silver bricks weighing around 61 kg.

At Purushottampur checkpoint on the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, police of the neighbouring state intercepted them and asked them to show valid documents to support possession of the huge quantity of silver.

After the accused failed to furnish the same, the cops arrested them on charges of silver smuggling and seized the silver bricks along with the vehicle. An investigation into the incident was initiated. Till the last report was filed, the police had launched an exercise to trace the person who supplied the silver from Berhampur.

## Testing times



Police baton charge Samajwadi Party workers during a protest against centre's decision to hold NEET, JEE exams amid the Coronavirus pandemic, outside Raj Bhawan in Lucknow on Thursday. SP president Akhilesh Yadav wrote an open letter opposing the central government's decision to hold exams amid the pandemic.

— PTI

## Pasteur inspired me, says Pune vaccine trial volunteer

Pune doc says he had also volunteered for clinical trials for H1N1 vaccine

**Pune, Aug. 27:** A 48-year-old doctor, who was inspired by immunology pioneers Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner, said on Thursday his vital signs are normal and he has resumed routine work, a day after becoming one of the first volunteers to be inoculated with Oxford Covid-19 vaccine candidate in phase II trials.

The man, who was administered the vaccine candidate dose on Wednesday, said his 21-year-old daughter had also volunteered during the trial of a vaccine on cervical cancer in 2014.

“As I work in healthcare sector, I know vaccines have made a huge difference in the quality of human life. When I read the history of vaccination, I got inspired by pioneers Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner who performed the trials on themselves. They inspired me to volunteer,” he said.

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) was a French chemist who proved that germs cause disease, and developed vaccines for anthrax and rabies, while Edward Jenner (1749-1823) was an English doctor and discoverer of vaccination for smallpox.

The Pune doctor said he had also volunteered 10-years-ago for clinical trials for a vaccine against the H1N1 (swine flu) virus.

The phase-II clinical trial of the Covid-19 vac-

cine developed by Oxford University and being manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India, started at the Bharati Vidyapeeth Medical College and Hospital here on Wednesday, with two volunteers being administered the Covidshield vaccine.

Hospital authorities said the identity of the volunteers cannot be revealed.

“My daughter, who is pursuing a B. Tech degree, has volunteered and become eligible for the (Covidshield) trial as her reports Covid-19 and antibody came negative,” the doctor said.

He said he is feeling good that he and his daughter could become a small part in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by volunteering for the trial. This is a noble and global effort for mankind, he added.

“Since Wednesday, my vital signs are normal and I have started my routine work,” he said.

He said he has worked as a teacher at the medical college and tried to create an awareness among the medical students about the vaccination trials.

“To lead by an example, I volunteered myself for the H1N1 vaccine trial,” he said. The volunteer said as per the ICMR panel norms, he is entitled to get travelling allowance for the hospital visits.

“If the volunteer has some health issues during

## 3 more volunteers given Oxford Covid-19 vaccine

**Pune, Aug. 27:** Three more volunteers were administered the Oxford Covid-19 vaccine candidate at a medical college in Pune on Thursday as part of the phase II clinical trial of the medicine, a senior doctor from the medical facility said.

Earlier, two volunteers, aged 32 and 48, were given a shot of the Covidshield vaccine, being manufactured by the city-based Serum Institute of India (SII), on Wednesday when the phase II clinical trial of the medicine began at Bharti Vidyapeeth's Medical College and Hospital here.

“On Thursday afternoon, three more volunteers — two females and a male — were administered the vaccine candidate after their reports of RT-PCR test for Covid-19 and antibody test came negative,” said Dr Sunita Palkar, in-charge of the research cell at the medical college. She said fol-

lowing the administration of the vaccine dose to two volunteers on Wednesday, five more persons were screened. Out of them, the Covid-19 and antibody test reports of four came out negative on Thursday and they became eligible for the clinical trial.

The fifth volunteer was excluded from the trial as the person's antibody test report came out positive, she said. The city-based KEM Hospital, another facility chosen for the vaccine's clinical trials in the country, is also scheduled to conduct a trial on some persons on Thursday, a senior doctor from the medical facility said.

● **SII, THE WORLD'S largest vaccine maker has signed an agreement to manufacture the potential vaccine developed by the Jenner Institute of Oxford University in collaboration with British-Swedish pharma company AstraZeneca.**

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The fifth volunteer was excluded from the trial as the person's antibody test report came out positive, she said. The city-based KEM Hospital, another facility chosen for the vaccine's clinical trials in the country, is also scheduled to conduct a trial on some persons on Thursday, a senior doctor from the medical facility said.

firm, said he was excited to become a part of the trial.

“When I came to know about the trials through social media, I approached

“We screened five people on Wednesday and we are now waiting for their reports. As per the results of the report, the vaccine will be injected to the eligible volunteers,” said the doctor. Meanwhile, the vital health parameters of the two volunteers, who were administered the Oxford Covid-19 vaccine candidate at Bharti Vidyapeeth's Medical College and Hospital on Wednesday, are normal, the medical facility's deputy medical director Dr Jitendra Oswal said.

“Since Wednesday, our team is in touch with the two volunteers and both are fine. They do not have any pain, fever, injection-site reaction or systemic illness post-vaccination,” he said.

“They have been given all the necessary emergency numbers (to contact in case of need) and our medical team is also conducting follow-ups with them,” he added. — PTI

the hospital and enrolled myself for the voluntary vaccination trial,” said the person, who hails from Aurangabad in Maharashtra. — PTI

## Air Defence Command to be ready soon

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

India is likely to get its Air Defence Command by October which will be responsible for protecting country's airspace from air attacks through missiles, drones and fighter jets.

## LETTER | SAGA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

The storm within the Congress refuses to die down. After the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting on Monday, it seemed that things had been “sorted”, but with a Congress unit in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday demanding action against all the letter writers, with a special mention of former Union minister Jitin Prasada, it seems the split in the Congress may run deeper. Senior leader Kapil

**Kapil Sibal, one of the signatories, criticised UP Cong's demand in a tweet**

## UP Cong unit wants action against Jitin Prasada

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

Sibal, another signatory to the letter, criticised the move in a tweet. “Unfortunately that Jitin Prasada is being officially targeted in UP Congress needs to target the BJP with surgical strikes instead wasting its energy by targeting its own,” he wrote. (sic) Another signatory to the letter and former union minister Manish Tewari responded to Sibal's post with a single word, “Prescient!” In a resolution addressed to Sonia Gandhi, the Congress unit of Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kh-

eri district, around 130 km from Lucknow, has called for action against all 23 signatories but singles out Jitin Prasada, the party's Brahmin face in UP.

Prasada had represented the Dhaurahra Lok Sabha seat, which is a part of Lakhimpur Kheri in 2009. Jitendra Prasada, the father of Jitin Prasada, had also unsuccessfully contested for the post of Congress president against Sonia Gandhi in the past.

Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad and also a signatory

to the letter broke his silence on Thursday. Speaking to reporters he said, “Anyone who has a genuine interest in the internal working dynamics of Congress would welcome our proposal to have every state and district president as being elected.”

He further added, “The intention is to make Congress active and strong. But those who simply got ‘appointment cards’ continue to oppose our proposal. What's the harm in having elected Congress Working

Committee members who will have stable tenures in the party?” The 23 leaders who are signatory to the letter have been under attack from other leaders of the party.

This is happening even after Congress President Sonia Gandhi said in the CWC meeting that the signatories of the letter are very much part of the Congress family.

Interestingly, after the Congress Working Committee meeting there have been several appointments that have been

made but the 23 signatories have yet not been accommodated in any of these appointments. As of now there is an uneasy calm that prevails in the party.

All of the signatories maintain that the points that they have raised are only to strengthen the organisation to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party.

If the issues that have been raised do not get addressed soon the ‘letter saga’ will remain to haunt the party in the days to come.

## Rhea claims threat to her life, asks for police protection

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 27

Actor Rhea Chakraborty on Thursday said there was a threat to her and her family's life and requested the Mumbai Police for protection. Rhea took to Instagram and shared a video where her father was seen being hounded by the media outside her building compound. She said they have been trying to get out of the house to cooperate with various investigating agencies probing actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death.

“The man in this video is my father Indrajit Chakraborty (retd. Army officer). We have been trying to get out of our house to cooperate with ED, CBI and various investigation authorities to cooperate. There is a threat to my life and my family's life. We have informed the local police station and even gone there, but no help was provided. We have informed the investigation authorities to help us get to them, no help arrived. How is this family going to live?” the 28-year-old actor wrote.

Some Mumbai Police personnel reached Chakraborty's residence on Thursday afternoon and took her father along for questioning by the ED. “The ED requested the Mumbai Police to reach their house and escort Rhea's father Indrajit out as it wanted to question him,” said a police official.

However, he did not specify whether her father was taken to the ED office in south Mumbai or some other location.

Earlier in the morning, Rhea's brother Showik Chakraborty arrived at the DRDO guest house for questioning by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

This is the first time that a member from Rhea's family is being questioned by the investi-

## PETITION FILED AGAINST MEDIA TRIALS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, AUG. 27

A PIL has been filed in the Bombay high court seeking order to restrain the media from further reporting on Sushant Singh Rajput's death case as it is ‘disturbing’ the investigation.

