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Can't lower guard in J&K, says Army chief Gen. M.M. Naravane
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Sri Lanka braces for environmental disaster as cargo ship sinks
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Djokovic eases into third round; injured Barty retires mid-match
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NEARBY

Oppn. parties may meet soon to evolve strategy

NEW DELHI
 With the friction between some States and the Centre on the rise, the Opposition parties are likely to hold a joint meeting soon to chalk out a strategy. The last such meeting was in May 2020, when 22 parties met virtually, 50 days into the lockdown.

NEWS PAGE 9

Delhi High Court issues summons to Ramdev

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued summons to yoga guru Ramdev on a plea accusing him of making statements against allopathic medicines and claiming that Patanjali's Coronil kit is a "cure" for COVID-19 infection. The yoga exponent has been asked to give his response within three weeks.

NEWS PAGE 10

Capital reports 487 COVID cases, 45 deaths

NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 487 new COVID-19 cases even as 80,046 tests were conducted over 24 hours, said a health bulletin released by the government on Thursday. The total number of cases now stands at 14,27,926. Also, 45 deaths were reported, pushing the toll to 24,447.

CITY PAGE 2

Significant progress in SDGs on clean energy, health: NITI index

Goalposts changed on inequality, with omission of key economic indicators

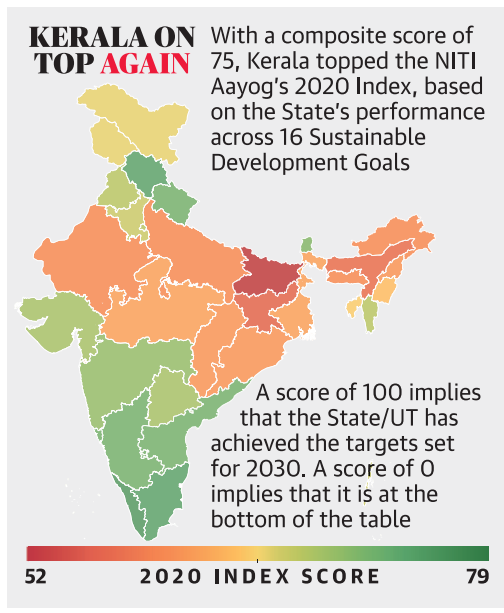
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

India saw significant improvement in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to clean energy, urban development and health in 2020, according to the NITI Aayog's 2020 SDG Index. However, there has been a major decline in the areas of industry, innovation and infrastructure as well as decent work and economic growth.

Although the index shows improvement on the inequality SDGs, the NITI Aayog has omitted key economic indicators used to measure inequality in income and expenditure last year and given greater weightage to social indicators instead.

Kerala retained its position at the top of the rankings in the third edition of the index, with a score of 75, followed by Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh, both scoring 72. At the other end of the scale, Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing States. However, all the States showed some improvement from last year's scores, with Mizoram and Haryana seeing the biggest gains.

Developed by a global consultative process on holistic development, the 17



Goal	Top States
No poverty	Tamil Nadu
Zero hunger	Kerala
Good health and well-being	Gujarat
Quality education	Kerala
Gender equality	Chhattisgarh
Clean water and sanitation	Goa
Decent work and economic growth	Himachal Pradesh
Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Gujarat
Reduced inequality	Meghalaya
Sustainable cities and communities	Punjab
Responsible consumption and production	Tripura
Climate action	Odisha
Life below water	Odisha
Life on land	Arunachal Pradesh
Peace, justice and strong institutions	Uttarakhand

SDGs have a 2030 deadline. The NITI Aayog launched its index in 2018 to monitor the country's progress on the goals through data-driven assessment and to foster a competitive spirit among the States and Union Territories in achieving them.

In March, an assessment by the UN of the impact of COVID-19 on the SDGs said the region India is part of may see rising inequality due to the pandemic.

The NITI Aayog Index shows some improvement in the SDG on inequality, but a look at the indicators used to

assess this goal shows that the think tank has changed the goalposts.

Thrust on social equality
 In 2019, the indicators for inequality included the growth rates for household expenditure per capita among the bottom 40% of rural and urban populations, as well as the Gini coefficient – a measure of the distribution of income – in rural and urban India. The 2018 indicators included the Palma ratio, another metric for income inequality.

Such economic measures

Journalists need protection against sedition charges'

SC quashes case against Vinod Dua

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
 NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday quashed a sedition case registered against senior journalist and Padma Shri awardee Vinod Dua for his critical remarks against the Prime Minister and the Union government in a YouTube telecast, underscoring its 59-year-old verdict that "strong words" of disapproval about the ruling regime did not amount to sedition.

A Bench, led by Justice U.U. Lalit, upheld the right of every journalist to criticise, even brutally, the measures of the government with a view to improving or altering them through legal means. The free speech of a journalist should be protected from charges of sedition.

The time is long past when the mere criticism of governments was sufficient to constitute sedition. The right to utter honest and reasonable criticism is a source of strength to a community rather than a weakness, the judgment said.

It upheld the spirit and intent of the 1962 Kedar Nath Singh verdict, which said, "Commenting in strong terms upon the measures or acts of government, or its agencies, so as to ame-

The time is long past when the mere criticism of governments was sufficient to constitute sedition. The right to utter honest and reasonable criticism is a source of strength to a community rather than a weakness

SUPREME COURT

liorate the condition of the people or to secure the cancellation or alteration of those acts or measures by lawful means, that is to say, without exciting those feelings of enmity and disloyalty which imply excitement to public disorder or the use of violence is not sedition".

Justice Lalit declared, "Every journalist is entitled to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment."

The 1962 judgment said Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (sedition) was intended only to punish subversion of a lawfully established government through violent means.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Will take all steps to bring back Choksi, says MEA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

India will make "all efforts" to bring back fugitive diamond trader Mehul Choksi from Dominica, where he is facing a case in a court over alleged illegal entry into the island.

The response of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came shortly before it became known that Mr. Choksi is likely to remain in custody in Dominica for a few weeks more as the next hearing is expected to be around July 1.

"India remains steadfast in its efforts to ensure that fugitives are brought back to face justice. Regarding the specific case of Mehul Choksi, we understand that he is in the custody of the authorities and certain legal proceedings are under way. We will continue to make all efforts to ensure he is brought back to India," said MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

Accused of defrauding the Punjab National Bank and the State Bank of India of ₹13,500 crore, Mr. Choksi fled to Antigua and Barbuda in 2018 and took citizenship there.

Meanwhile, Antigua PM Gaston Browne continued to distance his country from the fugitive.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Fresh fillip



Fading past: Central Vista redevelopment work under way at Rajpath in New Delhi on Thursday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

WhatsApp obtaining 'trick consent': govt.

STAFF REPORTER
 NEW DELHI

The Centre has informed the Delhi High Court that WhatsApp, the instant messaging app, was indulging in "anti-users practices" by obtaining "trick consent" from users for its updated privacy policy.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in an affidavit filed before the court, said that WhatsApp was "bombarding" million of its existing users, who have not accepted the updated 2021 privacy policy, with notifications on a daily basis.

DETAILS ON PAGE 8

1,044 cases of mucormycosis in city

COVID test positivity rate is less than 1% fourth day in a row

STAFF REPORTER
 NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said a total of 1,044 cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) have been reported in the city so far.

"Till yesterday (Wednesday), 1,044 black fungus cases were there in Delhi. Out of these, around 92 patients have recovered fully and around 89 people have lost their lives due to black fungus," the Minister said. The others are still under treatment at different healthcare

facilities, he said.

The test positivity rate of COVID-19 has remained less than 1% for four consecutive days. This is a "good sign", said Mr. Jain and urged people to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour. "My appeal to every citizen is that please maintain social distancing, wear a mask all the time, and wash your hands from time to time."

Covaxin quandary

Mr. Jain also said that many people who have taken the first dose of Covaxin are not

getting the scheduled second dose in Delhi and added that the situation has become like this because of the "mismanagement" by the Central government.

"They have changed the schedule for vaccination. If the Central government had given us the required number of vaccines, then no problem would have happened. But they are not providing vaccines. We are hopeful that people who are waiting for the Covaxin second dose will get it as early as possible," he said.

Talks on with Pfizer, J&J, Moderna: MEA

Govt. trying to step up supply: Shringla

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
 NEW DELHI

India is in talks to allow major foreign vaccine manufacturers to carry out "local manufacturing", said Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla on Thursday, as the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) asserted it was making "all efforts" to increase vaccine supplies, particularly from the U.S.

Addressing the WHO's South-East Asia Regional Health Partners' Forum, Mr. Shringla said India was fighting an "exceptionally severe second wave" of the pandemic. "We are also part of the discussions with major vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and Moderna on sourcing and possible local manufacturing of their vaccines in India. We have also helped expedite the introduction of Sputnik V," he said.

In an order on February 5 last, U.S. President Joe Bi-

Centre books 30 crore doses of new vaccine

The Union Health Ministry has finalised arrangements with the Hyderabad-based vaccine firm Biological-E to reserve 30 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses. These would be manufactured by the company from August to December. The vaccine is now undergoing Phase-3 clinical trial. PAGE 10

den invoked the Defence Production Act for vaccine components, putting a squeeze on India's vaccine manufacturing. Mr. Shringla said MEA's representatives had been working to "ease regulatory disruptions to supply chains".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
 SHE SEEMS INDEMNITY PAGE 10

HC orders action against Gambhir's foundation for stocking Fabiflu

Doing charity for some other reason is no charity, says court

STAFF REPORTER
 NEW DELHI

The Drugs Control Department of Delhi on Thursday informed the High Court that the Gautam Gambhir Foundation (GGF) had been found "guilty of unauthorised stocking, procuring and distributing Fabiflu (medicine) to COVID-19 patients".

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeed Singh told the drug controller to take action in the case. "Firstly, you do charity for charity. Doing charity for some other reason is no charity. We want to curb this practice and for this, we want you [drug controller] to take action," it said.

Noting the manner in which cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir procured huge quantity of the drug when it was in short supply in Delhi, the court said, "This was certainly not the way. In this pandemic it should not be done just be-



Gautam Gambhir

cause people have means to do it. It should not be that I will do it for one class or for my constituency people and it should not be for popularity."

The drug controller submitted that action would be taken without delay against the foundation and drug dealers too in similar cases that would be brought to its notice.

'AAP MLA also guilty'

It said that AAP MLA Praveen Kumar had also been found guilty for similar of-

fence under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and action would be taken against him.

The drug controller's counsel said that show-cause notices have been issued to licensees as well as those who were found to have breached the law and their responses were awaited.

The court asked the drug controller to file status report within six weeks and posted the matter for hearing on July 29. It was hearing a petition seeking the lodging of an FIR on the allegations that politicians were able to procure and distribute COVID-19 medicines in huge quantities even as patients were running from pillar to post to get them.

Soon after the High Court hearing, Mr. Gambhir quoted Bhagat Singh in a tweet. "I am a man and all that affects mankind concerns me - Sardar Bhagat Singh!" he posted.

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'Vaccinate
govt. teachers
at the earliest'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education has directed that all Delhi government school teachers who have been working as front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic be vaccinated immediately.

DoE director Udit Prakash Rai has asked that vaccination be facilitated for the teachers at the earliest in a letter to district education officers and school principals.

"Government school teachers have been spearheading the COVID-19 response of the city government. They have been deployed on several fronts to contain the virus spread. Teachers have gone beyond the call of duty in management of containment zones, vaccination drive, ration distribution, oxygen management etc," the letter said. Mr. Rai said that it is imperative that the DoE ensures all government teachers get vaccinated on an immediate basis.

Delhi govt. preparing for 45K daily cases during third wave

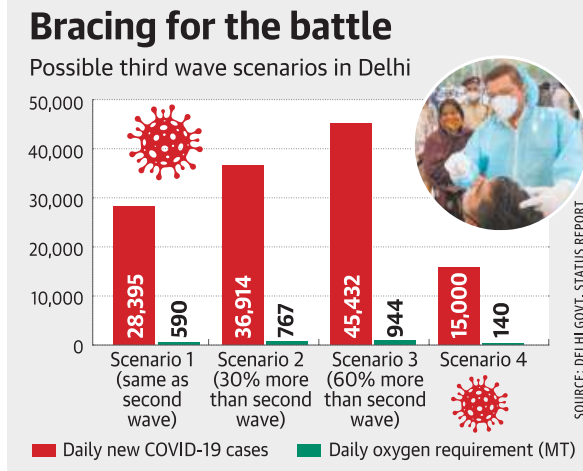
IIT estimates a sharp rise; oxygen plants installation in govt. hospitals delayed

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is currently considering four scenarios for a possible third wave of COVID-19 in the city. Alarming, in one of the scenarios, the daily new cases could be as high as 45,432, as per an official report seen by *The Hindu*.

In the first scenario, the daily new cases could be as high as 28,395, which is the same as the second wave. In the second scenario, it could be 36,914, which is 30% more than the second wave. According to the third estimate, the number shoots to 45,432, which is 60% more. The fourth projection offers a bit of respite, with the case count expected to be around 15,000.

The government is also making plans for oxygen arrangements for each of these scenarios. The scenarios are based on a report submitted to the Delhi government by



the IIT-Delhi. "These are preliminary estimates. The Delhi government has asked IIT-Kanpur to form a team, including epidemiologists and other experts, to come up with more accurate predictions of when the third wave could hit the city and how high the cases could be. But it will take more time for them

to submit a report," a Delhi government source said. The Delhi government will be giving the city's data including, cases and vaccination, to IIT-Kanpur to come up with the prediction, the source said.

Only nine of the 58 Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants have been

made operational in Delhi government hospitals so far, as per the report. This shows the government has missed the previous deadline given by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that 44 plants should be operationalised before May 31.

On April 27, he had said that 44 oxygen plants will be installed in a month at hospitals in the city. "After installing these 44 plants in different hospitals, oxygen supply will improve," Mr. Kejriwal had said.

Work in progress

The city had faced a grave oxygen shortage during the second wave, which led to several deaths due to hospitals running out of oxygen.

When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson said: "So far, 20 plants have already been installed in a mission mode within a month and another 10 will be installed next week"

Capital sees 487 virus infections out of 80,046 tests, 45 deaths

13,94,731 have recovered and there are 8,748 active cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Out of the 80,046 tests conducted in the last 24 hours, Delhi reported 487 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the count to 14,27,926, according to a health bulletin released by the government on Thursday.

The test positivity rate (TPR) fell to 0.61%, which means that less than one person out of 100 taking COVID-19 tests is now positive. The TPR was 0.78% on Wednesday and this is the fourth consecutive day that the figures are below 1%.

At the same time, 45 deaths were reported and the death toll stood at 24,447. Of the total cases, 13,94,731 people have recovered and there are 8,748 active cases.

Vaccines for youngsters

Delhi has been facing a shortage of vaccines and free vaccination for the 18-44 age group has not been happen-



Volunteers conducting door-to-door survey on vaccination at a colony in North Delhi on Thursday •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
14,27,926	24,447
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
487	45

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

ing in government schools for over about 11 days now, as per an official bulletin.

"The Central government has not been sending vaccines for more than 10 days. If youngsters want to get vac-

inated, they have only one option, which is to go to private hospitals. Those vaccines are administered for ₹800, ₹900, ₹1,000, ₹1,250 and ₹1,400 by private hospitals," AAP leader Atishi said.

She said it is a matter of great concern for Delhi because the last wave had some serious effects on the youngsters. "It is our request to the Central government that instead of sending the vaccines to private hospitals, they make the vaccines available to the Delhi government," she said.

BJP claims scam on Remdesivir distribution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Thursday filed a police complaint alleging a "scam" in stock and distribution of Remdesivir injections in the city and demanded an inquiry.

Delhi BJP spokespersons Harish Khurana alleged that there was discrepancy in the government accounts regarding the number of Remdesivir injections as on May 16. It alleged that over one lakh doses had gone missing.

Sisodia slams Centre over vaccine shortage

'Govt. doesn't have the vision or purpose for better COVID-19 management'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday hit out at the Central government over the vaccine shortage in the city and alleged that the BJP is giving vaccines to private hospitals instead of government centres.

"The BJP is responsible for closures of government vaccination centres, while private hospitals continue to receive vaccines, for which citizens have to pay for. The

BJP is using the backdoor to provide vaccines to private hospitals, while government centres with free vaccines face scarcity. Not one State right now has free vaccines to inoculate citizens," Mr. Sisodia said.

Answerable to nation

The AAP Minister said that the "nation needs to know" what happened to the ₹36,000 crore earmarked for vaccination. He said that it has been eight months since the vaccine was deve-

loped in India and the country is still facing a huge shortage.

"If BJP spokespersons are calling for press conferences to sling mud on Mr. Kejriwal, it means that the BJP-led Central government has neither a plan or a mission to fight against COVID-19. They don't have the vision or purpose for better COVID-19 management. The BJP needs to accept that it has grossly mismanaged the vaccine plan in India," he said.

Mr. Sisodia claimed that

the BJP still has no plan and they are playing "petty politics".

"At the press conference conducted by Sambit Patra, I noticed that for a good 15-20 minutes, [Sambit] Patra just indulged in continuous mud-slinging and attacking CM Arvind Kejriwal ji. What is even more astonishing is that it seems like Mr. Patra had no interest in speaking about vaccination in the nation or COVID-19 management or even preparing for a third wave," he said.

Campaign against home delivery of liquor begins

'Govt. must home-deliver ration instead'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Mahila Congress on Thursday launched a campaign against the Delhi government's new policy that allows home delivery of liquor.

Delhi Mahila Congress chief Amrita Dhawan said instead of focusing its time and effort on ensuring home delivery of ration or oxygen, the government was trying to earn money by allowing home delivery of liquor. She

added that families in Delhi had just gone through a tough time due to COVID-19 and were asking about ration, vaccines and medicine while the government was concentrating on liquor.

"I believe that alcohol can give a personal pleasure for a minute but it ruins families and has an adverse impact on women and children. The govt. should focus on providing home delivery of life-saving medication and ration instead," Ms. Dhawan said.

Gather info on orphans: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the Delhi government to take steps to gather information on the minors who have been rendered orphans in the COVID-19 pandemic and are in a vulnerable situation due to loss of one or both parents.

The court directed various departments of Delhi government to call all RWAs, police stations, schools, anganwadi workers, and hospitals to give information on children whose one or both parents have died.

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Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi

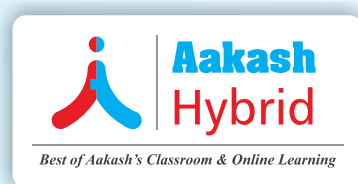
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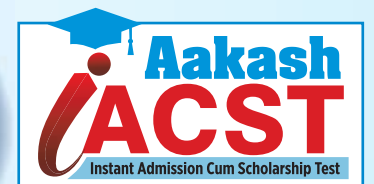
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IN BRIEF



A.P. gov't. launches work on over 15 lakh houses

Construction of 15.6 lakh houses began in Andhra Pradesh on Thursday with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually launching the YSR Jagananna Colonies project from Tadepalli.

