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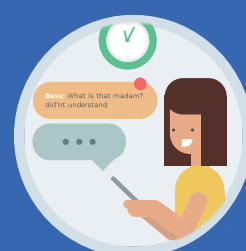
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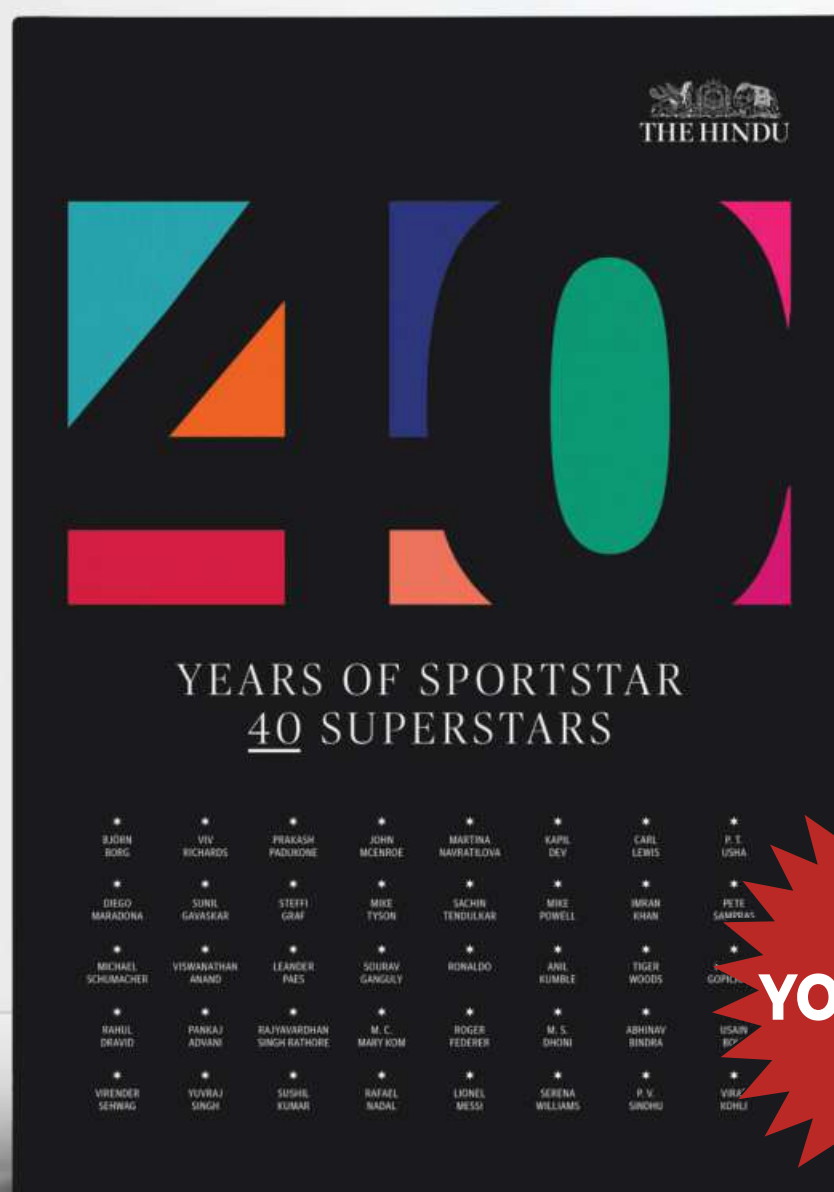
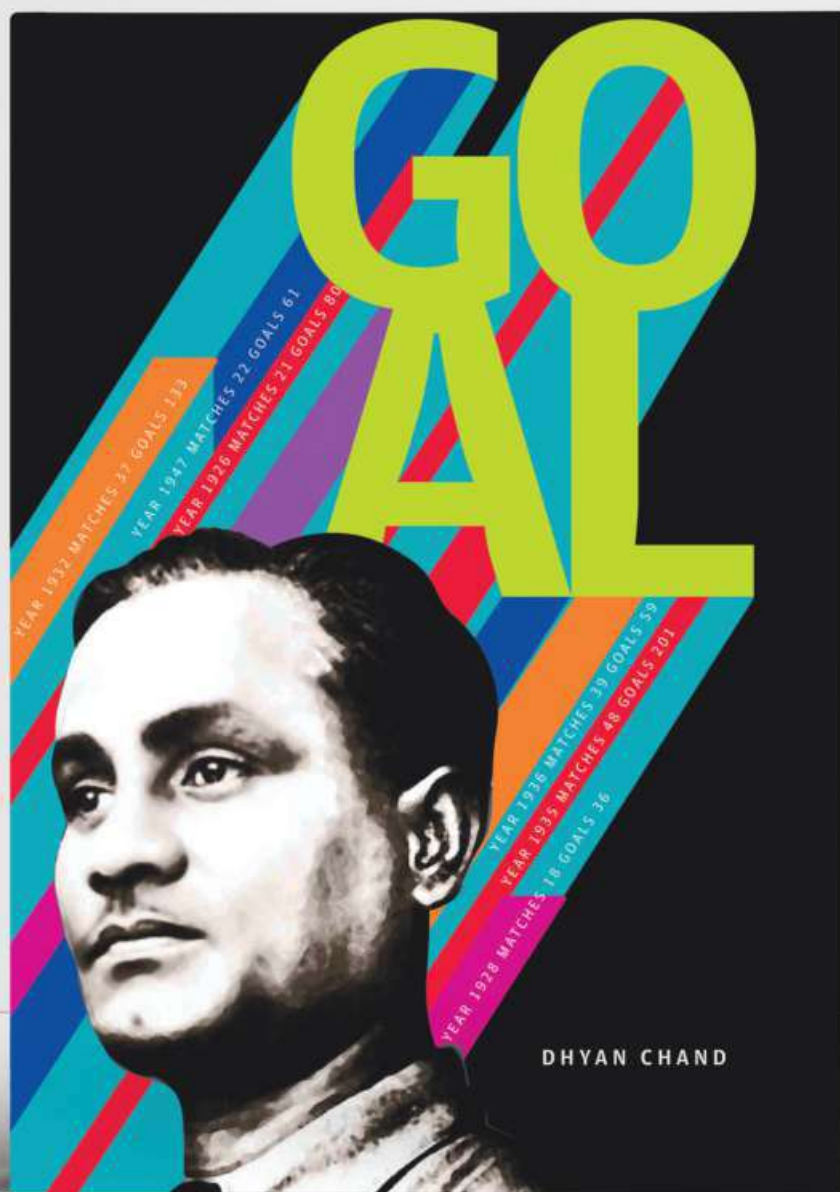


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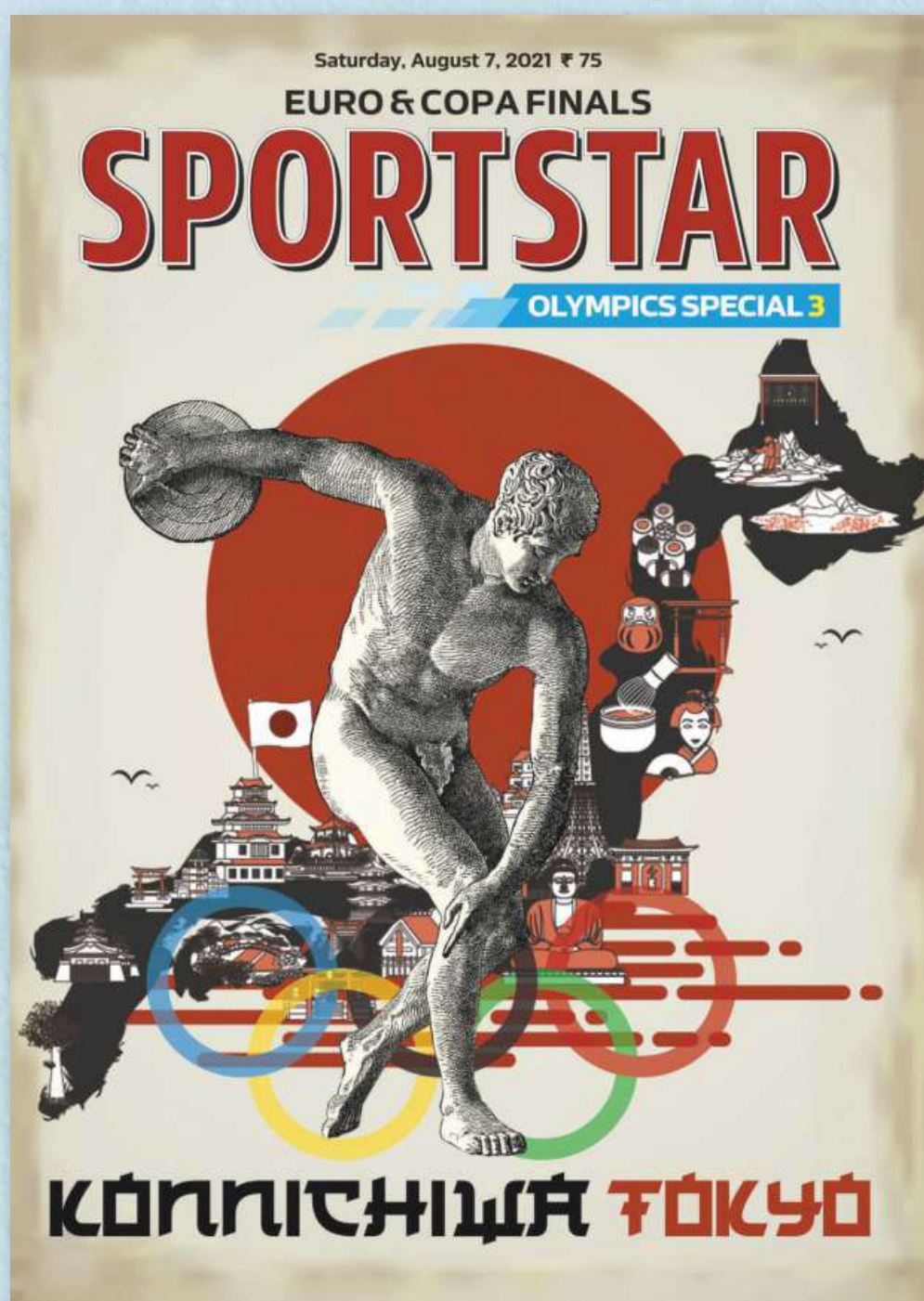


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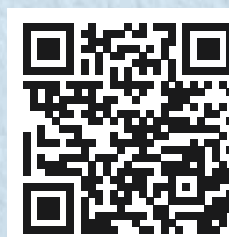
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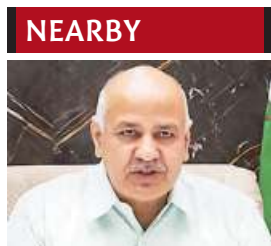


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Sisodia accuses Centre of lying about deaths
 NEW DELHI
 Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday accused the Centre of "lying" about "no deaths due to lack of oxygen". "Instead of taking responsibility for the deaths, the Centre is shamelessly denying them," he said.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Farmers to stage protest outside Parliament today
 NEW DELHI
 The protest against the three farm laws has come full circle, with farmer unions arriving at Parliament on Thursday to demand the repeal of the laws passed 10 months ago. Farm leaders said the government must ensure there is no chaos or conflict.
NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Govt. claim on oxygen-scarcity deaths is appalling, say experts

COVID-19 death certification does not record lack of oxygen, says epidemiologist

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

The Centre's claim in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that a lack of medical oxygen did not lead to deaths of COVID-19 patients was hollow and callous, public health experts said.

Public health expert and epidemiologist Chandrakant Lahariya said that technically no COVID-19 death would be recorded as "due to lack of oxygen", but the experience of patients and the fact that the availability of oxygen would have saved lives meant that the Centre should have chosen its words with care.

"They will be recorded as COVID deaths and lack of oxygen will never be noted as an immediate cause. However, oxygen is necessary for



Breathing space: Cylinders kept ready at a hospital in Visakhapatnam in May. • K.R. DEEPAK

treatment and the failure of the system to provide it has to be acknowledged. The Centre's bureaucratic response is contrary to the public experience and a more

empathetic view was required. Not doing so means we run the risk of repeating mistakes," Dr. Lahariya said. Malini Aisola, convener, All India Drug Action Net-

work, described the Centre's position as "absurd" and reflective of a refusal to acknowledge the death toll of the second wave because of a colossal failure to prepare and respond. "Oxygen shortage was undeniably a direct factor in causing numerous deaths — not limited to hospitals, but even patients stranded in homes and struggling to get admission in hospitals," she said. "There is a reality that cannot be erased from public memory — of hospitals making appeals for oxygen supplies, to media and to courts, and sharing death toll due to oxygen running out."

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10 PMs, WHO chief's staffer, Telegram founder targeted

Macron, Ramaphosa, Pavel Durov were on Pegasus list

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 CHENNAI

Telephone numbers linked to 10 Prime Ministers, three Presidents and a King appeared on the list of potential targets for spying using the Pegasus spyware of the Israeli company NSO Group, according to reports.

The numbers connected with a former staffer of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization, and Pavel Durov, the Russian tech billionaire who founded the Telegram messaging app, are also on the list of numbers selected by NSO's clients.

France's Emmanuel Macron, Iraq's Barham Salih and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa are the Presidents on the list. Morocco's Mohammed VI is the King. Pakistan's Imran Khan, Egypt's Mostafa Madbouly and Morocco's Saad-Eddine El Othmani are the Prime Ministers on the leaked database, which also has seven former Prime Ministers, who were added to the list when they were in power. They are Yemen's Ahmed Obeid bin Daghr, Lebanon's Saad Hariiri, Uganda's Ruhakana Rugunda, France's Edouard Philippe, Kazakhstan's Bakitzhan Sagintayev, Algeria's Noureddine Bedoui and Belgium's Charles Michel, according to *The Wire* news website and international

In the crosshairs | Phone numbers of several sitting heads of government and seven former PMs were part of a leaked database, whose mobiles were targeted by Pegasus spyware, according to a report by *The Wire*

Heads of states who are still in office:



- President of France **Emmanuel Macron**
- Prime Minister of Pakistan **Imran Khan**
- President of South Africa **Cyril Ramaphosa**

- President of Iraq **Barham Salih**
- Prime Minister of Egypt **Mostafa Madbouly**
- Prime Minister of Morocco **Saad-Eddine El Othmani**
- King of Morocco **Mohammed VI**

Others | Telegram app founder **Pavel Durov**

Mamata appeals to SC

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has urged the Supreme Court to take *suo motu* cognisance of the Pegasus spyware issue and asked all the Opposition parties to form a united front against the BJP

without delay.

"Either take *suo motu* cognisance or set up an SIT monitored by you to know whose phones were affected... Only the judiciary can save democracy," Ms. Banerjee said. ▶ PAGE 9

1.2 lakh Indian children lost caregivers: study

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
 NEW DELHI

As many as 1.19 lakh children in India lost their primary caregivers (one or both parents or one or both custodial grandparents) to COVID-19, placing the country after Mexico (1.4 lakh) and Brazil (1.3 lakh) in this figure, says a new study published in *The Lancet*.

Globally, this figure stood at 11.34 lakh between March 1,

2020, and April 30, 2021.

Children who lost either a mother or a father totalled 10.42 lakh, with 1.16 lakh of them in India.

The study developed estimates of pandemic-associated orphanhood and caregiver deaths using excess mortality and deaths for 21 countries that accounted for 76.4% of the global deaths during the period. It then used these findings to develop global ex-

trapolations. Researchers from the COVID-19 Response Team of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, Imperial College, London, the University of Oxford and the World Bank were among those who conducted the study.

More than 15 lakh children around the world lost at least one primary or secondary caregiver (co-residing grandparent). This figure stood at 1.86 lakh for India.

Though India ranks third in absolute numbers, its figure of 0.3 per 1,000 children was much lower than those of countries such as South Africa (5.1), Mexico (3.5), Brazil (2.4), Colombia (2.3), Iran (1.7), the U.S. (1.5), Argentina (1.1) and Russia (1). There were up to five times more children with deceased fathers than mothers.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Govt. delays release of data

DAMINI NATH
 NEW DELHI

A day after the Finance Ministry told the Rajya Sabha it needed more time to furnish data on sale of electoral bonds, activist Kanhaiya Kumar said on Wednesday that the details had been provided to him by the State Bank of India two months ago in reply to his RTI plea.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10



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Protesters reiterate demand to repeal farm laws

Stir at Singhu border about to enter ninth month; farmers ready lists to ensure Jantar Mantar rally isn't breached by miscreants

SHINJINI GHOSH NEW DELHI

Five days short of completing eight months at the Singhu border, protesting farmers on Wednesday reiterated their stance of not leaving the site unless the three farm laws are repealed. With a protest scheduled at Jantar Mantar on Thursday, organisers said that lists of farmers had already been prepared and identity cards made to ensure their protest isn't breached by "miscreants."

Farmers from the Capital's neighbouring States have been stationed at the city's borders for the last several months demanding a complete repeal of the three controversial agriculture laws brought in by the Centre last year.

Roldu Singh, from Punjab's Mansa district said, "Around 200 farmers will go to Jantar Mantar on Thursday. Lists have been drawn



A farmer inside a damaged temporary shelter at the Singhu border site in Delhi on Wednesday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

up to decide who all will be attending the protest there and identity cards have also been distributed. There will be farmers from the various unions. People are going to assemble at the Singhu border and will travel in designated buses."

"Even after all of these preparations from our side, outsiders and miscreants breach our protest and some

misshap takes place, then the onus cannot be on us," said Mr. Singh.

Rain adds to woes With incessant rains over the past few days, several of the makeshift houses and langar tents were damaged and farmers were seen rebuilding the structures.

Ajeetpal Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Anandpur Sa-

Police escort for farmers

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

After a series of meetings with farmers seeking to protest near Parliament during the monsoon session, the Delhi police on Wednesday granted permission to 200 farmers to stage protest at Jantar Mantar from Thursday to August 9 between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. A group of 200 farmers will travel to Jantar Mantar from

the Singhu border in buses with a police escort, sources in the Delhi police said.

They said the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' union which has been spearheading the protest against the farm laws, has been asked to give an undertaking that all COVID-19 norms would be followed and the agitation would be peaceful.

hish district said, "Every time it rains heavily or there is a storm, there is bound to be damage as the rainwater starts entering our structures. Even this time there were leakages, the bamboo structures broke and several of the tents also came off. We will have to purchase everything again and set it up. But we are here in service of humanity so we will

continue doing so no matter what the hurdle is."

Langars affected The rain has also affected the langars that have been at the forefront in feeding the thousands of farmers at the borders, in the past several months. Manjeet Singh, a volunteer at one of the langars at the border said, "Over the last few days, there have

been heavy rains and we have tried to save as much of the raw materials possible. Despite that we lost a lot of it as well. The tarpaulin sheets gave in due to the incessant showers and now it is a matter of great expense also to rebuild the entire thing. We have to now wait for people from our village in Punjab to come to the border with all the material. As of now we have stored the remaining ration in our trolleys." Avtar Singh Mehlna, another farmer added, "I have been at the border since Day 1 and have not gone home at all. The rain have of course done some damage, but we are farmers and we know how to handle these situations. The agitating farmers are equally dedicated to the movement and we are going to overcome all hurdles. We will continue with our movement no matter what and the three farm laws have to be repealed."

Hit by piece of wood, two minors stab boy

Police teams apprehend the accused

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Two minors have been apprehended for allegedly stabbing another boy after being hit by a piece of wood by the victim who was playing tip-cat (*gilli danda*) in Outer Delhi's Mangolpuri area, the police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said that information was received on July 18 from Sanjay Gandhi Hospital that a boy has been admitted with stab injuries.

When the police reached the hospital, the victim stated that he is a student of Class II and has been stabbed six times on the neck. The police said that he told them that he was playing tip-cat near his residence and the tip hit a minor who got enraged and called another minor. Both

the accused stabbed the victim mercilessly, the police said, adding that the victim is undergoing treatment.

Case registered A case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder was registered and teams were formed to nab the accused who had fled their houses. The two were apprehended later.

The accused allegedly told the police that one of them was taking a stroll in the park when he was hit by the piece of wood. When he asked the victim about it, an argument broke out between them after which the accused called his friend. Losing their temper, they brought a kitchen knife from their house and stabbed the victim. The knife and bloodstained clothes have been recovered, the police said.

Paralympian shooter moves HC seeking selection in Tokyo Games

PCI deliberately and arbitrarily ignored my name, he alleges

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Five-time Paralympian shooter Naresh Kumar Sharma has approached the Delhi High Court seeking his selection in the upcoming Tokyo Games.

Mr. Sharma, an Arjuna Awardee and Rajiv Gandhi State Sports Awardee, alleged that the selection panel, Paralympic Committee

of India (PCI), deliberately and arbitrarily ignored his name for the Paralympics in spite of him fulfilling all the eligibility criteria.

Court to hear plea today The High Court will hear Mr. Sharma's plea, seeking a direction to the PCI to include his name in the list of selected shooters for the R7 event, on July 22.

Mr. Sharma has claimed that the selection process was not fair and transparent and that the committee was biased against him.

He said the selection process was in violation of the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011 which mandates judicious and meritorious selection of players to represent India at major international events.

HC transfers Tihar jail inmate death inquiry to CBI

Move comes after Delhi Police fails to make headway in the case; CBI asked to file report by Sept. 29

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH NEW DELHI

With the Delhi police unable to make much headway into the investigation behind the mysterious death of an inmate inside Tihar Jail in May this year, the Delhi High Court has transferred the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Injury marks Justice Mukta Gupta noted that there was glaring variance in the Superintendent Jail's report and the version of the deceased's mother over the manner in which the death of the inmate has been caused.

As per the status report filed by the Superintendent

Jail, there was no apparent injury on the deceased, Srikanth, however, the case of the mother is that there were deep injury marks on his body.

Srikanth was taken into custody in connection with three FIRs on June 13, 2019, and since then, he was in judicial custody.

As per the Jail Superintendent, on the day of the incident on May 14, 2020, the officers on duty heard some hue and cry in one of the barracks at 7 a.m. When the officers rushed to the spot, four inmates were beating Srikanth with a cricket bat. The officials intervened and separated the group. Later that day, Srikanth complained of trepi-



dated and pain in the body. Taking note of his injuries, he was referred to Safdarjung Hospital, where he succumbed to death.

The Delhi police said that Srikanth used to bully other inmates and also demanded money from them. It said that Srikanth was targeted by

some of the harassed inmates.

Mysterious calls from jail In its status report, the police stated that PCR calls were also received from unknown numbers that inmate Srikanth has been assaulted by a senior jail official.

The sister of the deceased has also claimed that she had received a call from her brother, a day prior to the incident, expressing apprehension of being murdered by the jail officers.

"It has been two months since the FIR in question has been registered," the judge said, noting that the investigation based on calls "appears to be incomplete".

On previous hearing, the HC had enquired about the CCTV footage of the ward where the incident took place. However, the jail authorities said that the CCTVs in ward are not in working condition.

Considering all the details, the High Court said, "an in-depth investigation is required to be conducted to find out the circumstances under which the deceased made a phone call to his sister expressing his apprehension of death and his subsequent death in the judicial custody".

The court has called for a status report from the CBI by next date of hearing on September 29.

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4.	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਵਾਈਲ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	11:30 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
5.	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ 'ਤੇ ਇਤਰਾਜ਼ ਦੀ ਸੁਣਵਾਈ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	1:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੋਂ 3:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
6.	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਦੀ ਪਤਤਾਲ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	3:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੋਂ 4:00 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
7.	ਠੀਕ ਪਾਏ ਗਏ ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਦੀ ਸੂਚੀ ਲਗਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	4:00 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਤੋਂ 4:30 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
8.	ਨਾਮਜ਼ਦਗੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਵਾਪਿਸ ਲੈਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	4:30 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਤੋਂ 5:00 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
9.	ਬਿਨਾਂ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਚੋਟ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਦੇ ਐਲਾਨ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	10.08.2021	5:00 ਵਜੇ ਸ਼ਾਮ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
1.	ਚੋਟ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨ ਆਲਟ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	11.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ 9:30 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੱਕ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
2.	ਚੋਟ ਲੜ ਰਹੇ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੂਚੀ ਲਗਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	11.08.2021	9:30 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ	ਉਪਰੋਕਤ
1.	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੱਕ	ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਸਥਾਨ ਅਠਾਥ ਗੈਰਾ ਸੜਕ
2.	ਵੋਟਾਂ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ	13.08.2021	1:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੋਂ 3:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਤੱਕ	
3.	ਨਤੀਜੇ ਦਾ ਐਲਾਨ	13.08.2021	3:00 ਵਜੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ	ਹਿਟਰਲਿੰਗ ਅਫ਼ਸਰ ਡੀ.ਐਲ. ਗੈਰਾ ਸੜਕ

ਜ਼ੋਨ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਵੇਰਵਾ

ਲੜਾਈ ਨੰ	ਜ਼ੋਨ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ	ਮਿਤੀ	ਸਮਾਂ	ਜਿੱਥੇ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪੈਣਗੀਆਂ
1.	ਦੇਵੀਗੜ੍ਹ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਦੇਵੀਗੜ੍ਹ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਦੇਵੀਗੜ੍ਹ।
2.	ਘੜਾਮ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਘੜਾਮ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਘੜਾਮ।
3.	ਦੁੱਪਿਨ ਸਾਧਾਂ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਦੁੱਪਿਨ ਸਾਧਾਂ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਦੁੱਪਿਨ ਸਾਧਾਂ।
4.	ਰੋਸਨਪੁਰ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਰੋਸਨਪੁਰ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਰੋਸਨਪੁਰ।
5.	ਅਹਿਰੂ ਕਲਾਂ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਮਠਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਮਠਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ।
6.	ਮਸੀਂਗਣ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਮਸੀਂਗਣ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਮਸੀਂਗਣ।
7.	ਹਠਾਣਾ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਮਾਤੂ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਮਾਤੂ।
8.	ਚੁਲਕਾਂ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਸੈਂਪਰਨਗੜ੍ਹ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਸੈਂਪਰਨਗੜ੍ਹ।
9.	ਬਹਿਰੂ	13.08.2021	9:00 ਵਜੇ ਸਵੇਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 1:00 ਵਜੇ ਤੱਕ	ਦੀ ਸਰਸਰੀਗੜ੍ਹ ਬਹੁਮੰਤਵੀ ਸਹਿਕਾਰੀ ਸਭਾ, ਸਰਸਰੀਗੜ੍ਹ।

ਚੋਟ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਹਦਾਇਤਾਂ

- ਚੋਟ ਐਕਟ ਕੁਲਜ਼ 'ਤੇ ਬਾਇਲਾਚ ਅਤੇ ਮਹਿਕਮੇ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਸਮੇਂ ਸਮੇਂ ਜਾਰੀ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਹਦਾਇਤਾਂ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਕਰਵਾਈ ਜਾਵੇਗੀ।
- ਹਰ ਇਕ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਨਾਮੀਨੈਸ਼ਨ ਪੇਪਰਜ਼ ਦਾਖਲ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ 200/- ਰੁਪਏ ਇਲੈਕਸ਼ਨ ਫੀਸ ਜਮ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰਵਾਉਣੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਰਜੀਦ ਹਿਟਰਲਿੰਗ ਅਫ਼ਸਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਰਜਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਤਤਾਲ ਵੇਲੇ ਇਖਾਉਣੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ। ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਉਮੀਦਵਾਰ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਫੀਸ ਜਮ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਰਵਾਏ ਚੋਟ ਲਈ ਪੜ੍ਹਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਫੀਸ ਵਾਪਿਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।
- ਜੇਕਰ ਵੋਟਾਂ ਪਾਉਣ ਸੰਬੰਧੀ ਬੈਂਕ ਦੇ ਦਫ਼ਤਰ ਤੋਂ 300/-ਰੁਪਏ ਪ੍ਰਤੀ ਜ਼ੋਨ ਦੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ।
- ਜ਼ੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ 4 ਅਤੇ 8 ਔਰਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਜ਼ੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ 3 ਅਨੁਸੂਚਿਤ ਜਾਤੀ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਲਈ ਰਾਖਵਾਂ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ।

ਮਨੋਜਰ, ਪੀ.ਏ.ਡੀ.ਬੀ.ਦੇਵੀਗੜ੍ਹ।

ਨੋਟ:- ਸਮੂਹ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਚੋਟ ਦੀ ਮਿਤੀ ਜਾਂਚੀ ਜਾਵੇ ਕਿ ਚੋਟਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਉਹ ਆਪਣੀ ਡਿਫ਼ਰੈਂਟ ਰਕਮ ਕਿਸਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਭੁਗਤਾਨ ਕਰਨ ਅਤੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਹਿੱਸੇਦਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਰਕਮ 500/- ਰੁਪਏ ਤੋਂ ਘੱਟ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਬਾਕੀ ਦੀ ਰਕਮ ਭਰਵਾਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ 500/-ਰੁਪਏ ਦੇ ਬਰਾਬਰ ਕਰਨ।

Rain intensity to reduce over next two days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday said there may be a reduction in the intensity of rain-fall over the next two days in the Capital while the sky is likely to stay overcast.

