

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 28 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 1mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aavani 12
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Moolam
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.45 am
Zohar: 12.17 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.26 pm
Isha: 7.39 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 2.43 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.17 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+74,403)	(+1,046)
33,82,152	61,675

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+5,981)	
TN: 4,03,242	6,948

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

2,44,57,353

DEATHS

8,32,259

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

215

worldometers.info

Koyambedu market may open in Sept.

Chennai: The Koyambedu markets, which were closed in the first week of May after the commercial complex was found to be a source of Coronavirus infection, will be reopened in a staggered manner, starting with the food grains wholesale market on September 18. Deputy Chief Minister O Pannerselvam had called for a meeting of officials and traders on Thursday to discuss the opening of the commercial complex, which was being pushed repeatedly by the Federation of Tamil Nadu Traders.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 2

COUNTER

POINT

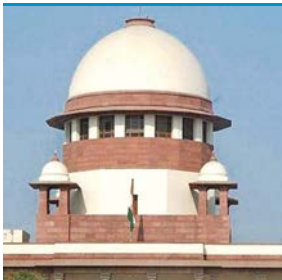


Only 30% of MPs are attending the House, the rest are working from home!

SC: 2004 ‘quota in quota’ verdict to be reconsidered

New Delhi, Aug 27: In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court Thursday ruled that its 2004 verdict holding that states do not have the power to further sub-classify the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for grant of quotas needed to be revisited by a seven or more judges bench.

The apex court said states should be allowed to provide preferential treatment to the “poorest of the poor” among SCs and STs and advocated that an “authoritative pronouncement” was needed with respect to the effect of Constitutional provisions



and whether sub-classification is permissible only with respect to the socially and educationally backward classes and not with respect to SCs and STs. The top court observed that the benefit of quota by and large is not percolat-

ing down to the “neediest and poorest of the poor” and it was “crystal clear” that creamy layer concept for excluding affluent people “can be applied to” SCs and STs.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said the 2004 verdict of a bench of same strength in the E. V. Chinniah case had held that states cannot give preference to certain Scheduled Castes as it would amount to “tinkering with” the Presidential list of SCs and STs under the Constitution and this required to be relooked.

— PTI

STATE | 3

Stalin wants other CMs to protest Neet, JEE



NATION | 4

Rhea claims threat to her life



SPORT | 7

Satwiksairaj tests Covid-19 positive



No quarantine for business travellers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 27

To give a boost to the industry and economy sentiment, e-passes would be issued to all business travellers visiting Tamil Nadu for a short stay of 72 hours and they would be exempted from quarantine, the government announced on Thursday.

The Covid-19 e-passes would be for the short term visit of business travelers from all segments namely industry, hospitality, legal, IT, ITES, entertainment etc, the order from the revenue and disaster management department said. Meanwhile, the Additional Chief Secretary to the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, Harmander Singh, wanted the officials in the Corporation to crack the whip on those violating Coronavirus prevention norms.

■ P3

SC says no to Muharram processions

New Delhi, Aug 27: The Supreme Court Thursday declined permission for carrying out Muharram procession across the country and asked Lucknow-based petitioner to move before the Allahabad High Court with his plea.

The apex court said how it can pass a general order for the whole country. A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said it would lead to chaos and targeting of a particular community.

GST shortfall ₹2.35L cr in fiscal 2021: Nirmala

‘Act of God’ claims fin min, States are upset

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, AUG 27

Severely hurt by goods and services tax (GST) collections due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre, on Thursday, offered two options before the GST Council for borrowing by states to meet the shortfall in its GST revenues. The GST compensation is estimated to be at ₹2.35 lakh crore in the current fiscal. The states were also given seven days window to decide between these two options offered by the Council for bridging the gap of their GST revenue shortfall as the Modi-led government is obliged to make up for till 2022.

Briefing to the media persons via a virtual conference soon after 41st GST Council meeting, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who heads the Council, said, “State finance secretaries have been asked to send suggestions in a note and sought time of seven days... This arrangement will be for current year and the council will again look at the situation in April 2021.”

The move of the GST Council comes at a time when collections, including compensation cess to the states, have been falling short of targets even before the coronavirus pandemic, making it difficult for the Centre to compensate the states.

