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Fall in COVID-19 cases should not be taken for granted, says V.K. Paul

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Conservative cleric tipped to win as Iran votes for new president

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Rain washes out opening day's play in WTC final

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## NEARBY



Flouting COVID-19 rules will hasten 3rd wave: HC

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Friday took suo motu cognisance of violations of COVID-19 protocols at various markets across the Capital where people are seen not wearing masks and flouting social distancing norms.

CITY PAGE 2

## NGOs slam jab clause in market reopening order

GUWAHATI  
Lewduh, Meghalaya's largest traditional market in Shillong, reopened partially on Friday after a long lockdown. But the condition that business would be allowed only if the traders are vaccinated drew flak from various quarters.

NORTH & EAST PAGE 4

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# SC refuses to intervene in HC ruling on student activists' bail

But says the June 15 order will not be treated as a precedent in any proceedings

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Friday did not intervene in the Delhi High Court decision granting bail to student activists Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal and Asif Iqbal Tanha, but said the High Court's order of June 15 would neither be treated as a precedent in any proceedings nor be relied on by the parties.

"It is clarified that the release of the respondents [student activists] on bail is not being interfered at this stage... The impugned judgment shall not be treated as a precedent and may not be relied upon by any of the parties in any of the proceedings," a Bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V. Ramasubramanian recorded.

The three students were granted bail by the High Court after a year's incarceration in Tihar Jail. They were accused of offences under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UA-

The issue is important. It has pan-India ramifications. There are many questions involved here... We want to decide it for the good of the entire country.

The entire UAPA was turned on its head along with the Constitution. The High Court judgment may be used by others booked under the UAPA to get bail.

JUSTICE HEMANT GUPTA, SUPREME COURT

TUSHAR MEHTA, SOLICITOR GENERAL

PA) in connection with the northeast Delhi riots, which broke out after the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) turned violent last year. The High Court accused the police of blurring the line between "terrorist act" under the UAPA and the students' right to protest against a law.

"The entire UAPA was turned on its head along with the Constitution...", Solicitor General Tushar Mehta objected in the Supreme Court on Friday during the appeal hearing.

"The issue is important. It has pan-India ramifications. There are many questions involved here... We want to decide it for the good of the entire country," Justice Gupta observed orally, issuing formal notice to the three students on the appeal.

Mr. Mehta argued that 53 people died and 700 were injured in the riots. "The right to protest does not mean the right to kill and hurl bombs," he submitted. If the protests were held on the "perceived belief" that the CAA was against a particular com-

## Will continue fight: Narwal

Freed student activist Natasha Narwal says the struggle of other jail inmates without support systems has humbled her and strengthened the commitment to ensure that such injustice does not go unchallenged. PAGE 8

munity, then "the lady who assassinated a former Prime Minister" also did it on the belief that injustice was done to a particular community, he stated.

Pushing for a stay of the judgment, he said the three students "may remain out" but the judgment may be used by others booked under the UAPA to get bail. A hearing on the limited question of bail for the students was used by the High Court to discuss an entire law.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

# Twitter grilled by MPs over violation of new IT rules

Law of land is supreme, officials told at House panel meet

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Social media giant Twitter was at the receiving end of prolonged questioning by members of the Standing Committee on Information and Technology, headed by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, on non-compliance with the new IT rules, usage of the 'manipulated media' tag and fact-checking.

According to sources, senior manager of public policy Shagufta Kamran and Twitter India legal counsel Ayushi Kapoor were present at the meeting.

The committee members unanimously were critical about Twitter dragging its feet on complying with the new IT rules. The Twitter officials claimed that they abided by their policy. The members, sources said, told Twitter that the law of the land is supreme. According to sources, members of the panel also asked Twitter why it should not be fined as it has been found "violating" the rules of the country.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views before the Standing Committee on Information Technology. Twitter stands prepared to work with the committee on the important work of safeguarding citizens' rights online in line with our principles of transparency, freedom of expression, and privacy.

Twitter representatives remained non-committal about the timeline by when they will be able to comply fully with the rules. We have also asked for a written reply to a set of questions.

MEMBER, STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) had served one last notice to Twitter, asking it to immediately comply with the new IT rules and warned that failure to adhere to the norms would lead to the platform losing exemption from liability under the IT Act.

**Query on fact-checking**  
"Twitter representatives remained non-committal about the timeline by when they will be able to comply fully with the rules. We have also asked for a written reply

to a set of questions," one of the members said.

BJP MPs also questioned Twitter on its "fact-checking" policy, pointing out that BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra was promptly given the "manipulated media" tag, while such alacrity was not shown in the Ghaziabad case.

An FIR has been filed against Twitter in Ghaziabad for provoking communal sentiments after an elderly Muslim man alleged that he was assaulted on June 5.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Banking on generosity



Much-needed meal: People being served food on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi on Friday. R.V. MOORTHY

## No demand for virtual session, says LS Speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties may have written letters about holding a virtual session of Parliament during the COVID-19 period but none raised the issue on the floor of the House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Friday in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Mr. Birla, who completed two years in office, not only defended the construction of a new Parliament in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic but also argued in favour of increasing the number of members in the Lok Sabha to ensure that one member doesn't have to represent an electorate size of 15-16 lakh people.

Asked about the pending disqualification request by Trinamool Congress against two of its members - Sisir Adhikari and Sunil Mondal - for alleged anti-party activities, Mr. Birla said he would refer the matter to the Privileges Committee once he has heard the views of the two rebel Trinamool MPs. Talking about demands for a virtual session of Parliament by Opposition leaders, Mr. Birla said, "They may have written but when Lok Sabha proceedings were going on during COVID period, none said on the floor of the House that Parliament should function virtually or that Rule 266 needs to change. To change the rules, we need the approval of the House."

"As far as parliamentary meetings are concerned, while framing the rules, it was decided to keep the proceedings secret as members rise above party lines while debating issues," the Speaker added.

INTERVIEW  
PAGE 9

# Buzz over Centre's possible meeting with J&K parties

Speculation as L-G, senior police officials meet Amit Shah

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing heightened political activity as the Centre mulls inviting all political parties from the Union Territory to New Delhi in the last week of June to start a political engagement, which is likely to pave the way for the restoration of statehood.

Several constituents of the Gupkar alliance, an amalgam of five political parties fighting for the pre-August 5, 2019, position of J&K, met in Srinagar on Friday to "discuss the future course", sources said. As J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and top police officials met Union Home Minister Amit

Shah in New Delhi on Friday, sources said the Centre is likely to invite the parties on June 24 or after that.

J&K was split into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh 22 months ago.

**'No invitation yet'**  
"We have no information about any initiative. We have not got any formal invitation yet. Let them make it public. We have never blocked the way forward," Gupkar alliance spokesman M.Y. Tarigami told *The Hindu*.  
Mr. Tarigami said J&K needed initiatives because the confidence was "completely shattered here".  
"I urge the democratic Government of India that

enough is enough. Let there be initiatives to restore confidence in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh," he said.

The Gupkar alliance spokesman said the onus of proving sincerity lay with those who "hampered the normalisation" and with the leadership of the country.

"We have a set agenda that we agreed upon on August 4, 2019. We are for special constitutional position of J&K and against bifurcation of J&K. We are committed to it. However, this does not mean we will not talk. We will see that legitimate rights of people of J&K are restored," he added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8  
SHAH REVIEWS WORK PAGE 8

# Tigress rescued from defunct U.P. factory

Though it was first spotted in March 2020, pandemic stalled the tracking efforts

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

A tigress living in an abandoned rubber factory in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district at least since December 2019 was rescued after an 18-day tracking operation, officials said on Friday. She was released in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve at night.

The tigress was first found in the dilapidated factory, around 6 km from Bareilly, in November-December 2019, Mayukh Chatterjee, head of Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), told *The Hindu*. The operation was carried out by a team of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, along with the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve and the WTI.

Sushant Soma, wildlife biologist, WTI, said, "The tigress is a fully mature adult, roughly aged around five-seven years. For her age, she seems a little less developed at just 115 kg



Free at last: The tigress was released in the Dudhwa reserve. At right is the tank where she was found. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



with a relatively small stature (body length is 140 cm) and pug size."

**Dense vegetation**  
Spread over 1,200 hectares, the synthetic rubber chemical factory shut down three decades ago, leading to dense growth of vegetation on the compound.

As a result, there was ample prey available, including black buck, wild pigs and rhesus macaques, said Mr. Chatterjee.

The tigress was tranquilised after it was spotted in an old oil tank and an earth-mover was used to tear the tank open, he said.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Bareilly zone, Lalit Verma said it was a tricky operation because the tigress was confined in the oil tank. "We were hoping it would come out due to hunger, but it did not," he said.

Mr. Verma said the animal was first spotted in

March 2020, and stayed on the premises for 15 months.

**Second tiger**  
"Normally, in such time the animal moves elsewhere but it was continuously being spotted that too late night or in early hours," he said. A tracking operation was started then but due to the pandemic, the officials had to stop their efforts.

This is the second tiger to be rescued from the factory in the last three years.

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### Fair assessment

The unprecedented Class 12 evaluation system must be an open book to inspire confidence

With its marks tabulation framework for Class 12 students encompassing three assessment years starting with Class 10, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has ended prolonged anxiety among lakhs of students. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has also developed a similar system. Student evaluation after a chaotic pandemic year remains a challenge in all countries, and many have opted for a hybrid system of school-level internal assessments combined with any examinations that may have been held. The CBSE scheme, evolved to fulfil a Supreme Court mandate, distributes score weightage across the Class 10 public examination, the Class 11 annual test, and the Class 12 school tests in a 30:30:40 ratio for theory, and actual score for internal assessment and practicals. This aims to level out any aberrant phase in a student's performance. Since the marks considered from Class 10 will be the average of the best three subjects among five, students must feel reassured. When they wrote that examination, they had no inkling of the future importance of the score. A provision to take a Class 12 public examination at a later date to attain a higher score when the pandemic has waned should also have a calming effect. Evidently, there are some challenges to uniformly implementing the CBSE plan, and its success hinges on the approach of school result committees responsible for inclusion of Class 12 marks. Uneven access to devices and online connectivity in the final school year, with an impact on scores or even resulting in non-appearance must be resolved by the result committees.

Successful conclusion of Class 12 assessment, which lacks the standardisation available in a public examination, and declaration of results by July 31 depend on result committees marking the theory segment transparently and moderating marks for the senior secondary years based on the school's performance over a period of time. There is then the issue of fraud. Even in the U.K., reports indicate influential parents brought pressure on schools to give their wards an unfair hike in grades in a similar mixed evaluation system, with veiled threats of legal disputes. For fairness, CBSE mandates the participation of external members on the result committees, but it will take utmost openness to dispel students' apprehensions. State Boards waiting for the central model for comparison also need to draw up safeguards, including a dependable dispute resolution process. Education boards were caught unawares last year by the pandemic and could not evolve suitable evaluation tools. Unfortunately, the course of the pandemic remains uncertain, and developing a continuous assessment system for 2021-22 and beyond has become a necessity. The CBSE has taken the lead on this, and State Boards must not lose time in forming their own.

### Cold peace

The U.S., Russia must reset their relationship to pragmatic levels and reduce tensions

The Geneva summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, on Wednesday, has set a pragmatic tone for engagement between the two competing powers. Mr. Biden had, in the past, called Mr. Putin "a killer". Relations have hit the lowest point in recent years since the end of the Cold War. The U.S. has accused Russia of interfering in its elections and launching cyberattacks and criticised its stifling of internal dissent, while Moscow has slammed America's "interventionist" foreign policy. Despite these differences, the leaders held talks on all critical issues, bringing diplomacy to the centre-stage. After the summit, they have struck cautious optimism that is rooted in self-interest. Mr. Biden sought a more predictable, rational engagement, while Mr. Putin said relations were "primarily pragmatic". They have decided to return their Ambassadors to the Embassies and announced "a strategic stability dialogue" to discuss terms of arms control measures. While there was no major breakthrough, which was not expected anyway, they could at least demonstrate a willingness to strengthen engagement and reduce tensions.

There are structural issues in the U.S.-Russia ties. When Russia ended its post-Soviet strategic retreat and adopted a more assertive foreign policy under Mr. Putin, partly in response to NATO expansion into eastern Europe, the West saw it as a threat to its primacy. The 2008 Georgia war practically ended the romance between "democratic Russia" and the West. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 renewed tensions. Russia was thrown out of the G8, and western sanctions followed. But such steps did not deter Mr. Putin. Ties hit rock bottom after allegations that Russian intelligence units had carried out cyberattacks and run an online campaign to get Donald Trump elected President in the 2016 U.S. election. Mr. Biden and Mr. Putin cannot resolve these geopolitical and bilateral issues in one summit. But they can certainly take measures to prevent relations from worsening. For the U.S., the cyberattacks are a red line. Russia, which had amassed troops on the Ukraine border earlier this year, sees NATO's expansion into its border region as a threat. Both countries should be ready to address their critical concerns and agree to a cold peace, which would help in addressing other geopolitical problems such as Syria. The U.S. should be less pessimistic about Russia's foreign policy goals. Whether the Americans like it or not, Russia, despite its weakened economic status, remains a great power. Mr. Putin should also realise that if his goal is to restore Russia's lost glory in global politics, he should be ready to cooperate with the West. Permanent hostility with other powers cannot be of much help to Russia.

# What needs to be done with vaccines

Policy approaches must strike a balance between the achievement of health goals and exigencies of supply constraints

GEORGE THOMAS, GAGANDEEP KANG & JAYAPRAKASH MULIYIL

Vaccines have proven to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 virus in preventing serious illness and death. In an article published in *Nature Medicine* on June 9, an analysis of data from the United Kingdom, gathered between December 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021 when the alpha variant was predominant, showed that the AstraZeneca vaccine had an effectiveness of 64% after one dose and 79% after two doses, in protecting against severe illness and death. In the same article (https://go.nature.com/3zBxB8x), the authors also found that a previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 had a significant protective effect against re-infection.

#### Vaccine data

On June 14, Public Health England released a report that showed that the AstraZeneca vaccine had an effectiveness of 71% after one dose and 92% after two doses in protecting from hospitalisation due to the delta variant (https://bit.ly/2S9kk7j). In the first report of vaccine effectiveness from India, researchers from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, reported an analysis of 8,991 staff who had been vaccinated between January 21, 2021 and April 30, 2021, predominantly with Covishield, in the *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (https://bit.ly/3qecsb). The protective effect of vaccination was 92% against need for oxygen and 94% against need for intensive care. There were no deaths, but about 10% of those who had received one or two doses were infected. Although sequencing was not available, many breakthrough infections were probably due to the delta variant strain. These data from the United Kingdom and India show that the Covishield vaccine is working against the variants.

More detailed studies on whether the vaccines are continuing to work, if yes, for how long, or against new variants, will continue to be needed. We also need to consider what we expect from vaccines at different stages of the pandemic. At the level of the individual, we expect vaccines to be safe and provide protection from disease and death at least, and preferably also from mild disease and infection. From the point of view of public health, we expect vaccines to decrease the burden of illness and spread of infection. For society, however, beyond the needs of public health, the ability to go back to productivity and social interactions also matters. These different needs require policy approaches that balance the achievement of health and societal goals with the potential impact, and the exigencies of supply constraints.

In a time of urgent need and short supply, a clear and measurable goal is essential. The prioritisation and delivery strategy needs to align with the goal to achieve maximum impact. We have been somewhat confused about the goal, with early announcements of vaccinating 300 million people being replaced by all adults. With the increase in highly transmissible variants, it is clear that to both prevent disease and slow spread, we will need to cover a larger proportion of the population, possibly extending at a later stage to children.

#### On herd immunity

When vaccines seemed to be somewhere in the future with no predictability on timing or supply, discussions on the pandemic focused on 'herd immunity' or the percentage of the population that needed to be infected or vaccinated in order to slow the spread of infection. The Swedish strategy of limited restrictions and the Great Barrington declaration (https://gbdeclaration.org/) attracted much opprobrium as ma-



ny scientific commentators considered it callous to follow a strategy which meant that a lot of people would get infected with the virus. Herd immunity or herd effect or herd protection is an often misunderstood term, but a key attribute is that the more transmissible the agent, the higher the level of the population that needs to be infected or vaccinated. With the delta variant, it is clear that the earlier plan to vaccinate a smaller proportion of the population is not appropriate and reaching up to 85% of the population might be necessary. This implies that not only will we have to consider all adults but we should be planning for children as well.

#### Long- and short-term goals

The control of infection in the population is the long-term goal. The short-term goal is to protect individuals at highest risk and to save lives. The deaths from COVID-19 show clearly that those who are the oldest are at the greatest risk of severe disease and mortality, with distinct stratification of severity by age, followed by those with comorbidities such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension. Yet, the risk of severe disease and death among younger people, though low, is not zero and therefore when large numbers of young people get infected some of them will die even with the best medical management. Nonetheless, the goal of preventing the maximum number of severe cases and deaths clearly requires an age descending approach.

This was indeed the strategy

# In India, looking beyond the binary to a spectrum

A delay in the provision of marriage rights to same-sex couples would fall foul of constitutional guarantees, judgments



MANURAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM

Last month, when the cases surrounding the question of same-sex marriages came up before the High Court of Delhi, the Union Government was found to be dithering. The Solicitor General of India made himself available only to request the court to have the matter adjourned on the ground that it was not urgent. Though the Union Government argued that the matter was not important in the context of the second wave of COVID-19 cases, it overlooked the basic notion that the plight of persons in same-sex and queer relationships looking after each other - without the legal protection of marital relationships - was exacerbated by the pandemic. In any case, it is a matter of some concern that the Union Government does not find urgency in a matter of extending civil rights to a class of persons who have approached a constitutional court. Nevertheless, given the march of law - both international and domestic - in the direction of expanding human rights, jurisprudence necessarily means that the provision of marriage rights to same-sex and queer couples is only a matter of time. Any further delay in doing so would fall foul of our constitutional guarantees, judgments rendered by various High Courts and evolving international jurisprudence. The last two decades have wit-

nessed tremendous progress in establishing civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community.