Row over Google search result on Kannada

Kannada as answer to a query in Google on ugliest language in India sparked an outrage on Thursday and the Karnataka government said it would issue a legal notice to the tech leader.

Hunger strike in Lakshadweep on June 7

Thousands of people living on the islands of Lakshadweep will observe a 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. hunger strike on June 7 in protest against the string of laws being pushed by the Union Territory administration.

Decide on home vaccination for elderly: HC

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Thursday directed the State government to take a decision in 10 days on home vaccination for bedridden patients and senior citizens who cannot move out of their residences.

Kerala beats Karnataka in race for KSRTC

Trademarks Registry has granted use of acronym to the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation

STAFF REPORTER BENGALURU

Kerala's race with Karnataka over the name of its State Road Transport Corporation has reached a milestone as the Trademarks Registry has ruled in favour of Kerala.

The Trademarks Registry, India, in its recent order has allowed Kerala to exclusively use the acronym 'KSRTC' for its State-run bus service.

Kerala Transport Minister Antony Raju issued a statement on Wednesday stating that the "KSRTC" acronym and the elephant logo were finally declared to belong to Kerala.

Shivayogi C. Kalasad, Managing Director, Karnataka RTC, said though the were yet to receive a copy of the order, they will explore all legal options.



The name game: Both Kerala and Karnataka Road Transport Corporations were using the acronym KSRTC for their State-run bus services.



"We will make all efforts to retain our right to use the acronym," he said.

Monsoon arrives in Kerala, two days behind normal date

IMD predicts 'normal rainfall' for the country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The southwest monsoon has set in over Kerala, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday.

"The southwest monsoon has advanced into some parts of south Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep area, south Kerala, south Tamil Nadu, remaining parts of Comorin-Maldives area and some more parts of southwest Bay of Bengal on Thursday, June 3, 2021," the IMD said.

This year, the onset of the system has occurred two



Welcome sight: Dark rain clouds heralding the onset of the monsoon in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday.

days behind the normal date of June 1. The IMD had initially predicted a May 31 onset for the monsoon.

According to the weather agency, the June-September monsoon rainfall for the

troller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks in 2013. It was spurred by the success of patenting the Airavata Club Class service with the tagline "Sleep like a baby".

register its brands such as Airavata Club Class, Rajahansa and others with the monogram 'KSRTC'.

There were also instances of people misusing the name of KSRTC by creating multiple websites and ticket booking sites.

Kodakara case: police to question Kerala BJP head

More BJP leaders could be quizzed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THRISSUR

The special team investigating the Kodakara black money robbery case will question Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Kerala president K. Surendran next week.

As the State organisation general secretary and party president are responsible for the money dealings in the party, Mr. Surendran needs to be questioned, according to the police sources.

The police said there were contradictions in the statements of BJP leaders

public. In 2013, we received the necessary certificates," said a source.

Karnataka RTC issued a notice to Kerala RTC asking them not to use the acronym 'KSRTC' as they had patented it in 2014.

Kerala argued that their government has been running their fleet of buses under the acronym since 1965, while Karnataka's bus services were named so only in 1973.

Kodakara case: police to question Kerala BJP head

More BJP leaders could be quizzed

Dharmarajan, who sent the money, and former State treasurer of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha Sunil Naik.

Alappuzha BJP district treasurer K. Gopalakrishna Kartha, during an interrogation, reportedly told the police that if they needed to get more details they should ask the State president of the party.

Mr. Surendran has said that the party was not involved in the Kodakara black money heist case. He also denied handing over ₹10 lakh to Janathipathya Rashtriya Sabha chief C.K. Janu during the elections.

"It is unfortunate that the media are playing up a baseless allegation against a tribal leader," Mr. Surendran said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18:00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Telangana, coastal Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala.

Table with 4 columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists rainfall and temperature for various cities like Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, etc.

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Table with 4 columns: CITIES, SO2, NO2, CO, PM2.5, PM10. Shows pollution levels for cities like Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, etc.

In observation made at 4:00 p.m., Hajipur, Bihar recorded an overall Air Quality Index (AQI) score of 236 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution.

In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 22

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO2: 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.

NO2: 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

Porters burdened by the absence of passengers

Many at railway station finding it hard to pay rent, afford food

HEMANI BHANDARI NEW DELHI

On a hot and sunny afternoon in Delhi, when a handful of passengers made their way into the New Delhi railway station, a group of porters thronged them.

Near an auto with a passenger with some luggage, were standing several porters in the hope that one of them will get work.

"What to do? Nobody comes looking for us anymore. We have to run behind them," said 43-year-old Mahesh Meena, a porter for 36 years now.

Most porters working at the railway station are from Rajasthan and reside in Paharganj — where the rent for accommodation is higher than parts of the city — because it's closer to their workplace.

Most of them have to pay anything between ₹4,000-₹5,000, an expense they are barely able to manage for two months now. Living in single room accommodation, their families back in villages waiting for them to send money every two-four week.

"Earlier, we were able to save ₹500-₹600 but now that amount has come down to ₹100-₹150 because there are hardly any passengers due to the pandemic. Also, most passengers don't prefer hiring us because of the fear of the virus," Mr. Mahesh said, adding that he has a family of five dependent on him.

Sitting idle for the hour and a half, Virender Singh (30) shared that the amount their charge is ₹100 for 40 kg but these days, they settle



Migrant labourers arrive with their belongings at New Delhi Railway station on Thursday.

for ₹60-₹80 for the same weight. "We ask less as there is no work...we have to accept whatever the passenger wishes to pay because nobody wants to sleep on an empty stomach," he said.

Hari (35), a porter for the last 12 years, said they all arrive at the station at around 3 a.m. and work till 6 p.m. For him, managing the rent has become an issue.

Not just rent, there are water and electricity bills as well that need to be managed. Most importantly, we have to send money back home every few days with someone who is going to the village," he said.

Helping others

The porters claimed that there are times when they help people, who are in need. Hari recalled helping a girl taking "Gareeb Rath" train home.

He said he had packed all her stuff to finally go home as she couldn't afford to stay in the city anymore.

"She had eight pieces of luggage and told us that she had no money. Two of us

helped her. We are all in the same boat after all," he added.

They said they are all managing ration on credit from local grocery stores as owners have known them for years. "At least in the last lockdown, food wasn't much of a concern because it was being provided by the government," said Om Prakash Meena, a porter for six years.

Reminiscing "good old days", Mr. Mahesh said he never looked to do anything else because he was earning a decent amount at the job.

"Aacha khana peena tha, koi tension nai thi. Gareeb they lekin itne nahinp [We were eating and drinking good. We were poor but not so much]," he said.

Porters miss Yadav Criticising the Central government, they said they miss RJD Chief Lalu Prasad Yadav — former Railways Minister — who offered jobs to porters as gangmen. "This government has ruined us all. Laluji should have been here," said Basant Lal (54).

80 nabbed for involvement in virus-related crimes in city

SAURABH TRIVEDI NEW DELHI

During the second wave, the police arrested 80 people for their alleged involvement in COVID-related crimes like black marketing and hoarding, said an officer on Thursday.

The arrested persons were involved in hoarding or black marketing of oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, or medicines for COVID patients.

"During the pandemic, the police not only helped COVID patients but also nabbed those involved in black marketing or hoarding. We also launched a dedicated helpline number for family members of COVID patients who were harassed by black marketers or frauds," said the officer.

Occupation of accused

Among the arrested, 32 are unemployed, 15 shopkeepers, eight hospital staff, six ambulance drivers, 12 from well-off sections of the society, and others. "Most of the arrested persons are in the age group of 25-35 years followed by 26 people in the age group of 35-50 years. We have found that 63 of them are city residents and the rest are from other States," said the officer.

In a data prepared by Delhi Police, it was also found that 53 accused were from middle class and 15 were from the weaker section of the society.

No criminal records

The police said most of the arrested persons have no previous criminal records.

Oxygen centre vandalised, alleges NGO running it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

An oxygen centre run by Hemkunt Foundation, an NGO, in Sector 61 here was allegedly vandalised on Thursday. The organisation claimed that the men of the tent house owner, who had rented them the place, were behind the incident.

SDM (Badshahpur) Satish Yadav said the NGO had entered into a "verbal" agreement with the tent house owner for the place to run the oxygen plant, but the former now demanded that his place be vacated since there were hardly any COVID patients visiting the facility.

"The tent house owner



Hemkunt Foundation's Community Development Director said the accused destroyed the beds at the centre in Sector 61 in Gurugram on Thursday.

had on Wednesday asked the NGO to vacate the place. On Thursday, the men of the tent house owner came and took away their generator sets and curtains. The tent house owner alleged that there were no

patients at the facility and the place was being used for storage purposes," said Mr. Yadav, who visited the place with the local SHO. He said the NGO was allowed 48 hours to vacate the place and

the police were told to look into the allegations.

Harteerath Singh, Community Development Director, said the NGO had a "verbal" agreement with the "Rama Tent House" to use their place for running an oxygen centre for two months and they had paid ₹3.5 lakh for it. "...around two dozen CCTV cameras also went off due to power disconnection. They then vandalised the place. At least one of them was armed," alleged Mr. Singh. He blamed "political hand" behind the incident.

He said a formal complaint would be lodged with the police in this connection.

CITY



Speed over optics

The Centre must act as procurer and allotter of vaccines, and leave distribution to States

The Centre's 'liberalised' policy of allowing vaccine companies to strike deals with States and private hospitals has borne limited fruit. While the age group of 18-44 years accounts for the bulk of vaccines being administered, attempts by States to negotiate deals with international vaccine companies have come to naught. In spite of opening vaccination for all adults, there were fewer doses administered in May – around six crore – as opposed to 7.7 crore doses administered in April. The Health Ministry has said that close to 8 crore doses were available in May (counting wastage and stocks with States) and that 12 crore will be available in June for the Centre, States and private hospitals. Over 22 crore doses have been administered so far. There is large variability within and among States regarding vaccination. It is in this context that State Chief Ministers, cutting across party divisions, are now demanding that the Centre be the sole buyer of vaccines. The Supreme Court too has expressed its dissatisfaction over the existing system that puts States in competition with each other and the Centre, almost like another competitor, for vaccine supplies. The Centre has tried to project that it was the clamour from States that forced it to abstain from being the sole purchaser of vaccines, but it was the Centre's miscalculation that there would not be frantic public demand this calendar year and that the output from the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech would be sufficient for India.

International arrangements such as COVAX were premised on India being a large supplier to Africa and several countries around the world with no vaccine development facilities. Now that the Government has prevented the Serum Institute of India from honouring its supply commitments, it is unclear if international suppliers would trust India's demand for large supply. The unpredictability in policy also weakens India's ambit of negotiations now that it seems desperate to increase short-term vaccine supply. Moreover, given that vaccines are the most sought-after goods, it is unlikely India would be prioritised so late in the day. There is optimism of increased and significant supply from Bharat Biotech and SII by August. At this stage, it appears that the Centre has few options other than waiting for its domestic suppliers to hike production. Increased supply from abroad is unlikely in the near future, even if resources for procurement are not a constraint. It must however heed the States' core demand that they be given a greater say in deciding how best to distribute the vaccine. The Centre can be a monitor of and an adviser to the process; and if it becomes the sole buyer, it can spell out a transparent distribution policy. But it ought to prioritise speedy administration over optics.

Digital tax tussles

The world cannot afford a tariff war to protect digital sector, which has low-tax operations

The United States announced and then immediately suspended a whopping 25% tariff rate on over \$2 billion of imports from six countries including India, signalling Washington's intent to act punitively on its long-held grouse with these nations for their digital services taxes primarily impacting Silicon Valley tech giants. The office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai said that the tariff proposed on goods from Austria, India, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the U.K. was approved following a "Section 301" investigation that found these digital taxes to be discriminatory. With the threat of tariffs hanging over these six economies when most of them are limping through a feeble post-COVID-19 recovery, the USTR appeared to project a softening of the blow by adding that the tariffs would be suspended pending ongoing tax negotiations to "provide time for those negotiations to continue to make progress while maintaining the option of imposing tariffs under Section 301 if warranted in the future". The backstory is that the investigation was initiated by the Trump administration in June 2020, and the deadline for approving tariff action based on the investigation would have lapsed this week. The latest policy action comes a few months after the Biden administration similarly approved, then suspended, tariffs on France retaliating for its tax impacting firms such as Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Microsoft.

One thing is clear: if the Biden administration did not subscribe to the notion that taxes on digital services by the titans of Silicon Valley, a significant portion of whose revenues are generated on foreign soil, were discriminatory, it could have distanced itself from the Trump-era investigation into this allegation without any serious political fallout. The fact that Mr. Biden has chosen to use the stick of tariffs to force the pace of negotiations on digital services tax with seven nations suggests that the current White House subscribes strongly to the idea of expanding the global playing field for American tech firms to dominate without fear of being slapped with tax liabilities. In the case of India, that was a mere 2% digital service tax on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce operators with a turnover of over ₹2 crore. Even more, Washington appears to be unafraid to throw serious political left behind this venture even to the point of risking another tariff war outbreak, compounding the tensions generated by tax skirmishes between the Trump White House and Beijing on this count. The cost for India could be potentially high, as \$118 million worth of its exports will fall under this proposed tariff, and a range of sectors could be impacted. At this point in the fragile, post-COVID-19 recovery, the world can hardly afford another tariff war, and that too one waged to protect a sector that has enjoyed low-tax or tax-free operations across the world for decades.

Rural health care needs fixing, and now

A takeaway from the pandemic is that India needs to revisit and refurbish its health infrastructure in the rural areas



BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA

The two consecutive waves of COVID-19 and Mucormycosis have left us shattered. Multiple bruises have been caused to us. But during the second wave of the pandemic, it is our rural people who are struggling the most. They are struggling to get prompt and quality health care. The key role of health-care facilities in the rural areas is to provide regular and comprehensive health-care needs guided by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s principle of Universal Health Coverage, "ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user the financial hardship".

Data show shortfalls

The second wave of the novel coronavirus pandemic has exposed the inadequate and poor health infrastructure in the rural areas. The fact shared by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey on July 23, 2019 in the Rajya Sabha suggest that 29,337 primary health centres (PHCs) are required in the rural areas of the country; India has 25,743, a shortfall of 3,594 units. This means that we have one PHC for 25 villages in India. This needs to be revisited. In the fast-changing health scenario, we should have one expanded PHC for every 10 villages along with the provision of some beds and other

minimum necessary facilities. We have 5,624 community health centres (CHCs) against the requirement of 7,322. Data on CHCs, which act as a referral centre covering a population of 80,000 people to 1.20 lakh people, show that, overall, there is a shortfall of 81.8% specialists at CHCs as compared to the requirement for existing CHCs. As in the Human Development Report 2020, India has eight hospital beds for a population of 10,000 people, while in China, it has 40 beds for the same number of people.

The picture in Haryana

If I may talk about the health infrastructure in Haryana, which remained a backward area of Punjab till 1966, it had only one medical college in the public sector up to 2005 till I became the Chief Minister. During my tenure up to 2014, we laid much emphasis on health services; besides many private sector medical colleges, one State health university, four medical colleges (at Karnal, Faridabad and Nuh in Mewat), and one medical college for women (in the rural area of Sonapat district) were established. Called the Bhagat Phool Singh Government Medical College for Women, this is the second women's medical college after Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi in the northern part of the country. We also established the All India Institute of Medical Sciences-II and a National Cancer Institute at Bhadsa village of Jhajjar district.

Yet, Haryana requires 5,070 sub-health centres (SHCs) as against the existing 2,666; 845 PHCs as against 531 at present, and 253 CHCs as against 118 working at present. As per Census 2011, Haryana has a 2.53 crore population. And, as per the norms required after each block of one lakh population, Haryana requires 253 CHCs



AFP

and 845 PHCs for the whole State. When infrastructure in the health services is so poor in a progressive and prosperous State such as Haryana, one can easily estimate the inadequacy of the physical health-care infrastructure in the rural areas in other States (<http://haryanahealth.nic.in/>).

It is of utmost importance that governments everywhere engage with all kinds of rural community organisations such as panchayats, gram sabha, notified area committees, municipal bodies and non-governmental organisations in minimising the adverse impact of the pandemic on rural life. For that purpose, in Haryana, we constituted Swasthya Kalyan Samitis, or SKSs for all CHCs, PHCs which has proved to be an effective management structure enabling people's participation in ensuring better functioning of rural health services.

According to worldometers.info, out of 139 crore population of India, at least 91 crore people are living in 649,481 villages. There are at least 10% of people in the urban areas who are partly settled in villages as well since they keep moving to their rural habitations quite frequently. Villages need adequate health services. Given the alarming proportion of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India, we cannot sit idle any longer and need to focus on the existing health infrastructure in the rural areas. This is one of the most important takeaways for us after the

two waves of COVID-19 and the spread of Mucormycosis in the country. For want of well-oiled health machinery, most of our people are unaware of being in the grip of NCDs such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases which assume significance in the pandemic.

The health network

As per an estimate of WHO, NCDs including cases of cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory problems and cancer cause nearly 41 million (71%) of all deaths globally and about 5.87 million (60%) of all deaths in India. It will not be humanly possible to treat them all, thereby causing premature deaths on such a large scale. Persons with such morbidities are the most vulnerable in the case of a pandemic.

I agree that the task is easier said than done, but it has to be accomplished. We have no other option but to treat the disease/s at the primary level in its first stage to create a healthy India. It will also help us save a lot of money and the resources being spent at tertiary level health care. If our SHCs work effectively, there will be less pressure on PHCs. If the PHCs function well, then there will be minimal pressure on CHCs and so on. Unfortunately, we have not been able to maintain the vibrancy and vitality of the network of health care. As a result, our vast rural populace remains deprived of critical health interventions.

The chain of SHCs, PHCs and CHCs can very well take care of the multiple health needs of our people. They should have the health data of people in their respective areas. It will enable them to identify those likely to slip into the secondary or tertiary care zone. Regular health camps will help us identify those on the verge of developing tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes or any diseases like

to be caused because of their socio and economic conditions. A CHC or referral centre equipped with specialists will do wonders if made to work efficiently. Every CHC is supposed to have 'at least 30 beds for indoor patients, operation theatre, labour room, X-ray machine, pathological laboratory, standby generator' and other wherewithal. Just imagine the kind of relief we would have had today in our fight against COVID-19 if our network of SHCs, PHCs and CHCs was working efficiently.