“Two options were placed before states. We told them that we will facilitate talking with the RBI and help to get G-security linked interest rates so that each state does not have to struggle for loans,” Sitharaman

FUNDS CRUNCH

Centre gives 2 options to borrow via RBI

Sad state of affairs in GST Council as it is increasingly yielding to majoritarianism instead of being consensual:
C'garh FM TS Singh Deo.

Unfortunate that Centre not helping states by honouring its commitment on compensation:
Puducherry CM V Narayanasamy after GST Council meet



Amid chorus by non-NDA ruled states for compensation of GST revenue shortfall, the Centre presented two options to states under which they can borrow from the market to make up for the estimated deficit of Rs 2.35 lakh crore this fiscal.

said, adding that states will also be given a further relaxation in FRBM of 0.5 per cent points for market borrowing.

Explaining the options in detail, finance secretary AB Pandey said, “The first option is to provide a special borrowing window to states, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to provide Rs 97,000 crore at a “reasonable” interest rate. This money can then be repaid after 5 years by extending cess collections. While the other option is to meet the entire GST compensation gap of Rs 2.35 lakh crore this year itself after consulting with the RBI.”

With the GST mop-up that has been badly hit by the pandemic, Sitharaman said the coronavirus pandemic was “an act of God” and an unforeseen factor that affected GST collections. “...This year we are facing an extraordinary situation. We are facing an act of God where we may even see a contraction,” she said.

■ P4

12,268 cr needed urgently: TN

Chennai, Aug 27: The Tamil Nadu government on Thursday urged the Centre to expedite release of ₹12,258.94 crore, which is its GST arrears from the latter since 2018-19 and the outstanding Integrated GST of ₹4,073 crore for the 2017-2018 fiscal.

Also, in view of COVID-19, which has imposed a fiscal burden on Tamil Nadu in terms of scaling up the medicare infrastructure for treatment and improving the health of the people, the Centre should continue with the GST compensation currently being enforced, the government said.

This measure should continue so as to ensure the states do not suffer a setback on the fiscal front. D Jayakumar, Minister for Fisheries, Personnel and Administrative Refor-

ms, who participated in the 41st meeting of the GST council on Thursday via video conference, demanded.

At present, Tamil Nadu is cutting back on other expenditure to carry out COVID-19 preventive measures and is unable to give up the state's financial resources. “Tamil Nadu's fiscal burden has increased owing to the coronavirus pandemic and the crisis necessitated curtailment of other expenditures to cope with the present situation,” Jayakumar said. Further release of the state's financial resources could have a serious impact on the implementation of welfare schemes for the poor and downtrodden, he stressed and demanded that the states continue to receive GST compensation.

Air Defence Command by Oct.

India best place for defence manufacturing: PM Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 27

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

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.

Its 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

New Delhi, Aug 27: Wooing foreign players to join his push for defence manufacturing in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that producing defence equipment in the country is the best option for them considering the big size of its market and underscored his government's commitment to creating a robust ecosystem for all

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 jointness among army, Airforce and Navy

manufacturers.

Addressing a seminar on 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' in defence manufacturing, Modi said his government has ushered in a “win-win” situation for all players, from public sector to private and foreign manufacturers, and asserted that the concept of a self-reliant India is not “inward-looking”. The goal of this mission is to

to effective strike at the enemy.

India will also have a peninsular command for maritime security.

As per initial plan Navy's eastern and western command could be combined under one commander, the Peninsular Command as India face threats like

make India work towards larger global peace, and also to help the world economy become more resilient and stable, he said.

The defence sector having self confidence is necessary for making a modern and self-reliant India, the prime minister said, asserting that a new mindset has emerged on his government's watch.

26/11. The commander will focus on the whole Indian Ocean Region. He will be free to transfer ships from western to eastern command as per the threat perception and will be in better position to manage the security of the region as he will be on ground.

● **Centre sent a team of health officials after six of the tribe tested positive.**

— File picture



tribe's members travel to Port Blair where they have government jobs. “The team tested 37 samples and four members of the Great Andamanese tribe were

found to be positive. They are admitted in hospital.” Avijit Ray, a senior health officer in charge of the disease management in the Andamans, said.

