





## 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.

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>.

TS SEES 2,795  
NEW CASES,  
EIGHT DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

Telangana state continued to witness increasing number of Coronavirus infections with the health department reporting 2,795 new Covid-19 cases and eight more deaths from the disease. In its Covid-19 bulletin for the 24-hour period between Tuesday and Wednesday evening, the department said the total Covid-19 cases rose to 1,14,483 while the toll stood at 788.

The non-GHMC areas recorded 2,346 cases. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area remained on top reporting 449 new cases, followed by Ranga Reddy district with 268 cases. The other districts that recorded three-figure caseload were Nalgonda with 164, Khammam 152, Karimnagar 136, Warangal Urban 132, Siddipet and Medchal-Malkajgiri 113 each, Nizamabad 112, Manicherial 106, and Mahabubabad 102 cases.

The department said 60,386 tests were conducted of which results from 1,075 tests were awaited as of 8 pm on Wednesday. So far, 86,095 persons have recovered from the disease. The number of people under treatment for Covid-19 was 27,600 of whom 20,866 are in home or institutional quarantine.

As many as 4,246 patients were being treated in 171 private hospitals while 2,488 Covid-19 patients were being treated in 42 government hospitals.

CENTRE MUST  
BORROW, GIVE  
STATES: HARISH

From page 1

Harish Rao said: "The Centre must borrow and compensate (the states) so that the interest rate will be at the minimum. No one exactly knows how long the impact of Covid-19 will last on the economy. No one knows the quantum of revenue shortfall, and hence the Union government must continue paying GST compensation once in two months."

Harish Rao said the Centre was depositing the leftover cess amount in the Consolidated Fund of India and utilising it. "The Union government is morally bound to compensate any revenue shortfall due to the lockdown. Under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, states were guaranteed payment for any loss of revenue in the first five years of GST implementation from July 1, 2017," Harish Rao said.

Saying that states had lost 60-70 per cent of their revenue by joining the GST regime, Harish Rao noted that the Centre, at the 7th, 8th and 10 GST Council meetings, had assured the states that the shortfall will be compensated even if it had to take it from the Consolidated Fund or by taking a loan.

He demanded that the subcommittee under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Susheel Modi must meet and prepare guidelines for the payment of these dues to the states immediately.

He said Telangana state had paid ₹18,082 crore to the Centre but had received ₹3,223 crore.

He said that Telangana state received only ₹169 crore in the first year of implementation of GST, nothing in the second year and a negligible amount in the third year. "This year, if you further decrease the amount on account of GST shortfall and Covid-19, states like Telangana will be at a loss," Harish Rao said.

He pointed out that the attitude of the Centre helping only states that faced natural calamities and ignoring progressive states like Telangana was detrimental to its growth. Finance ministers from several States were in complete support of TS point of view.

Staff get cracking as e-classes  
are all set to begin on Sept. 1

DD, T-Sat, Internet, community centres to be used to impart e-lessons

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG 27

Preparations for the commencement of online classes began on Thursday with principals, headmasters and teachers attending schools to ready the lesson plans and e-content for classes starting September 1 in private and government schools.

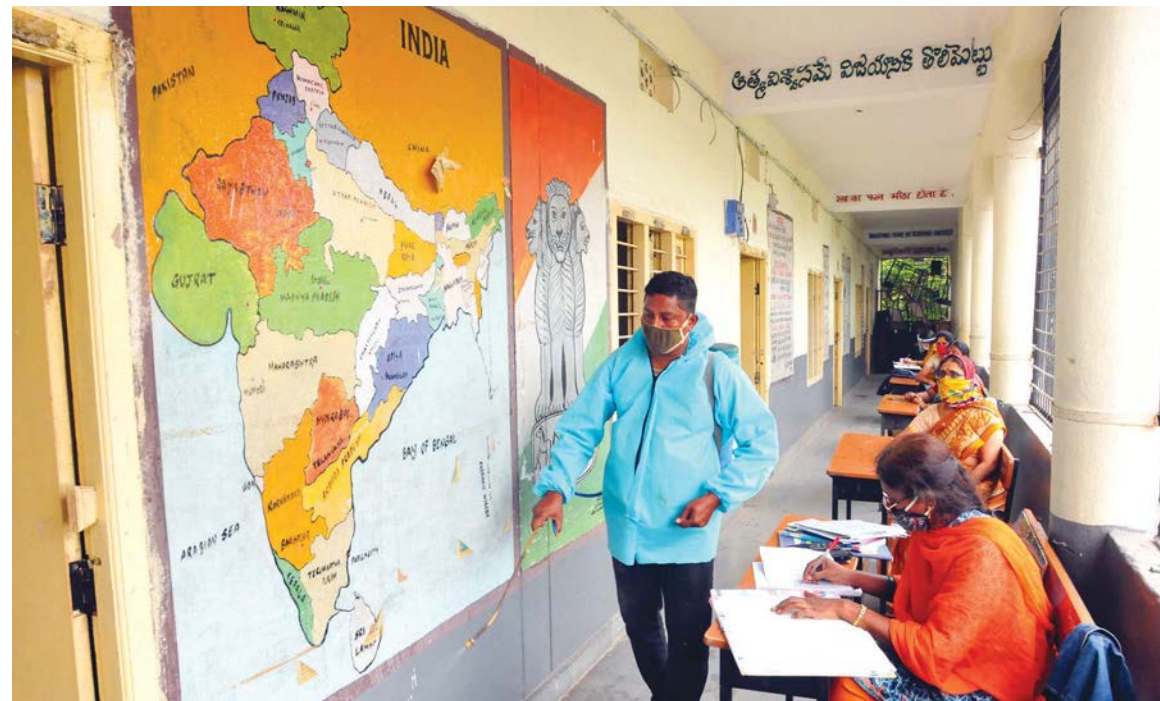
Following guidelines, a collaborative adjustment learning system for e-education is being made available on Doordarshan, the T-Sat network and the internet by the state government.

