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Rajarshi and Saptarshi

It has been a wonderful four-year journey at SRM-AP. Every moment has defined our life 'to see and to be seen', including exciting academics and research, 24/7 working in the student-run Next Tech Lab, Semester Abroad to UC Berkeley, USA on Design, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and winning a Hackathon in Bay Area, competing with MIT, Stanford and Carnegie Mellon. Now, we are starting our new life in Japan. - **Rajarshi and Saptarshi, B.Tech (CSE)**

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# SRM UNIVERSITY – AP

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- Sourav Sanyal, Miran Junaidi, and Saurabh Ghanekar, B.Tech (CSE)



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on Sunday



**Kerala moves SC against HC order in Assembly ruckus case**  
page 5



**Goa-bound Rajdhani derailed inside tunnel; all 309 passengers safe**  
page 6



**Partnership between Afghanistan, U.S. to continue, says Biden**  
page 9

**Mithali's India meets Knight's England in ODI series from today**  
page 14



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## NEARBY



**City parks, golf courses to open from tomorrow**  
NEW DELHI  
City parks, gardens and golf courses will open from Monday, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority stated in an order on Saturday. Apart from these, guests at marriage ceremonies will be allowed up to 50% of the banquet hall's capacity, gyms and yoga institutes too will be allowed to work at 50% capacity from June 28.  
CITY PAGE 3  
MAGAZINE 8 PAGES  
CLASSIFIEDS PAGE 4

## Govt. raises alert on Delta Plus

Advisory to States calls for more samples for epidemiological correlations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union government has warned the States that the Delta Plus variant, which is currently a variant of concern, has increased transmissibility, stronger binding to receptors of lung cells and potential reduction in monoclonal antibody response. Directing the States to initiate more focused and stringent measures to contain the spread of the virus, the Union Health Ministry said adequate number of samples from positive persons should be sent to designated laboratories so that clinical epidemiological correlations can be established. "The Ministry, in its writ-



**Virus check:** Swabs collected for testing being arranged at a centre in Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ten communication, advised immediate containment measures which must be put in place in districts and clusters where the variant has

been detected, including preventing crowds and intermingling of people. It has also advocated for widespread testing, prompt tracing as

## Concerned over Delta: WHO

The Delta variant, identified in at least 85 countries, is the "most transmissible" of the SARS-CoV-2 variants identified so far and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated populations, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned on Saturday. ■ PAGE 8

well as vaccine coverage on a priority basis," a Ministry official said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Omar seeks delimitation, statehood before election

Centre's timeline not acceptable, says NC leader

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Saturday said his party will keep pushing for delimitation first, followed by statehood and election. "Not delimitation-election-statehood but delimitation-statehood-election. If you have to conduct an election, return the statehood first. Whenever and wherever we get a chance, we will keep stressing this," Mr. Abdullah told presspersons at



**Making a stand:** NC president Farooq Abdullah and son Omar addressing a press conference in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

his residence in Srinagar, after the Abdullahs returned from Delhi where they met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 24. "Before Prime Minister's address, Mr. [Ghulam Nabi] Azad expressed the view on behalf of all of us and said that this timeline [delimitation-election-statehood] is not acceptable to us." CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Farmers complete 7 months of protest



**No let-up:** Farmers protesting against the three farm laws in Amritsar on Saturday. ■ PTI

## 'Undeclared emergency in country'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Thousands of farmers, marking the seven-month anniversary of their agitation against the three agricultural reform laws, marched to Raj Bhavans on Saturday. They submitted a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind through the Governors, alleging an "undeclared emergency" in the country.

As June 26 is also the date the Emergency was declared in 1975, the farm unions under the banner of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) observed the day as Kheti Bachao, Loktantra Bachao Diwas (Save Agriculture, Save Democracy Day). The Morcha said protesters were detained at several locations across the country.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## '186 cr. doses needed to cover all over 18'

Free vaccines for everyone, Centre tells apex court

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Union government informed the Supreme Court on Saturday that it will require 186 to 188 crore vaccine doses to twice inoculate the 93 to 94 crore population aged above 18. It said 51.6 crore doses would be "made available"

by July 31. The government said it was looking at a deadline of December 2021 and had procured a total of 35.6 crore doses as on date.

The government assured the top court that every single eligible person above 18, no matter what their financial capacity, would get free vaccine doses.

**93-94 crore target**

"The total population of the county aged 18 and above is 93-94 crore," the govern-

ment affidavit, filed through Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, said. "Administering two doses to these beneficiaries would require an estimated 186 to 188 crore vaccine doses... 51.6 crore doses will be made available for administration by July 31, leaving a requirement of approximately 135 crore vaccine doses for complete vaccination to the eligible population."

"The vaccination drive would obviously get a boost if the Government of India succeeds in its attempts to procure vaccines available outside India such as Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, etc," the government said. The government also said that the Zydus Cadila vaccine may be made available to children aged between 12 and 18 in the "near future". The Centre said the States are free to fix their own priorities for vaccine coverage and supply schedules.

## Guleria terms oxygen audit report 'interim'

Sub-group member says consumption figure was a collation of data for one day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The audit by the Supreme Court-appointed sub-group on Delhi's oxygen demand is an interim report and not the final word, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria said on Saturday as Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, under fire for purportedly exaggerating the city's needs, insisted that acute shortage of oxygen during the second wave of COVID-19 was "real". He also appealed for an end to political bickering.

"The virus will win if there is a fight among stakeholders," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted a day after his Aam Aadmi Party and the BJP hit out at each other over the report. While the BJP accused the Delhi government of "criminal negligence", AAP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that the "bogus" report was "cooked up" at the BJP office. Dr. Guleria, who heads the



**It is [oxygen audit] an interim report. The oxygen needs are dynamic and change from day to day. The matter is sub judice**  
RANDEEP GULERIA,  
DIRECTOR, AIIMS, AND HEAD OF SC-APPOINTED SUB-GROUP

five-member sub-group, said: "It is an interim report. The oxygen needs are dynamic and change from day to day. The matter is sub judice."

**CM calls for joint fight**

"May we work now if your fight over oxygen is finished? Let us together make a system so no one faces shortage of oxygen in third wave," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

The report of the sub-group constituted to audit oxygen consumption in hospitals in Delhi during the second wave in April-May stated that the city government "exaggerated" the consumption of oxygen and

made a claim of 1,140 MT, four times higher than the formula for bed capacity requirement of 289 MT.

Bhupinder Singh Bhalla, Principal Secretary (Home) and one of the members of the sub-group, wrote to his fellow auditors on Saturday clarifying that the exaggerated oxygen consumption was "not claimed" by the Delhi government but was "a mere collation of consumption data for one day".

This, he stated, was provided around May 12 by 183 hospitals, as per the proforma decided by the sub-group. The total oxygen consumption for Delhi, Mr. Bhal-

la stated in the note accessed by *The Hindu*, was 550 MT around May 12-13, about 10 days after the peak of COVID-19 in the Capital.

The draft interim report was circulated to the members of the sub-group "for kind perusal and approval" through emails on May 30. Mr. Bhalla said he had sent his detailed written objections and comments on the report on May 31 to the members by email.

His objections were added at the end of the report (pages 110-119) "just for posterity" leaving it to the reader "to make the effort, if he/she so decides, to interpret the entire report together". Mr. Bhalla termed this "unfortunate and unacceptable" and said the report, as submitted, "does not have the approval of all the members".

(With inputs from Special Correspondent)

OXYGEN DEMAND FALLS PAGE 3

## In deep waters



A shopkeeper waiting for customers on a flooded road following high tide in the Ganga, in Kolkata, on Saturday. ■ PTI

## Army Aviation raises tempo in operations along the LAC

Efforts on to replace ageing fleet of Cheetah and Chetak helicopters, while gearing up for inductions of modern choppers

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

While the Army's repeated attempts to replace its ageing fleet of Cheetah and Chetak helicopters continue, there has been a quantum jump in the employment of helicopters of the Army Aviation in the last one year along the northern borders during the ongoing stand-off, according to defence sources.

"The recent induction of third generation night navigation goggles provides our helicopters with the requisite capability to operate almost during the entire moon phase. Adding to this capability, the recent induction of fresh lot of ammunition for the fleet of Rudra, weaponised variant of Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), also

ensured a quantum jump in terms of capability of the Army Aviation helicopters," a defence source said. "The growth of Army Aviation has been exponential in the past one year or so."

During the ongoing stand-off and recent tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Army Aviation assets were deployed all along as a proactive stance giving troops on ground the much needed surveillance support and confidence in terms of available fire support, the source said.

**Surveillance system**

The Army has 90 ALH and 75 Rudra helicopters in service which are indigenously designed and developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited



**Eye in the sky:** The Army has recently leased four Heron-TP drones from Israel Aircraft Industries. ■ FILE PHOTO

(HAL). Very soon, the Army Aviation is also likely to induct a surveillance downlink system, anti-aircraft missiles, countermeasures against missile systems, new generation surveillance pods among others which will enhance the existing role manifold, the source stated.

The Army Aviation is also gearing up for some major inductions in the next couple of years including the AH-64 Apache, considered the world's best attack helicopter. These helicopters will be delivered as early as 2023 and will be operational within a year, the source said, ad-

ding, "This massive game changer will ensure that the western borders are well secured."

The Army will soon also receive the indigenous Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) from HAL. HAL has received the letter of intent for five IAF and five Army LCH for delivery pending contract finalisation of 15 limited series production variants, a source said. "In the current year, we are producing four LCH for Army and two for IAF."

In addition, to augment its surveillance capabilities along the LAC, the Army has recently leased four Heron-TP Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from Israel Aircraft Industries. Two UAVs would be delivered by

August and remaining two by year end, two defence sources confirmed.

Heron-TP is an advanced version of the Herons in service with the forces. It is satellite communication-enabled and can fly up to an altitude of 45,000 feet and has an endurance of over 30 hours.

However, about 75% of the Army's fleet of Cheetah and Chetak helicopters, which are its mainstay, is over 30 years old and some of them are about 50 years old. The Ka-226T utility helicopter deal with Russia along with the indigenous Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) meant to replace them has been held for several years over the percentage of indigenisation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Relief for man held under U.P. anti-conversion law

Lower court erred in rejecting plea: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
ALLAHABAD

The Allahabad High Court has set aside the order of a lower court in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district and granted bail to a man arrested under the new unlawful conversion law in the State.

The High Court said the lower court had "erred" in rejecting the bail application of Mehzan Malik.

On April 4, a special court under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Gautam Buddha Nagar, rejected his bail plea in a case of alleged rape and unlawful conversion of a Dalit woman aged 20. Mr. Malik was booked under Sections 376 (rape) and 506 (criminal intimidation), relevant sections of the SC/ST Act and Section 3(5) of the U.P. Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 at Kasna. He has been in jail since March 20.

The counsel for the accused submitted in court that from a bare perusal of the FIR it was apparent that physical relations were developed by him with the consent of the victim. In her statement under Section 161 CrPC, the victim had said that the man had a physical relationship with her on false assurances of marriage.

Setting aside the lower court order, Justice Vipin Chandra Dixit on June 25 allowed the criminal appeal filed by Mr. Malik.



### Interim relief for Lakha in Republic Day violence case

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**  
A Delhi court on Saturday granted interim protection from arrest to gangster-turned-activist Lakha Sidhana in connection with his alleged involvement in violence that ensued at the Red Fort on Republic Day. On January 26, protesting farmers had clashed with police during their tractor rally and stormed into the Red Fort, hoisting religious flags on its domes and injuring scores of policemen. Fearing arrest, Mr. Sidhana moved Delhi's Tis Hazari court seeking anticipatory bail in the case. The judge posted the matter for July 3 and directed the police to not arrest him until then.

### DDA plans webinars to discuss draft master plan

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Saturday said a series of webinars will be organised between July 1 and July 20 on the various aspects of the draft Master Plan for Delhi - 2041, which was recently put in the public domain for suggestions and objections from stakeholders. In a statement, the DDA said: "As part of the MPD 2041 preparation, a series of webinars are being organised. This will facilitate citizens to understand the draft plan better and give more constructive suggestions to the draft plan." Environment, economy, culture, heritage and public spaces will be discussed in a webinar on July 1. Shelters and social infrastructure, and transport and mobility on July 6. Physical infrastructure and spatial development framework on July 13, and the last session on July 20 will cover plan monitoring evaluation, development code and development control norms.

# Ready to stay at borders till 2024, say protesting farmers

'Our demands are the same as when the movement started seven months ago; more people will be joining the agitation in the coming days'

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**  
Marking the seven month of their ongoing agitation against the three agricultural reform laws, farmers at the Singhu border agitation site on Saturday said they are ready to stay put till 2024 - when the next general elections are due. Avtar Singh, who runs the makeshift hospital at Singhu border, said the protest has grown just like the hospital. "This hospital started from a table and now it is a full-fledged hospital with almost all services, tens of beds, and a fully equipped pharmacy. Just like this, the protest started from a two day-event and now it's been seven months," he said. The Central government is claiming that only a handful of people are left for the protests, but we are not gathering people in lakhs because we do not wish to be blamed for COVID-19, he said. "Also, we are now prepared to stay here till at least 2024. We have struck a balance between living here at Singhu and our houses in Punjab and Haryana. I spend half a week in Punjab and half here. People help each



Farmers take part in a protest march at the Singhu border; Delhi police personnel form a barrier near the protest site on Saturday. •PTI



other with farming," he said. **Fund collection** Sukhwinder Singh from Ludhiana said people have started collecting funds in villages to fund the protest. "Initially, donations were coming in abundance. Now, they have lessened. Collection points have now been made in villages and each family donates at least ₹500-₹1,000 a month towards the protest," he said. Stating that the demands of the farmers have re-

mained consistent since the first day of the movement, Sukhjeet Singh Sidhu, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district, said: "The government recently said they are open to dialogue and want the farmers to bring a proposal. What more proposal will we bring? Our demands have remained the same since the beginning. On the day we are completing seven months, farmers across the country are submitting memorandums to governors of various States. This has brought in a

new momentum to the movement." Mr. Sidhu said the agitating farmers are prepared for a long haul and that the protest sites will witness an increase in the number of protesters in the coming days. "This movement is bound to continue and we are not going to quit. We are even ready to continue the movement till 2024 when the next general elections are due. The government has been persistent in trying to create hurdles for us but that will

not stop us from moving forward with the movement. We will act according to whatever calls the unions and leaders give," he added. **'Done with farm work'** Gurmeet Singh, a farmer from Moga district, said: "If the Centre comes up with a solution then it is fine else they can expect to see people in large numbers back at the borders soon. People are almost done with their work on the farms and they are set to return soon in larger num-

bers. It has been seven months and the government has still failed to explain to us how the laws are favourable to us. Rather the farmers have already explained why we do not want the laws. The ruling dispensation will see how people reject them in the upcoming elections." Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said langar services and healthcare facilities being provided at the protest sites would continue like it has over

the past seven months. "The only thing which is certain is that the farmers are here to stay and will return only when the laws are repealed. It is for the Central government to decide when," said Mr. Sirsa. In the wake of farmers' rallies in different parts of the country, Delhi Police had also beefed up security in central Delhi. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation closed three stations, including Vishwavidyalaya, Civil Lines and Vidhan Sabha.

## DoE chalks out three-stage plan to restart teaching, learning

'Schools to stay closed but engagement with students will resume now: Sisodia

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
The Directorate of Education on Saturday announced its strategy to conduct teaching and learning activities in government and government-aided schools for nursery to Class 12 during the 2021-22 academic session till the time schools reopen. Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Manish Sisodia reiterated that schools will remain closed till the pandemic situation eases but that engagement between teachers and students will resume immediately using online and semi-online approach. "With the onset of the pandemic, learning loss has been massive. This year, we not only need to reduce learning loss but provide deep emotional support to our children. They need to



Manish Sisodia

be mentally prepared for any teaching-learning activities," he said, adding: "This year, we will have close alignment between teaching-learning strategies and assessment so that dependency on one-time exam for year-end result is reduced." **Staggered approach** According to the DoE, the action plan for the 2021-22 session includes a staggered approach for students to ease

into the teaching-learning process and is divided into three stages. The first stage will unfold during the week starting June 28 with teachers and heads of schools contacting students and parents, updating contact details, making WhatsApp groups and preparing a list of students with smartphones, normal phones or with no phones. In the second stage, starting from July 5 till the end of the month, teachers will enquire about students' well-being, understand their situation and need for support, and introduce light activities such as reading, writing and numeracy for students up to Class 8 through worksheets. Meanwhile, in Classes 9-12, the focus will be on understanding current learning level of the child and worksheets, apart from support-

ing emotional well-being. Stage three will begin from August onwards. It will focus on class-specific activities to bridge learning loss. While nursery to Class 8 students will receive generic and subject-specific worksheets, students of Classes 9-12 will have online classes from subject teachers. The focus of online classes for Classes 9-12 will be to guide students on how to learn. Students who have difficulty in accessing digital devices will be provided short notes capturing the points of online classes. Parents who do not have smartphones can collect the worksheets on a weekly basis from the school. In terms of assessing students, there will be regular monthly assessment based on project, activities and assignments.

### Govt. to take control of private school

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi government on Saturday said it had decided to take over the management of Swami Sivananda Memorial School in west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh after receiving several complaints from parents that the school authorities were arbitrarily charging extra fees from students. The government added the school had also been failing students and asking them to re-take the same grade "intentionally". An inquiry panel, formed to look into the matter, also found "inadequacies" in the functioning of the school.



Olympic medalist wrestler Sushil Kumar while being shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar jail on Friday. •PTI

## Policemen seen taking photographs with Sushil

'Conduct of personnel unprofessional'

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**  
Delhi Police has initiated an inquiry after its personnel were seen clicking photos with Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who is an accused in the killing of a young wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium. The matter came to light after the selfies started doing the rounds on the Internet.

sonal and unethical. The officials got carried away by the celebrity status of the accused," the officer said. Senior officers will decide on action to be taken, if any, against the erring officials. Police officials posted with the Special Cell and 3rd Battalion of the Delhi Armed Police took pictures with Kumar when he was being shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar jail on Friday morning. Kumar was arrested in connection with the murder of wrestler Sagar Dhankar, who was beaten to death in a clash involving two groups inside Chhatrasal Stadium.

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Letter No. 2915/1C-9/21 Dated: 26/06/2021

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SITC of 200 LPM PSA based Oxygen Generation Plant along with allied MGPS works at SDH Dangiawachi, Baramulla.	97.00	2000	45	HU/4/ Sgr/225-27 Dt:-12.06.21	MED/K/TS/61 Dt:-19.06.21	Under Languishing

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**'No major lapse'**  
A senior police officer said the inquiry was initiated on Friday and a report was submitted on Saturday. "There is no major lapse. However, the conduct was unprofessional and unethical. The officials got carried away by the celebrity status of the accused," the officer said. Senior officers will decide on action to be taken, if any, against the erring officials. Police officials posted with the Special Cell and 3rd Battalion of the Delhi Armed Police took pictures with Kumar when he was being shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar jail on Friday morning. Kumar was arrested in connection with the murder of wrestler Sagar Dhankar, who was beaten to death in a clash involving two groups inside Chhatrasal Stadium.

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**

**DEATH**  
Dr. R.V.RAVINDRANATH (Urologist) . S/o. Late Dr. R. Jeena Bai, Rajeev Hospital, Madurai. Rotary International Former Dist. Governor (R.I. Dist. 3000), Former President Indian Medical Association, Madurai. Former President Urology Association of Southern India, passed away on 26.06.2021. Funeral held on 26.06.2021. Wife: Mrs. Rtn. PP. R. Nalini, Plot No: 772, First North Cross Street, Anna Nagar, Madurai-625020, Tamil Nadu. Ph: 98948-51884 & 98943-52797

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**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person **Name:** Unknown, **Age:** About 25-30 years, **Height:** 5'6", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Unknown (Composed), **Built:** Medium, **Identification:** Kada in right hand, **Wearing:** Grey colour underwear only has been found dead at Yamuna River, Delhi on 19.06.2021. In this regard a case vide DD No. 78-A dated 19.06.2021 has been lodged at Police Station Wazirabad, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in Subzi Mandi, Mortuary, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this found dead person may kindly inform to the following:-

**SHO :**  
**P.S. Wazirabad, Delhi**  
**North Distt., Delhi**  
DP/1296/N/2021 **Tel. No. 011-23810069, 23810073**



**Timings**  
**DELHI**

**SUNDAY, JUN. 27**  
RISE 05:26 SET 19:23  
RISE 22:04 SET 07:50

**MONDAY, JUN. 28**  
RISE 05:27 SET 19:24  
RISE 22:45 SET 08:55

**TUESDAY, JUN. 29**  
RISE 05:27 SET 19:24  
RISE 23:22 SET 09:58

**Delhi Weather**

	max	min
Delhi City	39	26
Safdarjung	39	26
Palam	39	23

**Delhi Palam Today**  
39°C A comfortable morning turn hot and hot weather with partly cloudy sky. Thunderclouds development likely at few places.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
40°C Dry and hot weather would prevail. Light moist winds during day likely with partly cloudy sky.

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## Light rain expected today: IMD

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Parts of the city received light rainfall on Saturday evening. There is forecast of "light rain" and "partly cloudy sky" on Sunday, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

"Mostly central and north Delhi received light rain. Our station in Palam did not receive any rain," said Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the regional centre of the IMD, said.

"Prevailing meteorological conditions suggest that no favourable conditions for further advancement of southwest monsoon into remaining parts of Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and Punjab during next 7 days," the IMD said.

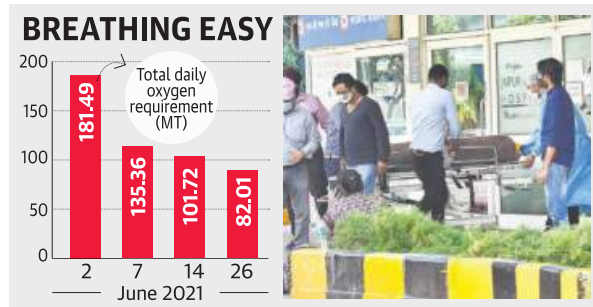
# Oxygen demand dips to 82 MT, expected to fall further: govt.

'About half of the new COVID-19 cases in June were people between 30-60 years'

**NIKHIL M BABU**  
NEW DELHI

The daily medical oxygen demand of the city has dropped to 82 MT from 972 MT in the beginning of May and is expected to fall further for the rest of June, according to Delhi government data shared with *The Hindu*. Also, about half of the new COVID-19 cases in the city in June are people between 30-60 years of age and of these cases, 267 were children below the age of 14 years.