— AFP

State surpasses 4L Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 27:

Coronavirus infections crossed the four lakh mark with 5,981 fresh cases reported in the State while the total fatalities since the beginning rose to 6,948 as 109 persons succumbed to the virus on Thursday.

Infections in Chennai were 1,286 with 32 deaths and the districts that had high levels of new cases were Chengalpattu 298, Coimbatore 439, Cuddalore 261, Kanchipuram 256, Salem 413 and Thiruvallur 323.

Meanwhile, a 45-year-old Coronavirus patient from Chennai, who was admitted to the Government Medical College Hospital at the Omandurar Estate with 90 per cent involvement of lungs due to Covid Pneumonia, recovered after 60 days of treatment.

Solomon from Kilpauk, was admitted on June 26 with complaints of fever and breathlessness, a statement from the hospital said, adding he was treated in the ICU with assisted ventilation, high flow of oxygen and administered protocol based drugs.

He was under the care of experts till he recovered completely and was discharged on August 24. Dean R Jayanthi, professors S M Sujatha, Ranjani and Padmanabhan and nodal officer Ramesh wished Solomon as he was discharged from the hospital, the statement added.

● **Fresh infected cases continue to hover around the 6,000 per day mark even as deaths are set to pass 7,000**

From 3,02,815 cases on Aug 10

the state has added one lakh plus cases in a matter of about **16 days** and in less than two months it has seen a whopping **three lakh new infections.**

On July 25, Tamil Nadu had crossed the two lakh mark and on July 3, the state surpassed one lakh cases.

RECOVERIES PAST 25 L: HEALTH MIN

New Delhi, Aug 27: The number of COVID-19 recoveries has surpassed 25 lakh in the country while the case fatality rate has further declined to 1.83 per cent, the Union health ministry said on Thursday. The cumulative number of COVID-19 tests conducted in the country has reached nearly 3.9 crore, it added.

A record 75,760 cases were added to the country's COVID-19 tally in a day, taking it to 33.10 lakh. The death toll due to the disease climbed to 60,472, with 1,023 fatalities reported in the last 24 hours, health ministry data updated at 8 am showed. Besides, 9,24,998 lakh COVID-19 tests were conducted across the country in a span of 24 hours, taking the total number of such tests performed to 3,85,76,510.

TIME TICKS ON

Under pressure, TikTok CEO resigns

HongKong: TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer resigned Thursday amid U.S. pressure for its Chinese owner to sell the popular video app, which the White House says is a security risk.

In a letter to employees, Mayer said that his decision to leave comes after the “political environment has sharply changed.” His resignation follows President Donald Trump's order to ban TikTok unless its parent company, ByteDance, sells its U.S. operations to an American company within 90 days.

Microsoft is currently the frontrunner in the race with other potential bidders including Twitter, Oracle, and reportedly even SoftBank.

10 of Andaman tribe of 50 get virus

Port Blair, Aug 27: Ten members of India's dwindling Great Andamanese tribe have tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said Thursday, fuelling concerns about the safety of the group and other indigenous people in the remote archipelago. Out of the 10, six have recovered and have been put in home quarantine, while the rest are undergoing treatment in a local hospital.

Just over 50 Great

Andamanese people survive today and live on the tiny Strait Island where the government looks after their food and shelter. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with a population of some 4,00,000, has reported 2,268 coronavirus cases so far with 37 deaths.

Authorities sent a team of health officials to Strait Island on Sunday after six members of the tribe tested positive in the archipelago's capital Port Blair recently. Some of the

SHORT TAKES

Pet dog helps trace master's body

Ooty, Aug 27: A pet dog helped in tracing the decomposed body of his missing master, suspected to have been trampled to death by a wild elephant in Nilgiris district. Palaniyandi (60), living in O'Valley near Gudalur, went missing three days ago following which a search was launched but to no avail, police said.

However, a few residents on Thursday noticed the dog visiting a particular spot and running back to the victim's house and barking. They then followed the canine and found the decomposed body bearing serious injuries on head and abdomen, indicating an attack by an elephant, they said. Further investigations were on, they said. — PTI

Add milk to mid-day meals, save dairy farmers: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

Working president of Tamil Nadu Congress Mohan Kumaramangalam urged the state government to add milk to the menu of the mid-day meal Scheme for the students to secure the livelihood of dairy farmers, who are in deep distress due to the reduced procurement of milk by Aavin and private milk vendors due to the lockdown.