Three activists have moved the HC stating that the media trial in the death case of Rajput is posing a real and substantial risk of prejudice to the proper administration of justice, much less, the criminal justice system, or to the fairness of trial.

The petition, terming the nature of reporting as sensationalisation, also alleges that this adversely impacts the ongoing Central Bureau of Investigation probe into Sushant Singh Rajput's case. According to the petitioners, news channels have gone so far as to display Call Detail Records and personal contact details of the accused.

Further, it is stated that insinuations have been made about the involvement of prominent politicians and officials, while the accused named in the FIR has already been convicted by news channels. With above claims, the petition seeks that the tenets of the Programme Code laid down in the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the 1994 Rules is followed in both letter and spirit.

gating agency.

Rajput's flat-mate Siddharth Pithani was also called by the CBI for the seventh consecutive day for questioning in the actor's death case.

## NCB arrests former TV actor in drug racket in Bengaluru

VINAY MADHAVA  
GOWDA | DC  
BENGALURU, AUG. 27

Close on the heels of drug supply racket issue rocking Bollywood after death of actor Sushant Singh Rathod, the Narcotics Control Bureau has busted a racket in Bengaluru that supplied drugs to VIPs as well as Sandalwood celebrities.

The NCB has arrested the racket kingpin and former television actress Anika D. and two of her associates M. Anoop and R. Ravindran, while confiscating large haul of drugs.

NCB Deputy Director K.P.S. Malhotra said that the gang distributed drugs to prominent musicians and top actors in Karnataka and the clients, including children of VIPs in the state are under scanner of NCB.

The agency has seized 145 ecstasy or MDMA pills and over ₹2.2 lakh

cash from Royal Suits Hotel Apartment, Kalyan Nagar on Aug. 21.

In the follow up action, the team confiscated 96 pills of MDMA and 180 LSD blots at Nikoo homes in Bengaluru. Later, 270 pills of MDMA were recovered from the house of Anika D, located at Doddagubbi.

Ravindran was the main distributor, after the clients booked their drugs online.

The NCB officials found over 2,000 numbers saved in his mobiles, which included at least 10 top Kannada actors, prominent musicians and children of VIPs.

Besides, he also used to supply drugs to college students.

Anika was a small-time television serial actress in Bengaluru. She stopped acting and took to narcotic supply. With her glamour industry background, she established contacts with celebrities and started supplying drugs to them.



## IN BRIEF

## Thai principal gets death for killing 3

**Bangkok:** A court in Thailand handed a death sentence Thursday to an elementary school principal convicted of fatally shooting three people during a robbery of a gold shop. The Bangkok Criminal Court found Prasitthichai Khaewkao guilty on charges including first degree murder, killing in commission of another crime, illegally carrying a gun and illegal possession of a war weapon in the January 9 robbery at Robinson Loppuri mall in Loppuri, about 145 kilometres north of Bangkok. During the robbery, the gunman began shooting wildly, killing a sales clerk, a security guard and a 2-year-old boy, and wounding four other people. Security video that was widely broadcast after the incident showed a man dressed in a black ski mask and camouflage trousers, with a backpack across his chest, carrying a pistol with a silencer.

## Rijneveld wins Int'l Booker Prize

**London:** A 29-year-old Dutch writer has become the youngest author to win the International Booker Prize. Mariëke Lucas Rijneveld's "The Discomfort of Evening," a dark story about a devout farming family in a strict Christian community in the rural Netherlands, was announced as the winner Wednesday. Under the rules of the prize, the £50,000-pound award will be split between the author and translator Michele Hutchison, giving both equal recognition. Ted Hodgkinson, who chaired a panel of judges, described the novel as "a tender and visceral evocation of a childhood caught between shame and salvation". The International Booker Prize is awarded every year to a book of fiction in any language that is translated into English and published in the UK or Ireland. The award is separate from the main Booker Prize, and aims to encourage more publishing and reading of quality fiction.

## China test-fires missile into SCS

**Beijing:** China's military test-fired two missiles into the South China Sea, including a "carrier killer" military analysts suggest might have been developed to attack US forces, a newspaper reported Thursday. The DF-26B and DF-21D missiles fired Wednesday targeted an area between the southern island province of Hainan and the Paracel Islands, *The South China Morning Post* newspaper of Hong Kong reported, citing unidentified sources close to the Chinese military. The ministries of defence and foreign affairs in Beijing didn't immediately respond to requests for confirmation. Disputes over control of the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest trade routes, are a growing irritant in Beijing's relations with Washington and its southern neighbours. The Trump administration this year rejected most of Beijing's claims to sovereignty over majority of the disputed sea, portions of which are claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines and other governments.

## TIKTOK CHIEF KEVIN MAYER QUILTS COMPANY

**Los Angeles, Aug. 27:** TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer said Wednesday he has quit the company as tensions soar between Washington and Beijing over the Chinese-owned video platform. Mayer's resignation comes days after TikTok filed a lawsuit challenging a crackdown by the US government over claims the wildly popular social media app can be used to spy on Americans.

TikTok has been at the center of a diplomatic storm between the US and China, and President Donald Trump signed an executive order on August 6 giving Americans 45 days to stop doing business with TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance — effectively setting a deadline for a sale of the app to a US company.

TikTok, which has been downloaded 175 million times in the US and more than a billion times around the world, argued in the suit that Trump's order was a misuse of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act because the platform — on which users share often playful short-form videos — is not "an unusual and extraordinary threat". The platform's kaleidoscopic feeds of clips feature everything from dance routines and hair-dye tutorials to jokes about daily life and politics.



Police stop a car near where protesters gather for a fourth night to demonstrate against the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on Wednesday.

— AP

## 17-year-old held after two killed in Kenosha

**Kenosha, Aug. 27:** A white, 17-year-old police admirer was arrested Wednesday after two people were shot to death during a third straight night of protests in Kenosha over the police shooting of a PoC Jacob Blake.

Kyle Rittenhouse, of Antioch, Illinois, was taken into custody in Illinois on suspicion of first-degree intentional homicide. Antioch is about 15 miles from Kenosha. Two people were killed Tuesday night and a third was wounded in an attack apparently carried out by a young white man who was caught on cellphone video opening fire in the middle of the street with a semi-automatic rifle. "I just killed somebody," the gunman could be heard saying at one point during the rampage that erupted just before midnight. In the wake of the killings, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers said, "A senseless tragedy like this cannot happen again."

"I again ask those who choose to exercise their First Amendment rights please do so peacefully and safely, so many did last night. I also ask the individuals who are not there to exercise those rights to please stay home and let local first responders, law enforcement and members of the Wisconsin National Guard do their jobs."

## JOIN TRUMP IN FIGHT AGAINST CHINA: DISSENTER

**New York, Aug. 27:** The Communist Party of China is an "enemy" of humanity and is terrorising its own people, a blind Chinese human rights activist has said, urging other countries to join US President Donald Trump to stop China's "aggression". "Standing up to tyranny is not easy. I know. When I spoke out against China's 'one child' policy and other injustices, I was persecuted, beaten and sent to prison and put under house arrest by the Chinese Communist Party," Chen Guangcheng said in his address to the Republican National Convention on Wednesday. Chen was brought to the US by the Obama administration in 2012. — PTI

## Portland protesters clash with US agents

**Washington, Aug. 27:** Protesters and US agents assigned to protect federal property in Portland clashed late Wednesday outside a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Building in another night of violence for Oregon's largest city.

Some people in a crowd of about 200 disabled or vandalised building security cameras, shined laser lights at the agents and threw rocks and bottles at them, Portland police said in a statement issued Wednesday. During the clashes, agents shot non-lethal munitions at the crowd and set off stun grenades and irritants that released green and white plumes into the air, *The Oregonian/Oregonian Live* reported.

One apparently injured

and a 36-year-old from Kenosha. The wounded person, a 36-year-old from West Allis, Wisconsin, was expected to survive, police said. According to witness accounts and video footage, police let the gunman walk past them. — AP

## Trump wants Biden to take 'drug test' before 1st debate

**Washington, Aug. 27:** US president Donald Trump said Wednesday he will call for a "drug test" for himself and Joe Biden before the first presidential debate, but did not offer any evidence for his suspicions about his Democratic opponent.

Trump said in an interview with the Washington Examiner that he was intrigued by Biden's improved performance during the Democratic primary.

"We're going to call for a drug test," Trump said, expressing surprise at the former vice president's bearing during the last debate against Vermont senator Bernie Sanders in March. The president has no concrete evidence to support his claims, but, he said, "all I can tell you is that I'm pretty good at this

protestor was carried away by fellow demonstrators, the newspaper reported. A federal agent was injured after being hit in the leg by a rock and police made 11 arrests, the Portland police said.

Portland has been gripped by nightly protests for nearly three months since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The demonstrations, often violent, usually target police buildings and federal buildings. Some protesters have called for reductions in police budgets while the city's mayor and some in PoC community have decried the violence, saying it's counterproductive. The Wednesday night protest followed another protest where demonstrators smashed windows at City Hall.