#### International jurisprudence

In 2005, the Constitutional Court of South Africa in the case of *Minister of Home Affairs and Another vs Fourie and Another; Lesbian and Gay Equality Project and Eighteen Others vs Minister of Home Affairs and Others* [2005] ZACC 19, unanimously held that the common law definition of marriage i.e. "a union of one man with one woman" was inconsistent with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Consequently, the Parliament of South Africa was given 12 months to amend the Marriage Act 25 of 1961, failing which the Marriage Act would stand amended, by virtue of the decision of the Constitutional Court, to include the words "or spouse" after the words "or husband". As a result of the verdict, the Civil Union Act, 2006 was enacted, enabling the voluntary union of two persons above 18 years of age, by way of marriage.

In 2007 in Australia, the reforms to civil rights of queer community were prompted by the Honourable Michael Kirby (then judge of the High Court of Australia) writing to the Attorney-General of Australia asking for the judicial pension scheme to be extended to his gay partner of 38 years (at that time). After initial opposition from the Federal Government, the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws - General Law Reform) Act 2008 came to be enacted to provide equal entitlements for same-sex couples in matters of, *inter alia*, social se-



curity, employment and taxation. Similarly, in England and Wales, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 enabled same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies or with religious rites.

More recently, in 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States decided that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples. The case of *Obergefell vs Hodges* ushered in a landmark shift in the American position and allowing same-sex marriages to be recognised and treated on a par with opposite-sex marriages. While doing so, the Supreme Court of the United States held the denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples to be a "grave and continuing harm, serving to disrespect and subordinate gays and lesbians". Across the world, the recognition of the unequal laws discriminating against the LGBTQIA+ community has acted as a trigger to reform and modernise legal architecture to become more inclusive and equal.

#### Courts and civil rights

In India, marriages solemnised under personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 and so on. At present, though same-sex and queer

marriages are not clearly recognised in India, we are not bereft of judicial guidance. In the case of *Arunkumar and Sreeja vs The Inspector General of Registration and Ors.* [W.P.(MD)No. 4125 of 2019 & W.P.(MD)No. 3220 of 2019], the Madurai Bench of the High Court of Madras employed a beneficial and purposive interpretation holding that the term 'bride' under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 includes transwomen and intersex persons identifying as women. Therefore, a marriage solemnised between a male and a transwoman, both professing the Hindu religion, is deemed to be a valid marriage under the Act. The import of this judgment cannot be overstated as it expands the scope of a term used in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 in a progressive manner and sets the stage for re-imagining marriage rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The judgment of the Madras High Court builds on the tenets laid down by the Supreme Court of India in *Shafin Jahan vs Asokan K.M. and Others* AIR 2018 SC 1933 (Hadiya case), wherein the right to choose and marry a partner was considered to be a constitutionally guaranteed freedom. By doing so, the Supreme Court held that the "intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable" and that "society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners". The only logical interpretation from reading these cases together, it is apparent that any legal or statutory bar to same-sex and queer marriages must necessarily be held to be unconstitutional and specifically violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of In-

dia. No longer can the position of the Union Government that marriage is a bond between "a biological man and a biological woman" be tenable.

di. No longer can the position of the Union Government that marriage is a bond between "a biological man and a biological woman" be tenable.

#### Evidence, models, good data

As more vaccines become available the vaccination policy must be adapted quickly to changing circumstances. We must generate evidence and develop models to design the appropriate vaccination strategy for younger populations. If cases are climbing in a particular region, we should direct vaccine doses there to protect as much of the population as possible and decrease both disease and further spread. High vaccination coverage in cities may protect rural areas. Some professions are most likely to spread infection and should therefore be prioritised for vaccination.

Finally, the Government must trust its citizens and share the information that is solely available to it. A notable aspect of the pandemic is the absence of credible data from the government. This has led to speculative ideas based on poor or poorly understood information and misinformation. The management of the pandemic has been severely impacted by this lack of granular, interpretable, actionable data. We need to restore society to normalcy. Good data, or the ability to measure what matters, is the key.

*Dr. George Thomas is the former editor of 'The Indian Journal of Medical Ethics', Dr. Gagandeep Kang is Professor, Wellcome Trust Research Laboratory at the Christian Medical College, Vellore; Dr. Jayaprakash Muliylil is former Principal of the Christian Medical College, Vellore*

## 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.

#### Assessment formula

The Supreme Court's approval of the CBSE's formula (along with the ICSE's) to assess the performance of Class 12 students this year is welcome, given the circumstances (Page 1, June 18). The pandemic has taught students an important lesson: that they cannot count on the usual eleventh hour preparations, as they should have performed well consistently in the last three years to score good marks/grades

this year. That said, one wonders how Class 10 marks can fit into Class 12 assessment especially in subjects such as business studies, accountancy, etc, which they would not have studied in Class 10. The evaluation would not reflect the correct performance.

S. RAMAKRISHNASAYEE, Chennai

The disruption caused by the pandemic offers lessons to the Government, school boards and the education sector. Marks and grades are

determined only by examinations. Students' abilities and skills are not often taken into consideration. Content-based assessments and evaluations do not give a clear picture of skills and competence. Instead of giving importance to theoretical aspects of subjects, utility and practical aspects of knowledge must be focused on. Education must never be reduced to textbook-based information, and rote-learning. It must develop critical thinking,

creativity and analytical abilities. As the disruptions by COVID-19 are likely to lead to a review of our present education and examination systems, it could be a blessing in disguise.

VENU G.S., Kalluvathukkal, Kollam, Kerala

#### Political opportunism

Political leaders and party members switching parties in election times and then doing it all over again as a result of greed for political power as well as monetary gains has become the order

of the day in Indian democracy. No party is above board. Yesterday, those who talked of accountability and transparency in public life are at the forefront of deal making. Rank opportunism has become a normal practice in the political conduct of our leaders who seldom care about voter sentiments. *Aaya Ram* *Gaya Ram* politics, once popular in Haryana, has now spread to almost every State, courtesy an ambitious BJP whose double standards are

out in the open.

BRJ B. GOYAL, Ludhiana, Punjab

#### Nadal's decision

Rafael Nadal's decision to pull out of Wimbledon and the Olympics "to prolong his career" defies logic as he is already 35. He should have a go at every Major. The race is against Novak Djokovic with a bunch of talented youngsters right behind.

V. LAKSHMANAN, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

# A village basking in vaccine glory

Viewan in Kashmir has become the first village in India to vaccinate all its people with the first dose against COVID-19. **Peerzada Ashiq** reports on the challenges faced by officials in turning a reluctant village in a remote area into a role model for the country



Dr Jehangeer Ahmad interacts with a local, Zaveri Bano, in the first week of June in Viewan village, Bandipora, north Kashmir. (Below): Neelofar Jan, a public health worker, vaccinates people near Athwato village in Bandipora district. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

A 3-km dirt track from Bandipora town allows vehicles passage to the whooshing Madhumati stream at Athwato village near the foothills of the Himalayas. The stream is noisy and in full flow – the glaciers nearby are melting fast under the warmth of the June sun in north Kashmir.

Across the stream, there are multiple narrow pony tracks on steep slopes. They lead to Viewan village, about 35 km away from the Bandipora district headquarters. On foot from Athwato, Viewan's last house is 11 km away. From here, the glaciers feeding the stream suddenly become visible and look like shimmering mirrors.

On the pony tracks, human habitation is visible first in Tangtari after 3 km of trekking. This cluster of 12 families is in the lower flank of Viewan village.

About 2 km away, Taziyat Jan and her daughter Naziya Jan sit in a two-storey mud-and-wood house buttressed against a slope in the midst of a dense forest. In this village – quaint, inaccessible and quiet – Taziyat has received her first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine. “I had heard a lot of negative things about the vaccine. I was hesitant at first, but doctors counselled us and motivated us to take it. They said the vaccination certificates are going to be an important document to move around and visit offices. So, I agreed,” she says.

Viewan shot into the limelight on June 7 when it was declared India's first vaccinated village against COVID-19. Everyone aged 18 and above has received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This glory has led to a big push for a pro-vaccine movement in Kashmir.

## A remote village

There are 710 adults – 348 of them aged above 45 years and 362 above 18 years – in and around Viewan village. Unlike the rest of the country, where fear of the virus prevails and lockdowns are still in effect, the local farmers and herders in the village have resumed a normal routine with some confidence.

Nawab Gojri, Taziyat's husband, got vaccinated in the first week of June. He then left on an arduous journey to G.G. Gali along with his cattle comprising 500 sheep. The upper reaches have untouched, green meadows where the cattle enjoy grazing. Back home, a ferocious dog keeps watch against any attack by bears.

“I had fever and dizziness after getting vaccinated, but it subsided quickly. My husband and I feel fine now. I am worried for my daughter who has suffered from a foot disease since childhood. The treatment is expensive, and we have dropped the idea of visiting any hospital,” Taziyat says.

Taziyat, like most inhabitants of Viewan, does not possess a radio, television or mobile phone. Only a few villagers have radio sets and trek to points



where they can catch a signal. With no communication access, information about the virus trickled in through a few locals like Rafiq Rehman. A farmer in his 30s, Rafiq knew that something terrible was unfolding in the plains throughout the year and people were dying. “I first heard about the pandemic on the radio in March,” Rehman says. Rehman and his family decided then that they would not venture towards the town.

Taziyat first came to know about the virus when doctors started streaming into the village in the last week of May. “Doctors told me that there is this disease which can kill us. They said if a person contracts it, the whole village can be wiped out. But Allah will take care of us now. We had no case of COVID-19 last year or this year,” Taziyat says.

The topography of Viewan village may have helped it to escape the fast-spreading pandemic in Bandipora district. It is a small village, remote, and landlocked. But for the same reasons, it has been a daunting task for the officials to vaccinate its population.

## Shedding the Wuhan tag

Bandipora district has a population of 3.92 lakh, according to the 2011 Census. Ninety-eight people have died of COVID-19 in the district so far. Thirty-six of them died in the second wave this year among the 4,338 people who tested positive until June 15.

The Deputy Commissioner of Bandipora, Dr Owais Ahmad, believes in aggressive sampling. This is what has helped keep the mortality rate low in this district. At least 2,44,215 samples, including 1,33,152 this year, have been collected since the pandemic outbreak. The sample size is equal to 62.2% of the total population of the district.

“Around 90% of the 45-plus age group has been covered so far. Extensive sampling, isolation of positive patients and strict preventive measures have all helped the district control the spread of the virus,” Ahmad says. The district administration also worked on setting up a five-bed COVID-19 Care Centre in every panchayat.

Last year, though, things were different for the district. Bandipora was labelled the ‘Wuhan of Kashmir’ when about 90% of the population in Gund Jahangir village, which has 1,500 people, tested positive for the virus in May-June.

“I still remember when the houses in

Gund Jahangir village emptied out and most of the people were shifted to quarantine centres last year. We dreaded walking through the streets and fields of Gund Jahangir,” says Dr Masarat Iqbal Wani, Block Medical Officer, Bandipora.

Wani, backed by Ahmad, was keen to not only get rid of this label but also beat the virus. The team began to work on a model, now known as the Viewan model, to battle the pandemic. The thrust, Wani says, was to create a chain of resource persons who could dispel the various myths about the vaccine, develop a rapport with the hesitant population, and convey the importance of vaccination before convincing the people to take the jab.

“We chose Viewan among 29 other remote villages of Bandipora because even if a single COVID-19-affected person made his or her entry into these pockets, it would have been catastrophic. It would have been very difficult for the affected population to reach the nearest medical centres in the plains. Vaccinating them was like creating a buffer wall, which we did,” Wani says.

All 267 villagers in the main cluster of Viewan village have been vaccinated with Covishield. In the other 28 villages, the 45-plus population has been inoculated with one dose.

## The Viewan model

The officials decided to first sensitise the population. They chose locals to influence the villagers, initiated vaccination drives, and sent a dedicated team of medical practitioners door-to-door for inoculation. Doctors were stationed nearby to address medical complications arising from vaccination.

Around 600 people of the Bandipora health department split into 60 teams to vaccinate the population. The population aged 45 and above is nearing 100% inoculation this week. The pace of the drive for people aged 18 and above has slowed down due to a low stock of vaccines.

It was one such team comprising doc-

tors, one auxiliary nurse midwife, an accredited social health activist worker, an anganwadi worker, a booth-level officer, teachers, sarpanchs, panchs, block development council members and voluntary influencers that visited Viewan on May 21 with a narrative and a method.

“There was hesitancy among the population regarding the vaccine. They had heard that some scientist had warned that people will die within two years of taking the vaccine,” says Wani. Many men hid in the jungles to escape getting vaccinated. “We managed to vaccinate only six people in the village, including the sarpanch, on our first trip,” he says.

Bagh Hussain, the sarpanch, says he could not sleep the night after inoculation. “We had heard that our limbs would fall off, we would die, etc. I was traumatised by these thoughts. But I realised that I need to show faith in the doctors to ensure that my community is safe from the virus,” he says.

For the next 10 days after the first visit, the team did not disturb the village. It was in the first week of June that the team returned with more evidence. All the doctors and paramedical staff carried videos of people being vaccinated to earn the trust of the villagers. “Once we were back in the village, we called all the six people who had been vaccinated 10 days earlier to tell us how they feel. The live demonstration worked for the rest of the population,” Wani says.

The team had another problem: all the elders in the village would either go to the fields or the upper reaches to graze cattle during the day. “So, we decided to do door-to-door vaccination at night. The sarpanch, who was vaccinated in the first trip, accompanied us to ensure that there was no communication gap,” Wani says.

The vaccination drive would start after sundown and continue well into midnight. As there was no accommodation available in this remote village, the female staff of the health department

stayed with the families, and the male staff stayed at the Viewan high school building. The building has been empty since the second wave hit India: all the 80-odd students enrolled there are at home. The entire population was vaccinated within three days and two nights.

Recalling the tour of the village, Jehangeer Ahmad, who is in his 20s, says he started trekking around 8 a.m. and reached the village around 12:30 p.m. It was not easy to develop a connection with the villagers immediately.

“We started a free medical camp once we reached the village. People started trooping in. Most women were anaemic. We addressed their chronic diseases. At the same time, we made them understand that vaccine certificates would help people access government offices in the future besides saving their lives,” Ahmad says.

Neelofar Jan, 30, a public health worker who vaccinated the villagers, has blisters from the arduous trek but that did not deter her from raising awareness about the vaccines. She says the women were very hesitant.

“We sat with them and educated them by providing a lot of details. We gave them a patient hearing. The biggest concern among women was infertility. We told them that this vaccine was like other vaccines which they had received as children to fight polio and measles. We told them that it is an immunity booster. Some people shut their doors but then, slowly, everyone started opening their doors to us,” Jan says.

The task of sensitising the population was not possible without a local influencer. Azad Hussain Sheikh, a government teacher who has worked as a booth-level officer during elections since 2008, had developed a rapport with the population. “I have visited Viewan many times. People know me and have faith in me. I used that influence to reinforce a pro-vaccine narrative. It worked,” Sheikh says.

Only 10 pregnant women could not be vaccinated in Viewan as the government has not yet approved of a policy to inoculate this segment. “When we vaccinated the entire eligible population of the village, we did not know that it would be the first village in the country to get this tag. We are very happy to achieve this feat. It was a joint effort between the top officials of the administration and grassroots representatives,” Ahmad says.

Since the village has no Internet, there was no way the team could register the details online. Details were written manually on a file at the spot. “Three days later, when the staff returned, the data were fed into the application for an official record,” Wani says.

## A pro-vaccine movement

The focus on Viewan has spurred a pro-vaccine movement in Bandipora dis-

trict. Majaz Hassan Khan, a candidate from Banakoot who lost the block development council polls, says he used the technique deployed during electioneering in his block to get people vaccinated. “I went door-to-door and pleaded with the people to get vaccinated, just like I would do to seek votes. When a medical team is backed by the political class in such initiatives, it does multiply the effect,” Khan says.

The Viewan model is being replicated across Bandipora. Health workers have drafted elaborate plans to go and inoculate people at night in far-off villages like Kundera, Chandaji and Sumlar where menfolk work in the fields during the day or take cattle for grazing.

“Late evening and midnight inoculations have proved successful in far-off villages. We need to design our vaccination plan according to the requirement of the population. Each village, semi-urban and urban pocket may require a different approach,” Wani says.

About 27 km away from Wani's hospital at the district headquarters, shikaras (small wooden boats) are decked up, with blue boxes of vaccines placed safely at one end. Wearing personal protection equipment, doctors and paramedical staff have decided to create a vaccine buffer in and around Wular lake, India's third largest freshwater lake.

At Kollhama, an island in the lake, doctors took samples to check if the population has been affected by the virus. After this examination, healthcare workers started vaccinating about 2,400 people. In another cluster of Zurimanz, 250 fishermen were vaccinated when they were out fishing in the lake during the day.

Bandipora's influencers, like kickboxing champion Tajamul Islam, 13, are also out on the streets to encourage those above 18 to line up for vaccination. “We can only defeat the virus by getting a jab,” Islam says.

The Viewan model has impressed the Bombay High Court too. On June 12, while hearing a petition, the court underlined the need to look at the door-to-door vaccination programme carried out successfully by Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala, with special reference to the country's first village that has got vaccinated. “How is it that individual States like Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir have introduced and are successfully doing door-to-door vaccination? What is the Centre's comment on the Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir pattern?” the Bench asked.