**Dip in cases**  
The oxygen requirement has steadily decreased through June, from 181.4 MT on June 2 to 82.01 MT on June 22. It has been going down as both new and active COVID-19 cases have been decreasing



SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT

in the city.

In April-May, during the peak of the second wave, the city had faced a grave oxygen crisis and people had died in hospitals as healthcare facilities ran out of oxygen.

There were 7,093 new cases during the period, of which 3,358 cases (47.3%) were people between 30-60 years of age, according to

the data. Also, 2,369 (33.3%) were people less than 30 years of age.

"The COVID-19 infections have always been more among younger people as they move around more. But severe cases, who need hospitalisation, are mainly elderly people and people with comorbidities," said Sumit Ray, Head of Department of Critical Care at Holy

Family Hospital.

However, the breakdown of data on new cases is not the same as the data from the official bulletin.

**Only Delhi residents**

"The Delhi government gets a list from the ICMR every day which has details of positive cases from tests conducted. That data is divided district-wise and age-wise," a government official said.

"However, the districts then check this data and many people in the list turns out to be not living in Delhi and coming from Noida or Gurugram and getting tested in Delhi. These cases are excluded from the health bulletin as they do not live in Delhi. So, the cases in the bulletin will be lesser," the official added.

## BJP wants Kejriwal to quit over oxygen 'misuse'

Party protests outside GTB Hospital

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday staged a protest outside a government hospital here demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for the mismanagement of oxygen supply in the Capital during the second wave of COVID-19.

Led by Rohtas Nagar MLA Jitendra Majahan, party workers demanded the registration of a murder case against the Chief Minister for the deaths of several innocent citizens in Delhi outside the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital in east Delhi where Mr. Kejriwal's effigy was also burnt.

"The Delhi government has proved to be a complete failure in dealing with the second wave of the pandemic in the Capital despite claiming to have spent nearly ₹47,000 crores on

healthcare infrastructure in the last six years," Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said.

**No facilities upgraded**  
"Not a single new hospital was opened nor were healthcare facilities upgraded; not even a single ventilator was purchased nor new ICU beds added in hospitals; only publicity was being carried out at the expense of taxpayers' money," Mr. Bidhuri also alleged.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, holding the Delhi Chief Minister responsible for the loss of lives in many States due to lack of oxygen, said if he did not apologise for mismanagement in the next 24 hours the BJP would launch a city-wide mass movement against him.

## BJP seeks CVC intervention in DTC matter

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday apprised the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) of the alleged "grave financial irregularities" in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor DTC buses.

BJP Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta sought CVC's intervention to punish the alleged culprits and cited the "arbitrary manner" in which the work order for 1,000 low-floor buses was put in abeyance.

"The timing of withdrawing the purchase order of 1,000 low-floor DTC buses is suspicious. Just when financial bungling has come out in the public domain and an investigation ordered, the Delhi government seems to have hurriedly put the lid on the matter, hoping the allegations would die down," Mr. Gupta alleged.

## RSS chief should clear stand on 'Ram Mandir land scam': AAP

Party MP questions silence of probe agencies on issue

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

AAP MP Sanjay Singh on Saturday urged the head of RSS to state his stand on the alleged scam related to the Ayodhya temple land deal.

He also questioned why various government investigation agencies are silent on the issue.

"I have written a letter to RSS head Mohan Bhagwat and have asked for a time to meet him. I will hand over all these documents to him

as proof of the scam related to land and corruption by the BJP and members of the trust. I would like the RSS head to take note of it and objectively clear his stand on the scam," Mr. Singh said.

The AAP leader said that the alleged scam is an attempt of the BJP to hurt the feelings of Hindus.

"Today, the Prime Minister convened a meeting with the members of the Ram Janmabhoomi trust working for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Only the BJP and its malice is to be blamed for the construction work that has halted since the last one and a half years," Mr. Singh said.

"I want to ask the PM, did you ask them why they failed to pay the dues for the construction of the Ayodhya Temple yet? Who all are receiving the share from the scam money that is reaching the top? Which members from the BJP and the trust are involved in this," he asked.

## City parks, golf courses to open tomorrow

Capital witnesses highest number of daily vaccinations; 85 new infections reported

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

City parks, gardens and golf courses will be allowed to open from Monday, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) stated in an order on Saturday.

Apart from these, the order stated, marriage ceremonies at banquet halls will be allowed up to 50% of their capacity, gyms and yoga institutes, too, will be permitted to open up to 50% capacity from Monday.

The Capital reported 85 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the to-



People coming out of a vaccination centre after getting their jabs in Nand Nagri on Saturday.

• R.V. MOORTHY

Also, nine deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 24,961. A total of 72,920 tests were done in a day and that test positivity rate was 0.12%. Of the total cases, 14,07,116 people have recovered and there are 1,598 active cases.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that more than 2 lakh people were vaccinated on Saturday, the highest number of daily vaccinations till now.

"In Delhi, 2,05,170 people have been given vaccine doses. For the last three days, more than 1.5 lakh people

are being vaccinated continuously. The Delhi government is rapidly trying to protect people from a possible third wave by vaccinating them," Mr. Sisodia said.

AAP MLA Atishi said about 1.5 lakh doses of vaccines are being administered daily and according to this, the Central government should give at least 45 lakh doses to Delhi in July.

She said that the vaccination stock of Delhi is currently around 8.39 lakhs and vaccine stock is available for five days as per the current vaccination pace.

## Delhi govt. aims to plant 33 lakh saplings this year

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday inaugurated the yearly plantation drive 'Van Mahotsav' from Garhi Mandu. All 70 Assemblies will witness plantation under the leadership of MLAs on Sunday.

The government plans to plant 33 lakh saplings this year under the campaign. "The Kejriwal government's efforts in the last six years have reduced pollution levels in the Capital by 25%. I appeal to the people to participate in this plantation drive," Mr. Rai said.

**THE HINDU**  
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2	East	Office of the Suptd. Engineer (East) ChitraVihar B.P.S. Delhi-110092	87003 55576
3	North- East	EE(NE)-II, R-Pocket OH Tank, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-95	96505 69988
4	Shahdara	Office of Executive Engineer (NE)-1 Janta Flats, GTB Enclave, Delhi-110093	96502 90935
5	South	DJB Office, E-Block opposite PVR Cinema, Saket, New Delhi-110017	95999 42466 96502 91239
6	South East	Room No. 002, Andrews Ganj building complex Adjacent to Defence Colony New Delhi-110024	96500 85754
7	South West	Sector-5, DDA Central Nursery, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075	96503 03799
8	Central	Office of EE (Central) Delhi Jal Board, JLN Marg. Opposite Ramjila Ground UGR & BPS New Delhi	88009 95542
9	New Delhi	Sector 7, RK Puram Water Emergency Complex New Delhi 110022	96500 94407
10	West	Office of Supt. Engineer Office G-17, OHT 1st floor, Room No 2, PashchimVihar	96502 91617
11	North West	DJB Office, Room No. 26, First Floor MU Block, Pitampura, Near Hotel City Park, Pitampura	96502 91531
12	North	Shakti Nagar, ZE DJB Office near Shakti Nagar Chowk	96252 02927

**Pulse Polio Ravivar - 27th June 2021**

Urban Development Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

**EVEN CORONA CANNOT GET IN THE WAY, TWO DROPS TO STOP POLIO THIS SUNDAY**

# 27 June 2021

9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

**Take your Child upto Five year of age to the nearest Polio Booth for giving Polio drops**

**Pulse Polio Immunization facts**

- India has been declared Polio Free. However, Polio Vaccination will continue till global eradication of polio is achieved until danger of Polio virus importation from neighbouring countries persists.
- Routine immunization is the key to sustaining polio free status of the country.
- Routine immunization to infants & young children is essential. It protects children from 12 serious diseases and is available free of cost at all govt. health facilities through out the year.

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, DELHI GOVERNMENT**  
PULSE POLIO CELL: 23813210  
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**IN BRIEF**  
**Chetan files defamation case against Minister**

**BENGALURU**  
Actor Chetan Kumar, who is facing two FIRs based on complaints by members of the Brahmin community for his critical comments on 'Brahminism', has sued Karnataka Labour Minister A. Shivaram Hebbur for civil defamation for his "defamatory" tweets against him. Mr. Chetan Kumar has sought ₹1 and a public apology from the Minister.

**NCB raids illegal drug manufacturing unit**

**BENGALURU**  
The Narcotics Control Bureau, on Friday, busted a drug manufacturing and trafficking unit in Bidar, and seized 91.5 kg of alprazolam, a short-acting tranquilliser. Officials arrested five people in Hyderabad, including the kingpin of the racket.

**SVBC of TTD receives ₹2 crore donation**

**TIRUMALA**  
The Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on Saturday received ₹2 crore in the form of donations, which was the highest it received in a single day. While the representatives of Indian Minerals and Granite Company handed over a DD for ₹1 crore, the Pattabhi Agro Food Private Limited gave a DD for ₹1 crore.

**Undertrial escapes from Chittoor sub-jail**

**CHITTOOR**  
The Chittoor police have intensified search for remand prisoner, Gajendra, who escaped from the sub-jail here on Friday. Gajendra was remanded in an alleged murder case. The jail staff reportedly used the services of Gajendra in the kitchen, during which he reportedly escaped by scaling a wall.

# Assembly ruckus case: Kerala moves SC

'Legislators' actions protected from legal action by parliamentary privilege'

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
The Kerala government has moved the Supreme Court challenging a High Court dismissal of a prosecutor's request to withdraw a case of criminal trespass, mischief and destruction of public property involving Education Minister V. Sivankutty and others who created a ruckus on the Assembly floor during a budget presentation in 2015. The televised images showed MLAs coming to blows on the House floor and hurling chairs, computers and other public property soon after Finance Minister K.M. Mani began his budget speech during the UDF government's tenure. The State argued that the legislators' actions were protected from legal action by

parliamentary privilege. "When the act of the accused persons was in relation to their function to protest as Members of the Legislative Assembly, are they not entitled to get protection?" the State asked the apex court. The Assembly Secretary should not have complained against the MLAs to the police without taking the prior sanction of the Speaker, the government argued. Besides offences under the IPC, the legislators were booked under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. The Public Prosecutor's application to withdraw the cases was dismissed by the Thiruvananthapuram Chief Judicial Magistrate on September 22, last year. The Magistrate had concluded that the request was made "with-



**Pandemonium in house:** A file photo of V. Sivankutty protesting inside the Kerala Assembly.

out good faith and under external influence". The High Court confirmed the Magistrate's decision in March. A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud is scheduled to hear the petition on June 29.

UDF leader Ramesh Chennithala has filed a caveat in the case. In its appeal, the State government, represented by advocate G. Prakash, said a Magistrate's role is limited

when the Prosecutor seeks withdrawal of the case under Section 321 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. All the Magistrate needs to examine is whether the Prosecutor has applied his mind "independently and properly". The reason for the Prosecutor's decision to seek withdrawal of a case need not be confined to paucity of evidence alone. It could also depend on "other relevant grounds as well as to further broaden the ends of public justice, public order and peace is the settled law". "The broad ends of public justice will certainly include appropriate social, economic and political purposes," the State argued in its special leave petition before the Supreme Court. The State also argued that it should be left to the House to decide whether it would want to exercise its jurisdiction or hand over the 'offenders' to the criminal courts.

## Kerala moots special courts to try dowry cases

Victims should get speedy justice: CM

**STAFF REPORTER ALAPPUZHA**  
The Kerala government will consider establishing special courts to try cases related to dowry harassment and violence against women, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said. The Chief Minister said the victims of dowry harassment and female victims of violence should get speedy justice. "We should ensure that the culprits in these cases receive swift punishment. The government will contemplate setting up special courts," Mr. Vijayan said. "Dowry has been legally banned. But dowry harass-



Pinarayi Vijayan

ment cases are still being reported. Dowry-related deaths have brought shame to the State. Women are subjected to torture and are killed in the name of dowry. These kind of things should not happen in Kerala," the Chief Minister said.

## Four of a family drown in Telangana

Pilgrimage to a dargah turned fatal for four members of a family as they drowned in Manjira, a tributary of Godavari river, at Birkur village, around 200 km from here, on Friday.

**STAFF REPORTER HYDERABAD**  
The victims were identified as Anjavva, 45, her daughter Sony, 8, and her co-sister's children, Gangothri, 12 and Prashanth, 9. Police said the victims boarded an autorickshaw to reach Birkur and from there, they decided to cross the river to avoid taking the Manjira bridge. "At a certain point, water flow was high and they drowned," the police said.

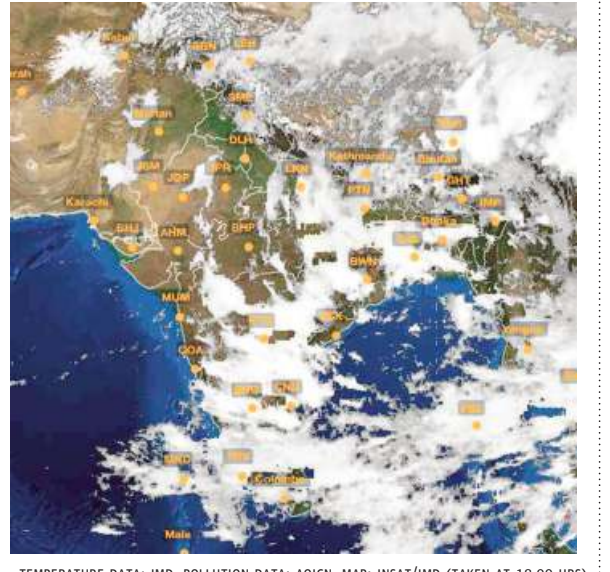
## After 50 years, relief for kin of slain Kerala naxal

Varghese killed in 1970 fake encounter

**STAFF REPORTER KALPETTA**  
The Kerala government handed over a compensation of ₹50 lakh to the siblings of Naxalite leader A. Varghese, who was shot dead by the police in the Thirunelli forest of Wayanad in 1970. The Cabinet on February 24 had approved the recommendation of the Secretary-level committee to compensate the family. The amount was recently deposited in the bank accounts of Varghese's brothers - A. Thomas and A. Joseph - and sisters Mariyam and Annamma. "Had the government an-

nounced the transaction through the media, it would have been useful, especially at a time when fake encounter deaths and human rights violations are so common," A. Varghese, a lawyer and the naxal leader's nephew told *The Hindu*. He has been in the forefront of the five decade legal battle over the fake encounter. The family is planning to set up a memorial for the slain leader at Vellamunda in Wayanad district utilising the compensation amount. The family had moved the High Court of Kerala after it came to light that Varghese was killed by the police in a fake encounter.

### WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: AQICN, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Sunday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaiikal. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala.....	0.6	34.3	26.6	Kozhikode.....	10	30.8	24.5
Ahmedabad.....	36.3	26.1	26.1	Kurnool.....	0.9	34.8	26.5
Aizawl.....	34.2	26.0	26.0	Lucknow.....	0.9	36.4	26.2
Allahabad.....	27.0	20.5	20.5	Madurai.....	9.1	29.5	23.4
Bangaluru.....	35.3	24.2	24.2	Mumbai.....	26.7	32.5	24.8
Bhubaneswar.....	2.5	33.4	25.8	Mysuru.....	0	28.0	21.4
Chandigarh.....	0.2	37.6	24.6	New Delhi.....	0	38.7	25.6
Chennai.....	34.1	29.2	29.2	Patna.....	146	30.4	23.2
Coimbatore.....	33.0	23.4	23.4	Port Blair.....	11	30.5	23.3
Dehradun.....	20.4	33.9	20.5	Puducherry.....	0	37.2	25.4
Gangtok.....	7	23.8	17.8	Pune.....	2.6	31.2	22.1
Goa.....	36	29.8	22.5	Raipur.....	0	33.8	24.8
Guwahati.....	4	35.3	26.5	Ranchi.....	0	31.2	23.6
Hubbli.....	27.0	22.0	22.0	Shillong.....	5	25.2	18.4
Hyderabad.....	33.8	24.0	24.0	Shimla.....	16	26.7	14.3
Imphal.....	31.9	22.1	22.1	Srinagar.....	0	32.5	15.6
Jaipur.....	36.2	25.7	25.7	Thiruvananthapuram.....	0.4	32.3	25.0
Kochi.....	8	30.6	25.4	Tiruchirappalli.....	0	38.5	26.0
Kohima.....	1	25.8	18.0	Vijayawada.....	15	35.4	26.0
Kolkata.....	33.9	28.0	28.0	Visakhapatnam.....	0	36.4	29.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad.....	13	10	7	79	67	...
Bangaluru.....	4	7	4	68	59	...
Chennai.....	4	2	11	136	56	...
Delhi.....	16	12	1	327	354	...
Hyderabad.....	2	16	4	72	72	...
Kolkata.....	42	7	4	100	59	...
Lucknow.....	4	2	4	163	75	...
Mumbai.....	6	3	9	107	88	...
Pune.....	40	51	78	69	99	...
Visakhapatnam.....	5	34	10	102	81	...

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.  
**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

# Will restore OBC quota in local bodies if given power: Fadnavis

Maharashtra BJP leader vows to retire from politics if he fails to fulfil promise

**STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI**  
The Maharashtra unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress held protests across the State on Saturday demanding restoration of reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) in local governing bodies, which was quashed by the Supreme Court in March this year. Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, who participated in a protest in his home district of Nagpur, claimed that if his party was brought back to power, he would ensure that the quota for OBCs was restored within four months, and if not, he would quit politics. Addressing BJP workers in Nagpur, Mr. Fadnavis said, "Unrest within the OBC community is a result of the incapability of the State government. This government did nothing in the court to ensure that the reservation remained. It did not even form the Backward Classes Commission. If this govern-



Police personnel restrain BJP workers during a protest over OBC reservation near Mantralaya in Mumbai on Saturday. •PTI

ment is not able to restore the quota, it should give power to us. If I don't deliver it within four months, then I will retire from politics." However, the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) accused the former BJP-led government of making a mess of the reservation issue. The ruling parties also blamed the BJP for failing to submit empirical data on OBCs to the Supreme Court despite being

**The real culprit behind OBCs losing reservation is the BJP-led Central government**  
**CHANDRAKANT HANDORE**  
State Congress working president  
 in power at the Centre. State Congress working president Chandrakant Handore said, "The real culprit behind OBCs losing reservation is the BJP-led Central government and the previous

State government headed by Devendra Fadnavis. How can it even blame the present Maha Vikas Aghadi government as it was the one that enjoyed power for the previous five years?" State Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant pointed out Mr. Fadnavis had promised to provide Scheduled Tribe status to the Dhangar community in his first Cabinet meeting in 2014. "Everybody knows that it was a lie and Fadnavis had been exposed. Similarly, he is trying to shift the blame in this issue of OBC reservation, but he has been exposed here as well," Mr. Sawant said. NCP State chief Jayant Patil accused the BJP of clipping the wings of OBC leaders such as Eknath Khadse, Pankaja Munde, and Chandrashekhar Bawankule. "An OBC leader like Chhagan Bhujbal was jailed. And this party is talking about delivering justice to the OBCs? Do not fall prey to these tactics," Mr. Patil said.

## Boy makes prank terror call

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUMBAI**  
A prank call by a Class IX student informing that two terrorists will enter Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Colaba sent the police into a tizzy on Saturday, an official said. The anonymous call was traced to Karad in Satara district and it turned out that the caller was a schoolboy. No case has been registered in the matter so far.

### SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Manisha, D/o Meenu Deen, R/o H.No. 484, Village Mukhampur, Delhi, Age: 22 years, Height: 5'3", Complexion: Sallow, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: Red Colour Suit & Salwar and Hawaii Chappal** her feet has been missing from her home since **14.06.2021 at 10:00 am**. In this regard a **DD No. 95A dated 14.06.2021** has been registered at **P.S. Alipur, Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.  
**E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in** **SHO**  
**Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641** **P.S. Alipur, Delhi**  
**Fax : 011-24368639** **Ph.: 011-27202265, 27202290**  
**DP/1100/ON/2021** **7065036325**

### MODERN COACH FACTORY, RAEBARELI

**E-Tender Notice No. MCF/RBL/CE/16391-005** Date: 25.06.2021  
 On behalf of the President of India, Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Project, Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli is inviting open e-tender, based on Single packet system, from capable & experienced tenderers through Indian railway portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for the under mentioned work. **Details:- 1. Name of work :-** Modernization work of WRS Kota Workshop Provision of LT Main Distribution Panel, cable laying and other electrical wiring work at Wagon Repair Workshop, Kota. **2. Place of work:-** Wagon Repair Workshop, Kota (Rajasthan). **3. Approx. Cost:-** Rs. 4789258.00 (Rupees Forty Seven Lakhs Eighty Nine Thousand Two Hundred fifty Eight only). **4. Earnest Money:-** NIL. **5. Date & Time of Closing of Tender:-** 27.07.2021 at 10.30 hrs. **6. Period of Complication:-** 12 Months. **7. Terms & Condition:-** Other details, terms & Condition are available in tender documents on [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).  
 Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Project  
 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a boy namely **Akash, S/o Manoj Kumar, R/o H. No. 357, Main Chowk Wali Gali, Village Bhorgarh, Narela, Delhi, Age: 20 years, Height: 5'8", Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Built: Strong, Wearing: Chocolate Colour Shirt, Blue Colour Pant and Blue Colour Nike Shoes** in his feet has been missing from his home since **03.06.2021 at 8:00 pm**. In this regard a **DD No. 68A dated 06.06.2021** has been registered at **PS. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this boy please inform undersigned.  
**E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in** **SHO**  
**Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641** **P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi**  
**Fax : 011-24368639** **Ph.: 011-27787593, 7065036324**  
**DP/1086/ON/2021**

## BEST told to pay compensation of over ₹4 lakh

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI**  
The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal has directed the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Undertaking to pay a compensation of over ₹4 lakh to a man who suffered 53% disability after a BEST bus jumped a signal and rammed into his bike in Powai on July 6, 2016. Rajendra Nagure was 30 years old and employed with Baroda Heat-up Controls Private Limited at a monthly salary of ₹14,600 at the time

of the accident. Mr. Nagure sought ₹3 lakh as compensation for his treatment. The BEST refuted his age, income and occupation and claimed he was under the influence of alcohol. The doctor, who examined the victim, said, "He suffered a partial permanent disability of 53%. He has deformity in the right thigh and right hip. Movement of the right hip and right knee are painful and restricted." S.C. Chandak, the presiding chairman of the tribunal,

said: "It is apparent that the fracture, which is obviously of the toughest bone in the body, has impaired his bodily strength to a certain extent, that he has difficulties. The partial disability is not occupational disability." In its order, the tribunal said, "The year of the accident and average prevailing rate of interest between 2016-2021. Thus, he is entitled to receive compensation of ₹4,28,555 with interest at 6.5% p.a. from the date of application till realisation."