State agents later recovered a knife from the driver's side floorboard of the vehicle, the release said. A search of the vehicle located no additional weapons.

No charges were announced and the state Department of Investigation was continuing to investigate. The shooting set off three nights of unrest in the city midway between Milwaukee and Chicago. — AP

## Trump wants Biden to take 'drug test' before 1st debate

stuff. "I watched him in the debates with all of the different people," he said, referring to the other Democratic hopefuls.

Biden was "close to incompetent, if not incompetent, and against Bernie, he was normal," Trump continued. "I say, 'How does that happen?'" Trump made similar remarks in the fall of 2016, at the peak of the presidential race, positing that then-opponent Hillary Clinton had taken drugs.

"I think we should take a drug test prior to the debate," he said during a rally in New Hampshire.

"I don't know what's going on with her. But at the beginning of her last debate — she was all pumped up at the beginning, and at the end it was like, 'Oh, take me down.' She

## AUTHORITIES NAME OFFICER WHO THEY SAY SHOT BLAKE

**Kenosha (US), Aug. 27:** The Wisconsin officer who shot a PoC Jacob Blake, seven times in the back has been identified as a seven-year veteran of the Kenosha Police Department, the state Department of Justice said Wednesday. Officer Rusten Sheskey shot Blake, 29, while holding onto his shirt after officers first unsuccessfully used a taser and as Blake leaned into his vehicle during an incident Sunday evening, the agency's news release said.

State agents later recovered a knife from the driver's side floorboard of the vehicle, the release said. A search of the vehicle located no additional weapons.

No charges were announced and the state Department of Investigation was continuing to investigate. The shooting set off three nights of unrest in the city midway between Milwaukee and Chicago. — AP

## Trump wants Biden to take 'drug test' before 1st debate

could barely reach her car," he added, mockingly. The three debates are scheduled September 29, October 15 and 22. — AFP

**You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America: Pence** Portraying President Donald Trump as a protector of the nation, his deputy and running mate Vice President Mike Pence has said the US needs four more years of his administration in these challenging times. Pence, 61, formally accepted the Republican Party's vice presidential nomination on the third night of the National Republican Convention on Wednesday.

"The hard truth is... you won't be safe in Joe Biden's America," Pence said in his acceptance address.

## Authorities imposing mask rules, hiring extra teachers, building new desks

## LESS UPROAR

## Virus on but Europe is going back to school

**Paris, Aug 27:** A mother and her three children scanned the school supplies in a Paris supermarket, plucking out multicolored fountain pens, crisp notebooks — and plenty of masks. Despite resurgent coronavirus infections, similar scenes are unfolding across Europe as a new school year dawns.

Virus or no virus, European authorities are determined to put children back into classrooms, to narrow the learning gaps between haves and have-nots that deepened during lockdowns — and to get their parents back to work.

Facing a jump in virus cases, authorities in France, Britain, Spain and elsewhere are imposing mask rules, hiring extra teachers and building new desks en masse.

While the US back-to-school saga has been politicised and chaotic, with a hodgepodge of fast-changing rules and backlash against President Donald Trump's insistence on reopening, European governments have faced less of an uproar.

And even though the virus has invaded classrooms in recent days from Berlin to Seoul, and some

teachers and parents warn that their schools aren't ready, European leaders from the political left, right and centre are sending an unusually consistent message: Even in a pandemic, children are better off in class.

France's prime minister promised Wednesday to "do everything" to get people back to school and work. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called reopening schools a "moral duty", and his government even threatened to fine parents who keep kids at home. Italy's health minister abruptly shut

down discos this month with one goal in mind — "to reopen schools in September in complete safety"

As both a parent and a teacher, Mathieu Maillard has plenty to worry about before French schools reopen Tuesday. The number of virus infections per 100,000 people has grown five-fold in France in the last month.

How will his 5-year-old daughter keep a safe distance from preschool friends she's so excited to see for the first time in six months? How will he gain the trust of his high school students, from one of

Marseille's roughest neighbourhoods, if he has to police their mask use?

But overall, Maillard thinks it's time to go back. School "has to start up again at some point", he says. "The health risk exists, but the risk of not putting children in school is even bigger."

During lockdown, he said, some students never joined his online French literature classes. Some had no place to work, or no computers, just telephones they used to send blurry photos of handwritten work. "Our students really, really need school," he

## NZ mosque shooter gets life term without parole

**Christchurch, Aug. 27:** The white supremacist who slaughtered 51 worshippers at two New Zealand mosques was sentenced on Thursday to life in prison without the possibility of parole, the first time the maximum available sentence has been imposed. Judge Cameron Mander said the crimes committed by 29-year-old Australian Brenton Harrison Tarrant were so wicked that a lifetime in jail could not begin to atone for them. He said they had caused enormous loss and hurt and stemmed from a warped and malignant ideology. "Your actions were inhuman," Mander said. "You deliberately killed a 3-year-old infant by shooting him in the head as he clung to the leg of his father."

After the sentence was announced, survivors of the shootings raised hands and fists in celebration and greeted supporters waving signs with painted hearts and carrying roses outside the court building. The March 2019 attacks targeting people praying at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch shocked New Zealand and prompted new laws banning the deadliest types of semi-automatic weapons.

They also prompted global changes to social media protocols after the gunman livestreamed his attack on Facebook.

● **AFTER THE sentence was announced, survivors of the shootings raised hands and fists in celebration and greeted supporters waving signs with painted hearts and carrying roses outside the court building.**

● **During the sentencing hearing, 90 survivors and family members recounted the horror of that day and the trauma they continue to feel.**

During the four-day sentencing hearing, 90 survivors and family members recounted the horror of that day and the trauma they continue to feel. One of those who spoke was Temel Atacocugu, who survived being shot nine times during the attack at the Al Noor mosque. Atacocugu said he felt relieved at the sentence. "Finally we can breathe freely, and we feel secure, and my kids feel secure," Atacocugu said.

"The justice system has locked up this ideology forever," Tarrant pleaded guilty in March to 51 counts of murder, 40 counts of attempted murder and one count of terrorism, reversing his earlier not guilty pleas. He fired his lawyers and told the judge he didn't wish to speak at his sentencing. A standby lawyer app-

ointed by the court told the judge that Tarrant did not oppose the maximum sentence. The judge said Tarrant recently told a psychiatrist that he now rejects his extremist views and considers his attacks "abhorrent and irrational". But Mander said he was skeptical Tarrant had abandoned his ideology, especially considering that the gunman told police after the attacks he wished he'd killed more people. Mander said Tarrant had shown no empathy toward his victims and remained detached and self-centred.

Tarrant arrived in New Zealand in 2017, never sought work, and began planning for his attack by stockpiling high-powered weapons and joining shooting clubs, the judge said.

"It appears that while travelling in Europe you developed deep-seated radical views regarding the migrant population of some Western countries," the judge said. Tarrant flew a drone over the Al Noor mosque and researched the layout, according to prosecutors.

On the day of the attacks, he drove to the mosques with six guns, including two AR-15s. "You committed mass murder," the judge said. "You slaughtered unarmed and defenceless people. You maimed, wounded and crippled many others."

— AP

## Putin urges all to end Belarus crisis

**Moscow, Aug. 27:** Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday called on the authorities in Belarus and the opposition to find a solution to the political unrest that has erupted over a disputed presidential election.

"The parties to this process have enough common sense to find a way out without resorting to extremes," Putin said in an interview aired on state television.

Belarus has been hit by opposition protests since President Alexander Lukashenko claimed a sixth term in the August 9 vote that sparked unprecedented protests and was rejected by the European Union. Putin also told state television that he followed through on a request from Lukashenko to create a reserve group of law enforcement officers who could be dispatched to Belarus.

The Russian leader conceded however that there were problems in the Belarus: "Otherwise people wouldn't take to the streets." Putin added that he hoped the problems would be resolved peacefully. Lukashenko's notorious security services rounded up nearly 7,000 participants of peaceful rallies that erupted after he claimed some 80 percent of the vote, with hundreds of detainees claiming they were abused by police in custody.

Putin warned that he stands ready to send police to Belarus if protests there turn violent, but added in an interview broadcast Thursday that there is no such need now and voiced hope for stabilizing the situation in the neighbouring country.

Putin told Russia's state television that Lukashenko

## EU CONDEMNS PROSECUTION OF OPPN COUNCIL

**Minsk, Aug. 27:** The European Union and ambassadors of its member states in Belarus on Thursday condemned a crackdown on opposition leaders seeking new elections after a disputed vote this month.

Allies of exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya formed the Coordination Council to oversee the peaceful transition of power after strongman Alexander Lukashenko claimed a sixth term in August 9 elections that critics said were rigged.

The 65-year-old authoritarian leader ordered a criminal probe into the opposition's attempts to "seize power" and several of the council presidium's members have been detained or summoned for questioning.

"The European diplomats emphasised that prosecution of Coordination Council members on grounds presented by the authorities is unacceptable," a joint statement said.

"Belarusians are asking for an open dialogue with their own authorities about the future of their country."