Unaware of the glory, Taziyat keeps looking at the sky-touching ridges of the Bandipora mountains where her vaccinated husband has gone to graze the cattle. “I am waiting for him to return safely with healthy cattle. We need to earn money to treat our daughter. I hope everyone gets vaccinated and the pandemic ends,” she says.





IN BRIEF



Court dismisses Christian Michel's bail petition

A special court on Friday dismissed the bail applications of British national Christian Michel, a key accused in the ₹3,700-crore VVIP chopper deal scam...

PDP's Parra shifted from Srinagar to Jammu jail

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) youth president Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra was shifted from Kashmir to a Jammu jail on Friday...

Forest guards kill tiger in 'accidental firing'

An incident of "accidental firing" has resulted in the death of a tiger on the outskirts of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve...

Assam cancels Class 10 and 12 board exams

The Assam government on Friday cancelled the Class 10 and 12 board exams in view of the COVID-19 situation in the State...

INTERVIEW | OM BIRLA

'Nobody objected to building new Parliament when it was proposed'

Lok Sabha Speaker calls for smaller constituencies, increasing number of MPs

NISTULA HEBBAR SANDEEP PHUKAN NEW DELHI

As Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla completes two years in office, he speaks about the importance of letting all elected representatives have a voice in Parliament...



I don't think anyone wanted Lok Sabha proceedings virtually

ceedings were going on during the COVID-19 period, none said on the floor of the House that Parliament should function virtually...

panded, the number of members increased, the outer shape of the building saw little alteration, but inside ad hoc changes to adapt to new needs took place...

The cost of the project is ₹970 crore and not ₹20,000 crore as is being said. Nobody in the government has said that the cost of the project will come in the way of any spending on COVID-19 management...

The proposed new Parliament has a seating capacity of 1,000 people for Lok Sabha. Former president Pranab Mukherjee had suggested raising the number of MPs because constituencies were too large and unwieldy...

As you complete two years, what would you say have been your achievements and the challenges you have faced?

Running the House at a time when COVID infections were fairly high was certainly a challenge. After a lot of brainstorming on how to run the House, Rajya Sabha Chairman and I agreed to have staggered timings for both the Houses and make seating arrangements for members of one House to sit in both the Houses...

I also started some new practices that came out of my experience when I was a first time member. I made it a point to encourage and allow all MPs to raise Zero hour notices, where most don't get the opportunity...

Several Opposition members wrote letters to ask why Parliament, as well as Parliamentary panels, can't meet virtually when the Prime Minister can conduct meetings with Chief Ministers virtually?

Several members have asked for the restoration of the Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) especially during the pandemic...

What was the need for a new Parliament and why was the decision to continue construction in the midst of the second wave of COVID-19 taken, despite criticism?

Chennithala meets Rahul amid Cong. churn

Ripples from poll losses refuse to ease

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The meeting of former Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, Ramesh Chennithala, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday revived talks of a possible organisational reshuffle in the party.



Ramesh Chennithala, left, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. FILE PHOTO

Mr. Chennithala, who had shot off a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi to express his disappointment over the manner in which he was dropped from the LoP's post, is expected to be made an All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary.

will hurt the Congress' prospects in Upper Assam, especially among the tea tribes that traditionally voted for the party but have now moved to the BJP.

There is still no clarity on who will head the Congress in Assam (the current Pradesh Congress Committee chief Ripun Bora has resigned) but there is speculation about more desertions in the Assam unit.

In Punjab, where the factional fights between Chief Minister Capt. (Retd) Amarinder Singh and cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu have played out under full media glare, there is now a new political realignment within the party.

Intense factionalism

The party is also faced with desertions and intense factionalism in States as diverse as Assam, Punjab and Rajasthan.

Barely days after Uttar Pradesh Congress leader Jitendra Prasad quit to join the BJP, a four-time Assam lawmaker, Rupjyoti Kurmi, is expected to do the same after resigning from the party as a legislator. While the departure of Mr. Kurmi - a young leader from the tea garden community - hasn't grabbed headlines, his loss

Panel formed for talks on theatre commands

'Many issues concern other Ministries'

DINAKAR PERI NEW DELHI

A high-level committee consisting of representatives from the services and the Ministries concerned has been formed for wider consultations on the creation of integrated triservice theatre commands, defence officials said.

The panel includes the Vice-Chiefs of the three services, the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, and representatives from Ministries such as Home Affairs, Finance and Law.

The decision was taken at a meeting last week after several issues were brought out which concern other Ministries, a defence official said. The committee will examine all issues and find a way forward before a formal note on their creation is sent to the Cabinet Committee on Security.

The official said the move was necessitated due to some aspects like bringing in paramilitary forces, which are under the Home Ministry, under the purview of the theatre commands and financial implications that may arise in the process of integration. The creation of theatre commands is now a given with directives at

the highest level, the issue is about fine-tuning the proposals and forming a consensus on how they should be, another defence official explained.

The mandate of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) includes bringing about jointness among the three services, including through the establishment of joint/theatre commands. The country's first CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat had constituted teams headed by the Vice-Chiefs of three services to study and submit recommendations on the formation of various commands. He recently stated that the study reports on the two proposed commands - air defence and maritime theatre - are being discussed and would be rolled out by August. However, with differences still to be resolved, there could be some delay.

The proposed Air Defence Command plans to integrate all air assets of the armed forces, while the Maritime Theatre Command plans to bring in all assets of Navy, Coast Guard as well as coastal formations of Army and Air Force under one umbrella. On land, the Army's Northern Command and Western Command would be converted into two to five theatre commands.

appropriate authorities may consider increasing the number of MPs, as a single person representing so many people is very difficult. One of the reasons I made it a point that as many MPs as possible should raise Zero Hour notices was because MPs are elected by such large electorates.

The Trinamool Congress asked for disqualification of two of its MPs [Sunil Mondal and Sisir Adhikari] for anti-party activities. What is happening to that request? They have written to me with their complaints. I have said that the complaint be taken on board as per the form required, I shall ask the two named for their version and later refer it to the Privileges Committee which will then hear the matter.

Any time line by when this will be over?

Well, the anti-defection law doesn't specify a time-line in dealing with such complaints. All I can say is that the process will be carried out in the most transparent way.

But the recognition of the breakthrough Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) as a group in the Lok Sabha has done almost overnight?

The LJP passed a resolution, the chief whip came along with the other four MPs and met me. Even then, I checked the signatures on the letter in person with all of them. No letter came challenging it, Chirag Paswan wrote two days after that.

Will you be asking for vaccination certificates from MPs for attending future sessions of Parliament?

We have only respectfully requested MPs to get vaccinated. As per our record, 425 MPs are vaccinated, some members suffered from COVID-19 recently and their vaccination is on hold. And we have not received any information from about 40-odd MPs. We are not making vaccination mandatory but want all MPs to be vaccinated as and when protocols suit.

Sale of illegal HTBt cotton seeds doubles

Industry lobbies demand action against offenders

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ NEW DELHI

The illegal cultivation of herbicide-tolerant (HT) Bt cotton has seen a huge jump this year, with seed manufacturers claiming that the sale of illegal seed packets has more than doubled from 30 lakh last year to 75 lakh this year. Industry lobbies have written to the Agriculture Ministry, demanding that action be taken to stop such sales and punish offenders, noting that cultivation of the genetically modified cotton variant has serious environmental and economic consequences.

However, a senior official at the Ministry said it was up to the State governments to enforce the policy. This comes even as activists from the Shetkari Sangathan have stepped up the reach of their civil disobedience movement to demand the legalisation of HTBt cotton by encouraging farmers to plant the seeds in violation of government regulations.

Bt cotton is the only transgenic crop that has been approved by the Centre for commercial cultivation in India. It has been genetically modified to produce an insecticide to combat the cotton bollworm, a common



The sales doubled from 30 lakh last year to 75 lakh this year.

there is no accountability of the quality of seed, it pollutes the environment, the industry is losing legitimate seed sale and the government also loses revenue in terms of tax collection," he added, noting that HTBt seeds are often produced in Gujarat and then moved to Maharashtra.

"It will not only decimate small cotton seed companies but also threatens the entire legal cotton seed market in India," National Seed Association of India president Prabhakar Rao said on Friday. "Regulators are only limiting their checking to licensed dealers and seed companies while this illegal activity of HT seed sales is carried mostly by unorganised and fly by night operators. The focus must be shifted to catching them and taking exemplary and strong punitive action."

Deputy Seeds Commissioner Dilip Srivastava admitted that such complaints had become widespread. "Centre has made the policy to ban this variant. But it is the State governments that must take action. We are issuing advisories from time to time," he told The Hindu.

Another official said following Central advisories to all cotton-growing States, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Telangana have seized HTBt stock and taken punitive action against the culprits.

CBSE develops portal to tabulate Class 12 marks

It issues notifications to all principals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

As schools grapple with the new formula to tabulate Class 12 marks approved by the Supreme Court on Thursday, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued a notification to all principals regarding the Information Technology system being developed in-house to aid them.

"This system will ease

down the calculation work, reduce the time taken and so many other hassles. This system will also pre-populate the marks of Class X of the students passed from CBSE. Efforts will also be made to take other Boards' Class X data," said the notification. The portal to check and update Class 10 results for all students will be available from Monday, while other software modules will be provided after that.

India, 3 EU nations begin naval exercise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The maiden Indian Navy and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) exercise began in the Gulf of Aden on Friday. Five warships from four navies are participating in the two-day exercise. INS Trikand is participating in the exercise, along with Italy's ITS Carabinere, the Spanish Navy's ESPs Navarra, and FS Tonnerre and FS Surcouf of France.

PARADIP PORT TRUST e-TENDER CALL NOTICE. Name of the work : 08th Dry Docking & Repairs of TUG Parvati of Paradip Port Trust.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (NI-MSME). e-Tender Call Notice for the purchase of various items.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD. OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI.

ANDHRA PRADESH MEDICAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION. Plot No.9, Survey No.49, IT Park, Mangalagiri-522503, Guntur District.

KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE. Office of the Deputy Chief Engineer, Transmission Circle, Thodupuzha.

central mine planning and design institute limited (A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited). NOTICE. All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on websites of Coal India Ltd.

Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation (RSLDC). Office of Managing Director, EMI Campus, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur.

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भरतपुर. नगर निगम, भरतपुर द्वारा निम्न कार्य कराये जाने हेतु केन्द्र सरकार व राज्य सरकार के विभागों में E-1 श्रेणी (विद्युत) में पंजीकृत संवेदकों/अनुभवों फर्मों से निष्पत्ति प्रथम में ई प्रोपोज़िशन प्रक्रिया से वेबसाइट http://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in पर ऑनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

# 'Third wave may hit by October'

But it will be better controlled, say experts in a poll

REUTERS BENGALURU

A third wave of COVID-19 infections is likely to hit India by October, and although it will be better controlled than the latest outbreak, the pandemic will remain a public health threat for at least another year, according to a Reuters poll of medical experts.

The June 3-17 snap survey of 40 experts from around the world showed that a significant pickup in vaccinations will likely provide some cover to a fresh outbreak.

Of those who ventured a prediction, over 85% of respondents, or 21 of 24, said the next wave will hit by October, including three who forecast it as early as August, and 12 in September. The remaining three said the third



**Cause of concern:** COVID-19 will remain a threat for at least another year, according to medical experts. Picture shows empty beds at a hospital in Ahmedabad. • VIJAY SONEJI

wave would occur between November and February.

But over 70% of experts, or 24 of 34, said any new outbreak would be better controlled compared with the current one, which has been far more devastating — with shortage of vaccines, medicines, oxygen and hospital beds — than the smaller first surge in infections last year.

"It will be more controlled, as cases will be much less because more vaccinations would have been rolled out and there would be some degree of natural immunity from the second-wave," said Dr. Randeep Guleria, director at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). When asked if children and those under 18 years

would be most at risk, nearly two-thirds of experts, or 26 of 40, said yes. But 14 experts said children were not at risk.

Earlier this week, a senior Union Health Ministry official said children were vulnerable and susceptible to infections but that analysis has shown a less severe health impact.

# COVID-19 numbers down but cannot lower guard: Paul

NITI Aayog member cautions about mutations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

India is showing a steady decline in the number of new COVID-19 cases but this decline should not be taken for granted, said Member, (Health) of the NITI Aayog V.K. Paul on Friday. Speaking at a press conference, Dr Paul added that the virus is mutating and "we can't lower our guard".

"Studies have also shown that children have equal susceptibility as adults so we have to be ready to ensure that we are in a position to cater to them in case numbers rise again," he added.

Dr. Paul explained that a World Health Organization and All India Institute of



Dr. V.K. Paul

Medical Sciences (WHO-AIIMS) survey shows seropositivity in persons below and above 18 years of age is almost similar. "In persons above 18, the seropositivity rate is 67% and 59% in persons below 18. In urban areas, it is 78% in persons below 18 and 79% in above 18, while in rural areas, the seropositivity rate is 56% in persons below 18 years of age and 63% in persons above 18. The information

shows that the children are getting infected," he said.

On vaccination, Dr. Paul said there are studies that prove that it reduced the chances of hospitalisation by 75-80% even after contracting COVID-19. "It also reduced the risk of ICU admission and brings it down to 6% in vaccinated persons and oxygen requirement comes down to 8%. The study was done among health care workers, who are a high-risk group," he said.

**Decline in daily cases** The Ministry said India has registered almost an 85% decline in daily new cases since the highest reported peak on May 7.

About 78.6% decline has been recorded in total active cases since the peak reported on May 10, the Ministry added.

# India sees 47,045 fresh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

India recorded 47,045 new COVID-19 cases and 1,462 deaths till 8.30 p.m. on Friday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,98,09,031 cases and 3,84,984 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 9,798 new infections, followed by Tamil Nadu (8,633) and Andhra Pradesh (6,341). Maharashtra also recorded 648 fatalities, followed by Tamil Nadu (287) and Karnataka (168). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Bihar, Punjab, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Around 19.29 lakh samples were tested in the country on Thursday, the results for which were made available on Friday. About 32.59 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Friday, which is 2 lakh doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 16,000 doses fewer than what was recorded during the same period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to increase. It stood at 31.24 lakh on June 17, which is slightly more than the 30.27 lakh recorded a week before (June 10).

While 16.1% of the population has received at least one dose, only 3.6% are fully vaccinated. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

## IN BRIEF



### Bihar woman given both Covishield and Covaxin

A Bihar woman, Sunila Devi, was administered shots of both the Covishield and Covaxin vaccines at an interval of five minutes on June 16. She is under the observation of a medical team and is said to be well. The incident occurred at the Beldarichak middle school vaccination camp.

### Girl sells shirts after losing father to COVID-19

Losing her father to COVID-19 in April, a Class 6 girl selling ready-made shirts outside her house in busy Khirni Bagh area of Shahjahanpur district has caught the attention of both the police and locals. Mahi's father, the sole bread earner of the family, used to supply ready-made shirts to shopkeepers. "The family has been assured of all help from my side," said Sadar Bazar police station in-charge Ashok Pal. • PTI

### Summit for vaccine internationalism begins

The Progressive International's four-day Summit for vaccine internationalism opened on Friday, with the goal of ending "the pandemic as quickly as possible by securing COVID-19 vaccines for all". A release said the summit brings together global south governments, political leaders, healthcare workers and vaccine manufacturers from over twenty countries and follows criticism of the G7's plan by U.N. aid chief Mark Lowcock as "not serious" and lacking "necessary urgency."

# IMA, doctors protest over violence against workers

Health Ministry writes to States, UTs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Several doctors across the country took part on Friday in a nationwide stir called by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) over the recent incidents of violence against healthcare professionals. The doctors and the IMA demanded a Central law to curb such cases. The association said that around 3.5 lakh doctors participated in the protest today.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has urged all States and Union Territories to ensure that prompt steps are taken for the safety and well-being of healthcare

workers while strictly implementing the amended Epidemic Diseases Act. In a letter, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said that healthcare workers are the most crucial resources in COVID-19 management on all fronts.

The letter, issued to Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries and Health Secretaries of all States and Union Territories, said that on multiple occasions, the Health Ministry had highlighted the need to ensure the safety and security of healthcare workers in their living and working premises.

# Join fight against pandemic: Vardhan

Health Minister calls for adherence to safety measures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The government worked round the clock to stop COVID-19 last year and was successful in decreasing the active caseload to the minimum, said Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan on Friday. However, with the arrival of vaccines early this year and things returning to normality, people gradually invited laxity in their adherence to the simple code of pandemic-appropriate behaviour, he added. While the virus mutated and evolved itself, people let their guard down. All this compounded



**Taking stock:** Union Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan chairing a high-level meeting in New Delhi on Friday. • ANI

in the spike in cases snowballing into the second wave, he said.

Distributing masks to all employees of the Health Ministry, he noted that that now many parts of the country were gradually moving towards unlock from the se-

cond wave, but "we cannot afford the laxity and any further increase in cases again".

Masks were the simplest, most powerful weapon against all variants of the virus, he said. He appealed to everyone, including em-

ployers, social organisations, his colleagues in other Ministries and political leaders in office to ensure that all their employees were safe from COVID-19. "We should ensure that all of them have adequate masks, that they are properly worn, and inform them, if necessary, about the importance of COVID-19-appropriate behaviour. We should encourage them to get vaccinated as well," he stated.

India, he said, had started the largest vaccination drive in the world and was now geared up to universalise it, throwing it open free of cost to every adult citizen above 18 years of age. He appealed to every Indian to get vaccinated and join the 'Jan Andolan' against the pandemic.

# No role for State in last rites, says Allahabad High Court

Plea for disposal of bodies buried along the Ganga

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Friday dismissed a petition seeking directions to the Uttar Pradesh government to perform last rites, cremate or dispose the bodies found near river Ganga, saying, "If there is a death in a family, is it the responsibility of the State?"