About 40 lakh farmers were involved in dairy business, producing about 2 crore litres of milk a day. Aavin, which procures milk from them at Rs 24 to 27 per litre, and private vendors, who pay Rs 30 per litre, have now reduced their milk procurement ratio, Kumaramangalam said in a statement on Thursday.

Two held under Pocso Act

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 27

A 23-year-old youth was arrested under the Pocso Act for allegedly kidnapping a 15-year-old girl, promising marriage.

Police said, Solai Raj, native of Pappirettypatti in Dharmapuri district, after completing an ITI course, came to Coimbatore a few years ago in search of a job, and was staying in a rented room near Ramanathapuram.

There, he developed a love affair with a girl living in the same area. A few days back, the girl went missing.

Following a complaint from her parents, Ramanathapuram police picked Solai Raj and the girl from his native place, Dharmapuri, and imprisoned him under the Pocso Act.

In another case, Kattoor police arrested a 40-year-old man under the Pocso Act under direction of Chennai police. The accused was identified as Balaji alias Balakrishna Dhas from Ram Nagar, working in a private firm.

Balaji was arrested for uploading hundreds of child porn videos on the internet.

File a report on infra facilities at foreigners camp in Tiruchy: HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

To ascertain as to whether infrastructure facilities are available or not, the Madras high court has directed the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Tiruchy, to visit the foreigners camp at Kottappattur Refugee Camp, Tiruchy, and file a report before the court.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and V.M.Velumani gave the directive while passing interim orders on the Habeas corpus petitions filed by Elumalai, challenging the detention order and restriction of movement orders passed by the authorities against his foreign national friends Vaikov Boris Ventsislavov, Bozhichkov Nikolay Katev and Spasov Loyubomir Maksimov.

The bench said the petitioners are foreign nationals and are arrested by the Central Crime Branch in connection with a case for the offences punishable under sections 120-B, 420, 465, 467, 468, 471 IPC and sections 66 and 43 of Information Technology Act. The authorities restricted the movement of the detainees under section 3 (2) (e) of the Foreigners Act. Challenging the said orders only, the present HCPs have been filed. As

Mega food processing park to be set up in Nagai

Nagapattinam, Aug. 27: A mega food processing park would be set up at Nagapattinam at a cost of Rs 1,000 crore, Chief Minister K. Palaniswami said on Thursday. Addressing the gathering at the collectorate after reviewing the measures taken to combat the pandemic, the Chief Minister said the state was making big strides in agriculture and healthcare despite the pandemic.

"All agricultural activities are now going on without any disruption," he said. Amid the pandemic, about 28 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured from the farmers in Cauvery delta districts, which is a historic achievement, he said, adding, this was 5 lakh tonnes more when



compared to the last year. He pointed out that desilting work was meticulously carried out in delta districts ensuring the free flow of Cauvery water to tail-end areas. Palaniswami said government hospitals in the state were providing better service than private hospitals. "Infrastructure facilities have been improved to a great extent. Poor people

now get easy access to high-quality healthcare in the state," he said and added that a new medical college with a modern hospital was being constructed at Nagapattinam at a cost of Rs 365 crore. Referring to the formation of the Mayiladuthurai district bifurcating Nagapattinam, the Chief Minister said that public hearing was now being conducted and the new district will start functioning soon. Stating that the state was attracting investors even during the pandemic, Palaniswami said that the government was firmly focused on employment generation on a large scale. He also announced that a mega food processing park would be set up in Nagapattinam at a cost of

Rs 1,000 crore, which will generate employment opportunities in this region. He further said that a textiles park would also be set up in Nagapattinam district. In higher education enrolment too, Tamil Nadu has made significant improvements during the past 9 years, he said. Claiming that the government had taken all steps to combat Covid-19 and control its spread, the Chief Minister pointed out that Tamil Nadu was now ranking first among the states in India in terms of the number of tests conducted per day and the cure rate. Earlier, the Chief Minister distributed welfare measures to beneficiaries under various schemes.