No rain was recorded in the city between 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday but 60.3 mm or rain was recorded in the 24-hours ending at 8.30 a.m.

The maximum temperature settled at 34.7° Celsius which was normal for the season. The minimum settled at 22.4 degrees Celsius which was five degrees below normal. The forecast for July 22 reads "partly cloudy sky with very light rain/thundershowers. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 35 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively.

Since June 1, the city has received 315.5 mm of rain which is 62% more than normal for the season.

A laborious task



PWD workers cleaning a drain at GT Road in Delhi in view of the ongoing monsoon season. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

2 friends fall to death at construction site

'They were visiting to buy property'

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Two friends fell to their death from the fourth floor of an under-construction building in Shahdara's Krishna Nagar on Wednesday morning, the police said, adding that inquest proceedings have been initiated.

DCP (Shahdara) R. Sathiyasundaram said that the deceased have been identified as Rajesh Rastogi (46) and Amit Malhotra (47), both residents of Krishna Nagar.

A PCR call was received regarding two persons falling from a building in East Krishna Nagar behind a hospital. When the police reached the spot, they were both shifted to a nearby hospital where they were de-

clared brought dead. During enquiry, the police said the security guard of the building, Gaya Prasad, stated that the two had visited the property with the intention to purchase it.

It was revealed that the duo had visited the terrace first and then came down to the fourth floor of the building. "It is suspected that they fell down while looking out of the balcony which was open and without walls, railing or fencing. Even the flooring was incomplete and filled with bricks," the DCP said. "No foul play has been suspected or reported so far. We are looking for CCTV footage and other eyewitnesses," Mr. Sathiyasundaram said.

Two held for making, supplying heroin

Drugs worth ₹2 crore seized: police

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Two Bareilly-based cousins have been arrested from east Delhi's Gazipur for allegedly supplying heroin, the police said on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Chinmoy Biswal said that the accused have been identified as Sajid Khan (24) and Wajid Khan (28), both residents of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh.

A total of one kg heroin worth around ₹2 crore in the international market has been seized from them. "On July 13, the police received information that two persons, involved in supply of heroin, would come near Shamsah Ghat in Gazipur to supply drug after which a trap was laid and the ac-

used were apprehended with two parcels of heroin," Mr. Biswal said.

Since last 5 years During interrogation, the police said the accused disclosed that they are cousins and involved in drug trafficking for the last five years. In 2016, they were caught by Uttar Pradesh Police with heroin.

"It was revealed that they are experts in making heroin by using crude [poppy head extracts] and various chemicals. They used to purchase the crude and chemicals from Bareilly and manufacture the heroin," the officer said.

They also revealed that they make the drug in the forest of Bhaira village on the banks of the Ganga.

Python stuck in AC unit, rescued

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

An Indian rock python was rescued by the Wildlife SOS NGO after it was found entwined inside an air conditioning unit at a home in Chattarpur. It was later released into the wild.

After receiving a call from a family who found the snake, the team from the NGO found that the two-foot long juvenile snake had entered the unit through the exhaust tube and was trapped inside. The rescue operation lasted 45 minutes. The reptile was examined for injuries and was then released into the wild. Kartick Satyanarayana, co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "We are very grateful to the family for contacting the Wildlife SOS and having faith in our team."

Timings DELHI

THURSDAY, JUL. 22
RISE 05:38 SET 19:18
RISE 17:58 SET 03:20

FRIDAY, JUL. 23
RISE 05:38 SET 19:18
RISE 18:59 SET 04:22

SATURDAY, JUL. 24
RISE 05:39 SET 19:17
RISE 19:52 SET 05:29

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	35	22
Safdarjung	35	22
Palam	35	23

Delhi Palam Today
33°C Light rain spells and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky. Day would remain humid.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
33°C Few spells of light rain or thundershower likely at some places with cloudy sky with gentle winds.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

Teen drowns in canal, friends hide his death

NOIDA
A college student has been arrested and a juvenile apprehended in Greater Noida for allegedly hiding the clothes and a motorcycle of their friend, who drowned in a canal five days ago, police said on Wednesday.

Centre is lying about no deaths due to oxygen shortage: Sisodia

Thousands of people lost their lives due to imprudent policies, says Deputy CM

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday accused the Centre of "lying" after Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha said "no deaths due to lack of oxygen have been specifically reported by States/UTs" during the second wave of COVID-19.

"Thousands of people lost their lives due to oxygen scarcity. This was all caused by imprudent policies of the Central government. Instead of taking responsibility for deaths caused by lack of oxygen, the Centre is shamelessly denying the deaths," Mr. Sisodia said in a video statement.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the entire country, including Delhi, reported deaths due to lack of oxygen and that the Centre is "completely wrong" in claiming that no one died due to lack of oxygen. "Won't be surprised if tomorrow the Centre says COVID-19 never came to the country," he added.

Mr. Sisodia said the Delhi government does not have any data on deaths due to oxygen shortage as the Centre did not allow them to form a committee to look into the incidents and give compensation to the families. "From April 15 to May 10, there was



A tanker carrying medical oxygen for COVID-19 patients enters Jaipur Golden Hospital. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

oxygen mismanagement by the Centre and due to this there was chaos in hospitals across the country and many people died due to oxygen shortage. When the Delhi government said it was setting up a committee to inquire into allegations of cases of deaths due to shortage of oxygen, the Centre did not allow it to be formed and blocked it through the Lieutenant-Governor," claimed Mr. Sisodia.

Jaipur Golden Hospital

"The State government has to first make a committee, then only there will be a report [on number of death due to oxygen shortage]. Currently, the (Delhi) government does not have any data on deaths due to oxygen shortage," said the Aam Aadmi Party Minister.

In April, the Delhi government had formed a four-

member committee to look into 21 deaths in Jaipur Golden Hospital, which the hospital said were "linked" to oxygen shortage.

In May, the Delhi government said in a report submitted to the High Court that the 21 deaths were not caused due to shortage of oxygen.

"In view of the above observations, the committee was of the opinion that all 21 recorded patients were sick/critical and suffering from COVID-19 infection. As per case records made available to the committee, all the reported patients were getting oxygen therapy/ventilation throughout the hospital stay, including time of resuscitation, and there was no mention of any oxygen shortage in any of the case records. In view of the natural virulent course of the disease and lack

of any evidence suggestive of oxygen shortage, the committee is of the opinion that shortage of oxygen as cause of death could not be ascertained," the report had said.

When contacted, the Delhi government spokesperson did not comment on how the government can say there was no data as the Centre did not allow it to form a committee, when one such panel was formed by the government and it had said 21 deaths were not due to oxygen shortage.

"Twenty critically-ill COVID-19 patients died last night over oxygen crisis. The oxygen stock was never completely dry, but the pressure was low as we were running out of stock," Dr. D.K. Baluja, medical director of Jaipur Golden Hospital in Delhi, had said on April 24, adding that the deaths were "linked" to the oxygen shortage.

BJP hits back

Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana, reacting the Mr. Sisodia's allegations, said: "This is how [Chief Minister] Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia operate. In their report they will state there was no death due to oxygen shortage. They will not send this report to the Centre, but will go from one news channel to another and claim the Centre has become insensitive."

'Delhi govt. never sought details about oxygen-scarcity deaths'

Batra Hospital confirmed 12 fatalities due to supply shortage

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

With the issue of deaths due to oxygen shortage during the second COVID-19 wave snowballing into a political blame game, SCL Gupta, medical director of Batra Hospital – where 12 patients died due to oxygen shortage – said the Delhi government never sought any details related to the deaths.

On May 1, the hospital did not have oxygen for more than an hour and the 12 who died, including a senior doctor from the hospital, were undergoing COVID-19 treatment. Delhi had witnessed several deaths of COVID-19 patients "linked" to oxygen shortage in at least three hospitals during April-May.

It was only Batra Hospital that had clearly stated that the patients died as the hospital ran out of oxygen.

"The Delhi government never sought details or figures about the deaths due to oxygen shortage. If the government now asks us to give details on this, we will definitely share the information with the government," Dr. Gupta told *The Hindu*.

"We ran out of LMO (Liquid Medical Oxygen) at 12.15 p.m. and we received LMO supply at 1.35 p.m. In between, we had some oxygen cylinders, but they cannot support ventilators," Dr. Sudhanshu Bankata, execu-



Relatives of COVID-19 patients wait in long queues to get medical oxygen in Delhi. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

tive director of Batra Hospital, had said.

Dr. Gupta said on Wednesday that there was an oxygen shortage across the country and deaths also happened due to it.

"But the Centre has said that health is a State subject and the States have not given them any data on the number of deaths due to oxygen shortage. So, they are also right in a way," he added. When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson did not comment on the issue.

On April 24, Jaipur Golden Hospital had said 20 critically-ill patients had died overnight. The hospital "linked" the deaths to an oxygen crisis. However, the Delhi government submitted a report to the High Court in May stating the deaths were not due to oxygen shortage.

D.K. Baluja, medical director of the hospital, did not respond to calls or messages for a comment.

On April 23, Sir Ganga

Ram Hospital, another private hospital, said 25 severely-ill patients had died in 24 hours and that the hospital was facing an oxygen shortage. When contacted, D.S. Rana, chairman of the hospital, said the deaths were not related to oxygen shortage.

"We never ran out of oxygen completely. But many times, we did not have reserve stock," Dr. Rana said.

Inquiry can clear doubts

Grish Tyagi, Secretary of the Delhi Medical Council, said the cause of death in such cases will not be shown as "lack or shortage of oxygen" anyways, but an inquiry could reveal whether there was an oxygen shortage that could have led to the deaths.

"The government could order a postmortem in such cases. But considering the COVID-19 situation, talking to health workers at the hospital is the only practical way," Dr. Tyagi said.

South civic body issued over 20K death certificates in April-June

Officials attribute spike to COVID-19, clearing of data backlog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) issued over 20,000 death certificates between April and June when the city was reeling under the second wave of COVID-19, municipal officials said.

According to data provided by the SDMC, the corporation issued 3,351 death certificates in April, 10,209 in May and 6,832 in June.

Officials attributed the increase in death registrations to the second wave as well as clearing of backlog of data.

"As compared to April, the number of death certificates is about 204% higher

in May because of the second wave. While the figure in June is about 103% higher than April. The maximum number of deaths occurred either in May or in the last leg of April. So, kin of most of the deceased who applied for certificates got the documents in May and June," a senior SDMC official said.

Civic officials clarified that these registrations also include normal deaths and they do not necessarily reflect the total death count due to COVID-19 in that particular month. Some civic officials also said that other than the second wave, there was backlog of data due to technical issues and it was

cleared in May and June, leading to a rise in the numbers of death registrations.

Municipal records also showed that only 4,656 birth certificates were issued in May, while the figure was 5,997 in April and 4,976 in June. Officials suggested that the decline in birth certificates may be due to the reduction in institutional births such as those in hospitals, maternity centres because of the pandemic.

"During the second wave, people preferred not to visit hospitals for deliveries due to possibility of getting infected with COVID-19, leading to more home births," another SDMC official said.

An unusual sight



A view of the Jama Masjid during Id-ul-Azha prayers in Old Delhi on Wednesday. The day lacked the usual hustle and bustle as people mostly stayed indoors to offer namaz. • SANDEEP SAXENA

Notice to police over Hauz Khas harassment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Wednesday issued notice to Delhi Police over alleged sexual harassment of a group of women from northeast at Hauz Khas.

In a statement issued, the women's panel said: "A video is going viral on social media since Tuesday wherein it has been claimed by some women from northeast that they were sexually harassed by a group of men in Hauz Khas area. According to the women, a group of men stopped them and asked them their 'rate'. The women can be seen confronting the men in the video."

Taking suo motu cognisance of the matter, the DCW wrote to Delhi Police seeking registration of an FIR and asked it to provide a detailed action taken report by July 25.

Case registered

The police said they have registered a case on charges of insult to modesty of a woman at Safdarjung Enclave Police Station. DCP (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh said efforts are being made to identify the accused.

Govt. to float tender for 465 e-buses, eyes becoming largest electric fleet

Engagement of 300 e-buses already under way by DTC

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Transport Department is preparing to float a tender for the engagement of over 400 electric buses as it eyes becoming the largest operational fleet of e-buses in the country.

According to the department, the tender will seek the engagement of 465 e-buses under the cluster scheme.

With the engagement of 300 e-buses already under way by the Delhi Transport Corporation, the engagement of more buses will not only move the Capital a step closer to its target of a fleet of 1,000 e-buses but also be-

coming the largest fleet of its kind in India after Pune's estimated fleet of over 600 e-buses, a senior Transport Department official said.

Most progressive

"Delhi's Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy is the most progressive of its kind and this bid is another component of it," said Ashish Kundra, Principal Secretary and Commissioner, Transport, confirming the development.

The e-buses are being inducted under the Centre's 'Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India (FAME) Phase-II' Scheme.

The first phase of the scheme was notified on April 1, 2015, with a total outlay of ₹895 crore and its second phase, with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore, was notified in February last year with effect from April 1, 2019, following approval by the Union Cabinet.

According to a senior official, with an estimated 800 buses providing mobility to the masses on the Capital's streets, Delhi would be the leader in this respect, overtaking Pune where 150 e-buses are currently operational and around 500 more are expected to be added to the fleet soon.

BJP demands vigilance probe into DJB 'scam'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday alleged that the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) had become the "most corrupt department" under the Delhi government.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said tenders for work orders were being rejected before being cleared after the receipt of "cut money" by the board and demanded a probe by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) in an alleged scam worth ₹280 crore.

'Rules ignored'

At a joint press conference, Mr. Gupta along with three members of the board, including Vijay Bhagat, Satyapal and Rajiv Kumar, alleged that a tender for a proposed water treatment plant at Dwarka was rejected at the board's meeting in July last year but awarded earlier this month.

No reason was given at the time when the tender was rejected, Mr. Gupta alleged. Later, the tender was cleared and awarded without citing any reason, he pointed out.

Mr. Gupta further claimed that "all rules and regulations were ignored" in the process of giving out the tender.

Microtunneling work at Anand Vihar RRTS begins

Technique is used for utility diversion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has started microtunneling work at its under construction Anand Vihar RRTS station for utility diversion work.

Keeping public convenience in mind, the NCRTC said it had chosen the microtunneling technique for diverting the existing interceptor sewer line of the Delhi Jal Board at the Anand Vihar RRTS (Regional Rapid Transit System) station site, which was infringing the RRTS corridor at the location.

Microtunneling is a trenchless underground tunnel construction technique generally used for constructing smaller tunnels for utilities diversion such as drainage pipelines to minimise the public inconvenience caused during the construction.

The NCRTC stated it is using a microtunnel boring machine, which follows the proposed diversion alignment with the help of a guidance system and uses pipe jacking method for laying the pipes behind the shield while moving forward.

"About 600-metre-long interceptor sewer line of 900 mm diameter high capacity



Microtunneling work under way at Anand Vihar RRTS station. • PTI

non pressure (NP-4) concrete pipes will be laid at a depth of about 6 metre below the ground surface," the NCRTC stated.

It said that construction activities at Anand Vihar are under way in full swing with the work of launching shaft of tunnel boring machine, measuring 20 m in length and 16 m in width, according to the NCRTC.

"Two tunnel boring machines will be lowered in the launching shaft to bore RRTS twin tunnels from Anand Vihar towards Sarai Kale Khan to construct around 3 km tunnels. It will be the longest tunnel section between any two stations amongst the available metro systems in the country," the NCRTC also stated.

Delhi sees 4 more deaths, still facing job shortage

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the city in a day is still low owing to vaccine shortage, as per Delhi government data.

The vaccine stock of the city will last for only less than a day, as per a vaccination bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

The city has been facing a similar situation for more than 10 days and the Health Minister had said last week that 500 vaccination centres were shut due to shortage in the city. Only 71,997 doses of vaccine were administered in the city on Tuesday compared to 1,29,054 doses of Covishield vaccine and 1,84,390 doses of Covaxin, as per the bulletin.

On Wednesday morning, the city had only 1,08,300 doses of Covishield vaccine and 1,84,390 doses of Covaxin, as per the data.

62 new cases

Also, the city reported 62 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,35,671, according to a second bulletin. Four deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 25,039.

A total of 65,811 tests were done in a day and the test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.09%. Of the total cases, 14,10,066 people have recovered and there are only 566 active cases.

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HC stays Arunachal's entry permit notification

State had sought vaccination for nod

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The Itanagar Bench of the Gauhati High Court has stayed the Arunachal Pradesh government's June 30 notification prescribing temporary entry permits for "developmental works in public and private sectors" only to those vaccinated against COVID-19.

Hearing a public interest litigation petition filed by Dibang Valley district resident Madan Milli on July 19, Justice Nani Tagia said the notification classifying people into the vaccinated and the unvaccinated for the purpose of issuance of temporary permit "violates Articles 14, 19 (1) (d) and 21 of the Constitution of India".

Indians who intend to visit Arunachal Pradesh - as in three other north-eastern States - for business or tourism need to possess an Inner-Line Permit (ILP), a British era system.

"Tourist ILPs shall remain suspended during the period of this order [till August 1]. However, for developmental works in both public and private sectors, temporary permits may be issued, pro-

vided such persons are vaccinated for COVID-19," Clause 11 of the government notification read. Representing the State, Additional Advocate General R.H. Nabam said the restrictions were placed due to the rising cases of COVID-19 with the sole objective of checking the spread of the pandemic in the State.

'No evidence'

Examining the plea for staying Clause 11 of the government order, Justice Tagia noted: "There is no evidence available either in the record or in the public domain that COVID-19 vaccinated persons cannot be infected with COVID-19 virus, or he/she cannot be a carrier of COVID-19 virus and consequently a spreader of COVID-19 virus."

It observed that even a vaccinated but COVID-19-infected person can be a super-spreader. Restrictions based on a person's vaccination status did not hold any water and that there was no justification for discrimination, it stated.

Staying the operation of the impugned Clause 11, the court issued notice on the matter returnable on July 28.

Farmers block national highway in Haryana

They seek release of arrested protesters, withdrawal of cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SIRSA

Farmers on Wednesday blocked a national highway here at three different points to demand the release of five protesters who were arrested last week following an attack on Haryana Assembly Deputy Speaker Ranbir Gangwa's car.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of various farmers' unions, spearheading stir against the farm laws, has also demanded the withdrawal of cases including sedition charges against over 100 protesters booked in connection with the incident involving the attack on Gangwa's car on July 11.

Meanwhile, the indefinite fast of farmer leader Baldev Singh Sirsa, as a protest against the arrests and registration of cases, entered the fourth day on Wednesday.

A team of the health department conducted Smr. irsa's medical checkup at the protest site.

The protesters blocked the highway for two hours at



Farmers attend a meeting on agricultural laws near Sonipat on Wednesday. ■PTI

different points, including Khuian Malana toll plaza and Panjuana village.

While emergency vehicles were allowed to pass, the blockade, however, resulted in traffic jams on both sides of the road.

Police deployment

Police in strength had been deployed to prevent any untoward incident.

Many passengers, including some students, were seen getting down from the buses and walking on foot and using other means to

reach their destinations.

The police have booked over 100 people, mostly unidentified, for sedition, obstructing public servants in discharge of their duty, murderous attempt on an elected representative and damaging public property after the attack on the Deputy Speaker's vehicle.

The protesting farmers had earlier claimed that the administration has not been able to show any video or other evidence to prove that the farmers indulged in violence on July 11.

No more avian flu cases in Gurugram: health dept.

A boy died of the disease this month

ASHOK KUMAR GURUGRAM

The district health department of Gurugram on Wednesday said that none of the close contacts of the minor boy, who had tested positive for avian flu and died earlier this month, was found to have symptoms of the disease.

Civil Surgeon Virender Yadav said the health department had examined the close contacts of the 11-year-old, a resident of Chakkarpur village, but none had the symptoms of avian flu.

The 11-year-old, suffering from blood cancer, had died at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi on July 11.

A report six days later confirmed that he suffered from avian flu. "We have been carrying out survey for the past four days in the village and the close contacts of the deceased have also been examined. None of them are found to have the avian flu symptoms. Also, no new such cases were reported in the district," said Dr. Yadav.

He added that the Ani-

Health department had examined the close contacts of the 11-year-old victim

VIRENDER YADAV
Civil Surgeon

mal Husbandry department too had carried out a survey among birds, but no case of avian flu was detected.

"The survey will continue to cover the entire village. The Primary Health-care Centres have also been alerted to report any case with symptoms of avian flu," said Dr. Yadav.

Death certificate

He, however, said the AI-IMS was yet to issue death certificate to the deceased's family citing the cause of death.

"The boy had tested positive for avian flu, but the cause of death would be established only after a death certificate is issued. The death could have been caused due to fungal pneumonia as well. If death due to avian flu is confirmed, it would be country's first such case," said Dr. Yadav.

Probe ordered into Assam bird deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

The wildlife wing of the Assam Forest Department on Wednesday ordered a probe into the death of a large number of birds due to suspected poisoning of an agricultural field in Barpeta district.

The poison was sprayed apparently to prevent the birds - sparrows and doves - from damaging the crops.

Locals said more than 300 birds had died.

Chief Wildlife Warden M.K. Yadava gave Assistant Conservator of Forest Ranjit K. Dutta a week's time to submit a report after investigating the deaths in Bohori Silgaon village under Sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Case registered

"A case has been registered by the ranger concerned and a man named Mannan Ali has been arrested in this connection. We are awaiting the autopsy report on the birds to ascertain the exact cause of the death," State Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya stated.

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SEARCH FOR MISSING



KRITI

General public is hereby informed that a girl (depicted in the photo), **Name** : Kriti D/o Sh. Arjun R/o H. No. 2461, Near Kali Masjid, Sita Ram Bazar, Delhi has been missing since 15.07.2021 from Near Union Bank, Asaf Ali Road, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 228/21 u/s 363 IPC dated 15.07.2021 has been registered at Police Station Kamla Market, Delhi. Her physical description is as under :-

Age : 17 Years, **Height** : 5'2", **Complexion** : Wheatish, **Face** : Long, **Built** : Normal, **Wearing** : Red colour lining kurta and blue colour laggi.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform to the following:- E-mail id - cic@cbi.gov.in or Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Phone: 011-24368638, 24368641 P.S. Kamla Market, Delhi

Fax No. 011-24368639 Central Distt., Delhi

DP/889/CD/2021 Ph. No. 011-23230623, 23233743

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE FOR MISCELLANEOUS WORK

Sr. No. Tender Notice No. CEC/BSP/21-22/05 Date: 14.07.2021 (Open Tender)

Name of Work :- Execution of S&T goomies and Gate lodge work including general electrical works for buildings between Chakewani Station to Gondia Station in connection with 3rd B.G. Rail line between Rajnandgaon-Kalumna of Nagpur division of S.E.C. Railway.

Tender Value: ₹ 849.98 Lakhs, EMD : NIL, Cost of Tender Document: NIL, Completion period of Work: 08 (Eight) months. Date & Time of Tender Closing: Up to 15:00 Hours on 13.08.2021. Date & Time of Tender Opening: 15:15 Hrs. on 13.08.2021.

For further details related to tender document eligibility criteria and the complete details for the above work please contract office of the Chief Administrative Officer/Con/S.E.C.R/ Bilaspur, Pin:495004 or Dy. Chief Engineer (Con)/S.E.C.Railway/Raipur, Pin-492009 or Chief Engineer/Con/S.E.C.Railway/Nagpur Pin-440001 refer on our website www.ireps.gov.in.

Dy. Chief Engineer/Con. S.E.C. Railway/Bilaspur

CPR/10/99 S.E.C. Railway/Bilaspur

South East Central Railway @secrail

'Doctor turning away rape victim serious'

RAHUL KARMAKAR GUWAHATI

Meghalaya's Social Welfare Department has taken "serious note" of a doctor's refusal to medically examine a minor rape victim on the grounds that the place of the incident was beyond his jurisdiction.

The State's Assembly Committee on Women Empowerment (ACWE) has also decided to hold a meeting on the issue and asked all officials concerned to depose before it.

Social Welfare Minister Kyrmen Shylla condemned the gang-rape of the 14-year-old as well as the in-

sensitivity of the doctor at the Williamgaro Hill Hospital in East Garo Hills district for citing a jurisdictional reason to decline treatment to her.

Four men were arrested for sexually assaulting the girl who had gone out on Sunday evening to buy candles in the Nangalbira area of South Garo Hills district.

"Jurisdiction should not be an issue in such cases. I won't mind if rules are broken to save a life and for the sake of humanity. We will take up the doctor's issue with the Health Department," Mr. Shylla said.

Man killed in bear attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PANNA (M.P.)

A 55-year-old man was mauled to death by a wild bear in the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, a senior official said on Wednesday.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Email: dycemprkpd@gmail.com Website: www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in & www.tenders.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE No. 24 dated 20.07.2021

Invitation of tenders through e-Procurement system

Dy Chief Material Manager, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur and on behalf of the President of India, invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items. Complete description of the item and other condition are available on website www.ireps.gov.in & www.tenders.gov.in

Item No.- 1. Tender No. & due date: 10216437 Due on Dt.- 20.08.2021, Brief Description of Stores : AAR "H" Tight Lock Coupler With Transition Screw Coupling etc. Qty. Required : 16 Nos. Earnest Money (Rs.): 76610/-

01- Above tenders are available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. The firm desirous in participating against e-tender are advised to electronically regd. themselves on the above website for which they would require to obtain class-III digital certificate (if already not obtain) from certifying agencies authorized under govt. of India IT Act, 2000. Manual offers will not be accepted. 2- Advertised tender and bulletin tenders of Dy.CMM/Depot office, NER are being opened through EPS (E-Procurement system) only. Firms desirous to participate in Dy.CMM/Depot. Tenders should obtain necessary digital certificate and get themselves registered with CRIS/New Delhi. Necessary details in this regard can be obtained from the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

3- In case of difference between English and Hindi version of the tender notice the English version shall prevail. 4- Head of allocation towards, S D money is 00844517 and Earnest money is 00084506. 5- The Tender Cost & EMD will be accepted through On-Line payment on IREPS Portal only for the tender published on or after 01.09.2016 against all the Dy. CMM/Depot/NER/GKP tenders except Global Tender. Dy. Chief Material Manager/Depot N.E. Railway, Gorakhpur

CPRO/S - 31

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General public is here by informed that this unknown person **Age** : About 20-25 years, **Height** : 5'6", **Face** : Oval, **Complexion** : Shallow, **Built** : Thin, wearing white colour check shirt and blue colour half pant, is wanted in case FIR No. CD-KB-000349-2020 dated 09.07.2020 u/s 379 IPC has been registered at P.S. Karol Bagh, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in SHO : P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph. : 011-28726870,

Fax: 24368639, 28721115, 8750870430

Tel.: 24368638/24368641

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



Dr. (Mrs.) Kamala Govindarajan
Retd. Head of Department, Chemistry,
Ethiraj College for Women

1-12-1938 21-7-2021

GururBrahma GururVishnu GururDevo Maheshwaraha
Guru Saakshaat ParaBrahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namaha

Teacher, Mother, Mentor

Mournd by:

Srihari Govindarajan, Madhukar Tummala
& Family, friends and students.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

Respectful Homage 20th Anniversary

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REMEMBRANCE

REMEMBRANCE
(12th Death Anniversary on 22.07.2021)



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Lingayats don't want a diktat from Delhi on CM

There is speculation that Yediyurappa has been told by BJP leadership to quit

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Support for Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, following speculation that he has been asked by the BJP high command to quit his post, has been pouring in from Lingayat MLAs of the Congress and seers heading *maths* of the Lingayat community.