The petitioner, Pranvesh, a lawyer from Prayagraj, had pleaded with the court for directions to the State government and officials in Prayagraj to perform the cre-



**Ganga's plight:** The petitioner had sought proper disposal of bodies at different ghats in Prayagraj. • PTI

mation according to religious rites and dispose the bodies buried at different ghats in Prayagraj as early as possible. The petition also sought directions to the government to prevent or stop the burial of bodies near the river. A bench of Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav and Justice Prakash Padia said the petitioner "has not done much research work" in respect of rites and customs which are prevalent among various communities living along the bank of river Ganga.

# Taking COVID-19 tests to rural India

CSIR ties up with Tata Group to develop mobile testing laboratories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has tied up with the Tata MD, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, to develop mobile testing laboratories to increase COVID-19 testing capacity in rural India.

The initiative will utilise CSIR's network of close to 40 labs across India and help increase India's testing capacity in smaller locations in the country. "CSIR and Tata MD will jointly develop the testing capacity and the RT-PCR, CRISPR test will be done using the Tata MD CHECK SARS-CoV-2 test kits that are powered by FELUDA technology from CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative

Biology (CSIR-IGIB)," a statement from the Science Ministry said on Friday.

**Simpler test**

The CSIR-IGIB had developed a coronavirus detection test that employed a gene-editing technology, called CRISPR. A paper-strip based test that needs to be analysed in a laboratory, FELUDA's promise is that it is a relatively simpler test to execute, using which results can be known faster than in a traditional RT-PCR based test.

"Apart from vaccination, rapid testing and isolation of SARS-CoV-2 positive persons have emerged as the best strategy in combating COVID-19. This initiative in partnership with Tata MD, to de-

ploy the RT-PCR CRISPR test across multiple CSIR labs spread across the country is an important step. This will augment the national capacity to test for COVID and detect it locally" Shekhar Mande, Director-General, CSIR, said in a statement.

For expanding reach, Tata MD is also deploying a proprietary 3-room design mobile testing lab that can conduct end-to-end, on-site COVID-19 testing to increase the testing capacity.

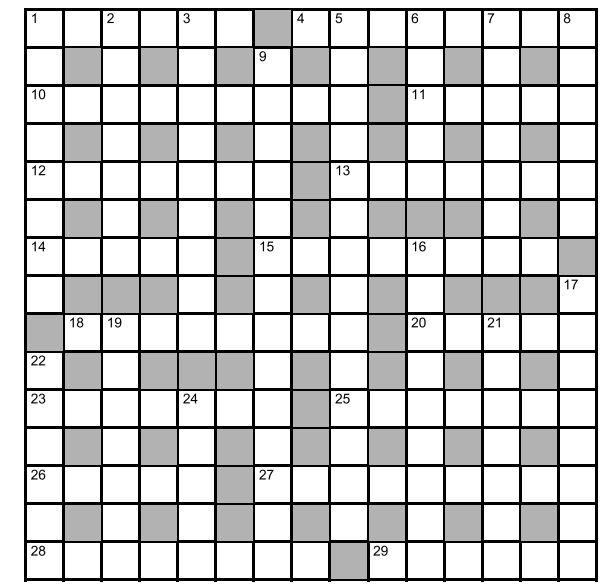
"By partnering with CSIR's network of labs and deploying fully equipped mobile laboratories, we are confident that we can quickly augment testing capacity using faster and scalable methods. This will signifi-

cantly enhance the ability of State and district administrations to ensure wider availability and easier access to testing on an ongoing basis," said Girish Krishnamurthy, CEO and MD of Tata Medical and Diagnostics.

The FELUDA technology has already been licensed to the Tata Group by CSIR in 2020. The test was employed — it isn't clear how many — during the concluded Kumbh Mela in Haridwar. So far 13 CSIR labs have been engaged in carrying out RT-PCR testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first CSIR lab to deploy the test was the CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

**THE CROSSWORD + 13278** Display keystrokes of genius. Type your answers into our online grids. @ https://qr.go.page.link/jjpTn



- ACROSS
- 1 Provides online jokes (6)
- 4 Determined ship, caught in stormy seas near England, evacuated (8)
- 10 Bird is calm, eating baked bread (9)
- 11 Breakfast food perfectly wrapped — sausages, primarily (5)
- 12 Use prop when playing role (7)
- 13 Student inside saw murder (7)
- 14 Greeting with a look and a laugh (5)

- 15 Titles of leaders in Europe saluting Gandhi perhaps (8)
- 18 Project about cutting a group of trees (8)
- 20 Inert compound becoming explosive (5)
- 23 Group of stars beginning to panic, say, like you and me (7)
- 25 Change direction of tour, moving east (7)
- 26 Quarrel in royal marriage, without love... (3-2)
- 27 ... you can annul, finally, formally signing and separating (9)
- 28 An air of finality (4,4)
- 29 Jack, trapped, avoided check-in at the terminal and flew (6)
- DOWN
- 1 German possibly exchanging a rupee note, half torn (8)
- 2 Essentially new, ground-breaking experience (7)
- 3 Riddle somewhat improper for a teenager (9)
- 5 Catalysts for industrial innovations initially worked well (14)
- 6 More of old retro music, say (5)
- 7 Son eating a small slice (7)
- 8 Perform on dais, forgetting opening of script - it's senility (6)
- 9 New nurse hated mask - attracts attention (5,5,4)
- 16 Canoeing vigorously around river - they say it is bliss (9)
- 17 Embarrassed about game lost in the end, girl fought back (8)
- 19 Member reaches South Africa to get material (7)
- 21 Visitor knocked out before bar's closing time in Bengaluru (7)
- 22 Excuses small cuts (6)
- 24 King overwhelmed by wrongdoings, dies (5)

## SUDOKU

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

**Solution to puzzle 13277**

A	G	E	O	F	R	E	A	S	O	N				
S	N	O	N	Y	A	I	F							
C	O	V	E	R	E	L	I	C	E	N	S	E		
E	O	M	G	L	R	D	E							
N	A	I	R	A	A	C	A	D	E	M	I	C	S	
S	L	M	B	A	G	E								
I	R	A	N	I	E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H	
O	P	T	F	N	A									
N	A	P	T	R	A	S	H	O	T	E	R			
R	E	T	A	R	I	B								
P	R	O	L	A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	S	I	
A	V	N	E	D	I	E	N							
P	H	A	N	T	O	C	O	O	L	E	B	A	G	
A	L	I	P	A	R	E	E							
C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R				

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

## FAITH

### Kamsa's confusion

Kamsa was warned that Devaki's eighth child would kill him. Kamsa spared Devaki's life, but killed every child born to her because of the threat to his life. He killed the first six sons born to her. When Devaki was carrying the seventh child, a miracle happened. Lord Narayana summoned Yogamaya and asked her to transfer Devaki's four-month-old foetus to the womb of Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva. When this was accomplished, everyone thought that Devaki's foetus had aborted. Now Kamsa, naturally, was in a state of confusion. The voice warning him had not spoken of such a situation. Should he count the aborted foetus as number seven? Or should he not? Kamsa did not know, and lost his peace of mind because of this.

This too was Krishna's leela. The Lord makes sure that those who detest Him or detest His devotees lose their sleep and happiness, said V.S. Karunakarachariar in a discourse. The foetus transferred to Rohini's womb was born at the appropriate time and was named Balarama. So the seventh child of Devaki was safe and sound. When Devaki became pregnant for the eighth time, Kamsa wondered if it would not be wise to kill her and be rid of the threat to his life once and for all. But he did not. Kamsa deciding to spare Devaki's life was the Lord's doing and was one of Krishna's leelas. Devaki carried the eighth child full term and Krishna was born. Vedanta Desika says that He was born in rishaba lagna, when five planets were in the most auspicious position. Appayya Dikshitar in his commentary on Vedanta Desika's Yadavabhudaya gives the astrological details. When Krishna was born, Chandra was in rishaba lagna, Mars was in Makara rasi, Mercury was in Kanya rasi, Jupiter was in Karkataka rasi and Saturn was in Tula rasi.



## Instapick

**Hot air balloons:** Multimedia artist Patricia Piccinini will fly her two whale balloons, Skywhale and Skywhalepapa, around Australia through 2021 and 2022. Celebrating fathers' roles as caregivers, the aerial sculptures depict 'the whale papa holding babies'. Meanwhile, artist Brian Donnelly, aka KAWS, is taking his character, Companion, as a hot air balloon to international cities. @kaws on Insta



## Talking Point

**Euro 2020:** The European Championship is pan-continental for the first time, with host cities ranging from Seville, Spain to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Fans are banking on Britain going ahead with full unlock plans: it would mean a full stadium for the final at Wembley Stadium on July 11. Meanwhile, Cristiano Ronaldo's Coca-Cola snub has highlighted the flip side of the rise of celebrity ambassadors.

# YARN IT! Betting on Father's Hour

Save the trick questions and make time for TV, specifically, Euro Cup TV!

JANE DE SUZA

I'm a great dad, don't get me wrong, but Father's Day terrifies me. It's another date I'm reminded that I forgot. If you really want a Dad's Day, it should be up to us dads to pick any one. Like casual leave. I'll take it whenever I want to. Huge extended family function? Sorry, I can't make it - I'm having a Father's Day. Else, allow us a Father's Hour - 24 of them to permutate. There's the match and I'm claiming my Father's Hour. With about 5000 calories in deep-fried snacks and a remote control within arm's reach. And of legitimately being emotionally

unavailable (which is non-bailable in the wife's eyes). It's not true that I never listen. I devoutly listen to the chaps in the commentary box who are kindly celebrating Father's Hour with me, whether they're fathers or not.

What makes Father's Day even more alarming is being asked what I want to do. The para above, obviously. But this 'What I want to do' is intricately linked to 'What we want to do' as a family. It's a devious trap. The last time we did this family time, it clashed with the Roland Garros finals. So we sat through a family movie, with puppies and babies, which got my wife weeping. I was weeping too.



SREEJITH RAVIKUMAR

Real tears. Because my friend kept ping me about the nail-biting first set. I was so emotionally available, emotionally overwrought even - that I had to rush to the loo, to get him to aim his video at his TV. I returned to

find that the puppy was still lost, or was it the grandpa? And they unfairly stayed lost through the second set as well.

What I'd like on Father's Day is not to be asked trick questions. And really, they're all trick questions. Which section is the kid

in? What is the history teacher's surname? Did you remember to buy fabric softener - I said so thrice? Do I look fatter in this or this? Do you remember what we said 11 years, 3 months and 15 days ago in the veranda at Isha's baby shower? I remember neither the baby nor its shower and only remember Isha for reasons you won't want to know.

For Father's Day, listen to my answers, though. Permanent answers which never change. To kid #1, you're too young for a boyfriend, and you always will be. To kid #2, no, your haircut doesn't suit you, and what it costs doesn't suit me. To both: I'm not paying your criminally-high fees for your vocabulary to comprise single alphabets like k, or c u.

Actually, Father's Day isn't so bad. Those kind chaps have planned the Euro Cup fixtures around it. Let's celebrate it with some family time and weep together - at the sheer beauty of this pass or that impossible save - and re-watch old matches for the 19th time. We'll have such a great Father's Day, you may just forget to remind me about it from the next year on.

Where Jane De Suza, the author of *Happily Never After*, talks about the week's quirks, quacks and hacks

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli's column, *Spit Take*, will be back as per schedule on July 3

## Pick of the week

Virtual tours, workshops, and other events you just can't miss



**Payal's NYC trunk show**

While she has been promoting her floral lightweight lehengas, and joining other designers for fundraisers during the second wave, Payal Singhal has also been busy getting back into the international pop-up circuit. #PSTravellingTrunkShow is underway at Radisson Hotel in New York, and includes her SS'21 collection 'The New Normal', menswear and wedding accessories. June 18-19. Also on payalsinghal.com. Closer home, Amazon Fashion has its **Wardrobe Refresh Sale** from June 19 to 23.



**Knowing Sita**

Aalaap begins a six-part series called **The Goddess: Six-Fold** with storyteller, artist and practitioner of Sanatana Dharma, Vinay Varanasi. Expect immersive storytelling with the focus on *Sita: The Power of the Feminine*. The curators will explore the many meanings and metaphors of the goddess. June 19 onwards. @aalaap\_concepts on Instagram. Meanwhile, **National Centre of Performing Arts (NCPA)** has an introductory music programme for five to seven-year-olds, starting July 5. Registration closes on June 21. ₹15,000, soimumbai.com/prelude



**Hear, hear**

Not travelling yet? British travel writer Aaron Millar will prime you for your first post-pandemic getaway with his stories from around the world. Check out his podcast, **Armchair Explorer**. Another podcast for the moment: Deepa Narayan's *What's a Man: Masculinity in India*. New episodes from June 23 feature feminist queer activist Manak Matiyani and Sanora Jha, the author of *How to Raise a Feminist Son*. But this weekend, a recent episode, **Fathers and Sons**, may be of interest, as it explores relationships between fathers and sons.



**Art likes print**

Adult colouring sheet, art by muralist and visual artist Anpu Varkey... **The Irregular Times**, a new art+design newspaper, has this and more in its first issue. Titled *Please Wait For The Host To Start This Meeting*, it is fuelled by plans to build a community-driven culture around design and **zine-making**. From Tarini Sethi and Anant Ahuja, the team behind visual arts and design initiatives like *The Irregular Art Fair* (an anti-art-fair for independent artists). ₹750 at theirregulararttimes.com



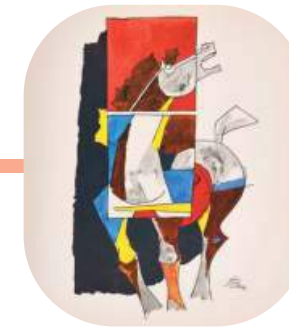
**Playing with the Khans**

If it feels like it's too soon, you are not alone. **World Music Day** (June 21) returns and with it scores of initiatives. Sony India has special offers on headphones and other audio products till June 21. Tourism Virginia is helping travellers plan 'country music' holidays for, sigh, 2022. But our favourite is the collaboration by **sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan** with Eagles' guitarist **Joe Walsh**. Khan's sons Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash are also part of the equation that has resulted in a three-song EP, *Prayers-East Meets West*. On Universal Music.



**Asanas unite**

Let's not forget International Yoga Day (also on June 21). Accessory brand Fastrack has a fitness band, Reflex 3.0, that they say will track all yoga movements at ₹2,495. Yoga-based wellness platform, **Sarva**, has a new campaign #StartTohKaro featuring Malaika Arora and Mira Kapoor. With 14 live sessions from 6.30 am onwards that can be accessed if you register for the Yoga Day Pass. ₹499-₹999. sarva.com Meanwhile, The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations has an online celebration from 6 pm to 7.30 pm IST on UN WebTV



**Art and IKEA**

AstaGuru's upcoming auction, *Collector's Choice*, has 120 lots and rare Modern Indian works. Like Ivory Eyes, an enamel on canvas work by Prabhakar Barwe from 1976. Or MF Husain's *Untitled* from his *Calcutta Series*, circa 1990. Each estimated at ₹20-₹30 lakh. All lots will be offered at no reserve and will start at an opening bid on ₹20,000. June 25-26. astaguru.com. For something more affordable for the home, there's good news: Swedish furniture giant **IKEA is now in Bengaluru** via e-commerce and their mobile shopping app. ikea.in

## GREEN LIVING

Plant-based drinks, a card game on birds, and Stella McCartney's latest eco-collection

# Return to Earth

Compiled by Nidhi Adlakha



**Plant-based Drinks**

**Only Earth**  
The latest entrant on the plant-based beverage bandwagon is Singapore-led Only Earth. Launched earlier this year, it is the brainchild of entrepreneur Kunal Mutha of Chennai's Mohan Mutha Group. Having made the switch to veganism two years ago, the athlete-in-making has kicked off his offerings with oat and coconut milk, and will soon be launching an almond variant. All products come in a one litre pack and are also available on leading online portals such as Amazon, Big Basket, and QTROVE. ₹300 per pack, on myonlyearth.com



**Immunity Gummies**

**Yours Truly**  
The evergreen superfood, turmeric, gets a new avatar in these vitamin-rich gummy bears for adults. An offering by the 2020 entrant in the nutraceutical industry, Yours Truly, the gummies claim to be '100% vegan, gluten-free, and enriched with antioxidants'. Rich in curcumin, the pops are said to boost the immune system, and improve digestive, brain and liver health. The founders advise two gummies every morning, and one before bedtime. ₹399 for 30 gummies. yourstrulycares.com

Disclaimer: Consult your doctor before starting any supplement



**Upcycled Plastic Bags**

**EcoKaari**  
Pune-based EcoKaari, known for transforming plastic waste into utility products, has a sale for Father's Day. Having upcycled close to 15 lakh plastic bags to date, the social enterprise handcrafts its 'fabrics' using the *charkha*. From totes and handbags (₹800 onwards) to cutlery kits and planters, the products pair traditional craft with contemporary designs. They also have a plastic donation drive in the city. Details: [ecokaari.org](http://ecokaari.org)

**Autumn 2021**

**Stella McCartney**  
The celebrated London-based fashion designer says her latest Autumn 2021 collection is their 'most sustainable collection to date' and is inspired by 'J is for Joy, from the McCartney A to Z Manifesto'. Featuring jackets, knit jumpers, patchwork silk trousers, boots, sneakers, and more, the line is reportedly crafted from eco-fabrics such as Econyl, forest-friendly viscose, sustainable beechwood, and old-stock fabrics. ₹20,723 onwards, on [stellamccartney.com](http://stellamccartney.com)



**Eco Apparel**

**Upcycleluxe**  
NIFT graduate and founder Harshita Chandra calls the four-month-old venture 'India's first e-commerce sustainable fashion tech marketplace'. Partner brands include Ahmev, Doodlage, Kaiyore, Punah, The Loom Art, and more. While the women's edit (₹2,000 onwards) includes pleated pants, draped shirts, tunics and dresses, the collection for men (₹4,500 onwards) comprises bomber jackets, shirts and trousers in shades of blue, grey and peach. [upcycleluxe.com](http://upcycleluxe.com)



**Birds of Kodaikanal**

**Hoopoe on a Hill**  
This hand-illustrated card game is the latest launch by the women-led organisation based in Kodaikanal. Known for retailing wild honey gathered by *adivasi* communities of Palani Hills, Tamil Nadu, the group has focussed on the many winged inhabitants of the hill station for the game. To play, you need to match the pairs of 20 bird species. Also available are beeswax crayons, candles, coffee, and a range of wild honey. The card game is priced at ₹450, on [hoopoeonahill.com](http://hoopoeonahill.com)

## What he gave me

With time, good memories return, says this writer about losing her father as a teen

CHRYSELLE D'SILVA DIAS

There was nothing extraordinary about the day my father died. I recall coming home from college, and finding an empty house; my friend pulling up in an auto-rickshaw, saying "Hurry up, your dad's in hospital!". In the days before mobile phones there was no other way to get the news to me.