### WESTERN RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION WORK

Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6th floor, Engg. Deptt. Mumbai Central, Mumbai - 400008, invites E-tender as per details given as follows: **Executive: DEN/Est/S/BC Tender Notice No. & Date: BCT/21-22/147 dtd. 25.06.2021 Work and Location: Mumbai central - Construction of Hamal rest room at Mumbai central (Main) station area. Approx cost of work in ₹: 83,12,535.94 EMD in ₹: Nil Date & Time of Submission: on 20.07.2021 till 15.00 hrs Date & Time of opening: on 20.07.2021 at 15.30 hrs. Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) Manual offers will not be considered. 0214**  
 Like us on [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

### HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED

(A State Government Undertaking)  
**"PRESS TENDER NOTICE" (e-Tendering Mode Only)**  
 Online tenders (Two part bid) are invited for the supply of following items, on the prescribed Tender Documents. The detail of tenders, dates of submission of bids and opening of Techno-Commercial Bids are as given below. The Detailed Tender Notice, terms and conditions along with tender documents can be viewed/downloaded from website <https://www.hptenders.gov.in>

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Description of Items	Qty.	Estd. Cost (Rs. in lacs)	Cost of Tender Document inclusive GST @ 18% (Non-refundable)	Date of online publication	Start date & time of bid submission	End date & time of bid submission	Date & Time of Opening of Techno-Commercial Bid
1.	CE (MM)-01/2021	ISI Marked Swaged Steel Tubular Poles of assorted sizes	40308 Nos.	4726.00	Rs. 1475/-	28.06.2021	03.07.2021 (11:00 a.m.)	14.07.2021 (upto 11:00 a.m.)	15.07.2021 (at 11:00 a.m.)
2.	CE (MM)-02/2021	ISI Marked 11/0.433 kV and 22/0.433 kV Class, 3 Phase Distribution Transformers of assorted ratings.	1320 Nos.	1834.00	Rs. 1475/-	30.06.2021	05.07.2021 (11:00 a.m.)	16.07.2021 (upto 11:00 a.m.)	17.07.2021 (at 11:00 a.m.)
3.	CE (MM)-03/2021	ISI Marked ACSR/AAAC conductors of assorted sizes.	2367 km	691.00	Rs. 1475/-	02.07.2021	07.07.2021 (11:00 a.m.)	19.07.2021 (upto 11:00 a.m.)	20.07.2021 (at 11:00 a.m.)
4.	CE (MM)-04/2021	ISI Marked 3-Phase, 3/4 wire, HT Static DLMS Compliant Tri-vector Meters of accuracy class 0.5S.	436 Nos.	28.78	Rs. 1180/-	05.07.2021	09.07.2021 (11:00 a.m.)	22.07.2021 (upto 11:00 a.m.)	23.07.2021 (at 11:00 a.m.)
5.	CE (MM)-05/2021	ISI Marked PVC insulated PVC Sheathed weather proof twin core cable with solid Aluminium conductor of 10 mm square size	543 km	80.00	Rs. 1180/-	08.07.2021	11.07.2021 (11:00 a.m.)	24.07.2021 (upto 11:00 a.m.)	26.07.2021 (at 11:00 a.m.)

Stay Home - Stay Safe Energy Saved is Energy Generated Chief Engineer (MM), HPSEB Ltd., Vidyut Bhawan, SHIMLA-171004.



FROM PAGE ONE

## Govt. ramps up alert on Delta Plus variant

"The Ministry has written to Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana, J&K, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh where some districts have this variant," he said.

Doctors across India have also cautioned against any relaxation in adherence to COVID-appropriate behaviour. Archana Dhawan Bajaj, director, Nurture IVF said that the Delta variant has been labeled as 'Variant of Concern' by World Health Organisation (WHO) for multiple reasons.

"Delta variant is more resistant to medication, treatment, and vaccination. Therefore, people who have been vaccinated can still be affected by this variant and can go on to get the clinical illness. Neutralising antibodies against this variant post-vaccination seem to be nearly five times lower in people who have already been vaccinated than the other variants," she said.

"Vaccinations specific against variants like Delta variant need to be synthesised or manufactured and rolled out on an urgent basis. If this variant is not controlled in a timely manner, this could lead to a rapidly occurring ferocious third wave of the COVID pandemic. Delta Plus variant has been instrumental in causing a new wave of COVID pandemic in the UK and parts of U.S. There are con-

cerns that it can bypass vaccine immunity, a phenomenon called immune escape. Countries like India with a big population size are always at risk of having extensive effects," said Arunesh Kumar, HOD, Paras Chest Institute and senior pulmonologist, Paras Hospital, Gurugram.

With multiple cases detected in Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and Maharashtra, the Delta Plus variant and impending third wave of coronavirus, it becomes important to strictly follow the directions of the Health Ministry to engage in immediate containment measures, said Piyush Goel, senior consultant-Pulmonary and Critical Care, Columbia Asia Hospital, in Gurugram.

The Delta Plus variant is a variant of concern that has been recently declared by the government. It has already been identified and isolated in over 10 countries and nearly 50 cases have already been seen in India especially in Maharashtra.

"Looks like the third wave will hit Maharashtra in the next six to eight weeks. Like the last wave which has been driven by the Delta variant, it is feared that the next wave will be driven by the delta plus variant," said Shuchin Bajaj, Internal Medicine, founder director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals.

## Omar seeks delimitation, statehood before polls

Keeping his cards close to his chest on the participation of the three NC members of Parliament in the Delimitation Commission, Mr. Abdullah said, "Dr. (Farooq Abdullah) Sahib is to take the view as and when necessary. There has been no fresh approach from the Delimitation Commission. As and when Commission makes an approach, Dr. Sahib will take the view. We will convey our stand to the Commission."

He said all the Gupkar alliance members made it clear that "they don't accept August 5, 2019 decisions".

The former Chief Minister made it clear that the struggle to restore J&K's special status is a long one. "It

took BJP 70 years to fulfil its agenda. If it takes us 70 weeks or 70 months, or whatever time it takes, we will not retract from our mission," Mr. Abdullah said.

He said the Prime Minister listened to the stand of the members of the Gupkar alliance. "We conveyed to him that people are unhappy," he said.

Mr. Abdullah said the people of Kashmir were facing an "unchecked bureaucracy".

NC president Farooq Abdullah described the meeting with Mr. Modi as "very good" and said people should wait to see if the Centre was ready to remove mistrust existing on the ground in J&K.

## Army Aviation raises tempo in ops along LAC

However, the Army is now hoping for some progress in the coming few weeks on the long-delayed deal, another source said, adding that it is making a pitch to procure a small number of Ka-226T helicopters.

### Putin visit

With the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the works for year end for the annual summit, there are expectations that this deal along with other held up proposals like the AK-203 as-

sault rifle deal will get a push, a third source said.

At present, the Army is holding 160 of the 246 Cheeta and Chetak helicopters with a serviceability rate of 60%.

In addition, around 20 helicopters are with HAL for overhaul for around a year at any point of time. As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, the technical life of these helicopters will start finishing from 2023 onwards, which will only further exacerbate the deficiencies.

## Farmers complete 7 months of protest

Farmers successfully delivered the memorandum to Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari and his Himachal Pradesh counterpart Bandaru Dattatreya, and to designated officials at the Raj Bhavans in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

In Delhi, though protesters were originally detained at Civil Lines and held at the Wazirabad Police Training Centre, they were later able to hold a brief virtual meeting with the Lt. Governor and hand over the memorandum to a representative.

rendra Singh Tomar reiterated his appeal to farmers to "end their agitation." Posting a video statement on Twitter, he said the Centre was also "ready to discuss and to resolve any provision of the laws" which the farmers were protesting against. However, the farmers are insistent on demanding a full repeal, "as there are fundamental flaws in the laws and their very objectives".

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted his support for the protesters. "It's simple. We are with the Satyagrahi Annadata," he said.

## U.P. panchayat poll candidate alleges kidnap

ANUJ KUMAR  
GHAZIABAD

The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)-Samajwadi Party (SP)-supported candidate in the upcoming Baghat Zila Panchayat election alleged on Saturday that she and her husband were kidnapped and forced to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

However, they claimed they somehow managed to escape from the Delhi residence of the BJP MP from Baghat, Satyapal Singh.

Jai Kishore, husband of the candidate Mamta Kishore, told reporters that they were forcibly taken to the residence of Mr. Singh in the early hours of Saturday. Ms. Kishore held a press conference in Baghat and filed her nomination for the seat.

"We were draped with BJP stoles and photographed with Mr. Singh. When we resisted, we were told that false cases will be filed against us and that our life would become hell. We somehow managed to escape from their custody and reached the RLD office in Baghat. I am a true soldier of the party," claimed Mr. Kishore.

BJP district president Suraj Pal Gurjar denied the charges. The duo went to the MP's house on their own, he said.

## Ailing woman dies during traffic hold-up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

An ailing woman, head of the women's wing of the Indian Industries Association (IIA), died after being stuck in traffic while she was being taken to a hospital during the visit of President Ramnath Kovind.

Commissioner of Police, Kanpur, Aseem Arun personally apologised for the incident.

"This is a big lesson for us in future. We pledge that our route system in future will be such that citizens are stopped for minimal time so that such incidents are not repeated," Mr. Arun said in a statement.

### Four suspended

Four police personnel – a sub-inspector and three head constables – had been suspended for stopping traffic longer than directed, said a police officer.

Mr. Arun said President Kovind was anguished by the untimely death of Vandana Mishra, the women's wing president of the Kanpur Chapter of IIA.

## India, Greece seek respect for territorial integrity

MEA statement indirectly refers to role of Turkey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India and Greece have held discussions over the situation in Cyprus during the visit of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Athens. The Ministry of External Affairs said both sides emphasised upon respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity by all members of the international community.

"Both sides discussed the recent developments pertaining to the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and Libya. They agreed that the rule of law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity are fundamental principles of international relations and must be observed by all," said a joint press release issued by the MEA on the discussions that Mr. Jaishankar has held with his counterpart Nikos Dendias.

The condition in nearby

## HCs are taking steps to fill vacancies, says CJI

CJI Ramana writes to Prasad, seeks better IT infrastructure

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has written to Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad that the Chief Justices of the High Courts have promised "positive and accelerated action" to fill vacancies of judges in their courts.

In his letter, the CJI said that during an interaction, he had impressed on the Chief Justices the "need to expedite the process of sending recommendations through Collegium to fill up the vacancies in the respective High Courts".

"This was in furtherance to my communication addressed to the Chief Justices of all the High Courts soon after I had assumed the Office of the Chief Justice of India. I have been assured of positive and accelerated action by the Chief Justices," the CJI wrote.

He has also asked the Centre to intervene immediately to strengthen network and connectivity in rural and tribal areas.

### Digital divide

In his letter to Mr. Prasad, who is also the Minister for Communications and IT, the CJI said his interaction with the Chief Justices revealed



that the digital divide between urban and rural India was adversely affecting the functioning of courts during the pandemic.

### ICT tools

He highlighted the need to augment judicial infrastructure with the latest information and communication technology tools to facilitate access to justice during and after the pandemic.

The top judge wrote to the Law Minister that a "blueprint of the proposal to set up the National Judicial Infrastructure Corporation (NJIC) is in the final stages of preparation and will be shared with the Union Government shortly".

"I am of the firm belief that concerted efforts need to be put in, in order to materialise this concept, in

view of the challenges put forth by the pandemic," he wrote.

The CJI also asked the government to take up at the highest level certain issues which include augmenting the vaccination of court staff and their families across the country to facilitate "full-scale functioning" of the courts.

He said his interaction with the Chief Justices brought to the fore the need to recognise court functionaries, including advocates, as frontline workers for the purpose of providing pandemic-related relief.

He flagged a requirement to provide financial support to advocates, especially juniors, who are struggling to make ends meet because of loss of work for more than a year.

## ED arrests Deshmukh's two aides

After summons, former Maharashtra Home Minister seeks more time to appear

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Saturday sought more time to appear before Enforcement Directorate officials after the agency issued a summons to him in a money laundering case. Mr. Deshmukh's lawyer submitted the request before the ED.

Earlier, the central investigation agency arrested Mr. Deshmukh's personal assistant Kundan Shinde and his former personal secretary Sanjeev Palande.

The agency called them for questioning on Friday and arrested them around 1 a.m. They will be presented before the court to seek their custody for further investigation.

### New summons

According to ED sources, a new summons will be issued to Mr. Deshmukh and he will be called for interrogation next week.

On Friday, the agency searched the houses of Mr. Deshmukh in Mumbai and Nagpur and his official residence, "Dyaneshwari",



Money trail: NCP leader Anil Deshmukh's personal assistant Kundan Shinde being taken to a court in Mumbai. •PTI

which he is yet to vacate after resigning as Minister. The agency searched the houses of Mr. Shinde and Mr. Palande. Both were later taken to the agency's office where they were questioned and arrested.

These searches come weeks after the Central Bureau of Investigation conducted searched the houses and properties of Mr. Deshmukh and his aides.

According to ED sources, the agency is following a trail of ₹4 crore which is believed to be the money given to Mr. Deshmukh by 12 bar owners in Mumbai.

The sources alleged that the money was deposited in the accounts of shell companies and diverted to the accounts of establishments related to Mr. Deshmukh. The former Minister has already said that he is cooperating

## CJI cites a letter that showed him the way

It was written by ex-judge Raveendran

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Saturday said a letter from a former Supreme Court judge, at the time of his appointment as top judge, to act with courage in "these testing days", became the road map for his tenure.

"I feel that this message is indeed the road map for my journey as the Chief Justice of India. I shall treasure this message forever," Chief Justice Ramana said of the letter from former Supreme Court Justice R.V. Raveendran.

The Chief Justice was speaking on Saturday at the virtual launch of *Anomalies in Law and Justice*, a book authored by Justice Raveendran.

### Testing days

Chief Justice Ramana read out Justice Raveendran's letter, which said, "These are difficult days. Challenging days. Testing days. Being a Chief Justice requires courage to act, commitment to the cause of justice, concern for the common man, tact to deal with and obtain the cooperation of the brother judges in addition to the qualities expected of a judge. You possess all of them in abundance. Let the



Justice R.V. Raveendran

almighty lead you to a purposeful, meaningful and successful tenure."

Chief Justice Ramana referred to Justice Raveendran's rise to the top court from a humble background, with "no family pedigree in the profession". The CJI is also a first-generation lawyer. Chief Justice Ramana took a leaf from Justice Raveendran's legacy in the Supreme Court.

### Low profile

"He never tried, or made an attempt, to project himself as the saviour of the judicial process. He continued to be humble and believed that the office which he held did not exist for himself... He believed in the dictum, as Lord Denning said, 'that the best judge is one who is less known and seen in the media'," Chief Justice Ramana said.

## IN BRIEF



### Akhil Gogoi granted two-day parole

GUWAHATI  
Sibsagar MLA and Rajgor Dal president Akhil Gogoi was on June 25 allowed to go home after almost 550 days in captivity, but for two days. A special court of the National Investigation Agency granted him 48-hour parole after he wished to visit his wife and teenage son in Guwahati and mother in Jorhat.

### Civic body gets notice for death of egret chicks

GUWAHATI  
The authorities of Assam's Udalguri district have served a show-cause notice on the officials of the Tangla town for causing the death of more than 250 egret and cormorant chicks due to a COVID-19 scare. The district's Deputy Commissioner, P. Uday Praveen said the show-cause was served to the civic body officials under the Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 and COVID regulations of 2020.

### Punjab CM reiterates call for national drug policy

CHANDIGARH  
Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday reiterated his demand for a national drug policy to tackle the scourge, saying there's a need for more synergy between the Special Task Force (STF), the police and the Intelligence wing to eliminate drugs from the State. Capt. Singh said while the neighbouring States of Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi had agreed to put in place an effective mechanism for tackling drug smuggling, no significant progress had been made.

### Assam drug bust hero made police constable

GUWAHATI  
A lowly-paid Assam home guard, who became a hero after he refused a bribe from drug dealers and helped the police seize high-grade crystal methamphetamine worth more than ₹12 crore, has been appointed as a constable in the State police. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma handed him his appointment letter at a function marking International Drug Abuse Day on June 26. Borsing Bey, a resident of Karbi Along district, had failed to get through to the police despite several attempts at cracking the exams. His integrity earned him the job.

## Rajdhani Express derails inside tunnel in Ratnagiri

All passengers safe, traffic restored

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

The Goa-bound Rajdhani Express from Hazrat Nizamuddin, with 309 passengers on board, derailed inside a tunnel in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra early on Saturday. Nobody was injured in the incident, officials said.

The front wheel of the locomotive of the special service (train no. 02414) to Madgaon derailed around 4.15 a.m. in the Karbude tunnel, approximately 325 km from Mumbai, the officials said.

The derailment led to disruption of traffic, which was restored within a few hours, they said.

### Boulder on tracks

A boulder had fallen on the tracks, which led to the derailment, a spokesperson of the Konkan Railway, which operates the route, said.

"The front wheel of the locomotive derailed in the Karbude tunnel located bet-

ween the Ukshi and Bhoke stations in the Ratnagiri region of the Konkan Railway," the official said.

A rail maintenance vehicle (RMV) and an accident relief medical van (ARMV) with re-railing equipment were rushed to the spot for the restoration work, he said.

### Resumes journey

The restoration work was completed and the track fit certificate was issued at 8.18 a.m., he said, adding that the express train began its journey towards Madgaon at 9.14 a.m.

"Traffic was restored at 10.27 a.m."

The Konkan Railway operates the 756-km route between Roha, near Mumbai, and Thokur, near Mangalore.

This route, which is spread across Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka is one of the challenging terrains with many rivers, gorges and mountains.



# Full statehood for J&K top priority, says CPI(M)

Worried national parties vacillating on Article 370: Tarigami

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

CPI(M) leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, who was among the 14 politicians from Jammu and Kashmir who attended a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, has said restoration of full statehood for Jammu & Kashmir with a Governor remained the top priority.



**We are concerned about restoration of original statehood. Election is a routine exercise**

M.Y. TARIGAMI

At the meeting, he said Union Home Minister Amit Shah said statehood would be restored at an "appropriate time". Mr. Tarigami told a group of reporters on Friday that the Prime Minister told the leaders that their concerns had been noted and that the same would not be "ignored". "What it means, only time will tell," he said.

The gathering was the first such meeting to be organised after the Centre removed the special status of J&K under Article 370 and split the State into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019. Mr. Tarigami said he told the Prime Minister while he appreciated the meeting being held, it would have been better had it been held in July 2019.

He said he was "worried" that "national parties are va-

cillating" regarding Article 370. When asked to clarify, he said some parties supported the government during the debate in Parliament when the special status was revoked and the State reorganised. He said the Home Minister asked the leaders to support the ongoing delimitation process. He said the CPI(M) had not been contacted by the Delimitation Commission yet.

"We are more concerned about restoration of original statehood. Election is a routine exercise. Recently, DDC polls were held and we participated in them. We are asking for creating a conducive environment for polls," he said, when asked if his party

would participate in the Assembly election if it was to be held before restoration of statehood.

He said the leaders had asked for restoration of civil rights and return of Kashmiri Pandits with dignity and security. He also said Assam had been left out of the delimitation process and Assembly poll was held there recently. "Why can't elections be held in J&K [before delimitation]," he asked.

### Double standards

In another example of apparent double standards, Mr. Tarigami said India was a huge country with diversity and uniqueness. He said Nagaland "feels unique". "You [government] are talking to them, not bulldozing. Why is the same thing not being followed for J&K?"

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said "nothing tangible had emerged" out of the meeting. He said it was a good gesture that the mainstream parties of J&K had attended the meeting. He said it appeared the meeting was called due to international pressures with the U.S. withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, rather than any domestic compulsions.

# Why does J&K delimitation exercise matter?

The process is likely to add seven more constituencies to the current 83-member Assembly

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir delimitation exercise took centre stage at the June 24 talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and political leaders from the Union Territory, especially those from the Gupkar alliance. The much-awaited process is likely to add seven more constituencies to the current 83-member Assembly ahead of the promised election.

Despite a freeze brought in by the government of then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah both in the State Assembly as well as in the Supreme Court in 2002 on such process till 2026, the J&K Delimitation Commission came into existence under provisions of Part V of the J&K Reorganization Act, 2019, and Delimitation Act, 2002, passed by the Centre in August 2019 along with other J&K-specific Bills.

Prior to August 5, 2019, carving out of Assembly seats was carried out under the J&K Constitution and the Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957. J&K saw the last delimitation exercise in 1994-95, after 22 years, which resulted in an increase in the number of Assembly constituencies from 76 to 87. The Jammu region saw an increase of five seats (from 32 to 37), the Kashmir region an increase



**Crucial meet:** Narendra Modi meeting leaders from various parties of Jammu and Kashmir, in New Delhi. •FILE PHOTO

of four seats (from 42 to 46) and Ladakh two seats (from two to four). The State as a whole had a total of 111 seats, with 24 reserved and vacant for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). J&K would hold elections to 87 seats, including four from Ladakh, after a six-year term, unlike the rest of the country where Assemblies have a five-year term.

### What changed?

Post August 5, 2019, and the split of the State into two Union Territories, the complexion of Assembly changed and the Union Territory of Ladakh seats were declared void, reducing the strength of the J&K Assembly to 83 from 87. The Delimitation Commission, headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, was constituted on March 6, 2020, to delineate seven more constituencies based on the 2001 census —

even though the fresh census is due this year — taking the strength of seats to 90.

All the five MPs from the UT of J&K, two from the BJP

### EXPLAINER

and three from the National Conference are its members. The Commission, which was granted a one-year term to complete the exercise till March year, was granted an extension. The extension was necessitated after the NC boycotted the Commission's meeting on February 18 this year, saying the entire Reorganisation Act, 2019 was under a judicial scrutiny for being "palpably unconstitutional and enacted in disregard and violation of mandate and spirit of the Constitution of India". On the other hand, the BJP MPs suggested considering other elements other than population like physical features,

existing boundaries of administrative units, facilities of communication and public convenience while delineating new constituencies.

### What is the BJP's agenda?

According to Aijaz Ashraf Wani, Senior Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Kashmir, the BJP has been proposing the removal of special status and delimitation exercise for many years.

"Abrogation of J&K's special constitutional position has been achieved. It does not want to miss the delimitation process for its set timelines. It may not have any significant value electorally but has a high rhetoric value for the party in the Jammu region, where its vote base is," Professor Wani said.