— PTI

Leopard sighted in Ooty town

DC CORRESPONDENT
OOTY, AUG. 27

The man-leopard conflict has again resurfaced in the town here, as residents reported movement of a leopard in Elk Hill area here during the night hours, triggering panic among the residents.

After a brief pause, the leopard was captured by surveillance camera footages in the area, freely sneaking into residential areas in Elk hill, and even seen walking inside a private bungalow which it used as a hideout. On an alert, forest officials set up cages to trap the leopard and relocate it.

Covid patient moves NHRC against erecting tin sheets

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

A Covid-19 patient, a lawyer in the Madras high court, has sent a complaint to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the inhuman and socially ostracising practice of fixing tin sheets in the residences of persons detected with the virus.

Advocate K. Elangovan on Thursday filed the complaint against the Chennai corporation, health department and other authorities for fixing tin sheet at the door of his house.

On August 20, he was tested positive for Covid-19 and sent to a hospital. Meanwhile, the corporation officials erected tin sheets on his door and fixed a poster warning that the place has been 'banned' for entry.

In the complaint, he said the officials erected the tin sheet without giving any prior notice. The corporation and health department are acting in an authoritarian manner against the interests of

In the complaint, he said the officials erected the tin sheet without giving any prior notice. The corporation and health department are acting in an authoritarian manner against the interests of Covid-19 patients and their family members. Instead of helping the patients, they are making things worse by banning entry of family members of the patients, the complaint added



Corporation workers fixed tin sheet at the door of the Covid patient's house.

Covid-19 patients and their family members. Instead of helping the patients, they are making things worse by banning entry of family members of the patients, the complaint added.

Elangovan said the blocking has deprived his human rights and curtailed right to freedom. No one has given the Corporation the right to imprison the inmates or restrict their family mem-

bers from entering the house. Even after getting out of hospital, the cured citizen cannot go to his own house.

Except a few rich and influential people, almost all the patients and their family members are facing the inhuman practice since the outbreak of the virus. He said action must be initiated against the erring officials, including Corporation commissioner.

Stalin wants other CMs to protest Neet, JEE

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

DMK president M. K. Stalin wrote to the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala on Thursday, urging them to join their counterparts of seven other states who are approaching the Supreme Court challenging the Centre's decision to hold the entrance examinations for professional courses, Neet and JEE.

"As you are aware, heads of West Bengal, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry are planning to move the Supreme Court against the Centre challenging its decision to conduct Neet and JEE," he said in the letter.

The decision to postpone the June 2020 examination was taken mainly because the conditions were not



conducive to conduct exams, he said, adding not the severity of the crisis had worsened across the country.

"Not just the pandemic, the country has witnessed floods and landslides, which cut off most of rural and hilly areas from the mainland. In most states, public transport system has not yet resumed. Railways and air travel cannot be accessed by the majority of candidates and a lot of uncertainty persists in reaching the allotted exam centres," Stalin said.

In the light of the severe difficulties explained above, keeping the well-being and future of students in mind, I sincerely request you to join in solidarity with the states and approach the Supreme Court on postponement of Neet and JEE for the greater good, as our united stand can help the voices of the students and parents across the country, he added.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Nadu Congress is organising protests demanding the postponement of Neet and JEE at two places in Chennai on Friday, August 28, at 11 am. Congress leaders and cadre would take part in the agitations to be held near the Chennai collector's Office, under the leadership of K. V. Thangabalu and near the Purasawalkam telephone exchange, led by party MP S Thirunavukarasar.

Duo smuggle gold worth ₹3 cr, held

ANANTH MATHIVANAN | DC
POLLACHI, AUG. 27

Two Kerala-based persons were arrested at the Tamil Nadu - Kerala border near Pollachi, as they were smuggling jewels worth over ₹3 crore, to neighbouring Kerala.

Police said, a team led by prohibition enforcement

Duo claimed they were taking the jewels to a jewellery outlet in Thrissur. Since they were unable to produce proper documents for the jewels and cash, officials arrested them

official, Ajith, was involved in regular vehicle check near Meenachipuram check-post bordering Tamil Nadu late on

Wednesday, when they stopped a speeding car heading towards Kerala under suspicion. On enquiry, the duo in the car gave irrelevant statements. Inside the car, officials found 3 kg and 641 grams of gold jewels along with ₹6 lakh in cash.