I was 18 that year, the oldest of three siblings. As a self-obsessed teen, I don't remember having long conversations with him. My mother was a more present, constant figure



## FASHION

### Jamdani: deadstock to dresses

FAYE REMEDIOS

Revival isn't new for this fabric. *Jamdani* has the potential to bring about an artisanal diversity by utilising modern techniques. However, for us to sustain the skill and artisans associated with it, we need to make it more mainstream and link it to fashion," believes designer Anavila Misra. Most recently, Kolkata-based designer Kavya Singh Kundu used deadstock (saris, stoles and scarves) from weavers in Phulia, West Bengal, to create an upcycled collection. In 'Tale as Old as Time', she has experimented with cuts, switching up the traditional aesthetic to



create versatile pieces such as one-shoulder dresses. "Going forward, we need to simplify the weave and work on more youthful and detailed silhouettes to make it more relevant," she says, pointing to how a section of younger weavers are creating fresh, contemporary motifs, which are almost like abstract works of art. "These appeal to a younger demographic as well as to an international clientele, and will ensure that *jamdani* continues to have a future," adds Kundu.

Read the full story, with tips on where to stock up, on [weekend.thehindu.com](http://weekend.thehindu.com)

Smriti Bhadauria and Kartik Vasan are living their best lives, travelling across Canada and the Americas, breaking brown stereotypes, and funding their #IndianVanLife from their own pockets



## The Dodge'y lifestyle

VIJAY LOKAPALLY

A gun-toting priest stopping you outside a church can be daunting. But for Smriti Bhadauria and Kartik Vasan, ambassadors of Indian van life, it's just one of the many memorable experiences they've been making since they sold their condo in downtown Toronto last year and hit the road in a vintage, brown camper van, their dog Everest in tow.

"When we entered the US, in the state of Oregon, in January, we were trying to take a picture of Mt Hood while driving through Portland," recalls Kartik. "As we pulled into the parking lot of a church, a man waved us down. He seemed friendly, but when he got closer we realised he was holding a big gun in his hand. We remained calm and soon found out that he was the pastor of the church and was only cleaning his gun," he laughs.

The couple, in their early 30s, met in Toronto in 2014. A year earlier, Smriti had read about an old couple travelling from Patagonia (South America) to Alaska and the idea of caravanning had appealed to her. So, when she met Kartik, she shared it with him. "Smriti's love for the outdoors and adventure completely changed my outlook towards life," he says.

**Breaking brown**  
You could say that the travelling bug had bitten Smriti and Kartik well before that. "I've seen 100 cities in India, as my father had a touring job [as a power grid safety head]," says



Smriti. Kartik's father was a diplomat, because of which he grew up in seven countries. So, when they got the van in 2018 (a spur of the moment decision while on a camping trip), they started thinking about quitting their jobs and travelling with just their savings.

However, it was not easy convincing their parents of their plan to live a nomadic life – working remotely, exploring nature and living in a 77 Dodge B200. Van life was a foreign idea. As Kartik recently told *Condé Nast Traveller*, "Our brown upbringing has conditioned us to live a certain way. My parents often call us and tell us, 'Your friends just bought a home.' But these are fleeting feelings. When you park in a beautiful spot, the moment just passes by."

The youngsters received the green signal once they tied the knot last year in February. Today, the two call their parents regularly and "show them beautiful sunrises and sunsets. This gives them peace of mind knowing that we are safe, working and still able to see new places".

Their Instagram, @thebrownvanlife, has over 8,000

followers too.

Kartik and Smriti travel slowly – usually driving between three to five hours daily, and never at night – so they get to stay in a place for a few days. "We don't burn too much fuel because it impacts the environment. All our electricals are solar powered, so we are eco-friendly and self-sustaining," adds Kartik. The van is outfitted with a queen-size bed, a kitchen with a fridge, and a 20-gallon water tank.

### Finding their balance

In January this year, the couple drove across several states in the US. "We were in a grocery store in Utah when they announced they had extra vaccine slots. So we walked in for yoghurt and came out vaccinated! Which was such a stress relief for our parents and for us," says Smriti. After exploring the US for four months, they entered Mexico. "We are currently in Baja and ready for the ferry to Mainland Mexico," she says.

Detailed paperwork is a critical part of the venture. "We have Canadian permanent residency, but hold Indian passports. Our biggest advantage is our 10-year US visa that allows us to travel to all of North and Central American countries with a visa on ar-



rival. People often feel we come from rich backgrounds or that we have a lot of savings, but the truth is we have worked really hard to obtain this lifestyle. The idea of letting everything go does not sit well with our Indian upbringing, so we decided to keep our jobs while living and travelling in different places," says Smriti, who is in digital marketing.

In fact, the duo had started planning their remote jobs early on, so they could support their caravanning lifestyle. "We work from 6.30 am to 1.30 pm, and then take the rest of the day to explore or cover distance. We

have not monetised our trip yet; we fund it with our jobs," says Kartik, an IT consultant.

### Map to everywhere

The two have also tried to be distinct from their western counterparts. "Since we are possibly the only Indians pursuing this life full time, we did not have a reference point. We also realised that whatever we do might become a reference point for others. So it was important for us to bring representation into the dialogue. We discuss all the social and cultural issues Indian kids and adults might face starting a life like this," explains Smriti.

The duration of their journey is still unknown (though visiting 10 countries is one of their goals).

"In terms of itinerary, our immediate goal is to get to Patagonia while exploring different countries in Central and South America, and experience all the cultures. We will go to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and by next year enter Colombia to start the South American leg of the journey."

And Everest will play the role of a security guard everywhere. "Our photo model, best hiking partner, and optimism booster," Smriti signs off.

### FOOD SPOT

## Sushi for a reason

Pullman & Novotel New Delhi are home delivering from their pan Asian restaurant Honk



RAHUL VERMA

It was a coincidence, but quite a happy one. I had some delicious sushi rolls earlier this week, and then heard, a few days later, that June 18 was International Sushi Day. I was glad to know that I had done my bit to mark the occasion.

The sushi came from #UnboxDeliciousness, the home delivery and take-away offering from Pullman & Novotel New Delhi. The hotel in Aerocity offers Indian street food from its Café Pluck, regional Indian cuisine from Food Exchange, and Mediterranean cuisine from a section called Farmers' Basket at Pluck. The pan Asian cuisine is from its restaurant Honk.

I'd had a meal at Honk many years ago, and remember in particular the Asian greens and avocado-duck-cherry dumplings. This time, my meal consisted of two kinds of sushi rolls, prawns in chilli XO sauce, twice cooked Belgian pork with greens, and massaman lamb curry with jasmine rice and noodles.

I started with the rolls – classic California rolls (₹1,050) and salmon and cucumber rolls (₹1,195). One bite of the salmon



Twice cooked Belgium pork belly, classic California rolls  
\*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

jasmine rice – with its light fragrance – complemented the hot prawns (₹1,450).

The prawns were juicy and tender, and the sauce was good enough to clear up my sinuses. I enjoyed the dish thoroughly.

The massaman lamb curry (₹1,200) had been cooked with potatoes and onion, tempered with tamarind, and flavoured with galangal, chillies and lemon grass. Mildly sweet, and mildly tart, it reminded me a bit of the Sunday mutton curry that we have: that too celebrates the potato, and is cooked with a pinch of sugar.

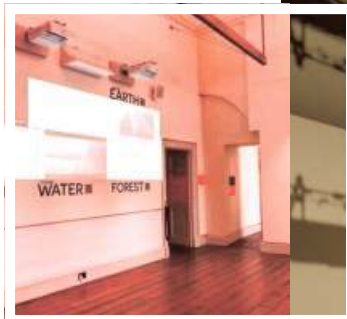
I am told the delivery service is taking off. The food is packed well, and hygiene standards are strictly maintained. The hotel follows a contactless delivery and payment system. Food is delivered up to a radius of 40km from the hotel, in Delhi and Gurugram.

The service offers a Honk dimsum lunch and the chef's recommendations include fish and chips, free range chicken burger and an 'Immune booster' salad. The *murgh dum biryani* is a hot favourite (₹1,145), too.

I was content with my sushi-led pan-Asian meal. Happy belated sushi day, Readers.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

## Bamboo toilet in Somerset House



Architect Nisha Mathew Ghosh showcases indigenous ideas at London Design Biennale's India Pavilion, to spur divergent approaches to sustainability

SHAILAJA TRIPATHI

The India Pavilion at the ongoing London Design Biennale 2021 (LDB) is mapping 'hero stories' – from innovator-engineer Sonam Wangchuk's ice *stupas* (which melt in summer to generate water) to smokeless *chulahs*. All inventive, indigenous, and sustainable ideas developed in various parts of the country in the last few years. "It is quite an 'aha' moment to see what India looks like through the lens of its people and their efforts to make a sustainable world," says architect Nisha Mathew Ghosh, 52, who has curated the pavilion. "It is exciting to imagine a future of collaborations to build this world of better ecological stewardship together."

The pavilion at Somerset House, titled 'Small Is Beautiful: A Billion Stories', comprises 150 entries segregated into five categories: Clean Air, Clean Water, Clean Earth, Clean Energy, and Forest. Ranging from product inventions to material explorations, each responds to the overarching theme of 'Resonances', as chosen by LDB's artistic director, Es Devlin.



(Clockwise from above) The bamboo toilet, Nisha Mathew Ghosh, the India Pavilion, and an installation

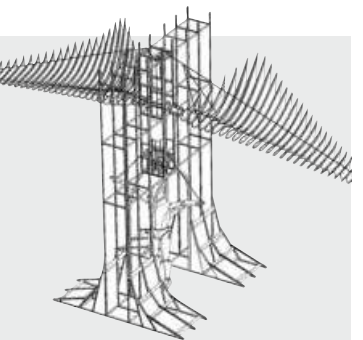
### Back to nature

The India Pavilion engages with the ideas of sustainability through effective design. "All these projects are reactions to situations and contexts. For example, the *Story of Fish* [by landscape architect Prachi Chopade Wakaley] uses art as strategy – making a fish from waste glass bottles to remind people to keep their water sources clean; Pollinator People [by landscape architect Vidisha Barwal] uses the logic and process of pollination to offer a design for the recovery of ecosystems; and Forest Cabin [by Architecture Brio], shows you how to build lightly in a forest setting with least impact,"

says Nisha. Among the plethora of intriguing projects, Bamboo Toilet – an initiative by Tata Trust, and designed by Delhi-based Shift Studio – has piqued interest. The brief was to build a toilet that would meet the needs of rural India, and Mayank Mishra of Shift Studio says they came up with a design that used bamboo and EcoSan technology (dry toilets that do not use water). Ideal for places that have scarcity of water, it converts human excreta into compost and fertiliser. "An individual unit will cost anywhere between ₹12,000 and ₹24,000, which can come down when built and managed by the community," explains Mishra. "It was challenging to evolve processes to elevate bamboo from a craft material to an engineering level [meeting the needs for structural constructions]."

### Travelling stories

Speaking of the showcase's engagement with viewers at Somerset House, where the various projects are being screened on a large projection, Nisha explains, "It's a showcase that is packed with ideas and needs a couple of hours to fully watch and observe." Beyond the Biennale, she feels that the ideas, which have emerged from traditional wisdom, scientific temper, and the communities' needs,



### Green interventions

Had it not been for the pandemic, LDB would have had a fun, interactive, two-winged bamboo-and-fabric installation called *Is It a Bird? Is It a Windmill?* "[Referencing the concepts of flight, windmills, and the traditional *punkhas*] it was meant to engage with visitors and play on the idea of clean energy, water, and air," explains Nisha. The fun would come through the toy-like interaction: visitors could tug on it and make the wings move (through a pulley and counterweight system).

Nisha collaborated with architect Soumitro Ghosh (in an advisory role) and Bengaluru-based Sandeep Sangaru, who lent his skills as a furniture designer to implement it. "The human interaction brings dynamism to the installation [4 metres tall, with a wingspan of 7 metres]. It shows the possibilities of sustainable design, and makes you rethink traditional ways of making, but in contemporary contexts," says Sangaru. Nisha plans to unveil the installation at another location and event in the future.

must be shared with the entire country. "We could do a travelling exhibition," she says. "These stories can be vital to bring about a change. People must know what's happening in various parts of India."

Moreover, she believes the current situation underlines the need for solutions that are local and interconnected, while still recognising the value of the large scale. "The two need to work together for the preservation of our resources. If an earlier Indian austerity could be referred to, it was doing the most with the least, and I believe design will respond in this manner given the conditions around us. We don't have a choice but to relook at maximising the potential of our natural resources for the benefit of communities post pandemic, and this has to begin with great ideas."

London Design Biennale is on at Somerset House till June 27.

# Conservative cleric tipped to win as Iran votes in presidential poll

Turnout expected to be low as opposition groups have urged a boycott

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TEHRAN

Iranians voted on Friday in a presidential election, in which conservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi is seen as all but certain to coast to victory after all serious rivals were barred from running.



Decisive poll: Ebrahim Raisi, a presidential candidate, waving at mediapersons after casting his vote in Tehran. \*AP

After a lacklustre campaign, turnout was expected to fall to a new low in a country exhausted by a punishing regime of U.S. economic sanctions that has dashed the hopes of many for a brighter future.

Iranian opposition groups abroad and some dissidents at home have urged a boycott of the vote they see as an engineered victory for Mr. Raisi, the 60-year-old head of the judiciary, to cement ultraconservative control.

But many queued to vote at schools, mosques and community centres, some carrying Iran's green, white and red national flag.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, cast the first vote in Tehran and then urged Iran's nearly 60 million eligible voters to follow suit before the scheduled close of polls at midnight.

### Economic woes

"Whether I vote or not, someone has already been elected," scoffed Tehran shopkeeper Saeed Zareie about the pre-election vetting that barred all but seven of the more than 600 hopefuls. "They organise the elec-

tions for the media." Enthusiasm has been dampened further by the economic malaise of spiralling inflation and job losses, that has deepened by the pandemic.

"I'm not a politician, I don't know anything about politics," said Tehran car mechanic Nasrollah. "I have no money. All families are now facing economic problems. How can we vote for these people who did this to us? It's not right."

Ultimate political power in Iran, since its 1979 revolution toppled the US-backed monarchy, rests with the supreme leader.

But the President, as the top official of the state bureaucracy, also wields significant influence in fields from industrial policy to foreign affairs.

## 'Verbal truce' with Turkey, says France

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

A "verbal ceasefire" is in place between France and Turkey after months of row over global crises, such as Libya, Syria, that strained ties between the NATO allies, the French Foreign Minister said on Friday.

This comes after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron at the NATO summit this week.

## Hong Kong newspaper raises print run fivefold after arrests

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
HONG KONG

Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* increased its print run more than fivefold to 5,00,000 copies as residents lined up Friday to buy the paper in a show of support for beleaguered press freedoms, a day after police arrested five top editors and executives.

The raid on the paper's offices by hundreds of police and security agents — along with the freezing of \$2.3 mil-

lion worth of its assets — marked the first time a sweeping national security law has been used against the media. It was the latest sign of a widening crackdown on civil liberties in the semi-autonomous city, which has long cherished freedoms that don't exist elsewhere in China.

Police said the editors were arrested on suspicion of foreign collusion to endanger national security, based on over 30 articles

that authorities said had called for international sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

On Friday, the National Security Department charged two men, according to a government statement. The *South China Morning Post* newspaper cited an unnamed source saying they are *Apple Daily's* chief editor Ryan Law and Cheung Kim-hung, the CEO of *Apple Daily's* publisher Next Digital.

# What led to the Biden-Putin summit?

Unlike in the past, the focus of the U.S. President's Europe visit was on China

STANLY JOHNY



Joe Biden meeting Vladimir Putin in Geneva on June 16, 2021. \*AP

In 2011, Joe Biden, then Vice President in the Obama administration, visited Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. Inside Mr. Putin's office, Mr. Biden "held his hand a few inches from his nose," he recalled later in a conversation with journalist Evan Osnos. "I said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, I am looking into your eyes, and I don't think you have a soul.'"

When Mr. Osnos, who has described this conversation in his book *Joe Biden American Dreamer*, asked if he said that to Mr. Putin, Mr. Biden replied, 'Absolutely, positively'. In March 2021, after assuming the White House, Mr. Biden described Mr. Putin as a "killer". He also said the Russian leader was "going to pay" for the "interference" in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Three months later, the same Mr. Biden met Mr. Putin in the Swiss city of Geneva and sought a more predictable relationship between the "two great powers".

na's human rights records. Issues such as the detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang, the crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong, growing tensions with Taiwan and the alleged lack of transparency on COVID-19 were all mentioned in the G7 statement.