— AFP

ko has asked him to prepare a Russian law enforcement contingent to deploy to Belarus if necessary. Putin said that he and Lukashenko have agreed that "there is no such need now, and I hope there won't be". — AFP



Alexei Navalny

## NO CRIME IN NAVALNY COMA CASE: RUSSIA

**Moscow, Aug. 27:** Russian authorities said Thursday they have found no indication so far that opposition leader Alexei Navalny's coma, which his allies and German doctors treating him believe may have been brought about by poisoning, was caused by a criminal act.

A preliminary inquiry launched last week hasn't found any indication of "deliberate criminal acts committed against" Navalny, Russia's Prosecutor General's office said. The statement comes amid growing pressure from the West to investigate the sudden illness of the Kremlin's fiercest critic and authorities' apparent reluctance to do so.

Navalny, an opposition politician and corruption investigator is a long-time foe of President Vladimir Putin. — AP

## INDO-PACIFIC CHINA CONTEST CENTRE: ESPER

**Washington, Aug. 27:** The Indo-Pacific is the epicentre of "great power competition" with China which wants to project its power globally, Defence Secretary Mark Esper has said as he underlined America's efforts to strengthen ties with partners like India to get Beijing to respect the international rules-based order.

Esper in his keynote address to the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii said that to advance the agenda of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues to pursue an aggressive modernisation plan to achieve a world-class military by the middle of the century. "This will undoubtedly embolden the PLA's provocative behaviour in the South and East China Seas, and anywhere else the Chinese government has deemed critical to its interests," he said. — PTI



# DECCAN Chronicle

28 AUGUST 2020

## Relook at entrances, take gap year instead

The holy grail of the life of an Indian student — and the gateway to prestige, and in many cases, continued prosperity, for their family — is less than a week away. A mulish government has decided to go by the decision of a blinkered court and hold the JEE (Main) and NEET entrances in the first weeks of September amid a raging pandemic whose daily case count topped 75,000 on Thursday in the face of fierce outrage from a section of the prospective examinees.

With the JEE (Main) starting on September 1 and the NEET set to be held on September 13, it may already be too late to reschedule these tests unless they are dropped altogether. The Centre did not make any provisions to have the National Testing Agency conduct an online exam. Plus, education mandarins have come out backing the move to go through with them and over 17 lakh have downloaded admit cards. At this stage, any uncertainty entails putting students through fresh psychological stress, and the education minister has cried foul. To him, this newspaper would like to ask if it is fair play to conduct the exams at a time when a significant proportion of the candidates, especially in flood-ravaged Bihar, UP, Assam and West Bengal, will be unable to find transport to reach the venue or be forced to travel jam-packed with no physical distancing and risk infection of the virus and its spread? These examinees, being young, will be accompanied by parents. The virus is an “anti-Robinhood”, says Raghuram Rajan, former RBI governor, and in the crisis that it has sparked, it is the poor who are hit the hardest. So also it is with these exams. By going ahead with them, the government will have created a new crisis in which the poor will be hit the hardest and the most. It can, therefore, no longer hold the high moral ground that it supports an examination system that assures a level playing field in which merit is the sole criterion for success. And for this, it must be urgently held accountable.

A perhaps equally urgent question would be to ask if the conduct of the exams would not result in the Coronavirus epidemic finally spiralling completely out of control. To the adamant parents who insist their children take the exams and who won't even let them take part in symbolic protests inside their homes, too, the newspaper would like to highlight that even climate warrior and role model Greta Thunberg, who has incidentally called the holding of these exams “unfair”, has taken a gap year herself. It would advise parents in this regard to take a leaf out of the West, which encourages this practice as a means of self-determination, and rid themselves of their obsession over “year loss”, more so because these are extraordinary times that call for introspection on their parts. Extraordinary times also call for extraordinary measures. Hence the collective review petition of the Supreme Court order planned by the Opposition and state CMs.

Are some hypothetical family goals regarding the careers of the next generation more important than the ideal of equal opportunity to all and the health and safety of 1.37 billion? Are they more important than the student's own health and life? These are a few questions the government must reckon with at some point, and that point will now arrive sooner rather than later.

## It's messy in Barcelona

It is said sportsmen die twice, first when they retire. In the case of Lionel Messi, one of the greatest footballers in the sport's history, it might well be thrice, first when he leaves Barcelona FC. This might be akin to the Mona Lisa leaving the Louvre or M.S. Dhoni moving, of his own volition, from Chennai Super Kings. In the case of Messi, who first signed a contract on a paper napkin to join Barcelona in 2001, the Burofax (recorded delivery) message he sent on his intention to move on represents a heart-wrenching tearing of ties. The decision rips asunder Spanish football even as it lights up the eyes of clubs and managers elsewhere dreaming of signing up the Argentinian super star.

Those who believe an institution is always greater than the individual may sometimes be wrong, at least in sport. Muhammad Ali, Pele, Don Bradman are just a few examples from a long list of sportspeople who seemed larger than life in the societies they lived in. Messi is the modern avatar of a universally loved sportsman, the man with the golden boots, the winner of six Ballon d'Ors, member of Olympics gold-winning Argentina and a million Euros a week footballer who was at odds with his favourite club as it deteriorated when falling from the heights.

Over time, even great edifices crumble. Increasingly angry and frustrated by Barcelona's dipping fortunes, Messi may have sighted the clear end when they were pummelled 8-2 by Bayern Munich, eventual Champions League winners. In the time of the pandemic when sport is trying to prove its relevance beyond just the playing of games, it cannot be of great consequence to society as to where Messi ends up — Manchester City, Paris St Germain or Juventus. At a time when American pro sport is redefining sport itself in the most modern era by protesting against racial injustice with strikes, Messi must introspect and gauge where he can contribute most to football and to society.

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Subhani



## It's time for Congress to change its 'culture'



Anand K. Sahay

Far & Near

It is preposterous to believe that the letter-writers (with exceptions, possibly) who brought a spot of drama to the Congress Party recently by demanding change in leadership, specially the jettisoning of former president Rahul Gandhi from a perch of influence, would have launched themselves on this path to benefit the BJP.

The ruling party's object, no doubt, is to spread a sense of deepening organisational crisis in the Congress, and to degrade it in the eyes of voters. This is because this party alone, even in its much-weakened state, offers a challenge to Hindutva on an all-India plane — in ideas, policy, and social and political acceptability. But men like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Shashi Tharoor or Manish Tewari, and many others among those 23, are hardly the type to consciously help the Hindutva party trump the Congress.

However, it is equally hard to credit their epistolary venture with political maturity or acumen, or indeed a sense of occasion. After all, the Bihar Assembly polls are less than three months away and needs focused attention. A pandemic is raging. Floods are devastating many states. At the political level, the Congress is still trying to stabilize itself in Rajasthan where only chief minister Ashok Gehlot's astuteness and tenacity came in the way of the corrupt bid to topple the state government with the help of defectors, with the BJP playing a key role.

Therefore, to call the letter-bomb amateurs “dis-senters”, as many have done, is to be ignorant of the meaning of dissent.

The act of dissent takes a toll. But the letter-writers as a group have been beneficiaries of the Congress' decades-old durbar and family connections culture (which now afflicts all parties), and were not bitten by the democracy bug before, though, to be fair, some began to espouse the cause of organisational polls after Mr Gandhi resigned as party president last year — honourably taking responsibility for the Lok Sabha rout — with a couple even throwing their hat into the ring.

Now the whole group has publicly demanded organisational elections in the Congress at all levels and the revival of the Congress Parliamentary Board, an elected CWC, and a more “visible” and proactive party president. This is a valid demand. Elections bring cohesion and accountability to a political organisation and throw up debates and discussion around issues that are important to the people. Indeed, such discussions — which sometimes grew fierce and ugly — were once the norm in the party that won India freedom, and triggered public participation around policy concerns.

But the context in which the “23 musketeers” raised the demand seems to suggest they have chosen to be innocent of ground realities. A full-fledged internal election in the Congress, starting with ascertaining, correcting and broadening a membership roster, can take about a year. If only the crusaders had waited until after the Bihar elections and the ebbing of the pandemic, they might have been more credible.

Since their demand was not made at a party forum (given that there were four CWC members

among them) but publicised through the media, it is not outlandish to think that they desired to embarrass or panic the current leadership (though it's meant to be a stopgap, with Sonia Gandhi as interim president), whittle its public standing, and force it to concede organizational polls and change of guard at the top here and now.

Even a college union doesn't work that way. So, if some Congress figures in frustration accuse the lot of aiding the enemy, their angst is understandable even if not well-founded, considering we are in an era of turncoats (as Madhya Pradesh showed graphically, and Rajasthan nearly did).

An Indira Gandhi (she had to claw her way back from the brink when the hardened old men of the party tried to shove her under the bus), a Chandra Shekhar, a V.P. Singh, a Madhya Limaye or a George Fernandes (the latter two from among socialists) would likely have stomped the countryside by now, and started their crusade even single-handed if they had a bee in their bonnet on the leadership or organisational issue, or an authentic point of policy contention, or plain burning ambition in their bosom. Each had shortcomings but they were not straw characters.