Though there is a set formula for carving out new constituencies, the BJP will only gain if the seats are increased in the districts where it is dominating the political scene like the Samba-Kathua-Jammu-Udhampur belt.

"Though it seems out of seven [new seats], there is by and large chances of equal distribution between the Kashmir region and the Jammu region," Mr. Wani said.

He said the delimitation process will become a major poll plank for the BJP in the

polls to highlight how it tried to break the domination of the Kashmir region by increasing seats in the Jammu region. However, many in Jammu are of the opinion that it will be for the first time the Scheduled Tribes will get reservation in the J&K Assembly.

### What is link with poll?

Constitutionally, Mr. Wani said, there is no correlation between the two exercises, delimitation and elections. "Both are independent exercises. However, the BJP wants to put a sequence to it," he added.

Experts suggested that the delimitation talks, which was put at the centre of the talks recently, is an issue with the BJP and the NC, because only these two parties have MPs from J&K. Thereby, other political parties, like the Peoples Democratic Party or the Congress with no MP, has no *locus standi* in the exercise.

### Why has NC agreed to be part of it?

Mr. Wani said the NC understood that the process may not change electoral dynamics significantly. "By attending the process, NC will lend credibility to the final report. Why they agreed to be part of the process that they questioned earlier is not known?" he added.

# Fluctuation in Odisha cases major concern

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

Fluctuations in the daily COVID-19 case count and the test positivity rate in Odisha indicates that the situation is not improving steadily in the State as was expected.

For the past 11 days, the daily figures have mostly remained above 3,000, dropping below the mark on two occasions.

Similarly the TPR has swayed around 5% during the same period.

### Fourth phase of curbs

The State has entered the fourth phase of virus-induced lockdown, but non-compliance of COVID-appropriate behaviour is being seen as the prime reason behind the slow improvement in the pandemic situation.

The State on Saturday reported 3,554 fresh virus cases, compared to 2, 912 on Friday — an increase of 642 cases.

The daily cases jumped by 22% in 24 hours.

# Sidhu's tweet hints at a possible patch-up in Punjab Congress

Former Minister took on SAD over inaction on sacrilege issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A tweet from dissident Congress leader and former Punjab Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu on Saturday indicates a possible compromise in the faction-ridden Punjab Congress.

Responding to an allegation from Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal that Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh was following Rahul Gandhi's directive to implicate SAD leadership in false cases, Mr. Sidhu claimed justice in the sacrilege case was "inching" forward under a new Special Investigation Team (SIT).

"6 Yrs since sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib Ji.. No justice in 2 yrs of your rule.. No justice in the following 4.5 yrs.. Today, New SIT inches

closer to Justice for Punjab's Soul & you cry of political interference.. Political interference was that which delayed Justice by 6 yrs," Mr. Sidhu said on Twitter.

Mr. Sidhu's tweets could give the Congress a way out as the leadership is learnt to have told the Punjab Chief

Minister to show visible action not just on the sacrilege issue but also against the liquor, sand and transport mafia operating in the State.

In another tweet, the dissident Congress leader asked his government what it had done against Bikram Singh Majithia, who was blamed for being involved in a drug racket when the Akalis were in power.

"To DGP [Director General Police] ... What have you done about Majithia? About those who gave political fac-



Navjot Singh Sidhu

ilitation & protection to set-up Chemical Drug Factory in Punjab? What is action taken on Big fish mentioned in STF report sent by Hon High Court to Govt? Thus today he threatens to put cases on us," the cricketer-turned-politician said.

Keen on united face While there is no unanimity among Punjab leaders on making Mr. Sidhu the Punjab Congress chief — a post he is sought to have wanted — the Congress leadership is keen

to present a united face going into the 2022 Assembly election.

In this context, through the week the former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has met several leaders including the incumbent Pradesh Congress Committee chief Sunil Jakhar, Punjab ministers Brahm Mohindra, Balbir Sidhu, Vijay Inder Singla and Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari (all close to Capt. Amarinder) as well as detractor Samsher Singh Dullo.

# SIT probes Badal's role in 2015 Kotkapura firing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister and president of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Sukhbir Singh Badal was on Saturday questioned by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Punjab police, probing the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incident in Punjab's Faridkot.

Mr. Badal appeared be-

fore the SIT at the Punjab Police Officers Institute. Several senior SAD leaders also reached the institute in support of their leader. The party said that Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Sunil Jakhar and Navjot Sidhu had replaced the three-member SIT and had already indicted former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and the SAD chief in the case.

# Ayodhya etched in the mind of every Indian, says PM

Modi reviews progress of development projects with CM

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday described Ayodhya as a city that is "etched in the cultural consciousness of every Indian", and said coming generations should feel the desire to visit the town in Uttar Pradesh at least once in their life time.

Ayodhya should manifest the finest of Indian traditions and the best of its developmental transformations, Mr. Modi said in a virtual meeting with U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to review the development projects in the town.



**Singing praises:** PM Modi attending a meeting on Ayodhya development plan via video conferencing on Saturday. •PTI

The Prime Minister also spoke about blending identity with infrastructure.

"It is our collective endeavour to celebrate the identity of Ayodhya and keep its cultural vibrancy alive through innovative ways," he was quoted as saying by sources.

In the meeting, government officials made a presentation on the various aspects of Ayodhya's development, which is being envisaged as a spiritual centre, global tourism hub

and a sustainable Smart City, the PMO later said.

The PM was also informed about various upcoming and proposed infrastructure projects to improve connectivity with Ayodhya.

An upcoming Greenfield township was discussed which includes lodging facilities for devotees, space for ashrams, mutts, hotels and bhavans of various States. A tourist facilitation centre and a world class museum will also be built, added the PMO.

**CSIR-CFTRI**  
RECRUITMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS  
(Adv. No. REC 02/2021)  
CSIR-CFTRI invites online applications from Indian citizens for filling up 9 posts of Junior Secretariat Assistants & 3 Backlog posts of Junior Stenographers. Interested candidates may please visit CFTRI official website <https://www.cftri.res.in> under Recruitments. All further announcements / details pertaining to this process / updates / corrigendum / addendum etc., will be provided only on CFTRI website from time to time.  
Commencement Date: 01.07.2021, 10:00 AM  
Closing Date: 30.07.2021, 05:00 PM  
Controller of Administration

**STATE HEALTH AGENCY (SHA KERALA)**  
5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Artech Meenakshi Plaza  
Opp. Govt. W & C Hospital, Thycad, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 014  
E mail - [statehealthagencykerala@gmail.com](mailto:statehealthagencykerala@gmail.com)  
web: [www.sha.kerala.gov.in](http://www.sha.kerala.gov.in)  
Ph. No. 0471 4063121  
Tender id : 2021\_SHA\_427645\_1  
e-Tender Notice  
Online Bids are invited from Eligible Third Party Administrations/Implementation's Support Agencies (Licensed with IRDA) for implementation of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana - Karunya Arogya Suraksha Padhathi (AB PM-JAY KASP) in Private Hospitals. For details on e-Bids submission and tender document, visit the e-procurement portal (<http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in>) and SHA's official website ([www.sha.kerala.gov.in](http://www.sha.kerala.gov.in)). Last date for submission of the completed e-bid documents: 13.07.2021 (up to 16.00 hrs.).  
Date : 26.06.2021  
Sd/-  
Executive Director (SHA)

**Office of the Chief Engineer, PMC, RRWS & FMP  
PHED, Nagaur**  
Email: [cepmcnagaur@gmail.com](mailto:cepmcnagaur@gmail.com)  
Sr. No. CE/PMC/Jaya/Matassukh/2021-22/748-755 Dated 21/6/2021  
Notice Inviting Bid No. 03/2021-22  
Online bids are invited on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from eligible enlisted "AA" class contractors of PHED, Rajasthan meeting eligibility criteria. Contractors enlisted with other departments of Government of Rajasthan or enlisted with CPWD / Postal / Telecom / Railways / MES / other State Government / Central Government undertakings / organization in class equivalent to "AA" class of Rajasthan and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may also apply after depositing prescribed Bid Security. Details of this Bid notification and pre-qualification criteria can also be seen in NIB exhibited on website [www.diprc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.diprc.rajasthan.gov.in), <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> and <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. Bids are to be submitted online electronic format on web site <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>.  
NIB No. Particulars of work NIB Code NIB Cost  
03/2021-22 Bids on Lump Sum Turn-key (Design Build) basis for the Retro-fitting works for providing Functional Household Tap Connections in 123 MH and 244 OH one year defect Liability and 10 years O&M thereafter including O&M of the existing system from starting of 1st year of O&M of this work (upto VTC) under Jai Jeevan Mission (JMJ) in Jayal tehsil, District Nagaur PHE2122A1773 Rs. 146.93 Crores  
(Dinesh Goel)  
Chief Engineer  
PMC, RRWS & FMP  
PHED, Nagaur  
DIPRC/6028

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - e-TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender No : Tender No : 14/SE/PHC/TSR/2021-22 JUM - Thrissur District - Providing FHCTs to Rural house holds and allied works in various Gramapanchayaths under PH. Division, Irinjilakuda. EMD: ₹500000, Tender fee: ₹16800. Last Date for submitting Tender: 21.07.2021, 03:00pm. Phone: 0487-2423230.  
Website: [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in), [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in)  
KWA-JB-GL-6-226-2021-22  
Superintending Engineer, PH Circle, Thrissur

**GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION  
Special Project Department**  
S.P.D.No.B1/0016/2021  
Short e - Re TENDER NOTICE  
Short e - Re Tenders are invited for the following work in Two Cover System as per details furnished below:  
Sl. No. Name of the Work  
1 S.P.D.No.B1/0016/2021:- Construction of New Main Block at Chennai Girls Higher Secondary School at Market Street School Campus in Division - 67, Zone - VI. Approximate value of work - Rs.562.00 lakhs (inclusive of GST) - E.M.D. Rs.5,62,000/-  
Tender last date and time of submission 12.07.2021 up to 3.00 pm  
Bid document will be available in website : <https://tntenders.gov.in>  
Tender opening date and time 13.07.2021 at 3.00 pm  
DIPR/1863/TENDER/2021  
Superintending Engineer (Special Project)

**अखिल भारतीय आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान (एम्स), कल्याणी  
ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), KALYANI**  
(स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के तत्वावधान में एक संवैधानिक निकाय)  
(A Statutory Body under the Aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI)  
राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग-34, बसन्तपुर, सागुन, कल्याणी, जिला-नदिया, पश्चिम बंगाल-741245  
NH-34 Connector, Basantapur, Saguna, Kalyani, District Nadia, West Bengal 741245  
No. 418/E-32013/6/21-(DEPUTATION) Date: 25.06.2021  
VACANCY NOTICE ON DEPUTATION  
Applications invited in prescribed pro-forma from eligible Officers/ Officials of Central/ State/ U. T. Government/ Universities/ Statutory/ Autonomous Bodies/ Public Sector Undertaking/ Research and Development Organisations for filling up the following Group 'A' & 'B' Posts on Deputation Basis (including short term contract) at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Kalyani, West Bengal.  
Sl. Name of Post Group Pay Matrix & Level No. Posts  
1. Superintending Engineer A Level- 13; as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Rs. 123100 - 215900) 01  
2. Executive Engineer (Civil) A Level-11 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Rs. 67700 - 208700) 01  
3. Nursing Superintendent A Level-11 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Rs. 67700 - 208700) 01  
4. Accounts Officer A Level-10 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Rs. 56100 - 177500) 01  
5. Librarian Grade - I (Documentalist) B Level-7 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Rs. 44900 - 142400) 01  
i) Maximum age limit for applying for the aforesaid posts on deputation is 56 years as on last date of receipt of applications.  
ii) The period of deputation will be for a period of 3 (three) years and extendable for maximum period of seven years as per DoPT guidelines.  
iii) The Officers/Officials who fulfill the specified eligibility conditions may submit their application in the prescribed pro-forma at Annexure-I through proper channel to The Executive Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Kalyani, First Floor, Administrative Building, NH-34 Connector, Basantapur, Saguna, Kalyani, District Nadia, West Bengal 741245.  
iv) For details of advertisement including educational qualifications, age and eligibility criteria etc., kindly visit institute's website <https://aiimskalyani.edu.in>  
v) The last date for receipt of completed application on the prescribed pro-forma along with required documents through proper channel is 30 days after publication of this advertisement in the Employment News.  
By order of Executive Director  
Sd/-  
Siddhartha Nandy  
Administrative Officer  
AIIMS, Kalyani



INTERVIEW | ANURAG AGRAWAL

# 'No immediate threat from Delta Plus in places that had Delta outbreaks'

There will be reasonable cross-neutralisation by antibodies raised against Delta, says Anurag Agrawal, Director, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR)

HINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

**Anurag Agrawal**, Director, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR), Delhi, speaks on the Delta variant of the coronavirus being a global concern, the impact of mutation on the efficacy of vaccines, the cause of mutation in a virus and the difference between a strain and variant of a virus.

**What is the Delta variant? How is it different from the Delta Plus variant? Why has it become a global concern?**

A mutant variant of SARS-CoV-2, B.1.617.2 is now named the Delta variant. It has mutations in its spike protein, which makes it more transmissible and able to evade immunity. It has already spread to 80 countries across the world. After India, now it is spreading fast in the U.K., some States in the U.S., Singapore and southern China.

When the Delta variant develops additional mutations of possible importance, it is called Delta Plus. As of now, the K417N mutation,

which was previously seen in the Beta variant, is what people usually mean when they say Delta Plus. This is not a Delta/Beta hybrid, but a case of convergent evolution where mutations develop independently. The more correct name is AY.1 or AY.2.

In my opinion, regions that have already suffered from Delta outbreaks should not have a major problem with Delta Plus, since I expect there to be reasonable cross-neutralisation of Delta Plus by antibodies raised against Delta. Thus, I do not see an immediate threat or any reason to panic. Delta Plus is not rising faster than Delta in the previous month, so that is somewhat confir-

matory. However, the Central government is keeping a close watch, since any Delta sub-lineage is a variant of concern meriting further investigation.

**Are we going to see a third wave soon as some are predicting?**

A viral outbreak begins by infecting the most exposed or vulnerable population in an area and then spreads by infecting more and more people who are susceptible. People who get the infection and recover develop some natural immunity against the virus. Then, there are people who acquire immunity post vaccination.

When enough people become immune resistant, the virus cannot propagate easily and cases diminish. After some time, when the immunity fades or the virus evolves to evade it, the virus strikes back and starts



**The Central government is keeping a close watch, since any Delta sub-lineage is a variant of concern**

spreading again. You may call this cycle a wave.

If we look at the entire country, we cannot say that the recent wave was just a second wave. For example, in Delhi, it was the fourth wave — the first in June last year, then in September, followed

by one in November, and now. Many people want to know when there will be the next surge. I don't think it will come anytime soon as the Delta variant caused this surge across the country. A majority of people will have immunity against it right now. So, while I expect localised outbreaks, I don't expect a big national wave anytime soon.

Of course, if the virus mutates drastically to evade this immunity and, more importantly, if people lower their guard as they did a few months back, there could certainly be another wave. Right now, vaccination is going on fast, viral evolution takes time and we are tracking the mutations, so I am hopeful that the size of future waves can be kept small.

Do remember that the virus is still there and while we have some time, we must use it well. So, we need to take reasonable precautions and

promote vaccination, but not panic.

**How does mutation impact the efficacy of the vaccines? And what leads to mutation in a virus?**

Some mutations on the virus's spike protein may not allow the antibodies developed after immunisation to bind to it. In such cases, the mutant can escape the immunity and cause disease. So far, currently available vaccines are efficient to prevent severe disease by mutants but have reduced effectiveness in preventing infection.

When a virus multiplies in a host's body, it makes millions of copies. But some copies are not perfect replicas, they develop some differences, which are termed as mutations.

The ability to escape human immunity makes some mutations advantageous. These may then propagate

better than parent lineages.

**What are double mutations or triple mutations in a virus?**

**Does India track mutations through genome sequencing? Why is it important?**

These are wrong choices of words used to oversimplify things. All current lineages carry many mutations. But only a few mutations, which lead to more infections or increase the severity of the disease, matter.

**What is the difference between a strain and a variant of a virus?**

Technically, it is one strain until there is a very major change in the virus, which is not yet the case. Variant or lineage is a better word to describe mutations in a virus that are leading to the changes being seen.

**Does it mean scientists will have to invent new vaccines for each mutation happening?**

We don't need to redesign the vaccine for every mutation. Some, for example, E484K mutants, may need tweaks to the vaccine. We are already seeing such versions for mRNA vaccines.

**Do vaccines that are currently available in India give protection against mutant COVID-19 virus?**

Yes, all available vaccines are protecting against severe disease. Mutations in a virus are inevitable. There is no need to panic. People need to take precautions and follow COVID appropriate behaviour (CAB). CAB is effective against all mutations. Also, as said earlier, vaccines are protecting against severe disease.

## WB sets up panel to probe fake vaccination

Health camps held for those duped

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

West Bengal government on Saturday set up an expert committee to examine the effect of fake vaccination administered to the people and take corrective action. Hundreds have been administered fake vaccines at camps set up by Debanjan Deb, who posed as an IAS officer and official of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

The four-member committee has been tasked with submitting a detailed report immediately. During the day, the West Bengal Health Department organised health camps for people who had been administered fake vaccines. Doctors said there were no serious reactions to the fake vaccines. Primary investigation has revealed that people were administered antibiotic Amikacin instead of vaccines.

Meanwhile, the Kolkata police have arrested three more persons in connection with the scam. They have been identified as Sushanta Das, Rabin Sikdar and Santanu Manna, and, according to police, they aided Debanjan Deb in opening bank accounts.

Former Kolkata Mayor and Chairman of Board of Administrators Firdad Hakim said that anyone, including officials of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, found to be involved in the scam will not be spared. Mr. Hakim wondered how the banks could allow the fraud-



At present, no adverse effects have been noted in those who got the fake jabs.

sters to open and operate a bank account in the name of KMC.

A special investigation team has been set up to investigate the scam and officers from Kolkata Police's Detective Department were charged with leading the investigation.

Several people, including businessmen, have lodged complaints against Debanjan Deb, son of a retired bureaucrat, who had for months pretended to be the joint commissioner of the KMC.

The police have also questioned businessmen who provided holograms of KMC to him. In the past 24 hours, another case against the accused was registered by a contractor who alleged that he was cheated of ₹90 lakh.

A pharma company also alleged that Mr. Deb duped the firm.

The fake vaccination racket was busted after Trinamool Congress MP Mimi Chakraborty raised an alarm after she did not receive any message or certificate after getting vaccinated at one such camp.

## 61.9 lakh vaccine doses given

Seven-day rolling average of daily jabs in the country continues to increase

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

India administered 61.9 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines until 9 p.m. on Saturday. Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of vaccinations (9.7 lakh) followed by Maharashtra (7.2 lakh) and Uttar Pradesh (5.2 lakh).

Between June 1 and 25, 39.5 lakh doses were administered daily in India on average.

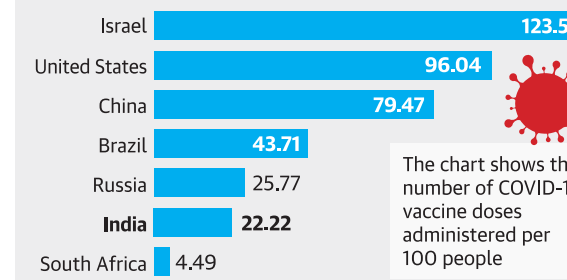
At the current rate, a total of 106.5 crore doses can be administered by December 31, 2021, which is around 81.5 crore doses less than those required to fully vaccinate all adults (188 crore doses).

To fully inoculate all adults by the end of this year, 82.4 lakh doses need to be given daily on average in the country.

The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to in-

### A smaller fraction

For every 100 people, India has administered a COVID-19 vaccine dose to around 22 so far. In comparison, vaccine coverage per 100 people is relatively higher in other BRICS countries such as China, Brazil and Russia



crease. It stood at 60.9 lakh on June 25, which is more than the 33.5 lakh recorded a week before (June 19).

**Significant rise**  
The figure was also significantly higher than the average daily doses recorded a month before (May 25), which was 21.2 lakh.

About 28% of adults in In-

dia, 59.1% of those aged above 45 years, and 66.4% of people aged above 60 years, were administered at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, until 9 p.m. on Saturday.

Only 4% of the country's population is fully vaccinated. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

India recorded 46,580 new COVID-19 cases until 9 p.m. on Saturday, taking the cumulative caseload to 3,02,29,199. As many as 1,222 new deaths were also registered taking the tally to 3,95,747.

### Kerala leads in cases

Kerala reported 12,118 new infections, followed by Maharashtra (9,812) and Tamil Nadu (5,415). Maharashtra recorded 511 new fatalities, followed by Tamil Nadu (148) and Kerala (118).

Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

## Delta variant most transmissible: WHO

It has been identified in 85 countries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA

The Delta variant of COVID-19, identified in at least 85 countries, is the "most transmissible" of the variants identified so far and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinated populations, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned.

"I know that globally there is currently a lot of concern about the Delta variant, and the WHO is concerned about it, too," Director-General Ghebreyesus said at a WHO press briefing on Friday.

The Delta variant was first identified in India.

"Delta is the most transmissible of the variants identified so far, has been identified in at least 85 countries, and is spreading rapidly among unvaccinat-



Testing and tracking remain the most useful tools to monitor COVID-19 spread.

ed populations," he said in Geneva.

He noted with concern that as some countries ease public health and social measures, "We are starting to see increases in transmission around the world."

"More cases means more hospitalisations, further stretching health workers and health systems, which increases the risk of death," he said.

## Activists seek 50 more days of work under NREGA

Over 2 lakh households have exhausted quota

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

More than 2 lakh rural households have already completed their guaranteed 100 days of employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme within the first three months of the financial year,

according to the scheme's database. This is higher than seen at the same time last year, indicating even higher demand for work than 2020-21's unprecedented levels.

Given the high rates of rural job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activists belonging to the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, asking for an additional 50 days of work to be provided under the scheme, with funding al-

located from the disaster management budget.

The MGNREGA scheme guarantees 100 days of non-skilled employment for every rural household each year, and proved a lifeline for migrant workers and families hit by the COVID-19 lockdown last summer. In acknowledgement of the disaster, the Centre increased MGNREGA funding by ₹40,000 crore for 2020-21. However, funding is back to pre-COVID-19 levels this

year, with the Centre arguing that there has been no nationwide lockdown.