The duo claimed they were taking the jewels to a jewellery outlet in Thrissur.



Court, the statement said.

"He was a great lawyer who had won many cases and as a judge had given many landmark judgments, particularly the one banning smoking in public places," Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said in his message.

Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam tweeted his condolences, saying that he was sad to hear of the passing away of the judge, who passed the

Over 21,000 eggs damaged in lorry capsized near Ambur

K. SENTHIL NATHAN | DC
VELLORE, AUG. 27

A mini-lorry carrying poultry eggs from Namakkal to a dealer in Anaicut here capsized on Thursday near Ambur in Tirupattur district on the Bengaluru - Chennai national highway, and as many as 21,000 eggs were damaged in the accident.

Sources said, as the lorry was nearing Vinnamangalam on the Bengaluru - Chennai highway, the driver lost control of the truck and the vehicle toppled after hitting the median, smashing around 21,000 eggs on the road. Vehicular traffic on the road was diverted and a crane was deployed to lift the truck.

HC seeks list of unorganised workmen

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 27

Declining the relief as sought for with respect to the cash assistance given only to the registered members of the boards, the Madras high court has directed authorities to undertake an extensive process of enumerating and enlisting of those unorganized workmen coming in the purview of 34 boards, both under the labour department and others, by interacting with the respective wings of the State government.

"The district collectors concerned are directed to undertake the said exercise and complete the process within eight weeks," said a division bench comprising Justices M.M.Sundresh and R.Hemalatha while disposing of a batch of petitions from Nirmal Mazdoor Panchayat Sangam and others, which sought a direction to the state government to accord the benefit of a 2020 GO to the members of the petitioner Union or construction workers who have not registered with the Tamil

Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board under the Tamil Nadu Manual Workers (Construction Workers) Welfare Scheme 1994 as well as to those construction workers who have registered but not renewed their registration under the said scheme, and thereby grant the relief of rations and financial assistance enhancing the same to Rs 5,000 on a monthly basis to construction labour as a whole for the duration of the lockdown or in any event grant the relief and the financial

benefit accorded in the said orders.

The bench said the petitioners seek the relief for the unregistered/non-renewed unorganized workmen on par with those registered by utilizing the funds available with the boards meant to be used for various schemes. "On the legal issue, we find force in the submissions made by the Advocate General. The scheme is meant to be used only for the members registered thereunder. The money collected by the board under the scheme is

now utilized. Therefore, though it was cash assistance, money was from the contribution made under the scheme. While, there may not be sufficient money to give the relief to all those similarly placed persons though unregistered, the same if made available using the available fund would make the scheme totally unworkable. We find that the classification has got certainly a nexus to the object sought to be achieved. It is not the case of the petitioners that the utilization of the fund is bad. On the

contrary, they also want the cash assistance as done to the registered members of the board", the bench added.

The bench said it was not possible for the state government to undertake a roving enquiry to identify all those who were working as unorganized workmen. Utilizing the fund available for the purpose as stated by the petitioners would substantially prejudice the cause of the registered members who were also not before the court, the bench added.

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.

CHAOS AS TS BANS REGISTRATION OF ILLEGAL PLOTS

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 27

Utter chaos prevailed in the sub-registrar offices (SROs) across Telangana over implementing the new rule prohibiting the registration of unauthorised plots and structures.

With no data available in the SROs on unauthorised layouts and particulars of structures, the registration authorities at the ground level were confused over implementing the rule. The head office is said to have been flooded with calls from sub-registrars seeking clarifications and several documents were kept pending, sources said.

The decision of the government is being viewed more as a threat before it makes a big move on revenue mobilisation. “The cash-strapped government has been looking for several ways to mobilise resources and regularisation of unauthorised layouts and buildings is one of them,” official sources pointed out.

Legal experts on the other hand found fault with the invoking of the Municipal and Panchayat Raj Acts which have no 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 said.

SC ORDER ON ARUNTHATHIYAR QUOTA WELCOMED

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 27:

The Supreme Court verdict allowing the State to provide three per cent exclusive quota for the Arunthathiyar community within the 18 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes was welcomed by many political parties on Thursday. Deputy Chief Minister O Pannarselvam tweeted that he was happy about the judgment, which he welcomed as it would bring prosperity to those in the lowest rung of society.