Collective responsibility

In conclusion, I will only urge all stakeholders to revisit and refurbish our health infrastructure in the rural areas and build them in a better manner. As more than 65% of the population resides in the rural areas, we cannot ignore their health needs. WHO has its norms and yardsticks. We can have our own, perhaps even better than what has been stipulated by WHO. We also know health is a State subject, but all those living in the rural areas are not only the responsibility of the States or the Centre but also a collective responsibility. Just spending money will not take us anywhere. We have to see and ensure that the money being spent improves facilities and contributes to people's ease of life. It is hugely challenging as a task but we have to firm up our strategies, their execution and by rigorous auditing so that we are ever well prepared not only to meet this pandemic effectively but also to make our rural folk healthier. We must remember that no one will survive unless all of us survive. As Bertrand Russell has put it, "It's co-existence or no existence."

Bhupinder Singh Hooda is a former Chief Minister of Haryana and Leader of the Opposition in the Haryana Legislative Assembly

Comments to avoid in long-standing ties

Some actions of political figures in India are detrimental to the consolidation of cordial bilateral ties



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

The Chief Minister of Delhi last month warned the Union government about a new strain of the novel coronavirus that has been observed in Singapore that was said to be extremely perilous for children and could visit India as part of a third wave. This triggered a strong denial from the authorities in Singapore that there was any 'Singapore variant', and they reserved the right to invoke against the Chief Minister a domestic law, the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act, against the online circulation of fake news. During this excessive over-reaction to a comment by the Chief Minister, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, declared that "irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships" – a wise and pertinent observation.

Inappropriate statements

It is improbable, however, that Mr. Jaishankar similarly cautioned his Cabinet colleague, the Home Minister, against the latter's many derogatory statements with refer-

ence to Bangladesh prior to and during the Bharatiya Janata Party's unsuccessful campaign in the election for the West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The Home Minister had described illegal Bangladeshi immigrants as vermin that he would push into the Bay of Bengal, and then implied that poor people in Bangladesh were starving, which drew a stinging public rebuke from the Bangladesh Foreign Minister. In this year, the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation and the birth centenary of the father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, irresponsible comments from those who should know better are profoundly inappropriate.

Diplomacy with Bangladesh

India's relations with Bangladesh, one of the most populous Muslim countries in the world, are acutely sensitive. As a neighbour nearly surrounded on all territorial sides by India, there are the inevitable bilateral problems of long duration, including a perennially favourable balance of trade for India, drought and flood in the 54 transboundary rivers flowing from India to Bangladesh, and the smuggling of goods and vulnerable human beings across the approximately 4,100 kilometre land border.

The turbulent history of Partitions; East Bengal that became East Pakistan and then Bangla-



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

desh, attended by enormous bloodshed and the abuse of human rights, has left emotional wounds that will take many generations to heal. There are those in Bangladesh who believe that separation from Hindu India in 1947 was more significant than the break with Pakistan in 1971, there remain about three lakh 'Biharis' in Bangladesh who have failed thus far to be resettled in Pakistan, and there is the presence of militant Islamist groups such as Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, that have linkages and support from outside Bangladesh.

In contrast to these circles, who take confrontation with India as part of their basic credo, are those who regard their Bengali roots and traditions as being of equal validity as their religious affiliation, and treasure the linguistic and cultural ties with adjacent India. It will take time for these inherent fractures in Bangladeshi society to be resolved, and it is for India to show

patience and sympathy to this entirely internal process of healing.

As *quid pro quo* for India's benign attentions and support, New Delhi's expectations are that a neighbour will keep India's concerns in mind when devising and pursuing its policies, and this understanding is implemented with severity or laxity depending on the regime in New Delhi.

Favourable steps

After decades of pro-Pakistani military and civilian governments following 1975, Mujibur Rahman's daughter Sheikh Hasina, elected for a third consecutive term since 2008, has consolidated her position as unquestioned leader in Bangladesh. She has maintained vigilant supervision over Muslim fundamentalist terrorists as well as on Northeast militant movements sheltering in Bangladesh, with the result that the pacification of India's Northeast has been greatly facilitated.

She has permitted a considerable degree of connectivity between India and its Northeast by land, river and the use of Bangladeshi ports, and Indian investments in Bangladesh have been encouraged. There are at least 100,000 Indian nationals now living and working in that country. To complete the ties of economic integration, the day will come when, along with free movement of commerce and capital, the

movement of persons on the lines of Nepal and Bhutan will have to be considered.

For India to note

As the leading mid-wife of Bangladesh's liberation struggle and its sole economic supporter in that nation's early years of independence, New Delhi should view with satisfaction Bangladesh's coming graduation in 2026 from 'least developed' to 'developing country' status, and its steady progress as one of South Asia's leading performers in human development indicators. Its eventual membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership cannot be ruled out.

To a certain degree, both India and Bangladesh depend on each other for security and stability. Responsible individuals on both sides of the border, whether in government or the Opposition, must be actively discouraged from words and actions detrimental to the consolidation of the existing cordiality. This is where Mr. Jaishankar's dictum is applicable to members of his own party as well as the Opposition. What is sauce for the goose is equally sauce for the gander.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Foreign Secretary

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

No examinations

While the decision not to hold Board examinations for Class 12 can only be welcomed, the respective Boards and Ministries need to answer some related questions. It is obvious that public pressure and strong hints by the Supreme Court had a significant role to play in shaping the final decision. These raise serious questions about the sensitivity and the capacity of the Boards to respond to the situation, particularly in the light of their much-vaunted claims of "autonomy". Moreover, it is only fair that the Boards also need to return the amount charged from students in the name of examination fees. Lastly, the issue seems to have been decided upon, on the basis of a health risk, whereas it needs to be

registered that a majority of students not only faced financial and medical crises during this session, but also that no meaningful teaching-learning had taken place which could have been used to assess students. With grave doubts about the pedagogic meaningfulness of online transactions and the digital divide working against a majority, it would have been far better to have declared a 'zero academic year'.

FIROZ AHMAD,
New Delhi

The gharial is back

I write this as IUCN SSC Crocodile Specialist Group Member, Member, Odisha State Wildlife Advisory Board and formerly of the Wildlife Institute of India. The recent news report of the sighting of a brood of

gharial hatchlings with the mother crocodile, after more than five decades, in the Mahanadi river in the Satkosia tiger reserve, Odisha, highlights their successful breeding in the wild in the Mahanadi, which is the southernmost distribution range of the species. It was in the 1970s, that the central government and Odisha with support from the FAO initiated the Gharial Conservation Project at Tikerpada on the Mahanadi in the Satkosia gorge region (by declaring a large stretch of river and the adjoining forest as a sanctuary). In 1975, wild-laid gharial eggs were brought from the Narayani river in Nepal to Tikerpada for simulated and artificial hatching. The hatchlings were reared and then released in the Mahanadi

within the protected area. The programme continued with the first reintroduction of captive reared gharials taking place in the Mahanadi in 1977, and the programme continued with eggs or hatchlings from Nepal and the Chambal in Madhya Pradesh. In 1981, the gharial also bred in captivity for the first time at the Nandan Kanan Biological Park, Odisha, which also contributed to the releases at Satkosia. However, the reintroduction programme in the Mahanadi was not considered a success due to the non-survival of the release stock and no breeding records in the Mahanadi for over five decades. In 2017, the reintroduction programme was reinitiated and Satkosia upgraded to a tiger reserve, with a

research team monitoring the restocked and resident gharial population. It remains to be seen now how the new brood will tide over the natural monsoon flood in the river as well as the artificial rise of water from the Hirakud dam located upstream. B.C. CHOUDHURY,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Doctors under siege

The two reports, "24 held for assaulting doctor in Assam" and "Delhi lost 107 doctors, Bihar 96: IMA"

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: In a front-page story headlined "Taruin Tejpal verdict a manual for rape victims" (June 3, 2021, some editions), a quote saying "It is a kind of manual for rape victims, ... for considering leave for appeal" was erroneously attributed to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. Actually, it was a remark by the Single Judge Bench of Justice S.C. Gupta.

In a "Sports" page story, "Conway makes dream debut with century at Lord's" (June 3, 2021), the bowling figures 20-5-55-1 were carried without the bowler's name. They were Anderson's (England).

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(Inside pages, June 3), highlight the plight of doctors who are waging a relentless battle against COVID-19. The mindless attack on the doctor in Assam is condemnable and exemplary punishment must be given to the accused. The Government must ensure adequate protection to doctors who are already struggling under increasing pressure. P.K. VARADARAJAN,
Chennai

Information Technology Rules: a case of overreach?

PARLEY

Only the judiciary, and not the executive, should give an order on traceability

Last week, WhatsApp decided to legally challenge one of India's new Information Technology rules which requires messaging platforms to help investigative agencies in identifying the originator of problematic messages. WhatsApp reckons this would break end-to-end encryption and undermine people's right to privacy. The government responded saying it is committed to ensuring the right of privacy for all its citizens, and that it also has to ensure national security. Have these new rules been framed to adequately address the privacy versus security balance, especially in the context of social media intermediaries such as WhatsApp? Rishab Bailey and Parminder Jeet Singh discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Sriram Srinivasan. Edited excerpts:



Rishab Bailey is Technology Policy researcher at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

What are your views on how the IT rules relate to the privacy versus security issue?

Rishab Bailey: The short answer is that every provision of the new IT rules is ultra vires the Constitution and the parent IT Act of 2000. The rules only make superficial attempts at balancing privacy and security interests. But it's very clear that security interests are being given primacy over both civil liberty interests as well as economic interests.

Keep in mind that the government already has huge powers of surveillance. This was recognised even in the Justice Srikrishna Committee report that accompanied the draft data protection law in 2018. So, rather than seeking to revise these powers, the government is giving itself greater ability to snoop on and interfere with the private lives of citizens. In particular, the traceability obligation in the new rules is problematic because the technical literature on this is nearly universal, in agreeing that this would mean breaking the use of end-to-end encryption for all users on platforms such as WhatsApp.

Also, end-to-end encryption is really needed in the digital economy because data theft and hacking are only increasing in India. There's also an issue of platforms them-

selves misusing user data. So, ideally, we should be looking to encourage more user-controlled encryption and not limiting this possibility.

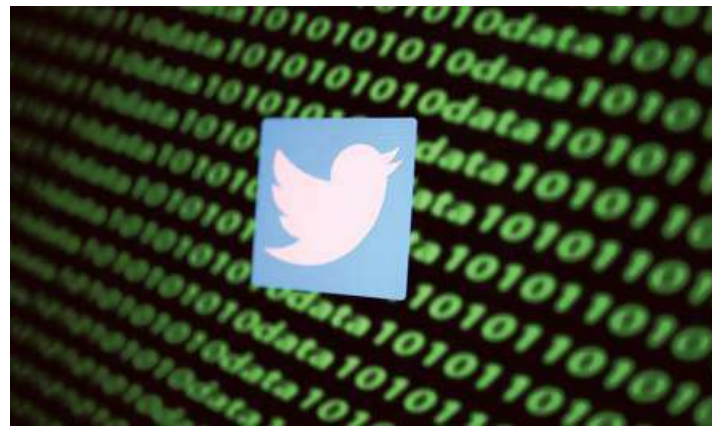
Parminder Jeet Singh: I'll start with the points of agreement with Rishab, and that is the context of the way the state has been using its powers in a manner which is becoming very dangerous.

Having said that, we also need to see things in the sense of the fact that our societies are changing from pre-digital to digital societies, and many fundamental structural changes have to take place. Among those are also the levers of law enforcement, required in the new context. Second, as Justice Srikrishna said, a new law should be brought out, which discusses the rationale, gives good institutional checks and balances, and then places this significant and new legal possibility for the law enforcement in that context. Third, the biggest problem with WhatsApp is that it is a private communication channel, and after certain virality, becomes public. So, what happens is that with the originator or traceability mandate, anybody who's writing a personal message to his or her friend is afraid that though they are giving an analysis which, in a private sense, is not criminal, but it could be criminal in a public sense. So, how do you balance the private and the public part of it is a concern.

Rishab, do you think that the use of metadata is itself enough to deal with this issue?

RB: It's unclear why you need to have a specific mandate for traceability. Yes, metadata as well as other forms of unencrypted data can be accessed by law enforcement. Keep in mind also that the current law in India also allows the government to request decryption of data where it's held by an intermediary or where the intermediary holds the private encryption key.

Would the decryption rules be relevant in a context where there are no keys for



REUTERS

decryption except at the ends of a communication?

RB: That is actually the fundamental issue here, which is that the government wants you to move away from encryption controlled by the users to encryption done by the intermediary itself. If the intermediary is controlling the encryption keys, the government can just go to them and ask for this information.

PJS: I don't believe traceability of encrypted messages requires breaking encryption. The metadata, which carries many layers of information already, including a counter that tells you that the message has crossed a certain limit of virality, can be a good enough place to lock the originator of every message when it is created. Now, you can always say it doesn't go with my method of encryption. But the law does not follow private models of business; private models of business follow the law.

I have been a law enforcement officer, and I can see many situations where there is really almost no other way – I mean you can spend decades of investigation and always find the originator. So, there are examples like somebody sending out a message which is derogatory to, say, Dalits and this goes viral. This is illegal under Indian law. So, what should the law do? A second example relates to systematic election-related manipulation, which has happened in the West on Twitter; in India it happens on WhatsApp. Foreign countries can do it, Indian political cells can be doing in a manner which is illegal. And all these can really be traced when you are

Ideally, we should be looking to encourage more user-controlled encryption and not limiting this possibility.

RISHAB BAILEY

able to find an originator. Another example is of obscene pictures, non consensual, intimate pictures (that are shared). And finally, a lot of the wrong kind of content is today leaked on WhatsApp by the police itself, who get access to a lot of digital media when they do investigation. All these require the originator to be found out and these cases are going to keep on multiplying. And just to say I think it could be found out otherwise is not sufficient.

The government's response to WhatsApp mentioned the safeguards that come with the rules. Any thoughts on that?

RB: The rule as it's currently drafted is vague, disproportionate, and probably unnecessary. The reasons for which this traceability power can be used are quite broad and therefore capable of misuse. The provision uses the phrase 'security of the state', which unfortunately has virtually come to mean criticising the government in any way. Similarly, to say that this power can be used to detect or prevent an offence basically gives executive authorities free rein to identify people even before an offence has been committed.

PJS: This should have been a new law with systemic explanation of intent, purpose, and institutional safeguards. Like now, the court has

said that sedition has to be redefined. There are two problematic terms here: 'security of the state' and 'public order'. People are shouting in my street; is it a public order issue? And we need our Supreme Court to define these terms and lay out the law on that.

I am also strongly of the belief that for these kind of cases, executive authority should not be able to give an order. Only a judicial order, which should insist on the purpose, how you are going to do it, whether the intermediary has been given an opportunity of being able to do it through less intrusive means, which are all the part of the new rules, should allow access to the originator of a message. So, these institutional systems should be in a new law, and the Supreme Court should clarify terms like 'public order' and 'security of the state'.

It will always be an ongoing battle. The powers that a police constable was given during the colonial regime... it is the same power the Indian policeman has in New Delhi and the Toronto policemen have: of arresting people, going into people's houses. It is the institutional safeguard around those which keep their power in check. The same would apply in the digital arena.

What do you have to say about the fact that these didn't come as new laws?

PJS: Probably much of it is not of the delegated rule-making level. These kinds of things should go to Parliament and a full-fledged law should be written.

RB: What has progressively happened over the last few years is that the Section 79 of the IT Act route, and the fact that you can make rules under this, is being used to introduce progressively more onerous obligations, including on many issues where you might actually need regulation. The argument is that all the rules under Section 79 can do is give effect to the main provision. They can't introduce new offences, they can't go beyond what the original provision or, in fact, the parent Act itself contemplates.

Coming back to the issue of encryption, the government's release in response to

WhatsApp's charges made a point about a 2019 **communiqué issued by five countries (the U.K., the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) in which they talk about the problems with encryption. What do you think is going to happen going forward?**

RB: Actually, every jurisdiction is struggling with the issue of how to deal with the fact that sometimes messages may not be accessible, or data may not be accessible to law enforcement agency. But I don't think there is a single liberal democracy that actually implements laws mandating traceability in the same way that the new IT rules actually do. This issue of access to encrypted data has come up over the last 25 years in many different countries. Even in the U.S., for instance, it's been discussed since the mid-1990s. It particularly comes up every five or six years when there's a terrorist attack or something like that and technology companies say we can't provide you this data because it's encrypted. But there have been no laws actually implemented that specifically deal with this issue, largely due to opposition from the technical community as well as civil society and academia.

In Australia, fairly wide-ranging powers have been given to the government under a law known as the Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment Act. This allows law enforcement to request information and assistance from intermediaries. But even here, they can't mandate the creation of systemic weaknesses or vulnerabilities.

It's also important to keep in mind that often, platforms don't always want to get on the bad side of governments. This might not necessarily apply in the Indian context, because clearly there's an adversarial position that's been adopted here. But platforms can also be arm-twisted into building in what's called weakness by design into their product. For instance, Apple is said to have dropped plans to encrypt its iCloud data because the FBI pressured it. These are bigger questions that need to be discussed, but I don't think that you will actually find too many countries which have similar provisions in the law.



Parminder Jeet Singh is Executive Director, IT for Change



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

A new home for old artefacts

A planned decision to move the National Museum could serve the institution's interests well

VINOD DANIEL

The National Museum in Delhi is a repository of India's rich history and proud heritage. Over the past few months, many critical pieces have been written about the government's decision to move the museum to the North and South Blocks. However, examples from other countries show that a planned move can serve the collection, comfort, and audience experience needs of the National Museum better. In addition to Egypt, where the impressive Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza will replace the crowded Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square in Cairo, many national museums have moved to new premises.

Limitations

The current building, though impressive, has limitations in being a national institution. The new location will provide a space that is over four and half times bigger than the current space. The museum has over 2,00,000 cultural collections and less than 6% of them are in display. The move can provide an opportunity to bring more collections from storage to be displayed through the creation of several more galleries. Additionally, it will also provide much more space for storage, especially with more collections being constantly added from excavations, donations and repatriations.

From the time an exhibition of Indian art was organised at the Royal Academy in London, and later in Rashtrapati Bhavan, which led to the creation of the National Museum, the collection numbers have been increasing manifold. They will only increase further in the next few decades.

The North and South block buildings are a prominent part of Delhi's landscape. Once they are retrofitted to provide a fitting external façade (without compromising on heritage), international standard exhibition and collection storage areas, and spaces for education and visitor services, they can become a landmark location. The increase in space would allow for more gallery spaces to include both ancient and contemporary Indian art and culture. The current museum also struggles in terms of finding a space with adequate envi-

ronmental controls for travelling exhibitions. There will be an opportunity in the new location, with the increased space available, for accommodating both international and national travelling exhibitions. The National Museum as the nodal agency for all outgoing and incoming cultural collections, including repatriated collections, will be able to serve these collection needs better.