However, the MGNREGA database shows that this year's demand may be even higher than last year's. As on June 26, 2.17 lakh rural households have already completed their 100 day quota and will not be able to seek any more work from MGNREGA this year. Last year, *The Hindu* had reported in the first week of July that 1.4 lakh households had

completed their 100 day quota within the first quarter. (During early April 2020, most MGNREGA worksites were shut down across the country, resulting in low levels of work provided.)

Throughout 2020-21, an unprecedented 72 lakh households completed 100 days of work. If the trend of the first quarter continues, this year will see an even higher number of families who run out of work under the scheme.

## MLA accused of torture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SHIMLA

Dharamsala BJP MLA Vishal Nehriya has been accused by his HPAS officer wife of physical and mental torture.

In an 11-minute video that has gone viral on social media, the 2020-batch Himachal Pradesh Administrative Services (HPAS) officer Oshin Sharma alleged that the BJP legislator slapped her thrice on Thursday.

## SUDOKU

1		6						5
	8		5		7	2		
		3		1				
		8		5				7
	9							4
	6			9		3		
			4		7			
		9	1		3		5	
3					8			4

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

6	2	9	7	8	3	5	1	4
5	7	1	4	6	2	9	3	8
4	3	8	5	1	9	7	2	6
1	8	2	9	5	4	6	7	3
3	5	4	6	7	8	2	9	1
7	9	6	2	3	1	8	4	5
2	4	5	1	9	6	3	8	7
8	1	7	3	2	5	4	6	9
9	6	3	8	4	7	1	5	2

## Oxygen concentrators from U.S. benefit Rajasthan villagers

Many patients have recovered with help of the machines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

Oxygen concentrators supplied by the Association of Indians in America (AIA) have benefited the COVID-19 patients in the remote areas of Rajasthan's Bharatpur district. The machines were sent to primary health centres in the villages, where the COVID-19 care centres were also established by the Medical and Health Department.

A total of 60 oxygen concentrators were sent in May-end and first week of June, during the second wave of the pandemic, in Nadbai, Kumher, Pahadi, Kaman, Bayana and Sewar blocks of Bharatpur district. While a large number of patients have recovered with the use of machines, some of them are still being used.

Eleven machines were kept at the block offices of



A health worker arranging an oxygen concentrator machine. • FILE PHOTO

Lupin Foundation, which has been working in the district's rural areas for over three decades, to provide emergency services at the doorsteps of villagers. Eight COVID-19 care centres were inaugurated in various blocks in the presence of MLAs from the respective constituencies.

Lupin Foundation's executive director Sita Ram Gupta said on Saturday that the oxygen concentrators had helped save lives of a large number of patients, who were facing difficulty in breathing. "This assistance from the U.S. turned out to be a blessing in region where the health facilities were in shambles," Mr. Gupta said.

### AIA thanked

The district administration profusely thanked AIA president Urmillesh Arya, hailing from Bharatpur district's Ballabgarh village, for the philanthropic gesture. Mr. Gupta suggested that the COVID-19 care centres be established in the localities at some distance from the community health centres to protect the villagers coming for treatment of other diseases from the COVID-19 infection.

## Experts oppose decision to open Corbett, Rajaji round the year

'Opening for income generation will be cruelty to animals'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DEHRADUN

Wildlife experts in Uttarakhand on Saturday strongly opposed the State government's decision to open Corbett and Rajaji tiger reserves for visitors all round-the-year, saying it amounts to cruelty to the animal world.

"The rule to close tiger reserves for around four months from June to mid-November every year was framed after considering all aspects. Opening them for visitors round-the-year just for income generation will be an act of cruelty to animals. We will oppose the decision legally and on all other platforms to ensure that it is withdrawn in the interest of wildlife," former wildlife warden for Nainital Dinesh Pandey said. Wildlife tourism is not open round-the-year anywhere in India or abroad, he said.

Uttarakhand's Forest and



A tiger at the Corbett National Park. • FILE PHOTO: AP

Environment Minister Harak Singh Rawat recently announced that Corbett and Rajaji tiger reserves will now remain open for visitors throughout the year.

### 5-month closure

The two tiger reserves whose major parts are located in Nainital and Haridwar districts, respectively remain closed to visitors every year from June 30 to mid-November.

"The State government

should review its decision to open the tiger reserves throughout the year because monsoon is also the mating season for a number of wild animals, including elephants, who roam freely around the forests in search of a mate. Movement of both animals and humans in the wild during the season may also give rise to man-animal conflict situations," State Head of the Wildlife Protection Society of India Rajendra Agarwal said.



# 'U.S. will continue to back Afghanistan'

Biden says America will 'help maintain Afghan military, provide economic and political support'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

As violence increases in Afghanistan with the Taliban making territorial gains, U.S. President Joe Biden met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the Chairman of its High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, in the Oval Office on Friday. The meeting comes as the U.S. approaches a September 11 deadline to withdraw its troops from the country.

With the Afghan leaders in the Oval Office, Mr. Biden pledged the U.S.'s economic and political support. A handful of reporters were permitted to be present during cursory remarks prior to the meetings beginning.

"Our troops may be leaving but our support for Afghanistan is not ending in terms of support and maintenance of helping maintain their military as well as economic and political support," Mr. Biden said, adding that the Afghan's had to determine their future.

"Afghans are going to have to decide their future, what they want," he said. "The senseless violence has to stop but it's going to be very difficult. But we're going to stick with you and we're go-



Looking ahead: Joe Biden, right, meeting with Ashraf Ghani, centre, and Abdullah Abdullah, in the White House. •AP

ing to do our best to see to it you have the tools you need," he added.

The U.S. President was joined by Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, Sumona Guha, who is the Senior South Asia Director at the National Security Council, USAID Administrator Samantha Power and others for the bilateral. Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar and National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib were among the representatives on the Afghan side.

The White House released a 'fact sheet' on Friday afternoon, highlighting its assistance to Afghanistan, includ-

ing a commitment to provide 3 million Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines and \$266 million in humanitarian assistance. Mr. Biden has requested the U.S. Congress for \$3.3 billion for the Defence Department's Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, the sheet said.

## Relocating Afghans

On Thursday, Mr. Biden said the U.S. would start relocating Afghans who were in danger of being targeted for working with U.S. troops.

Around 650 U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan to protect the U.S. Embassy while additional troops will cover the airport until a Tur-

kish-led operation will likely take charge of that facility, the Associated Press reported earlier this week.

On Friday, Mr. Ghani said he respected Mr. Biden's decision to withdraw troops. He also said that the Afghan forces had recaptured six districts in the South and North.

"Just for your information, today, the Afghan Defence and Security Forces have retaken six districts, both in the south and the north," Mr. Ghani said. In a number of areas, local security forces have surrendered to the Taliban.

"Let us understand that in great moments of transition, things happen but you will see that with determination, with unity and with the partnership, we will overcome all odds," he said.

Earlier in the day, following his meeting with Mr. Austin (Mr. Abdullah was also there), Mr. Ghani was asked about a report on a U.S. intelligence assessment that the Afghan government could fall within six months of U.S. troop withdrawal.

"There have been many such predictions, and they have all proven - turned out false," Mr. Ghani replied.

After meeting Mr. Ghani,

Senate Minority Leader (Republican) Mitch McConnell said that the withdrawal of troops would leave Afghan forces alone to confront threats.

"The Taliban, emboldened by our retreat, is rolling back years of progress, especially for the rights of Afghan women, on its way to taking Kabul," he said.

Asked how the administration would respond to Mr. McConnell, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Friday, "I would first say it's important to take a step back and remember what we inherited."

She cited factors including an agreement between the Trump administration and the Taliban that U.S. troops would be withdrawn and the relatively low levels of U.S. and allied forces on the ground. "That's the hand we were dealt. The President made a decision - which is consistent with his view that this was not a winnable war - to bring the U.S. troops home... after 20 years of fighting this war. And a big part of that decision was also around the fact that if we left our troops there, our troops would be at risk because the Taliban would be shooting at them by May 1st."

## Three killed in Germany knife attack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WURZBURG

Investigators were racing on Saturday to pinpoint the motive of a man who went on a knife rampage in the German city of Wuerzburg, killing three people and leaving five seriously injured.

The suspect, a 24-year-old Somali who arrived in Wuerzburg in 2015, staged the attack in the city centre on Friday evening, striking at a household goods store before advancing to a bank. He was later overpowered by police after they shot him in the thigh.

Investigators found records showing that the man had been treated at a psychiatric institution, and police said he was not a known Islamist.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said the investigations will show what drove the man to go on his rampage.

But the far-right AfD party immediately seized on the violence that has erupted just three months before elections. The anti-immigration party's co-leader Joerg Meuthen noted that a witness had reportedly heard the suspect shouting "Allah Akbar" (God is greatest).

## Chauvin gets 22 years in jail for Floyd's death

Prosecutors sought a 30-year prison term

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MINNEAPOLIS

Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced on Friday to 22.5 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the U.S. in generations.

The punishment - which came after Chauvin broke his yearlong silence to offer condolences to the Floyd family and express hope that they eventually have "some peace of mind" - is one of the longest prison terms ever imposed on a U.S. police officer in the killing of a Black person.

Still, Floyd family members and others were disappointed. The sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested. And with good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years. "Just because it's the most time doesn't mean it's enough time," said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a Minneapolis protest leader.

Judge Peter Cahill went beyond the 12 1/2-year sentence prescribed under state guidelines, citing Chauvin's "abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty" shown to Floyd.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump said the family had gotten "some measure of accountability" but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum at his upcoming federal civil rights trial. Mr. Crump said this was the longest sentence a police officer has ever received in Minnesota.

But he added: "Real justice in America will be Black men and Black women and people of colour who will not have to fear being killed by the police just because



People take out a rally after the sentencing of Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis. •AFP

the colour of their skin. That would be real justice."

Outside the courthouse, a crowd of about 50 people clasped hands or placed them on each other's shoulders. The reaction was subdued as people debated whether the sentence was long enough.

## 'We'll take it'

At George Floyd Square, as the intersection where Floyd was pinned to the pavement is now known, members of the crowd broke into applause, and several said, "We'll take it."

Chauvin was immediately led back to prison. He showed little emotion when the judge pronounced the sentence.

The fired white officer was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for up to 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man gasped that he couldn't breathe and went limp on May 25, 2020.

Bystander video of Floyd's arrest on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a corner store prompted protests around the world and led to scattered violence in Minneapolis and beyond, as well as demands for overhauling police departments.

# U.S. Justice Department to sue Georgia over election law

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

U.S. Attorney-General Merrick Garland announced that the Justice Department would be suing the State of Georgia over controversial voting rights laws passed in March this year on the grounds that they infringed on black voters' right to cast their ballot.

"Our complaint alleges that recent changes to Geor-

gia's election laws were enacted with the purpose of denying or abridging the right of black Georgians to vote on account of their race or colour," Mr. Garland said, adding that voting rights expansion had often been met with counter-efforts.

Georgia's Election Integrity Act cut the period during which potential voters could ask for absentee mail-in ballots, restricted locations for

ballot drop-boxes, outlawed the provision of food or water to those standing in line at the polls and prohibited breaks for ballot counters during counting. It also increased the control the state legislature has over the election apparatus.

Mr. Garland said Georgia casting a record number of ballots in the 2020 elections was a "cause for celebration", but that in March 2021

the State's legislature passed laws to make it harder to vote. Mr. Biden was the first Democrat in nearly three decades to win Georgia, buoyed by support from African-American voters.

Georgia's Governor Brian Kemp criticised the lawsuit on Twitter. "This lawsuit is born out of the lies and misinformation the Biden administration has pushed against Georgia's Election In-

tegrity Act from the start," Mr. Kemp wrote.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump had alleged widespread fraud in the elections and has continued to seek to overturn the results.

Florida and Arizona are among states that have also passed laws to restrict voter access. These could be challenged by the DOJ.

Mr. Garland hinted that his department could take

on other cases where access to the ballot was being restricted.

"The Civil Rights Division [of the DOJ] continues to analyse other State laws that have been passed and we are following the progress of legislative proposals under consideration in additional states," he said, adding that where the DOJ believes civil rights have been violated, it would "not hesitate to act".

# Colombia President says his chopper was hit by gunfire

The attack reportedly happened near the Venezuela border

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BAGOTA

President Ivan Duque said the helicopter he was flying in on Friday near the border with Venezuela was hit by gunfire in the first attack against a Colombian head of state in nearly 20 years.

No one was injured, and authorities did not say which side of the border the shots came from. Colombia regularly accuses Venezuela of harbouring Colombian rebels on its territory.

"It is a cowardly attack, where you can see bullet holes in the presidential aircraft," Mr. Duque said in a statement.

Mr. Duque said he was flying with the Defence and Interior Ministers and the Governor of Norte de Santander province, which borders Venezuela, when



Ivan Duque surrounded by bodyguards close to the presidential helicopter in Cucuta, Colombia. •AFP

the helicopter was attacked. Photos released by the President's office showed the tail and main blade had been hit.

Mr. Duque said the aircraft's "safety features" prevented a "lethal" attack. "I have given very clear instructions to the entire security team to go after those who shot at the aircraft," he said.

The U.S., European Union and UN mission in Colombia all condemned the attack.

The presidential delegation had left the town of Sardinata and was headed to the border city of Cucuta when they came under fire.

Mr. Duque had attended an event in the Catatumbo region, one of the main coca-growing areas of the country.

## Delta variant forces new lockdowns

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SAINT PETERSBURG

Australia's largest city Sydney entered a two-week lockdown on Saturday to contain a sudden coronavirus surge and Russia's Saint Petersburg announced a record death toll, as several European nations lifted restrictions despite the global spread of a highly contagious COVID-19 variant.

While vaccination drives have brought down infections in numerous - mostly wealthy - countries, the rise of the Delta variant has stoked fears of new waves of a virus that has already killed nearly four million people.

Bangladesh announced that it would impose a new national lockdown from Monday over the variant, with offices shut for a week and only medical-related transport allowed.

Sydney's normally bustling harbourside centre was nearly deserted after people were ordered to stay home except for essential trips.

New Zealand, citing "multiple outbreaks" in Australia, announced a three-day suspension of its quarantine-free travel arrangement with its larger neighbour.

Meanwhile in Europe, Spain brought an end to mandatory outdoor mask-wearing on Saturday, a year after the rule was first introduced during Europe's devastating first wave of the virus.

The Netherlands also ended its rules on outdoor mask-wearing.

Israel, which has one of the world's most successful vaccination campaigns, has seen infections linked to the variant surge.

Infections are also surging at an alarming rate in at least 12 countries in Africa, with the Delta variant fuelling unprecedented hospitalisations in the continent.

## ELSEWHERE



### Iran grants clemency to over 5,000 prisoners

TEHRAN Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei granted clemency to more than 5,000 prisoners to mark a Shia holiday, a statement on his official website said on Saturday. It gave no details of the identity of the 5,156 prisoners. AFP

### U.S. report on 144 UFO sightings 'inconclusive'

WASHINGTON A U.S. intelligence report on 144 sightings of aircraft or other devices apparently flying at mysterious speeds or trajectories, said most could not be explained, but did not rule out that some could be alien spacecraft. AFP

## Hong Kong police chief calls for fake news law

Apple Daily was forced to fold last week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's new police chief called for a fake news law on Saturday and blamed the media for plunging trust in his officers in the politically polarised finance hub.

His call comes as authorities carry out a sweeping crackdown on dissent and just days after outspoken newspaper Apple Daily was forced to fold following the freezing of its accounts under a tough new national security law.

Surveys show the police have been the least popular disciplinary service in the city since Hong Kong was rocked by pro-democracy protests in 2019, during which allegations of police

brutality emerged.

Police chief Raymond Siu said much of the blame lay with the media. "I understand that there are residents who are still hostile against us. In this regard, I told my colleagues that many of these torn relationships and hostility against the police are due to fake news," Mr. Siu said.

"There is no legal definition of fake news at the moment, but if there is any legislation that could help us bring these people to justice, as law enforcers, we absolutely welcome it," he added.

Three former police officers were on Friday promoted to key positions in government.

THE HINDU GROUP

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## SNAPSHOTS



## Earth-borne aliens

An article in *Nature* describes over 2,000 nearby star systems at distances of less than 326 light years that could find and observe the Earth, if they were so inclined. The researchers used the Gaia eDR3 catalogue to perform this analysis. If there are curious lifeforms in these systems, they might want to observe us - aliens from their point of view.



## Missing link

An article in *Science* describes how researchers have unearthed, from Neshor Ramla site, fossils dated 140,000 years to 120,000 years ago. These belong to a hitherto unknown species of humans and share resemblances with Neanderthals (teeth and jaw) and archaic *Homo* (skull). They had no chin and large teeth, which sets them apart from modern humans.

# Tackling vaccine hesitancy challenge in rural India

Addressing vaccine hesitancy in rural India would first of all require health systems to be honest and transparent

CHHAYA PACHAULI  
ANANT BHAN

In rural India concerns about COVID-19 vaccines are now increasingly commonplace. People voice their concern about what will happen to them if they get vaccinated and have doubts that the government is sending inferior quality vaccines to them. Vaccination sessions in local health centres often see very few or no takers.

From a public health and equity perspective, this is a cause for worry. The fear of vaccines and rural communities not only resisting but also outright rejecting vaccination is a reality. A few weeks ago, villagers in Barabanki (UP) jumped into a river to escape COVID-19 vaccinators. Efforts by local health authorities to create awareness are of little avail. There are contrasting dimensions to COVID-19 vaccine rollout: one where people are enthusiastically accepting it and the other of resistance. There are many diverse factors at play in this, which may go beyond the health concerns and have more to do with socio-anthropological aspects of health-seeking behaviour.

## Vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy is not a recent phenomenon. It is neither limited

to a particular community or country, nor have we seen it only in the context of COVID-19. Various studies have shown that the acceptance of vaccines among African-American communities is relatively low in the U.S. Polls have also shown significant hesitancy among Hispanics and people in rural areas.

We have also seen vaccine hesitancy among the urban and the more educated or 'aware' populations, with pockets of populations of socio-economically well-off communities refusing to get their kids vaccinated. While vaccine hesitancy can lead to a firm rejection of vaccines, there's also a possibility of people changing their perceptions over time.

## Socio-cultural context

Most of our fears and apprehensions stem from a deep impact of something adverse or unfavourable that we have personally experienced or our social circles have experienced. Over time these become our beliefs, our innate guards. In the context of the concerns described at the beginning of this article, we must look at vaccine hesitancy from a distinct lens of fear and not necessarily scepticism for new vaccines. These indi-

viduals, and the communities they belong to, are probably not really challenging medical science, or questioning vaccine trial results, adequacy or inadequacy of evidence. Rather, they seem to indicate deep-seated fears and belief in conspiracies, the fear of perhaps being discriminated and deceived and of being omitted (from societal benefits).

Parts of rural Rajasthan, where we have seen high vaccine refusal rates, are also often poorly resourced, and often tribal. Communities in this region here have believed that the widespread poverty and the general backwardness that they had been pushed into is a result of historically institutionalised discrimination imposed on them by those in power. They believe that they have been systematically alienated of their land rights, forest rights and kept deprived of basic education and health care. All of this has led to a state of despondency and, more than that, a very strong feeling of distrust and resentment against government institutions and those in power.

Such contexts cannot be ignored while we try to understand what might be fuelling the extreme fear and resistance around COVID-19 vaccine.

## Building trust

Communities might not see the impact of a vaccine instantly, as

it's usually preventive in nature rather than curative. People are used to taking medications when they are unwell or in pain, and they may feel better almost immediately, but that's not the case with vaccines. On the contrary, vaccines administered to a healthy person may lead to occasional side-effects like fever, body aches, etc. Add to that rumours about deaths post-vaccination, and it may not be so easy for people to get convinced about the vaccines.

Responses to vaccines must also be discussed and analysed in conjunction with and in comparison to uptake of other health care services by a particular population. Addressing vaccine hesitancy in rural India would first of all require health systems to be honest and transparent. Create awareness, let people know how vaccines work, how they help prevent a disease, what are the probable side effects and how they can be managed. Health authorities need to be comfortable about people raising questions, while providing them answers as best as possible. Moreover, it's important to be patient with them. In most cases, it would take time before they change their minds, if at all. Being cognisant of local cultural sensitivities and working with trusted intermediaries is important in this effort.

Sustained and meaningful efforts need to be made to build



trust, gain confidence of communities and meet their expectations. This would also require seeing them as equals, treating them with dignity and acknowledging their fears. To do this, governments and the health functionaries will need to break out of their conventional notions and beliefs around people's healthcare-seeking behaviours and understand and address their fears and apprehensions. They will also need to rethink and alter their communication strategies and move beyond ceremonial awareness drives and campaigns to interventions that are truly engaging and which make the communities feel important and valued.

Even more crucial is to engage communities in planning, execution and monitoring of health care services at all levels. Create fora where they can freely convey what they want and how they want it to be delivered, where they can share how they feel about government policies, programmes or services and where they can hold pe-

**Universal:** Vaccine hesitancy is not a recent phenomenon. It is neither limited to a particular community or country, nor have we seen it only in the context of COVID-19. •GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

ople and systems accountable for gaps without the fear of being subjugated. Also, governments at both Union and State level must commit to investing more on health care and prioritising primary health care services. Quality health services in all aspects, and not just in sporadic efforts such as pandemic vaccination campaigns, should be delivered. Once we establish these, we might start seeing communities respond favourably and supportively to public health efforts.

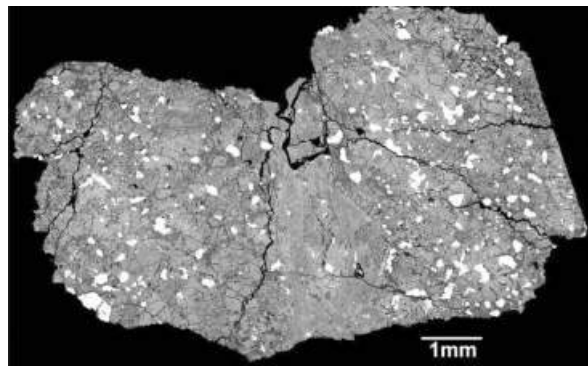
(Chhaya Pachauli is associated with Prayas, Chittorgarh, and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan and works on public health issues. Anant Bhan is a researcher in global health, bioethics and health policy.)

## Clues from meteorite to Earth's mantle

The meteorite originated in the asteroid belt, was sucked in by Earth's gravity

ASWATHI PACHA

On November 13, 2015, a meteorite fell near the town of Kamargaon in Assam, India. It weighed a little over 12 kg and scientists decoded its mineral composition and classified it as a chondrite, a variety of stony meteorite. A new study has now shown that by studying this meteorite and its minerals we may find new clues about the Earth's lower mantle.