The 30-member NATO, whose traditional focus has been on Russia, has also issued a statement in which China has been mentioned multiple times. NATO members warned against the "systemic challenges to the rules-based international order" emanating from China's rise. The U.S. and the 27-member EU have decided to cooperate more on technology, regulation, industrial development and trade in an attempt to help the West compete better with China. They have also decided to set up a high-level trade and technology council, which would boost innovation and investment.

### The China focus

This approach is in line with the Biden administration's overall focus on reorienting American foreign policy to deal with the China challenge more effectively. In the past six months since he assumed office, Mr. Biden has taken a host of decisions in this regard. He ended America's support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and is pulling back all American troops from Afghanistan by September 11.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

to resist any move by NATO to expand into its backyard. Ukraine remains an unresolved crisis. Earlier this year, Mr. Putin had assembled Russian troops on the Ukraine border in a direct challenge to Mr. Biden. After he recalled Russian Ambassador from Washington and asked the American Ambassador to return for consultations, bilateral relations between the two countries practically collapsed. On the other side, Russia was steadily deepening its partnership with China. Mr. Biden appears to have wanted to arrest this free fall of ties and bring in some order.

**Detente with Russia**  
In the Geneva summit, Mr. Biden stopped short of cha-

racterising Mr. Putin, which he had done in the past, and held talks on critical issues. One summit doesn't resolve the serious foreign policy differences between the two former Cold War rivals, but both leaders have sought a détente. Mr. Putin said it's "primarily a pragmatic relationship", while Mr. Biden said it's not about trust but about "self interest". And they decided to return their Ambassadors and follow up bilateral engagements with "a strategic stability dialogue" on arms reduction.

The message from Geneva is that the leaders wanted to establish rules of engagement so that the countries can better address their differences and seek common ground on issues of mutual interest. With some predictability in ties with Russia, Mr. Biden can strengthen his China-focused foreign policy. And with a less hostile America, Mr. Putin can retain Russian influence in the country's backyard.

In the past, President Donald Trump had sought to isolate China and reach out to Russia. But, amid allegations that a Russian cyber campaign helped him win the 2016 elections, Mr. Trump's attempts to build a bond with Mr. Putin met with strong resistance in Washington. But Mr. Biden, an establishment Democrat himself, seems to be having more leeway in the Russia policy.

It's too early to see any meaningful change in Russia-U.S. relations. But the Geneva summit suggests that policymakers in Washington have at least started thinking of Russia as a secondary challenge that needs to be tackled diplomatically, not only through coercion, if the U.S. wants to take on a rising China.

## U.S. to spend \$3.2 bn to develop treatments for COVID-19

It plans to prepare for other 'pandemic threats'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

The United States has announced that it will spend \$3.2 billion on developing antiviral treatments for COVID-19 and prepare for other "pandemic threats" — viruses that have the potential to cause pandemics.

Vaccines will continue to remain the "centrepiece of our arsenal against COVID-19," Anthony Fauci, medical adviser to the U.S. President, said on Thursday, when he described the programme, called the Antiviral Program for Pandemics.

"However, antivirals can and are an important complement to existing vaccines, especially for individuals with certain conditions that might put them at a greater risk," he said. "And it also adds a line of defence against other unexpected emerging things, like variants of concern that we are currently dealing with..." he added.

Regarding viruses with "pandemic potential", Dr. Fauci put up a slide listing some of them: coronaviruses (e.g., SARS, MERS), filoviruses (e.g. Ebola), togaviruses (e.g., chikungunya), paramyxoviruses (e.g., Nipah) and picornaviruses (e.g., enterovirus D68).

### Vaccine allocation

The programme seeks to accelerate the testing and authorisation of promising medicines and also support the discovery of new molecules by industry and academia, he said.

Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Roche are among those testing antiviral



Anthony Fauci

pillars currently, the Associated Press reported.

The U.S. will be allocating 55 million vaccine doses to other countries "in the coming days," the country's coronavirus response coordinator Jeffrey Zients said at Thursday's briefing. These 55 million doses are from a stockpile of 80 million doses that the U.S. has committed to other countries. This includes 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine that has not yet been approved for use in America.

The U.S. has already allocated 25 million of these doses bilaterally and via international vaccine distribution alliance COVAX. It is unclear how many doses India will receive totally, but indications are it will not be more than a few million. Some countries — such as Canada and Mexico — have received such doses.

"There'll be an increasing number of shipments each and every week as we ramp up these efforts. The process to export the 80 million takes partnership in coordination with the receiving governments. But that's well underway now," Mr. Zients said.

## Turkey to secure Kabul airport

Biden agrees to provide 'certain forms of U.S. support'

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan agreed in a meeting this week that Turkey would take a lead role in securing Kabul airport as the United States withdraws troops from Afghanistan, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Thursday.

However, the two leaders were not able to resolve the long-standing issue of Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 defence systems, Mr. Sullivan said, a bitter dispute that strained ties between the NATO allies.

Mr. Sullivan told reporters that Mr. Biden and Mr. Erdogan, in their meeting on Monday at the NATO summit, discussed the Afghanistan issue. Mr. Erdogan sought certain forms of

U.S. support to secure the airport and Mr. Biden committed to providing that support, Mr. Sullivan said.

"The clear commitment from the leaders established that Turkey would play a lead role in securing Hamid Karzai International Airport and we are now working through how to execute to get to that," Mr. Sullivan said, giving the first details from the U.S. side of the meeting.

### Contentious issues

Turkey and the U.S. have been at odds over a host of issues, including Ankara's purchase of Russian defence equipment, policy differences in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean and expectations for a breakthrough in first face-to-face meeting between Mr. Erdogan and

Mr. Biden were slim.

The two leaders sounded upbeat after their meeting although they did not announce what concrete progress they made. One potential area of cooperation has been Afghanistan, where Ankara has offered to guard and operate Kabul airport after U.S. and NATO forces withdraw in coming weeks.

The security of the airport is crucial for the operation of diplomatic missions out of the Afghanistan as Western forces pull out.

Last week, a Taliban spokesman said Turkey should withdraw its troops from Afghanistan under the 2020 deal for the pullout of U.S. forces, but Mr. Sullivan said the Taliban comments did not deter the "detailed and effective" security plan the U.S. was putting together.

## Sri Lanka to seek India's help to treat COVID-19 affected lion

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities on Friday said they would seek guidance from India on treating animals contracting COVID-19, after a lion at a Colombo zoo tested positive.

Eleven-year-old Thor, a lion gifted by a zoo in Seoul in 2013, tested positive for COVID-19, becoming the first known case of an animal contracting the deadly virus in the island nation, which is currently experiencing a persistent third wave, with over 60,000 active infections.

"We are seeking guidance from the Central Zoo Authority in India in order to treat Thor," said Ishini

Wickremesinghe, Director General of the Department of National Zoological Gardens. In a statement on Friday, she said Thor experienced breathing difficulties and did not eat over the last few days. Soon after, authorities at the Dehiwala Zoo in Colombo decided to test the lion for a possible COVID-19 infection.

While antigen tests showed a negative result, a few PCR tests taken subsequently showed the lion as COVID-19 positive. Thor has since been receiving oxygen support, while other animals have been isolated, according to zoo authorities. The animals' keepers have also been sent to quarantine.

**KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)  
# 49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru - 560 001. website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-08/2842/2021-22 Date: 18.06.2021

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
(Through GOK e - Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting Item rate Tenders under two cover system as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible contractors registered in KPWD Class-III (Civil) & Above and eligible contractors registered in KCEI Class-II (Electrical) & Above who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following works: (1) Formation of 18M Wide Road (Road No.20) Including Asphaltting, Construction of RCC Drain & Providing and Laying of HDPE water supply dual pipeline at Doddaballapura 3rd Phase Industrial Area, Bengaluru Rural District. (2) Implementation of Rain Water Recharge Structures at Aerospace park Industrial Area, Near KIAL, Bengaluru Rural District. (3) Repair & Reconditioning of Street Lights at Belur Industrial Area 1st, 2nd & 3rd Stage, Dharwad District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 13.07.2021 upto 04:00 pm

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/-  
DIPR/DDU/R.O:573/2021-22  
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

**STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.**

**हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय**  
**UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**  
(A Central University established by an Act of Parliament)  
(U Central University, Hyderabad, India)

**ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT 2021-22**

University of Hyderabad, an Institution of Eminence, ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among Universities and 15<sup>th</sup> under overall category in the NIRF rankings 2020, listed in Category-1 of UGC (Categorization of Universities) (only) for grant of graded autonomy) Regulations 2018, with N.A.C. grading of 3.72 out of 4.00, invites bright, aspiring students committed to excellence to apply for admission to various 5 Year Integrated P.G., P.G.E., M.Tech courses and Ph.D. programmes through an All-India entrance examination.

Candidates are required to apply online through University website: <https://acad.uohyd.ac.in>.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

Online Application start date	21.06.2021
Last date for submitting the Online Application	20.07.2021
Downloading of Hall Tickets & Dates of Entrance Examinations	To be announced later. The Entrance Exam will be held tentatively during August/September, 2021

For further details including courses offered, eligibility criteria, prescribed fee, reservation policy and the Prospectus 2021-22, please refer to the website <http://acad.uohyd.ac.in> or <http://www.uohyd.ac.in>

Sd/-  
Dr. Devesh Nigam  
Controller of Examinations

**ICMR - NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY**  
R-127, Second Main Road, TNHB, Ayappakkam, Chennai - 600077.

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Candidates are invited for Online zoom app Interview for the posts of: **PROJECT CONSULTANT, PROJECT SCIENTIST-B (Non-Medical)**, on contract basis under various projects at ICMR - NIE.

For application proforma and other details regarding qualification and experience, etc., please refer to [www.nie.gov.in](http://www.nie.gov.in)

**Director**

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** e-mail: [sephcbhpt3@gmail.com](mailto:sephcbhpt3@gmail.com)  
**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH CIRCLE, BHAWANIPATNA**,  
Paramnandpur, Railway Station Road, Bhawanipatna, Dist: Kalahandi, PIN -766002

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
Identification No. SEPHC-BHPT-02 of 2021-22 / Dt. 09.06.2021

**e-Procurement Notice**

Name of the work : Laying of Pipeline, Construction of Reservoirs, External Electrification & ancillary works in Different ULBs under PH Circle, Bhawanipatna.

Total No. Of works : 03 (Three)  
Estimated Cost : Approx. Rs.118.82 to Rs.285.86 Lakhs  
Class of Contractor : B & A  
Period of Completion : 4 to 6 Calendar Months

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	No. of works	Availability of Tender On-line for Bidding		Date & time of opening of Bid
			From	To	
2	3	4	5	6	
Additional Chief Engineer, P.H. Circle, Bhawanipatna	SEPHC-BHPT - 02 of 2021-22	03 (Three)	21.06.2021	05.07.2021	06.07.2021

For details can be seen from the Government website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)  
Additional Chief Engineer, P.H.Circle, Bhawanipatna.  
G-417. OIPR-13055/11/0002/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,**  
CENTRAL CIRCLE, RURAL WORKS, BHUBANESWAR

No. 2958 / Date: 17.06.2021

The tender for the work invited this office N.I.T. No.Tender-Online-C.C.-11 of 2021 Dt-18.05.2021 issued vide this office Lr.No.2479 Dt-18.05.2021 is hereby cancelled due to some unavoidable circumstances.

**Superintending Engineer, Central Circle, Rural Works, Bhubaneswar.**  
O-349. OIPR-25082/11/0013/2122

**MARKET WATCH**

	18-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52344	0.04
US Dollar	73.86	0.29
Gold	46460	-0.85
Brent oil	73.55	1.21

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	694.35	-47.45
Asian Paints	3047.20	-13.10
Axis Bank	736.30	-2.30
Bajaj Auto	4167.10	113.20
Bajaj Finserv	11999.35	180.80
Bajaj Finance	6087.05	36.80
Bharti Airtel	538.75	10.10
BPLCL	472.35	-4.55
Britannia Ind	3619.20	-38.95
CIPLA	960.90	9.95
Coal India	146.40	-5.75
Dixie Labs	4197.50	-105.05
Dr Reddys Lab	5283.95	-2.60
Eicher Motors	2707.55	33.80
Grasim Ind	1480.75	22.55
HCL Tech	975.25	-11.15
HDFC	2488.10	0.80
HDFC Bank	1479.80	13.70
HDFC Life	709.20	8.90
Hero MotoCorp	2891.35	-22.75
Hindalco	371.35	2.10
Hind Unilever	2482.90	65.20
ICICI Bank	630.40	-2.60
Indusind Bank	995.40	11.35
Infosys	1503.30	8.00
Indian Oil Corp	112.30	-2.30
ITC	204.55	-1.10
JSW Steel	670.60	-25.75
Kotak Bank	1760.45	-5.60
L&T	1476.00	-11.55
M&M	781.55	-24.15
Morari Suzuki	699.35	-10.00
Nestle India Ltd.	17670.65	-388.40
NTPC	113.55	-3.85
ONGC	120.25	-4.85
PowerGrid Corp	233.00	-6.85
Reliance Ind	2225.65	10.00
SBI Life	982.55	-0.75
State Bank	412.90	-7.35
Shree Cement	28045.80	-322.30
Sun Pharma	668.50	3.45
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	739.80	-5.20
Tata Motors	337.40	-8.25
Tata Steel	1092.30	-11.45
TCS	3297.30	-20.45
Tech Mahindra	1070.70	-9.55
Titan	1711.30	-0.10
UltraTech Cement	6693.90	-10.95
UPL	808.00	-27.05
Wipro	549.80	-8.90

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 18

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.66	73.98
Euro	87.77	88.16
British Pound	102.40	102.85
Japanese Yen (100)	66.87	67.19
Chinese Yuan	11.45	11.50
Swiss Franc	80.14	80.54
Singapore Dollar	54.90	55.17
Canadian Dollar	59.53	59.82
Malaysian Ringgit	17.79	17.87

Source: Indian Bank

**Forex reserves rise to record high of \$608 bn**

MUMBAI  
The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$3.074 billion to reach a record high of \$608.081 billion in the week ended June 11, RBI data showed. ■

# 'Q2 manufacturing expectations drop'

RBI's June Industrial Outlook Survey points to adverse economic conditions: Bhide in MPC's minutes

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI**

Early results from the RBI's June Industrial Outlook Survey show that not only has the summary index of current business conditions for the manufacturing sector dropped for the current quarter, but also that the index of expectations for the second quarter of FY2022 has declined, as per observations made by Shashanka Bhide, member of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, at the MPC meeting earlier this month. The RBI on Friday released the minutes of the meeting.

"These perceptions of business conditions point to the adverse economic conditions," Dr. Bhide noted.

He said while the data on the impact of the second



**Hard times:** The summary index of current business conditions for manufacturing declined for Q1. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was limited, qualitative data from the surveys of households and enterprises suggest 'significant dent' in consumer and business sen-

timent. "The survey of Consumer Confidence conducted by RBI in the last week of April and up to May 10, in 13 major cities... reveals a sharp rise in the percentage of res-

pondents who perceive the current general economic conditions to be worse than a year back, compared to a similar survey conducted two months back," he added.

Importantly, 51.5% of the respondents opined that economic conditions would be worse a year ahead.

Observing that the economy's recovery would hinge on the decline in the spread of the disease, he said, "acceleration in the vaccination program and availability of health care would be a key to boost the confidence of the consumers, workers and producers in the resumption of their economic lives".

Ashima Goyal, another member, cautioned against laying too much store by the latest round of the RBI's sur-

veys, noting that these were conducted during a "period of highest fear and uncertainty that very likely affected consumer responses" given that the number of fresh cases peaked on May 7. "Robust inferences have to await surveys taken in more normal times," she suggested.

**'Forecasts less reliable'**

Dr. Goyal also noted that the MPC had moved to data-based guidance, given that expectations and forecasts were less reliable in times of 'such uncertainty', a view echoed by fellow member Jayanth R. Varma.

Prof. Varma said the MPC must be sensitive to the risk that inflation expectations could become entrenched if inflation remains elevated for too long.

# S&P lifts ICICI Bank's rating outlook to stable

Agency says stake sales to help lender

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI**  
S&P Global Ratings on Friday said it has revised the rating outlook on ICICI Bank Ltd. to stable from negative on grounds that the lender will benefit from the sale of stake in subsidiaries.

The rating agency affirmed its 'BBB-' long-term and 'A-3' short-term issuer credit ratings of ICICI Bank.

"We revised the rating outlook to reflect our view that ICICI Bank will maintain its strong capital position over the next 24 months," S&P said.

"The bank will benefit from the sale of stakes in subsidiaries and gradual normalisation of earnings, which should reduce risks associated with its capital



position," it said.

In a statement, S&P forecast that ICICI Bank will maintain a risk-adjusted capital (RAC) ratio of more than 10% over the next 24 months.

"Our expectation factors in 13-14% credit growth for the bank, an improvement in earnings and sale of stake in insurance subsidiaries over the period," it said.

# Wipro to raise junior staff pay from Sept. 1

IT services major Wipro said it will give wage hikes to junior employees with effect from September 1.

"Wipro Limited will initiate merit salary increases for all eligible employees up to Band B3 (assistant manager and below), effective September 1. In January, the company had announced salary hikes for eligible employees in these bands, who form 80% of the company's workforce - this is the second hike in this calendar year," it said.

As announced earlier, all eligible employees above band C1 (managers and above) will receive pay hikes effective June 1, Wipro added.

# RBI clears Centrum's way for PMC Bank takeover

Gives nod for small finance bank

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI**  
Paving the way for the takeover of crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank (PMC), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday granted in-principle approval to Centrum Financial Services to set up a small finance bank (SFB).



Centrum was one of the applicants for takeover of the PMC Bank.