Meanwhile, headmasters from schools in remote villages have been directed to make alternative arrangements by categorising and identifying the number of school children based on the availability of e-education resources like TV, smartphones, internet connectivity, laptops that they may or may not possess.

Headmasters of government schools and Chava Ravi, Telangana State Unites Teachers Federation (TSUTF) general secretary, have brought to light that a survey conducted in July showed that 39.6 per cent families didn't have smartphones and 14.8 per cent families did not have a cable TV connection to allow their children to watch lessons on government educational channels.

Rajasekhara Gaddam, gazetted headmaster of a zilla parishad high school, Thanikella, in Khammam district, said that in his school, 20 per cent of students have been identified as in possession of smartphones with internet connectivity and about 50 per cent students can access TV in their households.

"For the rest, we are trying to make arrangements with the gram panchayats to set up community centres for TV transmissions of lessons for students."



GHMC staff sanitise classrooms of the Government Boys' High School in Hayathnagar as teachers returned to the school to prepare for e-classes, on Thursday. The school was a Covid19 testing centre. — P. SURENDRA

He added, that even the setting up of gram panchayats was becoming difficult because of lack of funds from the government.

Sarapaka, Thotamalla Rama, headmaster of a zilla parishad secondary school, said that they are trying to identify students with access to internet and TV connections and are in the process of guiding students and parents in the villages about the time-table to be followed for the upcoming classes. She added that some teachers are even going to personally guide those who don't have access to mobile phones.

With the government instructing all teachers to start attending school, around 1.32 lakh teachers in the state will join duty.

DEOs instructed to  
monitor online classes

From page 1

A. Sanjeev Kumar, special counsel for government, submitted that district education officers have been instructed to monitor online classes closely and ensure that they run smoothly. The DEOs have spoken to Transco officials about uninterrupted power supply power when the online classes are on. Counsel asserted that the main intent of the government was to ensure that no student is idle or loses an academic year.

On Justice Vijaysen Reddy's query whether the

government has any plans to conduct physical classes for students in private schools with some students of each class attending the classes daily, counsel said there are no such plans so far. If the court so directs, the government may work on the issue. But counsel said parents may hesitate to send their children for physical classes and transportation will also be an issue.

Counsel for petitioner Hyderabad Parents Association Sheelu informed the bench that most private schools were insisting upon parents to

pay fees for the entire academic year. Cases are being registered in police stations against parents who are protesting against such collection of fee.

On this, government counsel said the state government has issued GO. Ms. No. 46, dated 29-4-2020 prescribing fee limits for schools. Notices will be issued to schools violating these guidelines and their registrations may be cancelled.

The court adjourned the hearing to September 18 after directing all officials concerned to file their counter affidavits.

## HC grills TS on land given to dir

VUJJINI  
VAMSHIDHARA | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

The Telangana High Court on Thursday questioned the authority of state Cabinet in fixing a nominal price of ₹5 lakh per acre for a parcel of land whose market price is ₹2.5 crore per acre and allotting it to a single person — film producer N. Shankar.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijaysen Reddy was dealing with a public interest litigation challenging the pricing of the land allotted to Shankar for setting up a film training institute at Mokila village in Shankarpally mandal of Vikarabad district. The HMDA has stated that the value of the land is around ₹2.5 crore an acre.