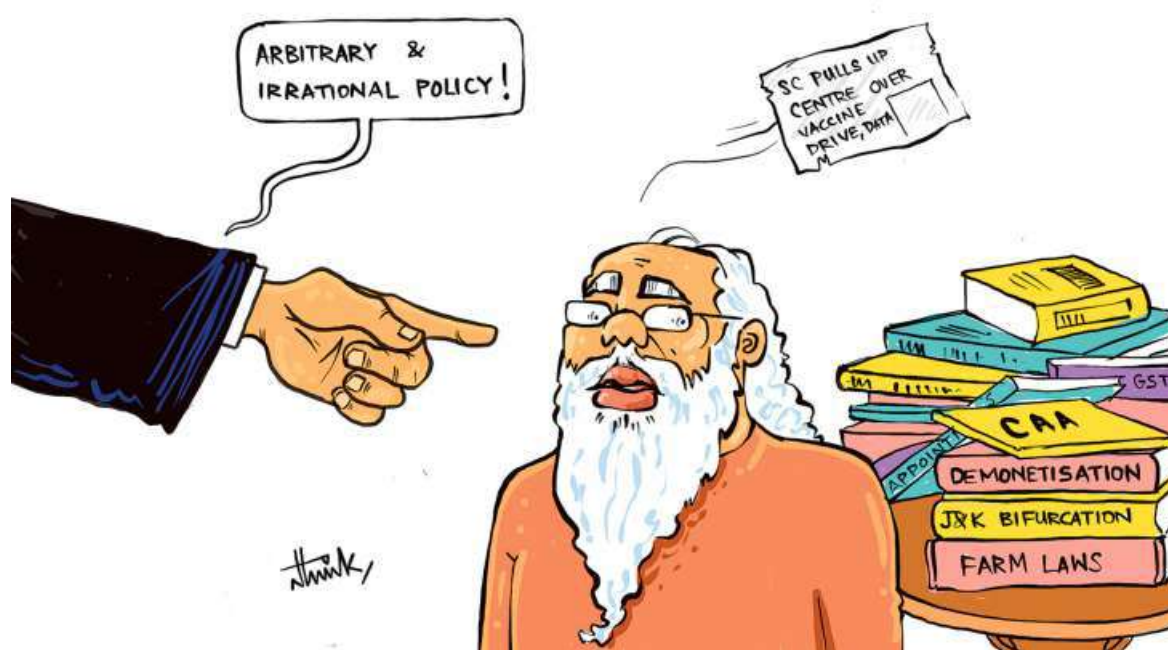
Key skills for students

The National Museum Institute (NMI), whose highly skilled graduates not only serve the needs of the museum but also the broader needs of India's cultural sector, will benefit much from the move. The students could gain a lot from the collections, their storage, conservation and interpretation. They can greatly benefit with a large increase in laboratory, gallery and teaching facilities. There is also an interest to expand NMI and incorporate its programmes in Museology, Art History and Conservation along with other programmes in Archaeology, Archival Studies and so on, under a new institute. The benefits would only be greater from an expanded operation.

The exhibition areas in the current building are still operational. A new Buddhist gallery is being opened at the adjoining Archaeological Survey of India building. In this context, keeping the collections safe in the current building and getting the new location ready before carefully moving the collections with safe packing and transport is important. The risks of damage to collections during transit can be greatly minimised. A better designed and new collection storage area in the new location will minimise risks from the environment, disasters and pests.

A revamped National Museum that looks at both people and collection comfort; has galleries that provide excellent audience experience; good education spaces; and uses technology creatively for interpretation, outreach and education could become a 'must visit' for every visitor. In fact, it could become the anchor for a vibrant museum movement in India.

Vinod Daniel is Board Member, International Council of Museums and Chairman, AusHeritage



NOTEBOOK

Behind headlines and numbers, stories of invisible lives

The lives of many in China have been turned upside down by the one-child policy

ANANTH KRISHNAN

When China announced on May 31 that it would for the first time allow couples to have a third child, I thought of Yang Zhizhu.

Exactly 10 years ago, I had met Yang in Beijing while researching a story on China's one-child policy. Back then, most Chinese couples were allowed to have only one child under the family planning policy that came into existence in 1979. The only exceptions were if you were a family living in rural China whose first child was a daughter, or if both parents were only children. The Yangs fit neither description. They lived in Beijing, where Zhizhu was a professor of constitutional law at the China Youth University for Political Sciences.

Their lives, like the lives of so many others in China, had been turned upside down when his wife became pregnant for the second time. What should

have been a moment of joy became one of a complicated mix of emotions. Having the child, under the policy, would have meant paying extraordinary fines that the family couldn't afford.

"God gave us the child," was how the Yangs explained their decision to me. Their second daughter was born on December 21, 2009. Zhizhu had to pay a fine of 2,40,000 Yuan (then around \$37,000). Without doing so, he would not be able to get his daughter's household registration certificate, which is needed for everything in China, starting with getting into school. The fee was 10 times the average disposable income in Beijing. He decided not to pay it. That cost him his job.

He made a second decision: to take the case to court. In doing so, he triggered a broader debate in China and garnered so much public sympathy that the university reinstated his job subsequently, even

if he was not allowed to resume teaching. He ultimately lost the case after a two-year battle and had his bank accounts frozen until he paid the amount.

Another conversation came to mind this week, of hearing a friend tell me about her "many brothers and sisters". Noticing how surprised I was, she explained, "That's how those of us born in the 1980s refer to our cousins." It was that rare for many in that generation to have their own sibling. In her case, two years after she was born, her mother was forced to have an abortion to keep her job in the government-run factory where she was working. This was early 1980s China, where you couldn't simply walk away from your state-given job and your work unit that had such a hold over every aspect of your life. Her father worked in the same factory too, and the only kindergarten she had access to was the one

linked to the same work unit. Fighting the policy was not an option.

In 2015, China announced a two-child policy. After that failed to boost birth rates, the three-child policy was introduced on May 31. The latest change was explained in news reports with a flood of numbers. Twelve million – the number of babies born last year, according to the May 11 Census, the lowest since 1961 (some experts believe the latest Census prompted the change). Or 264 million – the 60 and above population in China, up 5.44% in the last year. Or 300 million – the number of births, according to the Chinese government which still strongly defends the one-child policy, that family planning had prevented.

Statistics are what demographers and governments go by. But we forget that behind each of these numbers lie stories of invisible lives impacted in unimaginable ways.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 4, 1971

Communists over doldrums

New Delhi, June 3: Once again, the Indian Communists are in the doldrums – blowing hot and cold – and unable to react rationally and carry conviction with their hair-splitting arguments and contradictory postures over the Bangla Desh situation. In the initial stages of the struggle, they tried to ride the massive wave of popular support in India and establish some degree of rapport with the activist groups in the Bangla Desh freedom struggle. Both the right and left communists had hoped to dig in their toes firmly in the two Bengals and become the torch-bearers of this new upsurge of Bengali nationalism rising above the rut of Ind-Pak tensions. But when they failed to make such headway in this ambitious bid to radicalise the Bangla Desh freedom movement, the Indian communists started reassessing their positions to make sure that they did not get too closely identified with the petit bourgeoisie leadership of the Awami League and be engulfed by the nationalist upsurge in the two Bengals which had come closer in the wake of the brutal Pakistani military action. They are now trying to cover up this incapacity to foresee the course of events correctly with a lot of ideological nonsense which is only exposing them to further ridicule.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 4, 1921

Postmasters-General

Simla, June 3: Revised rates of pay of the Postmasters-General have been published in the "Gazette of India." It is further notified that the Postmasters-General who are recruited from the ranks of the Indian Civil Service will draw Rs. 250 a month over and above the time-scale pay and the overseas pay which would be admissible to them if they were employed in the regular line and held appointments classed as superior. While under training an officer of the Indian Civil Service will draw his time-scale pay in the ordinary line plus overseas pay and he will not come on the scale set forth above until he is placed in independent charge of a circle. Should an officer be placed in an independent charge of a circle before his 10th year of service his pay will be that which he would draw on the superior Indian Civil Service scale plus Rs. 250 per month. The scale of pay for a non-Civilian Postmaster-General will be ₹1750-100-2250, with one selection post on Rs. 1500 a month, subject to the condition that no officer should hold this special appointment unless he has completed three years' permanent service as Postmaster-General.

FROM PAGE ONE

'Progress in SDGs on clean energy, health'

The SDGs that do deal directly with wages and industrial growth better reflect the fact that India's economy has taken a beating over the last year.

The country's score on the SDG related to industry and infrastructure dropped 10 points to 55, while the scores on decent work

dropped three points to 61. The Clean Water and Sanitation SDG also saw a five-point drop, despite flagship government schemes in this sector.

In a more welcome development, the SDGs on eradication of poverty and hunger both saw significant improvement.

'Journalists need cover against sedition charges'

The court acknowledged the submission made by Mr. Dua, who is currently recovering from COVID-19, that "there is a recent trend against the media where State governments who do not find a particular telecast to be in sync with their political ideologies register FIRs against persons of the media primarily to harass them and to intimidate them so that they succumb to the line of the State or else face the music at the hands of the police".

However, the court rejected Mr. Dua's plea that FIRs should not be registered against journalists of 10 years' experience unless cleared by a committee constituted by the State government concerned. Mr. Dua

had said the committee should comprise the Chief Justice of the High Court or a judge designated by him, the Leader of the Opposition and the Home Minister of the State.

The court said such a committee was outside the present statutory framework. By granting the prayer, it would be encroaching into the legislature's domain.

The complaint against Mr. Dua was filed by a BJP leader. The senior journalist was accused of spreading fake news. Besides sedition, the other charges include causing public nuisance, printing of defamatory matter and making statements conducive to public mischief.

Will take all steps to bring back Choksi: MEA

The Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister said Mr. Choksi had become "Dominica's problem" and would remain in Dominica's custody as he was facing the case of entering the country illegally.

"The preference of the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda is for Mr. Choksi to be repatriated to India from Dominica," said Mr. Browne in a statement even as the

court hearing continued at Dominica where the diamond trader argued that he was abducted from Antigua and should be returned there. Mr. Browne had argued that the return of Mr. Choksi would draw Antigua into the problem again.

"If he finds himself in Antigua, the problem reverts to Antigua and Barbuda," he said, seeking repatriation of Mr. Choksi to India.

Talks on with Pfizer, J&J, Moderna: MEA

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, replying to questions on the outcome of Mr. Jaishankar's week-long U.S. visit, said, "We are also engaged with the U.S. administration to ensure that necessary components and raw materials for vaccine production in India are readily available. This issue was taken up most recently during External Affairs Minister [Jaishankar]'s visit to the U.S."

India was also awaiting

the U.S. allocations from its surplus stockpile of 80 million AstraZeneca vaccines, he added.

In his address to the WHO, Mr. Shringla said India would create "global scale capacities" necessary to fight the pandemic. "A number of serious global conversations are under way on this in platforms such as the G7, G20, QUAD, BRICS, the United Nations and the WTO itself," he noted.

'CBSE cannot deny students name change on certificates'

Right to change names is part of freedom of speech: SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday found a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) rule that prohibited students from changing or correcting their names on Board certificates, based on a presumption that it would affect "administrative efficiency", far-removed from social realities and even "absurd".

The court said the CBSE's examination bylaws of 2007 made it look as if the Board was more concerned about administrative paperwork than the future prospects of its students, who use their certificates as a public document to go for higher studies and gain employment.

"Students stand to lose more due to inaccuracies in their certificates than the Board, whose sole worry is increasing administrative burden... Administrative ef-



iciency cannot be the sole concern of CBSE. Every institution desires efficiency in their functioning. But it does not mean that efficiency is achieved by curbing their basic functions... One of the primary functions of CBSE is to grant certificates to its students, a three-judge Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar observed in a 132-page judgment.

Right to be forgotten
On the other hand, the court illustrated how a juvenile accused of being in conflict

30% PMGKAY recipients yet to get grains for May

Centre urges States to issue more ration cards to vulnerable

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Almost a third of all ration card holders are yet to get their free foodgrains allocation for May under the Centre's COVID-19 relief scheme, according to the Food Ministry. At a press conference on Thursday, Food Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey also said it was up to the States to take further action on providing rations to migrants and others without ration cards in compliance with a Supreme Court order, indicating that the Centre does not intend to revive last year's scheme meant for these vulnerable populations.

Out of the 79.25 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), only 55 crore have so far received their 5 kg per person quota of free wheat or rice under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), which was announced to mitigate the economic distress caused by the pandemic. Thus, more than 30% have still not got their benefit. However, almost 90% of beneficiaries have received their regular subsidised grain for the month, raising questions over why the free grain has reached



Not enough: Only 55 crore have received their 5 kg per person quota of free wheat or rice under PMGKAY. *K.V.S. GIRI

fewer beneficiaries. Food Ministry data showed that Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Odisha and Rajasthan did not even begin distribution of the May quota under PMGKAY until June 1.

On Wednesday, the Centre issued an advisory to all States asking them to launch a special drive to issue ration cards to the most vulnerable sections of society, including migrant workers and street dwellers, noting that "some of the poor and needy people who do not have address proof may be finding it difficult to obtain a ration card".

However, this must be done within the existing coverage allowed for each State under the NFSA. Mr. Pandey told presspersons that there was a nationwide coverage

gap of 1.97 crore beneficiaries. However, he admitted that 14 States had already reached their quota limits and would not be able to enrol any new beneficiaries.

An analysis of NFSA data shows that the only major States which have significant coverage gaps are Himachal Pradesh (23%), Madhya Pradesh (14%) and Gujarat (9%). Most other large States have less than a 5% gap, which can be used to issue new ration cards. In a May 24 order, the Supreme Court had directed that migrant workers and poor people without ration cards should be provided with dry ration under the Atma Nirbhar scheme — which was implemented last year — or any other scheme found suitable by the States and Centre.

ED arrests RJD MP in fertilizer import scam

Case involves IFFCO MD and others

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Amarendra Dhari Singh in connection with the money laundering investigation in the fertilizer import scam involving the managing director of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd. (IFFCO) and others, a senior agency official said on Thursday.

"Mr. Singh is a Rajya Sabha MP from the RJD. He has been arrested in the fertilizer scam case," said the official. The ED is conducting the probe on the basis of a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against IFFCO managing director U.S. Awasthi, Pravinder Singh Gahlaut, then managing director of Indian Potash Ltd. (IPL) and others, including Mr. Singh as the senior vice-president of Jyoti Trading Corporation (Dubai).

Mr. Awasthi's sons Amol and Anupam; Mr. Gahlaut's son Vivek; Pankaj Jain of Dubai-based Jyoti Group of

Companies and Rare Earth Group; and his brother Sanjay Jain, president of Jyoti Trading Corporation, have also been named, along with Rajiv Saxena, who is also under investigation in the AgustaWestland case.

Highly inflated rates

The scam involves the import of fertilizers and raw materials running into thousands of tonnes by IFFCO and IPL from various foreign suppliers at highly inflated rates.

The Central government gives subsidy on fertilizers for supply to farmers at reasonable rates. It is alleged that the quoted rates included the commissions to be paid to Mr. Awasthi and Mr. Gahlaut.

The CBI, in its case, alleged that about ₹685 crore of illegal commissions were received through the bank accounts of firms belonging to Mr. Saxena and some others. While ₹481 crore of the total amount was routed via Dubai-based Rare Earth Group, the remaining went to the Awasthi brothers and Mr. Vivek.

WhatsApp is indulging in anti-user practices: govt.

'Obtaining trick consent from users for updated privacy norm'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Centre has informed the Delhi High Court that WhatsApp, the instant messaging app, was indulging in "anti-user practices" by obtaining "trick consent" from the users for its updated privacy policy.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, in an affidavit filed before the court, stated that WhatsApp was "bombarding" million of its existing users who have not accepted the updated 2021 privacy policy, with notifications on a daily basis.

'Give a direction'

The Ministry has urged the court to give a direction to WhatsApp to "desist from any action of 'pushing notifications' to existing users related to updated 2021 privacy policy".

"The current notifications as being pushed by the Respondent No. 2 [WhatsApp] to its users whether existing or new is against the very

Stand at HRC on Palestine not new: India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's latest abstention on a Palestine-related resolution at the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations is not a "new" stand, said Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi.

The official response came days after Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki wrote a strong letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, observing that India's action "stifled" human rights of "all people".

"Palestine has written similar letters to all the countries that abstained during the UN Human Rights Council vote. The position that we took is not a new position," said Mr. Bagchi, substantiating the Indian decision to abstain during the resolution, aimed at enforcing international humanitarian law in the Palestinian territories and in Israel.

The resolution was supported by 24 members of the HRC. Nine members voted against it and 14, including India, abstained. Passing of the resolution led to the establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry to Investigate Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel.

Govt. advised the split in MGNREGA wage benefit

'It is to assess Budget benefits for SC/STs'

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The decision to split the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wage payments by caste categories was done on the advice of the Union Finance Ministry in order to assess and highlight the benefits flowing from budgetary outlay towards Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), Rural Development Secretary N.N. Sinha told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

He said this should not cause any delay in wage payments or any changes for beneficiaries if processes were put in place correctly, and added that there was no plan to focus MGNREGA only on districts with high SC and ST populations.

Separate categories

On Wednesday, *The Hindu* had reported on a March 2 advisory of the Rural Development Ministry, which directed States to divide wage payments into separate categories for SCs, STs and others from this financial year. Workers' advocates feared this move would cause unnecessary delays and complications in the payment system, and worried that it could lead to a reduction in scheme funding.

"The rationale was very



The move should not cause any delay in wage payments, an official said. *K.R. DEEPAK

simple. It is not as if the payments made to SC and ST are not reported on the NREGA website, but overall, in terms of the budgetary outlay, people don't have that intricate information about how much benefit is flowing from the Budget to the SC and ST [communities]," said Mr. Sinha.

"When people take an assessment merely on the Budget head under which the programme is budgeted, then they miss out this intricate nuance. So, the Finance Ministry advised that we should make Budget provisions under SC and ST components as well," he said, adding that the measure was to a large extent aimed at highlighting what the Centre was doing for the SC and ST communities.

The Secretary said there was no need to worry about the changes.

IN BRIEF



Christian Michel's team seeks U.K. intervention

NEW DELHI
The lawyers of AgustaWestland case accused, Christian Michel, have urged the U.K. government to take up the issue of his release from judicial custody with the Indian government. He is currently lodged in Tihar Jail. They will petition the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which had in February ruled that Mr. Michel's detention since 2018 was arbitrary.

'Lightning killed 18 elephants in Assam'

GUWAHATI
A strong negative lightning flash with a peak current of 39,000 amperes at 9.28 p.m. killed the 18 elephants at the Kandali Proposed Reserve Forest in Nagaon district, central Assam, on May 13, an autopsy report has concluded. Making the report public on Thursday, Assam Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya ruled out any foul play such as a conscious attempt of electrocution.