"This 'in-principle' approval has been accorded in specific pursuance to the Centrum Financial Services Limited's offer dated February 1, in response to the expression of interest notification published by the PMC Bank Ltd.," the RBI said.

In September 2019, the

RBI had superseded the board of PMC and placed it under regulatory restriction after detecting financial irregularities, hiding and misreporting of loans given to realty developer HDIL.

PMC's exposure to HDIL was over ₹6,500 crore, or 73% of its total loan book size of ₹8,880 crore as of September 19, 2019.

# Hyundai unveils Alcazar SUV

South Korean carmaker Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) forayed into the premium 6/7 seater sport utility vehicle (SUV) segment with the introduction of Alcazar.

"This new product is wholly designed and developed in India at a cost of ₹650 crore," said Tarun Garg, director, sales, marketing and service, HMIL. It had an indigenisation level of 90%, he said.

"In the last 10 days, it secured 4,000 bookings," he added. The SUV is priced upwards of ₹16.53 lakh for diesel engines and ₹16.30 lakh for petrol engines. It will have a waiting period of 6 to 8 weeks.

# Paytm seeks investor nod for ₹120-bn new stock sale

Aims to raise \$3 bn in 'biggest-ever' IPO

**REUTERS  
NEW DELHI**  
Digital payments firm Paytm is seeking shareholder approval to sell up to ₹120 billion (\$1.62 billion) in new stock in what could be the country's biggest-ever initial public offering at a total of \$3 billion.

Paytm, which counts China's Alibaba and Japan's SoftBank as backers, will sell new shares and will also have an option to retain an over-subscription of up to 1%, the company said in a notice for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) of shareholders in Delhi on July 12. The company is aiming to raise \$3 billion via the public listing on Indian bourses, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI**

Telecom operator Reliance Jio gained more than 79 lakh mobile users in March, surpassing the combined net adds by rivals Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea during the month, according to data released by regulator TRAI on Friday.

While Bharti Airtel added 40.5 lakh wireless users, Vodafone Idea gained 10.8 lakh customers during March compared with the previous month.

Jio added 79.18 lakh wireless subscribers in March, taking its customer base to about 42.29 crore.

Bharti Airtel's user base swelled to 35.23 crore as of March 2021.

## INTERVIEW | G.P. HINDUJA

# OWO is our largest redevelopment, it is the group's commitment to Britain

'London's Old War Office complex will have residences, a hotel, restaurants, a spa'

LALATENDU MISHRA

The Hinduja Group recently put up its OWO Residences by Raffles, Europe's first Raffles-branded residences, on the market. Targeted at ultra-high-net-worth individuals, who may aspire to own a piece of the Old War Office, the property's redevelopment is set to be completed in 2022.

Group co-chairman G.P. Hinduja said the property, which had stood witness to many wars and had been closed to the public for more than a century, had been transformed into a destination of tolerance, peace and happiness. Excerpts:

**How significant is this development?**

■ We have a great liking for heritage buildings and we gained great experience in restoring Carlton House Terrace, which is our residence now. We have a good team in place under the company Westminster Development Services.

This vertical will work on development of heritage properties. My son Sanjay and my daughter-in-law Shalini (wife of Dheeraj Hinduja) have been actively involved in this project. We are already in negotiations with 2-3 more such iconic heritage properties.

For the Hinduja family and the Group, this is our largest real estate redevelopment. The Old War Office has seen many wars and bad times; our aim was to transform this into a destination of tolerance, peace and happiness. There is nothing quite like 'The OWO' - a building constructed in 1906 for government and war.

In the 21st century, it has undergone a transformation on a scale never achieved before, bringing it new life and

purpose. We have tried to maintain its originality. We are converting a Grade II listed century-old building into luxury, serviced residences with a five-star hotel. Located on Whitehall, close to 10 Downing Street, St James's Park, Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Westminster, The OWO is one of London's most important addresses.

Residents, hotel guests and visitors will be a short stroll from Buckingham Palace, The National Gallery, The Tate and The Royal Academy. Our late father always taught us to act local and think global. We have been living here for 40 years and wanted to create a legacy of our contribution to the U.K. The OWO is our commitment to Britain.

**What has gone into this?**

■ It has been a journey of learning and discovery, restoration and conservation, alliances and partnerships, and even the most unexpected - a global pandemic. We have brought in the world's best architects, engineers, craftsmen and designers to create a location never seen before for homeowners, hotel guests and visitors.

Having undergone a monumental and painstaking transformation over the last five years, this landmark is set to complete in 2022 and will also comprise the Capital's first Raffles Hotel with 125-rooms and suites, a collection of nine restaurants and bars, and an immersive spa. We worked closely with organisations specialising in historic buildings including Historic England and the Prince's Regeneration Trust.

**What was the cost of acquisition? How much did you invest in restoration?**

■ There is a huge demand



for private residences in the pandemic-hit world. We have received a good response. However, we are being very careful; we want to conduct a KYC and background check for every buyer.

The total value of the project was £1.2 billion. At the time, the media widely reported the purchase price was £340 million. We had a Switzerland-based company as a partner in this project; however they faced some financial difficulties midway due to the global pandemic following which we bought their shares. This is owned 100% by the Hinduja family.

We have spent 5 years on the redevelopment to reach the stage today where we are launching sales of The OWO Residences by Raffles.

**How challenging has the restoration been?**

■ This is a monumental transformation of an enormous building - with over 1,100 offices spread across 2.5 miles of corridors. We have had to ensure the building remained structurally sound while adding over 1,80,000 sq. ft to provide 7,60,000 sq. ft of floor space with new floors to both the existing roof and basement.

**What is the most expensive property in the complex?**

■ The starting price for 2-bedroom residences is £5.8 million. The most expensive will be the larger turret resi-

dences (each with a private 3-storey turret) and the two penthouses, each of which are 'price on application'. There are penthouses which could be around £150 million and four- to five-bedroom residences would cost in the range of £7,000 to £8,000 per sq. ft. As we have announced the commencement of sales this week, it is too early to share the pricing of these residences.

**What is the Group's long-term plan in real estate?**

■ For the Hinduja family and Group, this is our largest real estate redevelopment. We remain open to other opportunities to restore and redevelop unique historic 'trophy' properties across the U.K. and Europe.

Our founder believed land and property increase in value and [he] invested across India. Our real estate company, Hinduja Realty Ventures Ltd. has large land banks across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Mumbai, where plans are in hand for major redevelopments.

**What is your assessment of the pandemic-hit global and Indian economies?**

■ The global economy is resilient and will bounce back - stock prices are high in the U.K., property prices are rising and across many economies, there is some optimism. For India, we have the skill, know-how and expertise to become a top-five global economy - it is a bed of roses, but there are also thorns. The government must make it easier and more attractive for foreign investment.

If this is implemented well, India can become the third-largest economy in the next 8-10 years. The unfortunate thing is implementation has a long way to go in India.

*Ring around the Rosie  
Ringa Ringa Roses  
Posies - a small bunch of flowers  
Pocket full of posies  
Atishoo! Atishoo!  
Hussha! Bussha!*

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**Wet start:** Heavy overnight and morning rain put to rest any chance of play on the first day. •GETTY IMAGES

# Rain washes out first day

Reserve day to come into effect as six hours of play is lost

**WTC FINAL**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SOUTHAMPTON

The eagerly-awaited opening day of the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand was rained out here on Friday, which is set to bring the reserve day into the equation.

As per the ICC playing conditions guidelines for the WTC final, if required, the reserve sixth day can now come into effect with six hours of play lost on day one itself.

There was forecast of rain and thunder showers and the heavens opened up last evening with relentless downpour continuing till afternoon.

**Puddles everywhere**  
With puddles forming throughout the outfield, even the best drainage system couldn't have possibly forced some action on the opening day.

Umpires Michael Gough and Richard Illingworth, after multiple inspections, called off the game at 7.30 p.m. IST (3 p.m. local time). While there has been

talk about Southampton being the preferred venue, it has been learnt that the BCCI was taken into confidence by both the ICC and England and Wales Cricket Board before they finalised the venue which also has a five-star facility within the premises, helping create a tight bio-secure bubble.

**Fickle weather**

The English weather is known to be fickle and, in any case, there was no guarantee that the match being played at any other venue would have not led to a wash-out on the first day.

# India has conquered the 'away' barrier

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

Just as the weather gods swung a damp curtain across Southampton's Ageas Bowl and washed out the WTC final's opening day, it was also time to acknowledge India's switch in mindset that helped Virat Kohli's men travel so far.

Back at Centurion, South Africa, 2018, disappointment was writ large on Kohli's visage. India had lost a Test it should have won and the mood in the press conference room was grim.

The skipper breathed fire: "If you want to win away from home, you've got to eat, breathe and sleep with it in your mind. You have got to dream about it."

And when India won the next Test — it lost the series 2-1 though — at the Wander-

ers on a rather vicious pitch, Kohli's men appeared to have got the message.

Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri made a conscious effort not to complain about conditions away from home. As bowling coach B. Arun would say, "We wanted to make the foreign soil our home ground."

Shastri got the side to make this mental switch. Away games were no longer seen as a barrier. And when India stunned Australia 2-1 in the Test series down under in 2018-19, Shastri said, "The lessons we learnt in South Africa enabled us to win here."

The conquering of the 'away series' psychological hurdle has been a huge factor in India progressing to the WTC final.



**Big change:** The Indians have become confident travellers.

# Playing XI can be changed as the toss is not yet over, says Sridhar

Reveals that the players, staff are following the women's Test

ASHWIN ACHAL  
S. DIPAK RAGAV

On a dull day of endless waiting and no cricket action, it is important to stay in good spirits. India fielding coach R. Sridhar was certainly in a cheerful mood, starting the end-of-day media interaction with his own take on the viral Cristiano Ronaldo-Coca Cola incident.

"Should I move the Coke bottle before we start? Will the share prices be affected if I do it?" Sridhar joked, before taking questions from the media.

Given that the toss has not been conducted yet, and that persistent rain can affect match conditions, the Indian team has the option to make changes to the playing eleven announced earlier.

"I think the playing eleven which was announced on Thursday is the eleven which takes the pitch and conditions out of the equation."

"It's the eleven which can play and perform on any given surface, and in any given weather conditions. But having said that, the toss is not yet over. If a decision needs to be taken, it will be taken



**Umbrellas out:** Southee, Boult and Wagner make a splash on a rainy day in Southampton. •GETTY IMAGES

at the time of the toss," Sridhar said.

The players and staff are closely following the Indian women's team's Test match against England, Sridhar said.

"We have not missed a beat in the girls' game, right from day one. It is broadcast live in our team rooms and breakfast area."

"Today, when we were waiting for the rain to stop, all of us were sitting together and encouraging our girls...

Shafali (Varma) reminds us so much of Viru (Virender Sehwag), with the way she plays and her mindset," Sridhar said.

**Wait and see**

New Zealand vice-captain Tom Latham stated that the playing eleven is yet to be finalised.

"We have not confirmed the final eleven. We have to wait and see when we get the chance to look at the wicket," Latham said.

# WI makes early inroads

**SA IN WI**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GROS-ISLET (ST. LUCIA)

West Indies made early inroads during a rain-interrupted first session to have South Africa struggling at 44 for three at lunch after the visitors were put in on the opening day of the second Test here on Friday.

Heavily criticised after choosing to bat first on a seaming pitch a week earlier in the first Test at the same venue, home captain Kraigg Brathwaite did not hesitate to bowl first on winning the toss again.

The decision was justified with Shannon Gabriel, who missed the first Test through injury, Jayden Seales and senior seamer Kemar Roach picking up a wicket each.

**SCOREBOARD**

**South Africa — 1st innings:** Dean Elgar (batting) 22, Aiden Markram c Chase b Gabriel 0, Keegan Petersen c Holder b Seales 7, Rassie van der Dussen b Roach 4, Kyle Verreyne (batting) 1; Extras (b-1, lb-8, w-1): 10; Total (for three wkts. in 25 overs, at lunch): 44.  
**Fall of wickets:** 1-1, 2-26, 3-37.  
**West Indies bowling:** Roach 9-5-11-1, Gabriel 6-3-11-1, Seales 4-1-8-1, Holder 5-3-5-0, Chase 1-1-0-0.  
**Toss:** West Indies.

# Shafali dazzles with second fifty of the match

India follows on after being bowled out for 231 in the first innings; Ecclestone picks up four

**INDIA IN ENG**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BRISTOL

India was 83 for one at stumps after being forced to follow-on on the third day of the one-off Test against England here on Friday.

Debutant Shafali Verma once again looked in great touch as she remained not out on 55 off 68 deliveries when the day's play ended after the final session was washed out. The other opener, Smriti Mandhana (8), departed early. Deepti Sharma (18 batting) was the other unbeaten batter.



**King on the cake:** Shafali, known for her exploits in limited-overs cricket, showed that she could handle the red ball with aplomb too. •GETTY IMAGES

**SCOREBOARD**

**England — 1st innings:** 396 for nine decl.  
**India — 1st innings:** Smriti Mandhana c Brunt b Sciver 78 (155b, 14x4), Shafali Verma c Shrubsole b Cross 96 (152b, 13x4, 2x6), Punam Raut lbw b Knight 2 (31b), Shikha Pandey c & b Knight 0 (6b), Mithali Raj c Beaumont b Ecclestone 2 (2b), Harmanpreet Kaur lbw b Ecclestone 4 (11b, 1x4), Deepti Sharma (not out) 29 (73b, 4x4), Taniya Bhatia lbw b Ecclestone 0 (6b), Sneha Rana c Jones b Ecclestone 2 (16b), Pooja Vastrakar b Brunt 12 (34b, 3x4), Jhulan Goswami b Shrubsole 1 (3b); Extras (b-4, lb-1): 5; Total (in 81.2 overs): 231.  
**Fall of wickets:** 1-167 (Shafali, 48.5 overs), 2-179 (Smriti, 54.3), 3-179 (Shikha, 55.6), 4-183 (Mithali, 57.2), 5-183 (Punam, 58.2), 6-187 (Harmanpreet, 61.1), 7-187 (Taniya, 63.1), 8-197 (Sneha, 69.3), 9-230 (Pooja, 80.1).  
**England bowling:** Brunt 11-2-42-1, Shrubsole 10.2-2-18-1, Sciver 10-3-22-1, Cross 12-4-40-1, Ecclestone 26-5-88-4,

Knight 11-8-7-2, Dunkley 1-0-9-0.  
**India — 2nd innings (following on):** Smriti c Sciver b Brunt 8 (13b, 1x4), Shafali (batting) 55 (68b, 11x4), Deepti (batting) 18 (66b, 2x4); Extras (lb-1, w-1): 2; Total (for one wk. in 24.3 overs): 83.  
**Fall of wicket:** 1-29 (Smriti, 4.3).  
**England bowling:** Brunt 8-3-21-1, Shrubsole 6-1-25-0, Ecclestone 6-2-12-0, Cross 4.3-0-24-0.

# Auger-Aliassime moves into the semifinals

**TENNIS**

AGENCIES  
HALLE

Felix Auger-Aliassime, who stunned his idol Roger Federer in the pre-quarterfinals, cruised into the last four of the Halle Open with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Marcos Giron.

Fourth seed Andrey Rublev moved into the semifinals of a grasscourt tournament for the first time in his career after beating Philipp Kohlschreiber 7-6(4), 6-2.

Rublev will face qualifier Nikoloz Basilashvili for a place in the final with the latter beating South Africa's Lloyd Harris 6-4, 7-6(5).

**Muguruza exits**

In the WTA tournament in Berlin, Alize Cornet put paid to the hopes of former Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza in the quarterfinals with a comeback 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(5) win.

Also making the last four was fit-seeded Belinda Bencic, who beat Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-4, 4-6, 7-6(4).

# Osaka to skip Wimbledon

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

Japanese star Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from Wimbledon, her agent confirmed on Thursday, weeks after the World No. 2 pulled out of the French Open citing her struggle with depression and anxiety.

"Naomi won't be playing Wimbledon this year," Osaka's agent Stuart Duguid said in an email to AFP.

Osaka has been in the spotlight since withdrawing from the French Open. Wimbledon is the second tournament Osaka has withdrawn from since abandoning her French Open campaign after one match. She also withdrew from a WTA tournament in Berlin.

Meanwhile, US Open champion Dominic Thiem joined Nadal in withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympics. World No. 5 Thiem said he wanted to concentrate on Wimbledon.



Osaka. •AFP

# Milkha's condition turns critical



Milkha. •FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Legendary Indian athlete Milkha Singh's condition turned critical on Friday evening as he developed complications, including fever and dropping of oxygen saturation level, after a bout with COVID-19, in the Intensive Care Unit of the PGIMER hospital here.

The 91-year-old, who tested negative for the virus on Wednesday and was shifted to a general ICU, is being closely monitored by a team of doctors. "His condition has turned critical," PGIMER sources said.

# The Dutch coast into the pre-quarterfinals

Sweden takes control of its progress with a win over Slovakia

**EURO 2020**

REUTERS  
AMSTERDAM

An early Memphis Depay penalty and a Denzel Dumfries goal gave the Netherlands a convincing 2-0 victory over Austria on Thursday and a place in the Euro 2020 last 16 as Group C winner.

The Dutch cannot be over-taken at the head of the standings after a second win while Austria's hopes rest on the result of its last match against Ukraine.

The 11th-minute spot-kick provided an early platform for the home side and flying full back Dumfries proved a popular scorer at the Johan Cruyff Arena as he doubled the tally in the 67th minute with his second goal in as many matches.