The community solidarity for Mr. Yediyurappa owes a lot to the long shadow that late Chief Minister Veerendra Patil has cast on State politics and the narrative of hurt feel-

NEWS ANALYSIS

ings in the Lingayat community evoked as yet another Lingayat Chief Minister faces an abrupt exit. The year was 1990 and the Congress had been ensconced in government in Karnataka with its largest majority ever, 179 out of the 224 seats in the Assembly, thanks to the mobilisation of Lingayat votes by Patil in a party that was already in possession of Vok-

kaliga support. Patil, was, however, dismissed by the then Congress president Rajiv Gandhi just as the former was recovering from a stroke, after incidents of communal violence broke out in the background of the Rath Yatra connected to the Ram Janmabhoomi issue.

Gandhi, in fact, announced the dismissal of the Chief Minister before boarding an aircraft at the Bengaluru airport. Patil, weighed down by paralysis following the stroke, gave a statement to television saying he would not quit notwithstanding any diktats from the party high command.

Like Mr. Yediyurappa, Patil was defiant in terms of who he wanted to accommodate in his government, making factionalism a given in the party. The then Janata Dal government at the Centre, seeing the stand-off between the Chief Minister and his legislature party (backed by the national leadership), imposed President's Rule in the State where the ruling party



Strong pitch: Siddalinga Swamy addressing the delegation of various *maths* at the Karnataka CM's residence in Bengaluru.

had an absolute majority in the Assembly.

The legal aspects of it all aside, the Lingayat community, seeing the brutal dismissal of their ailing leader who had led them into supporting the Congress, took it personally. When polls were held in 1994, the Congress was reduced to 36 seats from the 179 it got in 1989. This collapse of Lingayat support was beneficial to the BJP, which saw its vote share increase from around 4% in the State to 17%, and the Janata Dal. The BJP went on to actively woo this vote bank,

one of the two dominant and electorally decisive communities in Karnataka and formed its first government in the south in the early 2000s.

This cultivation of the Lingayat vote also saw the rise of Mr. Yediyurappa in State politics and as the major leader of the BJP. In 2013, following his removal from the BJP over corruption and other charges, he formed his own party, the Karnataka Janata Paksha, and reduced the then ruling BJP to third position in the State in the subsequent Assembly poll of 2013.

Karnataka CM appeals to supporters not to protest

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Breaking his silence, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday appealed to his supporters to adhere to party discipline and not hold any protests. This came amid escalating demand from

Veerashaiva-Lingayat groups that he should not be replaced as Chief Minister. Some had called for protests across the State if the BJP chose to effect a leadership change.

On Wednesday, more Veerashaiva-Lingayat seers visited and expressed support to Mr. Yediyurappa.

The BJP learnt from its mistakes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepared to take the mantle of national leadership. Mr. Yediyurappa was rehabilitated in the party and was its chief ministerial face in the 2018 polls.

The parade of support for Mr. Yediyurappa from Congress MLAs M.B. Patil and Shamanur Shankarappa, who belong to the Lingayat community, is as much about acknowledging the ill-treatment of Patil within the Congress as it is about fishing in troubled waters.

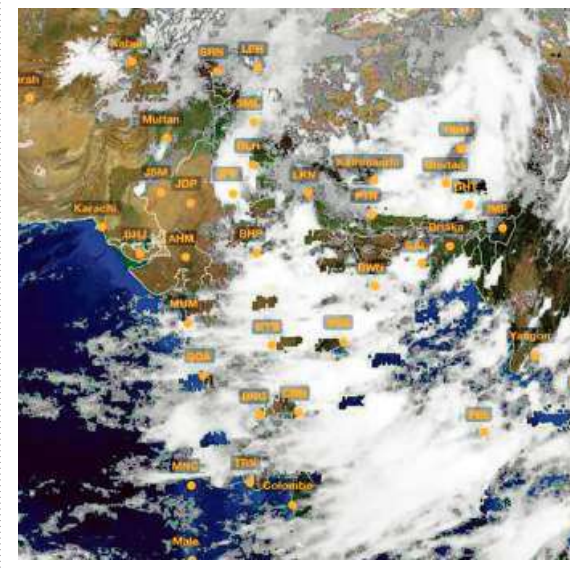
For Lingayat seers, the im-

minent removal of a Chief Minister from the community again at the diktat of Delhi is a case of history repeating itself. At the heart of it is a tug of war between party high commands looking for pliable Chief Ministers and the assertiveness of leaders with a mass base.

At the most core of all this unfolding drama is the question of whether the Lingayats will follow the lead of the seers and the Congress MLAs and desert the BJP if Mr. Yediyurappa is removed or will it, defying history, transfer its loyalty to the party.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, central Maharashtra, interior Karnataka and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over east Rajasthan, Assam, Meghalaya, Rayalaseema, Yanam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaiikal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1	32.0	27.2	Kozhikode	27	29.0	23.7
Ahmedabad	4	32.6	26.4	Kurnool	5	28.2	23.9
Aizawl	2.8	27.2	20.0	Lucknow	7	30.8	26.4
Allahabad	35.1	26.4	20.0	Madurai	36.2	26.0	20.0
Bengaluru	24.2	20.4	19.0	Mangaluru	24.9	28.3	23.4
Bhopal	30.8	24.6	19.0	Mumbai	24	27.3	19.4
Bhubaneswar	0.2	30.2	24.7	Mysuru	2	26.0	24.0
Chandigarh	43.8	35.1	25.9	New Delhi	60	34.7	22.4
Chennai	7	33.5	25.3	Patna	33.6	26.4	20.0
Coimbatore	0.2	31.0	23.4	Port Blair	21	30.1	23.5
Dehradun	0.6	33.0	23.5	Puducherry	34.1	25.5	19.0
Gangtok	44	21.7	18.3	Pune	9.4	25.4	22.5
Goa	15	28.5	24.4	Raipur	42	34.5	24.5
Guwahati	49	35.6	26.1	Ranchi	27	31.4	22.5
Hubbali	23.0	21.0	19.0	Shillong	25	25.3	17.9
Hyderabad	6	24.6	21.8	Shimla	28.1	28.1	17.9
Imphal	30.7	23.1	19.0	Srinagar	2	20.0	18.9
Jaipur	35.0	27.7	20.0	Thiruvananthapuram	31.1	24.4	19.0
Kochi	29.4	24.2	19.0	Tiruchi	34.9	27.2	20.0
Kohima	7	27.8	18.0	Vijayawada	0.5	26.8	24.8
Kolkata	0.8	33.7	27.0	Visakhapatnam	0.2	29.6	26.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

CITIES	Pollutants in the air you are breathing				Yesterday
	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5} PM ₁₀ CODE	
Ahmedabad	32	36	17	75 105	In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 165 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 13.
Bengaluru	7	20	38	19 86	
Chennai	4	40	95	31 45	
Delhi	7	65	90	106 111	
Hyderabad	63	21	11	11 13	
Kolkata	5	27	12	85 74	
Lucknow	9	36	84	34 54	
Mumbai	1	17	101	84 84	
Pune	64	16	48	63 52	
Visakhapatnam	68	33	26	51 51	

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

IN BRIEF



Tada Falls reopen for visitors after 3 months

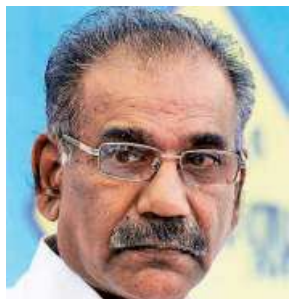
CHITTOOR
The Ubbalamadugu waterfalls, popularly known as Tada Falls, near Varadahaipalem in Andhra Pradesh was reopened for visitors after three months. Forest Range Officer Prasada Rao said about 500 people visited it on Wednesday.

LDF unlikely to disavow Saseendran

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) government appeared resolved to not award the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) a moral victory by disavowing Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran in the Assembly that convenes for a protracted 22-day session on Thursday.

The allegation that Mr. Saseendran had attempted to shield a top party aide from prosecution in an alleged molestation case is likely to figure prominently in the House.



A.K. Saseendran

The CPI(M) reportedly took stock of the likely political fallout of the charge. It did not want the "insinuation" to cloud legislative bu-

business. A party insider said any capitulation to the UDF's demand for Mr. Saseendran's resignation would only help animate the "weakened" Opposition.

Moreover, it would act as a glue for UDF partners allegedly divided over the minority scholarship issue. CPI(M) acting State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan appeared to suggest that the government would strongly counter the Opposition charges in the Assembly. "I have no comment now," he said.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan said Mr. Sa-

seendran should not be seen on the treasury bench as a Minister during the Assembly session.

He alleged that the Minister had used the heft of his office to coerce the victim's father to prevail on his daughter to withdraw the sexual assault complaint against an NCP leader.

Mr. Saseendran had violated the oath of office and, in the process, exposed the hollowness of the LDF's "Shree Paksham" campaign against dowry, gender injustice and misogyny, Mr. Satheesan said.

Probe into transwoman's death ordered

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Minister for Social Justice R. Bindu has directed Social Justice Principal Secretary Rani George to conduct an inquiry into the death of Ananyah Kumari Alex, a transwoman who was found hanging in her apartment in Kochi on Tuesday. A meeting of the Transgender Justice Board would be convened on Friday. For help, call Disha 1056/0471-2552056.

SC slams Goa, Vedanta's delayed review pleas in mining case

Court dismisses review petitions against cancellation of mining leases in 2018

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A Supreme Court Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud has slammed the Goa government and Vedanta for "preferring" to file their review petitions against a February 2018 judgment after the retirement of two judges who authored it.

A Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta, in their February 7, 2018, judgment, cancelled 88 mining leases, which were renewed by the BJP government in Goa in 2015 to "benefit private mining leaseholders".

Their 102-page judgment had traced the "rapacious and rampant exploitation" of Goa's fragile ecology by private mining lease holders, whose sole motive was to make profits, for years. The verdict had noted how these



SUPREME COURT

No cogent grounds were furnished by either Goa or Vedanta to justify their delay between 20 and 26 months to file their review petitions. Such practice must be firmly disapproved to preserve the institutional sanctity of the decision-making of this court

leases were hastily renewed by the State in 2014 with retrospective effect from 2007, just in the nick of time before an amended Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act made auction of leases mandatory to mine notified minerals like iron ore.

Review petitions are heard by the same Bench that passed the original judgment.

Retirement of judges

Justices Lokur and Gupta retired on December 30, 2018

and May 6, 2020, respectively.

The State of Goa preferred its four review petitions in November 2019, after Justice Lokur's retirement. Vedanta preferred its four review petitions in August 2020, right after Justice Gupta's retirement.

Justice Chandrachud and Justice Shah, the second judge on the Review Bench, said that no cogent grounds were furnished by either Goa or Vedanta to justify their delay between 20 and 26 months to file their review

petitions.

Under the Supreme Court Rules of 2013, a plea for review has to be filed within 30 days of the judgment.

Dismissing the review, the Review Bench observed that "such practice must be firmly disapproved to preserve the institutional sanctity of the decision-making of this court. The review petitioners were aware of the decision of this court".

"Keeping in mind the above, we are inclined to dismiss these review petitions on the ground of limitation alone. However, in any event, we also find that no legitimate grounds for review of the judgment in Goa Foundation II have been made out, and dismiss these review petitions on merits as well," Justice Chandrachud and Shah recorded in their recent five-page order.

Authorities free to crack down on illicit hoardings: Pawar

'Birthday greeting' hoardings from supporters have sprung up throughout Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Wednesday said the Pune Police and civic authorities were free to take action against "unauthorised" hoardings that had come up in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad ahead of his birthday.

Scores of "birthday greeting" hoardings from party supporters had mushroomed throughout Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, wishing Mr. Pawar and the Leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis, who share



Ajit Pawar

a birthday on July 22, despite both leaders urging their supporters not to do so

"Did I ask party workers or anybody else to put up those hoardings? I am a man who always abides by the rules. If

these hoardings are illegal, then officials concerned from the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation [PCMC], which is ruled by the BJP, should initiate action immediately," said Mr. Pawar, who is also the Guardian Minister of Pune district.

The hoardings refer to Mr. Fadnavis as the "architect of new Pune" and the "development man". They have been put up by BJP supporters and party workers, while Mr. Pawar's followers have propped billboards calling him an "administrator par excellence".

With the civic body polls

due in February next year, all major parties in the State have geared up for what is expected to be a fierce fight, especially in the crucial Mumbai, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal corporations.

The contest has already heated up with Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole's repeated declarations that his party, despite being in an alliance with the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party in the State government, would go it alone.

Recently, Sena MP Sanjay Raut, too, said that the Sena

IMD issues orange alert for East Vidarbha, warns of heavy rainfall



Due to rain and COVID-19-induced restrictions, Bandra railway station wears an almost deserted look on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, in Mumbai on Wednesday. ■PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) regional office here on Wednesday warned of heavy to very heavy rain in Maharashtra's East Vidarbha region on Thursday.

The IMD issued an orange

alert for the region, which includes districts like Bhandara, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli and Yavatmal.

An IMD release said "a cyclonic circulation lies over Northwest Bay of Bengal and extends between 3.1 km and 7.6 km above sea level tilting southwestwards with

height". "Under its influence, a low pressure area is very likely to form over northwest Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood during the next 48 hours. Hence, the monsoon is expected to remain active over Vidarbha from July 21 to 23," the release said.

WEST

Tiger mauls villager to death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GONDIA

A 60-year-old man was mauled to death by a sub-adult tiger in the jungles of Maharashtra's Gondia district on Wednesday, an official from the forest department said.

The incident took place when a resident of Bhandanga village in Goregaon tehsil, ventured into the forest to gather leaves for his livestock, the official said.

A forest guard had allegedly warned the victim about the presence of a big cat, but the latter had ignored her warning, he said. Villagers soon heard a tiger roar and set out into the forest armed with sticks. They spotted the tiger near the victim's body in compartment number 448 of the Goregaon forest range, the official said.

The victim's body was eventually recovered and sent for post-mortem, he said.

Porn case: chats suggest Raj Kundra planned another app, say police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Purported WhatsApp chats between businessman Raj Kundra, arrested in an alleged porn films racket, and other members of a group suggested he had a Plan B in place after Google Play took down Hotshots, the OTT app at the centre of the illegal activity, due to policy violations, police sources said on Wednesday.

The Plan B involved launching a new application to carry on the illegal business of producing and circulating pornographic content,

the police said.

Mr. Kundra (45), husband of Bollywood actor Shilpa Shetty, was arrested by the Mumbai Crime Branch on Monday night in a case, which it said, related to alleged creation of pornographic films and publishing them through some apps. He is in police custody till July 23.

At least four screenshots of purported WhatsApp chats have surfaced on social media in which Mr. Kundra was allegedly discussing the Plan B with another member on 'H ACCOUNTS' group, the sources said.

In another screenshot of chat with a member on November 10, the member told Mr. Kundra, "till BF (Bollywood) is up let's find our way to sustain HS (Hotshots)." There was also discussion on removing "extremely bold content" for the time being, the sources said.

On October 11, members of 'H ACCOUNTS' WhatsApp group discussed about live revenue of ₹1.85 lakh and movie sale of ₹4.52 lakh, which was appreciated by Mr. Kundra and his brother-in-law Pradeep Bakshi, who was also allegedly part of the racket.



Dealing with denial

India must not play down the COVID-19 tragedy, as that would hurt public confidence

A touchy topic for the Centre and States has been the counting of the dead from COVID-19. In 2020, as the pandemic ravaged Europe and the U.S., Health Ministry officials would incessantly argue that India had better managed the pandemic because its deaths per million of population were comparatively lower. While factually true, it was always apparent that the argument was specious given the size, demographic difference and India's per capita access to quality health care. But the ferocious second wave, in April and May, characterised by the very visible scenario of hospitals being overrun, and the sick gasping for a very basic necessity of medical oxygen, revealed a spike in excess deaths, compared to the normal death rate in previous years. Even though independent databases, such as the CRS and State records, show large spikes in deaths, with no other explicable cause other than COVID-19, the Centre continues to be in denial of the mortal scale of the pandemic. Tuesday's statement by Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, in the Rajya Sabha, that there were no "specific reports" of deaths from States due to lack of oxygen, led Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, to say the party will move a privilege motion against her.

Indeed, it is the absolute lack of empathy or acknowledgement of the lived experience of many who have watched their closest suffer and die for want of medical oxygen that makes the Minister's statement appalling. It is technically true that while no death certificate or medical record would note a COVID-19 patient's demise as due to "lack of oxygen", and therefore not causative, the very fact that the Centre moved in April-May to re-purpose all its industrial oxygen capacity into producing and transporting medical grade oxygen is itself evidence that the inability to access it must be considered as a probable cause of death. In the early days of the pandemic, a COVID-positive test was necessary to count as a COVID-19 death until the ICMR said it was not always required. It is bewildering why India – with the third highest number of COVID-19 deaths globally, whose oxygen crisis was international news, and mortality figures considered an under-count – sees value in denying oxygen-shortage casualties. Counterproductively, it diminishes public faith in the health-care system. India's leadership sought to convey the impression that the country had conquered the pandemic and – chastened by the second wave – is now advising abundant caution, with the public messaging focused on the possibility of a third wave, and how nearly a third of the population continues to be vulnerable as per the ICMR's fourth serology survey. But diminishing the tragedy, especially in Parliament and in its official records, only further erodes the Government's credibility.

Water as woe

Mumbai cannot manage its flooding without a new deal for drainage and housing

The revival of the monsoon has overwhelmed Mumbai and its suburbs once again, paralysing life, disrupting drinking water supplies, and exposing the parlous state of its infrastructure. It is clear that the volume and duration of monsoonal rain are turning unpredictable, and intermittent torrents, with crippling impacts on cities will become more frequent, influenced by a warming climate. Strengthening that theory, three weather stations in Mumbai recorded a staggering level of rainfall in one week from July 13, ranging from 628 mm in Mahalaxmi to 958.5 mm in Santa Cruz, the latter experiencing a peak of 234.9 mm on July 18. The inundation has taken a toll of at least 32 lives, and the majority of victims died in landslides that crushed their slum houses at Mahul in Chembur. These deaths of despair recur almost every year, soon to be forgotten in fair weather in a city that prides itself on its enterprise and resilience. In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the monsoon malady poses a double jeopardy, adding to the economic misery of the vulnerable who live in hovels in suburban landslide-prone locations. Such dire conditions stand in contrast to Maharashtra's keen desire to keep Mumbai as the country's pre-eminent financial metropolis. The limitations in its infrastructure to accommodate intense monsoons, and its notorious inability to provide affordable inner city housing to the less affluent and even the middle class, are making other cities look more attractive.

The catastrophic floods in Mumbai and Chennai in 2005 and 2015, respectively, resulted in the emergence of a management plan drawn up by the National Disaster Management Authority and later, the first dedicated storm water drainage manual by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. But such initiatives can do little if States, which have both power and responsibility over city affairs, do not feel compelled to address the challenges posed by urbanisation. In fact, Mumbai's inability to manage recurrent floods and the needs of a massive slum population was highlighted by a fact-finding committee appointed by the Maharashtra government after the 2005 deluge, with calls to liberate the city's rivers and lakes from various impediments, enable perennial flow in the Mithi river, create fresh holding lakes for excess waters, and rehabilitate those who live in risky locations. There is a need to clear the air on the follow-up to these and other expert recommendations, which the State can do through a white paper. Mumbai's neglect is not unique, though, and most big cities are amorphously expanding to the suburbs where basic infrastructure including drainage is absent, and lakes and rivers are heavily encroached, often with political support. Such unplanned growth, with no defences against weather disasters, is leaving cities a lot poorer.

India must directly engage with Taliban 2.0

The time for hesitant, backchannel parleys is over and New Delhi has to begin 'open talks' as it is a strategic necessity



HAPPYMON JACOB

With the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan in process, New Delhi has decided to ramp down its civilian presence in the war-torn country, bracing for a full-blown civil war. India has "temporarily" closed its consulate in Kandahar and evacuated its diplomats and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel stationed there. This follows the decision to suspend operations in the Indian consulates in Jalalabad and Herat. As a result, India today is left with its Embassy in Kabul and the consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The Taliban's sway

These developments indicate two things: New Delhi's decision to partially "withdraw" from Afghanistan shows that betting only on the government in Kabul was a big mistake, and that New Delhi realises the threat Taliban poses to Indian assets and presence in Afghanistan. Either way, India's Afghan policy is at a major crossroads; to safeguard its civilian assets there as well as to stay relevant in the unfolding 'great game' in and around Afghanistan, New Delhi must fundamentally reset its Afghanistan policy.

India must, in its own national interest, begin 'open talks' with the Taliban before it is too late. The time for hesitant, half-embarrassed backchannel parleys is over. However, when I say it is time to 'openly' talk to the Taliban, I do not mean according recognition to the Taliban. In any case, what is there to 'recognise' at this point as far as the Taliban is concerned? It is only one of the parties in Afghanistan – it is neither the Afghan government, nor a part of it. Not yet. But with over a third of Afghanistan's 400 districts

under Taliban control, the talk-to-the-Taliban-option is indeed the best of the many less than perfect options available to India.

To be fair, New Delhi has been steadily abandoning its puritanical policy towards the Taliban over the past few years. In late 2018, when Moscow organised a conference which had the Taliban, members of the Afghan High Peace Council, and other countries from the region in attendance, India sent a 'non-official delegation' of two retired diplomats to Moscow. Thereafter, in September last year, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar joined the inaugural session of the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha. Last month, reports indicated that India has started reaching out to the Taliban which was indirectly confirmed by the Ministry of External Affairs when it said "we are in touch with various stakeholders in pursuance of our long-term commitment towards development and reconstruction in Afghanistan".

However, such half-hearted, half-embarrassed, ideologically-hesitant meandering outreach to the Taliban is hardly sufficient to safeguard Indian interests in a rapidly shifting Afghan geopolitical landscape. Open dialogue with the Taliban should no longer be a taboo; it is a strategic necessity. Therefore, our outreach must now be direct and unambiguous. But before I explain why I say so, let me briefly analyse New Delhi's rationale for the indirect approach to the Taliban.

Rationale for indirect talks

There are at least five possible reasons why New Delhi appears to want to keep the Taliban engagement slow and behind closed doors. For one, if New Delhi chooses to engage the Taliban directly, it could make Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, thus far India's trusted partner, uneasy. This could potentially nudge him to look towards China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisa-



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tion (SCO) for national security and personal political survival. So, in New Delhi's calculation, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Two, decision makers in New Delhi are also faced with the dilemma of who to talk to within the Taliban given that it is hardly a monolith. New Delhi may have little access to the members of the Quetta Shura or the fighters on the ground in Afghanistan. So, the only option might be the Doha-based Taliban negotiators or leaders such as Abdul Salam Zaeef whose beef with Pakistan is well known. Third, given the global opprobrium that Taliban faced in its earlier avatar and the lack of evidence about whether the outfit is a changed lot today, New Delhi might not want to court the Taliban so soon. More so, there is little clarity about what the Taliban's real intentions are going forward and what they would do after ascending to power in Kabul. Finally, it would not be totally unreasonable to consider the possibility of Pakistan acting out against India in Kashmir if India were to establish deeper links with the Taliban.

New Delhi's rationale is not entirely erroneous. And yet, there are more compelling reasons why India should engage with the Taliban more proactively and openly. For one, whether we like it or not, the Taliban, one way or another, is going to be part of the political scheme of things in Afghanistan, and unlike in 1996, a large number of players in the international community are going to recognise/negotiate/do business with the Taliban. So, basic statecraft requires that we follow that route as well. Making peace with the *fait accompli* is not always a bad thing espe-

cially in the absence of better alternatives.

The Pakistan factor

Two, the Taliban today is looking for regional and global partners for recognition and legitimacy especially in the neighbourhood. So the less proactive the Indian engagement with the Taliban, the stronger Pakistan-Taliban relations would become. Put differently, and bluntly, letting the Pakistani deep state exclusively deal with the Taliban is an inherently bad idea.

Third, even though the Taliban is widely considered to be propped up by Pakistan, it would be a mistake to think that the Taliban will continue to be Pakistan's servile followers upon gaining power in Kabul. A worldly-wise and internationally-exposed Taliban 2.0 would develop its own agency and sovereign claims including perhaps calling into question the legitimacy of the Durand Line separating Pakistan and Afghanistan, something Pakistan was always concerned about. More so, contrary to what many analysts assume, a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan, next door to its Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan-infested tribal areas, may not really end up becoming a happy space for Pakistan. In other words, the Taliban would want to hedge their bets on how far to listen to Pakistan. That is precisely when New Delhi should engage the Taliban.

Four, India needs to court all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, if it wants to ensure its security of its civilian assets there. It makes neither strategic nor economic sense to withdraw from Afghanistan after spending over \$3 billion, something the Government seems to be prepared to do. Withdrawing from Afghanistan now because the Taliban is on the rise (and we do not want to have relations with them) will go on to highlight how weak our strategic resolve is.

Five, India's outreach to the Taliban should have started years ago before the Taliban had many

suitors as they do today. So, if India is not proactive in Afghanistan at least now, late as it is, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China will emerge as the shapers of Afghanistan's political and geopolitical destiny, which for sure will be detrimental to Indian interests there.

Open the congested frontier

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, opening up the congested north-western frontier is key to bringing India's continental grand strategy on an even keel, a process New Delhi has already started. Backchannel talks with Pakistan and a consequent ceasefire on the Line of Control, political dialogue with the mainstream Kashmiri leadership, secret parleys with Taliban all indicate that New Delhi is opening up its congested north-western frontier. Proactive engagement of the Taliban will provide this effort with more strategic heft.

Consider this. Except for the strategic foray into the Indo-Pacific, India today is strategically boxed in the region and it must break out of it. Afghanistan could provide, if not immediately, India with such a way out.

In the end, India's engagement with the Taliban may or may not achieve much, but non-engagement will definitely hurt Indian interests. In an ideal world, the Taliban, given its bloody past, should not have been anywhere near governing Afghanistan, but it is neither an ideal situation nor is the Taliban stoppable from gaining power in Kabul. So New Delhi must exorcise the demons of IC-814 (the December 1999 hijacking) from its collective memory and engage with the Taliban 2.0 – there is no need to be secretive or embarrassed about it. And yet, open engagement of the Taliban is neither tolerating nor accepting the condemnable atrocities committed by the Taliban.

Happymon Jacob teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and is the founder of the Council for Strategic and Defense Research

A cardinal omission in the COVID-19 package

The Government's COVID-19 health package II again overlooks the need for and availability of health human resources



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

Those who are either old enough or have read the history of health services in India, will testify that in the mid-1980s, there were a number of government health-care facilities across the country, with newly constructed buildings, impeccable linoleum floorings, imported state-of-the-art medical equipment such as infant radiant warmers and at times 'foreign made' cars/jeeps (for the field visits of health staff).

These facilities had benefited from generous financial and commodity assistance as part of the overseas development assistance (ODA) from many well-intentioned international donors. However, in the year to follow, the number of patients attending these facilities continued to be low and the equipment remained packed and stacked in store rooms. Years later, the vehicles were repurposed for use in some national programmes such as polio elimination and blindness control. Most of such upgraded facilities had failed to meet the health needs of the poor people. A key reason was that while infrastructure was upgraded, there was perennial shortage

of health staff, i.e., doctors, nurses and others, which was supposed to be recruited by the governments. Four decades later, in the COVID-19 pandemic response, the Indian government appears to repeat the same mistake.

Centre's financial package

On July 8, 2021, the Union government announced the "India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package: Phase II" (<https://bit.ly/3BpyrHL>), with the stated purpose to boost health infrastructure and prepare for a possible third wave of COVID-19. Through this financial package, there is plan to increase COVID-19 beds, improve the oxygen availability and supply, create buffer stocks of essential medicines; purchase equipment and strengthen paediatric beds. However, the package barely has any attention on improving the availability of health human resources.

Even before the novel coronavirus pandemic, as reported in rural health statistics and the national health profile (both official government documents), there are vacancies for staff in government health facilities, which range from 30% to 80%, depending upon the sub-group of medical officers, specialist doctors to nurses, laboratory technicians, pharmacists and radiographers, amongst others. In addition, there are wide inter-State variations, with States that have poor health indicators with



GETTY IMAGES

the highest vacancies.