The protagonists of the simulated dissent who have come to the fore today appear to be a very different set. Their anxieties belong to the realm of existentialism: What will happen to their political careers if the Congress' fortunes don't change? It's not necessarily concern for the party or the country. And they

**The protagonists of the simulated dissent who have come to the fore today appear to be a very different set. Their anxieties belong to the realm of existentialism.**

have (rightly) banked on media help if their message is couched in an anti-dynasty idiom.

The Congress has brought some of this upon itself. Since Rahul Gandhi resigned his post unexpectedly in May 2019, gob-smacking the loyalist and dynasty diehards, the party showed listlessness. An ailing Mrs Gandhi was drawn in as chief on an interim basis as the only one who would be above factions. But the party's mandate — at this stage — was to democratise and hold an organisational election, even a patchy one. It didn't, relying on ever-present distractions in India to bail it out.

The path of electing the next party chief by summoning an AICC session in the next six months was cleared at Monday's CWC, and announced. This could have easily happened earlier, considering some form of acceptable democratisation has been in contemplation at the top levels of the Congress for some time. But this party, with a thoroughbred democratic past that few political organisations in the world can rival, has fallen on opaque times, and didn't make this known. It's time to change this culture — consciously, and with dispatch. This will take some doing.

It is undeniable that the Congress is a pale shadow of its past self. That proposition need not detain us. The point is, has it been taken to the cleaners by Narendra Modi's BJP? Again, the answer is obvious. While the party has lost two Lok Sabha polls on the trot (the BJP had too!), in state after state it has been the BJP's equal in Assembly polls or has roundly defeated it — in situations where the fight is not multi-cornered (as in UP, Bihar, West Bengal). Even in Gujarat, the citadel of Mr Modi and Amit Shah, the BJP got to the finish line panting. As a party, the Congress must take lessons from this dichotomous situation. It must not succumb to listlessness.

### LETTERS

#### GOVT RESPONSIBLE

The ongoing pandemic and economic crisis has worsened the situation in India. The economic contraction now, according to RBI's annual report, is not surprising. At a time when lives and livelihood are under continuous threat, the Central government has a lot to do to clear the decks. The demand of several Chief Ministers for compensation due to new GST structure is justified.

**Dr D.V.G. Sankararao**

Vizianagaram

#### TRANSFER OF CENTURY

Is the impossible happening? FC Barcelona has confirmed that Lionel Messi has intimated them about his desire to leave the club. It is the consequence of many actions happening along the past few years like humiliating Champions League exits, no trophy for the 1st time since 2009 for FC Barcelona along with poor decisions from the board. The 8-2 defeat against Bayern Munich and axing of Luis Suarez only infuriated him. Football fans will be heartbroken if Messi moves away.

**Dushyanth Kudaka**

Visakhapatnam

#### PATIENCE PAYS

These days some governments seem to have become intolerant to criticism and are indulging in suppression of their opponents. It does not bode well for democracy and the right to freedom of expression. Instead they must come out with befitting replies.

**Udaya Kumar Esikela**

Ananthapuramu

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

#### Liquid fertiliser plant at Chandigarh

By a staff reporter

HYDERABAD, August 27 India's first liquid fertiliser plant will go on the stream at Chandigarh within two years under the auspices of the Punjab Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation. Mr. Jasdev Singh Sandhu, Punjab's Minister for Agriculture, told a news conference here today that pending erection of the liquid fertiliser plant the Federation proposed to take up aerial spraying of fertilisers in select farms on an experimental measure.

Sudhanshu Sarangi



## Suicide probe: Not the 'who' but the 'how' of it is the key

Three decades back, when I joined the police, suicide cases were entrusted to the junior-most investigating officers in the police stations for inquest. Once the autopsy report was made available, the officer concluded, “death is suicidal in nature, no suspicion of foul play”, and that was the end of the story. Of course, in a few instances, the autopsy report and circumstances did raise suspicions requiring registration of a criminal case and further investigation. But it was relatively uncommon for families to question police findings. The media was still not as ubiquitous in our lives and people were not as vocal.

By now, police officers realise that suicide inquiries are potential minefields. Society feels an understandable sense of empathy for a person who has ended life and seeks an answer. The near and dear ones cannot believe that a person they know so intimately and for so long, could have taken such a decision of their own volition. “They can't do it” is their obvious view and so a logical demand for justice. Problem is, the dead tell no tales. Suicide victims mostly end life in their personal space. There are no eyewitnesses. Suicide notes, the final will and testament, even when

available, are mostly cryptic statements of a person who is running away from life in a hurry. Consequently, all the ingredients of a mystery are in-built for crafting many conspiracy theories at will and at the cost of the privacy and dignity of the deceased and those in his or her life. The pressure on the police to find a scapegoat to end the storm is enormous. Most suicide victims have no news value. Their families reconcile to the tragedy after sometimes. Otherwise, there would be much more hullabaloo.

For a variety of reasons, investigative findings of the Indian police have suffered from trust deficit historically. When allegations are levelled, some with merit and many without, senior officers in the police, government or courts have had an easy way out. Any case, facing accusations, is handed over to another team of police officers, known by a different name, hoping for a more satisfactory conclusion. There is a need to shift focus from “who investigates” to “how suicides are investigated”, if serving the truth is the goal. Four areas need to be considered for systemic reform.

First, an autopsy and its findings are absolutely vital. Once autopsy surgeon(s) have recorded conclu-

sions, the fate of the case is almost sealed. Neither the police nor the court can change a clear autopsy finding unless the autopsy surgeon or one of the team members disowns the report in part or in its entirety. So, changing the investigating team is just a waste of time. The new team can only seek a few clarifications, but the basic conclusion, in sum and substance, will be the same. There are three problems here. First, bodies are handed over to the family almost immediately for last rites. Unless the body has been buried, there is no scope for exhumation and a second autopsy in case of any doubt. Second, laws should permit the presence of a qualified autopsy surgeon to represent the interest of the family and he may provide a report to the family's counsel like in the West. In the absence of an alternate expert opinion, lawyers have really no basis to question police findings. Thirdly, the infrastructure and skill set currently available for autopsy is hardly of a desirable standard in most parts of the country. The ideal way will be that a specialist autopsy surgeon examines the dead body without any time pressure, gets all the related test reports and submits findings before body is handed over for last rites unless family dis-

avows future claims. This will take between a week and 10 days.

Second, the mandate of a police inquiry is to eliminate the apprehension of murder or what is called “foul play”. A police officer is neither trained nor required under the law to get into psychological aspects of a suicide, which requires a “psychological autopsy”. In psychological autopsy a qualified forensic or investigative psychologist reconstructs the state of mind of the person at the point of death. There are established protocols for such a procedure. A person may decide to end life for a variety of complex psychological reasons. There might be long-term behavioural issues as well as immediate triggers. Sometimes the person has expressed an intent earlier and might have shown symptoms of self-harm. If a person is under clinical care then the clinician may have followed a set of strategies that may require peer review. None of these are in the scope or competence of cops. In India we do not have any practice of psychological autopsy as of now.

Third, there is a need for a coroner court system so that a full judicial process can be gone through as part of an inquest. In colonial times such elaborate inquest was limited

to metropolitan towns. We now need to assign greater value to human life, and seek a full inquest in all cases of equivocal deaths.

Fourth, the only major research on suicide in India is the statistics compiled by the National Crime Record Bureau, which is largely a presentation of data generated by the police. There is a need for collaboration between the academia and the police for better understanding of suicides and their causes, which can be relied upon for psychological autopsy, psycho-linguistics for understanding suicide notes and other investigative supports. Also, policy interventions can be made to address incidence of suicide. India needs to deal with mental health issues far better.

Investigation into suicide cases needs to be carried out with greater professionalism and transparency. Otherwise, from time to time we will have episodic maelstroms that will captivate TV audiences and undermine police credibility only further.

**Sudhanshu Sarangi, an IPS officer, is commissioner of police of Bhubaneswar-Cuttack. He has received special forces training and has a PhD in psychology from UK's Liverpool University.**



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	39,113.47	0.10
Nifty 50	11,559.25	0.08
S&P 500*	3,483.21	0.13
Dollar (₹)	73.81	0.67
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.55	0.16
Euro (₹)	87.37	0.46
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	52,508▲743	1.41
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.91	-0.73
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.147	-0.056
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.742	0.055

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

## Q2: US economy plunges annualised 31.7%

The US economy shrank at an alarming annual rate of 31.7 per cent during the April-June quarter as it struggled under the weight of the viral pandemic. It was the sharpest quarterly drop on record. The previous worst quarterly drop since record-keeping began in 1947 was a 10 per cent annualised loss in 1958. The Commerce Dept downgraded its earlier estimate of the US GDP last quarter from 32.9 per cent.

## Realme India head Sheth to see Europe as well



Smartphone-maker Realme elevated its vice president and head of India market Madhav Sheth to lead business in Europe as well. Sheth co-founded Realme along with Sky Li in May 2018. Since then, the company has expanded to 59 regions in five continents, Realme said in a statement. Under the new designation of VP, Realme and CEO, Realme India and Europe, Madhav will lead product, marketing and sales functions in Europe.