The bench observed that government land cannot be given away for peanuts to private parties, as though it is for a fancy number. On the government's contention that the nominal price was fixed because director Shanker had been in the forefront of Telangana movement by making films on the issue, the High Court observed, "Now, everyone



Illegal construction of 5 floor building being demolished by GHMC at Mehdiapatnam. — S. SURENDER REDDY

is claiming that they participated and fought for separate statehood. Will the government give land to all of them? Around 10,000 people made sacrifices for Telangana... will the government be liberal to the same extent with these people?"

Advocate General B.S. Prasad submitted that the practice of allotting land to private persons for developing the film industry has been continuing since 1983. Fifty acres of land in Banjara Hills was given to six persons for a nominal price.

On this, Chief Justice Chauhan observed, "That was the time to establish Telugu film industry in Hyderabad. Now, Hyderabad has full-fledged world-class film studios like Ramoji Film

City. Telugu film industry is firmly based in Hyderabad and robust in all aspects of films."

Expressing dissatisfaction with the government in being too generous to one person, the CJ observed, "There is nothing wrong in the government being generous. But it should be something like ₹2 crore per acre. But ₹5 lakh per acre is not agreeable, when the cost is above ₹2.5 crore. If the government is so liberal, Bollywood will make a beeline before the Telangana state government for setting up studios."

On the request of Advocate-General that a chance be given to explain contentions in the form of an affidavit, the bench adjourned the case to September 16.

STATE PUSHED  
AHEAD WITHOUT  
CLARIFYING

From page 1

Sources said the stamps and registration department raised had queries earlier when the proposal was moved, but the government pushed ahead with the decision without clarifying several issues.

The department had even suggested that the government build a common database with details of authorised layouts and building permits from where the departments concerned would access information and act accordingly.

Legal experts on the other hand found fault with the invoking of the Municipal and Panchayat Raj Acts which don't have an overriding effect on the Stamps and Registration Act. "Even assuming that provisions in those Acts are implemented, it could be prospective only and not with retrospective effect," an advocate pointed out.

More tests reveal  
true virus spread

From page 1

The unlocking phases which began in rural areas and later in semi-rural and urban areas kept the movement of people intact and that is also being seen as leading to a wider virus spread.

Apart from that, the number of testing centres is increasing and more testing is being done across all states which is revealing the true spread of the disease.

Dr K.K. Aggarwal, senior doctor and past president of Indian Medical Association, said, "We must not look at the number of daily new cases but at the deaths. It has been six months now and we have understood the nature of the disease and our aim must be to save lives. We are a highly populated country and the cases are going to rise till 60 per cent of the people are infected. Our aim must now be to test, trace and bring them to hospitals early so that they are treated and there are no complications. This must be the way forward."

The virus in India was earlier of the A31 strain according to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology which was found to be lethal in June and July. It is now

being observed that A31 is being replaced by the less virulent strain A2a and due to this the disease is not very severe and there are fewer fatalities. In the June-July period, the case fatality rate was 3.3 which has now fallen to 0.7, he pointed out.

Dr Mustafa Afzal, senior infectious disease specialist at Care Hospitals, explained, "We are not needing high-end drugs for treating patients now and this shows that the strain is different. This is a good sign as patients are coming with mild to moderate symptoms and responding to medicines. Those who are coming very late are the ones whose condition is deteriorating. People must understand that there are medicines which are working. They must not stay at home and give up."

In the districts, mild cases are going to government hospitals as there are minimal home isolation facilities. Those who can afford are coming to the city for treatment in the private sector.

Experts say that another phase of unlocking will bring in other new cases and the vigilance of people, local governments and institutions will be needed along with appropriate control measures.

4 +ve prisoners  
escape from GHJAYENDRA  
CHAITHANYA T. I DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

Two convicts and two undertrial prisoners undergoing treatment at Gandhi Hospital for Covid-19 reportedly escaped from the prisoners' ward located on the second floor of the hospital. The police have formed special teams to trace and apprehend them. The four prisoners were identified as M. Javed, Mohammed Abdul Arbaz, P. Narsimha and S. Sunder and had been lodged at the Cherlapally prison.

Early on Thursday, the four prisoners removed the iron grills of a window in the washroom and crawled down from the second floor using bed-sheets. The Armed Reserve escort team, who noticed in the morning that the prisoners had fled, alerted the local police and senior officials.

Tandur police arrested Javed and the Rajendranagar police arrested Arbaz less than a week ago for involvement in thefts. Narsimha and Sunder, were convicted for theft and were housed at the Institute of Mental Health at Erragadda before being admitted to Gandhi Hospital.