'SC reiterated our stand on vaccine scarcity, price'

Govt. ignored our suggestions: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday welcomed the Supreme Court's observation that the Narendra Modi government's vaccination policy was "arbitrary and irrational" and claimed that the top court's order reiterated its position on vaccine shortage, price neutrality and

uniformity of distribution.

Addressing a virtual press conference, party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi, pointed out that several leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and party chief Sonia Gandhi, gave valuable suggestions, but the government always responded with "taunts and scorn".

187 eminent personalities write letter panning govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a scathing criticism of the Narendra Modi government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, 187 eminent personalities, including academics, activists, authors, film-makers and professionals, accused the government of renegeing on its moral and constitu-

tional responsibilities in an open letter.

The signatories include Aruna Roy, Kaushik Basu, Romila Thapar, Harsh Mander, Rajmohan Gandhi, Wilson Bezawada and Prabhat Patnaik. The signatories demanded that the government support the civil society, which had stepped up during the pandemic.

Webinar to be held for students

Topic will be the role of technology in agriculture courses

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

A webinar on 'Role of Technology in Agriculture Courses' will be held on June 6 at 11 a.m. as part of the SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021 series.

The webinar series, organised by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) in association with The Hindu Group, spotlights science, engineering, technology, law, humanities, medical health sciences and agriculture courses and



their relevance to the 2020s workplace. Dr. Subrat Panda, Chief Technology Officer, AgNext Technologies; Dr. M. Chinnadurai, Dean, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, SRMIST; and Dr. M. Sanjeevchandhi, Assistant Professor (Environmental Sciences), SRM College of

Agricultural Sciences, SRMIST, will speak as a part of the webinar. The discussion will be moderated by Deepa H. Ramakrishnan, Senior Assistant Editor, *The Hindu*. To register for the free webinar, visit <http://bit.ly/SRMTH13> or scan the following QR Code.



'Teachers Eligibility Test valid for life'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Teachers Eligibility Test certification will be valid for a lifetime, for all those who have achieved the qualification, the Centre said on Thursday.



APPEAL

2 years old Vairava needs your support in bringing a lasting change and a new life. He suffers from Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis and requires Rs. 3,00,000/- towards Chemotherapy at Meeanakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai. Donations sent by Ch.D.D. favouring Meeanakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai will be acknowledged. The donations sent through Ch/DD/D/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c. No. 6018201068310, IFSC No: CNRB0160181) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under 80G IT. Please give your e-mail ID. All Correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. GF 1, Corrdel Apartments, O.No. 13, N.No. 29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai-600005. Ph: 044-42137401 / 28233247/38978027. Email ID: womenswelfarefund@gmail.com. Website: www.womenswelfarefund.org. WWS

Amarinder adds three AAP leaders to his camp

Move comes amid growing infighting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI

In a sign of factionalism within the Punjab Congress intensifying, Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, before leaving for Delhi on Thursday, made two rebel Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs, along with the former Leader of the Opposition Sukhpal Khaira, join the Congress.

The move – right in the middle of an exercise to quell dissidence in Punjab and ahead of the Chief Minister's meeting with a three-member panel of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) – is being seen as assertion of authority by Captain Singh. His detractors have been pressing for a leadership change ahead of next year's Assembly election. While former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu had met the AICC panel on Tuesday, former heads of Punjab Congress, Partap Singh Baj-

wa and Shamsher Singh Dullo, are among those seeking a leadership change.

Amid the power tussle, Captain Singh roped in AAP rebel MLAs Jagdev Singh Kamalu and Pirmal Singh Dhaura to his camp.

“By inducting Mr. Khaira without waiting for the AICC nod, Captain Singh has signalled the high command. If they are thinking of a change of guard, they will also have to weigh in the possibility of a split,” said a loyalist of the Chief Minister.

But the party played down the reports of factionalism. “The ongoing Punjab discussion is not a crisis management exercise but an election preparation exercise where suggestions are being taken to ensure the Congress' victory in 2022 and youth workers should get maximum opportunity,” said AICC spokesperson Jaivergill after the panel meet.

Submit assessment criteria: SC

Court tells Boards to spell out evaluation plan for Class XII students in two weeks

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it was happy that the government chose to cancel the Class XII Board exams and gave the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) two weeks to place on record the objective criteria by which they intend to assess the performance of the students.

“We are happy you have decided in principle to cancel the exam... but what are the objective standards [for assessment]... That is not spelt out here in this letter,” Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, the lead judge on the Bench, asked Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal, who was appearing for the Centre.

Mr. Venugopal said the process for fixing the criteria may take a “little time” and asked the court to dispose of the petition filed by an advo-



Big relief: Both CBSE and CISCE cancelled the Class XII Board exams in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. ■ FILE PHOTO

cate, Mamta Sharma. The prayer made in the petition had been fulfilled with the cancellation of the exams.

Justice Khanwilkar, however, said the petitioners would want to address the court once the government placed on record the assessment standards. “Both sides may have issues concerning the objective criteria...”

“Any issue, let them file an application,” Mr. Venugopal replied. Justice Khanwilkar said the court would prefer to keep the petition pending till the objective criteria were also scrutinised. Initial-

ly, the government suggested filing the standards in four weeks, but the court insisted on two weeks.

“The students have apprehensions ... Many students want to go outside for further education. This requires an urgent decision. Let the persons concerned interact on a day-to-day basis,” said Justice Khanwilkar said.

Justice Dinesh Maheshwari, the other judge on the Bench, also asked why the government needed even two weeks, as objective criteria for assessment had been notified last year too

when the Board exams were similarly cancelled due to the pandemic.

The CISCE, represented by advocate J.K. Das, urged the court to give more time, at least three weeks, to prepare the criteria for assessment. “If you want to do it [finalise the objective criteria], you can do it overnight ... Everything can now be done on video conferencing ... Don't bargain for time like this ... Do not force us to pass directions. Do it on your own.” Justice Khanwilkar told Mr. Das.

Ms. Sharma also raised the case of exams of Class XII students under the State Boards. She said the decision on the exams should be “uniform” across all Boards. “Let the CBSE/ICSE problem get over ... You had only asked for CBSE/ICSE Class XII exams ... Now do not ask for the heavens,” said Justice Khanwilkar. The court adjourned the case by two weeks.

PM Modi interacts with Class XII students

Use time productively, he tells them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

In a surprise interaction with Class XII students and their parents on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the children to utilise their time in a productive and creative manner following the cancellation of their exams, and said they should never feel stressed about any examination.

Joining the online interaction organised by the Education Ministry, Mr. Modi asked them how they felt following the cancellation of the Board exams in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and what they were planning to do now.

The Prime Minister asked the students whether they would watch IPL, Champion's League, or wait for the Olympics. He said they should always remember the mantra “health is



Narendra Modi

wealth” and asked them what they did to remain physically fit.

Several students told Mr. Modi that the announcement about the cancellation brought them relief and ended a long spell of uncertainty. Mr. Modi told them that the decision to cancel exams was taken in their interest. Some parents said students could now focus on their college admissions.

The government decided on Tuesday to cancel the CBSE Class 12 Board exams amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Mr. Modi.

Opposition parties likely to meet soon to evolve strategy

The last meeting was in May 2020, when 22 parties met

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

With the friction between some States and the Centre on the rise, the Opposition parties are likely to hold a joint meeting soon to chalk out a strategy. The last such meeting was in May 2020, when 22 parties met virtually, 50 days into the lockdown.

Talks are on but so far no date has been picked. In the last few days, four Chief Ministers – Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan, Jharkhand's Hemant Soren, Odisha's Naveen Patnaik and Andhra Pradesh's Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy – have demanded rationalisation of the vaccine policy, calling for centralisation of the procurement and universally free vaccines.

Mr. Reddy on Thursday wrote to all his counterparts saying the situation has transformed into “Centre vs State”.

“It is my request that as Chief Ministers, we speak in a single voice and urge the government of India to take charge and responsibility of the vaccination drive, the way it was happening in the early part of the year,” he wrote.

The Supreme Court's observations on Wednesday,



Mamata Banerjee is locked in a tussle with the Centre over Alapan Bandyopadhyay.

calling the Centre's paid COVID-19 vaccination policy for the 18-44 age group “arbitrary” and “irrational”, has added ammunition to the Opposition efforts to corner the Union government.

On a separate front, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is engaged in a head-on confrontation with the Centre over its decision to attach former State Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay. In a four-page letter to the Prime Minister, she wrote: “I sincerely hope that you do not want to damage the federal amity.” Her office made it a point to send a copy of the letter to all the Opposition leaders.

Congress Chief Ministers of Rajasthan and Chhattis-

garh, Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel respectively, are protesting against the non-inclusion of the Congress-ruled States in the eight-member Group of Ministers (GoM) to discuss the GST waiver on materials to fight the pandemic.

A senior Opposition leader said, “There are enough issues that need a joint deliberation and action. Senior leaders from all sides are in constant touch. For now, we are waiting for the report of the GoM on GST. We will take a call on when to meet once the report is submitted.”

Though both Mr. Patnaik and Mr. Reddy have questioned the Centre's vaccination policy, it remains to be seen if they will join hands with the rest of the Opposition. Both of them have maintained distance from the Opposition and have often found themselves on the same side as the ruling BJP.

It's also a moot question whether Telangana and Delhi Chief Minister, K. Chandrashekar Rao and Arvind Kejriwal, will join such an effort. Sources said some efforts have been made to reach out to them, but so far, there has been no clear response from them.

BJP treads with caution in U.P.

Ahead of the election next year, B.L. Santhosh does a stocktaking exercise

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

BJP general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh's visit to Lucknow over the last couple of days was a stock-taking exercise by the party in the State where the Assembly election will be held next year. While his meetings with party leaders and Ministers in the Yogi Adityanath government set off speculation about large-scale changes, the word from the central leadership is that for now, it will be more or less status quo.

The government has been buffeted by allegations of mishandling of the second wave of COVID-19. Four BJP MLAs and at least one Union Minister (Santosh Gangwar) have written to the Chief Minister on the “unsatisfactory” handling of the second wave. On Wednesday, however, as he wound up his meetings, Mr. Santhosh expressed satisfaction over the government's work. “In five weeks, @myogiadityanath's Uttar Pradesh reduced the new daily case count by 93%. Remember it's a state with 20+ crore population. When municipality CMs (chief ministers) could not manage a city of 1.5 crore population, Yogiji managed quite effectively,” he said on Twitter. He also lauded the government's decision to prioritise



On the ground: Yogi Adityanath inspecting a temporary COVID-19 hospital in Varanasi on May 9. ■ PTI

vaccination for those with children below the age of 12.

No large-scale rejig
Central leaders also confirmed to *The Hindu* that no large-scale rejig is to be expected at this point, with elections just a few months away. “As far as Cabinet expansion goes, that will be as per the wishes of the Chief Minister with some inputs by us,” said a source.

NEWS ANALYSIS

This show of confidence, however, say party leaders, should not be mistaken for complacency with regard to the devastation caused by COVID-19, as also the erosion of political support on the ground. A top leader said the party's on-ground absence in the midst of the second wave had cost it dearly and the only way out to recoup

any of that was to work harder on visibility on the ground.

“The second wave came as a tidal wave, and governments, along with people, were scrambling to deal with it. Currently, emotions are high. *Iss vatavaran main samvaad nahin ho sakta, log chidchida jayenge* [we cannot open a dialogue with people in this environment, people will only get more upset with us]. Instead of explaining what happened, we must do our utmost to provide support,” said the leader as the BJP announced its “Seva hi Sangathan” programme.

The party has been asked to assist the government's efforts to maximise vaccination, especially in rural areas, where both vaccine hesitancy and resources are major problems.

However, how all this will square up with already triumphal announcements that the second wave has more or less abated in the State is yet to be seen. Mr. Santhosh, along with the national “prabhari” for U.P., Radha Mohan Singh, asked the State unit to “stay united”. Several Ministers, who also met the two men from Delhi, said the government relied more on bureaucrats than political and Cabinet colleagues, leading to over-centralisation of COVID-19 management and a tone-deafness in the administration's response. Mr. Santhosh raised this issue with Mr. Adityanath when the two met. There have been assurances of accommodation on both sides.

While the resentment among the people over the handling of COVID-19 is a new issue, the cleavages in the State unit in terms of factionalism are old. That, and a vocal section of Brahmin leadership speaking up against what is perceived as a “Thakur”-oriented bias by Mr. Adityanath, are questions that haven't been addressed by this visit. The State election is being seen by many as a semi-final to the 2024 general election and Mr. Santhosh's visit and his utterances lauding the government show that the strategy remains to make haste, but slowly.

Alapan Bandyopadhyay responds to notice

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Former West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay on Thursday responded to the show cause notice issued by the Centre to him. Mr. Bandyopadhyay, who is working as the Chief Adviser to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, was served a notice by the Centre under the Disaster Management Act on May 31.

Sources said Mr. Bandyopadhyay stated in his reply that he did not violate any provisions of the Act and acted as per the instructions of Ms. Banerjee.

He said he had taken leave of the Prime Minister before proceeding with Ms. Banerjee to visit cyclone-affected areas on May 28. A row had erupted over their absence from a review meeting on Cyclone Yaas.

Can't lower guard in J&K, says Naravane

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Chief of the Army Staff General M.M. Naravane on Thursday said there was no room to lower guard given the mistrust with Pakistan, and any troop reduction in Jammu & Kashmir was subject to improvement in the ground situation.

“There can be no room to drop guard as far as security is concerned. There have been decades of mistrust with Pakistan. If ceasefire violations continue, we are alert. We cannot in any way reduce alert and preparedness [in J&K],” Gen. Naravane said during an interaction with selected TV channels in Srinagar. The Army Chief, who met top Army brass here to review the security, said any troop reduction in J&K “would depend on the ground situation and threat perception.”

The situation had shown improvement in Kashmir, he said, adding that the onus was also on Pakistan to reduce their activities. “For peace in the Valley, the onus lies on the militant groups and sympathisers. We are doing all possible things for peace.”

Norms for employing retired officials defined

Fresh rules require vigilance clearance

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has laid down a defined procedure to be followed by government organisations for getting vigilance clearance before employing a retired official on a contractual or consultancy basis.

In a letter to the Secretaries of all the Union Ministries and departments, chief executives and chief vigilance officers of public sector undertakings, the CVC said the absence of a uniform procedure sometimes led to a situation where officials with tainted past or cases pending against them were engaged.

According to the procedure, before offering employment to retired All India Services and Group A officers of the Central government or their equivalent in other organisations owned or controlled by the Centre, the vigilance clearance from the employer organisation, from which the officer has retired, should be obtained. In case a retired officer served in more than one organisation, clearance has to be obtained from all of them

where the person was posted in the 10 years prior to retirement.

Simultaneously, a communication seeking clearance should also be sent to the CVC.

If no reply is received from the erstwhile employer (s) within 15 days of sending the communication by speed post, a reminder can be sent.

If there is no response within 21 days, vigilance clearance should be deemed to have been given. Later, if the employee is found involved in any vigilance-related matter or not cleared from the vigilance point of view, the erstwhile employer organisation would be responsible for all consequential actions.

Cooling-off period

In the case of retired officials taking up full-time or contractual assignments in the private sector, the Commission said often, the “cooling off” period was not observed and the act constituted serious misconduct. It directed all government organisations to formulate rules to ensure the cooling-off period was observed.

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सिक्कतपुरम / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695022
(फोन नं. / Ph. No: 0471- 2564568 / 2564537)

निविदा की अवधि बढ़ाना / EXTENSION OF TENDER

कार्य का शीर्षक/Title of work:
70 एकड़, वीएसएससी, तुंबा में सीएसएसजी का सामग्री भंडारण सुविधा के लिए मवन (पीईबी) का निर्माण (सिविल तथा पीएच कार्य) / Construction of Building (PEB) for Material Storage Facility of CASG at 70 Acre, VSSC, Thumba (Civil & PH works)
ई-निविदा सूचना सं./E-Tender Notice No.
NIT No. VSSC/CMG/CIVIL/02/2021-22 Dt. 23.04.2021

निविदा दस्तावेज डाउनलोड करने हेतु अंतिम तिथि Last date for downloading the tender document	दिनांक 21.06.2021 तक बढ़ाया गया / Extended upto 21.06.2021
निविदाएं प्राप्त करने हेतु नियत तिथि Due date for receipt of tenders	दिनांक 24.06.2021 तक बढ़ाया गया / Extended upto 24.06.2021

योग्यता मानदंड तथा अन्य ब्यौसों को पाने के लिए इच्छुक निविदाकार ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करते हुए विस्तृत सूचना (ई-एनआइटी) का अवलोकन करें, जिस www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। / Interested tenderers may please refer detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (E-NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, which can be down loaded from website www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO.

ग्रुप निदेशक, सीएसएससी, वीएसएससी / Group Director, CMG, VSSC

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PHED, PROJECT CIRCLE, JAIPUR, SECTOR 26, NEAR AYUSH BHAWAN, PRATAP NAGAR, JAIPUR
Email: sectuprojectjaipur@yahoo.in

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 and 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 NIS exhibited on web site www.dpr.rajasthan.gov.in, <http://sppp.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 Cost
03/2021-22	Bid for the Retrofitting Works including Construction of Local sources for Conjunctive use, new OHSRs, connecting these OHSRs with existing Rising Mains, Pipeline from OHSRs to VTCs, Pipeline network inside the village, Providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) including Geo tagging and O & M work (upto VTC), to be carried out under Jai Jeevan Mission (JJM) for Baisalpur-Chaksu Water Supply Project (Package-I)	Rs. 88.74 Crores

Important Dates :-

S.No.	Events	Date & Time	Website / Location
1	Date & time for downloading of bid document.	From 31.05.2021 at 10.00 AM to 30.06.2021 upto 06.00 PM	http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in
2	Date & time for online submission of bid document	From 17.06.2021, 10.00 AM to 30.06.2021 upto to 6.00 PM	http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in
3	Date & Time for opening of Technical bid	01.07.2021 at 03.00 PM	In the office of Superintending Engineer, PHED, Project Circle, Jaipur
4	Opening of Price bid	Will be intimated after decision of Technical Bid	In the office of Superintending Engineer, PHED, Project Circle, Jaipur

(Bharat Lal Meena)
Superintending Engineer
PHED, Project Circle, Jaipur

UNB No-PHE2122WLB02877
DIPRC/5140

Strong policies on black carbon can sharply cut glacier melt: World Bank study

Regional collaboration is one way to address the question, suggests report

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN CHENNAI

Black carbon (BC) deposits produced by human activity which accelerate the pace of glacier and snow melt in the Himalayan region can be sharply reduced through new, currently feasible policies by an additional 50% from current levels, a study by World Bank (WB) specialists has said.