## GMR Infra Q1 loss more than doubles to ₹834 cr

GMR Infrastructure's consolidated net loss for the quarter ended June 30 more than doubled to nearly 834 crore against Rs 336 crore loss in the January-March period in FY20, the company said in an exchange filing. The consolidated total income for the quarter almost halved to Rs 1,224 crore from Rs 2,206 crore in the year-ago quarter. Revenues from the airports segment stood at Rs 494 crore against Rs 1,460 crore.

## Abjayon wins Oracle customer cloud service deal

Abjayon said it has won the mandate for implementing customer care and billing solution for Bluegreen Energy in Europe. Bluegreen, a global energy retailer, is expanding its operations in Europe across France, Spain, and other countries. With Abjayon as its technology partner, Bluegreen will implement a single billing solution for these markets using Oracle Utilities Customer Cloud Service product.



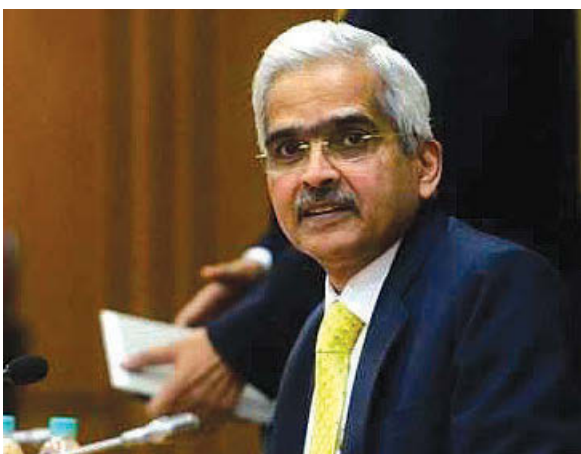
# ■ Banks need to reorient business, lend more RBI hasn't exhausted all options, ready to act: Das

FC BANKING BUREAU  
MUMBAI, AUG. 27

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said the central bank is yet to exhaust all options and added that it would not unwind the recent measures taken to support the Covid-19 hit economy. Hinting that it could announce more policy measures, including rates cut if required, to support the economy, Das said, "We have not exhausted our ammunition, whether on rate cuts or other policy actions. We are constantly watchful and as and when we anticipate certain emerging situation, we'll deal with it."

He warned banks that being overly risk-averse would be "self-defeating" and that lenders will not be able to "win their bread" if they do not carry out their basic task. Rather than becoming averse to lending, banks have to improve their risk management and governance frameworks, and also build sufficient resilience, Das said.

On a question whether the RBI, which cut policy rates in two moves since the onset of the pandemic, front-loaded its calls and what is it left with to tackle further impact, Das said, "We have not exhausted our policy options, whether it relates to rate cuts or any other aspects of central banking. We have not exhausted our instruments or ammunition." Das that the RBI wanted



## BANKERS RESENT RISK-AVERSION REMARK

Mumbai, Aug 27: Heads of various public and private sector banks on Thursday sought to present a counter narrative on RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das warning lenders about the perils of extreme risk-aversion when credit demand is on the wane.

But bankers were of the view that the real problem was not risk-aversion but lack of demand, which only the government can help revive.

Aditya Puri, MD & CEO, HDFC Bank said his bank

has booked 20 per cent growth in core interest income in the June quarter, which proves the robust lending at his bank.

"There is no risk aversion but there is prudent banking," he said in reply at a webinar.

PNB MD & CEO S. S. Mallikarjuna Rao said, "I can categorically say that there is no risk-aversion at all. The real problem is lack of demand". He said credit demand has been slowing ever since the RBI brought out stringent NPA norms. —PTI

to keep its gun powder dry and hence opted for a status quo at the last policy review earlier this month.

Speaking at a webinar, Das said, "The measures taken by the RBI are intended to deal with the

specific situation of Covid and cannot be permanent. Post-containment of Covid-19, a very careful trajectory needs to be followed for orderly unwinding of the various counter-cyclical measures taken by the

## Audi's most powerful RS Q8 launched at ₹2.07 cr



MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, AUG. 27

Audi, India's third largest luxury car maker, on Thursday introduced its sportiest Q, the all-new high performance Audi RS Q8 priced at Rs 2.07 crore at pan-India showroom.

A rival to the Lamborghini Urus SUV and Porsche Cayenne Turbo Coupe, the Audi RS Q8 costs Rs 74 lakh more than the standard V6-powered Q8, which is priced at Rs 1.33 crore.

The imported Audi RS Q8 combines the power of an RS model with the elegance of a premium coupe and the ability of an SUV. "We are thrilled to bring the record setting Audi RS Q8 to India. It's an all-in-one model, Balbir Singh Dhillon, head of Audi India, said.

## NMDC'S Q1 PROFIT DOWN 55% AT ₹533 CRORE

Hyderabad, Aug. 27: NMDC Limited's profit after tax for the first quarter ended June 30 slumped by 55 per cent to ₹533 crore as both production and sales were impacted due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the state-owned miner said on Thursday.

The company had posted ₹1,179 crore PAT in the corresponding quarter in 2019-20, it said in a release. The turnover of the state-run miner during the first quarter was ₹1,938 crore compared to ₹3,264 crore during the corresponding quarter last fiscal. Due to the lockdown, both production and sales were impacted, it said. —PTI

# Centre puts its burden of compensation on states

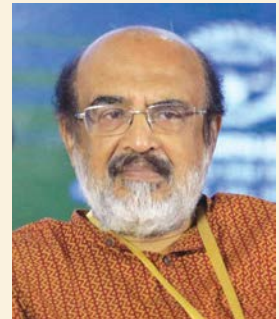
SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

The Centre placing the burden of borrowing for GST compensation on the states can hamper the economy of the states. The uncertainty of revenue collection and the possible differential treatment towards states in terms of lending can make things worse.

"Both options enforce sacrifice from the part of the states. This is not acceptable for us. We will talk to other states before we send our response to the Centre," said T. M. Thomas Issac, Finance Minister of Kerala.

According to Sumit Batra, partner at India Law Alliance, the Central government in its bid to end the woes of the states caused due to shortfall in GST collections and lockdown, has completely ignored the plight of the states.

"The compensation cess was designed to cover losses that the states may incur due to the implementation of GST. While the states are facing acute shortage of funds



Thomas Issac

to meet their day to day expenses, the way central government has asked the states to borrow the shortfall from RBI at the reasonable rate of interest or to chalk out a plan in consultation with RBI will only result in collapse of respective state economy," he said.

The government has made an estimate of a shortfall of Rs 2.35 lakh crore based on the expected cess collection for the remaining months and Rs 97,000 crore on the Covid impact. "The actual numbers can go up if the revenue collection remains lower than the estimates in the coming months of

the fiscal. In such a case, the burden on the states will further go up," he said.

The Centre is only talking about the compensation for this year. What if the compensation requirement is higher in the next two years till 2022? he asked.

"The compensation requirement gets compounded at a rate 14 per cent from the base year of 2016-17. So anyway the requirement will be higher in the coming years," said Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY.

Further, the possibility of a differential treatment by the RBI to the states cannot be ruled out. "As the Centre is facilitating the borrowing, the non-BJP ruled states can face issues in raising money. If the RBI is not willing to lend the entire amount estimated by such states, there could be issues," said Batra.

Also, the Centre has only raised the FRBM limit by 0.5 per cent and states need a higher limit to accommodate compensation borrowing.

## Maha stamp duty cut lifts realty stocks

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 27

The Maharashtra government's temporary stamp duty reduction from 5 per cent to 2 per cent on residential flat purchase price till December 31, 2020 and road tax waiver worth Rs 700 crore on commercial vehicles from April 1 to September 30, led to rally in real estate and select auto stocks.

The stamp duty rate will be 3 per cent from January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021.

The BSE Realty index gained 6.63 per cent while the Auto index gained 0.95 per cent as the market expects other states to follow suit.

The top realty gainers included DLF (9.93 per cent), Prestige Estates (8.07 per cent), Suneek Realty (7.31 per cent), Godrej Properties (7.06 per cent), Oberoi Realty (6.94 per cent) and Sobha (6.85 per cent).

"Realty stocks were in action post the Maharashtra government's move to cut 2-3 per cent stamp duty and on the hopes that the other states may follow soon," analysts said.

Festival season buying may get a boost now with flat buyers saving on stamp duty.

"Now, the fence sitters waiting for market correction will decide to take the plunge and buy properties with all-time low interest cost and muted prices," said Anuj Khetan, director, Vijay Khetan Group, a Mumbai developer.

# Insolvency move against Ambani stayed

New Delhi, Aug 27: The Delhi High Court Thursday put on hold the insolvency resolution process (IRP) proceedings against

Reliance Communications (RCom) Chairman Anil Ambani in relation to recovery of Rs 1,200 crore loans given by SBI to his two firms.

Ambani had given personal guarantees for Rs 565 crore and Rs 635 crore SBI loans to RCom and Reliance Infratel Ltd (RITL), respectively, in August 2016.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rajnish Bhatnagar, while putting on hold the IRP under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), also restrained Ambani from "transferring, alienating, encumbering or disposing of his assets or legal rights and interests therein till the next date of hearing".

It issued notice to the Centre, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) and State Bank of India seeking their stand on the plea by October 6, the next date of hearing.