At least 40 personnel from law and order and other wings guard Gandhi Hospital per shift. The city police formed six teams to search for the missing prisoners.

Sources said, "The prisoners would have planned an escape route before resorting to the escape. Police teams are posted at the main entrance, rotary, Gandhi Hospital main building, in the corridors, and at the rear entrance." When contacted, North Zone DCP Kalmeshwar Siganevar

HC SEEKS INFO ON  
COVID SITUATION  
IN STATE PRISONSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

The Telangana High Court has sought details of the Covid-19 situation in prisons. A division bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan directed the Director-General of Prisons to submit details on whether or not tests for Covid-19 were being conducted in the jails and how many inmates had been found to be infected.

The court also directed the officer to submit details about the treatment and isolation facilities provided for infected prisoners, including undertrials.

The bench was dealing with a PIL seeking to grant bail to prisoners who have completed five years of imprisonment. The petitioner said there was a very high chance of prisoners getting infected by Covid-19, as jails were overcrowded and precautions were not being maintained. The bench sought details by September 9 and adjourned the hearing to September 10.

said, "We have checked the footage of the CCTV cameras installed on the hospital premises, and it did not indicate that the prisoners have gone out of the hospital campus."

"It is a seven-acre campus, with about close to 1,000 Covid-19 patients. The teams are searching for the prisoners in the campus suspecting that they would be hiding in any ward in the hospital," the DCP added.

## ARMED TO THE TEETH

Bizmen rise to unusual challenges thrown up by the Coronavirus pandemic

## Innovative anti-Covid-19 gadgets flood online sites

BALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

A key that promises an end to some of the most basic of Covid-19 related woes. Face shields that resemble masks that became popular after being featured in Hollywood hits. Wrist bands that spit out sanitiser. Ballpoint pens that double up as sanitiser sprays. And car stickers that scream Coronavirus.

All these and more are there for the asking, for a price of course, as more and more products, some weird, some practical, begin to jostle for space on

online sales platforms, promising much-needed relief from the stresses related to Covid-19.

So if you are worried that you have to touch that light switch someone else may have had earlier, or press buttons on an ATM, or even operate a door handle, there is a key for that. If you happen to be a connoisseur, it is available in burnished brass finish as well as various colours in plastic.

The Covid key promises much. Open your car door by hooking to the handle. Do the same when you reach home with your front door. You can press



Pictures of anti-Covid equipments like face shield, capacitive keys and wristband.

elevator buttons with it too! And if you are in the mood to pop open a bottle of fizzy, it also comes with a notch that serves as a bottle opener.

One manufacturer has even gone a step further. Remember the ATMs where the push buttons next to the screen don't

work anymore and you are forced to touch the screen to get the ATM to cough up some much-needed cash? There is a capacitive touchscreen enabled version of the key, with a little black cap to overcome this problem. The only thing none of these Covid keys talk about is that you

will eventually need to wash your hands with soap and water anyways.

If you are tired of carrying a bottle of hand sanitiser, there are options for this too. You can buy yourself a ballpoint pen with a little refillable container that serves as a tiny spray bottle. Or you can get

yourself a whole 'pen' that does the same job.

If the spray option is not for you, then there are wrist bands with little squeezable and refillable containers that with a little press, eject some sanitiser onto your palm. Though some of these bands look like wrist watches, unfortunately, they do not tell time, as one seller made it clear to a potential customer possibly looking for a multi-functioning gadget.

There are the face shields that can compete with the best that Hollywood has thrown in our face over the decades.

Some look like a cross between the terror Jason wore in 'Friday the 13th' though not quite in the league of the one Hannibal Lecter is forced to wear in 'Silence of the Lambs'.

Of course, they still need the wearer to sport a proper mask covering the mouth and nose but are definitely sturdier options than the much more delicate looking face shields made out of thin transparent plastic sheets.

Covid-19 has thrown up some unusual challenges for society to overcome and businesses have clearly risen to the challenge.



## OTHER STORIES

ELIGEDU, IS A  
MANDAL FREE OF  
LAND ISSUESDC CORRESPONDENT  
PEDDAPALLI, AUG. 27

The Eligedu mandal in Peddapalli district has been announced as a land issue free mandal on Thursday. Additional collector Lakshmi Narayana after inspecting the tahsildar's office in the mandal said that land issues pertaining to Part-A and land renovation works of Part-B along with all pending land issues have been successfully resolved.

Odela and Julapalli mandals were already in the past declared as mandals free of land issues. The additional collector appreciated the revenue staff, Village Revenue Officers (VROs) and tahsildar for completing the land renovation works of the Eligedu mandal.