DMK President M K Stalin, who had introduced the Bill providing for the exclusive reservation in the Assembly in 2009, thanked the Supreme Court for upholding the social justice of the oppressed and depressed people.

Hailing it as a victory for DMK’s principle of social justice and the efforts of M Karunanidhi, Stalin traced the history behind the passing of the Bill in Assembly. It was finally notified in the gazette on April 29, 2009, Stalin said.

BJP State vice president V P Duraiswami and PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss welcomed the verdict. Dr Ramadoss said the PMK had been supporting the cause of the community since 1988. CPM State secretary K Balakrishnan also welcomed the judgment as the party, too, had been with the community.

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

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

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.

Rhea claims threats; seeks 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 actor wrote.

Mumbai Police personnel reached her residence on Thursday afternoon and took her father along for questioning by the ED.

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 Khari 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

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

AP Covid caseload second highest; K’taka, TN follow

DC CORRESPONDENTS
AUG. 27

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

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

Andhra Pradesh stood second in total number of Covid-19 active cases by registering 94,209 cases while Maharashtra records the highest of 1,73,195 cases among 35 States and Union Territories.

Karnataka stands at third position with 83,627 cases followed by Tamil Nadu with 52,362 cases.

2,795 new cases, 8 deaths in Telangana

Hyderabad: Telangana state reported 2,795 new Covid-19 cases and eight more deaths from the disease. The health 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.

Kerala has 2406 new cases, 2067 recoveries

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala on Thursday reported 2406 new cases of Covid - 19 even as 2067 were cured of the disease.

With this the total number of cases in the state has gone up to 66,761 of which 22,673 are active cases. Ten deaths were reported on Thursday taking the death toll to 267, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said.

NCB arrests former TV actor in drug racket in Bengaluru

VINAY MADHAVA GOWDA | DC
BENGALURU, AUG. 27

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

The NCB has arrested the racket kingpin and former television actress Anika D. and two of her

associates M. Anoop and R. Ravindran, while confiscating large haul of drugs.

NCB Deputy Director K.P.S. Malhotra said that the gang distributed drugs to prominent musicians and top actors in Karnataka and the clients, including children of VIPs in the state are under scanner of NCB. The agency has seized 145 ecstasy or MDMA pills and over ₹2.2 lakh cash from Royal Suits Kalyan Nagar on Aug. 21.

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

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 Machhili-patnam — were heading to AP from Berhampur in a car smuggling the silver bricks weighing around 61 kg.

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 Loppburi mall in Loppburi, about 145 kilometres north of Bangkok. During the robbery, the gunman began shooting wildly, killing a sales clerk, a security guard and a 2-year-old boy, and wounding four other people. Security video that was widely broadcast after the incident showed a man dressed in a black ski mask and camouflage trousers, with a backpack across his chest, carrying a pistol with a silencer.

Rijneveld wins Int'l Booker Prize

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

China test-fires missile into SCS

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

TIKTOK CHIEF KEVIN MAYER QUILTS COMPANY

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

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

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



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

17-year-old held after two killed in Kenosha

Kenosha, Aug. 27: A white, 17-year-old police admiral 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, as 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

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

in National Guard do their jobs." In Washington, the Justice Department said it is sending in the FBI and federal marshals in response to the unrest. The dead were identified only as a 26-year-old Silver Lake, Wisconsin, resident

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. — AP

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

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

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. — PTI

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 Lukashen-

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 presidency'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

LESS | UPROAR

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

Virus on but Europe is going back to school

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

said. For some of those growing up in an environment plagued with violence and drugs, school "is a place where they can breathe". Unlike the US, many European schools reopened at the end of the last term, offering lessons for the fall. Among measures in place: Hand-washing stations, one-way corridors, staggered starts and lunch times. Some regions are giving out free laptops, in case of new lockdowns. Many countries require masks in school, but rules vary on where to wear them and from what age.