**Heavenly clue:** Back-scattered electron microscope image of the Kamargaon meteorite. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Layers of the Earth

"We are always interested in knowing how this planet of ours was formed. The Earth has different layers - the upper, very thin crust, followed by the intermediate silicate mantle which starts from 30 km to 2,900 km depth, and then the centre iron-nickel alloy core. The mantle faces high temperature and pressure. So by studying these meteorites which may have experienced similar high pressure and temperature conditions, we can understand the inaccessible mantle

layer in detail," explains Sujoy Ghosh from the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. He is one of the authors of the paper recently published in *Geophysical Research Letters*.

Previous studies had noted that the Kamargaon meteorite contains minerals such as olivine, pyroxene, plagioclase and chromite. Olivine is also found in Earth's upper mantle. It breaks down into bridgmanite and magnesio-

wustite in Earth's lower mantle conditions. This breaking down is an important reaction that controls the physical and chemical properties of the Earth's interior.

## Olivine dissociation

Using new high-resolution electron microscopy and spectroscopy, researchers studied this dissociation reaction of olivine in the Kamargaon meteorite. They noted an alternative mechanism and reactions that may be driving the transforma-

tion of olivine. "It is possible that when materials are transported to the lower mantle by convection or subduction, there would be high-temperature conditions in the lower mantle that would cause this dissociated reaction," adds Dr. Ghosh. The results suggest what processes and reactions may be involved in the formation of Earth's lower mantle.

## Sucked by gravity

"This meteorite originated from the asteroid belt, between Mars and Jupiter, and was somehow sucked by Earth's gravity. By studying different meteorites, we can understand in detail about their parent body and in the process understand our own planet and its formation," adds first author Kishan Tiwari, research scholar, IIT Kharagpur. "The question remained, however, if this process we identified could actually occur in nature. The mechanism needs to be verified in natural terrestrial samples in future studies."

## Why bacteria develop multi-drug resistance

*E. coli* were evolved in fluctuating and steady environments and observed

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

During evolution, the fitness costs experienced by bacteria under constant and fluctuating environments pose an unsolved problem. One way of seeing this is through the example of multi-drug resistance. It is not clear why some bacteria evolve multi-drug resistance while others do not. New research from the Population Biology Lab at IISER Pune could hold a key to this and a similar class of puzzles.

## Public health menace

Multi-drug resistance is a menace in public health, however it is a fascinating problem to an evolutionary biologist who sees it from this angle: possessing multi-drug resistance implies that the bacteria is adept at handling multiple antibiotics simultaneously. This would increase its fitness appreciably. Given that antibiotics exert a very strong selection pressure, it would appear that every bacteria in nature

can become multi-drug resistant, which is not the case. "One of the reasons given for why that does not happen is fitness cost," says Sutrith Dey, in whose lab the study was carried out.

When bacteria become fit in one environment, they either lose fitness or fail to increase fitness in other environments. "Our study is showing that when the environment is fluctuating, large (but not small) populations can by-pass this effect," he adds.

Yashraj Chavhan, Sarthak Malusare, and Sutrith Dey studied populations of small and large sizes across different constant and fluctuating environments and then subjected the evolved populations to whole-genome, whole-population sequencing analysis. They found that small populations acquire a certain set of mutations which allow them to survive in one environment while paying a cost in others. Large populations also develop these mutations but, in addition,

**Our study is showing that when the environment is fluctuating, large (but not small) populations can by-pass this effect.**

SUTRITH DEY  
IISER, PUNE

tion, have certain compensatory mutations that together give them fitness to survive in different environments. Thus, population size determines the kind of mutations available to the bacteria, which in turn, leads to the type of fitness costs they evolve.

## Population size matters

In the paper, published in *Ecology Letters*, the group studied approximately 480 generations of *E. coli* in four types of steady environments consisting of different carbon sources: galactose, thymidine, maltose and sorbitol; also in one fluctuating environment in which the carbon source changed unpredictably between these four. Bacteria cannot use all

carbon sources similarly. "Which carbon source is available impacts the bacterium's ability to survive and grow. Since this is a very basic requirement for survival and growth, we decided to study what the availability of different kinds of carbon sources does to their evolution," says Prof Dey.

The study showed that, all else being equal, whether the bacteria pay fitness costs or not will depend on the population size they evolve in. Further, on doing whole-genome, whole population sequencing, the researchers found that the larger populations contained greater number of mutations. The smaller populations only had mutations related to metabolism of one kind of carbon source whereas the larger populations had known mutations for metabolism of multiple types of carbon sources. "We believe that this is the reason that the larger populations were able to bypass the costs," he clarifies.

## Blindness burden in India: restoring vision to the needy

As populations age, there is increasing burden of vision-related disorders



## SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

About 9.1% of the world's population in 2019, 703 million people, were 65 and over: the result of an acceleration in the ageing of the world populace. By 2050 it is estimated that this will rise to 1.5 billion (15.3%). As populations age, there is an increasing disease burden of vision-related disorders. Several of the most common reasons for blindness or moderate-to-severe visual impairment - cataract, under-corrected refractive error, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy are avoidable if there are mechanisms available for early detection and intervention. Offering treatment to prevent or restore vision would be a noble deed of great value. Indeed, many nations across the globe are bravely doing their best, offering vision restoration with great commitment.

Data for the last 30 years, from a major study on the

global burden of eye disease, published in *The Lancet* in February 2021, has noted that although much progress has been made in reducing blindness in this period, there is much scope for reducing the impact of blindness and vision impairment in our society. There is considerable variation between countries. There are over 1.5 crore people over the age of 50 with cataracts in the world today. A further 8.6 crores have severe refractive errors which can be corrected by properly prescribed spectacles. It is vital that more countries should get involved in this effort in their regions so that the number of needlessly blind people reduces in number.

## Needless blindness

Peninsular India, comprising Karnataka, some eastern parts of Maharashtra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Pudu-



**Early detection:** Several reasons for moderate-to-severe visual impairment such as glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy are avoidable if there is early intervention. •GETTY IMAGES

chery, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, has a population of about 36 crores. About 13 lakhs of these are blind, with 76 lakhs suffering from easily correctable cataracts and refractive errors. If we can devise viable methods to reduce this needless blindness by offering treatment modes, that would be a major advancement in reducing this burden.

## Notable centres

Indeed, there are three notable centres in the peninsular area, the Aravind Eye Care System at Madurai, Sankara Nethralaya in Chennai (and Bengaluru), and the L. V. Prasad Eye Institute in Hyderabad. The former two cater to the needs of blind people in

the city and its suburbs, and Aravind also caters to people in several districts in Tamil Nadu through mobile facilities, and free treatment for the needy; so does Sankara Nethralaya through similar facilities in Chennai and its suburbia, and at Bengaluru and its suburbia, catering to the needy poor for free). L V Prasad Eye Institute has set up a system that covers the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, (and Nanded in Maharashtra) by establishing what has become known as the Rural Eye Health Pyramid. This pyramid comprises over 208 rural "Vision Centres", situated at the bottom tier of the pyramid, each of which offers eye care services to a local rural

**A study noted that there is much scope for reducing the impact of blindness and vision impairment in our society**

population of about 500 people, essentially free of charge, by providing spectacles, and advising the cataract patient to go to the nearest ophthalmologist and so forth. A crucial link to communities is the number of 'vision guardians', individuals trained to be involved in their local environment and communicate with people about eye health.

In the second tier of the pyramid are 21 Secondary Centres such as rural eye care clinics, for people in the districts. We have three Tertiary Centres (each with its branches), and at Bengaluru and its suburbia, catering to the needy poor for free). L V Prasad Eye Institute has set up a system that covers the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, (and Nanded in Maharashtra) by establishing what has become known as the Rural Eye Health Pyramid. This pyramid comprises over 208 rural "Vision Centres", situated at the bottom tier of the pyramid, each of which offers eye care services to a local rural

mid have come forward to support the cause of the Rural Eye Health Pyramid - a total of about 1,000 at the village level (bottom of the pyramid) and about a dozen at the secondary centres at the district level. These are the local equivalents of the Gates or the Tata Foundations, and we are deeply obliged to their philanthropy.

## More pyramids needed

What about other ophthalmology centres across India? Yes, e.g., Aditya Jyot Centre, which caters to Mumbai, particularly Dharavi, where a million people live in a little over 2 square km of space; Project Prakash in Delhi and Western U.P., and at Ahmedabad, Haryana, and elsewhere. They are no doubt analysing the Pyramid Model, improving on it and will come out with their versions, based on the geographic and demographic conditions, and we welcome them and help them, in case they need. Indeed, we need more pyramids across the whole of India so that no one in our nation be needlessly blind at all; let all of India enjoy Vision 20-20!

dbala@lvpei.org

### Question Corner

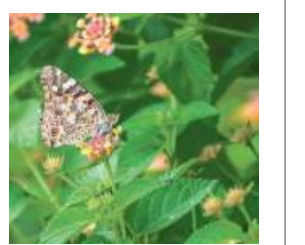
## Long journeys

**Do insects migrate? Which insect has the longest migration route?**

Many dragonflies, beetles, butterflies, locusts and moths are known to migrate during the breeding season and the distance travelled varies with species. Most insects travel in large groups and scientists have been studying these movements for several years.

A recent study (PNAS) noted that the painted lady butterfly (*Vanessa cardui*) can make 12,000 to 14,000 kilometre round trips. This is the longest annual insect migration circuit so far known.

Found in sub-Saharan Africa, the butterfly is able to travel to Europe, crossing the Sahara Desert when weather conditions are favourable. The

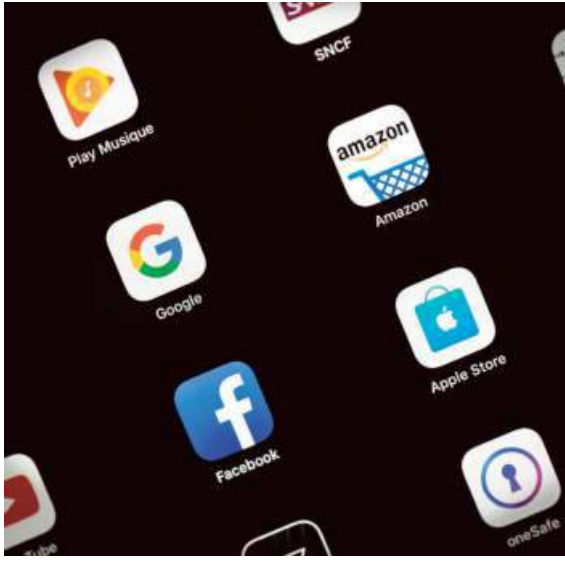


**Painted lady:** This butterfly is a long distance migrant. •GETTY IMAGES caterpillars thrive in wetter winter conditions of sub-Saharan Africa and the adults migrate to North Africa during wet spring. They then cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe.

Simulations in the laboratory showed that favourable tailwinds between Africa and Western Europe help these insects in transcontinental travel. They fly about one to three kilometres above sea level with a maximum speed of around 6 metres per second. The researchers studied a similar butterfly species and calculated that the painted lady may have enough body fat to sustain 40 hours of non-stop flying.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in





## Reining in the Big Four

Why is the U.S. readying new rules for the tech giants and how will they impact the industry?

P.J. GEORGE

**The story so far:** On Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee voted to advance six Bills outlawing business practices that sit at the core of tech companies such as Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple. The package of Bills, which would stop the Big Tech from competing on the platforms they run, will become law once they are passed in the House and in the Senate. These Bills constitute the biggest action to come out of the anti-trust scrutiny these companies have been facing in the U.S. over the last few years. While many nations have taken legal or legislative routes to limit the influence of the Big Four, this is the first major move on their home turf.

### What is 'anti-trust'?

Anti-trust is an American term for laws meant to prevent unfair business practices such as monopolisation, which leads to fewer choices for consumers and higher prices. A prime example of anti-trust law in action is when Microsoft was sued in 1998 for giving away the Internet Explorer web browser for free with its Windows operating system, which led to the collapse of browser-maker Netscape. Microsoft was found guilty of using its market dominance in operating systems to build a monopoly in browsers and was forced to open up Windows to other developers.

The major anti-trust laws in the U.S. are the Sherman Act of 1890 and the Clayton Act of 1914, and the Federal Trade Commission is charged with upholding them. The evolution of technology has, however, taken the edge off these anti-trust laws. A report submitted in October last year after a 16-month probe by the U.S. Congress stated that since rise in consumer prices is the currently accepted indicator of unfair practices, it is difficult to gauge the actions of companies like Google and Facebook that make money off advertising and give many products away for free.

The new package of six Bills that is now in Congress is an attempt to add more teeth to anti-trust proceedings against new-age tech firms.

India already has versions of some of these laws. If the new rules are implemented globally, a level playing field for brand visibility on Google and Amazon will benefit retailers in India

### What's in the Bills?

The Platform Competition and Opportunity Act would prevent big tech companies from nipping competition in the bud by buying up smaller rivals, like what Facebook had done by buying up Instagram for \$1 billion.

The Ending Platform Monopolies Act would prevent companies from becoming players on their own platforms, like how Amazon sells its own brands, competing with smaller retailers that use its e-commerce platform; Apple's chokehold over developers on App Store is another example.

The Augmenting Compatibility and Competition by Enabling Service Switching (ACCESS) Act promotes interoperability, forcing platforms to let users take data such as contacts lists and profile information with them while migrating to other platforms.

The Merger Filing Fee Modernization Act increases the government fee on large corporate mergers to help fund anti-trust law enforcement.

The American Choice and Innovation Online Act would prevent companies from giving preferences to their own products in the marketplaces they run, such as Google search results prioritising YouTube videos or Amazon highlighting its own brands.

The State Antitrust Enforcement Venue Act would prevent companies from shifting anti-trust cases to courts that could be favourable to them.

Will they become law? Over the last few years, the Big Tech has lost favour with both political parties in the U.S. While Republicans perceive an anti-conservative bias in these companies on issues such as free speech, Democrats have been up in arms over weak data privacy and fake news proliferation.

These Bills enjoy support primarily from the Democrats, with some Republicans thrown in. However, legislative procedures such as a filibuster may force the Bills' supporters to get more Republicans on board. The 50-50 split in the Senate, which is the Upper House, will be another obstacle to surmount.

The tech companies also have their supporters in both camps. According to news reports, some Republican legislators see these laws as excessive government control on private enterprises, which is anathema to the conservatives. On the other hand, for some Democratic legislators from California, on whose turf these companies sit, any loss to these companies translates to a loss in incomes and employment in their domains.

How will the move affect India? Any behavioural change that these companies may be forced to adopt in the U.S., which is their largest market, would likely be adopted in all their global markets as well. India already has versions of some of these laws, such as the one that prevents Amazon from selling brands that it owns on its platform. If implemented globally, a level playing field for brand visibility on Google and Amazon will benefit retailers in India.

# ED transfer of defaulters' assets to PSBs

Will handing over the properties of Mallya, Modi and Choksi to banks help tide over the bad loans crisis?

PRASHANTH PERUMAL J.

**The story so far:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday came out with a statement saying that it had seized assets worth ₹18,170.02 crore belonging to three fugitive businessmen. The seized assets belong to liquor baron Vijay Mallya and diamond traders Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi – all three left India before law enforcement agencies could nab them for fraud. The ED estimated that the seized assets would help public sector banks recuperate about 80% of their losses from the loans given to companies connected to these three individuals. It also noted that assets worth 40% of the total loss amount had already been handed over to the banks concerned. This included cash worth approximately ₹6,600 crore obtained through the sale of shares. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman later said that fugitive and economic offenders would be actively pursued by the government and that their properties would be attached for the dues to be recovered.

### Why did the ED seize and sell the assets of the businessmen?

The three fugitive businessmen have been outside India for a few years now after allegedly cheating banks. The ED stated that these businessmen caused a total loss of ₹22,585.83 crore to banks by "siphoning off the funds through their companies". Mr. Modi and Mr. Choksi have been pursued for committing fraud using unauthorised letters of undertaking (LoUs) that caused a loss of about ₹11,500 crore to the Punjab National Bank. It has been alleged that Mr. Modi colluded with Punjab National Bank employees in Mumbai to create unauthorised LoUs in his favour. On the other hand, Mr. Mallya has been accused of cheating banks of ₹9,000 crore by siphoning business loans towards other purposes. Banks also alleged that Mr. Mallya had offered personal guarantees for the loans taken by his business.

Indian authorities have been trying to extradite these businessmen to India to prosecute them under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and other laws. In 2019, the ED managed to convince courts to declare Mr. Mallya and Mr. Modi fugitive economic offenders under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, allowing it to seize assets owned by them. Of the ₹18,170.02 crore seized by the ED under the PMLA, assets worth ₹9,041.5 crore have already been handed over to banks, according to the agency.

### Will the recovered money help banks?

The actual cash worth ₹6,600 crore transferred by the ED will obviously help public sector banks, which have been troubled by bad loans, to recoup some of their losses. However, the recovered amount is unlikely to have any major impact on the overall health of banks. This is simply because bank losses attributed to these fugitives are tiny compared to the overall amount of bad loans in the books of banks. It is estimated that the total bad loans of Indian banks stood at more than ₹8 lakh crore at the end of September 2020. Some believe it could easily cross ₹10 lakh crore by the end of the financial year 2022 due to the impact of the two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic on repayments.

Further, doubts remain over the actual value of the remaining assets that have been seized by the ED. The money that has been transferred to banks came from the sale of Mr. Mallya's shares in United Breweries Holding Limited (UBHL). Other assets seized by the ED belonging to these fugitives may not be as liquid as the UBHL shares. For example, when banks tried several times in the past to sell assets, such as various properties, owned by Mr. Mallya, the sales did not attract significant buyer interest. So, it is likely that banks may face hurdles trying to sell illiquid assets owned by the trio and may not actually be able to recover the amounts cited by the ED in

# Jet Airways revival plan gets NCLT clearance

Given the present state of the aviation sector, what are the challenges the airline faces before it can take off again?

JAGRITI CHANDRA

**The story so far:** Two years after Jet Airways – at the time India's second-largest full-service airline – halted operations in 2019 as it ran out of cash, the carrier has a real chance at getting airborne again. The Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) this week approved a resolution plan from a consortium comprising UAE-based businessman Murari Lal Jalan and U.K.-based Kalrock Capital, clearing the decks for the airline's takeover and a potential revival.

### What is the resolution plan approved by the NCLT?

Against the claims totalling ₹15,432 crore that the resolution professional had admitted from operational and financial creditors, the Jalan-Kalrock consortium has offered to pay creditors, including banks, ₹1,183 crore over a five-year period.

Of this, the first tranche of ₹280 crore would be paid in cash after 180 days of the new promoters taking ownership of the beleaguered airline. A second instalment of ₹195 crore would follow in 730 days. The balance would be paid through a mix of cash, proceeds generated from the sale of assets and from the cash flows generated by the airline annually.

Banks would also get a 9.5% stake in the airline, while the consortium would hold 89.79%. Employees would get to own 0.5% of the airline's equity capital, while public shareholding would be at 0.21%.

Based on this offer, the Committee of Creditors, led by the State Bank of India, had voted the consortium as the winning bidder last October. "That the lenders agreed to such a massive clean-up is surprising and it can at best be termed as a face-saver," said Kapil Kaul, CEO & Director, CAPA Advisory.

### Are there any caveats to the proposal?

When Jet Airways halted operations in 2019, the government distributed its airport slots (the time-specific landing and take-off rights at various airports) among various other Indian carriers. At the time, the government had stated that the move was only "temporary" and that the airline's new owners could get the slots back. However, the government has since reversed its position. It informed the NCLT that the slots could not be returned to the new owner of Jet Airways as other airlines had made investments in acquiring



Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi used unauthorised letters of undertaking that caused a loss of about ₹11,500 crore to the Punjab National Bank. ■ REUTERS

Addressing the problem of crony lending will require structural changes in the banking system in India. Currently, according to experts, the sector is dominated by public sector banks, which are prone to political influence of various kinds

its statement on Wednesday.

### Why is the recovery process long?

It is also worth noting the delays that have plagued the entire recovery process and the costs associated with such delays. Banks were unable to sell the UBHL shares belonging to Mr. Mallya as the sale was contested in courts by various parties. In fact, it was only after a PMLA court order last month restored the UBHL

shares from the control of the ED to the banks that the current sale has transpired. The ED had earlier moved the PMLA court after the Debt Recovery Tribunal, Bengaluru, also ruled in favour of transferring the shares to the banks.

The true scale of the losses to banks may also be higher when the cost of interest foregone by banks since the defaults is taken into consideration. Even when a borrower defaults, banks need to continue paying interest to lenders. There is also the opportunity cost of the interest that the banks could have earned if they had lent the money to a more eligible borrower.

### What are some systemic issues?

The seizure and the liquidation of assets may help in paying back a significant share of the liabilities that these fugitives owe to banks. However, efforts to extradite them are likely to continue as they are accused by banks of not just default but also various other frauds, including siphoning off loans that were sanctioned for business purposes. It is unclear when the trio will actually reach India, given the legal procedures involved in their extradition process.

More importantly, many still believe that these asset seizures do not go far enough to address the root

problem of banking scams in India, which is systemic. For one, loans given by public sector banks to powerful industrialists were often influenced by crony, non-business considerations. When the Indian economy was booming, most of the loans that were disbursed by public sector banks were concentrated towards a small group of industrialists. There was also very little oversight of the purposes for which these loans were put to use. At one point, these loans to corporates constituted almost three-fourths of the total bad loans in the banking system. This issue was brought to light by former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Raghuram Rajan, during his tenure.

Addressing the problem of crony lending will require deep structural changes in the banking sector. Currently, India's banking industry is dominated by public sector banks, which are heavily prone to political influence of various kinds, according to experts. This affects the health of banks, which are forced to lend as per special interests while ignoring any business sense. Structural reforms against this, however, are hard to come by, given that they will upset special interest groups.

### Is the new debt resolution regime robust?

Despite laws such as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, recovery of dues from defaulters remains a prolonged process for banks as courts are burdened with cases.

Under the new regime, the amount lenders have managed to recover from defaulters has improved significantly when compared to the pre-IBC regime. This is true even as a few large corporate resolutions may have skewed the numbers in favour of the IBC regime. The time taken for recoveries from corporate defaulters has also improved from about four years to about 400 days. However, cases have been piling up and the existing Benches of the National Company Law Tribunal have been unable to dispose of cases within deadlines. This may extend the resolution process of troubled companies into several years, which was the case before the IBC regime. Further, when the resolution of a company is deemed infeasible and the company is liquidated, the recovery made by lenders is abysmal due to the absence of a robust market for the sale of stressed assets.