NIZAMABAD OPTS  
FOR EARLY GANESH  
IMMERSIONDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 27

In view of the Coronavirus pandemic, few Ganesh pandals held early immersion in Nizamabad district. With limited devotees, immersion began in Nizamabad and other areas on Wednesday night onwards.

Usually, the immersion of Ganesh idols takes place after Navaratri celebrations and sometimes after 11 days. However, this year Ganesh pandals minimised celebration days and conducted early immersion of idols.

Meanwhile, police officials are conducting peace committee meetings with the Ganesh pandal organisers. Devotees visited the pandals wearing face masks and maintained physical distance.

TSEWIDC ENGINEER  
SUSPENDED, THREE  
ISSUED MEMOSDC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 27

Telangana state education welfare infrastructure development corporation assistant executive engineer N. Nageshwar Rao was suspended on Thursday.

Memos were also issued to the TSEWIDC executive engineer Chakrapani, deputy EE Anji Reddy and district minority welfare officer R. Rathan.

District collector C. Narayana Reddy during his visit to a minority girls residential school at Pandu tarpa in Bodhan on Thursday found disparities in the measurement book and payments and in the construction of the school.

IMD WARNS: PARTS  
OF TS TO RECEIVE  
HEAVY RAINFALLT.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

The weather department has issued a heavy rainfall warning for the state for Friday.

The Indian Meteorological Department-Hyderabad (IMD) said that there would be heavy rain at isolated places in Hyderabad, Sangareddy, Medak, Siddipet, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Ranga Reddy, Yadadri-Bhuvangiri, Nalgonda, Jangaon, Suryapet, Khammam, Mahabubabad, Waragal Urban and Rural districts.

The weather bureau has warned of heavy rainfall in the city and has issued a yellow warning for the GHMC limits. The IMD-H predicted that there could be pooling of water on the roads and low-lying areas coupled with wet and slippery roads.

It has advised restricted movement and necessary warnings to be issued by the municipal and other departments. As of 5.30 pm on Thursday, the highest rainfall in the city was registered at BHEL Colony at 31.3 mm.

**THE INDIAN Meteorological Department-Hyderabad (IMD) said that there would be heavy rain at isolated places in Hyderabad, Sangareddy, Medak, Siddipet, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Ranga Reddy, Yadadri-Bhuvangiri, Nalgonda, Jangaon, Suryapet, Khammam, Mahabubabad, Waragal Urban and Rural districts.**

Private hosps piggyback  
off on Covid treatment

## Patients asked to shell out as much as ₹3.50L

NARENDER  
PULLOOR | DC  
NIZAMABAD, AUG. 27

The prevailing unethical trends in private hospitals were exposed when a pregnant woman from Kanjar village in Mopal mandal recently approached a private hospital in Hyderabad road in Nizamabad for delivery.

It is alleged that the hospital doctors refused to do the delivery, saying that the ventilator facility is not available with them as the woman's scan report showed mild infection in the chest.

The victim who was experiencing labour pains approached another multi-speciality hospital in the same locality. But, the second hospital man-

agement asked her to shell out ₹3.50 lakh, as the first hospital authorities had categorised her as a Covid-19 patient.

The woman has a government health card, which the second hospital refused. Unable to pay such a huge amount, the woman and her family approached M.J. Hospital in Armoor, where doctors performed the delivery without hesitation. She gave birth to a baby girl.

In the times of the Coronavirus pandemic, many people are preferring to go to private hospitals to avail general as well as Covid-19 treatment.

The medical and health department has permitted seven private hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients.

These self-styled multi-

speciality hospitals are charging more than the prescribed amount fixed by the state government.

The government has capped treatment in private hospitals — for bed charges ₹4,000 in isolation, ₹7,500 for treatment without ventilator in ICU and ₹9,000 for treatment with ventilator in ICU. However, these private hospitals demand ₹3.50 lakh for Covid-19 treatment, while other hospitals ask patients to shell out ₹30,000 per day.

The family of the woman complained against the multi-speciality hospital to the district medical and health officer.

Meanwhile, district collector C. Narayana Reddy has also warned private hospitals not to conduct

CT Scan tests for Covid-19. There is no need to conduct a CT scan, and Antigen Rapid Tests are available in the district, he said. He also said that stringent action will be initiated against private hospitals, if they ignore the government rules during Covid-19 treatment.

The same goes for private hospitals offering telemedicine to Covid-19 patients. People are forced to pay huge amounts for Covid-19 treatment in private hospitals.

For this purpose, the victims get into debts for higher interest rates or have had to sell their properties.

Repeated efforts by Deccan Chronicle to reach the district medical and health officer were futile.