The Dutch were awarded the penalty after Dumfries was caught on the foot by Austrian captain David Alaba on the corner of the penalty



**Dispatching it:** The Netherlands' Memphis Depay made no mistake from the spot against Austria. •REUTERS

area. But it was only given after referee Orel Grinfeld consulted the pitchside VAR monitor, with Depay dispatching spot-kick powerfully underneath the diving Da-

niel Bachman. The second goal came after Donyell Malen beat the offside trap and unselfishly played in the charging Dumfries, whose finish was en-

**TODAY'S SCHEDULE**

**GROUP F**

**Hungary vs France**  
6.30 p.m.

Portugal vs Germany  
9.30 p.m.

**GROUP E**

**Spain vs Poland**  
12.30 a.m. (Sunday)  
Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD)

thusiastically celebrated by his team mates and the 16,000-strong crowd.

Emil Forsberg's second-half penalty sealed Sweden a 1-0 win over Slovakia in Saint Petersburg on Friday as the Scandinavians moved top of Group E. A point in its final game against Poland would be enough of a top-two finish for Sweden in the group.

**The results:** Group C: the Netherlands 2 (Depay 11-pen, Dumfries 67) bt Austria 0. **Group E:** Sweden 1 (Forsberg 77-pen) bt Slovakia 0. **Group D:** Croatia 1 (Perisic 47) drew with Czech Republic 1 (Schick 37-pen).

**SHORT PASSES**

**Eriksen discharged from hospital**

COPENHAGEN  
Christian Eriksen was discharged from the hospital on Friday, nearly a week after collapsing on the field during a match. The Danish soccer federation wrote on Twitter that Eriksen has been through a successful operation to fit a cardiac device. "The operation went well, and I am doing well under the circumstances," Eriksen said in the tweet. AP

**Busquets returns to Spain squad**

SEVILLE  
Spain got its most experienced player back at the European Championship on Friday. The Spanish soccer federation said Sergio Busquets tested negative for COVID-19 on Thursday, so he was allowed back with the team after being in isolation since testing positive on June 6. The Barcelona midfielder will be in Seville for Spain's match against Poland on Saturday, though he is not likely to play after not practising regularly. AP

# Oosthuizen and Henley in the van

Molinari, Bello a stroke behind after a delayed first round

**US OPEN**

REUTERS  
SAN DIEGO

Louis Oosthuizen completed his first-round play in the U.S. Open with a pair of pars on Friday morning to maintain a share of first place at Torrey Pines. The South African is tied with Russell Henley, who posted a 4-under 67 in the first round on Thursday.

Oosthuizen began the U.S. Open with a sub-70 round for the third year in a row. Upon returning to the course on Friday, he had two holes to play to finish his first round.

Italy's Francesco Molinari and Spain's Rafa Cabrera Bello are one stroke back at 3-under.

**Big bunch**

Two-time champion Brooks Koepka, Xander Schauffele, Hayden Buckley, Spain's Jon Rahm and Masters cham-



**Giving it his all:** Russell Henley set the pace on Thursday with a four-under 67 on Thursday. •AFP

pion Hideki Matsuyama of Japan were set to begin the second round at 2 under.

About three dozen golfers completed first rounds on Friday after play was suspended the previous day because of darkness. Earlier on Thursday, the beginning of the tournament was delayed for about 90 minutes because of fog.

A total of 23 golfers ended up under par through the first round.

**Leading scores:** 67: Russell Henley (USA), Louis Oosthuizen (RSA); 68: Francesco Molinari (Ita), Rafa Cabrera Bello (Esp); 69: Brooks Koepka (USA), Xander Schauffele (USA), Hayden Buckley (USA), Hideki Matsuyama (Jpn), Jon Rahm (Esp), Rikuya Hoshino (Jpn).

## TV PICKS

**WTC final 2021:** India vs New Zealand, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.

**England Women vs India Women:** Only Test, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

**F1:** French GP (Qualifying): SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

**Euro 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six HD (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

**Golf:** USGA: US Open championship: Eurosport (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



## Bucks take series into decider

**LOS ANGELES**  
Milwaukee Bucks beat Brooklyn Nets 104-89 in game six of their NBA playoff series on Thursday.  
**The result (semifinal):** EC: Milwaukee Bucks 104 bt Brooklyn Nets 89 (Series tied 3-3).

## JSW to be additional sponsor for Olympics

**NEW DELHI**  
The Indian Olympic Association has roped in JSW as an additional sponsor for the Tokyo Olympics. "We are happy to announce one more sponsorship offer confirmed with the JSW Group for the Tokyo Olympic Games. Mr. Parth Jindal, CEO of JSW has confirmed a sponsorship of ₹1 crore to the IOA," the IOA said in a statement on Friday.

## Ankita Raina in doubles semifinals

**NOTTINGHAM**  
Ankita Raina and Renata Zarazua of Mexico beat Great Britain's Naomi Broady and Murray Sharan 7-6(4), 6-3 to enter the doubles semifinals of the \$100,000 ITF women's tournament here.  
**Other results: \$25,000 ITF women, Figueira Da Foz, Portugal: Pre-quarterfinals:** Arianne Hartono (Ned) bt Riya Bhattacha 6-3, 6-2.

## Kevin O'Brien ends ODI career

**LONDON**  
Ireland all-rounder Kevin O'Brien, whose 50-ball century against England in a 2011 World Cup match remains the fastest in the tournament's history, has quit One-Day Internationals, Cricket Ireland said on Friday.  
**REUTERS**

## Praneeth wins

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**  
Telangana's V. Praneeth (10 points) defeated Delhi's Sankalp Kukreja in the 11th and final round to win the National (under-14) online rapid chess title on Friday.  
In fact, Rajasthan's Vranshank Chouhan (9.5) did Praneeth a favour by beating the 10th round joint-leader Sandip Nagare to become the runner-up. Sandip topped an eight-player tie for third place at nine points.  
**Final standings (after 11 rounds):** 1 V. Praneeth (Tel, 10 points), 2. Vranshank Chouhan (Raj, 9.5); 3-10. Sandip Nagare (Mah), A.R. Ilamparthi (TN), Sankalp Kukreja (Del), Harsh Suresh (TN), Bhavesh Mahajan (Punjab), Mohamad Imran (AP), Om Manish Kadam (Mah) and Sahib Singh (Del) (9 each).

## Indians need to improve in technical ability: Stimac

'Only by playing over 40 games a season, they can compete against the best'

## FOOTBALL

**AMITABHA DAS SHARMA KOLKATA**  
The national coach Igor Stimac said there are not enough players with requisite technical ability to make the senior national football team competitive enough.

Speaking to the media on Friday, following India's recently concluded World Cup qualification campaign, Stimac said that the stakeholders of Indian football should look at this fact and devise a system that would help Indian footballers have enough games to grow in terms of technical ability.

"To be honest there are not many players with the

## New-look men's squad for Tokyo

Three veterans dropped as selectors opt for fresh-legs formula

## HOCKEY

**UTHRA GANESAN NEW DELHI**

The 16-member Indian men's hockey squad for the Tokyo Olympics was announced on Friday with a few surprise inclusions and omissions that reiterate the team management's preference for youngsters.

Only five players from the Rio Olympics have been retained, with P.R. Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh playing their third Olympics. Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh and Surender Kumar are the other three.

## Surprise exclusions

While Birendra Lakra, who missed Rio due to a knee injury and surgery, returns, the most surprising exclusions are those of the striking trio of S.V. Sunil, Akashdeep Singh and Ramandeep Singh.



**Best among equals:** The relatively young Indian team will hope to make a mark in Tokyo.

• TWITTER/THEHOCKEYINDIA

The three have a collective 600 caps and 200 international goals in major competitions.

While Hockey India said the team was "fuelled with a fresh approach-based in-

tense training and preparation" on the ongoing preparatory camp, the absence of seniors, along with Varun Kumar, seems to indicate persistence with the fresh-legs formula in team selec-

tion, especially in the attack section.

## Tough task

"It has not been an easy process to make the final selection as there is a lot of quality

and ambition in this group of players. The performance levels of all the athletes are at an optimum level and more importantly they work well together," coach Graham Reid said.

## Focused on training

"We are now focused on training with the same intensity and our goal is to put forward our best performance as a collective unit in Tokyo," he added.

India is grouped in Pool A along with Olympic champion Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and host Japan.

**The squad:** Goalkeeper: P.R. Sreejesh; Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Surender Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Birendra Lakra; Midfielders: Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit; Forwards: Shamsher Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Lalit Upadhyay and Mandeep Singh.

## Indians look to gain sparring experience

They will train in Italy till July 10; Mary Kom to hone her skills at ASI

## BOXING

**Y.B. SARANGI KOLKATA**

The Tokyo Olympics-bound Indian boxers will look to gain some valuable sparring experience during their final exposure tour to Italy over the next few weeks.

Eight of the nine Olympics-qualified boxers – including Amit Panghal (52kg) and Vikas Krishan (69kg) among men and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) among women – and eight other elite pugilists of the country will be part of the trip to Assisi till July 10.

London Olympics bronze medallist M.C. Mary Kom



Santiago Nieva. • FILE PHOTO

(51kg) has preferred to stay back and train at the Army Sports Institute (ASI), Pune.

## Significant

The camp assumes significance as boxers from at least six other countries, including Italy, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Venezuela,

Ecuador and France, are expected to take part.

"The idea is to get some good sparring. Facing different national sparring styles and different opponents is important. We get good sparring in India, but the boxers know each other well. It's not the same when you go out and spar with others from different countries," high performance director Santiago Nieva told *The Hindu* on Friday hours before the squad's departure to Italy.

In the run-up to the Olympics, Nieva said, "the focus is on how to be more effective, more aggressive and add more power on the punches".

"Different situations re-

quire different solutions and you have to be quick to find out what suits you better. There are different intelligence levels and the best way to explain a point to someone is to show it to him on the video."

## Back in training

According to Nieva, Manish Kaushik (63kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg) have got back to training after recovering from COVID-19.

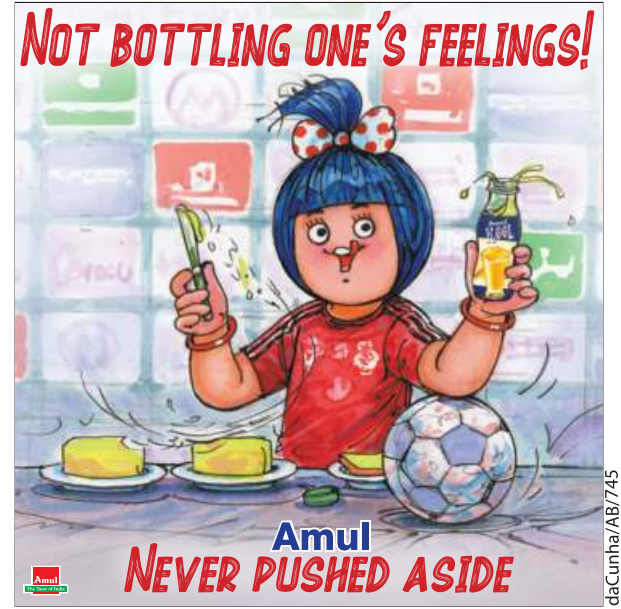
Nieva expressed satisfaction over the Indian boxers' exposure tours amid the pandemic. "Compared to other countries and bearing in mind the current situation, we are in a good position," he said.

## Verstappen fastest overall in practice

**REUTERS LE CASTELLET**

Red Bull's Formula One World championship leader Max Verstappen pushed Mercedes off the top of the timesheets in French GP practice on Friday with the battle between the teams looking as close as ever.

The Dutch driver lapped Le Castellet's Paul Ricard circuit in one minute 32.872s in the afternoon, 0.008 quicker than Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas, who led the first session with a lap of 1:33.448. Bottas set his best lap on the slower medium tyres, however, rather than the softs used by Verstappen.



## Neeraj, Vinesh's Europe extension approved



Neeraj Chopra. • FILE PHOTO



Vinesh. • FILE PHOTO

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Sports Ministry has approved the extension of ongoing training camps for javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra and wrestler Vinesh Phogat abroad till July 25 before they leave for Tokyo Olympics.

Neeraj, in Portugal since June 6, will begin training in Uppsala, Sweden, from June 21 with biomechanical expert Klaus Bartonietz and physiotherapist at a cost of ₹34.87 lakh.

Vinesh, in Europe since late April, will now also have a 10-day training camp in Tallinn, Estonia, and a 16-day

camp in Budapest, Hungary at a cost of ₹9.01 lakh. She is being accompanied by coach Woller Akos and physiotherapist.

While the government has provided approximately ₹1.61 crores to Neeraj in the current Olympic cycle through the ACTC and TOPS, it has spent ₹1.81 crores on Vinesh.

The Government's Mission Olympic Cell also approved wrestler Bajrang Punia's proposal to engage men's 70kg u-23 world champion Mirza Skhulukhia as additional sparring partner in Russia at a cost of ₹2.53 lakh.

## Brazil has it easy against Peru

Under-strength Venezuela holds Colombia goalless

## COPA AMERICA

**AGENCIES SAO PAULO**

Brazil changed half of its starting lineup to face Peru on Thursday in its second Copa America match and still cruised to a 4-0 victory.

It was the Selecao's ninth consecutive victory, and another display that suggests the tournament hosts are the favourites to defend their South American title.

Defender Alex Sandro, Neymar, midfielder Everton Ribeiro and striker Richarlison scored the goals in Rio de Janeiro.

The result puts Brazil atop the Group B standings with six points. Colombia is two points behind after its 0-0 draw with Venezuela.

## Neymar's record

Neymar's goal took him past former Brazil striker Ronaldo as the country's second top goalscorer behind Pele. Neymar reached the mark in 107 games and is now just nine behind Pele, who



**Keeper's day out:** Venezuela custodian Wuilker Farinez stonewalled everything that Colombia threw at him. • AP

scored 77 goals in 92 games.

"It's obviously a great honour for me to be part of the Brazil team's history," a tearful Neymar said.

"To be completely honest, my dream was always to play for Brazil, to wear this shirt. I never imagined I would reach these numbers."

Pele backed Neymar and wrote on Instagram, "Today, he took another step towards my goalscoring record for the (national team). And I'm rooting for him to

get there."

An understrength Venezuela managed just one shot at goal for the second game in a row but shut out a superior Colombia.

Venezuela mustered just one shot at goal compared to Colombia's 17, requiring a dazzling performance from its goalkeeper Wuilker Farinez to keep a clean sheet.

**The results:** Group B: Colombia 0 drew with Venezuela 0; Brazil 4 (Alex Sandro 12, Neymar 68, Everton Ribeiro 89, Richarlison 90+3) bt Peru 0.

## Pritam hopes for govt. support for academy

Three of her wards making the National Olympic squad should act as catalyst

**UTHRA GANESAN NEW DELHI**

In 2002, when the Indian women's hockey team won the Commonwealth Games gold, Pritam Rani Siwach was one of the pillars of that victory. But the 46-year old is happier and prouder today with three of her trainees making it to the squad for the Tokyo Olympics.

The three – Neha Goyal, Nisha Warsi and Sharmila – are products of the academy run by Pritam and her husband Kuldeep in Sonapat since 2004. While Neha has been around for a while, cementing her place in the national side, Sharmila and Nisha are relative newcomers.

## Proud as a parent

"I feel like I am personally going to play in the Olympics, I don't think I ever felt this proud even as a player. It is like three of my own daughters have achieved something."

"Given their background and the absence of support, for them to reach this level



**Excited:** Pritam Rani says it feels like she is personally going to play in the Olympics. • FILE PHOTO

and for a small academy like mine to have a role in their development, the feeling cannot be explained," Pritam told *The Hindu*.

While Neha's story has been told before – an abusive father, a supportive mother and her determination – Pritam believes Nisha and Sharmila deserve equal

appreciation. "Nisha too has been with me for almost seven to eight years, she came as a fifth-standard student."

"Coming from a Muslim family, it was far more difficult for her to pursue sports because of societal pressure. She even quit for a while before I convinced

her mother and sister to let her continue," Pritam said.

Sharmila, on the other hand, had other hurdles. Despite a supportive family, Sharmila, who belongs to Kandi village in Hisar had to adjust to living on her own all these years.

"Several of my girls stay at the Tika Ram School hostel because we do not have a residential academy or place for them to stay," Pritam said.

## Proof of success

She insists she isn't looking for any long-term financial support from the officials. "For girls like them, I hope the government takes note of our efforts and supports us. All we seek is sanctioning an astro-turf field and a residential academy."

"The operational part we will manage ourselves. I have applied many times but there has been no response. If they want proof of success, I think these girls have given them that. Hopefully now things will move," she said.

## When quarantine did wonders for bonding

We understand each other very well now, says Deepika Kumari

## ARCHERY

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA KOLKATA**

The 10-day quarantine period in Paris did wonders for team bonding, feels seasoned Deepika Kumari as Indian women's archery team gets ready for its final Tokyo Olympic qualifier event on Sunday.

The World No. 3 Deepika, who has already qualified in the individual recurve category, has a different challenge this time though.

As the senior-most archer, she has to bring out the best from her team, comprising teenager Komalika Bari and



Deepika. • GETTY IMAGES

the fast-improving Ankit Bhakat – the only change to the team that missed out on the team quota from the World Championships in 2019.

"Normally, I stay aloof and take time to gel with the juniors, but during this quarantine in Vichy, we would spend hours together after practice," said Deepika from Paris. "Transparency hona chahiye team game mein (transparency is key to team's success) and I think it is helping us tremendously. I'm happy with the team coordination. We understand each other very well now," she said.

"As a senior-most member of the team, the priority for me is to remain confident all the time so that it rubs off on them. Acha karna hai aur karwana bhi hai (I've to

do well myself and also help bring out the best from them). It's my duty," Deepika said.

The women's team checked in ahead of the men's and compound teams and entered a bio-secure bubble in Vichy, about 400kms from the venue Stade Charlety in Paris, but it was allowed to practice.

"It's their first time and it's natural for them to be nervous. I don't want my team to miss out after one poor round. My role will always be to push them and take them to a zone so that they can give their best for qualification," Deepika said.