The research covers the Himalaya, Karakoram and

Hindu Kush (HKHK) mountain ranges, where, the report says, glaciers are melting faster than the global average ice mass. The rate of retreat of HKHK glaciers is estimated to be 0.3 metres per year in the west to 1.0 metre per year in the east. BC adds to the impact of climate change. Full implementation of current policies to mitigate BC can achieve a 23% reduction but enacting new poli-



Glacial melt can lead to flash floods and soil erosion.

cies and incorporating them through regional cooperation among countries can achieve enhanced benefits, the WB said in the report titled "Glaciers of the Himalayas, Climate Change, Black Carbon and Regional Resilience" released on Thursday.

"BC is a short-lived pollutant that is the second-largest contributor to warming the planet behind carbon dioxide (CO₂). Unlike other greenhouse gas emissions, BC is quickly washed out and can be eliminated from the atmosphere if emissions stop," the publication says.

Unlike historical carbon emissions, it is also a localised source with greater local impact. Some of the ongoing policy measures to cut BC emissions are enhancing fuel efficiency standards for

vehicles, phasing out diesel vehicles and promoting electric vehicles, accelerating the use of liquefied petroleum gas for cooking and through clean cookstove programmes, as well as upgrading brick kiln technologies, says the publication, edited by Muthukumar Mani, lead economist, South Asia Region, World Bank. However, with all existing measures, water from glacier melt is still projected to increase in absolute volume by 2040, with impacts on downstream activities and communities.

At a virtual panel discussion on the release of the report, Hartwig Schafer, vice-president, South Asia Region, World Bank Group, said regional integration and collaboration was one way to address the question of melting glaciers. Glacier melt produces flash floods, landslides, soil erosion, and glacial lake outburst floods.

Air temperature

Deposits of BC act in two ways hastening the pace of glacier melt: by decreasing surface reflectance of sunlight and by raising air temperature, the researchers point out.

"Specifically, in the Himalayas, reducing black carbon emissions from cookstoves, diesel engines, and open burning would have the greatest impact and could significantly reduce radiative forcing and help to maintain a greater portion of Himalayan glacier systems. More detailed modelling at a higher spatial resolution is needed to expand on the work already completed," says the study, calling upon regional governments to review policies on water management, with an emphasis on basin-based regulation and use of price sig-

nals for efficiency, careful planning and use of hydropower to reflect changes in water flows and availability, and increasing the efficiency of brick kilns through proven technologies. There must also be greater knowledge sharing in the region.

The WB publication says "Industry [primarily brick kilns] and residential burning of solid fuel together account for 45-66% of regional anthropogenic [man-made] BC deposition, followed by on-road diesel fuels (7-18%) and open burning (less than 3% in all seasons)" in the region.

IN BRIEF



3 Bhima Koregaon case accused test positive

MUMBAI

Mahesh Raut, Sagar Gorkhe and Ramesh Gaichor, accused in the Bhima Koregaon case, have tested positive for COVID-19 after an RT-PCR drive was conducted at Taloja Central Jail. Co-accused Vernon Gonsalves, Sudhir Dhawale, Surendra Gadling, Arun Ferreira, Anand Teltumbde, Rona Wilson and Gautam Navlakha have also tested negative.

MyLab rolls out 10 lakh self-test kits for COVID

NEW DELHI

MyLab Discovery Solutions on Thursday said that it is rolling out 10 lakh self-test kits for COVID-19 and based on consumer demand, it will make 70 lakh units available per week. The indigenous test kit will be available over-the-counter at pharmacies and online through Flipkart. It costs ₹250 per kit. PTI

Restaurants to open for 3 hrs in West Bengal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday allowed restaurants in the State to operate with limited capacity from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. after fully vaccinating its staffers and maintaining COVID-19 protocol.

Ms. Banerjee held a meeting of different chambers of commerce who sought her permission to open restaurants.

The Chief Minister, however, refused permission to allow malls and shopping complexes in the city to open and said a decision on the request would be taken after June 16.

Centre orders 30 crore doses from Biological E

Advance of ₹1,500 crore given for made-in-India vaccine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has finalised arrangements with Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer Biological E to reserve 30 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Ministry said these doses would be manufactured and stockpiled by the company from August to December. For this purpose, it would make an advance payment of ₹1,500 crore.

The RBD protein sub-unit vaccine, now undergoing Phase-3 clinical trial, is likely to be available in a few months.

"The proposal of M/s Biological E was examined and recommended for approval after due diligence by the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC)," the Ministry said.



Indigenous job: Biological E has received support for research from the Centre. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The arrangement with the company was a part of the wider endeavour of the government to encourage indigenous vaccine makers by providing them support in research and development and financial aid.

The vaccine candidate has been supported by the government from the pre-

clinical stage to the Phase-3 studies. The Department of Biotechnology has provided grant-in-aid of over ₹100 crore and partnered with the firm to conduct all animal and assay studies through the research institute, Translational Health Science Technology Institute in Faridabad.

Maharashtra to lift curbs cautiously

Districts will be divided into five levels based on positivity rate, bed occupancy

STAFF REPORTER MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Thursday said that it has finalised a plan to unlock the State by dividing its districts into five levels based on the coronavirus test positivity rate (TPR) and occupancy of oxygen beds. The local administration will be submitting reports based on this to the State headquarters, following which directions on lifting restrictions and unlocking will be announced.

The announcement comes amid confusion after the State's Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Vijay Vaidetiwari held a press conference declaring 18 districts with a test positivity rate of less than 5% and oxygen bed occupancy of less than 25% to undergo a complete unlock.

The Chief Minister's Office, however, intervened and issued a clarification saying no restrictions had been lifted. "The proposal for the



Safety protocol: Maharashtra will continue sample testing widely. •EMMANUAL YOGINI

same is being considered. We will be taking complete information from the district headquarters and local administrations. Only based on that final decision will be taken," said the clarification.

Mr. Vaidetiwari, who had left Mumbai for Nagpur after his press conference, said after reaching his destination that he had forgotten to

mention there had been an "in principle approval" to the proposal and the Chief Minister would take the final decision.

As per the proposal, Level 5 regions were in the red zone. Level 1 includes areas with less than 5% positivity rate and less than 25% oxygen bed occupancy and Level 2 can have TPR below 5%

and oxygen bed occupancy from 25-40%.

For Level 3, the TPR could be from 5-10% and oxygen bed occupancy 40-60%.

The TPR could be between 10-20% for Level 4 with, oxygen bed occupancy at 60-75%. Level 5 will be the areas that have TPR over 20% and oxygen bed occupancy over 75%.

Serum Institute too seeks indemnity from liability

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT PUNE

With the Central government favourably considering the grant of indemnity against legal proceedings to foreign vaccine-makers Pfizer and Moderna prior to their rollout in India, the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) had also sought indemnity from liability, expressing the hope that rules would be the same for everyone, said sources on Thursday.

The Adar Poonawalla-led SII, which manufactures Covishield (Indian name for the AstraZeneca-Oxford jab), had conveyed to the Centre that all vaccine makers, whether Indian or foreign, ought to be granted

the same protection (against the cost of compensation in the event of severe side-effects), the company sources said. Besides Covishield and Novovax's Covovax, the SII has also applied to the Drug Controller General of India to manufacture Sputnik V. Sputnik V is currently being manufactured by Dr Reddy's Laboratories.

According to reports, the Centre is considering granting indemnity to vaccine manufacturing companies if they applied for the Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA). Till date, no Indian vaccine company has ever paid indemnity and neither has the Union government, the biggest vaccine user, done so.

1.26 lakh fresh cases and 2,599 deaths registered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

India recorded 1,26,528 new COVID-19 cases and 2,599 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Thursday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,85,67,607 cases and 3,40,613 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 24,405 new infections, followed by Kerala (18,853) and Karnataka (18,324). Maharashtra recorded 643 new casualties on the day, followed by Karnataka (514) and Tamil Nadu (460). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include

cases and deaths from Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

21.59 lakh tests

Around 21.59 lakh samples were tested in the country on Wednesday (the results for which were made available on Thursday). India's average daily test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) continues to decline. It was 6.4% on June 2 compared to 10.9% recorded a week before.

About 24.97 lakh vaccine doses were administered in

the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Thursday, which is 3,000 doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. Also, it is 5 lakh lesser doses than what was recorded during the same period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country stood at 26.21 lakh on June 2, which is more than the 21.83 lakh recorded on May 2.

While the seven-day rolling average of daily recorded COVID-19 cases in India continues to decrease, it is still registering the highest number of new cases in the world. Brazil (63,626) and Argentina (32,860) follow.

Delhi High Court issues summons to Ramdev

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday issued summons to yoga guru Ramdev on a plea accusing him of making statements against allopathic medicines and claiming Patanjali's Coronil kit is a cure for COVID-19. The yoga exponent has been asked to give his response within three weeks.

Justice C. Hari Shankar was of the view that the statements made by Mr. Ramdev was his "opinion", which falls under the right to freedom of expression under the Constitution. "I don't think your allopathic profession is so fragile... I think it comes within Article 19(1)(a)," he said.

The court's remarks came while hearing a suit filed by the Delhi Medical Association (DMA) against Mr. Ramdev's statement.

It said, "There are institutions in place to check the false medical claims or magical remedies. There is a protocol in place. So you cannot say here is matter for the court to interfere. First of all I, or this court, is no one to say whether Coronil is a good or bad medicine. Whether allopathic treatment or ayurvedic treatment is better, I don't know. These are matters which needs experts".

Senior advocate Rajiv Nayar, for Mr. Ramdev, has raised objection on the maintainability of the plea.

THE CROSSWORD + 13265

Locked up at home, feeling down? Lock your answers down pat online! @ <https://qr.go.page.link/jjpTn>

- ACROSS
- 1 Stayed with drummer's last beat (6)
- 4 Runs away to the west, with money secured (8)
- 10 Country locked between plateaus triangulary (7)
- 11 Stable feeder system recruits a supervisor (7)
- 12 Skip while maintaining standard time interval (8)
- 13 Overt rookie's trespassing of covert area (6)
- 15 Decay around centre of tooth's base (4)
- 17 Exclusion of some tribes - basically, bigotry! (9)
- 20 Nice to be rid of incompetent leader after ten years resulting in social decay (9)
- 21 30% of land on earth is towards the west, within America's borders (4)
- 24 Sharpens edge of bolt that's blunt (6)
- 25 Water infused with two vitamins taken everyday at the start is sufficient (8)
- 28 Animals, over a long period of time, becoming winged creatures (7)
- 29 Now and then, clues by Spinner certainly provided entertainment! (7)
- 30 Elevation, with second in line moving to the top, gives breathing space (8)
- 31 Swear at trial (6)
- DOWN
- 1 DNA strand altered, erasing a bit of narcissistic quality (8)
- 2 Flowers planted in upturned vases organically (5)
- 3 Clear soup with chunk of enriched grains (6)
- 5 Cat's drums (4)
- 6 Declare a new lockdown at the end to recover, after starting late (8)
- 7 Boxes first on table among dogs with a wrinkled face (9)
- 8 Scandal envelops Election Commission's order (6)
- 9 Basically, coronavirus curve runs its course in leader's absence, resulting in dead bodies! (9)
- 14 Ice-cold or otherwise, one's emotion is considered insincere (9)
- 16 Instant deliveries before late hours (9)
- 18 Plant manufactured soft coat (8)
- 19 Beats men regularly in cellar (8)
- 22 Place perhaps in which church ultimately sits? (6)
- 23 Impudent person finally faces whip (6)
- 26 "Please apply after a minute!" (5)
- 27 Cashed in on currency consuming energy (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13264

P	A	S	S	E	U	L	F	O	R	S	A	K	E
U	E	N	T	I	X	I	L	E	L	L	O		
R	E	N	T	A	L	S	E	S	T	I	V	A	L
A	C	T	E	R	E	R	E	I					
N	E	E	M	T	R	E	E	S	A	B	O	U	T
I	A	N	I	L	I	L	H						
C	A	N	D	I	S	E	V	E	N	T	I	E	S
D	A	V	Y	J	O	N	E	S	D	R	E	S	S
E	L	I	U	C	O	N	S	E	R	E	R	I	
N	A	Z	I	R	P	R	O	S	E	C	U	T	E
T	A	V	A	S	M	D	U						
I	S	R	A	E	L	I	N	B	U	I	L	I	
S	D	E	L	S	T	E	I	T	H				
T	E	S	T	A	T	E	Y	O	R	K	E	R	S

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Unchanging One

Kooratazhvan, in his Varadaraja Stavam, extols Lord Varadaraja's qualities using words that remind us of Upanishadic descriptions. This is to show that Varadaraja is the Supreme One, said Valayapet Ramachariar in a discourse. One of the words he uses is niraabaadham. This means He is changeless. Non-sentient (acetana) things change by appearance and by character. When milk changes to curd, the taste and thickness change.

What about cetana (sentient beings)? The atma may take different births. But it does not change in size. It may be born as a human being in one janma and as an elephant in another. It does not increase in size to match the size of the elephant. If born as a human being, the atma has dharmabhutajnana (attributive consciousness), and is able to talk, to sing, to write etc. If it is born as an animal, it cannot do these things. So, while its appearance or size does not change, there is a change in the degree of jnana it has. But the appearance or qualities of the Supreme One never change.

For every action, three karanas are needed - upadana, sahakari and nimitta. The mud used to make a pot is upadana karana. The potter's wheel etc become the sahakari karana. The potter is the nimitta karana. To get a pot you need all three. As for the Universe, the Lord is the upadana karana (the One from whom it came) and the nimitta karana (the One who made it). But in the case of the mud pot, the upadana karana, namely the mud, changes form to become a pot. How then can we say the Lord is upadana karana, and also claim He is changeless? One may wear a blue shirt in the morning and a different shirt in the evening. Does this mean the person changes? He remains the same. Likewise, Paramatma's svarupa never changes.

Israel coalition reaches deal to form govt.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid says his group has enough numbers, seeks quick vote in Knesset

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEL AVIV

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's opponents pushed on Thursday for a quick Parliament vote to formally end his lengthy rule, hoping to head off any last-minute attempts to derail their newly announced coalition government.



Numbers game: (Left to right) Yair Lapid, Naftali Bennett and Mansour Abbas in Ramat Gan on Wednesday. • REUTERS

The latest political manoeuvring began just hours after opposition leader Yair Lapid and his main coalition partner, Naftali Bennett, declared they had reached a deal to form a new government and muster a majority in the 120-member Knesset, or Parliament.

The coalition consists of eight parties from across the political spectrum with little in common except the

shared goal of toppling Mr. Netanyahu after a record-setting 12 years in power.

The alliance includes hardliners previously allied with Mr. Netanyahu, as well as centre-left parties and even an Arab faction — a first in Is-

raeli politics.

Mr. Netanyahu lashed out at his foes on Thursday, signalling that he will continue to exert pressure on former allies who joined the coalition.

"All members of Knesset who were elected with

right-wing votes need to oppose this dangerous leftist government," he wrote on Twitter.

The drama riveted Israelis at a time when tumult has not been in short supply: four inconclusive elections in two years followed by an 11-day war in the Gaza Strip last month that was accompanied by mob violence between Jews and Arabs in cities across the country. The country also is emerging from the coronavirus crisis that caused deep economic damage and exposed tensions between the secular majority and the ultra-Orthodox minority.

Yet the political debate has focused squarely on Mr. Netanyahu, who is facing corruption charges — and

whether he should stay or go. The anti-Netanyahu bloc announced the coalition deal just before a deadline at midnight Wednesday. The agreement triggered a complex process that is likely to stretch over the next week.

The coalition has a razor-thin majority of 61 votes in Parliament. Now the question is whether the group's votes will hold together in order to name a new Parliament Speaker, who would then preside over a vote required to confirm the new government.

If the group can't manage that, the current Speaker, who is a Netanyahu ally, could use his position to delay the vote and give Mr. Netanyahu more time to sabotage the coalition.

What's next for Benjamin Netanyahu?

Eight parties have come together to form a coalition that could oust Israel's longest serving PM

STANLEY JOHNY

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest serving Prime Minister, may finally be on his way-out. Eight political parties, from the rightwing Yamina to the Arab-majority Ra'am (United Arab List), have come together to form a new coalition, which, if proves majority in the Knesset, could oust Mr. Netanyahu, who has been in power since 2009.

Why a new coalition?

Israel saw four national elections in the past two years. In all these elections, no party won a majority on its own. After the March 2020 polls, Mr. Netanyahu's rightwing Likud party joined hands with Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White to form a unity government. But the coalition did not last long.

In December, the government collapsed after the Knesset failed to pass the annual budget. In the March 2021 election, the voters gave another split verdict. Likud emerged as the biggest party with 30 seats out of the 120-member Knesset, but failed to form a coalition with the

support of 61 lawmakers — the majority-mark. After Mr. Netanyahu's failure to form the government, President Reuven Rivlin invited Yair Lapid, leader of Yesh Atid, which is the second largest party in the current Knesset with 17 members, to form the government. It's Mr. Lapid who put together the 'change' coalition.

Who are its members?

In 2020, Mr. Lapid's Yesh Atid fought the elections as part of the Blue and White coalition. But when Blue and White leader Mr. Gantz decided to join Mr. Netanyahu's unity government, Mr. Lapid parted ways. He was the Opposition leader in the previous Knesset.

Now, Mr. Lapid and Mr. Gantz have come together again. Their parties together have 25 MKs (Members of Knesset). Six other parties have also joined them — the rightwing Yamina (7 MKs), centre-right New Hope (6 MKs); centre-left Meretz (6 MKs) and Labour (7 MKs); secular right Yisrael Beiteinu (7 MKs); and Arab Ra'am (4 MKs). The eight-party coalition has 62 MKs among



Benjamin Netanyahu

themselves. But one of Yamina MKs, Amichai Chikli, has already said he would not support the coalition. That has left the coalition with a razor-thin majority of one seat.

What happens next?

According to the coalition agreement, Yamina leader Naftali Bennet, who was earlier with the far-right-religious Jewish Home party, could be the next Prime Minister. Mr. Bennet, a kippa-wearing politician who is opposed to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, could be the first leader forming a government with support from an Arab party in Israel's history.

Mr. Bennet, according to the coalition pact, could remain the Prime Minister for

two years and then Mr. Lapid will get the top job. But the coalition has hardly anything in common but their goal to see Mr. Netanyahu go. So it has to be seen how long the coalition will last.

By signing the unity agreements, Mr. Lapid, the architect of the coalition, has passed the first test. But the next is the most important

EXPLAINER

one — to win the confidence of the Knesset. The current Knesset Speaker is Likud's Yariv Levin. Mr. Lapid has accused him of delaying the vote so that Mr. Netanyahu will have more time to try to persuade rightwing MKs (of Yamina and New Hope) to vote against the Bennet-Lapid government.