Workforce shortage

The Government seems to have recognised the gaps in health infrastructure; however, the shortage in the health workforce is barely being discussed. An intensive care unit bed or ventilator is no use unless there are trained staff to run these equipment and qualified doctors and nurses to attend to patients. Sixteen months into the pandemic, though there has been occasional recognition of the shortage in the health workforce and a few commitments to fill the vacancies; very few are known to fructify, even partially, at both the Union and State levels. As an example, the Union Ministry of Health in May 2020, announced recruiting 300 epidemiologists; it is not known what the status is. Among the States which announced filling vacancies of health staff, attention has mostly been narrow – on select subgroups such as doctors or nurses, and not holistic, and promises remain unfulfilled.

The COVID-19 package II (which focuses on health infrastructure strengthening) needs to be urgent-

ly supplemented by another plan and a similar financial package (with shared Union and State government funding) to fill the existing vacancies of health staff at all levels. Alongside, an objective approach to assess the mid-term health human resource needs could be the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS), which prescribe the human resources and infrastructure needed to make various types of government health facilities functional. Once such a need is assessed, the Union and State governments would have to come up with another financial package for human resources to complement the COVID-19 health package II. That alone can make health facilities functional in a sustainable manner.

The broader picture

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic should not be seen in the narrow sense of an infrastructure shortage for the health sector. Even after being supplemented by another package for health human resource, the pandemic should be used as an opportunity to prepare India's health system for the future. As an initial step in this direction, the new Union Minister of Health should consider getting a comprehensive review of actions taken on the key decisions and Government promises made (to strengthen health services) since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

Alongside, the progress on key

policy decisions, for the last few years, to strengthen India's health system, including those in India's national health policy of 2017, need to be objectively scrutinised. These two sets of policy decisions and announcements should be reviewed and progress monitored, through a meeting of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare, of which the Health Ministers of the States are members. This should not wait for the pandemic to get over and should be done now. It is only if the past policy promises and commitments are followed through and implemented that India's health system could be strengthened from what it is now.

India's health system will not benefit from ad hoc and a patchwork of one or other small packages. It essentially needs some transformational changes. The COVID-19 package II appears insufficient and seems to be based upon a misguided assumption that infrastructure is equal to health services. Governments (both Union and State) seem to be on the path to repeat four decade-old mistakes. While international donors could be excused for being bereft of ground realities, what would the excuse for the Government be?

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, a physician-epidemiologist, is a public policy and health systems expert and co-author of 'Till We Win: India's Fight Against The COVID-19 Pandemic'

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.

Under watch

The damage caused by Pegasus has far-reaching effects. The Indian government, which has not denied so far that any of its agencies bought the spyware, has, as usual, rushed to accuse the Opposition parties of bringing up the issue only to denigrate the country in the eyes of the world. It is time the Government gives us honest answers.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,
Chennai

revealed the NSO lists and why. This should be looked into and the Centre must come clean on whether it has either directly acquired, or authorised one of its agencies to acquire the spyware. The Government should also review its bureaucratic digital security measures to avert the misuse of surveillance technology and allay fears of our democracy slipping into authoritarianism.

J.S. ACHARYA,
Hyderabad

have, as expected, taken to grandstanding, brushing off the accusation that the Government used the spyware to snoop on citizens. So, let us assume the story is false, it is all celestial and democratic in the State of Denmark, proverbially speaking. But the fact remains that Israeli spyware was indeed used to snoop on select Indian politicians, journalists and activists. If the Government is not culpable, then some foreign entity did this and is culpable. Which means that our national security has been compromised and our Government was either

unaware, or remained mute or ignorant. Is this not a very grave situation? The buck stops with the Indian Government.

ANILKUMAR K.,
Thiruvananthapuram

The KiteX story

There are other points in the analysis of the KiteX story using the core tropes of capitalism and globalisation (Editorial page, July 21). One important point is the humiliation and the loss of self-respect that genuine entrepreneurs have to face from political parties. Why should hard working

business people have to yield to corrupt elements besides paying taxes? The KiteX story has to help us find answers to these practical questions.

P.J. THOMAS,
Vazhapally, Changanassery, Kerala

At the Olympics

The point made by Anju Bobby George on the performance of Indian athletes in the Olympics as being more dependent on their psychological framework is apt ('Sport' page, July 21). Her advice about the need for athletes to have full confidence before their event is absolutely right. Confidence does play a

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vital role in delivering the best results.

J. EDEN ALEXANDER,
Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

With the Olympics set to take place in eerie silence it will be a test of will for athletes as they will miss the vocal support of spectators, a factor which helps in their quest for glory. One does understand that the safety of athletes is top priority. We only hope that this does not take away the charm of the sporting spectacle.

ZUBIN MATHEW JOSEPH,
Kottayam, Kerala

Man cannot live by the Internet alone

The real world rooted in the earth and soil can create wealth too



G.R. GOPINATH

The just-concluded initial public offering (IPO) of Zomato, which has successfully raised about ₹9,000 crore at an astronomical valuation of ₹66,000 crore, makes one believe that money does grow on trees.

More than 150 years ago, Leo Tolstoy, one of the greatest novelists and thinkers of the world, writing in his book, *What Then Must We Do*, wondered and asked: if everything of value and substance is produced in the rural areas, why then are the villages mired in poverty and cities awash in wealth? That question continues to befuddle us.

An old conundrum

All these thoughts brought back memories of my own life from the 1980s. Those days I struggled as a farmer to make ends meet. I toiled all day, living out of a second-hand Army tent in a remote part of rural Karnataka. One day, after harvesting the banana crop and loading it on to my tractor well before dawn, I drove it to the weekly farmers' market in Hassan, the district headquarters. As I approached the main road leading to the market, my tractor stopped behind a massive row of trucks and vehicles, hundreds of them, all belonging to other farmers. Walking up a kilometre I came across thousands of agitated farmers. They had unloaded their fresh green chillies and tomatoes on to the road and the black tarmac had turned red and green. The heady pungent fumes from the crushed chillies made it impossible to breathe. Discovering that the prices had crashed, the farmers were up in arms as they were not even able to recover the transportation costs. So, they had blocked the roads. Around noon, finally extricating myself from the melee, unable to sell my produce and crestfallen, I ferried the bananas back to my farm and fed them to my cattle.

The IPO event of Zomato also reminded me of those days when banks repeatedly turned down my request for an agriculture loan of ₹1 lakh but two decades later, a bank



Farmers walk through a newly planted paddy field in Guwahati. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

sanctioned an eye-popping amount of ₹500 crore on a silver platter to my low-cost airline as the airline was publicly listed and a highly valued stock. The value lay in the mind's eye of the beholder, who, unbeknownst to me, was in thrall to mythic bears and bulls who swayed the bourses.

All these strange phenomena of the modern economy hark back to the old conundrum: how is it that those farmers who own land, toil and till; produce real stuff that we eat and drink and touch and feel; produce things that keep us fed and warm — grains, fruits, vegetables, meat, cotton, wool and silk and so on — live in destitution whereas the merchant who peddles them or the broker who speculates is rich? The multinational behemoths which retail groceries and other products (Kraft Heinz, Cargill, Tyson Foods, Danone, Nestle, Unilever, Walmart, Reliance), those which build solid steel plants, automobiles, buildings, bridges, ships, railways and chains of hotels may in turn wonder why they do all the heavy lifting but are overshadowed in their stock market valuation by Amazon, Microsoft, TCS and Infosys. And now, the new kids on the block — Byju's, Zomato, and Paytm — are more valuable than those that have been working for decades. The Manipal Group, for instance, runs scores of medical and engineering colleges and hospitals. It owns hundreds of acres of prime land across cities in India and even overseas. It has massive education complexes and im-

pressive laboratories, medical diagnostics equipment, and surgical operation theatres. Despite thousands of crores of investments and hundreds of professors and doctors and nurses, it is valued at a fraction of Byju's.

Similarly, the Taj Hotels, Oberoi Hotels and other five-star hotels own the most expensive real estate. They have luxurious rooms and suites, gourmet restaurants, spas and salons, and swimming pools fit for maharajahs. But they are valued less than a fraction of Zomato. And Zomato, which produces nothing and only purveys the food made by innumerable restaurants across the country, has almost twice the valuation of Jubilant FoodWorks that owns Domino's Pizza. While others make profits, Zomato and the new unicorns all bleed cash but have dizzying valuations.

I met Neeraj Gupta of Meru Cabs, who was the first entrepreneur to launch nationwide GPS-linked radio taxis in India. He revolutionised urban mobility a few years ago. He owned more than 3,000 cars then. His company now has a fleet of 9,000 cars. But Uber and Ola, which manage a few lakh taxis across the metros of India, have upended his business model. These are asset-light companies that only manage the taxis enlisted on their Internet platform. They meet the needs of customers with optimal, effective and timely use of available resources but have heady market caps. I am not discred-

iting these Internet companies. These are indeed brilliant concepts.

A good life

Information and data are said to be the new fuel of the modern economy. The Internet makes the world go round and round and the stock valuations of new-age companies can orbit you into space.

But there is limited space in that stratosphere. This world, and life on it, cannot be circumscribed in a make-believe cloud. You can't eat information and everyone cannot live in the Internet bubble. We need food, clothing, water, housing, transportation, electricity and hospitals, and also flowers, poetry and art. We need education in schools and university campuses where there are teachers in flesh and blood and where breezy, invigorating dialogue, debate, bonhomie, music, and laughter reign. We need restaurants and travel, and beaches with sun, sand, and wine and kisses. We need stout hearty men and women who work with their hands to provide for the world. All that makes for a good life.

That may not make you a billionaire, which the sterile world of the Internet economy can make you, but don't be disheartened or discouraged. That real world rooted in the earth and soil I speak of can create wealth too. It can give abundant joy and meaning if you do your job with passion and commitment.

Then my thoughts turned to my wife's 25-year-old Iyengar Bakery tucked away in Malleswaram, Bengaluru. It is a landmark eatery, which is loved and patronised by the local residents. It is part of the cultural landscape. Her wealth has not soared like the stocks of Internet companies. But she is happy and content and loves making breads and buns every day. And she is the master of her own universe.

There are countless such people across India in myriad fields — farmers, teachers, doctors, writers, journalists, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics, artists, artisans, grocers and vendors — who serve their communities and provide jobs, livelihoods and security. They make this a wonderful world. Man cannot live by the Internet alone.

Captain G.R. Gopinath is a soldier, farmer and founder of Air Deccan

Prosecutor, not persecutor

The public prosecutor has an ethical obligation to balance the interests of the victims, the accused, and society



LEAH VERGHESE

Father Stan Swamy's recent death while waiting for bail has prompted an outcry among lawyers, activists and concerned citizens. While those who admired him were processing their grief, the same National Investigation Agency (NIA) Court rejected bail for one of his co-accused, Anand Teltumbde. Father Swamy's arrest under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the denial of bail to him and others accused in the Bhima-Koregaon case have highlighted issues related to police power, pretrial detention, and draconian anti-terror legislation. However, the role of prosecutors in perpetuating the dominant attitude towards undertrial detention has been largely ignored.

Role of public prosecutors

The NIA Court order rejecting Father Swamy's request for bail stated that the prosecutor submitted various pieces of evidence to prove a prima facie case against the accused. The prosecutor argued that the court must give precedence to the interest of the community/society over the right to liberty even though by this stage, Father Swamy's need for medical attention was apparent. He had Parkinson's disease, his hearing was impaired and he had contracted COVID-19. Was an 84-year-old man in such a precarious state of health a threat to the community's interests? Was there any risk of him absconding or tampering with evidence if released? The prosecutor's stand in the case as mechanically presenting the investigating agency's case while zealously demanding prolonged detention of the undertrial throws up vexing questions about the role of public prosecutors in the criminal justice system.

Public prosecutors are influential at every stage of a trial. They decide what offences the accused person should be charged with, whether to seek pretrial custody, and what sentence to ask for. However, public prosecutors, unlike defence counsel, have an ethical obligation to seek justice balancing the interests of the victims of crime, society, and those accused of crimes. They represent the public and are not mere mouthpieces for law enforcement agencies. The Supreme Court in *Sheo Nandan Paswan v. State of Bihar* (1986) cautioned that even though prosecutors have a duty to represent the executive for trying the offender, and it is broadly their responsibility to see that the trial results in

conviction, they need not be extremely concerned about the outcome of the case. They act as officers of the court and are obliged to ensure that the accused person is not unfairly treated. The High Court of Delhi, in *Jitendra Kumar v. State* (1999), warned that, "In performance of his duty he can prosecute the accused, but he cannot assume the role of a persecutor. It is no part of his duty to secure conviction at all costs... The Public Prosecutor should act fairly and impartially and must be conscious of the rights of the accused. He is not only required to conduct prosecution case... but [also] respect and protect the rights of the accused."

The duty of a public prosecutor to not assume the role of persecutor is vital in trials under special statutes like the UAPA, which water down fair trial guarantees. Undertrial detention becomes a convenient means to punish those accused under the UAPA without convicting them. Such trials are long-drawn-out, and the conviction rate is low. In 2019, in 11% of UAPA cases (pending from previous years and filed in 2019), the police closed the case because of insufficient evidence or because the accused was untraceable. Charge sheets were filed in only 9% of the UAPA cases. The conviction rate for UAPA cases was 29.2% compared to an average conviction rate of 50.4% for crimes committed under the Indian Penal Code.

Narrative building

Public prosecutors also have a role in narrative building. Since they present the state's case in criminal trials, they build narratives of criminality and criminalisation. Daniel Richman describes them as "adjudicative gatekeepers" who play a key role in translating criminal "law on the books" to criminal "law in action." Such narratives are especially pernicious in cases involving alleged terrorist activities and "anti-nationals", where anxieties about the security of the state already haunt the imagination of those in the criminal justice system and ordinary citizens. Thus, public prosecutors who support criminal justice reform can be a powerful force for altering the culture of undertrial detention.

The responses of the prosecutors and law enforcement agencies reflect the carceral logic that buttresses undertrial detention. Two-thirds of India's prison population comprises undertrial prisoners. This reflects the embedding of this carceral logic in the architecture of law enforcement and manifests in prosecutors demanding prolonged custody of the accused. Reversing course will require a re-imagining of the objectives of the criminal justice system and cultural change.

Leah Verghese is with DAKSH, a nonprofit based in Bengaluru

A compromise amid uncertainty

The OPEC deal to step up crude production will ease rising prices and balance domestic and global priorities

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

For now, the risk has receded that the United Arab Emirates (UAE), said to hold the world's largest untapped crude reserves, might quit the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The end to the UAE's weeks-long impasse with Saudi Arabia, one of the world's biggest crude exporters, and Russia, a non-OPEC state, was brought about by Sunday's deal. Under its terms, the UAE's demand for an increase in its oil output quotas, in recognition of its higher production capacity, has been conceded. The baselines have also been raised for Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq and Kuwait.

The compromise

The bloc will now step up crude production by 400,000 barrels a day starting in August. The deal will extend until the end of 2022. The output boost is in response to rising oil prices in the wake of the rebound in economic activity following the easing of lockdown restrictions and increased COVID-19 vaccinations in different parts of the world. Sunday's deal has also extended until the end of next year the broad terms of the unprecedented production cuts the bloc enforced in April 2020. The cartel cut oil production by 9.7 million barrels a day (mbd) as oil demand fell from 100 mbd to 91.1 mbd and prices plummeted from \$70 in January 2020 to around \$20 in April. The bloc has since gradually rolled back these steep cuts and hopes to return production to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022.

The UAE has played hard ball during the bloc's attempts to deal with the pandemic-induced price volatility. In December, when OPEC+ tried to ease production cuts, the UAE insisted that members who diluted the original output reductions should compensate through even steeper cuts, following its own example. Thus, while the internal rift has been resolved for now, the danger cannot be ruled out of an increasingly economically and politically assertive UAE flexing its muscle. Any potential break with the bloc would undoubtedly prove far more consequential

for the OPEC than the 2019 exit of Qatar.

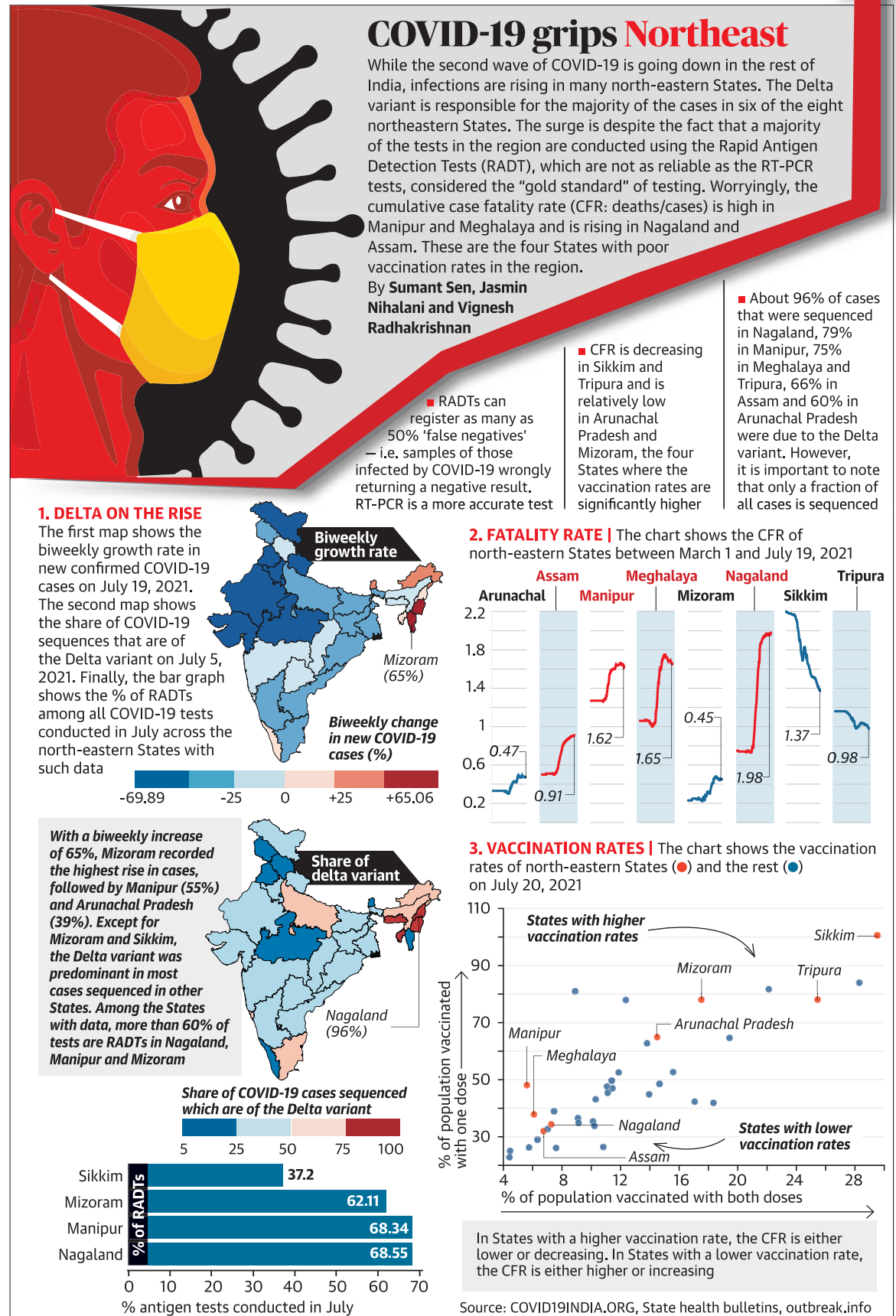
Bilateral relations between the traditional allies, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have been especially strained since the UAE established diplomatic ties with Israel last year and withdrew troops from the Saudi-spearheaded war in Yemen the year before. A more recent arena of tension is the tariffs Riyadh has imposed on imports from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia will now exclude from the GCC tariff agreement goods made by companies with a workforce of less than 25% of locals and industrial products with less than 40% of added value after their transformation process. Home to a predominantly migrant population, the move could hit the UAE especially hard.

Peak in oil demand

The latest OPEC compromise echoes growing recognition of the delicate balance between competing domestic and global priorities. Foremost is their eagerness to maximise the returns on their substantial hydrocarbon resources, amid growing speculation of a peak in oil demand within sight. The OPEC, echoing other assessments, forecast in 2016 that a strict implementation of the Paris climate accord could see the demand for oil peak by 2030, owing to the proliferation of alternative fuels and electric cars. Conversely, its report last year pins hopes on population growth and expansion of the middle class for continued increase in oil demand. The International Energy Agency (IEA), which in 2016 forecast a continued rise in oil consumption until the 2040s, has more recently hinted at about 5% rise or fall relative to the demand before the pandemic within a decade. The OPEC's other concerns are the stabilisation of world oil prices without jeopardising national expenditure programmes, and the diversification of economies in anticipation of the unfolding global energy transition. Unity would be of the essence amid this uncertainty.

Garimella Subramaniam is Director - Strategic Initiatives, AgnoShin Technologies Pvt Ltd

DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 22, 1971

India not alone: Swaran Singh

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Swaran Singh, to-day [New Delhi, July 21] warned Pakistan against any attack on India on some pretext and said, "we are also not alone." He was replying to a call attention notice in the Rayja Sabha on President Yahya Khan's threat on Monday that Pakistan would go to war if India seized "any part of East Pakistan." Mr. Swaran Singh described the statement of the Pakistan President as "unwarranted and baseless." Either President Yahya Khan was trying to mislead his people and the world at large or preparing them for an aggression against India by making such a statement, he said. Mr. Swaran Singh advised restraint on the part of members when Mr. N.G. Goray (P.S.P.), who tabled the notice along with others, urged the Government to take possession of some areas in East Bengal to rehabilitate the refugees. He appealed to the members not to say anything which might be quoted against India in international forums. India, he said, had no desire to seize any part of Pakistan. While taking note of the fact that Gen. Yahya Khan's threat had come in the wake of the announcement of the Sino-U.S. summit meeting, the External Affairs Minister repeated that India was ready to defend itself if Pakistan used the successes of freedom fighters in liberating territory in Bangla Desh as a pretext for attacking India.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 22, 1921

Wellington Cinema

"Sati Anusaya" exhibited at the Wellington Cinema has been attracting thousands of spectators every-day. The Puranic character of the film coupled with the great moral contained in the story has been the chief cause for the collection of such a vast multitude of the shows. The enterprising proprietors of the cinema have spared no pains to secure as wide an advertisement as possible for their exhibition and Washington lantern advertisements are to be seen in all the main thoroughfares of the city. It is proposed, we are told, to exhibit the same film next week also to satisfy the growing public demand. For the convenience of the mofussil visitors, women and children, the show at 3-30 P.M. will also be continued. The film possesses great educative value and as such deserves great encouragement.

FROM PAGE ONE

Govt. claim on deaths appalling, say experts

"The statement made in Parliament that there were no deaths reported by the States caused by oxygen shortage is surprising and appalling. Policymakers at both the Centre and in States should not be hiding behind guidelines on death reporting, which might not have included specific questions on oxygen shortage. It is well documented that oxygen stock-outs were a trigger and a key underlying reason for several deaths. We owe it to those who lost their lives to be transparent about what were proximate causes of these deaths, fix accountability, and work on ensuring that such a scenario never recurs in our health system," said Anant Bhan, researcher, Global Health, Bioethics and Health Policy.

Minister of State for Health Bharati Pawar had said in her written response on Tuesday that States had not "specifically reported" instances of people dying due to lack of oxygen. While this is officially true, many States – and this includes both government and private hospitals – have admitted to an oxygen shortage during the second wave and hospital staff reveal a different story.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Wednesday said that there was no record in the State of any death due to shortage of oxygen during the two waves of the pandemic. "We have never said that because of shortage of oxygen a COVID-19 patient has died in any hospital in the State... There is no record of any such case, nor have I made any statement to this effect..."

A Maharashtra official on condition of anonymity said, "A death due to 'oxygen deficit' usually occurs in cases of choking or drowning and is considered culpable homicide not amounting

to murder. If one says COVID-19 patients have died in a hospital due to oxygen shortage, then it would involve a police or government probe and a case would have to be lodged."

'No case in T.N.'

Not a single person has died due to oxygen shortage in Tamil Nadu, State Health Minister Ma. Subramanian claimed, while noting that the State had faced acute shortage in May when the daily requirement of oxygen shot up from 230 MT to over 500 MT.

However, a number of doctors, who were on duty during the peak of the second wave, recounted that many patients with COVID-19 waited endlessly outside hospitals due to lack of oxygen-supported beds. Doctors, who were working the wards, had a different story. "Some of them even died while waiting in ambulances," a young doctor who worked in a zero-delay ward said.

"We had patients dying due to oxygen shortage during the crisis. Ventilators and C-PAP machines were not able to deliver the required amount of oxygen because of short supply," said a government doctor in Chennai. Another doctor pointed out that a few patients died of hypoxic brain injuries caused by a shortfall in oxygen supply.

Vimala Thomas, Director, Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences, Gachibowli, Telangana said on May 11 that the deaths were part of natural progression of the disease and complications, and not due to shortage of oxygen.

The Uttar Pradesh government did not admit to any deaths due to scarcity of oxygen, but admitted facing shortage of oxygen in several instances.

(With inputs from bureaus)

10 PMs, Telegram founder targeted

None of the leaders provided their phones for forensic analysis to the media outlets that conducted the Pegasus investigation so that it could not be confirmed whether their phones were actually infected with the malware, according to *The Washington Post*.

The NSO maintains that it sells the malware, which can secretly unlock the target's phone, computer or other devices, collect information and transfer it into another device without the permission of the user, only to government agencies to fight terrorism and other serious crimes.

"NSO Group will continue to investigate all credible claims of misuse and take appropriate action based on the results of these investigations," the company said in the statement.

Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based non-profit organisation, and the Amnesty International got access to the leaked database and shared it with 17 media publications, including *The Wire*, *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*.

The Amnesty's Security Lab provided forensic analyses and technical support, while the media consortium conducted the investigation, called the Pegasus Project.

1.2 lakh children lost primary caregivers: study

For example, in India, an estimated 25,500 children lost their mother and 90,751 their father. The rise in COVID-19-associated deaths from February to April 2021 in India was associated with an 8.5 times increase in the number of children orphaned or losing caregivers

in April as compared to March, according to the study.

The study underlines that such children are at greater risk of family separation and institutionalisation and recommends investments towards strengthening family based care.

Scindia forms advisory committees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has set up three committees with sizeable representation from the industry to advise the government on the aviation sector.

One committee each is for airlines and airports and a third for maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), cargo, flight training organisations and ground handling.

Boosting connectivity

The committee on airlines has representation from all carriers and includes Indigo chairman Rahul Bhatia, SpiceJet chairman and managing director Ajay Singh, GoAir director Ness Wadia, Vistara chairman Bhaskar Bhat, AirAsia CEO Sunil Bhaskaran and Air India's chairman and managing director Rajiv Bansal. They will advise the government on enhancing domestic and international connectivity.

BSF and Pak. Rangers exchange sweets on Id

First time since the Pakistani side shunned custom in 2019

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) and the Pakistan Rangers on Wednesday exchanged sweets at various points along the border on the occasion of Id-ul-Azha, the first time since the Pakistani side shunned the custom in 2019.

A BSF spokesperson here said, "An exchange of sweets took place between the BSF and the Pakistan Rangers on the occasion of Id at JCP [Joint Checkpost] Attari." This lies across the Wagah border in Amritsar district of Punjab.

A similar exchange of sweets took place between the two forces along the Rajasthan front too, officials said.

The Pakistani side had unilaterally stopped the exchange after the Narendra Modi government abrogated

Farmers to stage protest at Parliament

If there is any chaos created by outsiders, government must take responsibility, says SKM

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The protest against the three agricultural reform laws has come full circle, with farm unions arriving at Parliament on Thursday to demand the repeal of the laws passed 10 months ago.

With Delhi's Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajaj giving official approval for a staggered agitation at Jantar Mantar during the monsoon session, farm leaders say the government must take responsibility for ensuring there is no conflict or chaos as seen on Republic Day, the last time the protesters entered the capital.

"It is Parliament that had passed these laws, and it must take the responsibility to repeal them. We have issued voters' whips to all Opposition MPs that they must raise the issue within the House, while we sit outside at Jantar Mantar," said Jagmohan Singh, a leader of the Dakaunda faction of the Bharatiya Kisan Union in Punjab.