Jet Airways aircraft parked at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai in 2019. ■ REUTERS

additional planes to bolster capacity and utilise the slots. The Jalan-Kalrock consortium has maintained that the offer to acquire the airline would be meaningless without the coveted time slots.

The NCLT, in its oral ruling on June 22, did not address the issue in detail and just set a 90-day period for the consortium to work with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to resolve the matter and seek various regulatory approvals.

### Will it be difficult to get slots?

According to a senior government official privy to discussions between the Jalan-Kalrock consortium and airport operators, acquiring airport slots will not be much of a hindrance.

"The Airports Authority of India has said that it does not have a problem in allotting new slots," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "Delhi airport is willing to give 15 departure and 15 arrival slots and has said that more slots will become available after its fourth runway is ready. Mumbai airport, too, is willing to discuss the matter with the new owners. Availability of airport slots is a non-issue today as airlines are not able to operate flights on all the slots allotted to them because of a dip in travel demand," the official added.

However, while obtaining a certain number of basic slots may not be a problem, the availability of premium

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a drastic fall in passenger demand. The number of domestic travellers shrank to 53 million in FY21 from 140 million in FY20, forcing airlines to ground 50%-70% of their fleet and fly half-empty planes, which led to massive losses for airlines

slots, such as early morning departures out of Delhi and Mumbai, which Jet Airways had previously held, could end up being a thorny issue.

### What other issues need to be addressed before the airline can take to the skies?

Resolution Professional Ashish Chhawchharia has said the airline could start flying by the end of this year. Before that, it will have to obtain various approvals and certifications, including

an air operator's permit, security clearances for the new owners, airworthiness of planes, permission to import planes, etc. The induction of pilots and their refresher training could take two to three months if the new owners rehire old employees. Similarly, cabin crew and engineers would also have to undergo refresher training.

The consortium will also need to hire a dedicated management team to run the airline and help it negotiate fresh contracts for the supply of a range of flight-related services, including fuel, catering and ground handling.

### How viable could Jet Airways be and what is the current aviation industry scenario?

Jet Airways may face big challenges once it resumes operations, given the present state of the sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a drastic fall in passenger demand. The number of domestic travellers shrank to 53 million in FY21 from 140 million in FY20. This forced airlines to ground 50%-70% of their fleet and fly half-empty planes, resulting in massive losses. The country's largest airline, IndiGo, saw a decline of almost 60% in revenue from flights in the financial year 2021.

CAPA has forecast total losses for Indian airlines over two years of the pandemic to be about \$8 billion and has estimated that airlines would need almost \$5 billion of capital infusion just to survive. In such an environment, a new player would need deep pockets.



CPC

# Back to the future for China's communists

The ruling party, which turns 100 on July 1, is moving away from the Deng-era principles of collective leadership and hide-and-bide policies to the Mao-inspired strongman politics

ANANTH KRISHNAN

In February, the ruling Communist Party of China, which turns 100 on July 1, came out with a new edition of *A Short History of the Communist Party of China*, a text that provides the authoritative version of party history.

## In Focus

■ The CPC, founded in 1921 by two Chinese intellectuals, offered in its early years an alternative to young Chinese, especially during the corruption of the Kuomintang period

■ The fortunes of the party turned around during the reform period of Deng Xiaoping, who sought to free China from the two vice-like grips of ideology and one-man totalitarianism

■ Under Xi Jinping, collective leadership – as well as the term limits instituted by Deng – has been disbanded, while ideology is back with a bang

This text matters. It offers the template for how party history is taught everywhere in China, whether in schools and colleges, study sessions for party officials or the military, or even in the increasingly active party units of private enterprises.

The 2021 edition, coinciding with the party's centenary, comes with noteworthy changes. Past versions of the text noted Mao Zedong's great successes – chiefly, his leading a ragtag group of ill-equipped revolutionaries to an unlikely victory, against tall odds, in a brutal civil war with the Kuomintang and amid Japanese occupation, and laying the foundations for the country's progress, for which Mao remains venerated in China.

They did, also, acknowledge his failures, in keeping with the formula set by the party's second-generation leader, Deng Xiaoping, whose pronouncement that Mao was "70% correct and 30% wrong" allowed for some discussion of his mistakes after decades of blind deification. The texts, for instance, mentioned the calamitous Great Leap Forward, which devastated agriculture, led to famine, and caused more than 30 million deaths, and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that led to the persecution of mil-

lions, as it warned of the historical lessons.

The latest edition, however, has seemed to ignore the Deng formula. Gone is any discussion of Mao's wrongs, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, with the Maoist years only remembered for industrial and technological progress. Also gone is another important Deng formula, which stressed the need for what the party calls collective leadership. His state-

**In 1978, China's GDP was \$149 billion, 1.75% of global GDP. Forty years later, its \$12.2 trillion economy would account for 15% of global GDP and become the second-largest**

ment that "building a nation's fate on the reputation of one or two people is very unhealthy and very dangerous" no longer finds mention. Instead, the text says, referring to China's fifth-generation – and current – leader, Xi Jinping, "Amid ten thousand majestic mountains, there must be a main peak."

## Rebels to rulers

History, anywhere in the world, is written and rewritten by the victors. Historical narrative is, for rulers, a key source of legitimacy. In China, how the Communist Party tells its history – what it chooses to emphasise, and what it chooses to downplay

or entirely leave out – has seen as many twists and turns as the changes it has presided over since coming to power, as it evolved from a revolutionary party to a ruling one.

The CPC was founded in 1921 by two Chinese intellectuals, Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu. The party, in its early years, offered an attractive alternative to young Chinese, especially during the corruption of the Kuomintang period, as it drew inspiration not only from Marx and Lenin, but from the idealism of the May 4, 1919 movement. The Peking University scholar Jiang Shigong, who has grown into one of the more influential intellectuals of the Xi era, described in a 2018 essay the party's first stage, from 1921 until 1949, as one of revolution and nation-building. The second stage from 1949 to 1978, he wrote rather charitably, was of "standing up", thanks to the achievements of the Mao years – including land reform and vastly improved health and education – although, in keeping with the recent trend, he ignored the calamities.

## Reform and revival

Regardless of the current tendency to recast the Mao years, it is what Mr. Jiang describes as the third stage (1978-2012) of "getting rich" that turned around the fortunes of a party in crisis. In one sense, 1978 was a far more significant liberation than 1949, as Deng pushed China into the reform era and sought to free it from the two vice-like grips of ideology and one-man totalitarianism.



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

On one of his "spark lighting trips" to push reform in Sichuan in 1978, Deng would, as Ezra Vogel writes in his biography of Deng, mock those who said "if a farmer has three ducks he is socialist, but if he has five ducks he is a capitalist". "Socialism is not poverty," he argued, as he made the case for "reform and opening up". Deng, Vogel argues, was a pragmatist with a knack for changing things without saying he was changing them. He criticised "collective responsibility" as being a system where "no one was responsible" but sang praises to communism. He said "it does not matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mouse"

but officially extolled "Mao Zedong Thought" as the party's abiding ideology. He said "some will get rich first" without saying that economic growth would, inevitably, bring inequality.

Deng's view was simple. "If we can't grow faster than the capitalist countries," he said, "then we can't show the superiority of our system". And grow faster China did. In 1978, China's GDP was \$149 billion, 1.75% of global GDP and only slightly higher than India's \$140 billion. China's \$156 per capita GDP was less than India's \$203. Forty years later, its \$12.2 trillion economy would account for 15% of global GDP, grow to five times India's, and be-

come the world's second-largest, establishing a once isolated state as a powerhouse of trade and lynchpin of global supply chains.

The transition was not without hiccups, and Deng's liberalisation was firmly limited to matters economic, as the brutal crushing of the 1989 protests would show. Neither was Deng as powerful as Mao, with the continued conservative resistance stalling his reforms process, which were given a second wind after his famous "southern tour" of 1992 that would usher in years of double-digit growth. The Deng legacy of China focusing on growth, while "biding time, hiding brightness" in foreign

affairs, was broadly carried forward by his successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. That famous maxim, too, was among those that no longer merited mention in the party's latest official history.

## Growing strong

Mr. Jiang, the Peking University scholar, says the current – and fourth – stage of the party's evolution, starting in 2012 (neatly coinciding with the ascension of Mr. Xi) is about "growing strong". There is no longer a need to bide or hide. It is a time for resolving the contradictions that emerged from the third phase, from income inequality and calls for political reform to corruption and the absence of ideological tethers for the party, and ending a growing debate within that looked to "pit the Deng Xiaoping era against the Mao Zedong era".

Mr. Jiang justifies the Mao-inspired strongman solution favoured by the current leader, Mr. Xi, who ended two of Deng's most significant legacies. Collective leadership – as well as the term limits instituted by Deng – has been disbanded, while ideology is back with a bang, with stricter enforcing of what Mr. Xi calls political discipline. Some of the modest freedoms of the Deng, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao eras are being narrowed. As China opened up to the world, so did its media and universities. Scholars embraced exchanges, while journalists pushed the bar where they could, exposing local-level corruption and power abuses even if the central leadership remained off limits. Today, classrooms and newsrooms are the most controlled they have been since the 1970s.

Others, such as Xu Zhan-grun at Tsinghua University, disagree, viewing the dismantling of collective leadership and term limits as "a negation of the last 30 years" and ending a system "that afforded the people of China a measure of political certainty and bolstered international confidence that our country seemed on the way to becoming a modern polity". As the party turns 100, it stares at yet another inflection point in its history, but what the next chapter will say remains anyone's guess.

## GREAT BARRIER REEF

# A fabled wonder in danger

Climate change has led to 3 events of coral bleaching in 2016, 2017 and 2020

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

As a fabled wonder of the natural world, Australia's Great Barrier Reef and its diversity of marine life ranging from corals to whales found a place on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1981. Made up of a couple of thousand individual reefs off the continent's northeastern coast, it has a geological history going back an estimated 23 million years to the Miocene epoch, and has survived many challenges.

The GBR is about 2,300 km long and extends across a breathtaking 346,000 sq. km. area, hosting an assemblage of fishes and invertebrates in the reefs, dugongs, green turtles and other species in seagrass meadows, and sharks, rays, anemones, sponges, worms and myriad other forms all of which need a delicate ecological balance to thrive.

Idyllic as it appears, the reef system faces severe environmental threats, and this year, the World Heritage Committee has sounded a warning by drawing up a resolution to inscribe the reef on the 'List of World Heritage in Danger'. The Committee took note of the 2019 Outlook Report of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which says in no uncertain terms that the long-term state of the ecosystem has further deteriorated from poor to very poor. At the heart of the crisis is climate change, which has led to three big events of



coral bleaching in 2016, 2017 and 2020. UNESCO's move to list the GBR as 'in danger' brings pressure on Australia's government to review its record on responding to climate change. As a continent that has recorded a rise in its average temperature by 1.4 degrees C since 1910, the devastating fires of 2019-20 were another wake-up call on climate change aggravating extreme events.

## Destructive impacts

The World Heritage Committee resolution calls upon Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government to heed the conclusions of the Outlook Report, particularly on accelerated action needed to address climate change with the Paris Agreement goals in focus. The updated Reef 2050 Plan that the country is pursuing for conservation should incorporate this. Further, the government should stop destructive impacts of human activity such as land-

based and farm run-off that has polluted waters, coastal development and other commercial uses, it adds.

The World Heritage Centre, the administrative body, had sent a letter to Australia in 2019 raising concerns "about the approval of the Carmichael Coal Mine", a controversial project with impacts for the reef and the climate, to which it got a response noting "that the project's approval is subject to over 180 regulatory conditions and that compliance with these conditions will be monitored."

Canberra's response to the UNESCO Committee's move was to allege a conspiracy, hinting at pressure from China, which holds the chairmanship of the panel.

Close scrutiny of the GBR shows a variety of ecological impacts from environmental stresses, including climate change. The Outlook Report records harm to "the abundance and health of many species groups, in-

cluding corals, invertebrates, some bony fishes, marine turtles and seabirds" from the rising sea temperatures and thermal extremes due to global warming. It adds that since 2014, there has been widespread and significant declines in many coral species. In 2018, coral larvae declined by 89% averaged across the region, arising from consecutive bleaching events, as the adult broodstock was reduced.

Warmer temperatures led to "feminisation of green turtles originating from nesting beaches in the northern Region, potentially leading to significant scarcity or absence of adult males in the future". Coral growth is also endangered by the proliferation of crown-of-thorns starfish, which consumes them.

Some relief is available from the reported recovery of humpback whales, and slow gain in southern populations of green turtles. Urban coastal dugong populations also show an improved breeding rate. But overall, the reef is under threat.

A magnet for eco-tourists, the vast expanse coloured by algal hues draws thousands annually. The report says that in 2015-16, tourism, fishing, recreational uses and scientific activities contributed an estimated \$6.4 billion to the Australian economy, a rise of about 14% since 2011-12. Without resolute action on climate and pollution threats, though, all sectors stand to lose.

## GUPKAR ALLIANCE

# A diverse coalition

The multi-party bloc remains a formidable force in J&K's political landscape

PEERZADA ASHIQ

The People's Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a group of five political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, was in the spotlight on June 24 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met leaders from eight political parties in J&K, the first such meeting since the erstwhile semi-autonomous State was split into two Union Territories (UT) of J&K and Ladakh and its special status was taken away on August 5, 2019.

Otherwise sworn rivals in the battleground of electoral politics, the five parties – the National Conference (NC), the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the People's Conference (PC), the Awami National Conference (ANC), the CPI(M) and the J&K People's Movement – forged the alliance on October 15, 2020.

The sole motive of the alliance, according to its head Farooq Abdullah, "is to fight for the restoration of the August 4, 2019 position".

The journey of the Gupkar Alliance, as the PAGD is widely called, has already witnessed many ups and downs. It was after the sun-down of August 3, 2019 that the PDP's Mehbooba Mufti started visiting her rivals' houses amid speculation that the Centre was planning something big.

J&K's political class was clueless then and could not read the reasons for the unprecedented security measures taken by the Centre in



the State, such as asking tourists to leave and stopping the Amarnath yatra in the middle.

On August 4, 2019, the Gupkar declaration was signed at the residence of Mr. Abdullah, located on Srinagar's Gupkar Road, by eight political parties, including the Congress. The 169-word declaration unanimously resolved to protect the identity, autonomy and special status of J&K, fight against modification or abrogation of Articles 35A, 370 and oppose any bid to carry out the unconstitutional delimitation or trifurcation of J&K. "It (such actions) would be an aggression against the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh," the declaration reads. All the leaders sought an audience with the President and the PM but failed.

Finally, Prime Minister Modi met the Gupkar Alliance leaders on Thursday, but only after the government put them in jail for

eight to 13 months, with Ms. Mufti, Mr. Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah booked under the controversial Public Safety Act. The incarceration, however, seemed to have cemented the bond between the local rivals who nursed a deep sense of hurt, betrayal and despair.

## DDC elections

Despite many second-rung leaders and workers remaining in jails, the Gupkar Alliance emerged a formidable force during the District Development Council (DDC) polls in J&K in November-December 2020, amid allegations that the State machinery favoured BJP candidates during the campaigning.

In the run-up to the polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah even termed the alliance 'Gupkar Gang', which became a catchphrase for the electioneering carried out by top BJP leaders. When results came in, the alliance won 110 out of 280

segments, while the BJP managed to win only 75. The results and the alliance's domination in most districts of Kashmir as well as in Jammu may have contributed to the softening of the Centre's approach towards the grouping.

The Gupkar Alliance first saw the Congress distancing itself in 2020 because it did not want to be seen clamouring for Article 370, which would have impacted the party's electoral prospects in the rest of the country. They suffered another setback when Sajad Lone, who was the alliance spokesman, decided to quit the group, alleging "the partners fought against each other during the DDC polls". Omar Abdullah also started maintaining a conspicuous absence from the amalgam's key meetings in recent months. The alliance is now reduced to three key faces: Farooq Abdullah, Ms. Mufti and M.Y. Tarigami of the CPI (M). The trio is both the binding and frictional force within the group, with each leader professing politics contrarian to each other.

The meeting with the PM was both an opportunity and a challenge for the alliance. It's an opportunity because the Centre reached out to them and they could push for their declared goals with the government. It's a challenge because there would be questions whether the decision to meet the leaders who ended the special status to J&K yielded any tangible result.



# More I-T relief sought for COVID-19 bills

Accountants call for tax breaks to those footing their own medical expenses, especially senior citizens

**VIKAS DHOOT**  
NEW DELHI  
Tax practitioners have urged the government to consider some tax relief for those who footed their own COVID-19 bills, particularly senior citizens, even as they await the fine print on the Income Tax exemption announced for all such treatment costs funded with the help of employers and well-wishers.



**Costly care:** Anecdotal evidence suggests COVID treatment costs can often run into lakhs of rupees, says Bhalla. ■AFP

On Friday, the Centre promised legislative changes to the Income Tax Act to exempt any amounts received by a taxpayer for COVID-19 medical treatment retrospectively from 2019-20.

"If an employer or a well-wisher paid a person's hospital bills directly, then the treatment costs are not taxable for the patient in any case," said Gautam Nayak, partner at CNK & Associates

LLP. "This exemption will help those whose taxable incomes may not be very high, but their accounts would have shown higher receipts if employers or others remitted funds to them to help meet medical costs," Mr. Nayak added.

Delhi-based chartered accountant Geetanshu Bhalla said one would have to wait for the notification of the tax break to assess its impact, particularly as the word 'well-wisher' mentioned in the press note does not figure in the tax law.

The exemption also won't benefit those who may have pooled funds together informally to help meet the medical costs of needy persons, he pointed out, as the pooled corpus would be treated as a gift from unrelated parties and taxed in the hands of the person who coordinated the funding.

Mr. Bhalla also called for a rethink on the deduction provision for taxpayers who tapped their own savings to meet healthcare costs.

## 'Inequitable situation'

"We have a slightly odd and perhaps inequitable situation now, whereby all financial aid from employers or other persons for treatment is tax-free, while taxpayers who paid their own bills can only claim a deduction up to ₹25,000 under section 80D

of the IT Act, with senior citizens allowed ₹50,000," he said.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests COVID-19 treatment costs can often run into lakhs of rupees, so these thresholds are quite inadequate," he added. Senior citizens who do not have an employer to fall back on and are living off pensions and interest income could find it particularly difficult.

Separately, while the government has temporarily allowed cash payments of more than ₹2 lakh for COVID-19 patients, section 80D deductions are only permissible for medical expenditure incurred in non-cash mode. In the absence of requisite changes to the provision, no tax break could be availed for medical bills paid in cash, accountants noted.

INTERVIEW | VIKAS GUPTA

# 'Capacity expansion will help us to meet PLI criteria'

PGEL sees wider opportunity in Make in India initiative: MD

LALATENDU MISHRA

*PG Electroplast Ltd., which is engaged in electronics manufacturing, plastic injection moulding and assembly of printed circuit boards for large white good brands, is planning expansions in all of its businesses. Managing Director Vikas Gupta, elaborates on the plans.*



**W** We wish to remain in B2B, as having own brands will be conflict of interest with our clients

## What is your focus area?

■ We see a lot of opportunity in the Make in India initiative, especially in our sector. We feel there are good prospects in the consumer appliances segment, and production wise we are aligning our resources accordingly to play a significant role in the coming years.

Currently we have six manufacturing units with presence in sectors like plastic moulding, tool manufacturing, PU paint shop, PCB assemblies and final product assembly.

We are a major manufacturer of washing machines, air conditioners and coolers for clients like LG Electronics, Whirlpool, Haier, Lloyd, Blue Star, Voltas, Carrier, Midea, Godrej, Lava, Flipkart, Reliance Retail, Jabil, Honeywell, Kohler, Jaquar, Orient and Crompton.

In automotive, we are working with Tata, Mahindra and Maruti. We are trying to diversify and move into other industries also. But in the next 2-3 years, our major focus will be on consumer appliances because we see strong traction in that field.

**Do you have any plan to come up with your own brands?**

■ We are a third party con-

tract manufacturing company and do not have our own brand. We wish to remain B2B, as having our own brands will be a conflict of interest with our clients.

**What is the total investment plan in next 3-4 years and how will you mobilise it?**

■ We are planning to do a capex of almost ₹150-200 crore in the next three to four years.

Apart from existing products, we will be starting LED TV product manufacturing also.

We are trying to fund this expansion through a combination of sources like debt, internal accruals, and some fund raising.

Recently, our board had passed a resolution to raise ₹76.6 crore from investors. Baring Private Equity India AIF, Ananta Capital (promoted by the Taparia family) and the Patni family office are participating through preferential allotment of equity shares of ₹40.30 crore and compulsorily convertible debentures (CCD) of ₹36.30 crore in the company.

Through this funding, the

company is planning to expand its plant in Pune, which produces air-conditioners and coolers, and establish a new plant in Greater Noida which will produce air coolers, mobile phone parts and other plastic components. Total investment planned for the expansions is about ₹100 crore for this year.

Through this growth focused funding, we plan to expand our production capacity in manufacturing ACs and coolers. We want to triple the production capacity of AC manufacturing and other products too.

The capacity expansion is in line with the growth envisaged in the segment and will also allow us to comfortably meet the PLI scheme criteria of the Government of India.

**What was the turnover in the last fiscal year?**

■ We recorded ₹705.8 crore operating revenue for fiscal year 20-21, a growth of 10% over revenue of ₹641.8 crore during the previous fiscal.

**What is the annual growth you are looking at and how many people are you planning to hire?**

■ In the last four years, PGEL has grown at 25% CAGR annually.

We are anticipating a growth of about 25-30% in the current financial year as compared with the last financial year.

Secondly, the number of employees working with us will definitely increase as we are building capacity. Currently we are employing about 2,000 employees overall. We will be hiring more than 500 people in the coming 8-9 months.

# Tesla 'recalls' cars in China for online update

Firm to fix assisted driving software

REUTERS

BEIJING

Chinese regulators said on Saturday Tesla Inc. would 'recall' almost 3,00,000 China-made and imported Model 3 and Model Y cars for an online software update related to assisted driving, with owners not required to return their electric vehicles.



ware 'recall' — a first for Tesla cars built in China — covers 2,49,855 China-made Model 3 and Model Y cars, and 35,665 imported Model 3 sedans.

Tesla, now making Model 3 sedans and Model Y sport-utility vehicles in Shanghai, sold 33,463 China-made electric cars in May, according to industry data.

## Sudden acceleration

The State Administration for Market Regulation said on its website that the move is linked to an assisted driving function in the electric cars, which can currently be activated by drivers accidentally, causing sudden acceleration.