One Yamina MK has already revolted against Mr. Bennet's decision. Another one, Nir Orbach, has expressed his doubts about the coalition. If he switches sides, the coalition won't have a majority.

But two members of the Joint List (another Arab platform that has 6 MKs) are un-

decided how to vote. If they vote for the 'change' government, it could sail through despite the rebellion within Yamina.

Uncertainty ahead

For Mr. Netanyahu, the best outcome would be Mr. Bennet failing to prove majority in the Knesset. The country would then move into another round of elections, and he could stay in power until the next government is formed — which could be months away. Being in power would also offer some immunity to Mr. Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption.

If ousted, he could remain the Opposition leader. But Mr. Netanyahu's repeated failures to form a stable government have shaken his hold over Likud.

Out of power, he could face leadership challenges within the party. In 2019, Gideon Saar had unsuccessfully challenged him for Likud's leadership. It may be too early to write Mr. Netanyahu off. But if the 'change' coalition forms a government, Mr. Netanyahu's political future would be thrown into uncertainty.

Sri Lanka braces for oil spill from sinking cargo vessel

It has readied containment booms to tackle a possible leak

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities on Thursday said they were bracing for a possible oil spill, as a fire-damaged cargo vessel was sinking off the island's main port in capital Colombo.



Plastic pellets washed ashore from MV X-Press Pearl. • REUTERS

Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl, carrying chemicals and plastic, has been in news since a fire incident on May 20 and subsequent explosion aboard, following which tonnes of plastic pellet deposits were found deposited along the country's beaches.

The country's Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), which termed

the incident one of Sri Lanka's worst ecological disasters in history, has readied oil spill containment booms, to tackle a possible leak from the vessel that officials said carried 350 tonnes of oil in its fuel tanks.

"There is no oil leak from the ship yet, but arrange-

ments are in place to deal with a possible spill. That is the worst-case scenario," Navy spokesperson Indika de Silva said.

Meanwhile, several coastal villages reported dead fish and other marine organisms by the shore, images of which went viral on social media.

The ship's crew was evacuated last week, while the fire was fully extinguished on Tuesday, by the Sri Lankan Navy, along with experts from a Dutch salvage company and the Indian Coast Guard, after a 13-day battle with the raging flames.

Sri Lanka police are investigating the incident.

Uighur exiles describe 'torture' in Xinjiang

They will testify before U.K. tribunal

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISTANBUL

Three Uighurs who fled from China to Turkey have described forced abortions and torture by Chinese authorities in the far western Xinjiang region, ahead of giving testimony to a people's tribunal in London that is investigating if Beijing's actions against the ethnic Uighurs amount to genocide.

The three witnesses include a woman who said she was forced into an abortion at six and a half months pregnant, a former doctor who spoke of draconian birth control policies, and a former detainee who alleged he was "tortured day and night" by Chinese sol-

diers while he was imprisoned in the remote border region.

They spoke to The Associated Press of their experiences before testifying by video link to the independent U.K. tribunal.

The tribunal, which does not have U.K. government backing, will be chaired by prominent human rights lawyer Geoffrey Nice, who led the prosecution of ex-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and worked with the International Criminal Court. The tribunal's judgment is not binding on any government.

A third exile, Mahmut Tevkkul, said he was imprisoned and tortured in 2010 by Chinese authorities.

Modi, Harris discuss nitty-gritty of U.S. offer on vaccine doses

PM invites her to India after 'normalisation' of situation

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke on the phone with U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris on Wednesday to discuss the U.S. announcement of how it would share the first tranche of 25 million vaccine doses out of the 80 million doses it has committed to sharing by the end of June. It is not yet clear what the specific allocation for India will be.

"Spoke to @VP Kamala Harris a short while ago. I deeply appreciate the assurance of vaccine supplies to India as part of the US Strategy for Global Vaccine Sharing. I also thanked her for the all the support and solidarity from the U.S. government, businesses and Indian diaspora [sic]," Mr. Modi tweeted.

"We also discussed ongoing efforts to further strengthen India-U.S. vaccine cooperation, and the potential of our partnership to contribute to post-COVID global health and economic recovery," the Prime Minister said.

A government readout of the call said Mr. Modi had discussed strengthening the health supply chain, including in vaccine manufacturing. They also discussed the Quad vaccine partnership,



Joe Biden

which aims to manufacture, in India, at least 1 billion vaccine doses (mostly Johnson and Johnson) by the end of 2022, for supply across Asia.

Significantly, Mr. Modi invited Ms. Harris to India, after "the normalisation of the global health situation". Ms. Harris's mother's family is from Tamil Nadu and Ms. Harris has made multiple visits to Chennai in her earlier years.

"Vice-President Kamala D. Harris spoke this morning to President Andres Manuel López Obrador of Mexico, President Alejandro Giammattei of Guatemala, PM Narendra Modi of India, and PM Keith Rowley, Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)," a White House readout of her calls said, adding that there were individual calls to each of the leaders, in which Ms. Harris notified them of the decision to share 25 million

vaccine doses.

"The Vice-President reiterated that the Administration's efforts are focused on achieving broad global coverage, responding to surges and other urgent situations and public health needs, and helping as many countries as possible who requested vaccines."

The U.S. has committed to donate 13% of its vaccine supply or 80 million doses by the end of June to other countries.

"At least 75% of these doses — nearly 19 million — will be shared through COVAX, including approximately 6 million doses for Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 7 million for South and Southeast Asia, and approximately 5 million for Africa. The remaining doses, just over 6 million, will be shared directly with countries experiencing surges, those in crisis, and other partners and neighbours, including Canada, Mexico, India and the Republic of Korea," Mr. Biden said.

Based on this, it is not clear how many doses India will receive, and if it will receive a second tranche via the COVAX (an international effort to equitably distribute vaccines) allotment.

(With inputs from Suhasini Haider in New Delhi)

No salary for unvaccinated: Sindh govt.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KARACHI

The head of a Pakistani province ordered on Thursday that government employees who refuse to get vaccinated against COVID-19 would not be paid salary from next month.

"Any government employee who is not vaccinated should have their salary stopped from July," Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said in a tweet, adding that orders had been given to the Finance Ministry.

Earlier, he met health officials to discuss the first cases of the delta variant detected in the province.

A third wave of infections has begun to stabilise in the country after weeks of restrictions on public gatherings, but Sindh province has reported the highest number of cases since the pandemic began.

Pakistan has ramped up vaccination in recent weeks with more than 2,00,000 doses administered almost daily.

But the country has fully vaccinated only 2.2 million people — a fraction of its 220 million population.

Biden intends to overhaul Trump's China blacklist

U.S. is likely to add new firms to the list

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden intends to this week overhaul a list of Chinese firms that U.S. investors are allowed to own shares in, as the President re-evaluates the world powers' post-Trump relationship while maintaining pressure on Beijing.

Donald Trump prohibited Americans from buying stakes in 31 Chinese companies that were deemed to be supplying or supporting China's military and security apparatus.

The list included major telecoms, construction and technology firms such as China Mobile, China Telecom, video surveillance firm Hikvision, and China Railway Construction Corp.

The measures by the White House aimed at quelling the Asian giant's rise and which has left ties between the two severely strained.

Beijing repeated its outrage at the Trump-era blacklist on Thursday and vowed to protect Chinese companies' rights, claiming the blacklist was "politically motivated" and "ignores the facts and actual situation" of the firms involved.

The ban "severely undermines normal market rules and order" and "damages... the interests of global investors including US investors," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

Mr. Biden's new order will see the Treasury Department create a list of firms that would be hit with financial penalties for their links with China's defence and surveillance technology sectors, Bloomberg News reported.

He is expected to keep the list largely intact, while the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control will add new firms to the list.

ELSEWHERE



NASA announces two new missions to Venus

WASHINGTON
NASA announced two new missions to Venus on Wednesday that will launch at the end of the decade and are aimed at learning how Earth's nearest planetary neighbour became a hellscape while our own thrived. "These two missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world, capable of melting lead at the surface," said Bill Nelson, the agency's newly-confirmed administrator. AFP

Trump's Justice Department seized reporters' phone records

Attempt to identify sources for national security stories: NYT

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

The Trump Justice Department secretly obtained the phone records of four New York Times reporters as part of a leak investigation, the newspaper reported on Wednesday.

It is the third instance over the last month in which a news media organisation has disclosed that federal authorities seized the records of its journalists in an effort to identify sources for national security stories pu-

blished during President Donald Trump's administration.

President Joe Biden has said he would not allow the Justice Department to continue the practice of obtaining reporters' records, calling it "simply, simply wrong."

Justice Department spokesman Anthony Coley said the department notified the four reporters on Wednesday that it had obtained their phone records last year and that it had sought to obtain non-content email re-

ords as part of "a criminal investigation into the unauthorised disclosure of classified information."

The newspaper said the records that were seized covered a nearly four-month period in 2017 and belonged to reporters Matt Apuzzo, Adam Goldman, Eric Lichtblau and Michael S. Schmidt. Mr. Lichtblau has since left the newspaper.

The journalists are neither the subjects nor the targets of the investigation, Mr. Coley said.

U.S. offers reward to find AQIM leader

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department posted a \$7 million reward on Wednesday for information leading to the location or identification of Abu Ubaydah Yusuf al-Anabi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The department said Anabi was declared the Emir of the northern Africa region branch of Al-Qaeda in November 2020 and his predecessor, Abdelmalek Droukdel, was killed five months earlier.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
Department of Agriculture
The Department of Agriculture, Government of Andhra Pradesh invites application from all the manufacturers of farm machinery for empanelment in DBT portal for 2021-22 towards supply of farm machinery to the farmers groups/PACS/FPOs for setting up of Custom Hiring Centres and Hitech High Value FM Hubs throughout the State. More details on the notification are provided in website www.apagrisonet.gov.in.
DIPR 133PP/CL, 03.06.2021 Sd/- Commissioner of Agriculture

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bengaluru - 560 001.
Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in
No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-DPR-02/2093/2021-22 Date:02.06.2021
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK e - Procurement Portal Only)
KIADB invites tender from reputed consultants/firms under two cover bid system having an office at Bengaluru with vast experience and proven record of similar nature of work for the mentioned works: (1) Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) Including Economic Analysis, Surveying, Layout Plan, Design, Preparation of Estimates, Cost Structure etc., For formation of the proposed Madhugiri Industrial Area, Tumakuru District. (Extent 336A 11G). (2) Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the supply of 2MLD Tertiary treated Water from Tertiary Treatment Plant located at Vasanthnarsapura Industrial Area to Sira Industrial Area, Tumakuru District.
The last date and time of receipt of tender is: **28.06.2021 upto 04:00 pm**
Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.
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Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru
DIPR/DDU/R.O.:471/2021-22
STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.
Wear Mask
Follow Physical Distancing
Maintain Hand Hygiene


Injured Barty limps out of Paris, Djokovic cruises past Cuevas

Federer outclasses Cilic, but becomes entangled in a rare dispute with a chair umpire; Bopanna and Skugor make the doubles third round

ROLAND GARROS
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS
World No. 1 and former champion Ashleigh Barty limped out of Roland Garros on Thursday, throwing the battle for the women's title wide open as Novak Djokovic eased into the third round for the 16th straight year. Top seed Barty, already suffering from a left hip injury, retired midway through the second set of her second-round match against Poland's 45th-ranked Magda Linette. The Australian, who won the title on her last visit to Roland Garros in 2019, left the court for medical treatment after losing the first set 6-1. She then called it quits at 2-2 in the second set on Court Philippe Chatrier. Djokovic continued his bid for a 19th Grand Slam title

with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 win over Uruguay's Pablo Cuevas. Roger Federer became entangled in a rare running dispute with a chair umpire before safely securing his place in the last 32. Federer saw off Marin Cilic for the 10th time in 11 meetings, winning 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-2 but only after a second set bust-up with umpire Emmanuel Joseph. The 20-time Grand Slam title winner was handed a time violation at 1-3 down in the for taking too long between points. "I don't even dare to go my towel anymore," he said to Joseph. Federer, the oldest man in the draw at 39, lost his cool and the set before recovering to defeat former world number three Cilic. Former US Open winner Cilic was also handed a time warning late in the third set. Rohan Bopanna and Cro-

atian Franko Skugor advanced to the third round with a 6-4 7-5 win over Americans Frances Tiafoe and Nicholas Monroe. Earlier on Wednesday, Serena Williams survived a scare to extend her latest bid for an elusive 24th Grand Slam singles title with a three-set victory over Mihaela Buzarnescu, while men's fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and world number two Daniil Medvedev also reached the third round. Medvedev bounced back from losing the first set to American Tommy Paul in style by romping to a 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 victory. **Naomi said she didn't feel comfortable not to do something for her own personal health. And the backlash is ridiculous**
HAMILTON on Osaka



THE HIGHLIGHTS

0 Since his first appearance in 2005, Djokovic has never lost in the second round in Paris

1 First time Barty has been forced to retire midway in 70 Grand Slam matches

7 Svitolina has made the third round at Roland Garros for the seventh consecutive year

10 Cilic has lost 10 of his 11 matches against Federer. Lone victory was in the 2014 US Open semifinal

FRIDAY'S PICKS

MEN

- 6-Zverev vs Djere
- 2-Medvedev vs 32-Opelka
- 5-Tsitsipas vs 31-Isner (night session)

WOMEN

- 3-Sabalenka vs 31-Pavlyuchenkova
- 7-Serena vs Collins
- 15-Azarenka vs 23-Keys

I remained focused. I thought the third set was very difficult for me because he lifted the level of his game
DJOKOVIC after his second-round victory

It's disappointing to end like this. I've had my fair share of tears this week. It's all good, everything happens for a reason. There will be a silver lining in this eventually
BARTY after her withdrawal in the second round

IMPORTANT RESULTS

Second round: Men: 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt Pablo Cuevas (Uru) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; 8-Roger Federer (Sui) bt Marin Cilic (Cro) 6-2, 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-2; 9-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) bt Federico Coria (Arg) 6-3, 6-3, 6-2; 10-Diego Schwartzman (Arg) bt Aljaz Bedene (Slo) 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Philipp Kohlschreiber (Ger) bt 24-Aslan Karatsev (Rus) 6-3, 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-1; Marco Cecchinato (Ita) bt 21-Alex De Minaur (Aus) 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 6-1.
Women: Magda Linette (Pol) bt 1-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) 6-1, 2-2, ret.; 25-Ons Jabeur (Tun) bt Astra Sharma (Aus) 6-2, 6-4; 24-Coco Gauff (USA) bt Wang Qiang (Chn) 6-3, 7-6(1); Sloane Stephens (USA) bt 9-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) 7-5, 6-1; 18-Karolina Muchova (Cze) bt Varvara Lepchenko (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Bar-

bora Krejckikova (Cze) bt 32-Ekaterina Alexandrova (Rus) 6-2, 6-3; 5-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) bt Ann Li (USA) 6-0, 6-4; 4-Sofia Kenin (USA) bt Hailey Baptiste (USA) 7-5, 6-3; 17-Maria Sakkari (Gre) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA) 6-2, 6-3.
Wednesday's results: Men: 22-Christian Garin (Chi) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 4-6, 4-6, 7-6(7), 6-3, 8-6; 2-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt Tommy Paul (USA) 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3.
Women: 7-Serena Williams (USA) bt Mihaela Buzarnescu (Rou) 6-3, 5-7, 6-1; 3-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (Blr) 7-5, 6-3.

Fallen seeds

Men: 14-Monfils, 21-De Minaur, 24-Karatsev, 30-Fritz

Women: 1-Barty, 9-Pliskova, 32-Alexandrova

The Indians have landed



'Hello Southampton!' The Indian teams, which arrived in England, will undergo mandatory quarantine.
JASPRIT BUMRAH/TWITTER

INDIA IN ENGLAND
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON
The Indian men's cricket team arrived here on Thursday for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand and the subsequent Test series against England. The men's team was accompanied by the women's side which is touring England for three One-Day Internationals and as many T20s besides the one-off Test, starting in Bristol on June 16. "Touchdown," top-order batsman K.L. Rahul tweeted with a picture of the chartered flight in the back-

ground, confirming their safe arrival. Both teams reached Southampton, where they will complete their mandatory quarantine. Upon completion of the quarantine period and subsequent COVID-19 tests, the Virat Kohli-led men's team will take on New Zealand in the maiden WTC final starting here on June 18. Following the WTC final, the men's team will face England in a five-match Test series starting on August 4 in Nottingham. India is travelling with an extended 20-member squad keeping the COVID-19 pandemic in mind. The women's team's tour ends on July 15.

CoI complaint against Rupa upheld

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI
The ethics officer of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has upheld a conflict of interest complaint against Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) president Rupa Gurnath. Rupa, daughter of former BCCI chief N. Srinivasan, became the first woman to head a State association when she took over as the TNCA chief in September 2019. Her position was chal-

lenged by Sanjeev Gupta, a former life member of the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association. Justice (retd.) D.K. Jain, in his verdict issued on Thursday, has stated that Rupa "has at least indirect (if not direct) interest in CSKCL, which has entered into an agreement/contract with the BCCI, thus, attracting one of the forms of conflict of interest". Rupa is a whole-time director of India Cements Ltd. (ICL), while Chennai Super Kings Cricket Limited (CSKCL) owns the IPL franchise. As per the verdict, Rupa "... in her capacity as the whole time director and promoter of ICL, has close association with the Trustees of IC Shareholders Trust and the Directors of CSKCL." The ethics officer has directed the BCCI to follow its rulebook. If it is adhered to, the TNCA president will have to step down from her post.

Dinesh Karthik to get behind the mike at WTC final

S. DINAKAR CHENNAI
The man with different strokes can play different roles - in front of the mike or behind it. Dinesh Karthik will be seen in the role of a television commentator in the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand. Karthik told *The Hindu* on Thursday, "I was a bit fortunate the way it came to me. I think I can bring to the table things like technique and strategy."

Knowing the players
And, he can provide insight into players' minds. "I have played with the cricketers in both teams, know the way they think and will try to get into their heads." New Zealand was a very good side but India had the firepower, Karthik said. "We have a potent pace attack. And if we can build partnerships, I see no reason why we cannot win." Karthik may be in the commentary box for the big game, but he hasn't given up on his India dreams. The thought of playing for India again fires him up. "The passion is still there. The prospect of playing for



Dinesh Karthik. FILE PHOTO

lombo, 2018. His innings included a sensational last ball six - a whip-drive over extra cover off Bangladesh seamer Soumya Sarkar - when India needed five. "That was a life-changing innings," Karthik remembered with a smile. He had donned the role of a finisher to perfection. Karthik is suited for that role with his composure under pressure and rapier-like blows that can scuttle bowling plans and scatter field settings.