The court also said that the proceedings would continue in relation to the corporate debtor (the companies), and while dealing with those proceedings, the liability of the petitioner-personal guarantor (Ambani) may also be examined by the IRP.

"However, proceedings against the petitioner (Ambani) under Part 3 of



Anil Ambani

the IBC shall remain stayed," it said.

Ambani in his plea has challenged the constitutionality of the IBBI (Insolvency Resolution Process for Personal Guarantors to Corporate Debtors) Regulations, 2019.

During the hearing via video conferencing, the Centre and the IBBI -- represented by Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma, central government standing counsel Akshay Makhija and advocate Madhavi Divan opposed stay of the IRP saying it could lead to the guarantor "frittering" away his assets.

SBI too raised similar apprehensions during the hearing. It also urged the court to allow the resolution professional appointed by the NCLT to go on with his work and give a report, but the bench did not agree to it.

The NCLT on August 20 had directed initiation of insolvency proceedings against Ambani.

—PTI

# Equalisation levy not for rough diamonds: FM

FC BUREAU  
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

The equalisation levy (EL) of two per cent on e-commerce transactions will not be applicable for the e-trade of rough diamonds.

The legislative intent for introduction of the EL was to only tax the digital economy utilising the e-commerce means to reach end consumers and should not be applicable on B2B transactions like procurement of rough diamonds through digital platforms for business purposes, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the industry body.

The Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council had urged the minister to issue appropriate amendment/clarification to ensure that the diamond sector is not burdened with the EL, even where the rough diamonds are procured through auctions over a digital platform.

"While the EL is structured as a levy on the foreign entity, the global miners and traders are likely to revise the pricing structure to account for the EL. Leading global diamond

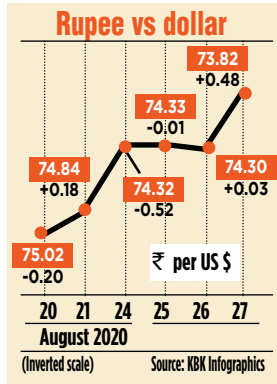


Nirmala Sitharaman

miners have asked GJEPC for clarification of this additional two per cent EL on the procurement of diamonds. This is leading further tax burden to the already severely hit Indian gems and jewellery exports industry," said Colin Shah, chairman of GJEPC.

The minister promised to look into the matter positively and discuss the provisions and its interpretation with officials concerned.

The equalisation levy has been effective from April 1, 2020 and is applicable on the consideration received/receivable by an e-commerce operator.



## Bezos becomes first man to be worth \$200 b



Jeff Bezos Elon Musk

DEVON PENDLETON & JACK PITCHER  
AUG. 27

Three of the world's richest people have achieved staggering new levels of personal wealth.

The net worth of Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos eclipsed \$200 billion on Wednesday as shares of the e-commerce giant climbed to a record. The move simultaneously pushed his ex-wife MacKenzie Scott, 50, to the brink of becoming the world's richest woman, just behind L'Oreal heiress Francoise Bettencourt Meyers.

Elon Musk, meanwhile, extended an extraordinary stretch of wealth gains to become a centibillionaire. Tesla Inc. shares rallied on Wednesday, pushing his net worth to \$101 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, a listing of the world's 500 richest people.

The gains by Bezos, 56, and Musk represent just the latest high water mark for wealth accumulation in a topsy-turvy year defined by both surging markets and catastrophic human and economic loss.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## India loses two shuttle tourneys

**New Delhi:** The India Open Super 500 and the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournaments were on Thursday cancelled by the Badminton World Federation in its adjusted calendar to salvage a season thrown haywire by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The India Open, which was originally scheduled in March, was to be held from December 8 to 13 in New Delhi and Syed Modi was slated for November 17 to 22 in Lucknow in the previously revised calendar.

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) will implement an adjusted tournament calendar for the HSBC BWF World Tour in 2020," the world body said in a statement. "The TOTAL BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2020 in Aarhus, Denmark will remain part of the international tournament calendar and will proceed on the planned dates of 3-11 October 2020," it added.

The badminton season has been on hold after the All England Championship in March. — PTI

## Pogba tests +ve for Coronavirus

**Paris:** France midfielder Paul Pogba has tested positive for Covid-19 and been left out of the national team squad, coach Didier Deschamps said Thursday.

"I had to make a change at the last minute because Paul Pogba was supposed to be in the squad," Deschamps said. "Unfortunately for him, he had a test yesterday which was positive this morning," he further added.

The Manchester United midfielder's place in the squad will be taken by 17-year-old Rennes midfielder Eduardo Camavinga ahead of upcoming Nations League qualifiers against Sweden and Croatia. — AP

## Maguire appeals, is set for retrial

**Manchester:** Manchester United captain Harry Maguire has filed an appeal against his conviction for assault and attempted bribery of a police officer, and will get a retrial, the Premier League club said Wednesday.

Maguire was handed a 21-month suspended sentence on Tuesday following his arrest after a brawl last week on the Greek island of Mykonos. United said Maguire's legal team filed the appeal against the verdict on Wednesday and that he has been granted a full retrial "in a more senior court."

"This means," United said, "that Harry has no criminal record and is once again presumed innocent until proven guilty."

The club did not give a date for the retrial. Maguire, who is the world's most expensive defender and plays for England's national team, was not present at the trial on the nearby island of Syros on Tuesday, when he also was found guilty of swearing in public.

The 27-year-old Maguire had already issued a statement saying he would be appealing. — AP

## NISHIKORI SAYS NO TO US OPEN

**New York:** Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, said he tested negative for Covid-19 after having two positive tests but still decided to withdraw from the Grand Slam tournament that begins next week. Nishikori wrote Wednesday on his mobile app that he is ready to "slowly" return to practice — but not prepared to compete in best-of-five-set matches.

"After such a long break I feel that returning in a best of 5 long-match setting is not smart until I am fully ready to do so," Nishikori's post said.

Nishikori said last Friday he tested positive for COVID-19 a second time and had "very minimal symptoms."

Meanwhile, top-ranked Novak Djokovic had all parts of his game working while advancing to the semifinals of the Western & Southern Open. — AP

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## HEAD &amp; SHOULDERS

## Eoin will complement Karthik, says KKR coach

**Abu Dhabi, Aug. 27:** The presence of England's World Cup-winning skipper Eoin Morgan as Dinesh Karthik's deputy augurs well for Kolkata Knight Riders, the franchise's bowling coach Kyle Mills said on Wednesday.

The wicketkeeper-batsman faced criticism in 2019 after they failed to make the cut following a string of losses in the business end of the tournament.

This time, the franchise has brought back the England limited-overs skipper Morgan, who played for the KKR from 2011 to 2013, as the team's vice-captain.

"I think Eoin is going to complement DK really well. DK can focus on keeping, Eoin will be in the cover region. So, the communication with the bowler in the death overs or pressure situations will work well," Mills said in an interview on KKR's website.

The former New Zealand pacer spoke about KKR's heavy bowling artillery with world number one Pat Cummins spearheading the attack comprising Harry Gurney, Lockie Ferguson and Andre Russell alongside Indian youngsters — Prasidh Krishna, Kamlesh Nagar Koti, Sandeep Warrier and Shivam Mavi.

"We have got a really heavy artillery. I guess Pat Cummins will be a superstar by the time he ends his career. He has been around for a while, and he is just 26-27 years of age. He is really young. We have got him in his prime," he added. — PTI



Dwayne Bravo (left) shares a light moment with Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni in this photo.

## Bravo, Tambe script history

**Port of Spain, Aug. 27:** All-rounder Dwayne Bravo wrote his own piece of history, while Praveen Tambe became the first Indian cricketer to play in the Caribbean Premier League as Trinbago Knight Riders posted their fourth straight win, beating St Lucia Zouks by six wickets via D/L method in a rain-truncated match here.

While Dwayne Bravo made history on Wednesday by becoming the first player to reach 500 T20 wickets and 100 Hero CPL wickets, his brother Darren hit a quick-fire 23 off 13 balls with two sixes to help Trinbago Knight Riders chase down the revised 72-run target in nine overs with six balls to spare.

Darren's first off the two

sixes also made him the first to record 100 sixes in CPL.

There was another landmark on Wednesday as Tambe, 48, became the first Indian to play in the CPL and his only over saw him pick up the wicket of Najibullah Zardan.

The Zouks started aggressively before Andre Fletcher (10) departed to be reduced to 32 for one

after three overs. When Rakheem Cornwall handed Colin Munro a low diving catch, Dwayne Bravo (2/7), on his home ground, became the first bowler to reach T20 cricket's 500 club. Bravo was the pick of the bowlers for Knight Riders with two for seven in three overs as rain intervened in 17.1 overs with Zouks scoreboard reading 111 for 6. — PTI

## Sachin remembers Don Mankad talk is on as Ricky in Dubai

**New Delhi, Aug. 27:** The Covid-19-forced break and the uncertainty it brought has turned the athletes into a worried lot but iconic cricketer Sachin Tendulkar has an advice for them. Tendulkar has asked the worried athletes to find inspiration from Sir Donald Bradman, who missed out on eight years of Test cricket between 1939 to 1945 due to World War II but did not let it affect his performance.