480 COVID-19  
POSITIVE CASES  
IN KHAMMAMDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, AUG. 27

About 480 Covid-19 positive cases were exposed against the 2,270 samples that were collected in Khammam district on Thursday. Nearly 158 patients were discharged and 94 patients are in the Covid-19 centre in Sarada Engineering College and 99 patients are in the isolation centre in the district headquarters hospital. Madhira recorded 34 cases and Kamepalli mandal recorded 12.

The medical and health department have speed up tests in all primary health centres. The government opened another two mobile Covid-19 test vehicles on Thursday. Presently, there are three mobile vehicles now.

Minister for transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said that the mobile Covid-19 test vehicles will visit remote villages and collect samples from the suspects. "Each vehicle will visit two to three villages daily and collect samples. TSRTC has provided these vehicles", he said.



TPCC secretary Padi Koushik Reddy argues with superintendent of Huzurabad Government hospital Dr Ravi in Karimnagar district on Thursday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Cong leader loses his cool,  
lashes out at hospital chiefPULI SHARATH  
KUMAR | DC  
KARIMNAGAR, AUG. 27

Padi Koushik Reddy, secretary of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC), on Thursday came down heavily on the superintendent of Huzurabad Government hospital, Dr Ravi, alleging that he was responsible for the death of Praveen, an employee of the government hospital.

Congress legislative party (CLP) leader, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, paid a visit to Huzurabad and Jammikunta and inspected the arrangements for Covid-19 patients in government hospitals in the respective towns of Huzurabad constituency, Karimnagar district.

Mr Koushik Reddy, who accompanied Mr Vikramarka, suddenly started attacking hospital superintendent, Dr Ravi, pointing his finger at him and asking why the doctor

had lodged cases against Congress party activists when they visited the hospital to check the arrangements provided for the patients.

Alleging that Dr. Ravi removed Praveen from his job without any reason as he was not supporting the superintendent in his illegal activities which caused Praveen to go into depression, Mr Koushik Reddy accused Dr. Ravi of Praveen's death due to a heart attack on Tuesday.

Mr Koushik Reddy also accused Dr. Ravi and health minister, Etala Rajendar, of killing patients in Huzurabad constituency in government hospitals in Huzurabad and Jammikunta with their illegal activities.

Warning that the Congress will lodge a murder case against Dr. Ravi, Mr Koushik Reddy said that the Congress will take up agitations until he is removed from

the superintendent post.

Mr Vikramarka intervened and asked Mr Koushik Reddy to calm down and handled the situation which got heated with the argument between Dr. Ravi and Mr Koushik Reddy. Mr Vikramarka also flew off the handle while inspecting the government hospital in Jammikunta town.

Expressing anger with the negligent behaviour of the officials of various hospitals, Mr Vikramarka asked how only 30 beds in the hospitals would be sufficient when large numbers of people are testing positive for Covid-19 in the region.

When private hospitals are giving treatment to Covid-19 patients with new medicines and injections released recently, doctors in the government hospitals are treating the Covid-19 patients with red and green tablets which are given for cold and cough, he alleged.

ABVP seeks prompt  
probe into girl's rapeANUDEEP  
CEREMILLA | DC  
WARANGAL, AUG. 27

Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists on Thursday protested in front of the Dr Ambedkar statue in Hanamkonda against the alleged arrest of ABVP leaders who staged a dharna in front of the police commissioner's office demanding justice for the rape victim.

ABVP state secretary Ambala Kiran said that the ABVP condemns the rape and prolonged sexual exploitation of the 25-year-old Dalit woman, at the National Conference of SFI held in Hyderabad. He demanded a prompt investigation followed by speedy trials to bring the offenders to justice.

The FIR filed by the victim on 22 August 2020 at the Panjagutta police station mentions repeated and prolonged sexual exploitation by 139 people, including members of the CPI (Marxist) affiliated Students' Federation of India (SFI), people from the film industry and persons associated with the ruling TRS government.

According to the victim's testimony, she was drugged, gang raped frequently and given death threats for refusing to submit herself to sexual exploitation. In addition she also suffered cigarette

**THE FIR filed by the victim on 22 August 2020 at the Panjagutta police station mentions repeated and prolonged sexual exploitation by 139 people, including members of the CPI (Marxist) affiliated SFI, people from the film industry and persons associated with the TRS government.**

burns and said that the SFI activists blackmailed her using photos taken against her will in compromising positions.

The victim also had to terminate her rape-induced unwanted pregnancy which led to her steep health deterioration. "We pray for the speedy recovery of the traumatised victim," Kiran said.