Back again: Farmers from Punjab arriving at the Singhu border to continue their agitation against the three agriculture laws on Wednesday. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

He said there had been no progress in terms of talks with the government since the last round ended six months ago on January 22. Hence the return to the legislature. "There will be no hulla-balloo. We will just sit there

as long as Parliament sits every day, holding them accountable to the people's interests. It will be a parallel Parliament."

Krantikari Kisan Union president Darshan Pal, who is also a member of the core

committee of the wider Samyukt Kisan Morcha platform of all protesting unions, welcomed the L-G's official nod of approval. "We have been having talks with the Delhi police, and they have pursued this official permis-

sion with the government," he said. He reiterated that there would be no attempt to enter Parliament or accost MPs. The MPs would not even speak at the Kisan Sansads being held at Jantar Mantar, he said.

Given that the SKM is taking steps to vet and control its daily contingent of 200 protesters, All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hanman Mollah said the ball was in the government's court to prevent hijacking of a peaceful agitation.

"We do not want any agent to enter and create a bad name for the movement, because that was done on January 26. Those people who were not part of the movement were used and they created the vandalism. If that happens again, that is the government's responsibility," he said.

The protesters are coming in special buses, with each expected to wear identification badges and carry Aadhaar cards.

Lightweight anti-tank missile tested by DRDO

'Trial has met the mission objectives'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A new generation of Akash surface-to-air missile was successfully flight-tested on Wednesday by the DRDO from an integrated test range off the Odisha coast in a boost to air defence capabilities.

Separately, the DRDO also successfully flight-tested an indigenously developed low weight man-portable anti-tank guided missile, paving the way for its production for the Army.

The Defence Ministry said the Akash missile was test-fired at around 12:45 p.m. from a land-based platform and that the "flawless performance" of its weapons system was confirmed by the complete flight data.

"Once deployed, the Akash-NG weapon system will prove to be a force multiplier for the air defence capability of the IAF," the Ministry said.

It is learnt that the new



The man-portable, anti-tank missile being test-fired.

variant of the Akash missile (Akash-NG) has a slightly better range compared to the original version that can strike targets at a distance of around 25 km.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO, the IAF and production agencies Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) for the test-firing of the missile.

On the man-portable missile, the Defence Ministry said the test had validated the minimum range successfully.

IN BRIEF



Kangana challenges criminal proceedings

MUMBAI Actor Kangana Ranaut approached the Bombay High Court challenging the criminal defamation proceedings initiated by the metropolitan magistrate against her. The magistrate court on March 1 issued a bailable warrant against Ms. Ranaut after she failed to appear despite summons.

Bombay HC to rule on Deshmukh's plea today

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court will give its verdict on Thursday on pleas filed by former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh seeking to quash the CBI FIR lodged against him into an allegation of corruption, and the Maharashtra government seeking to delete two paragraphs in the FIR. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar will pronounce the judgment.

NGMA to be renovated, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Culture Minister G. Kishan Reddy on Wednesday said the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) here would be renovated and reorganised as a part of the commemoration of the 75th Independence Day next year.

Mr. Reddy, who visited the NGMA along with Ministers of State for Culture Meenakshi Lekhi and Arjun Ram Meghwal on Wednesday, said the NGMA was being renovated "in the context of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* as per the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi", a Ministry statement said.

"The Minister explained that after the completion of the renovation and reorganisation works, the new look of the NGMA will be presented before the people as it will be rededicated to the nation.

For this, a large number of paintings and artworks are being collected from different parts of the country to be displayed at the gallery and this collection will remain available for the future generations of the country," the Ministry said.

Weeks after being appointed to their posts, the Ministers visited the historic Jaipur House that houses the NGMA, which was renovated recently, as well as the new wing that hosts exhibitions.

Congress leadership does a balancing act

It is trying to promote younger leaders in States while reaching out to the old guard

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The Congress leadership is attempting a balancing act in trying to promote younger leadership in States while reaching out to the old guard.

In the past few days, while the party was firefighting a very public leadership tussle in Punjab, *The Hindu* has learnt Congress president Sonia Gandhi reached out to senior members of the group of 23 dissenters (G-23) – who had written to her about re-vamping the party last year – as well as other veterans. These leaders include Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kamal Nath, Anand Sharma and Digvijaya Singh, a source said on Wednesday.



Fresh start: Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu and supporters at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. •PTI

There's no official word on the agenda of these meetings but the Congress chief is said to have discussed organisational matters and the political situation.

While most of these meetings took place away from

the media glare, her meeting with the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister triggered speculation that Mr. Nath could be given a big responsibility at the All India Congress Committee when a reshuffle takes place. Mr.

Nath, however, denied these reports and said he was not in any hurry to leave Madhya Pradesh, where he heads the party.

The timing of Ms. Gandhi's political meetings with the senior leaders, however, is significant: it comes at a time when the party seems to be experimenting with State-level leadership. While the Congress is yet to resolve the differences between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former PCC chief Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan, the appointment of Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Punjab Congress Committee (PCC) chief despite stiff opposition from Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has created an impression that the Gand-

hi siblings – Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra – are now ready to fully back the younger leaders and ease out seniors.

Against such a backdrop, the Congress chief's meeting with veterans could help bridge the divide. But it's also clear that Mr. Sidhu's elevation seems to be part of a larger Congress design to promote younger leadership in the States, even if some of them may have joined the party recently.

Like Mr. Sidhu, Lok Sabha member Revanth Reddy joined the Congress in October 2017. But the former two-time Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLA was recently appointed as the Telangana Congress chief.

India signed 26 pacts to fight drug menace

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

India has signed 26 bilateral pacts, 15 memoranda of understanding and two agreements on security cooperation with different countries for combating illicit trafficking of narcotic, drugs and psychotropic substances, besides chemical precursors, according to a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reply in the Lok Sabha.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) coordinated with various international organisations for sharing information and intelligence to com-

bat transnational drug trafficking. They included the SAARC Drug Offences Monitoring Desk; Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa; Colombo Plan; Association of Southeast Asian Nations; ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters; Bay of Bengal Initiative For Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-Operation; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the International Narcotics Control Board, it said.

Sharp vigil, effective surveillance, public cooperation, source-based intelli-

gence, sensitisation of field officials and associated measures had resulted in a gradual increase in the registration of a number of drug trafficking related cases in the country, the MHA stated.

"For coordination among various Central and State agencies, the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism was set up by the MHA in year 2016 for effective drug law enforcement. This NCORD system has been restructured into a four-tier scheme up to district level on July 29, 2019, for better coordination," it

pointed out.

A Joint Coordination Committee with the NCB Director General as its chairman was set up on July 19, 2019, to monitor the investigation into cases involving large seizures.

"For digitisation of pan-India drug seizure data, the MHA has launched an e-portal called 'SIMS' (Seizure Information Management System) in 2019 for all the drug law enforcement agencies under the mandate of Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS)...," the MHA noted.

Two youth found dead in police custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Two young men who were accused of a motorcycle theft and were under detention were reportedly found dead in the police station, causing furore in the tribal belt of South Gujarat. The two were detained at the Chikhli police station of Navsari district. The police said they found them hanging in the computer room, which also served as a lock up room.

IT panel to deliberate on Pegasus issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Standing Committee on Information Technology, headed by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, will on July 28 deliberate on the use of the Pegasus spyware against nearly 300 persons in India.

Officials of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Telecommunications have been summoned to depose on the subject – “Citizens’ data security and privacy”.

The committee has had several rounds of meetings on the subject. It was also deliberated in two meetings held in November 2019. The panel has not submitted a report so far because the investigation remained inconclusive. The Union government has neither confirmed or denied its involvement in the snooping episode targeting activists in 2019.

“The latest revelations show that it is a more serious situation. Does the government have access to Pegasus or not is the key question,” a member said.

‘SC must take cognisance of Pegasus’

Mamata urges all the Opposition parties to form a united front against the BJP without delay

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday urged the Supreme Court to take *suo motu* cognisance of the Pegasus spyware issue and asked all the Opposition parties to form a united front against the BJP without delay.

“My humble regards to our Hon’ble Supreme Court. Why can’t the court take *suo motu* cognisance when judges’ phones are tapped?... Either take *suo motu* cognisance or set up an SIT [Special Investigation Team] monitored by you to know whose phones were affected... Only the judiciary can save democracy,” she said.

Ms. Banerjee was addressing the annual Martyrs’ Day rally in Kolkata, which was telecast live across several States, including New Delhi. The July 21 Martyrs’ Day rally is organised annually by the Trinamool Congress to commemorate the 1993 Kolkata firing.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson added, “We must forget our individual interests and come together to save the country. To work together, we must form a front without any delay.”



Strong stand: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Wednesday. •PTI

Ms. Banerjee said she would visit New Delhi later this month and would be happy to meet Opposition leaders between July 26 and 29. “I also want to meet important leaders... Chidambaramji [Congress leader P. Chidambaram] will be there, Sharadji [Nationalist Congress Party chairperson Sharad Pawar] will be there, I am ready to attend any meeting between July 26 and 29.”

Ms. Banerjee, who is likely to visit New Delhi after two

years on July 25, said, “The general election is still two-and-a-half years away, but nothing will be achieved if we form an alliance just before it.”

The Chief Minister urged each and every Opposition party to start working together to make a “front” and not leave matters for the last moment. “If the doctor comes after death, nothing will happen. If the treatment is done on time, the patient can be cured. Now is your

time. The more time you waste, the more the situation will worsen,” she said.

The Chief Minister alleged that her phone was tapped. She said she had put plasters on her phone as “they [Centre] tap everything”.

“See, I have put plasters on it, what else can I do. The camera turns on when I use audio or make video calls. I have put a plaster on my phone’s camera. The Government of India should be plastered, or else the coun-

try will be in ruins,” she stated.

The Chief Minister, who spoke in Bengali, Hindi and English during a hour-long speech, alleged that the Centre did not trust anyone, including its own Ministers. “I cannot talk to Chidambaramji, Sharadji because my phone is tapped, I cannot talk to the Delhi Chief Minister, the Telangana Chief Minister or any other Chief Minister,” she added.

During her speech, Ms. Banerjee repeatedly said, “Pegasus is dangerous and ferocious.” She accused the Centre of indulging in “spy-giri [surveillance]” and the BJP of being a “high-load virus” party.

She also blamed the Prime Minister for the “monumental failure” in handling the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She thanked the State’s people for electing her to power for a third term. “Bengal is the model State for the country and not Gujarat.”

Ms. Banerjee also relaunched her party’s mouthpiece, *Jaago Bangla*, as a daily, with the lead article saying, “*Ebar saphal chalo Delhi* [Now, let’s go to Delhi]”.

Opposition participates in Trinamool’s Martyrs’ Day

Party organises function in New Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Wednesday remotely participated in the Martyrs’ Day observed by the Trinamool Congress and listened to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s speech here in New Delhi at a special function organised by the party.

The leaders who dropped by at the Constitution Club, where screens were put up relaying Ms. Banerjee’s speech, included senior Congress leaders P. Chidambaram and Digvijaya Singh, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader Tiruchi Siva, Rashtriya Janata Dal’s (RJD) Manoj K. Jha, Samajwadi Party’s Ramgopal Yadav, Aam Aadmi Party’s (AAP) Sanjay Singh, Telangana Rashtra Samithi’s (TRS) Keshava Rao, Shiv Sena’s Priyanka Chaturvedi and Akali Dal’s Balwinder Singh Bhunder. The significant absentees were the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

The Trinamool Congress leaders claimed that the “enthusiastic” participation



Sharad Pawar

of the Opposition parties showed the growing acceptance of the party as a possible fulcrum of “Opposition unity”.

Curtain-raiser

The event also acted as a curtain-raiser to Ms. Banerjee’s visit to New Delhi on Monday. She is expected to meet all the senior Opposition leaders. She will also be paying a visit to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

Martyrs’ Day is one of the key events in the Trinamool Congress calendar. It is observed to commemorate the 13 West Bengal Youth Congress workers who were killed in the police firing during a demonstration led by Ms. Banerjee in 1993 while she was still in the Congress.

Officials’ visit to Israel in 2019 creates political stir

Team went to study trends in PR

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

A visit to Israel by a five-member team of the State Publicity Department, Directorate General of Information and Public Relations (DGIPR), in November 2019 to study new trends in government public relations (PR) and new ways of utilising social media has become the centre of a political storm in Maharashtra.

Amid claims of the officers not submitting the report to the State government and a possible inquiry into it, *The Hindu* spoke to one of the five officers who said the tour was sanctioned by the State government and also by the Foreign Ministry after the official invite from the Israel government. The officer, on the condition of anonymity, said Ajay Ambekar, who has now retired, did file the report of the November 17-22 tour.

“This was the first time when a team from the DGIPR went to Israel. Our mandate was to study various new means of publicity, understand how foreign government PR agencies work and how communication strategy can be improved. We even did a presentation on return,” the officer said, adding that officials from the Agriculture,



Devendra Fadnavis

Irrigation and Urban Development Departments routinely visited Israel for study tours.

On Monday, Maharashtra Congress general secretary Sachin Sawant demanded a probe into the visit. In a reply on Tuesday, former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the tour was after the Assembly election and before the formation of the new government. It was to study agricultural issues. Interestingly, the agenda of the visit had no mention of agriculture, but talked about PR strategies and the use of social media platforms.

In April, Congress MLA from Nagpur Vikas Thakre had sought details of the tour, including information about who organised it and how it helped the State government. “I did not get any reply on this. I am still waiting,” he said.

‘Intelligence agencies not grounded in law’

Pegasus would not have happened if they were held accountable, says Congress leader Manish Tewari

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The use of NSO Group’s Pegasus spyware against Opposition leaders, activists, judges and journalists would not have occurred if intelligence agencies were grounded in law and with provisions for holding them accountable, senior Congress leader Manish Tewari has said.

In 2011, Mr. Tewari had moved a private member’s Bill in the Lok Sabha – the Intelligence Services (Powers and Regulation) Bill – that sought to bring “appropriate statutory basis” for intelligence agencies. It also dealt with the question of balancing the demands of security and privacy of individuals.



Manish Tewari, Senior Congress Leader

Mr. Tewari listed an improved version of the Bill in 2019, but since the beginning of the 17th Lok Sabha, private members’ business has not been taken up.

“The problem in India is that both the law enforcement and intelligence organisations do not have a sound legal basis,” he stated.

Mr. Tewari pointed to a November 2013 Gauhati High

Court judgment, which called the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) “illegal”. For the past eight years, the CBI’s existence hung by the thread of a stay, as the Supreme Court had so far not adjudicated on the legality of the organisation that had the authority to deprive people of their life and liberty, he stated.

To a question raised by Mr. Tewari in 2009 on the legal basis of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the government admitted that the RAW had no basis in law. The IB, it stated, derived its existence from being on the Union List.

Mr. Tewari said, “It creates a spectre of completely unbridled power, when you have organisations functioning without any legal framework that have the ability to transgress in the personal lives of the citizens.”

The world over, he observed, intelligence agencies were governed by law. “In each evolved democracy, intelligence agencies are sub-

ject to very rigorous parliamentary oversight. There are specific parliamentary committees that look at their functioning so that excess do not get committed. Unfortunately, in India, there is a complete absence of even a public discussion on how to hold the agencies accountable,” he said.

If this law had been in place, something like Pegasus would not have happened, Mr. Tewari added.

Mr. Tewari said BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad, in an “implicit admission of the government’s culpability”, had stated that when 45 countries had used the Pegasus spyware, why should India be singled out.

“Our party has nothing to do with spying or phone tapping. If at all there is any party that has a habit of hatching spy conspiracies and destabilising popular governments, it is definitely the Congress,” said the Chief Minister while addressing a press conference here.

Mr. Lal condemned the Congress for supporting Amnesty International, the agency that had first published a report about the snooping on the personal data of Ministers and journalists in India with the help of Pegasus, the Israeli spyware.

“In the last seven years, the Narendra Modi-led government did not give Congress a chance to raise valid issues. Therefore, following its character, it has hatched a conspiracy to defame and malign the Indian democracy,” Mr. Lal said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Wednesday hit out at the Congress for creating a ruckus in the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament over the “phone tapping” issue, adding that the party had a habit of raising allegations rather than discussing development issues.

“Our party has nothing to do with spying or phone tapping. If at all there is any party that has a habit of hatching spy conspiracies and destabilising popular governments, it is definitely the Congress,” said the Chief Minister while addressing a press conference here.

Mr. Lal condemned the Congress for supporting Amnesty International, the agency that had first published a report about the snooping on the personal data of Ministers and journalists in India with the help of Pegasus, the Israeli spyware.

“In the last seven years, the Narendra Modi-led government did not give Congress a chance to raise valid issues. Therefore, following its character, it has hatched a conspiracy to defame and malign the Indian democracy,” Mr. Lal said.

‘CAA, NRC won’t affect India’s Muslims’

Organised bids made since 1930 to increase Muslim population in India: Bhagwat

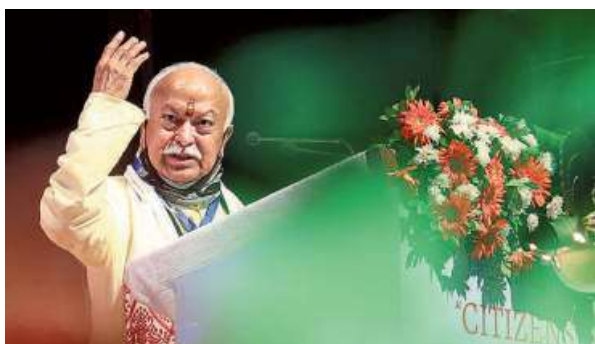
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will not harm India’s Muslims, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said at a book launch function at Guwahati in Assam on Wednesday.

A communal narrative was being spun by a section of people trying to derive political mileage out of these issues, he said.

The CAA was passed in 2019 to fast-track the citizenship process for non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who took refuge in India till December 31, 2014. The NRC of 1951 was updated in Assam to leave out 19.06 lakh persons out of some 3.3 crore applicants.

Mr. Bhagwat said, “Not a single Indian Muslim will face any loss due to the new citizenship Act. India has been following the [1950]



Making a point: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat speaking at the event in Guwahati, Assam, on Wednesday. •PTI

Nehru-Liaquat Pact, which states that each country would protect its minorities while Pakistan failed to do so.”

‘Welcomes outsiders’

Indians had always welcomed outsiders, Mr. Bhagwat said. “But the designs by some to impose their language, religion and food habits on others led to fears,” he added.

“There have been organised attempts to increase the

while others came with the intention of increasing their population. “The CAA clearly caters to those who came from the [specified] countries because of persecution. We cannot ignore the plight of the minorities in Bangladesh and Pakistan,” he insisted.

“Respect for other religions, cultures, and languages are part of India’s culture. Our Constitution clearly defines the rights and duties, but the problem arises when some people want all the rights and do not want to follow the duties,” he stressed.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the anti-CAA protests in the State were against the inclusion of all communities unlike the “very communal” opposition elsewhere in the country, because Muslims did not figure in the list of persecuted communities.

“I will always remain a supporter of the CAA,” he said.

document for the first time. “In exercise of the powers conferred by proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution of India read with Section of the J&K Civil Service (Decentralisation and recruitment) Act, 2010, the government hereby grants domicile certificates to spouse of a domicile,” a government order, dated July 20, 2021, said.

The government has authorised tahsildars to issue the certificate against a “valid proof of marriage”.

According to the J&K Grant of Domicile Certificate Procedure Rules, 2020, the domicile certificate would be issued to all Permanent Resident Certificate holders and their children living outside the Union Territory.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has rolled out the process of issuing domicile certificates to the spouses of the erstwhile State subjects who have a domicile certificate.

This would allow the husbands of the women married outside to acquire the

J&K begins issuance of domicile certificates to non-local spouses

Centre’s statement on oxygen criminal, cruel: SP

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday said the BJP-led Central government’s statement that no person died due to lack of oxygen during the second wave of COVID-19 was “criminal and cruel”. “Those whose homes were ruined, they understand the painful truth of this *mahajhoth*

[big lie] of the BJP,” said Mr. Yadav on Twitter. The BJP does not deserve forgiveness, he said.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Yadav told reporters that the BJP government was responsible for the deaths of the people who suffered during the second wave. The BJP governments could not arrange oxygen in hospitals when people were dying, he said.

TAMILNADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)			
Sl.No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Specification No	Total
1	SE / P&A / TTPS	(2966-S Due Date Extension)	1
2	CE / C / Transmission	T-39	1

For details of works / Procurement / Due date of submission / opening / viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit website, www.tangedco.gov.in, www.tantransco.gov.in, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app, www.sppcrj.nic.in

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION AJMER
PHONE NO. 0145-2624748 FAX NO. 0145-2627671
No. F. (J)/AMP/2021-2022/4850 Dated: 13/07/21

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS

Bids for the Execution of various works for providing FHTC under JJM for village -Chapri Khurd, Dhawa, Oldan & Rol Chandawada, Block-Merta with one year defect liability period in the jurisdiction of PHED Division - Merta City, Nagaur (Estimated cost of work - Rs. 645.09 lacs) are invited from interested bidders upto 03.08.2021. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.cprirajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppcrj.nic.in>) of the state.

UBN No. PHE2122WLOB04965 (Mukul Bhargava)
NIB No. PHE2122 A2212 Additional Chief Engineer
DIPRC/6954 PHED Region, Ajmer

ANNA INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
Mahizhampoo Complex, No. 163/1, P.S. Kumarasamy Raja Salai (Greenways Road), Raja Annamalaiapuram, CHENNAI 600 028
Phone No. 044 - 2493 7170, 2493 8247, 2461 0300, 2461 3726

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed Tenders are invited for undertaking Catering services at Anna Institute of Management, Chennai-28 till 2.00PM on 06.08.2021 Tenders will be opened on 06.08.2021 at 3.00 pm. The tender document can be obtained in person till 5.45 pm on 05.08.2021 at the above said address on cash payment of Rs. 525/- or by downloading from the website <http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in> An EMD of Rs. 50,000/- has to be remitted along with this Tender form. For detailed information, the tender document can be seen

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
ANNA INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
DIPR/1903/Tender/2021

महाराजा गंगा सिंह विश्वविद्यालय, बीकानेर
निविदा सूचना

विश्वविद्यालय द्वारा ई-निविदा जापन संख्या 01/2021-22 क्रमांक 5430 दिनांक 20/07/2021 के तहत विश्वविद्यालय में परीक्षा वर्ष 2021 एवं 2022 के लिये उत्तरपूर्विका आपूर्ति हेतु निविदा जारी की गई है जिसका यूबीएन [GSU2122GLOB00002](http://www.sppcrj.nic.in) है। निविदा से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट पोर्टल www.eproc.cprirajasthan.gov.in <http://sppcrj.nic.in> तथा <http://mgsbikaner.ac.in> पर उपलब्ध है।
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NOTICE INVITING TENDER - CPRI/BLR21NIT08 Date : 22-07-2021

Online e-tenders are invited from eligible manufacturers/suppliers/service providers for the following in conformation to National / International standards wherever applicable: -

(1) Annual Rate Contract for Hiring of Goods Carrier container vehicles for Transporting test equipment of CDD, weighing about 4.5 - 5.0 Tons (approx.) to various Power Stations & substations situated across the country to undertake Condition Assessment & Consultancy Services at site. (2) 100 kV break Down Tester (DC Bipolar). (3) HighVoltage AC/DC Bipolar Variable Stress Ageing Source Test Step-up for ageing three insulators at room temperature. (4) Supply of “Loop Sensor”. (5) Short circuit current limiting reactor banks for augmentation of short circuit test facilities at High power laboratory, CPRI Bengaluru. (6) Data Acquisition System (DAS) for augmentation of short circuit test facilities at High power laboratory, CPRI Bengaluru.

Tender documents with detailed specifications, terms & conditions, instructions, and other details be kindly **available/downloaded from CPRI website : <http://www.cpri.in> and CPRI e-procurement portal: www.tenderwizard.com/CPRI from 22-07-2021 onwards.**

CPRI/ADVT/18 /2021 Purchase Authority-CPRI

Rahul flags 49 lakh 'excess deaths' report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said wrong decisions of the Government of India (GoI) "killed" 50 lakh people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a tweet, Mr. Gandhi cited a report of the Washington-based think tank, Centre for Global Development, that offered three different scenarios of "excess deaths" in India between January 2020 and June 2021.

"The Truth. GOI's wrong decisions during Covid second wave killed 50 lakh of our sisters, brothers, mothers and fathers," he tweeted, tagging the working paper of the Centre for Global Development.

The study — authored by Abhishek Anand, Justin Sandefur and Arvind Subramanian (former chief economic adviser to the GoI) — projected three different estimates: a conservative estimate of 34 lakh deaths using civic registration data from the States; another estimate of 40 lakh deaths using infection fatality ratio and finally, an estimate of 49 lakh deaths based on an analysis of a consumer pyramid household survey.

CBSE allows schools to finalise results by July 25

Exams for private candidates between Aug. 16 and Sept. 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has extended the last date for schools to finalise Class 12 results from July 22 to 25. In case any school fails to complete the moderation process by then, its results will be declared separately, a letter from Controller of Examinations Sanyam Bhardwaj said on Wednesday.

The Board also announced that Class 12 examinations for private candidates would be held between August 16 and September 15. In a letter to the CBSE school principals on the eve of the deadline to finalise results, Dr. Bhardwaj noted that "teachers involved are under stress, getting panicky and committing mistakes and sending request to CBSE to rectify these." Given these problems, the Board has decided to extend the deadline to 5 p.m. on July 25.

"It is requested that schools may continue to work towards compiling the result by completing the moderation to avoid any last-minute rush. In case any school is left to complete the moderation, the result of



Fresh formula: Students were able to complete their practical examinations in person. ■ K. PICHUMANI

such schools will be declared separately," the letter said.

The CBSE had said the final results would be declared by July 31.

Tabulation policy

When the Board examinations were cancelled due to COVID-19, it formulated a tabulation policy to assess students using previous years' marks, as well as internal and practical scores. However, the process is different for private candidates.

"In case of regular students, schools have conducted a unit test, mid-term and pre-board examinations, and thus the performance of these students was available. However, in the

case of private candidates, no records based on which their assessment could be done without the conduct of examination," said an official statement.

In multiple posts on social media, private candidates have asked why their health and safety concerns are not considered as seriously as those of regular candidates. They have also complained that the delay in holding exams for them will affect their prospects for admission into higher education. The CBSE statement said it was coordinating with the University Grants Commission to ensure that the admission schedule took into account the later declaration of results for private candidates.

Recalling the days of 'oxygen langar'

'Govt. must explain why so many people were knocking at the doors of a gurdwara'

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

"Official records may show otherwise, but our records prove that there was a severe oxygen crisis during the second wave of COVID 19," says Gurpreet Singh Rummy, president of Khalsa Help International, known for coming up with the idea of "oxygen langar" at the Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in the Indrapuram area of Ghaziabad.

On a muggy July afternoon, Mr. Singh is seen showing the makeshift oxygen pipeline outside the gurdwara. It is a reminder of the grim three weeks in April-May when the road was filled with hundreds in need of oxygen for their near and dear ones. "Anybody who had passed by this road would remember how serious the situation was as the road was choked with patients waiting in four-wheelers, gasping for breath," says Mr. Singh, who worked day and night along with volunteers of the NGO to help people.

"If the government says nobody died from oxygen shortage, it should explain why so many people were knocking at the doors of a gurdwara. It is only after they were denied oxygen beds that they came to us," he says. "We waited for a week. It is only after we



Life support: Gurmeet Singh showing the oxygen pipeline outside Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Ghaziabad. ■ ANUJ KUMAR

sensed that the healthcare system is collapsing that we chipped in."

His son Gurmeet Singh remembers that they started the service on April 22. "We could do it because unlike other gurdwaras we were already running a COVID-19 testing centre at the gurdwara for a year. We were careful but not unduly scared of the disease," says Mr. Gurmeet, who twice tested positive. "We had a doctor on duty and our goal was to stabilise the patient before he or she could find a hospital bed. For this, we put up 30 beds inside the gurdwara."

For the next 28 days, Mr. Singh says, around 7,000 se-

riously ill patients were provided oxygen. "I have seen 25-30 people dying in front of my eyes because they arrived here when it was too late," he says.

Ishan Bindra, a volunteer, brought a relative to the gurdwara for oxygen. "Her condition improved but she died of COVID a few days later at a hospital in Noida," says the volunteer.