The remote online soft-

# Shree Renuka plans ₹450 cr. ethanol boost

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Shree Renuka Sugars will invest ₹450 crore to expand its ethanol capacity, the company said on Saturday.

In a regulatory filing, the company informed that its board had approved expanding production capacity by 430 kilolitre per day to 1,400 kilolitre per day.

"Considering the huge untapped demand for ethanol due to the policies of Government of India on ethanol blending, the board of directors of the company approved further capacity expansion for ethanol production from 970 kilolitre per day to 1,400 kilolitre per day," the company said in the filing.

# Jet resolution: Panel to oversee implementation

Ashish Chhawchharia ceases to be RP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

A seven-member monitoring committee, including members appointed by the winning bidder Jalan-Kalrock consortium and the lenders, will soon start managing the day-to-day affairs of Jet Airways till the resolution process is complete.

Further, Ashish Chhawchharia has ceased to be the resolution professional (RP) of the airline, Jet said in a filing on Saturday. According to the terms of the approved resolution plan, a seven-member monitoring committee is required to be constituted.

Three members each would be appointed by the consortium and the finan-

cial creditors, respectively. Also, there would be an independent insolvency professional appointed by the financial creditors (preferably the existing resolution professional), on the panel, according to the filing.

The committee would supervise the implementation of the resolution plan. According to the filing, the actions in respect of the appointment as well as duties and functions of the committee, and implementation of the resolution plan will be taken in accordance with the resolution plan.

The same would be subject to any directions that may be issued by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) in this regard.

## TV PICKS

**Archery World Cup:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.  
**England Women vs India Women:** 1st ODI, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.  
**F1:** Styrian GP: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**Euro 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Monday)  
**Copa America 2021:** Sony Ten 1 & 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 a.m. (Monday)  
**NBA:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. (Monday)

## IN BRIEF



## No Mo Farah for Tokyo Olympics

Four-time Olympic champion Mo Farah fell short of the Tokyo Olympics qualifying mark for the 10,000m at the British championships in Manchester on Friday. His time of 27:47s, at a specially-arranged race, was nearly 20 seconds off the cut-off mark. Farah won the 5,000m-10,000m double at the London Olympics in 2012 and repeated the feat in Rio de Janeiro. AFP

## Milwaukee Bucks trample over Atlanta Hawks

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 25 points and Jrue Holiday delivered 22 as the third-seeded Milwaukee Bucks crushed Atlanta Hawks 125-91 to level their Eastern Conference final series 1-1. **The result:** Eastern Conference finals: Milwaukee Bucks 125 bt Atlanta Hawks 91 (Series tied 1-1).

## Aditi misses the cut

Aditi Ashok carded a disappointing five-over 77 for a six-over 150 to tumble out of the KPMG Women's PGA Championship here on Friday. Nelly Korda returned a tournament record-tying 63 to be at 11-under 133. PTI

# Manu and Saurabh win silver

Go down to the Russians in the mixed air pistol final

## SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary were beaten to the gold in the mixed air pistol team event by Russia's Vitalina Batsarashkina and Artem Chernousov 16-12 in the Shooting World Cup in Osijek, Croatia, on Saturday.

Manu and Saurabh topped the first stage of qualification one point ahead of the Russians with 587. However, the latter asserted their class in the second stage with a three-point lead over the Indians, before dominating the gold match.

The second Indian team of Yashaswini Deswal and Abhishek Verma was fourth



**Podium finish:** Saurabh and Manu started off well but could manage only second place. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the first qualification and third in the second. The Iranians Javad Foroughi and Gholnosh Sebghatollahi won the bronze match against Yashaswini and Abhishek 17-7.

In mixed air rifle, Elavenil Valarivan and Divyansh Singh Panwar were eliminated in the second stage in sixth place. The pair shot 416.1 and missed the chance to fight for a medal by 1.6

point. Even in the first stage of qualification, the Indian team had placed fifth.

Anjum Moudgil and Deepak Kumar placed 15th with a total of 624.6 in the first stage of qualification.

**The results: Mixed air pistol:** 1. Russia (Vitalina Batsarashkina, Artem Chernousov) 16 (390) 586; 2. India (Manu Bhaker, Saurabh Chaudhary) 12 (387) 587; 3. Iran 17 (385) 583; 4. India-A (Yashaswini Deswal, Abhishek Verma) 7 (386) 577.

**Mixed air rifle:** 1. Hungary (Eszter Meszaros, Istvan Peni) 17 (420.1) 626.1; 2. Russia 13 (419.1) 628.7; 3. Russia-1 17 (418.8) 630.4; 4. US 11 (417.7) 626.8; 6. India-2 (Elavenil Valarivan, Divyansh Singh Panwar) 416.1 (626.6); 15. India-1 (Anjum Moudgil, Deepak Kumar) 624.6.

# Adhiban well placed

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

With the draw out for the chess World Cup beginning at Sochi on July 12, the prospects for GM B. Adhiban look better than five other Indians who begin their campaign from the first round. P. Harikrishna and Vidit Gujrathi, seeded 11 and 13, have received a bye in the first round. Sixth seed D. Harika starts in the second round of the women's section.

The initial rounds feature two-game mini-matches in classical time-control. Rapid and blitz games get into play as tiebreakers.

Adhiban, expected to beat Chileto Chipanga, will also start as favourite against the winner of the clash between Niaz Murshed and Neuris Delfado Ramirez.

# Sreejesh, Deepika for Khel Ratna

## HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Veteran India goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh and former women's team player Deepika were on Saturday nominated by Hockey India for this year's prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

Besides the duo, vice-captain of India's Tokyo Olympics-bound men's team Harmanpreet Singh and women's team members Vandana Kataria and Navjot Kaur were nominated for the Arjuna awards.

The national federation also nominated R.P. Singh and Ch Sanggai Ibemhal for

the Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement, while coaches B.J. Kariappa and C.R. Kumar were recommended for the Dronacharya Award. According to a statement issued by HI, the period of consideration for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is between January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020.

# Players' body raises its concerns

## CUE SPORTS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

The Billiards and Snooker Players Association of India (BSPA), on Saturday, demanded that the Billiards and Snooker Federation of India (BSFI) reinstate its affiliation and allow two of its representatives in the national federation.

The BSPAI, which was

formed in 1992 and was functional until 2007-08, was revived in February 2021.

"We started to engage the BSFI in the early part of this year. Now they say they don't recognise us," said BSPAI president Cherag Ramakrishnan during a virtual press conference.

He added the players' body wanted recognition from the BSFI and representation

of two players nominated by it in the BSFI managing committee and executive committee meetings.

Asian Games gold medalist snooker player Yasin Merchant, a vice-president in the BSPAI, said the players' body was not anti-establishment.

Pankaj Advani, another BSPAI vice-president, said: "We are asking for a bit of transparency."

# SPORT

## COPA AMERICA

### TODAY'S SCHEDULE

#### GROUP B

**Brazil vs Ecuador**  
2.30 a.m. (Monday)  
**Venezuela vs Peru**  
2.30 a.m. (Monday)

Live on Sony Ten 2 and Sony 6 (SD & HD)

## SHORT TAKES



## Qatari athlete Haroun passes away

Qatar's Abdalelah Haroun, who won the 400m bronze at the 2017 World championships, passed away Saturday aged 24, the Qatar Olympic Committee said. World Athletics said the former world junior champion "has died in a car crash". AP

## Harika in semifinals

Dronavalli Harika moved into the semifinals of the Women's Speed Chess Championship, shocking Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. She won 13.5-8.5. Also through to the last four was China's Hou Yifan, who defeated Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan 13.5-9.5.

## Aadya, Arpitha in lead

Delhi's Aadya Gupta and Telangana's Arpitha Kothagundla shared the lead with 6.5 points from seven rounds in the National girls' u-12 online rapid chess on Saturday. Sachin Jain, Aswinika Mani and Yashvi Jain were among the 13 players in the third spot at six points.

## Fraser-Pryce books Olympics 100m berth

World champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce won the Jamaican women's 100m title on Friday, clocking 10.71s to confirm her spot on the team headed to the Olympics. AFP



# Denmark makes a statement with classy win

Dolberg leads the 4-0 hammering of Wales as the Danes motor into quarterfinals; Maehle, Brathwaite also score

## EURO 2020

AGENCIES  
AMSTERDAM

Forward Kasper Dolberg struck in each half while Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite also got in on the act late on as Denmark overpowered Wales to win 4-0 and reach the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 on Saturday.

Dolberg, making his first start of the tournament, gave his side the lead with a fine individual goal in the 27th minute, curling into the top corner from outside the area.

He doubled Denmark's advantage in Amsterdam early in the second half, ruthlessly pouncing on a loose ball after Wales failed to clear a

cross following a galloping run down the right wing from Dolberg's strike partner Braithwaite.

### Glaring opportunity

Braithwaite missed a glaring opportunity to add to Denmark's lead but Maehle sealed the win in the 88th minute.

Wales' frustrations spilled over when Harry Wilson was sent off for a wild tackle on Maehle in added time.

Braithwaite finally got the goal he had craved for by netting at the death, though he had to wait for the goal to be awarded following a lengthy VAR review.

Wales needed a moment of magic from captain Gareth Bale or Aaron Ramsey but

that never came.

Earlier, a framed Wales national team shirt with Christian Eriksen's name on it was given to Denmark captain Simon Kjaer before the teams played.

### Welsh wishes

The Wales jersey had "CHRISTIAN" written on top of Eriksen's No. 10 and BRY-SIA WELLA underneath. Brysias wella means get well soon in Welsh.

Kjaer, Wales captain Gareth Bale and the three match officials in Amsterdam then posed for a photo with the framed jersey moments before kickoff.

**The result:** Wales 0 lost to Denmark 4 (Dolberg 27, 48, Maehle 88, Braithwaite 90+4).



On fire: Kasper Dolberg's, right, brace set Denmark on its way past Wales on Saturday. •AFP

# Early reckoning for top-ranked Belgium

Dutch will be wary of the Czechs

REUTERS  
SEVILLE

Top-ranked Belgium and its golden generation faces an early reckoning at the European Championship against determined holder Portugal, which clawed its way into the last 16, on Sunday.

The contrast in progress could not have been greater with Belgium masterfully overcoming adversity to win all its group games, while a pugnacious Portugal saw its fortunes ebb and flow.

An extra day of rest was Belgium's reward for topping Group B.

It could be counter argued that Portugal is better prepared, having had to

## TODAY'S MATCHES

**The Netherlands vs Czech Republic 9.30 p.m.**  
**Belgium vs Portugal 12.30 a.m. (Monday)**

Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD)

scrap against the likes of Germany and France.

Meanwhile in Budapest, the Netherlands come up against an old nemesis in the Czech Republic.

The Dutch topped Group C with a perfect record, yet will be wary having fallen to the Czechs in Euro 2016 qualification and also in the Euro 2004 finals group stage where it let slip a two-goal advantage.

# India, England to battle it out in limited-overs format

Shafali to make ODI debut as visitors look to build on the Test performance

## INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BRISTOL

Teen sensation Shafali Verma is set to make her One-Day International debut as India takes on World champion England in the first game of a three-match series here on Sunday.

The 17-year-old, who has taken world cricket by storm, has so far played 22 T20 Internationals but was inexplicably not picked for the last home series against South Africa. India lost the series 4-1.

The team management is well aware of Shafali's value. Especially after her stellar Test debut against England last week with scores of 96 and 63.

Smriti Mandhana and Sha-

fali could open the batting, with Punam Raut at No. 3, followed by skipper Mithali Raj and her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur.

**The teams (from):** India: Mithali Raj (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Punam Raut, Harmanpreet Kaur (Vice-Capt.), Deepti Sharma, Taniya Bhatia (wk), Sneha Rana, Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Jemimah Rodrigues, Arundhati Reddy, Puja Vastrakar, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Poonam Yadav, Priya Punia and Indrani Roy (wk).

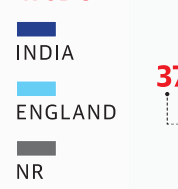
**England:** Heather Knight (Capt.), Tammy Beaumont, Kate Cross, Nat Sciver, Sophia Dunkley, Lauren Winfield-Hill, Anya Shrubsole, Katherine Brunt, Sophie Ecclestone, Amy Jones (wk), Freya Davis, Tash Farrant, Sarah Glenn, Mady Villiers, Fran Wilson, Sarah Glenn, Emily Arlott and Tash Farrant.

Match starts at 3.30 p.m. IST.

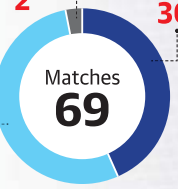
## The rivalry resumes

As Mithali's India gears up to take on Knight's England in the ODI series, a look at how the contests between the two have panned out

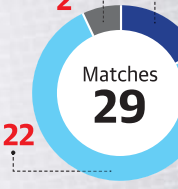
### HEAD-TO-HEAD IN ODIs



### OVERALL



### IN ENGLAND



### TOP PERFORMERS IN INDIA-ENGLAND ODIs IN ENGLAND

#### FOR INDIA

	M	Inns	N.O.	Runs	HS	Avg.	50s/100s
Mithali Raj	24	22	4	773	94 n.o.	42.94	8/0
Jhulan Goswami	22	21	20	4/17	25.70	3.08	1/0

#### FOR ENGLAND

	M	Inns	N.O.	Runs	HS	Avg.	50s/100s
Sarah Taylor	20	16	3	495	75 n.o.	38.07	2/0
Isha Guha	13	12	20	4/29	13.85	3.06	1/0



SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

# Will encourage Shafali to enjoy her batting: Mithali

'She is a young kid and will learn with experience'

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Mithali Raj wants Shafali Verma to play her natural game at Bristol on Sunday. The free-stroking opener is expected to make her ODI debut in the first of the three-match series against England.

The expectations are high about the 17-year-old after her sensational start to her Test career a few days ago at the same venue, with scores of 96 and 63. Mithali said, as a captain, she would encourage her to play the way she enjoyed playing.

"There will be times when she gives us head starts, and we would love her to be consistent, but she is a young kid and will learn with expe-



Shafali. •GETTY IMAGES

tage of playing at home.

"England is one of the best sides in the world," she said. "But we have players who have had the experience of playing the league here and we would get inputs from them about preparing against the England squad."

About the early end to the Test match, when debutants Sneha Rana and Taniya Bhatia had chances of reaching a hundred and fifty respectively, she said she was surprised. "Sneha told me it was a bad-light call taken by the umpires," Mithali said.

"When the umpires saw both the teams congratulating each other, it was pretty much taken the match was over."

# Kiwis home with mace

Williamson, few others still in England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AUCKLAND

The triumphant New Zealand players returned home on Saturday, carrying with them the mace they clinched after winning the inaugural World Test Championship.

However, the team's inspirational skipper Kane Williamson and a few others were not part of the group that landed here on Saturday due to playing commitments in England.

As many as 11 players and eight support staff members returned to Auckland via Singapore.



The mace flew home on Saturday. •TWITTER

New Zealand Cricket chief executive David White said the Board plans to honour the players soon.

# Verstappen grabs pole

REUTERS  
SPIELBERG

Red Bull's Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen secured pole for his team's home Styrian Grand Prix on Saturday, with Lewis Hamilton joining him on the front row.

Hamilton qualified third but moved up because Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas, second fastest in qualifying, had a three-place grid penalty from Friday practice. Verstappen leads Hamilton by 12 points after seven rounds.

**The starting grid: Front row:** Max Verstappen (Red Bull), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes); **2nd:** Lando Norris (McLaren), Sergio Perez (Red Bull); **3rd:** Valtteri Bottas (Mercedes), Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri); **4th:** Charles Leclerc (Ferrari), Fernando Alonso (Alpine); **5th:** Lance Stroll (Aston Martin), George Russell (Williams); **6th:** Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri), Carlos Sainz (Ferrari); **7th:** Daniel Ricciardo (McLaren), Sebastian Vettel (Aston Martin); **8th:** Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo), Nicholas Latifi (Williams); **9th:** Esteban Ocon (Alpine), Kimi Raikkonen (Alfa Romeo); **10th:** Mick Schumacher (Haas), Nikita Mazepin (Haas).

# Shaili's potential to the fore

Wins long jump in style; Gurindervir, Dhanalakshmi fastest

## ATHLETICS

UTHRA GANESAN  
PATIALA

Shaili Singh proved that her reputation as the next big thing in Indian athletics was not misplaced, the 6.48m leap giving her the long jump gold in the National inter-State athletics championships on Saturday, but the 17-year old is focused firmly on the World Junior Championships later this year.

The jump will place the 17-year-old in the joint top spot in the IAAF rankings in the Under-18 category this year. Training under Anju and Bobby George, Shaili is expected to be a strong medal contender at the World juniors in Kenya in August.

It wasn't as happy a homecoming for high-jumper Tejaswin Shankar, however, as he could only do 2.20m in his first meet at home in three years. Although it was good enough for gold, it was his lowest jump this season.

With Hima Das faltering in the 100m heats in the morning and pulling out of the competition, the much-awaited showdown with Dutee Chand did not happen.

# BCCI to host T20 WC in UAE, Oman

Tournament to start on Oct. 17, two days after IPL final

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to formally inform the International Cricket Council (ICC) about its willingness to host the T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates and Oman from October 17 to November 14.

ANI quoted BCCI secretary Jay Shah saying that the Board "will take a final call soon", but *The Hindu* understands that the decision has been made in the wake of a new COVID-19 variant that has been found in various states in India.

On June 1, the ICC had given the BCCI a four-week extension to finalise the venue for the 16-team tournament.

It is understood that the BCCI, in consultation with the ICC events team, has chalked out a tentative schedule.

While Oman and Sharjah will stage the qualifiers from October 17, the main event will be held in UAE, with the grand final in Dubai on November 14.

It means that the T20 World Cup qualifiers will begin barely 48 hours after the Indian Premier League final, scheduled at the Dubai In-

ternational Stadium on October 15.

Considering the limited window available to stage the IPL and the T20 World Cup in UAE, it is learnt that the T20 World Cup qualifiers will coincide with the warm-up ties for the main draw.

### CPL final advanced

With the IPL set to resume in UAE on September 19, the BCCI has managed to convince Cricket West Indies to advance the Caribbean Premier League final from September 19 to September 15. At least 12 IPL cricketers are set to feature in CPL.

# Alaphilippe in yellow after dramatic opening stage

## TOUR DE FRANCE

REUTERS  
LANDERNEAU (FRANCE)

Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe recovered from a crash to win the first stage of the Tour de France, an incident-strewn 197.8-km ride from Brest, to take the inaugural leader's yellow jersey on Saturday.

Alaphilippe burst away from the main pack with 2.3km left of a brutal climb up to the Cote de la Fosse aux Loups, and none of his rivals could match his power.

Australian Michael Matthews took second place, with Slovenian Primož Roglic coming home third, eight seconds behind, with

**Women: 100m:** 1. Dhanalakshmi (TN, 11.52s), 2. Amasha de Silva (SL, 11.59), 3. Archana Suseendran (11.60); **400mH:** 1. Salini (Ker, 1:01.63), 2. Khushdeep Kaur (Pun, 1:04.52), 3. Nirmal Punia (Har, 1:05.68); **Long jump:** 1. Shaili Singh (UP, 6.48m), 2. Sherin A (TN, 6.26m), 3. Renu (Har, 6.17m); **Shot put:** 1. Manpreet Kaur (Pun, 16.95m), 2. Sriшти Vig (Del, 15.96m), 3. Kiran Baliyan (UP, 15.75m).



Powering through: Julian Alaphilippe burst away from the main pack with 2.3km left of a brutal climb. •AFP

# England makes it 3-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SOUTHAMPTON

England defeated Sri Lanka by 89 runs in the third T20I to clinch the series 3-0 on Saturday. Asked to bat, the hosts rode on a 105-run stand for the first wicket between Jonny Bairstow (51, 43b, 5x4, 1x6) and David Malan (76, 48b, 5x4, 4x6) to score 180 for six.

The visitors were shot out for 91 in 18.5 overs.

**The scores:** England 180/6 in 20 overs (Jonny Bairstow 51, David Malan 76, Dushmantha Chameera 4/17) bt Sri Lanka 91 in 18.5 overs (David Willey 3/27, Sam Curran 2/14); **MoM:** Malan; **MoS:** Curran.

# Arjun stuns Dubov; Firouzja shocks Carlsen

## ASIAN RAPID CHESS

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Arjun Erigaisi's second-round victory over day's joint leader Russia's Daniil Dubov was the high point of Indian performances on the first day of the Goldmoney Asian online rapid chess tournament on Saturday.

The lowest-ranked in the 16-player field, Arjun went to sign off with a draw against joint-leader Ding Liren on a day when Alireza Firouzja shocked Magnus Carlsen.

**The results (involving Indians): Fifth round:** Vidit Gujrathi bt B. Adhiban; D. Gukesh lost to Levon Aronian (Arm); Arjun Erigaisi drew with Ding Liren (Chn). **Fourth round:** Adhiban drew with Arjun; Vladislav Artemiev (Rus) drew with Vidit; Ding drew with Gukesh. **Third round:** Gukesh drew with Adhiban; Vidit lost to Daniil Dubov (Rus); Arjun lost to Ar-



Arjun.

temiev. **Second round:** Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol) drew with Vidit; Adhiban lost to Ding; Dubov lost to Arjun; Artemiev bt Gukesh. **First round:** Vidit drew Anish Giri (Ned); Adhiban lost to Aronian; Gukesh lost to Dubov; Arjun drew with Duda.

**Leading positions (including Indians, after five rounds):** 1-5. Ding Liren, Levon Aronian, Magnus Carlsen, Vladislav Artemiev, Daniil Dubov (3.5 points). 9-10. Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi (2.5 each); 14-15. D. Gukesh, B. Adhiban (1 each).

# Abhishek bags gold

## ARCHERY

SPORTS BUREAU  
PARIS

Abhishek Verma defeated American Kris Schaff via shoot-off in a nerve-wracking final to win the compound men's individual title in the Archery World Cup Stage-3 here on Saturday.

Abhishek shot a 10 against Schaff's nine in the shoot-off after the two were tied 148-148 in the gold medal match.

This was his second World Cup individual gold after the one in Wroclaw, Poland, in 2015.

The 32-year-old Indian scored a perfect 30 apiece in the first three of his five attempts and established a two-point lead. Schaff fought back to level the scores and take the contest to the tie-breaker.

Earlier, Abhishek defeated Russian Anton Bulaev 146-138 in the semifinals.



Abhishek. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Abhishek, who led 86-85 after the third attempt, scored a perfect 30 apiece in his last two attempts to ensure a medal for himself.

He fetched the lone medal for the country in the compound division.