State joint secretary Punnam Venu said, "The brutal baton-charge on the protesting ABVP activists shows that the ruling TRS regime in protecting the culprits of its own ilk as well as the accused named from the SFI and Swaeroes. ABVP will continue its agitation until a timely, fair and competent investigation into the complaint made by the victim is concluded and speedy trials are commenced to bring all the accused involved in this ghastly crime."

TRADING PICKS  
UP IN KHAMMAM  
AGRI MARKETDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, AUG. 27

The agricultural market in Khammam witnessed hectic activity on Thursday after five months of lockdown.

Farmers brought 6,000 bags of cotton to the market. Cotton was sold at ₹4,850 per quintal and traders lifted the produce to export them to cotton mills in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Though the price is less than the minimum support price which is ₹5,825 per quintal, farmers were happy with the price. Nageswara Rao, farmer leader said, "In light of Covid-19, farmers feared that there would be no demand for the cotton produce. Farmers need the money to pay wages for harvesting the crop."

In June the price of cotton was ₹4,100 per quintal in July it touched ₹4,400. C. Sridhar, a cotton trader, said, "During lockdown, the cotton mills did not lift much cotton. Presently, the mill owners need the produce immediately and are eager to lift the produce. The increase of MSP of cotton to ₹5,825 is also the reason."

Farmers want the government to monitor payments from traders. Cotton arrivals are likely to pick up in the second week of September. The farmers in Khammam district raised the crop in 52,000 acres and the recent rains affected crops in more than 15,000 acres.

**FARMERS BROUGHT 6,000 bags of cotton to the market. Cotton was sold at ₹4,850 per quintal and traders lifted the produce to export them to cotton mills in Maharashtra and Gujarat.**

**THOUGH THE price is less than the MSP which is ₹5,825 per quintal, farmers were happy.**

**IN JUNE the price of cotton was ₹4,100 per quintal in July it touched ₹4,400.**

## Preparing for classes



As the schools are set to reopen, Mankamma Thota Dhagharwadi High School teachers attend a meeting held in the school premises in Karimnagar on Thursday.

BAMMERA POTHANA REMEMBERED  
ON HIS BIRTH ANNIVERSARYDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, AUG. 27

Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Rural Water Supply, Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Thursday paid respects to poet Bammerra Pothana on his birth anniversary.

In a statement released on the occasion, the minister said, "The day is also celebrated as 'Bhagavatha Day' commemorating the Pothana Bhagavatham translated by the poet from Sanskrit to Telugu.

"By scripting the Telugu version of the holy book of Bhagavatham, Pothana made all the Telugu people proud. Pothana's native village Bammerra

is located in my constituency of Palakurthy. It is an honour for me. Several people who brought global recognition to Telugu hailed from my constituency," he stated.

The minister also reminded that the place where Bammerra Pothana spent scripting his books has been chosen by Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu to be developed as a tourist spot.

"Funds to the tune of ₹25 crore have been released by the state government for the development of the area. As per the vision of the Chief Minister, we are developing the Palakurthy area as a tourism hub," he said.

## SCHOOLS | REOPEN

## Government's online classes get a thumbs up

## No vaccine, no school: Parents

A. RAVINDRA  
SESHU | DC  
KHAMMAM, AUG. 27

Parents and students are unhappy with the commencing of classes in the academic year of 2020-21 with no cure for the Coronavirus on the horizon.

Parents are reluctant to send their kids to schools in the current pandemic situation. They clarified that they will send their children only after the vaccine for Covid-19 is in the market.

G. Madhavi, a mother of two girls, said, "We are not in a position to send our children to the schools till

**THERE ARE 1,214 schools with 89,297 students and 4,200 teachers in Khammam district.**

the vaccine comes. We welcome the government's decision to commence online classes from September 1. As a parent, I hope for a vaccine before December, 2020."

Parents in urban areas are not worried about issues such as lack of smart phones or internet access for 50 per cent of students inhibiting the success of online classes.

The teachers of government schools have started coming to the schools from August 27 and will make arrangements for

online classes to be commenced from September 1. There are 1,214 schools with 89,297 students and 4,200 teachers in Khammam district.

Teachers are collecting information on the students who can attend online classes. The teachers came to their respective schools on Thursday after five months. Students who do not have smart phones or easy internet access have been asked to go to the nearest houses of other students. Students have been advised to

maintain three feet physical distance while sitting in the houses of other students and the student number should not exceed three. Students who download T-Sat App, can participate in online classes.

N. Appa Rao, a teacher working in Tallada, said, "The government may continue online classes till the vaccine comes. Exams may be conducted in April, 2021, with 30 per cent lessons of various subjects taught. My teaching community is expecting a vaccine before it."

The government may not involve Vidya volunteers in online classes.





## 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.

the trial period, the treatment is free,” he said.