Even such a long period couldn't make Bradman rusty as he was hungry as ever during the final phase of his career finishing with an unbeatable

average of 99.94 from 52 games.

"Sir Don Bradman was away from cricket for several years due to World War II, yet has the highest Test batting average," Tendulkar wrote on Twitter while remembering the 'greatest' of them on his 112th birth anniversary.

"Today, with concerns about athletes' form due to uncertainties and long breaks, his career stands even taller as a source of inspiration. Happy birthday Sir Don," he wrote.

In fact when asked about how players will cope up with this long six-month

break before the IPL starts, the maestro had spoken about days till the 1990s when there used to be a dedicated cricket season in India.

"If I am not mistaken, one phase during 90s, between March, 1994 and October, 1995, for close to 18 months, we had hardly played in Test matches.

"During that phase till mid 90's, getting three to four months off was normal, and when we would go to Sri Lanka during summer months and a lot of matches would be washed out. There was no cricket in India and it was normal," he said. — PTI

**Dubai, Aug. 27:** Delhi Capitals head coach and former Australia captain Ricky Ponting on Thursday landed here and went into mandatory six-day quarantine at his hotel ahead of the 13th Indian Premier League to be held in the UAE from September 19.

"My view for the next 6 days, hotel quarantine is officially underway," Ponting tweeted from his hotel room after landing here.

Delhi Capitals players

and other support had already reached here on August 23.

Ponting had triggered quite a debate recently when he said that he won't allow senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin to run out batsmen at the non-strikers' end if they back up too far. Ashwin recently said that he has spoken to his IPL coach on the contentious issue and will reveal the details after a face-to-face meeting with Ponting. — PTI

## Shooting protests stall sport in US

**Orlando, Aug. 27:** LeBron James' Los Angeles Lakers and the Los Angeles Clippers have voted to abandon the NBA season in protest at the latest US police shooting of a black man — Jacob Blake — multiple reports said on Wednesday.

The Lakers and Clippers vote to end the season came at an emergency meeting of all the teams left in the NBA's playoffs, which are taking place in Orlando, Florida.

The meeting followed the Milwaukee Bucks' boycott of their first round playoff game against the Orlando Magic earlier. That decision prompted the NBA to call off all three playoff games on Wednesday.

The Lakers' James had earlier tweeted angrily over the shooting of Blake, who was shot seven times in the back by police as he got into a car containing his three children. "WE DEMAND CHANGE. SICK OF IT," James wrote on Twitter.

The NBA has scheduled a special Board of Governors meeting to address players' concerns. The WNBA too did not play three games, Washington, Atlanta, Minnesota, Los Angeles, Connecticut and Phoenix were supposed to be in action. Atlanta's Elizabeth Williams read a statement saying that the "consensus is not to play in tonight's games. We stand in solidarity with our brothers in the NBA." — AP



Naomi Osaka reacts during her quarterfinal with Anett Kontaveit in New York. — AP

## Osaka pulls out of semis, later changes decision

**New York, Aug. 27:** Japan's Naomi Osaka reversed her decision to withdraw from the WTA Western & Southern Open semifinals on Thursday, saying she will now play the match that has been rearranged for Friday.

The two-time Grand Slam champion said in a statement on Wednesday that she had pulled out of her last-four clash with Belgium's Elise Mertens in protest at the police shooting of black man Jacob Blake in Wisconsin.

However, after WTA and ATP chiefs announced a suspension of play at the tournament following anger over Blake's shooting, Osaka said she has now changed her mind.

"As you know, I pulled out of the tournament yesterday in support of racial injustice and continued police violence," Osaka said in a statement first reported by Britain's *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*.

"I was (and am) ready and prepared to concede

the match to my opponent. However, after my announcement and lengthy consultation with the WTA and USTA, I have agreed at their request to play on Friday. They offered to postpone all matches until Friday and in my mind that brings more attention to the movement. I want to thank the WTA and the tournament for their support," she said.

Osaka beat No.12 Anett Kontaveit 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the quarterfinals. — AFP

## BASEBALL AND SOCCER SIDES STAY OFF TIES

**Los Angeles, Aug. 27:** The Milwaukee Brewers and Cincinnati Reds refused to play their Major League Baseball fixture on Wednesday, following the police shooting of an unarmed black man in the teams' home state.

"With our community and our nation in such pain, we wanted to draw as much attention to the issues that really matter, especially racial injustice and systemic oppression," a team statement said.

Other teams across MLB also opted not to play on Wednesday, with the Seattle Mariners voting not to take to the field in their game against the San Diego Padres in Southern California.

Major League Soccer players too boycotted five games on Wednesday night. Players from games between Atlanta United and Inter Miami, FC Dallas and Colorado, Portland and San Jose, Real Salt Lake and LAFC, and the LA Galaxy and Seattle decided not to play.

Atlanta United released a statement before its scheduled game against Inter Miami in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The players all gathered on the field before the game, arm in arm. — Agencies

## Satwik and two others test +ve

**New Delhi, Aug. 27:** Three winners of this year's National Sports Awards, including badminton player Rankireddy Satwiksairaj, have tested positive for Covid-19 and will not attend the virtual ceremony on August 29, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Thursday.

The SAI said that 65 of the 74 awardees will attend the first-ever virtual National Sports Awards from its centres across the country due to the pandemic. "There are 74 awards in seven categories. Total 65 award winners will be attending the function from various locations. Nine award winners will not attend due to several reasons like being quarantined, tested positive, ill health or not in the country etc," the SAI said in a statement.

"Three award winners after having tested positive will not attend the function," it added without giving any names.

However, Satwiksairaj earlier confirmed his positive test.

The country will honour an unparalleled five Khel Ratna winners and 27 Arjuna awardees among others.

The five chosen for the highest honour are cricketer Rohit Sharma, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, Paralympian Mariyappan Thangavelu, table tennis player Manika Batra and women's hockey captain Rani Rampal.



Rankireddy Satwiksairaj

Satwik is yet to develop any symptoms of the infection. "There are no symptoms, neither my parents nor any friends, none had the virus. So, I don't know from where it has come," the 20-year-old said from his home in Amalapuram.

"Few days back, I went for a test (antigen) and it has been five days since I have been in quarantine. I went for an RT-PCR (test) and that too came positive," he added.

Satwik said he will undergo another test in three days' time. "I have no cough, fever or body ache. I tested positive and was to a separate room. Many people are helping me. I am taking medicines. I will go for test again after three days," the doubles player said.

"Good thing is my parents have tested negative," he added.

Satwik and his doubles partner Chirag Shetty were recommended for the Arjuna Award jointly. — PTI

## HOCKEY STAR AKASHDEEP LAPS UP ARJUNA HONOUR

**Bengaluru, Aug. 27:** Acknowledging the contribution his teammates made in his and Indian hockey team's Akashdeep Singh on Thursday said he is delighted and honoured to be selected for the Arjuna.

Akashdeep, who has played 194 matches for the national side, has been part of several cherishable performances in the last four years — the FIH Olympic Qualifiers win against Russia last year, the bronze medal winning show at the Asian Games.

"I am extremely delighted and honoured to be conferred with the Arjuna Award," Akashdeep said in a media release.

"I have been very fortunate to be playing for my country since December 2012 and I am very grateful for playing alongside a fantastic bunch of players. I wouldn't have been able to contribute to the Indian team's victories if I hadn't received the wonderful support from all of my teammates," he added. — PTI

## Delhi High Court asks HI for stand

**New Delhi, Aug. 27:** The Delhi High Court Thursday asked the Centre and Hockey India (HI) for their stand on a plea alleging that the sports federation has violated the national sports code by creating posts, like 'life member', 'life president' and CEO, which are not permitted under the rules.

A bench of Chief Justice D. N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan issued notice to the Sports Ministry, HI and the two persons who have been appointed in the sports body as life member and CEO, seeking their stand by September 28 on the petition by a former hockey player.

Petitioner Aslam Sher Khan, who was part of the Indian team which won gold in the 1975 Hockey World Cup, has sought quashing of the articles in HI's Memorandum of Association (MOA) under which the posts of 'life member', 'life president' and 'CEO' with unlimited tenure and full voting rights have been created.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Khan, said these posts are not contemplated under the National Sports Code of 2011 and have been created in violation of the rules, circulars and guidelines governing functioning of the national sports federations (NSFs). The petition, filed through advocate Vanshdeep Dalmia, has also sought quashing of the appointments of Narinder Dhruv Batra and Elena Norman as 'life member' and CEO, respectively.

Khan, in his plea, has alleged that "various acts of nepotism and favouritism" by Batra and Norman was "causing loss, financial and otherwise to the sport of hockey". — PTI

## TT BODY PLANS TO GO SINGLE AT NATIONALS

**New Delhi, Aug. 27:** The Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) wants to host the senior National Championship in November subject to government approval albeit with only singles event in the wake of rising cases of Covid-19.

In its bid to organise an event in bio-secure environment with least health safety concerns, the TTFI doesn't want to conduct doubles, mixed doubles and team events to avoid close contact among the players.

"We will only have team events and doubles if a vaccine is found by then. The target is to have the camp in October and from November to February, we can have the national championships in various categories," TTFI secretary general MP Singh said. — PTI