Fitting the bill
He is 36, but talk about age and he shows his displeasure. "We live in an era where fitness parameters are set for a cricketer. You have to clear those fitness tests to be picked in the Indian team. So, if you are fit, where is the question of age." Whether leading Tamil Nadu to title triumph in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Twenty20 championship or knocking up quick runs for Kolkata Knight Riders, or plucking a gravity-defying catch with the big gloves, Karthik is a man of action. And he still has gas left in the tank.

Conway joins Test debut 200-club

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON
New Zealand opener Devon Conway made exactly 200 on Test debut before he was the last man out in a first innings total of 378 on the second day of the series opener against England at Lord's on Thursday. England was III for two in reply at close. The South Africa-born left-hander was in sight of

becoming the very first batsman in the 144-year history of Test cricket to carry the bat in the first knock when he was run out, ending a stay of more than nine-and-a-half hours. Conway was only the seventh batsman to make a double hundred on Test debut. Debutant paceman Ollie Robinson took four wickets.



Conway. REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand - 1st innings: Tom Latham b Robinson 23, Devon Conway run out 200, Kane Williamson b Anderson 13, Ross Taylor lbw b Robinson 14, Henry Nicholls c Robinson b Wood 61, B.J. Watling c Sibley b Wood 1, Colin de Grandhomme lbw b Robinson 0, Mitchell Santner c Anderson b Wood 0, Kyle Jamieson c Crawley b Robinson 9, Tim Southee c Bracey b Anderson 8, Neil Wagner (not out) 25; Extras (b-7, lb-15, nb-2): 24; Total (in 122.4 overs): 378.

Fall of wickets: 1-58, 2-86, 3-114, 4-288, 5-292, 6-293, 7-294, 8-317, 9-338.

England bowling: Anderson 28-7-83-2, Broad 27-5-79-0, Robinson 28-6-75-4, Wood 27-8-81-3, Root 12.4-1-38-0.

England - 1st innings: Rory Burns (batting) 59, Dom Sibley lbw b Jamieson 0, Zak Crawley c Watling b Southee 2, Joe Root (batting) 42; Extras (b-2, lb-1, nb-5): 8; Total (for two wks. in 43 overs): 111.

Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-18.

New Zealand bowling: Southee 11-4-17-1, Jamieson 10-4-29-1, de Grandhomme 9-3-12-0, Wagner 10-1-36-0, Santner 3-1-14-0.

HOPING FOR A MIRACLE

A look at the teams that can cause a flutter but will find it tough to go the distance at Euro 2020

RUSSIA
GOALKEEPERS: Yuri Dyupin, Matvei Safonov, Anton Shunin
DEFENDERS: Georgi Dzhiykiya, Igor Diveev, Yuri Zhirkov, Vyacheslav Karavaev, Fedor Kudryashov, Andrei Semenov, Mario Fernandes
MIDFIELDERS: Dmitri Barinov, Rifat Zhemaletdinov, Maksim Mukhin, Aleksandr Golovin, Daniil Fomin, Roman Zobnin, Alexei Ionov, Daler Kuzayev, Andrei Mostovoy, Magomed Ozdoev, Denis Makarov, Aleksei Miranchuk, Denis Cheryshev
FORWARDS: Artem Dzyuba, Anton Zabolotny, Aleksandr Sobolev

COACH: Stanislav Cherchesov
FIRST MATCH: June 13 vs Belgium, St. Petersburg, 12.30 a.m.
FORM GUIDE: L | L | W | W | L
EURO APPEARANCES: 11
BEST PERFORMANCE: Winner 1960 (as USSR)

SLOVAKIA
GOALKEEPERS: Martin Dubravka, Marek Rodak, Dusan Kuciak
DEFENDERS: Peter Pekarik, Lubomir Satka, Denis Vavro, Milan Skriniar, Tomas Hubocan, David Hancko, Martin Koscelnik, Martin Valjent
MIDFIELDERS: Marek Hamsik, Stanislav Lotobotka, Patrik Hrosovsky, Juraj Kucka, Ondrej Duda, Robert Mak, Vladimir Weiss, Laszlo Benes, Lukas Haraslin, Jakub Hromada, Tomas Suslow, Jan Gregus
FORWARDS: Michal Duris, Robert Bozenik, Ivan Schranz
COACH: Stefan Tarkovic
FORM GUIDE: L | D | D | W | D
FIRST MATCH: June 14 vs Poland, St. Petersburg, 9.30 p.m.
EURO APPEARANCES: 4
BEST PERFORMANCE: Winner 1976 (as Czechoslovakia)

DID YOU KNOW? Eight of the Czechoslovakia XI that won the 1976 edition were from Slovakia

SWITZERLAND
GOALKEEPERS: Yvon Mvogo, Jonas Omlin, Yann Sommer
DEFENDERS: Manuel Akanji, Loris Benito, Eray Coemert, Nico Elvedi, Jordan Lotomba, Kevin Mbabu, Becir Omeragic, Ricardo Rodriguez, Fabian Schaer, Silvan Widmer
MIDFIELDERS: Christian Fassnacht, Edimilson Fernandes, Remo Freuler, Mario Gavranovic, Admir Mehmedi, Granit Xhaka, Denis Zakaria, Djibril Sow, Ruben Vargas
FORWARDS: Breel Embolo, Xherdan Shaqiri, Haris Seferovic, Steven Zuber
COACH: Vladimir Petkovic
FORM GUIDE: D | W | W | W | W
FIRST MATCH: June 12 vs Portugal, Budapest, 9.30 p.m.
EURO APPEARANCES: 4
BEST PERFORMANCE: Pre-quarterfinals 2016

DID YOU KNOW? Switzerland has successfully negotiated every group stage under Petkovic but is yet to win a knockout match at the 2014 and 2018 World Cups, Euro 2016 and Nations League

HUNGARY
GOALKEEPERS: Peter Gulacsi, Adam Bogdan, Denes Dibusz
DEFENDERS: Gergo Lovrencsics, Adam Lang, Attila Fiola, Willi Orban, Attila Szalai, Andre Botka, Akos Kecskes, Bendeguz Bolla
MIDFIELDERS/FORWARDS: Adam Nagy, Laszlo Kleinheister, Filip Holender, David Siger, Loic Nego, Daniel Gazdag, Andras Schafer, Tamas Cseri, Adam Szalai, Nemanja Nikolic, Roland Sallai, Roland Varga, Kevin Varga, Janos Hahn, Szabolcs Schon
COACH: Marco Rossi
FORM GUIDE: D | W | D | W | W
FIRST MATCH: June 15 vs Portugal, Budapest, 9.30 p.m.
EURO APPEARANCES: 3
BEST PERFORMANCE: Third place 1964

DID YOU KNOW? Hungary got to two of the first four semi-finals, in 1964 and 1972, but didn't qualify again until 2016

Vijeylaxmi, Harini chosen for ICC programme

AMOL KARHADKAR S. DIPAK RAGAV MUMBAI/CHENNAI
Two Indians - match referee Vijeylaxmi Narasimhan and media person-turned-sports-management professional Harini Rana - have been selected as India's representatives for the ICC 100% Cricket Future Leaders Programme. The programme, according to a statement by the International Cricket Council, is the world cricket governing body's "long-term commitment to accelerate the

growth of women's cricket and women in cricket". While Vijeylaxmi will be a part of the 20 women who will be mentored in the first batch starting September, Harini will be the lone Indian in the second batch from November. Vijeylaxmi, a former Tamil Nadu player, has been a referee for the past three years after she cleared the exams in 2018. She has officiated in an international women's quadrangular T20 series in Patna featuring India A, B, Bangladesh and



Vijeylaxmi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

after coaching Tamil Nadu's Under-19 girls' team for a year, will be mentored by Australian umpire Claire Polosak. "I am looking forward to learning about the skills, professional ethics and domain knowledge," Vijeylaxmi told *The Hindu*. "It gives me a platform to develop myself and make an impactful contribution to women in sports, something that I am passionate about," Harini said. Veteran journalist Sharda Ugra has also been roped in as a mentor for Roberta Morretti Avery (Brazil).

Olympics certain to go ahead

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TOKYO
The Tokyo Olympics are "100%" certain to go ahead, the chief organiser said on Thursday, but warned that a major coronavirus outbreak mid-Games could slam the door shut on fans. Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto made the comments exactly 50 days before the pandemic-postponed Olympics, which remain plagued by public opposition. "I believe that the possibility of these Games going on is 100% that we will do this," Hashimoto told *BBC*

Perfect setting: Fans pose with the Olympic Rings in Tokyo on Thursday. GETTY IMAGES

Sport, adding that fans could be locked out during the Games. "The biggest challenge for us will be how we can control and manage the flow of people who flock to the venues," said Hashimoto.

TV PICKS

Roland-Garros: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.

England vs New Zealand: 1st Test, Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Simone Inzaghi to take over as Inter coach

MILAN Inter Milan appointed Simone Inzaghi as coach on Thursday, signing him to a two-year contract. Inzaghi replaces Antonio Conte, who left Inter last month after leading the club to its first Serie A title in more than a decade. AP



Benteke extends Crystal Palace deal

LONDON Belgium striker Christian Benteke said he is "happy and proud" to have committed his future to Premier League side Crystal Palace after signing a two-year extension on Thursday. AFP

Lukaku rules out Inter Milan exit

MILAN Romelu Lukaku confirmed on Wednesday he intended to stay with Serie A champion Inter Milan next season. Lukaku's future was in doubt after coach Antonio Conte's departure, but the Belgian striker said he did not envisage any problems with new coach Simone Inzaghi. AFP

Ramkumar loses to Berrettini

NEW DELHI Ramkumar Ramanathan lost 5-7, 6-1, 6-4 to qualifier Jacopo Berrettini of Italy in the pre-quarterfinals of the €44,820 Challenger tennis tournament in Biella, Italy, on Thursday. Ramkumar collected seven ATP points and €730.



76ers, Hawks and Jazz advance

LOS ANGELES Philadelphia 76ers, Atlanta Hawks and Utah Jazz powered into the conference semifinals of the NBA playoffs on Wednesday while an electrifying display by Luka Dončić took Dallas Mavericks to the brink of a series victory. **The results:** EC: Washington Wizards 112 lost to Philadelphia 76ers 129 (Sixers win series 4-1); Atlanta Hawks 103 bt New York Knicks 89 (Hawks win 4-1). **WC:** Memphis Grizzlies 110 lost to Utah Jazz 126 (Jazz wins 4-1); Dallas Mavericks 105 bt Los Angeles Clippers 100 (Mavericks lead 3-2).

Sindhu backs training at the Gachibowli Stadium



Rapt attention: P.V. Sindhu listens intently to what Korean coach Park Tae Sang has to offer at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium. ■ FILE PHOTO: V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

When you have facilities why not use them, asks champion shuttler

BADMINTON

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

World Champion P.V. Sindhu looks to continue training outside the Gopi Chand Academy even after the Tokyo Olympics.

In mid-February this year, Sindhu shifted her training base to the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad to train under Korean coach Park Tae Sang.

"When we have facilities of international standard, why not use that? If you want to compete against the top-class players, you have to make sure everything is perfect. Gachibowli is a bigger, international-level stadium. Wherever we go, we will al-

ways be playing in a bigger stadium, then why not get used to it?" said Sindhu during a virtual press conference on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy along with their Danish coach Mathias Boe also moved to Gachibowli Stadium. B. Sai Praneeth, under Indonesian coach Agus Dwi Santoso, continues to train at the Academy.

Talking about her training, Sindhu elaborated, "I do on-court sessions at Gachibowli. My gym and off-court sessions take place at Suchitra Academy, where my trainer gives me training. He is really helping me out. If I need sparring partners, I get

them from Suchitra Academy."

Underlining the factors that led to training in the stadium, Sindhu said, "When you play in a big stadium, you make sure you control the shuttle, which is very, very important. Sometimes, when you play abroad, there is drift, there is AC or the shuttle might be just fast. Also, I am learning new skills and techniques."

Praise for Park

About training with Park Tae Sang, Sindhu said, "When I started training under Park (one and half years ago), it was not easy to grasp what he was teaching. We practised each day and the communication got better. He is

always supporting and motivating me. He is doing a great job."

Looking at the likely field in the absence of defending champion Carolina Marin in Tokyo, Sindhu said, "You can't take it easy. There are a lot of good players like Tai Tzu-Ying, Ratchanok, Okuhara, Yamaguchi and others. Those ranked from 1 and 10, have the same standard. I have to be prepared."

"When I started off this year, it wasn't too great for me because of the big gap due to lockdown. But I came back and rectified my mistakes. I played the All-England and improved on my game. Attack is my strong point but I'm also focusing a lot on defence."

Humpy qualifies for Candidates

Books berth with runner-up finish at Grand Prix

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

In her long career Koneru Humpy has notched up several remarkable achievements. But, what she did on Wednesday night merits special attention. Or, rather, what she achieved without doing anything, to be precise.

She qualified for the Candidates tournament – the winner of which will earn the right to challenge the World chess champion – after she finished second in the FIDE Women's Grand Prix overall standings.

Special

What makes the feat special is that she did it without playing one of the three legs she had chosen from the series of four. Humpy chose to skip the Gibraltar leg, which concluded on Wednesday, because of travel concerns in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When she played in the



Koneru Humpy. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

first two legs – at Skolkovo (Russia) and Monaco – the coronavirus hadn't yet raised its ugly head. She won the first leg and was runner-up in the second.

She had 293 points from those two legs. A top-three finish in the third could have fetched her the Grand Prix title, but she had, of course, chosen not to play.

She, however, finished runner-up in the GP series to Russia's Alexandra Goryachkina (398 points); she had chosen Lausanne as the

third leg, which was played in March last year, shortly before the world went into lockdown.

Humpy has no regrets at having missed Gibraltar. She is, actually, relieved that she has qualified for next year's Candidates.

"I was closely following the Gibraltar tournament and am relieved and happy that the results went my way," the World No. 3 told *The Hindu* over phone. "It feels great that I have qualified for the Candidates on my Grand Prix performance alone."

Calculated risk

Even if she hadn't, there would have been chances at the World Cup or Grand Swiss or by virtue of her Elo rating. "But I could not have taken anything for granted and I could have missed out, too," she said. "Yes, I was taking a risk by not going to Gibraltar. But I had to take that decision. Life is not just about playing chess, you know!"

Harikrishna and Vidit confirmed for World Cup

Duo gained spot owing to withdrawal of seeded players

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Grandmasters P. Harikrishna and Vidit Gujrathi have received confirmation from the International Chess Federation (FIDE) to be part of the World Cup beginning in Sochi from July 10.

Harikrishna and Vidit, ranked 20 and 22, gained the berths that fell vacant owing to the withdrawal of the seeded players.

The confirmation from FIDE also helped All India Chess Federation nominate B. Adhiban – the highest

ranked Indian after Viswanathan Anand, Harikrishna and Vidit – for the World Cup.

In all, FIDE allows 91 countries to nominate a player each apart from those already qualified.

Anand gives it a miss

Anand, a two-time champion who enjoyed a direct seeding, will not participate.

As a result, in the 206-player men's field, India will be represented by P. Harikrishna, Vidit, Adhiban, Ara-

vinth Chithambaram and P. Iniyan. An additional 'wild card' entry cannot be ruled out. In the 103-player women's section, as reported earlier, it will be K. Humpy, D. Harika, Padmini Rout, Bhakti Kulkarni and P. Vaishali.

The squad will be accompanied by two trainers, GMs Abhijit Kunte and N. Sri-nath.

Players like Harikrishna, Vidit, Humpy and Harika are likely to get a first-round bye. The on-board action commences on July 12.

Turf clubs liable to pay GST only on commission received for service of totalisator: HC

Court strikes down GST rules levying tax on entire 100% face value

RACING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

In a judgement that gives a major tax relief to turf clubs, the High Court of Karnataka has declared that the clubs are liable for payment of GST only on the commission that they receive for the service that they render through the totalisator.

The court said that the clubs are not liable to pay GST on the entire 100% of the face value of the bet or amount paid into the totalisator while striking down the Rule 31A(3) of the Central GST Rules, 2017 and the corresponding Rule 31A of the Karnataka GST Rules, 2017.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna delivered the verdict on June 2 while allowing the petitions filed in 2018 by the Bangalore Turf Club Ltd and



the Mysore Race Club Ltd questioning the legality of these rules, which came into effect from January 23, 2018.

The court said the rules are contrary to the provisions of the GST Act as "the totalisator is brought under a taxable event without it being so defined under the act nor power being conferred in terms of the charging section, which renders the rule being made beyond the pro-

visions of the act." The court also said that the two petitioner clubs are entitled for all consequential benefits that flow from this verdict.

The act, the court said, which deals with supply of goods, consideration, business "would not apply to the function of the totalisator."

"Making the entire bet amount that is received by the totalisator liable for payment of GST would take

away the principle that a tax can be only on the basis of consideration even under the CGST," the court said.

"The consideration that the petitioners (turf clubs) receive is by way of commission for planting a totalisator. This can be nothing different from that of a stock broker or a travel agent - both of whom are liable to pay GST only on the income - commission that they earn and not on all the monies that pass through them," said the court.

Stating that betting is neither in the course of business nor in furtherance of business of a race club for the purposes of the GST Act, the court said that clubs hold the amount received in the totalisator for a brief period in its fiduciary capacity, for which the consideration the clubs receive is the commission.

Indian official kits for Tokyo Games unveiled

Contingent expected to return with at least 10 medals

OLYMPICS

UTHRA NAGAN
NEW DELHI

Indian officials expect at least 25 more athletes to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics by the end of June and the contingent to return with at least 10 medals from the Games.

So far 100 athletes have qualified, including the two hockey teams.

"We are estimating to touch 125 to 135 by the time the qualification process is over. This means the Indian contingent, including officials and support staff, is likely to be around 190," IOA president Narinder Batra said during a virtual unveiling of the Indian sports and ceremonial uniforms for the event.

It also marked the 50-day countdown to the Games, scheduled to open on July



New look: Indian sports and ceremonial uniforms for Tokyo which were unveiled on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

23. Only a handful of qualified athletes were present physically on the occasion – including Neeraj Chopra, Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya, Sumit Malik and Seema Bisla.

The sports kits are sponsored by Li Ning while the ceremonial kits are by

Raymonds.

Sports Minister Kiren Rijju assured of full support from the ministry and SAI in accelerating the vaccination programme for the qualified/ probable athletes in time for their departure to Tokyo.

"The IOC will issue an up-

dated Playbook later (but) we have to follow all the health and safety protocols in view of the pandemic," Rijju said.

PM reviews preparations

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting to review India's Olympics preparations and was apprised with various steps taken for athletes' training.

While most of the athletes and officials have managed one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, the Prime Minister has directed complete vaccination for all athletes, staff and officials travelling to Tokyo.

He would also be connecting with the Olympic contingent through video-conference in July. Regular video interactions with their families are planned for all athletes during the Olympics.

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