The second volunteer, a 32-year-old man, who is a PhD holder in statistics and works in a private

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

## CONG SHOULD REVIVE ITSELF, SAYS SHIV SENA

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC  
MUMBAI, AUG. 27

Amid the demand to change the guard of the 130-year-old grand party Congress, the Shiv Sena alleged that the letter written by 23 senior Congress leaders to Sonia Gandhi was a “conspiracy to finish off Rahul Gandhi's leadership”.

The Sena said that the Congress should revive itself as the country needs a strong opposition party.

The executive editor of party mouthpiece *Saamana* Sanjay Raut said that Rahul Gandhi is the only leader in the Congress, who has “unanimous acceptability” in the party.

“Sonia Gandhi is ageing and I don't see Priyanka Gandhi in full-time politics. There are many senior leaders in the party, due to whom Rahul Gandhi is not being able to work,” he said.

## 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.

The Air Defence Command (ADC) will have all the air defence assets of Army, Air Force and Navy under its operational command so that there is better co-ordination and quick reaction during an air attack on the country.

It is likely to be headed by an Air Force Officer.

Currently the responsibility of Air defence lies with Air Force but still army and Navy also have their own air defence systems.

The advance S-400 Air Defence system which India has bought from Russia will be placed under this command once these are delivered.

Currently, China has deployed S-300 against India at the Ladakh sector.

The new command is expected to be situated in Allahabad. The chief of Defence staff has been mandated to bring unity among army, Airforce and Navy for effective strike at the enemy.

— PTI

## 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 MADHAV  
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.

## LETTER | SAGA

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

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

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.



## 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 Lophuri, 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.

## 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

## LESS | UPROAR

**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.

## 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

protester 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.

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

## Virus on but Europe is going back to school

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

## 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 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

## 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 president'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 pumelled 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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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, psycholinguistics 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.

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 Madhu 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, gobsmacking 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

ILLEGAL PLOTS

It is a wise decision by the state government though delayed (*TS bans registration of illegal buildings, plots, DC, Aug. 27*). The ban must be strictly implemented. The highly corrupt department may use every possible way to circumvent the orders as the legal position is very weak. The court may put some hurdles in its implementation but the government should not go back. This order brings great relief to those seeking to buy hassle-free properties.

S.M. Tanvir  
Hyderabad

HOTEL FREELOADERS

Kudos to *DC* for exposing GHMC officials and police for misusing their power (*Free-loaders among officials bleed hotels, DC, Aug. 26*). Though there are a few of them, they bring shame to their department though they are well-paid. Apart from hotels, even the small tiffin centres and roadside carts are not spared. There must be an end to such beggarly behaviour.

Chandrasekhar  
Secunderabad

BURNING ISSUES

I find many television channels putting extra focus on the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput as if there were no other burning issues in the country to deliberate on. They did not cover floods, landslides and other issues.

Balaji Shanker  
Hyderabad

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.



## 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.



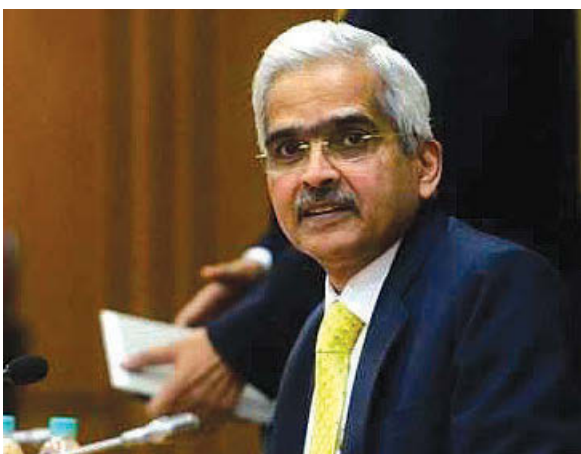
# ■ Banks need to reorient business, lend more RBI hasn't exhausted all options, ready to act: Das

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

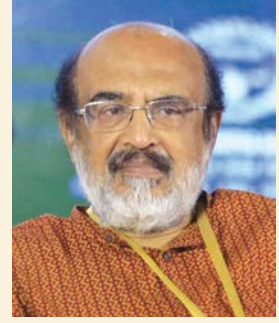
SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

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

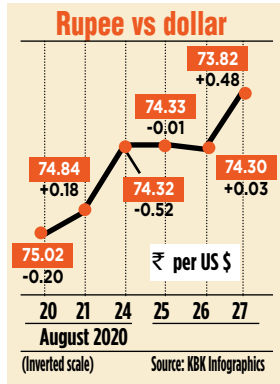


Nirmala Sitharaman

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'Oréal 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