— AP

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 Sep 1 and the NEET set to be held on Sep 13, it may already be too late to reschedule these tests unless they are dropped altogether. The government 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 MS 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 pummeled 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.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-0885

Sudhanshu Sarangi



Suicide probe: Not the ‘who’ but the ‘how’ of it is the key

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subhani



LETTERS

SONIA'S GIMMICKS

Indians have seen quite a lot of bonhomie sessions of Opposition parties to fight and topple BJP government in the elections previously too. The latest face in the bonhomie session convened by Sonia is Uddhav Thackrey, CM of Maharashtra, who with all vehemence attacked the BJP. It is funny to see that none of the participants had given a clear cut prescription of the remedies to pull the country out of the state of stalemate and imbroglio. There is also a total absence of unity of opinion with regard to the future PM of the country.

Kooduthuraiyan
Coimbatore

SC CONFUSED!

THE SC IS really placed now in a piquant situation with regard to handing a punishment to Prasant Bhushan for his continued defiance in tendering an apology for his derogatory observations against the Indian top court. The best course would be to declare the offender as an 'unwanted person' besides relieving him from the Senior Advocate position in the Supreme Court. Any other punishment will make Bhushan a martyr. Who knows that the Opposition parties will not make him a contestant in the next elections for the post of the President of India?

S. Nagarajan Iyer
Coimbatore

REMARKABLE FEAT

KUDOS TO ENGLAND pace bowler, James Anderson, for capturing his 600th wicket during the 3rd Test against Pakistan to become the first fast bowler in history to achieve the feat. Definitely it is a remarkable achievement and as the legendary Fred Trueman put it, he must be a bloody tired man now. With this achievement has ended the monopoly of spin bowlers of 600+ elite clubs. By playing another 4 to 5 Tests he could even surpass the record of our Anil Kumble to capture the Number 3 spot. Of course, it may be a Herculean task for him to surpass legendary Muthiah Muralidharan or even the record of Shane Warne. Anyway, wish him the best in the remaining years of his illustrious career.

Vinay Mahadevan
Chennai

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.

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2222, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252,253,255,257 & 358
Editor: **ADITYA SINHA**

HEAD & 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, 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

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



Rankireddy Satwiksairaj

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. 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. — 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

LIVE RICH FINANCIAL Chronicle

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

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.

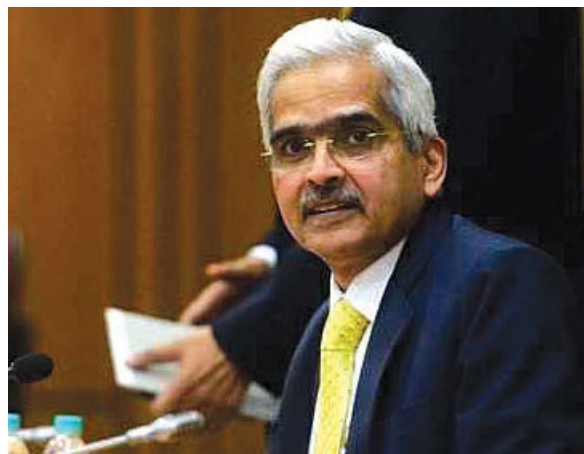
■ Banks need to reorient business, lend more
RBI hasn't exhausted all options, ready to act: Das

**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 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 said 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

RBI and the financial sector should return to normal functioning without relying on the regulatory relaxations and other measures as the new norm," the governor said.

He further said that once some clarity reaches on the coronavirus curve and other aspects, the RBI will start giving its estimates on inflation and growth. The headline Consumer Price Index (CPI) for June 2020 came higher than consensus expectations and was at 6.1 per cent year-on-year, after reaching 7.2 per cent in April and 6.3 per cent in May. Real rates, which have been a driver of inflation in the past, are moving towards the negative terrain after six long years.

Since February, the RBI has reduced rates by 1.15 per cent in two rate cut moves till the inflation continued to surge to beyond its comfort level. However, the policy continues to be within the accommodation stance, which means the central bank can act as and when it sees space.

Speaking about hardening of yields on government securities of late, Das said it will be incorrect to say that the RBI's moves have not worked. He said the bond yields have hardened only in the last fortnight.

Das said that the banking system needs to reorient business in the post-coronavirus world by looking within and added that the banking system in India is resilient enough now.

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), Sunteck 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