Keeping up supplies

The challenge, Mr. Singh says, was to maintain the supply of oxygen. "A hungry person could wait for langar but those with oxygen saturation levels as low as 50 could not," he says.

"For the first few days, we sourced from Naraina Industrial Area but from then on we travelled to different States and brought oxygen cylinders from Hisar, Ludhiana, Ropar and Haridwar," says Amoljeet Singh, the volunteer who was in charge of maintaining the supply. Mr. Singh claims at least four hospitals in the vicinity sought their help for supplying oxygen cylinders to them.

The NGO later shifted the facilities to Krishna Dental College. "But we haven't dismantled the supply pipes as you never know how serious the third wave could be," says Mr. Singh.

Govt. delays release of electoral bond data

TMC MP Santanu Sen sought details

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

A day after the Finance Ministry told the Rajya Sabha that it needed more time to furnish data on sale of electoral bonds asked by an MP, activist Kanhaiya Kumar said on Wednesday that the details had been provided to him by the State Bank of India two months ago in reply to his Right to Information application.

Trinamool Congress MP Santanu Sen had sought the details of the 15th and 16th phases of the sale, which was in the run-up to the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Puducherry, Assam and Kerala from March to May.

Bonds cost

Mr. Sen also asked about the bonds sold since the scheme started in 2018 and the cost of printing the same.

"The government seeks more time to furnish the replies," a written reply by Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Tuesday.

Mr. Kumar, a Bihar-based RTI activist, received the reply from the SBI, the only

Details were provided to me by the State Bank of India two months ago in reply to Right to Information application

KANHAIYA KUMAR
RTI activist

bank authorised to sell the bonds, on May 14. As reported by *The Hindu* on May 18, the SBI reply said bonds worth ₹695.34 crore had been sold from April 1 to 10.

No details of parties

The SBI declined to share the details of the parties that cashed them and the commission it earned from the sales, both of which were asked by Mr. Sen.

Questions delay

"The questions are submitted 15 days in advance. The SBI has already provided this information in response to my RTI query. So it's quite obvious that they have information in requisite format. Still, the Ministry says it needs more time to furnish the replies," Mr. Kumar said.

Centre amends policy on suspended family pension

'Next of kin eligible if spouse charged with employee's murder'

S. VIJAY KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Union government has amended a decades-old policy of suspending family pension to the spouse of a deceased government employee, when he/she is charged with murdering the employee or abetting the commission of such an offence.

Under the new rule, other eligible members of the family would be entitled to receive the family pension till the disposal of the criminal proceedings against the spouse of the deceased employee. In case, the spouse is proved not guilty of the murder charge, the family pension would be payable to him/her from the date of acquittal.

In accordance with the provisions under the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972, if a person who is eligible to receive family pension on death of a government employee or a pensioner is charged with offences of murdering the government employee/pensioner or for abetting in the commission of such an offence, the payment of family pension shall remain suspended till the conclusion of the criminal proceedings.



Pensioners waiting outside a sub-treasury branch to draw money. ■ FILE PHOTO

In such cases, family pension is neither paid to the person who is charged with the offence nor to any other eligible member of the family till the conclusion of the case.

If on conclusion of the criminal proceedings the person concerned is convicted for the murder or abetment of the murder of a government servant, he/she would be debarred from receiving the family pension.

In that case, the family pension would become payable to other eligible member of the family from

the date of death of the government servant. But if the person concerned is subsequently acquitted of the criminal charge, the family pension becomes payable to that person from the date of the death of the employee/pensioner.

However, denying payment of family pension to any other member of the family, particularly dependent children or parents who are not charged with the offence, till the conclusion of the criminal proceedings, was not considered justified. Since finalisation of the criminal proceedings may take a long time and the eligible children or parents of the deceased may suffer for want of financial support by way of family pension, the issue was taken up by the Department of Pension & Pensioners Welfare with the Department of Legal Affairs for a review.

In case the other eligible number is a minor child of the diseased government servant, the family pension to such should be payable through a duly appointed guardian.

Meghalaya Cong. seeks to counter Assam Bill

'Law needed to protect interest of State'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Congress in Meghalaya has asked the Conrad K. Sangma government to come up with a law to counter Assam's Cattle Protection Bill, 2021, which seeks to restrict the transport of bovine creatures within and through the State.

Beef is part of the diet in some Christian-majority north-eastern States, primarily Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Geography makes these States depend on the transportation of most food items through Assam. "We should have our own law to protect the interest of most of our people, the right to have access to high-protein red meat in this case. We respect the religious sentiments of all political parties and of citizens across the nation, but this [beef] is a part of our life and we cannot let another State disrupt our food habit," senior Congress MLA and former Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh said.

The Hynniewtrep Youth Council, a pressure group, submitted a memorandum to Meghalaya's Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong



Cattle bound for Meghalaya is transported through Assam. ■ FILE PHOTO

pointing out certain "objectionable" sections of the Assam Bill.

"Section 7 of the Assam Bill is in contravention of the Constitution of India as inter-State trade and commerce falls under the Union List of the Seventh Schedule and no State has the authority to regulate inter-State trade and commerce except by the rule of law passed by Parliament," council's president Robertjune Kharjahirin said. "If Assam is allowed to restrict the transportation of cattle, it could encourage them to regulate the supply or prohibit other food items and goods, which can greatly impact livelihoods and economy of Meghalaya," he said.

Several TMC leaders, workers held in Tripura

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AGARTALA

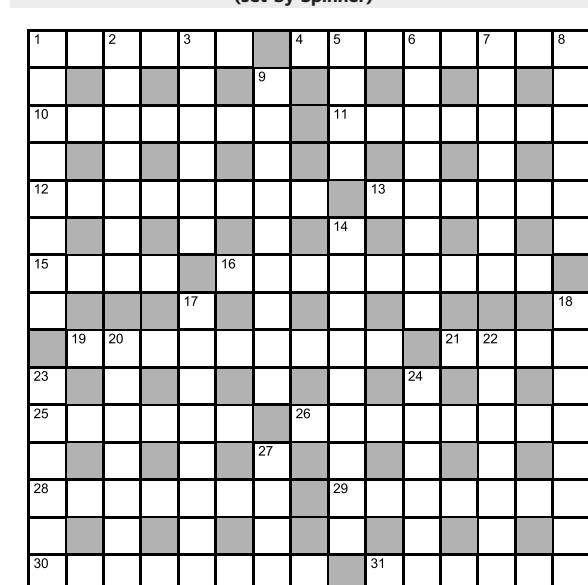
Several Trinamool Congress leaders and activists, including the party's Tripura unit president Asish Lal Sinha, were arrested on Wednesday in the Unakoti district as they gathered, violating the COVID-19 restrictions, the police said.

The TMC leaders gathered at Gournagar to pay homage to the Youth Congress activists allegedly killed in police firing in Kolkata on this day in 1993 during a rally led by then Congress leader Mamata Banerjee.

"Twenty-one people were arrested as they violated the COVID restrictions and made an unlawful gathering," said Parth Munda, the officer-in-charge of the Kailashahar police station.

"They were put in a temporary jail. The arrests were made in presence of an Executive Magistrate," he added. However, Mr. Sinha claimed that 82 activists and leaders, including him and TMC's Unakoti district president Anjan Chakraborty, were arrested.

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- ACROSS**
- Filling in when head's away — something one might do at a summer internship? (6)
 - Caught after chief of police recalled good man's theories (8)
 - Newspaper exclusive, one that causes a drop in concentration levels! (7)
 - Criminal deed, hiding origin of transmission — it's to be avoided in a pandemic! (7)

- IT update breaks facility (8)
 - Shooter is trapped by well-designed plot (6)
 - Girl's date hijacked by amateur (4)
 - Ruined by coronavirus, finally healed on getting protective equipment (9)
 - Italy rose spectacularly for rightfully due winnings! (9)
 - Artificial intelligence takes over small bit of antiquated continent (4)
 - Holy pouch with vermilion (6)
 - Fond of condemned king thrown out by husband (8)
 - Spinner's following former flame with answer for question (7)
 - Train carries haul when returning daily (7)
 - Pressure's disorienting when wading through water (8)
 - Observed selection of co-star edgily (6)
- DOWN**
- If truth be told, account total hides a bit of unscrupulousness (8)
 - Medical professional provided some treatment before editor feel asleep (7)
 - Perhaps, point when batters get nervous batting in net, yes? (6)
 - Cry of pain when finger's cut at the top (4)
 - Scrutinise son running amok, consumed by alcohol (8)
 - Talk softly before clang (7)
 - Solve intrinsically felt testing, in retrospect (6)
 - Remove aerated liquid, grabbing nearly frozen water! (9)
 - Those who triumph unexpectedly over makers of crossword! (9)
 - Friend returning home is important (8)
 - Travelled here and there? Dread new variant! (8)
 - Apple's origin story starts here: Design hardcore, with no compromise ultimately! (7)
 - Southern dynasty's ruler firstly an intellectual (7)
 - Unexpectedly elapse, becoming dead to the world (6)
 - Great playing by team's leader for goal! (6)
 - Eager for knowledge, absorbs everything at first (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13305

A	C	A	P	U	L	C	O	E	S	T	A	T	E
C	H	I	L	D	A	D	V	E	R	T	I	S	E
E	G	E	I	O	A	N	A	N					
P	A	N	O	R	A	M	I	C	P	I	N	O	
T	M	E	T	H	O	D	T	O	T	A	L	E	
S	N	E	H	A									
P	A	T	H	W	A								
P	A	T	H	O	B								
C	O	S	T	A	E	S	P	L	A	N	A	D	
E	T	T	L	S	R	S	A	L	E				
B	R	U	S	H	E	D							
A	N	E	S	I	E	E							
R	E	G	A	R	D	I	N	C	L	U	D	E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Identifying the jivatma

What is actually intended by an individual when he uses the term 'I'? Generally it refers to both the body and the atma within. When it is said that a child is born or someone has died, does birth or death bind the person inclusive of the body and the atma? There is lack of clarity in such matters from a laukika standpoint.

The Charvakas, for instance, see no difference between the body and the atma and they view birth and death accordingly. But Vedanta sees the jivatma as an individual being with a sarira in which there is the atma and teaches us to differentiate between the two entities. To clarify this matter further, the Brahmasutra discusses at length about the nature of the atma swaroopa, pointed out Sri Mani Dravid Sastri in a discourse.

In the view of Vedanta, when it is said the jivatma is born and dies it pertains only to the sarira with the senses, mind, intellect, etc, and not the atma which is nitya and of chaitanya swaroopa. Sastras say that unlike the sarira, the atma is not bound by birth and death. The atma does not die even when the individual body dies. They explain that the atma leaves that body to take another sarira according to its karma. The jivatma's awareness of the laukika world is owing to the association of the atma with the sarira. Whatever is affecting the sarira is also felt by the atma. But in actuality, all the experiences and knowledge of the laukika world is called vritti jnana. This is only a reflection of the atma's chaitanya swaroopa in the antakarana. Atmaswaroopa is to be recognised and meditated upon. This is necessary to grasp the import of the Mahavakyas such as Tat Tvam Asi, and understand that the self spoken about in these statements is the atma alone and not the sarira.

Burgers in a bagasse box and sambar in a bottle. This #PlasticFreeJuly, we scan how restaurants and supermarkets across the country are pivoting to sustainable packaging



How green is your takeaway?

ANISHA MENEZES

The lockdowns have not been kind to those of us who enjoy gastronomic expeditions. Takeaway and food delivery have made protracted lockdowns almost bearable. But, with India's online food delivery market set to grow at a staggering 28.94% during 2020-2026, managing food delivery waste poses problems of its own.

In anticipation, restaurants and cloud kitchens are reinventing their branding and packaging game.

When dressing to the nines and venturing out is not always an option, restaurants are trying to replicate that experience indoors. For Shaariq Akhtar, resident manager at ITC Grand Chola, Chennai, take-out orders must offer the same luxury as dine-in experiences.

Their Gourmet Couch packaging is food specific: ceramic dishes for steaming biryani, corn starch boxes for fluffy kulchas, and glass bottles for beverages, maintaining freshness and form, across distance and delivery times.

With over 50 orders a day, the hotel sees how customers respond positively to sustainable packaging, and that makes it worth the extra cost. Plant-based packaging that uses bagasse, areca leaves or corn starch is typically more expensive than plastic tubs purchased wholesale. But Shaariq opines, "offering biodegradable boxes, or mason jars, allows them to be composted or reused and our patrons appreciate that".

This perspective is everything. Working with hospitality chains like the Taj and Oberoi, coffee majors Starbucks and Blue Tokai, and grocery platforms like Foodhall and Reliance Retail, Pappco Greenware's products also come at a slightly higher price point. Co-founder Abhishek Agarwal breaks it down: "Each clamshell box today delivers food that is at least worth ₹150-200. The bagasse clamshell costs anywhere around ₹4-10, depending on the size. So it's really affordable. Just not at a throwaway price, like plastic."

He adds, "We started out with bagasse, but that was only one piece of the puzzle. We expanded to paper, wood and bamboo, helping brands use 100% eco-friendly packaging that biodegrades in 60-90 days."

Similarly, Corugami, a Pune-based packaging firm, looks to reduce packaging like plastic tape and superfluous paper bags, by adding handles to

Choices, choices A variety of leaves, bagasse, kraft paper and areca are just a few of the materials available

• OAKTREE KITCHEN, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



boxes. Its focus now is on "custom, local, eco-friendly packaging solutions for Indian favourites such as dosas, where vendors can create boxes that preserve the crispness of a rolled dosa," says Corugami co-founder Udit Bansal.

The past year also saw a jump in the number of kitchens delivering homely fare – an experience that just does not feel as warm when the food offered is ensconced in plastic, points out Mumbai-based Marina Balakrishnan. Marina helms Oottupura, a home-to-table, vegetarian kitchen offering everything Malayali, from *puttu* to *pazham pori*.

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE?

Sustainable packaging refers to packaging with an environmental footprint that reduces over time. According to Ethicolndia, this can be achieved in three ways:

- 1) Material:** 100% recyclable and/or eco-friendly packaging raw material
- 2) Method of production:** Production processes and supply chains with smaller carbon footprints
- 3) Recyclability:** A circular economy, wherein the life cycle and usefulness of the package is extended

Says Marina, "During lockdown, I had to factor in how long the food travelled and tailor my menus and packaging to suit delivery logistics."

Picking the right packing

She adds, "Kerala cuisine is savoured best on a banana leaf, which I include in my boxes. All containers are bagasse or paper-based. My *pachadis* which use yogurt, are sent out in bottles since a lot of condensate builds up in boxes; it is not a pleasant experience to get a soggy container."

The ability of the material to travel well is another key factor. Shikha Lakhnani, co-founder and COO at Living Food Company, an online marketplace for fresh produce and artisanal cuisine, says, "It all depends on weight, size, moisture content, shape, climate requirement and hygiene metrics. We use areca bowls for our microgreens, and source directly from farmers on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Salem, Hosur, Mysuru and Ramnagar."

Choice of packaging also depends on the food. "Greens are packed better in sal leaves, while more delicate produce like pumpkin flowers are packed in castor leaves, as suggested by our farmer partners," explains Shameek Chakravarty, co-founder of Farmizen, an app that helps Bengaluru's city dwellers with a community-powered alternative food system.

It relies heavily on its farmers to use sustainable agro-based packaging. He points out, "In many cases, natural packaging actually performs better than artificial ones. It lets the produce breathe."

Pootham descends from the sky

Palakkad-based artist Vimal Chandran reimagines characters from Kerala folklore in a sci-fi setting for his new NFT series



A child's perspective (From left) The Revealer of Light and The Visit by Vimal Chandran • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SWETA AKUNDI

It is like a half-remembered dream. A sickle-wielding oracle, a school-going boy, a cluster of areca nut trees and leaping roosters on either side. Artist Vimal Chandran plucks memories from a childhood in Palakkad and places them in a world where extraterrestrial creatures rise from the seas and descend from the skies.

When the pandemic hit last year and Vimal moved from Bengaluru back to his hometown in Kerala, he was reacquainted, after a break of 15 years, with village folklore, myths, temple characters and superstitions he had heard as a child. These vivid visuals creep into his ongoing art series, Folk SciFi.

"I am reimagining characters from our native traditions in a Science Fiction environment. These are unreal stories about real people in real places," he says.

The artworks are 12-second animations, blinking like glitches in the matrix to ominous music. The colours – dreamy and surreal – stay in the spectrum of blues and greys.

In *The Visit*, Vimal tells the story of Pootham, a poltergeist who goes from house to house

looking for a little boy he has become attached to. Performing artistes in Kerala enact this character, visiting homes in villages after the summer harvest, and it is the memory of meeting one such 'Pootham' on a summer evening by the river Nila that Vimal captures.

In his rendition, the Pootham hovers miles above the child, as if broken away from a passing UFO. This perspective – of a large mythical creature gazing down on a child – carries forward in all the works; whether it is the enormous wooden horses of Kuthira Vela or the character of Darika, from the traditional theatrical battle between Darika and Kali. "As a child, these characters would seem scary and fascinating to me at the same time," he says.

Vimal clubs these memories with his interest in sci-fi – something that bloomed thanks to the Russian magazine *Misha* in the 1990s.

Four of the seven artworks have been released and sold so far, as NFTs, on WazirX marketplace. "Stories of these characters have been passed on for generations," says Vimal. "These are 4,000-year-old tales on the blockchain for the first time, and that is interesting because once up there, they will live forever."



A leaping Tequila fish

Artist Keerthana Ramesh's handmade pop-up book features 30 critically endangered species created using papercut art

GOWRI S

A vampire flying frog sticks its tongue out from a labyrinth of what appear to be creepers. Did you know that as tadpoles, this species has 'fangs'? This is also from where they get their name.

But here, the critically endangered frog, web of creepers, and bed of green it perches on, are all made of paper. It is one of the creations from a handmade, pop-up book that dedicates its pages to 30 critically endangered species. On the spine of this colourful book are the words: 'My Friends are Missing'. Once open, the combination of thick and thin-cut pages seamlessly morph into shapes and forms of flora and fauna – some recognisable, while others, not so much.

Made in 30 days by Chennai-based design researcher and paper artist, Keerthana Ramesh, the book invites readers to understand the behaviour of critically endangered species like the marine otter, staghorn coral, Antiguian racer and many more.

It wouldn't be wrong to call this a lockdown project, Keerthana says. It began with a 30-day Instagram art challenge posed by One Million One Month, a non-profit art project to raise awareness about endangered species. "It seemed like a good time to revisit the obsession with pop-ups that I had during my undergraduate years. Moreover, it seemed like the right project to learn more about wilder-



Folds of Nature

(Left) A page featuring kakapo, the world's only flightless parrot; the pop-up book

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ness and Nature," says Keerthana adding, "Another intention was to learn as many mechanisms as possible." The project was completed on June 20.

The style used for this book is called papercut, says the artist, explaining, "It's essentially cutting out small bits of paper using a craft knife."

For this book, she set aside five to seven hours a day, mostly at nights, to finish pages in 30 days, including the research for each species. "I had to figure out how they move, so that I could translate the movement into paper. After making prototypes, I cut out the final forms and assembled them into pop-ups," Keerthana recalls.

But the dearth of informa-

tion on some endangered species posed challenges. "About 50% of the research was very hard to carry out, because many of the animals that are mentioned in the list have not been studied at all. I had very little information to draw from," she says.

She cites an example: the New Caledonian owllet nightjar. "It is a bird found in the island nation of New Caledonia near New Zealand. There are assumptions that the population size of these birds is about 50 and they are nocturnal, but no one knows for sure. The only reason it is believed that they are not extinct is because every 10 to 15 years, there is a spotting."

The fact that these birds are away, intrigued Keerthana. Which is why, when the pop-up page first opens, the bird is visible. But once it falls fully open, a mount closes over the bird.

She is also working on a series of isometric artworks that explore self-identity during isolation, where lacy artwork is created by cutting into a sheet of paper.

View her work on Instagram @keerthanalikestodraw



Ain't no mountain high enough

DEEPA ALEXANDER

'You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains' ... Canadian-Italian Natalie di Luccio's voice soars over the blue-green baize of Nagaland's hills.

Wrapped in traditional Naga colours, Di Luccio, who found fame as 'Bollywood's soprano' sings the popular Nordic-Irish song 'You Raise Me Up' with members of the Phetsukikou Club, Khonoma. By her side, in the video released last week that has garnered over 1.7 lakh views on YouTube, is Naga folk musician and luthier Atso Chasie playing the string instrument he developed, the Gei-Ü (pronounced Jee-uh) – its sound a blend of lilting bagpipes and resonant violins.

"The Gei-Ü has three strings, one for plucking and two for bowing. Made from bamboo and local wood, the sound bounces off the top. I use a store-bought bow. The Gei-Ü has a unique sound which represents our Naga musical heritage but can blend in with contemporary songs too. I had made a Gei-Ü cover video of the gospel song 'Via Dolorosa' that Natalie chanced upon when visiting Kho-

nama. That's how the collaboration happened," says Chasie over a phone call from Kohima, where he lives. "We started filming in 2019 and the pandemic happened. We had to record some parts again and that delayed it further. I have carried this song with me all this time."

The hills are alive

In a place where war, melody and Nature breathe, Chasie has carried the music of his people, the Angami, for longer. Distilled over generations, their music now inhabits his dextrous fingers as he plucks and bows the Gei-Ü. His songs travel over the immodestly green hills as steadily as the monsoon raindrops that rake the earth here. Khonoma, where Chasie was raised, is India's first green village.

Known for its successful conservation projects, Khonoma is around the bend from Kohima, where British, Indians and the Japanese fought a savage, heroic battle during the Second World War. Now, beyond the cordite and crackle of guns that have peppered this anthropological paradise, music has helped hold together a fraying society.

Naga folk musician-luthier Atso Chasie and the Gei-Ü, his string instrument, share centre stage in crossover soprano Natalie Di Luccio's version of 'You Raise Me Up'



Sounds of the East Atso Chasie and Natalie di Luccio in a screenshot from 'You Raise Me Up'; (below) with the Gei-Ü

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"I have been practising music professionally for 15 years now," says Chasie. "It is my passion, honed from a childhood spent listening to songs on tape-recorders and radios. For my first formal music classes I saved coins to pay the fees. Later I attended a short music course at Patkai Christian College, Chümoukedima. Under the guidance of Nibanuo Swuro and Christine Iralu, I completed the Trinity Guildhall ATCL graded exam at Shillong in 2009 and ended up a classical guitarist."

In the years since Chasie has taught the violin and guitar to people across ages, tuned pianos and repaired bikes. But it is as a luthier that he has come into his own.

"I'm currently focussed on the production of the Gei-Ü. I started making one in 2014; it was formally introduced in 2017," says Chasie. "It now takes about three weeks to make one and is a refined version developed from our old instruments – the nraibu and marok kongki. I hope to start making it commercially so that it brings our musicians a step closer to our culture where western influence is at its peak."

Chasie has mirrored the Gei-Ü's unusual sound in two music videos – 'Via Dolorosa' and 'The Grand Bison'. Both are rites of passage to the cultural grandeur of Northeast India. So is 'You Raise Me Up', in which Chasie performs wearing the colours of the Phom tribe "to promote inter-tribal harmony".

The video has stunning visuals of the chorus by young adults of the Phetsukikou Club that preserves Angami cultural songs, games and practices. The phrase 'Ra kemo lhenu zivi' sung by them means "never-fading everlasting beauty" in the Angami language. As it rises above the halo of clouds and settles on listeners worldwide, it is as much a tribute to the beautiful music as it is to the spirit of the Angami people.

Everybody dances to jazz Aditi appears as an anthropomorphic squirrel in *Khamotion's* album art



Life in motion

Aditi Saigal, better known by her stage name DOT, returns to the music scene with her first album *Khamotion*

SWETA AKUNDI

When riding public transport, you are, at once, both in motion and sitting completely still. It is in this dual state that Aditi Saigal (DOT) immerses herself in music, coming up with new song ideas.

In 2017, DOT took the indie music world by surprise with raw recordings of herself, singing ditties on the piano. And now, the 22-year-old is back with her first EP, *Khamotion*.

Comprising songs such as 'Taxi Fare', 'This Train' and 'Sultry Town (Ship's Got No Sail)', the album is dedicated to the concept of motion; the idea came to her on the daily commute to her college campus in Bangor, Wales, UK. It is a contemplation on being forced to stay still and wanting to keep moving. Their release now, after a year in standstill, is appropriate.

"I first wrote these songs as a final year project at Bangor University in 2019, and I thought why not polish them," she says, on a call from Wales.

Khamotion sees DOT enter into what she calls her "new sound": jazzy, occasionally vintage, and added layers of brass – from clarinets and woodwinds to trumpets and saxophones.

DOT wants to retain her organic songwriting approach even while

producing polished songs. "I hate going to the studio with a click track already in mind. I like to slow down, speed up, without keeping time with clicks. To me, that is what jazz is," she says. And that is how it was recorded, with the piano and the drums playing together, in adjacent rooms with the door left slightly ajar.

The album culminates in 'Rush', a series of grooves put together from all the other songs. It is an attempt to break free of the verse-chorus-bridge structures of pop. Yet, songs like 'Taxi Fare' are still reminiscent of the 'Everybody Dances to Techno' days.

The latter was DOT's breakout song as an 18-year-old, who was then just recording songs on her piano and putting them up on YouTube. As the daughter of musician Amit Saigal, founder of *Rock Street Journal*, DOT was no stranger to the music world, but after 'Techno', fame came knocking overnight.

DOT moved to Bangor to study Music and Creative Writing, and then took up a job as a teaching assistant for special needs students.

Her stay in Wales, and its proximity to concerts and open mics in Manchester and Liverpool, also allowed her to collaborate with musicians. "But the main thing I have picked up here is a longing to go back home and continue making music," she says.

Srishti Bakshi walked from Kanyakumari to Srinagar to create awareness about violence on women. The journey and the compelling tales of women she met along the way, are now captured in a documentary titled *WOMB*

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

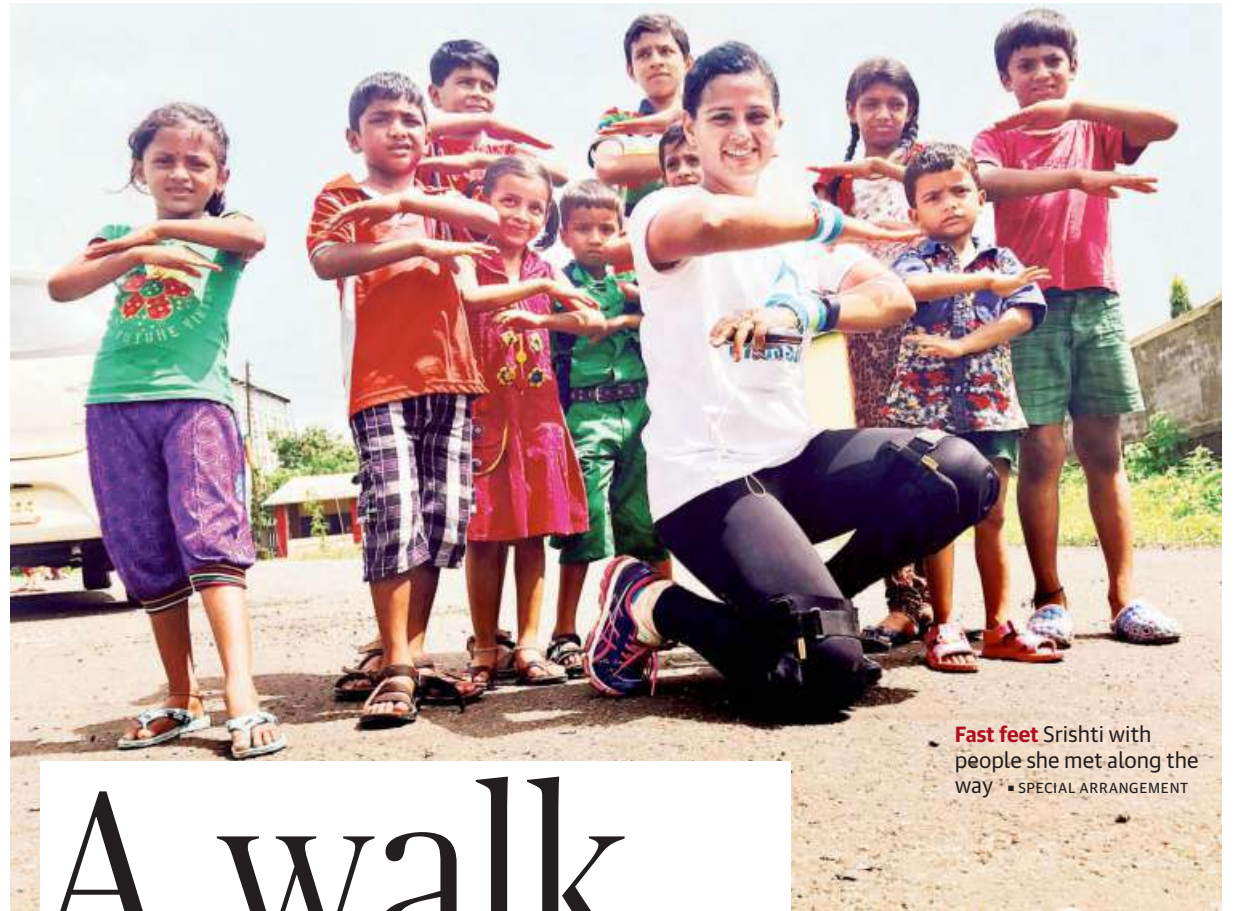
When Srishti Bakshi trained for her arduous walk from Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu) to Srinagar (Kashmir) she knew about the physical challenges it would entail. "But I did not anticipate how difficult it would be as an emotional journey," says Srishti. Everyday she met women from different parts of the country and they broke down as they spoke, narrating tales of abuse and violence inflicted upon them. "And I had to be collected in my response," she adds.

The 230-day walk, spanning 3,800 kilometres was Shristi's way of creating awareness about violence – acid attacks, dowry, rapes, assaults... – on women, and finding a possible solution. The walk and compelling interactions, are now part of a 90-minute-long documentary titled *WOMB - Women Of My Billion*.

"It captures the authentic voice of the Indian woman; what she feels, how she has tackled violence, how she has emerged victorious or even succumbed to it. All her different interactions with the world of violence is what the documentary puts out there," says Srishti. The documentary was showcased at the New York Indian Film Festival last month, followed by the London Indian Film Festival and its sister festivals in Birmingham and Manchester.

Next month, it will be screened at the opening night of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) in Australia. The film is directed by Ajitesh Sharma (who also had the challenging task of condensing 1,000 hours of footage into 90 minutes), produced by Apoorva Bakshi, Emmy-winning producer for *Delhi Crime*, and Juliet Blake also known for *The Hundred Foot Journey*.

A marketing professional with stints across India and Hong Kong, Srishti has always been vocal about women's rights. Every time she read an article about attacks on women, it would anger



Fast feet Srishti with people she met along the way • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A walk remember

her enough to post about it on social media. "It was like a coping mechanism," says Srishti over a call from Edinburgh, United Kingdom, where she now lives. But it was when Srishti read about the Highway 91 rape case in India that she was really shaken and decided to do something about it.

She spoke to friends and acquaintances and realised that it is a me-centric society. "Unless it happens to my family or within my society, we don't wake up and think about the whole race," says Srishti, who is also the founder of Cross Bow Miles, an organisation that empowers women.

The journey

"I prepared for the walk for a year," says Srishti recalling her physical strenuous routine at the gym, where she dived into muscle training and was lifting 100 kilograms. There were days when the training got so intense that she fell ill, but that did not deter her goal. "I was



laser focussed on the walk. This did not even compare to the logistical nightmares. I engaged dad (a retired Lieutenant General from the Indian Army) as Operations Head of the movement. He charted out the route, and together we wrote to over 100 officials including District Collectors, women development boards, IAS and IFS officers.

Srishti walked 30 to 40 kilometres everyday and realised that one can do

only 20% of planning on paper, the remaining 80% happens on ground. She organised workshops, which were attended by 200-300 people everyday, including men and women. People even walked with her a part of the stretch in their villages, towns or districts.

"When we were crossing Madhya Pradesh, in Deval, I heard a 13-year-old girl had recently been gangraped and burnt alive. I visited the house where it happened. I felt demotivated and my team was sad," she says. At that point, she started questioning herself and wondered why she was doing this; what will it change?

The next day, she was joined by the ASHA and Anganwadi workers. One of the women looked like she had been beaten black and blue. It was a case of domestic violence. The woman walked in silence. At the end of that day's walk, she turned to Srishti and narrated what had happened to her. Srishti asked her to join them at the workshop. The woman replied, 'Just by looking at you doing what you are doing, I feel energised. I will push back and put a stop to what is happening with me.'

This incident, Srishti says, made her stop second guessing herself. "I came across horrific stories but also stories of courage. These made me continue my journey."

Hail a cab for the pigeon

This Bengaluru-based pigeon hospital gets its winged patients delivered to the facility via Dunzo, Uber, Ola and other service providers

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

The door to the Audi opens, the seat is readied for the passenger: a pigeon swaddled inside a cardboard box. The injured bird has just been rescued off the street and is quickly being dispatched to the pigeon hospital for medical attention.

"A number of rescuers are particular that the bird travels in comfort and often send them in their luxury cars, or the most-high end option that Uber has," says Vasanthraj Ranka, treasurer of this unique pigeon-only hospital in Rajaji Nagar, Bengaluru.

Launched in 2019, this is a project by Shree Shankheswar Parshwanath Jain KabootarDaana Seva Samithi, an NGO that was started in 1990 by Pukhraj Ranka, Vasanthraj's father. The hospital created a buzz on social media recently when Shishira Suresh of RT Nagar, in Bengaluru, found an injured pigeon by the pavement. When she called the hospital, she was given detailed instructions on how to carefully pack the winged patient in a cardboard box, with ventilation and layers of old clothes for cushioning, before sending them the bird via Dunzo.

As it turns out, the hospital regularly tells callers to send injured birds to them via Dunzo, Ola, Uber, or Swiggy Genie. "Sometimes, in the absence of a cardboard box, a handbag works too," says Shishira,



HOW TO HELP AN INJURED BIRD

Call a bird rescue centre in your city. If you're unsure about picking up the bird and placing it in a box, inform them and they will guide you.

Carefully put it in a cardboard box with a lid or a towel over the top.

You can use a bag if there are no boxes, but ensure that there is ventilation by poking some holes. Also ensure that the bag is closed fully.

Do not force the bird to drink water or eat. Let the rescuers arrive and take care of its recovery.

as she discovered recently while rescuing another bird. "The Dunzo professional who came to pick up my delivery had experience in carrying pigeons. He said he had carried one to the same hospital a while ago," she adds, clearly still fascinated by the whole process.

"This arrangement makes things efficient and we are able to help more birds," says Vasanthraj. Initially, they had a representative who went around town picking up pigeons in need of help. "We get calls from as far as 40 kilometres away and it was not possible for one person to cover such long distances in a day. We

Wings and wheels

At the pigeon hospital in Bengaluru

• K BHAGYA PRAKASH

ended up saving just one or two birds that way. Then we realised that tying up with service providers is a better idea."

Today, the hospital gets anything from 30 to 500 pigeons a week, including the 'out-patients'. "Some of them were getting cut by *manja*, and some were affected by mosquito bites also known as pigeon pox. Sometimes we receive eggs, but we haven't been able to hatch them artificially," Vasanthraj adds.

There are over 250 cages in the facility, where the birds recuperate for two to three weeks, after which, they can take to the skies again.



Sankalp Reddy to helm Vidyut Jammwal's *IB 71*

Hyderabad-based filmmaker Sankalp Reddy, who made his directorial debut with the Hindi-Telugu film *The Ghazi Attack* (2017), will be helming the Vidyut Jammwal-starrer *IB 71*. The Hindi espionage thriller will be Jammwal's first as a producer, and the story written by Aditya Shastri, is inspired by true incidents that unfolded during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. The actor will play an intelligence officer and according to the film's team, "The story recounts the tale of how Indian intelligence officers outwitted the Pakistani establishment and gave the Indian Armed Forces the required advantage they needed to face a two-front war. Not all victories are won on the battlefield." Sankalp's debut film *The Ghazi Attack* won the National Award for the Best Feature Film and was based on true incidents that led to the sinking of the PNS Ghazi submarine during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. He then directed the Telugu space thriller *Antariksham 9000 kmph* and a segment for Netflix's Telugu anthology film *Pitta Kathalu*.

The return of Jalaja

The veteran Malayalam actor makes a comeback as Jameela in *Malik*

SARASWATHY NAGARAJAN

The veteran actor Jalaja recently made a quiet comeback after 26 years in Mahesh Narayanan's magnum opus, *Malik*. As Jameela, the tough mother and school teacher who refuses to condone her son's nefarious activities, Jalaja stands her ground amidst new-gen stars such as Fahadh Faasil and Nimisha Sajayan.

"It was Mahesh who persuaded me to don the greasepaint again. I was not keen to do a character that was more like a prop. But when I read the script, I knew Jameela has an important part. It was not just another 'mother' character. However, I was quite nervous about facing the camera after such a long interval," says Jalaja.

She says that another reason for her second innings was her daughter Devi; she makes her debut in *Malik* as the younger version of Jameela since it is a film spanning two decades. "After completing her post-graduation in International Studies and Economics from Wharton Business School, Devi decided she wanted to act. Mahesh offered her the part and though it is not a significant character, I thought it would be a good break for her," she says.

The face of parallel cinema during her heyday in the late '70s and '80s, Jalaja made a mark in mainstream cinema as well. After working with legendary actors and directors, she left tinsel town to be a homemaker in Bahrain. Earlier, she says there wasn't a wall between actors and technicians. "We used to spend time together and there was no star system on the set. For women, changing costumes or finding a washroom used to be tough, especially when we were shooting in remote locations. We had to depend on the goodwill of people or travel all the way back to our hotels," she recalls.

The veteran actor asserts that she is happy that women are asking for and getting the space they deserve – both inside and outside of cinema. She says she is not in a hurry to take on projects and would rather wait for the right one. "I hope the Malayalam industry starts writing scripts for senior actors too," she concludes.



Past talk Jalaja in a still from *Malik* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13422

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■ **Across**

- Madly (in love)? (4,4,5)
- Wet soft earth (3)
- East Midlands city, home of the National Space Centre (9)
- Go faster! (4,2,2)
- Let out (4)
- Mollycoddle (6)
- Cheats (anag) – small porous bag (6)
- Communal bedroom (abbr) (4)
- Toys made of cloth, stuffed and painted (3,5)
- Gilbert and Sullivan operetta (3,6)
- Perceive (3)
- She was Duchess of Windsor, 1937-1986 (6,7)

■ **Down**

- Songs of praise (5)
- Poet who wrote *To His Coy Mistress* (6,7)
- Witness (8)
- Magical potion (6)
- Gardening tools (4)
- Issue or accept a challenge – lent tee shirts (anag) (5,3,5)
- Snake – old wind instrument (7)
- Officers' mess on a warship (8)
- North Cornish resort with an annual 'Obby' Oss festival (7)
- Pester persistently (6)
- Back of a boat (5)
- Someone from New Zealand? (4)

Solution will appear in *MetroPlus* dated July 29, 2021

Solution No. 13422

N	E	W	F	O	U	N	D	L	A	N	D
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To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

U.K. wants new trade deal for N. Ireland

European Union rebuffs Britain's demand for renegotiation on post-Brexit trading arrangements

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON
Britain demanded on Wednesday that the European Union renegotiate post-Brexit trading arrangements for Northern Ireland after rioting and business disruption hit the province, but the EU immediately rejected the offer.

London stopped short of suspending the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol — introduced at the start of the year, and which requires checks on goods arriving from mainland Britain — and instead called for “significant changes”.

It wants the European Union to indefinitely abandon ad-hoc grace periods for certain border checks and freeze legal action launched against the U.K. for non-compliance, as part of a “stand-

still period” allowing for fresh negotiations.

Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis said while Britain had negotiated the protocol “in good faith”, its real-world application by the bloc had entailed “considerable and continuing burdens”.

“Put simply, we cannot go on as we are,” he told U.K. lawmakers.

“We urge the EU to look at it with fresh eyes and work with us to seize this opportunity and put our relations on a better footing.”

‘Creative solutions’

But within hours, the EU — which has long insisted that it is up to London to implement what it agreed in their drawn-out Brexit divorce — had ruled out any renegotiation.



Smooth passage: A file photo of a truck near the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. ■ AFP

“We are ready to continue to a renegotiation of the Protocol.”

The protocol was painstakingly negotiated to avoid a hard border with Ireland, by effectively keeping Northern Ireland in the EU’s single market.

Northern Ireland, which

suffered three decades of sectarian conflict until a peace agreement in 1998, has been rocked by violence this year, in part against the protocol. Many pro-U.K. unionists see it as creating a de facto border in the Irish Sea with mainland Britain and say they feel betrayed.

U.K. proposals

In its proposals, Britain urged the EU to stop broad checks and focus more squarely on goods “genuinely” at risk of entering its single market via Northern Ireland. The government insisted for all other goods, a light touch was needed to preserve Northern Ireland’s integral status as part of the U.K. It also wants the removal of any oversight role by the European Court of Justice.

Climate cooperation depends on overall ties, China tells U.S.

Kerry asks Beijing to step up its efforts to reduce emissions

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China said on Wednesday its cooperation with the United States on climate change will depend on the overall state of relations between the two countries, warning the Joe Biden administration, which has placed special emphasis on tackling climate change, that working together on this issue may extract a price.

“As the largest developing country and the largest developed country in the world, China and the United States share common interests in addressing climate change,” Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

“We should step up communication and coordination, and play an exemplary role in the international community. That said, I want to stress that China-U.S. cooperation in specific areas is closely related to the overall China-U.S. relationship. The U.S. should not, on the one hand, wantonly interfere in China’s internal affairs and harm China’s interests, while on the other hand, ask China to show understanding and support in bilateral and global affairs.”

‘Not sufficient’

His comments followed a call from the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Cli-



Smoke and steam rising from an unauthorised steel factory. ■ GETTY IMAGES

mate, John Kerry, for China to do more. He said Beijing’s commitment to peak emissions by 2030 was not sufficient to ensure a 1.5 degree Celsius global warming target.

“If China sticks with its current plan and does not peak its emissions until 2030, then the entire rest of the world must go to zero by 2040 or even 2035,” he said. “There is simply no alternative because without sufficient reduction by China, the goal of 1.5C is essentially impossible.”

Mr. Zhao pointed out, regarding China’s efforts, that the country’s national carbon trading market had recently begun trading and carbon emissions by companies in the first batch were “estimated to exceed 4 billion tonnes per year, making the market the world’s largest in terms of the amount

of greenhouse gas emissions”.

“China will strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060,” he said. “China will make the stride from carbon peaking to carbon neutrality within a far shorter period than developed countries. This is a major strategic decision made by China... In addressing climate change and successfully achieving emission reduction, China expects the U.S. to match its words with deeds, earnestly fulfil its due obligations and make its due contributions.”

U.S. diplomat visit

This is expected to be one of the many issues on the agenda later this week when Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman travels to China on July 25 and meets Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi. The State Department announced in a statement on Wednesday that “these discussions are part of ongoing U.S. efforts to hold candid exchanges with PRC officials to advance U.S. interests and values and to responsibly manage the relationship”.

“The Deputy Secretary will discuss areas where we have serious concerns about PRC actions, as well as areas where our interests align,” the statement said.

Taliban in ‘defence status’ during Id holiday

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE KABUL

The Taliban said on Wednesday they would fight only to defend themselves over the holiday of Id-ul-Azha, but stopped short of declaring a formal ceasefire.

The militants are waging sweeping offensives across Afghanistan, snapping up territory, seizing border crossings and encircling cities, with the withdrawal of foreign troops all but com-

plete. “I can confirm we are in defence status during Id,” a spokesman for the Taliban said, without offering further details.

Pause in fighting

Id-ul-Azha is one of the biggest festivals on the Muslim calendar. In Afghanistan, celebrations started this Monday and will run to the end of Friday. For past Islamic holidays, the militants have declared a pause in fighting

with government forces, offering a brief respite to Afghans who can visit family in relative safety. But the group has been criticised for using ceasefires to reinforce their positions and resupply fighters, allowing them to attack Afghan security forces once the truce expires.

The Taliban comment comes a day after President Ashraf Ghani said in a speech that the Taliban had proved “they have no will and inten-

tion for peace”, with negotiations between the two warring sides achieving little.

Minutes before his address, at least three rockets landed near the presidential palace where Mr. Ghani held outdoor prayers with top officials to mark the start of Id. The attack was claimed by the Islamic State group. While ideologically different, the much smaller IS has been accused in the past of acting as a proxy for the Taliban.

More than a dozen diplomatic missions in Kabul this week called for “an urgent end” to the Taliban’s current offensive, saying it was at odds with claims they want to secure a political deal to end the conflict. That statement followed another round of inconclusive talks in Doha over the weekend between the two sides, that many had hoped would kickstart the ailing peace process.

France launches vaccine pass as fourth wave hits

It is must at events with over 50 people

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

French cinemas, museums and sports venues began asking visitors on Wednesday to furnish proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a negative test as the country, which is in the throes of a fourth wave of infections, rolled out a controversial vaccine passport system.

The so-called “health pass” is required for all events or places with more

than 50 people before being extended to restaurants, cafes and shopping centres in August.

Prime Minister Jean Castex defended the policy, noting that nearly all new infections were in people who had not been immunised. He added that the goal of the pass was to avoid another lockdown. The number of new cases shot up to 21,000 on Wednesday, the highest since early May.

25 killed, dams damaged in record flooding in central China

Zhengzhou receives 87% of annual precipitation in 24 hours; troops deployed to fortify embankments, divert reservoir water



Passengers stuck in a submerged subway car. ■ AFP

ANANTH KRISHNAN

At least 25 people were reported killed and tens of thousands relocated after record flooding in central China caused extensive damage, including to dams that officials fear are on the verge of bursting.

Chinese social media on Wednesday circulated horrifying images of flooding in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province, including commuters stuck on

flooded subway carriages unable to get out as water levels rose.

At least 12 of those killed were reported to have died because of water flooding the city’s subway system as commuters were heading home.

Authorities said on Wednesday evening that the toll had risen to 25, with seven missing. That number is feared to increase in coming days as reports come in from elsewhere in the province

and with further rainfall forecast. Officials said 1.24 million people had been affected and 1,64,710 people had to be relocated.

The flooding followed an extraordinary period of rainfall. Zhengzhou “picked up an incredible 21.75 inches (552.5 mm) of rain over the 24-hour period ending Tuesday. That’s 87% of their average annual precipitation in 24 hours. It’s also equal to their average 7-month total from April-October,” meteorologist Jonathan Erdman said on Twitter.

Mr. Xi has ordered the Army to be deployed. The Central Theatre Command of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) “sent more than 5,700 soldiers, armed police troops and militias”, the State media reported, to fortify embankments and divert waters to relieve pressure on dams. The rains have led to water exceeding flood season levels in nine large reservoirs and 40 medium-sized ones in Henan, official media reported.

Pressure on dams

The biggest concern on Wednesday revolved around damages to several dams in the region. President Xi Jinping said the rainfall “made the flood control situation very severe, causing severe waterlogging in Zhengzhou and other cities, water levels in some rivers exceeding alarm levels, and damages to dams of some reservoirs”.

ELSEWHERE



Pakistan blocks TikTok for fourth time

ISLAMABAD
The popular TikTok video-sharing app was blocked on Wednesday in Pakistan for a fourth time because of “inappropriate content”, the country’s telecommunication regulator said. The Chinese-owned site has fought a series of legal battles with religious activists and authorities in the conservative Muslim nation, and was shut down for two days earlier this month on the order of a provincial court. ■ AFP

Russia supplying military equipment to Myanmar

REUTERS MOSCOW

Russia is cooperating closely with Myanmar to supply military hardware, including aircraft, the Interfax news agency cited Alexander Mikheev, the head of Russian state arms trader Rosoboronexport, as saying on Wednesday.

Rights activists have accused Moscow of legitimising Myanmar’s junta, which seized power in a February 1 coup, by continuing bilateral visits and arms deals.

Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told Myanmar’s junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing during his visit to the Rus-

sian capital last month that Moscow was committed to strengthening military ties.

Speaking on the sidelines of Russia’s annual MAKRS air show, which President Vladimir Putin attended on Tuesday, Mr. Mikheev said Myanmar is one of Rosoboronexport’s key customers in south east Asia and a key partner of Rostec, Russia’s state aerospace and defence conglomerate. Ties between the two countries have grown in recent years, with Moscow providing training and university scholarships to thousands of soldiers, as well as selling arms to a military blacklisted by several Western countries.

UNESCO strips Liverpool of its world heritage status

REUTERS LONDON

The English city of Liverpool has been removed from UNESCO’s list of world heritage sites after the United Nations’ cultural agency found new buildings, including a football stadium, undermined the attractiveness of its Victorian docks.

Liverpool was named a World Heritage Site in 2004, joining cultural landmarks such as the Great Wall of China and the Taj Mahal.

After a vote in China by members of its World Heritage Committee, UNESCO said on Twitter that Liverpool should be removed from the international cultural organisation’s list.



A view of Liverpool’s Albert Dock. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Joanne Anderson, the Liverpool Mayor, said the decision was “incomprehensible”. The only other sites stripped previously of the title are a wildlife sanctuary in Oman in 2007 after poaching and habitat loss, and the Dresden Elbe Valley in Germany in 2009 when a four-lane motorway bridge was built over the river.

HK channel restricts staff on Taiwan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE HONG KONG

Hong Kong’s public broadcaster has banned staff from calling Taiwan’s leader “President” or referring to its “government” in new guidelines that mimic mainland China’s rhetoric.

In a memo sent to all staff on Tuesday, the management of RTHK news channel said: “Inappropriate terminology such as ‘country’, ‘Republic of China’, ‘ROC’... must not be used when referring to Taiwan.”

Under no circumstances should Taiwan be referred to as a sovereign state or perceived as one, it added.

Request for application to fill the Project Management Unit (PMU) positions of Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project
Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSDP), Department of Technical Education, Skill Development & Employment, Government of Madhya Pradesh
Date: 16.07.2021
Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSDP) is an Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported program, to reinforce efforts by the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) to modernize and reform the state’s technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system so that its workforce can be equipped with the skills required by the growing development needs of the state.
The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSDP), invites eligible individuals to submit their application for the positions as below
Positions
1. Support Consultant-MIS - 01
2. Support Consultant Finance - 01
Interested individuals may submit their application online at ADB Consulting Services Recruitment Notice (CSRN) website <http://csrn.adb.org> in accordance with the instructions contained therein in the CSRN. All other form of submissions including hard copy will not be considered for evaluation. MP Government employees who are interested in joining the project may send application to mpsdpsd@madhya.gov.in for advertised post. The project details and Terms of Reference for the positions are available on the CSRN. The deadline for the submission of application is 16.08.2021.
Project Director,
Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSDP)
G-14747/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT
CHENNAI KANYAKUMARI INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR PROJECT
TENDER NOTICE NO. NCB/CKICP/PPP-SH58-II/IPDP/02, Dated 22.7.2021
1. The Superintending Engineer (H), PIU / Kancheepuram Circle, CKICP for and on behalf of Governor of State of Tamil Nadu invites bids online for Implementation of IPDP.
2. The bid document and all other information will be available online in the website, www.tntenders.gov.in from 26.07.2021 at 16.00 hours (IST).
Superintending Engineer (H),
PIU / Kancheepuram Circle, CKICP
Guindy, Chennai - 600 025.
Telephone No.: 044-22350610 Email : sepiuckicp@gmail.com /
Website : www.ckicp.tnhighways.gov.in
Superintending Engineer (H),
PIU / Kancheepuram Circle, CKICP.
DIPR/2193/TENDER/2021

TAMILNADU MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.
417, Pantheon Road, Egmore, Ch-8. Phone : 28191890 / 28190259 | E-Mail: equipment.tnmsc@tn.gov.in
1. The Government of Tamil Nadu has received a Loan (Loan No. ID-P251) from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) towards the cost of Tamil Nadu Urban Healthcare Project and it is intended that part of the proceeds will be applied to eligible payments under the contracts for which this Invitation for Bids is issued. 2. The General Manager (Equipment), TNMSC Ltd. now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for supply of the following goods:
S. No. Equipment and Quantity with nos. in bracket (Method of procurement) ICB/LCB No. Docu-ment cost Pre-bid Meeting Submission of bid Opening of bid
1 PKG16(R)/ICB/TNUHP/JICA/C2/CAR-IV/TNMSC/ENG/2021, dt. 19.07.2021 5,725/- 23.07.2021 to 06.09.2021 13.08.2021 11.00 AM 07.09.2021 11.00 AM 07.09.2021 12.00PM
2 PPN Set - 5 Nos. (Local Competitive Bidding) PKG35(R)/LCB/TNUHP/TNMSC/ENG/2021, dt. 19.07.2021 2,290/- 23.07.2021 to 09.09.2021 30.07.2021 11.00 AM 10.08.2021 11.00 AM 10.08.2021 12.00PM
3. For details visit www.tenders.in.gov.in and TNMSC website www.tnmsc.com. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in Indian rupees as specified in section VII - Schedule of requirements in the bid document and must be delivered to the above Office at the date and time indicated above. DIPR/2183/Tender/2021 General Manager (Equipment)

Government of Tamil Nadu
Highways Department
Trichy (H) NABARD and Rural Roads, Circle
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No. 06/2021-22/SDO Dated: 20.7.2021.
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu percentage tender (Two Cover System) will be received by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Circle Trichy for Upgradation of Koodakovil - T.Kokkulam Road Km.0/0-3/500 Under Upgradation of Panchayat / Panchayat Union Roads scheme in respect of Madurai (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Division upto 14.00 hours on 25.8.2021 through online only.
Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 30.7.2021 onwards in the Government website <http://tntenders.gov.in> If any changes / Corrections etc in the tender, it will be published on the above website only.
Superintending Engineer (H),
NABARD and Rural Roads Circle, Trichy.
DIPR/2180/Tender/2021

Government of India Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) NIOT Campus, Velachery-Tambaram Main Road, Pallikarandai, Chennai-600100 RECRUITMENT NOTICE
Advertisement No. MoES/NCCR/Recr.PS/31/2021
National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), Chennai, an attached office of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), established in 1996, has been implementing various projects in coastal research to provide systematic information, solutions and services for effective management of coastal areas.
Applications are invited for filling up of temporary project positions for various programs such as Coastal Process and Hazards, Marine Pollution and Marine Life, Ecosystem and Critical Habitats, and Marine Spatial Planning. The posts are purely on temporary and on contract basis, initially for a period of 1 year and may likely to be extended, based on the performance review and based on the project requirements.
The details of project posts, number of vacancies and emoluments are given below:

Post Name	No. of Vacancies	Monthly Emolument
Project Scientist-III	3	Rs. 78,000/- + HRA
Project Scientist-II	35	Rs. 67,000/- + HRA
Project Scientist-I	29	Rs. 56,000/- + HRA
Senior Research Fellow	4	Rs. 35,000/- + HRA
Technical Assistant	1	Rs. 20,000/- + HRA
Field Assistant	9	Rs. 20,000/- + HRA

More details of posts, qualifications, experience and nature of work along with link for ONLINE Application Form are available on NCCR website page: <https://www.nccr.gov.in/NCCR2021/nccrct.htm>
Online registration commencement date : 24-07-2021, 5-00 p.m.
Last date for submission of online applications : 20-08-2021, 5-00 p.m.
Last date for receipt of applications (hardcopy) at NCCR : 27-08-2021, 5-00 p.m.
Date: 20-07-2021
HEAD OF OFFICE

TAMIL NADU CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION
HEAD OFFICE
12, THAMBUSWAMY ROAD, KILPAUK, CHENNAI - 600 010.
AMENDMENT
Due to administrative reasons, the following amendment is issued for the tender notification published for the Supply, Erection, Commissioning and Testing of one 5 MT/Hour of Rice capacity Colour Sorter machine each on turnkey basis in three MRMs of TNCS, Tamil Nadu under DIPR reference No. DIPR/2156/Tender/2021, tender reference No. ME/016381/2020 on 20.07.2021.

Sl.No.	For	Read
-	Tender Reference No. ME/016381/2020	Short e-Tender Reference No. ME/016381/2020 Short e-Tender No. TNCS/21-22/ET-12
-	Sealed Tenders are invited from Reputed Manufacturers/Authorised Manufacturer's dealer for the Supply, Erection, Commissioning and Testing of one 5 MT/Hour of Rice capacity Colour Sorter each on turnkey basis at three Modern Rice Mills of Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, Tamil Nadu.	Authorised Manufacturer's dealer for the Supply, Erection, Commissioning and Testing of one 5 MT/Hour of Rice capacity Colour Sorter each on turnkey basis at three Modern Rice Mills of Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, Tamil Nadu.
-	-	Complete e-tender document can be viewed and downloaded through https://www.mstcecommerce.com/eproc/home/tnpsc and also available in www.tenders.tn.gov.in . The bidders have to participate in online bidding only with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III For Registration and further details contact MSTC Limited, Phone : 25222842/25251910/25261005 e-Mail : mstcsaro@mstcindia.co.in
3	Last date and time for receiving/ opening of tender documents : 28.07.2021, 3.30 PM	Closing : 29.07.2021, 3.00 PM
-	The tender documents can be downloaded from www.tnpsc.tn.gov.in/ or www.tenders.tn.gov.in/ at free of cost till 12.00 PM on 28.07.2021.	The e-tender documents can be downloaded from https://www.mstcecommerce.com/eproc/home/tnpsc/ or www.tenders.tn.gov.in/ at free of cost till 12.00 PM on 29.07.2021.

DIPR/2192/TENDER/2021
Managing Director

INTERVIEW | K.N. BALAGOPAL

Spirit of cooperative federalism is essential for GST to succeed

Our expenditure is increasing because of COVID and special schemes to help people, while income has stagnated; without increased borrowings no State can survive

VARGHESE K. GEORGE
VIKAS DHOOT

With States' finances in the doldrums after the second COVID-19 wave, Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal has urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow States to borrow up to 5% of their Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) this year, without any reform conditions. The GST regime needs urgent fixing as revenues are declining and the structure and functioning of the GST Council needs more democratisation, he said. Excerpts:

The Centre recently released ₹75,000 crore of GST dues, of which over ₹4,100 crore was to Kerala. Will this alter your borrowing plans?

I personally met the Union Finance Minister that day when they released around ₹4,200 crore to us. Even though it is belated, it is good. Due to the financial crisis in the State due to the second COVID wave, whatever money we are getting from these means are not enough for facing our requirements.

Actually, the financial situation for the last five years has been stagnant, not only for Kerala but other States also. The annual borrowing limit this year has been fixed at 4% of GSDP, but only 0.5% of this is untied. An equal amount is permitted for achieving certain levels of capital expenditure and, separately, for undertaking electricity reforms. We are now discussing the latter but it's difficult to meet all these formalities. So we have urged the Finance Minister to allow

States to borrow up to 5% of GSDP, without any conditions, but they have not accepted that. So our options are limited in this scenario.

Our expenditure is increasing because of COVID expenses and special schemes introduced to help people and income has stagnated for the last few years. Without increased borrowings no State can survive, at least in the present situation.

Last year's compensation dues are still pending and the FM had promised a GST council meet to discuss all compensation related issues. What is your stand?

The compensation issue is a serious one. We have already asked for States' protected revenue under GST to be extended for another five years, because there's actual-



GST regime is showing some systemic failure. Our average income as a percentage of sales has fallen from 16% four years back to 11%

ly a very serious fall in income since GST's inception. There's a systemic failure; the COVID situation and, for Kerala, floods and other natural disasters have also hit income. Almost all States are seeing a decline in income. So, the compensation should continue for another five years. The GST regime is showing some systemic failure as the income is not go-

ing up. Our average income as a percentage of sales has fallen from 16% four years back, to only 11%... prices haven't fallen for the consumer. This means that if we are getting ₹50,000 crore tax now, it would have been another ₹18,000 crore in the earlier kind of taxation system and [if] buoyancy had continued.

There will be a very se-

rious discussion about the future of compensation and on the taxation policy to see if some more plugging is needed and actual taxes [need to] go up. Moreover, the devolution theory of the Central government would also have to be discussed, separately.

Could you explain this a bit?

Up to the last Finance Commission, we were getting 2.45% from the divisible pool of taxes. Now, we are getting only 1.92%. In the 1980s, our share was 3.92% so that is the fall now. That means we are not getting our rightful part from the central pool. Earlier, the 1971 population was the base, now it is 2011. Because of our development in education, health... we have some improvement and feel we are being penalised for that.

The Tamil Nadu FM has raised concerns about the constitution and functioning of the GST Council. What is your view?

The predominance of the Central government in the GST Council's functioning was expected... Even the AIADMK was very strongly against it. The Central government is getting maximum control in the administration of the Council, and if they're managing some States [to back them], nobody can change that decision. So, the prerogative of the Central government will succeed. Now, fortunately other parties are understanding or accepting the points which we raised. The GST experiment will not be successful. Brexit happened because Britain wanted to go out of the European Union taxation

and migration laws that it felt will not be helpful. United States, which is considered business-friendly, does not have this kind of a tax system. Our counterpart from Tamil Nadu may be speaking from his experience... This is an important debate for the States and more democratisation in the true spirit of cooperative federalism should be there in the GST Council's functioning.

In the last meeting, the Centre said it has the power to tax extra-neutral alcohol... There's a provision in the constitution that ethanol for human consumption is under States. But they are saying that ENA is not for human consumption, so central GST will be charged. In the Council, there was a very strong protest from almost all States, whether it was BJP [ruled] or Congress [ruled].

'Collection ratios in securitised pools see dip'

'Commercial vehicle, MSME classes hit'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Ratings agency Crisil Ratings on Wednesday said collection ratios in securitised pools had seen a dip during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agency said unlike in the first wave, the decline in the second wave had not been as sharp for two reasons - localised restrictions limited the impact on business activity, and lack of moratorium meant that borrowers could not postpone their debt repayments.

Securitisation is the process of pooling and repack-

aging of homogenous illiquid financial assets into marketable securities that can be sold to investors.

Crisil said in a report that while commercial vehicle loans saw a dip in median collection ratios of almost 11 percentage points in May, it expected collections to improve in line with the recovery expected in economic activity.

Median collection ratios for pools comprising micro, small and medium enterprises and microfinance fell 12 percentage points and 6 percentage points, respectively, the agency said.

IBBI amends insolvency rules to help improve transparency

Seeks to probe corporate debtor's 'avoidance' transactions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Seeking to enhance transparency in the insolvency process, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations.

The IBBI said in a release on Wednesday that the amendments were aimed at enhancing "the discipline, transparency, and accountability in corporate insolvency proceedings".

The resolution professional has to intimate details of his opinion via Form CIRP 8

A resolution professional was duty-bound to find out if a corporate debtor (CD) had been subject to avoidance transactions, namely, preferential transactions, undervalued transactions, extortionate credit transactions, fraudulent trading and wrongful trading, and file applications with the adjudicating authority seeking ap-

propriate relief. This not only claws back the value lost in such transactions increasing the possibility of reorganisation of the CD through a resolution plan, but also disincentivises such transactions preventing stress to the CD, the IBBI said.

"For effective monitoring, the amendment requires the RP to file Form CIRP 8 on the electronic platform of the Board, intimating details of his opinion and determination in respect of avoidance transactions," the board said in the release.

Byju's buys U.S.-based Epic for \$500 million

Enters kids digital reading space

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Online learning platform Byju's has acquired Palo Alto-based Epic, a digital reading platform for kids aged 12 and under, for \$500 million, said the company on Wednesday.

The acquisition would help Byju's expand its U.S. footprint by providing access to two million teachers and 50 million children in Epic's global user base.

Interactive reading "This partnership will enable us to create engaging and interactive reading and



learning experiences for children globally," said Byju Raveendran, founder and CEO, Byju's.

"Together with Epic, we have the opportunity to create impactful experiences for children to become life-long learners."

'Videocon lenders to lose only up to 55%'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Lenders to Videocon will eventually take 50-55% haircut and not 95% after considering about ₹15,000 crore expected from the sale of the group's overseas oil and gas assets, said ex-CFO Rajneesh Gupta

"There is a haircut but it is not 95%, it is around 50-55%. Despite the claim of oil and gas being included in the said amount, the said investment of VIL in oil and gas assets, worth about ₹15,000 crore, is not forming part of the acquisition by Vedanta Group," said Mr. Gupta.

IN BRIEF



Hexaware Tech deal may net Baring almost \$3 bn

HONG KONG
Baring Private Equity Asia has shortlisted bidders including Bain Capital and French company Teleperformance SE for its India portfolio firm Hexaware Technologies in a deal that could fetch almost \$3 billion, sources said. REUTERS

Glenmark IPO to hit market on July 27

MUMBAI
Glenmark Life Sciences Ltd. said its initial public offering (IPO) will open on July 27. The price band is ₹695-₹720 apiece. The offer comprises fresh issue of ₹1,060 crore and an offer for sale of up to 63 lakh shares by Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Bharti, Intel to collaborate for 5G in India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Wednesday announced a collaboration with Intel for 5G network development by leveraging virtualised radio access network (vRAN) and open radio access network (O-RAN) technologies.

"The collaboration is a part of Airtel's 5G roadmap for India as it transforms its networks to allow its customers to reap the full possibilities of the hyperconnected world where Industry 4.0 to cloud gaming and virtual/augmented reality become an everyday experience," Bharti Airtel said in a statement.

The company said it will deploy Intel's latest third generation Xeon Scalable processors, field programmable gate array and eASICs, and Ethernet 800 series across its network.

'TII aims to bring CG Power back on track'

There is room for value creation: MD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Tube Investments of India Ltd. (TII), a ₹38,100-crore Murugappa Group company, said its priority is to bring the recently acquired CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd. back on track with its post-merger integration model.

"We strongly believe that there is a fair amount of value creation opportunity by improving profitability and increasing the company's growth trajectory," MD Vellayan Subbiah said in the annual report.

He said the rationale for the acquisition of CG Power was not only to drive inorganic growth, but also to de-risk it from the auto business and its cyclicality. This is in alignment with TII's core strategy to be a leading industrial player in the



Vellayan Subbiah

country, he pointed out.

"We strongly believe, our line of prudent financial management, coupled with strong and transparent corporate governance standards, will benefit CG Power in the long-term," he said.

The acquisition was a major step-up in size, scale and scope for TII, accelerating the company's forward bound growth strategies for redefining the future, said chairman M.A.M. Arunachalam.

Order book to help HCL Tech tide over third wave, says MD

'Firm should be fine as deals booked are under execution'

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

While the anticipated third wave may have some impact on business, HCL Technologies is confident of registering double-digit growth in the current financial year on the back of a strong deal pipeline and hiring momentum, said C. Vijayakumar, CEO and managing director, HCL Technologies.

"I know wave three [of the pandemic] could have some implications, but for the deals which are already booked, they are under execution, I do think we should be fine," he said, replying to a query on the impact on business due to the anticipated third wave across markets such as Europe, the U.S. as



C. Vijayakumar

well as India. Mr. Vijayakumar said the IT services firm had seen 'good' bookings in the last two quarters and 'a lot of these' were under execution. He said HCL Tech had significantly ramped up hiring as well, with the addition of 7,500 people in April-June and about 9,000 in January-March.

"Overall booking momentum is very strong, our pipeline is strong, our hiring is strong. So we are looking at good quarters ahead," he added. The strong deal pipeline was being driven by a rise in digitisation, cloud migration, Industry 4.0, cybersecurity and overall cost optimisation, he said.

On employees coming back to the office post vaccination, he said the work-from-home model would continue for about half of HCL Tech's employees. "There will be some kind of system... where they come to office on certain days and work from home on other days. I think the hybrid model will be sustainable in the long run," the MD added.

Shanthi Gears back in black, nets ₹8.58 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Shanthi Gears Ltd. (SGL), a Murugappa group firm, has returned to the black with a standalone net profit of ₹8.58 crore for the first quarter, compared with a loss of ₹3.58 crore.

Revenue from operations more than doubled to ₹67 crore, despite disruptions in operations due to the second wave of the pandemic. SGL booked orders for ₹84 crore and the pending order book stood at ₹235 crore against ₹164 crore. The State government had enforced a total lockdown from May 10.

Consequently, there was a disruption in operations due to shortage of manpower and non-receipt of raw materials during the period, SGL said in a filing.


SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS FROM THE HINDU GROUP

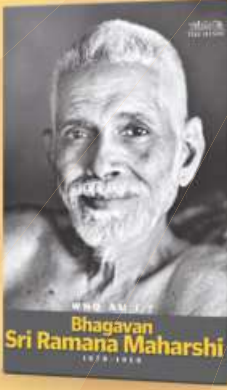

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Sailors primed for their best in uncharted waters

Having already scripted history, Nethra, Vishnu and Varun-Ganapathy are striving to make it a memorable Games

TOKYO OLYMPICS
K. KEERTHIVASAN

For the first time in the history of Indian sailing at the Olympics, four sailors have qualified in three categories: laser radial (women), laser standard (men) and 49er (men). The four competitors – Nethra Kumanan (radial), Vishnu Saravanan (standard), and the pair of Varun Thakkar and K.C. Ganapathy (49er) – booked their Olympic spots at the Mussanah Open championships in Oman in April.

Sufficient practice
All of them have had sufficient practice at their respective training bases in Spain (Nethra), Malta (Vishnu) and Portugal

(Varun-Ganapathy). The 23-year-old Nethra, ranked a career-best No. 54, will definitely have it tough in Tokyo. There are some wonderful sailors in the radial class. Leading the list of favourites is the Netherlands' Marit Bouwmeester, who won gold at Rio 2016 and silver at London 2012. World No. 1 Emma Plasschaert (Belgium) and the silver and bronze medalists at Rio, Annalise Murphy (Ireland) and Anne-Marie Rindom (Denmark), will fancy their chances as well.

Realistic expectations
Nethra will be realistic about her expectations. As her coach Tamas Eszes said in April, "We expect her to finish in the top 20 [among 44 competitors] at Tokyo."

SAILING

Vishnu, too, is a fighter, as was evident from the manner in which he raced the final round of the Asian Olympic qualifier in Oman, winning it to finish second overall. The standard fleet includes reigning world champion Philipp Buhl (Germany) and the silver and bronze medalists at Rio, Tonci Stipanovic (Croatia) and Sam Meech (New Zealand). Add to that the world's top two sailors, Charles Buckingham (USA) and Juan Ignacio Maegli (Guatemala). Australia's Matthew Wearn, who has won medals in three consecutive world championships, is another attraction. The return of 48-year-old

Brazilian Robert Scheidt, a veteran of five Olympic medals (including two gold), will be watched with interest. In a competitive 35-boat field, Vishnu, ranked No. 43, will want to do everything in his control to make it a memorable Games. **Top stars**
The 49er will have a galaxy of top stars, including Rio gold medalists Peter Burling and Blair Tuke (New Zealand), the World No. 1 duo of Bart Lambriex and Pim Van Vugt (the Netherlands) and the pair of Erik Heil and Thomas Ploessel (Germany), who finished third in Rio. Ranked 73 in the world, the Varun-Ganapathy duo, bronze medalists at the 2018 Asian Games, will hope to finish in the top 10.



Ahoy! The Indian sailors will be eager to cause a flutter at the Games. •TWITTER/SAIMEDIA

Navigating headwinds since Munich

K. KEERTHIVASAN
India sent nine male sailors to six editions pre-Tokyo, but – unlike the four who have qualified for the 2020 Olympics – they made it to their respective Games through quotas. Indian sailing made its debut in Munich 1972, with Soli Contractor and A.A. Basith finishing 29th in the Flying Dutchman class. Farokh Tarapore and Dhruv Bhandari finished 17th in the 470 class at Los Angeles 1984. Tarapore then paired with Kelly Rao at Seoul 1988 to place 17th again in the 470 section. Tarapore made his third successive Games appearance at Barcelona 1992, partnering Cyrus Cama. The pair finished 23rd. Malav Shroff and Sumeet Patel represented India at Athens 2004 in the 49er class with a 19th-place showing. At Beijing 2008, Nachatar Singh Johal finished 23rd in the Finn class.

Action begins at the Games

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO
The Tokyo Olympics sports programme finally opened after a year's pandemic delay with softball in Fukushima.

Japan thrashed Australia 8-1 in the first action of the 2020 Games. Although no fans were present for the softball event in Fukushima, one unexpected spectator was spotted before the game: a bear, which appeared late on Tuesday and early on Wednesday. "We couldn't find or capture the bear, and while there won't be any spectators at the stadium, we are on alert," a police spokesman said.

Sharath and Manika meet third seeds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
A. Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra will face Chinese Taipei's third-seeded pair of Lin Yin Ju and Cheng-I Ching in the mixed doubles first round on July 24.

In men's singles, after an opening round bye, Sharath will play the winner of the match between Tiago Apolonia (Portugal) and Olajide Omatayo (Nigeria). A victory for Sharath will set up a clash with China's Ma Long, the current Olympic and World champion. Similarly, after a first-round bye, G. Sathiyam will meet the winner of the clash involving Brian Afanador (Puerto Rico) and Lam Siu Hang (Hong Kong). In women's singles, Manika is due to clash with Great Britain's Ho Tin Tin. Sutirtha Mukherjee will take on Sweden's Linda Bergstrom.

Arjun, Arvind face upstream battle

Set for maiden Games without extensive international exposure

ROWING
K. KEERTHIVASAN



Up against it: Arjun and Arvind will compete with top-class rowers at the Olympics. •TWITTER/SAIMEDIA

The lone Indian rowing pair of Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh face an upstream battle in the men's lightweight double sculls event at the Sea Forest Waterway in Tokyo Bay. The pair has not had much international exposure after the pandemic changed the world. A proposed five-week trip to Portugal this May was cancelled because of strict quarantine rules. The Army Rowing Node in Pune has been the duo's base since October 2020. The two-man crew made the cut after finishing second in the Asia/Oceania qualifying event at Tokyo. Arjun (24) participated in the 2019 World Championships without making a big impact in the single sculls, but won silver with Arvind (25) at the 2019 Asian Championships in Chungju (South

Korea) in the pair's only major international event. The German pair of Jason-Toby Osborne and Jonathan Rommelmann will also contend for the top spot. The duo won gold at the World Cup-I in Zagreb in April-May and silver at the European Championships. Realistically, if the Indian pair finishes anywhere between ninth and 14th (among 18), it would be considered a credible achievement, given the Ismail Baig-coached team is competing in its maiden Games.

Not much to show

K. KEERTHIVASAN

Indian rowers have featured in each of the Olympics since Sydney 2000, but without much success. Kasam Khan and Inderpal Singh were the first oarsmen to make it to the Games in 2000, but the challenge proved too strong in both the heats and repechage. They failed to advance to the semifinals in the coxless pairs. At Beijing 2008 and London 2012, the country had three rowers. Bajrang Lal Takhar (21st, men's single sculls) and the Manjeet Singh-Devender Kumar Khandwal pair (18th, lightweight men's double sculls) appeared in Beijing. Sawarn Singh Virk (16th, men's single sculls) and the Manjeet Singh-Sandeep Kumar duo (19th, lightweight men's double sculls) competed in London. Dattu Baban Bhokanal was the lone Indian rower at Rio 2016, ending 13th in single sculls after promising much.

Sweden ends USA women's 44-game run

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

Four-time Olympic champion the United States suffered a first defeat in 45 matches on Wednesday as it lost 3-0 to Sweden in their opening game of the women's football tournament. Stina Blackstenius scored twice and Lina Hurtig added a third goal to give 2016 silver medalists Sweden a dream start to their Group-G campaign at a Tokyo Stadium devoid of fans due to COVID-19 restrictions. The US, which plays

New Zealand and Australia in its next two games, hadn't lost since going down 3-1 to France in a friendly in January 2019. "We got bopped," said US forward Megan Rapinoe. "I thought we were a little bit nervous, a bit tight, doing dumb stuff." **The results: Group E** (Sapporo): Britain 2 (White 17, 72) bt Chile 0; **Group F** (Miyagi): China 0 lost to Brazil 5 (Marta 9, 74, Debinha 22, Andressa 82-pen, Beatriz 89); **Group G** (Tokyo): Sweden 3 (Blackstenius 25, 55, Hurtig 72) bt USA 0.



Heady affair: Stina Blackstenius, who netted a brace, nods in Sweden's first goal. •GETTY IMAGES

Brisbane awarded 2032 Olympics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRISBANE
Brisbane was awarded the 2032 Olympics on Wednesday and will become the third Australian city to host the Summer Games after Melbourne (1956) and Sydney (2000). IOC president Thomas Bach confirmed the widely expected result after delegates voted 72 to five with three abstentions at the IOC session in Tokyo. The announcement was greeted by cheers from the Australian delegates in Tokyo, while in Brisbane fireworks lit up the skies and crowds who had gathered for the vote went wild.

A distant dream among constantly moving targets

Sajan, Srihari have accomplished what no Indian has managed, but the challenges keep getting bigger

SWIMMING
N. SUDARSHAN

Last month, Indian swimming witnessed history being made when not one, but two swimmers went under the A-mark Olympic Qualification Time to secure berths for Tokyo 2020. In a span of 24 hours in Rome, first Sajan Prakash in 200m butterfly and then Srihari Nataraj in 100m backstroke came up with record-breaking efforts to become the first two Indian swimmers ever to make the A-cut. That they had to cope with multiple pandemic-triggered lockdowns, injury breaks and personal setbacks made the feat more noteworthy.

But to merely bask in the glory of qualification is to miss the forest for the trees. As the duo already knows, and will experience firsthand in Tokyo, Olympic standards are moving targets. A stellar showing will be required to just get out of the heats and reach the semifinals, something no Indian swimmer has ever done. Sajan's 1:56.38s (A-mark: 1:56:48s) would have placed him in the top eight at Rio 2016, but this time around, all it earned him was the right to be in Tokyo. Similarly, Srihari's 53.77s (A-mark: 53:85s) would have earned him a semifinal spot in Rio. A medal is thus a distant dream. In 2016, Tamas Kenderesi's bronze in 200m but-



Leading the charge: Sajan Prakash, Srihari Nataraj and Maana Patel will hope to herald a new era for the sport in India.

terfly came in 1:53.62s – almost three seconds faster than Sajan's best – and David Plummer's bronze in 100m

backstroke was earned in 52.40s, more than a second quicker than Srihari's A-mark. The aim will thus be to make the semifinals, something 20-year-old Srihari is aiming for on his debut. With his best years ahead of him, the youngster is expected to treat this as part of his preparations to excel at Paris 2024. But for 27-year-old Sajan, this may be his last Olympic sojourn at his prime, and he will want to significantly improve on his 28th-place finish out of 29 swimmers at Rio, after having entered via the universality quota. Maana Patel, the 21-year-old National record holder across 50m, 100m and 200m backstroke events, will hope for a good show too, making full use of her universality quota place as she, like Srihari, sets sights on Paris.

Not a force to reckon with

REWIND
N. SUDARSHAN

Indian swimming has long been in a slumber. It's not a force to reckon with even at the Asian and Commonwealth Games, let alone the Olympics. In the presence of powerhouses like China and Japan, India has just one silver and two bronze medals to show at the continental level, in 17 editions since the first in 1951. At the Commonwealth Games, it has zero medals, as Australia, England, Canada and South Africa have dominated. At the Olympics, no Indian swimmer has even reached the semifinals. Until Tokyo, India didn't have a single swimmer who had secured a berth by going under

the A-mark Qualification Time. Though India has had continuous participation from 1996 through the likes of Sebastian Xavier and Sangeeta Puri (Atlanta 1996), Nisha Millet (Sydney 2000), Shikha Tandon (Athens 2004), Sandeep Sejwal and Viradhawal Khade (2008 Beijing), it was either through the B-mark qualification route or the universality quota offered to countries from where no swimmer has made the cut. Khade caused a sensation as a 16-year-old in 2008, becoming the youngest Indian swimmer to enter the Olympics. In recent times, Srihari Nataraj has displayed a similar youthful verve and will hope to break India's duck, alongside Sajan Prakash in Tokyo.

'Team India responded like a champion'

Coach Dravid calls the back-to-the-wall victory an incredible effort

INDIA IN LANKA
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO

With its back to the wall, Team India responded like a champion, said coach Rahul Dravid in an inspiring dressing room speech after his young side registered a series-clinching win in the second ODI against Sri Lanka on Tuesday. "Obviously we finished on the right side of the result, which is incredible and fantastic but even if we didn't finish on the right side of the result, the fight all the way through was absolutely brilliant. So, well done to all of you," Dravid said in a video uploaded on *BCCL.TV*. "We said they were going to respond, we knew we had to respect the opposition-



Pulling off a coup: India looked down and out before Chahar, right, and Bhuvneshwar joined forces. •AFP

.They responded, and we responded back like a champion. With our back to the wall, we found a way to break them. Fantastic job," Dravid said. "It is not the right time to talk about individuals at this point. Obviously there were some fine individual performances, especially towards the end," said Dravid.

"We had talked about that, we acknowledge and recognise every player's contribution in this game. If you look at the whole game, it was a very good team performance," the coach added. **One of the best**
The video also featured Suryakumar Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Deepak Chahar talking about their experiences from the match. "I don't have words, I think it is one of the best games I have been part of, I have seen live... it is an unbelievable victory," Suryakumar said. "Bhuv, our vintage man, and Chahar... we have been talking about his batting, and today he has proved himself. It was something special from him."

Haseeb, Umesh shine on day 2

INDIA IN ENG
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DURHAM

Haseeb Hameed celebrated his recall to the England Test team with a century on the second day of the warm-up game between County Select XI and Indians here on Wednesday. Opener Haseeb hit 13 boundaries in his 112 off 246 balls as the hosts made 206 for seven in reply to the visitors' 311. Haseeb, who shared a 75-run stand for the fifth wicket with Lyndon James (27), was caught behind by K.L. Rahul off Shardul Thakur. Washington Sundar, batting at No. 4, was dismissed for one by Mohammed Siraj. Umesh Yadav was the pick, taking three for 22 in 15 overs. The pacer castled County Select skipper Will Rhodes with a beauty. Jas-



Telling spell: Umesh prised out three County Select batsmen, including skipper Rhodes with a beauty. •TWITTER/BCCI

prit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja took a wicket each. **Kohli back at the nets**
Meanwhile, Virat Kohli, who skipped the warm-up game due to a niggle, was back at the nets and was involved in a full-fledged batting session. Shubman Gill, out of the Test series against England with shin splints, has returned home. He is expected to go to the NCA in Bengaluru for rehabilitation. **The scores: Indians** 311 in 93 overs (K.L. Rahul ret'd. out 101, Ravindra Jadeja 75, Craig Miles 4/45) vs County Select XI 220 in 82.3 overs (Haseeb Hameed 112, Umesh Yadav 3/22).

Robinson and Stokes return

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON
Fast bowler Ollie Robinson was recalled to the England squad on Wednesday for the first two Tests against India. All-rounder Ben Stokes returns after missing the two-match series against New Zealand in June with a fractured finger. **The squad: Joe Root** (Capt.), James Anderson, Jonny Bairstow, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Haseeb Hameed, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes and Mark Wood. **The schedule: First Test: Aug. 4-8:** Trent Bridge, Nottingham; **Second: Aug. 12-16:** Lord's, London; **Third: Aug. 25-29:** Headingley, Leeds; **Fourth: Sept. 2-6:** The Oval, London; **Fifth: Sept. 10-14:** Old Trafford, Manchester.

TV PICKS

TNPL 2021: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Tokyo's COVID cases rise to six-month high

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

Tokyo's COVID-19 infections surged to a six-month high on Wednesday with the Olympic host city logging 1,832 new cases just two days before the Games.

Under emergency

Tokyo is currently under its fourth state of emergency, which will last until August 22, covering the entire duration of the Olympics that starts on Friday and ends on August 8.

Fans are banned from all venues in the Tokyo area, with limited audiences at a few outlying sites.

Happening now

"What we have worried about is now actually happening," Japan Medical Association President Toshio Nakagawa said.

"The surge in cases has been expected whether we have the Olympics or not, and we are afraid that there will be an explosive increase in cases regardless of the Olympics."

Experts warned on Wednesday that Tokyo's infections would only worsen in coming weeks. Dr. Norio Ohmagari, the Tokyo metropolitan government's expert panel member, said that Tokyo's average daily cases could hit around 2,600 in two weeks if they continue at the current pace.

SAI continues to omit cricket and tennis

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

Popular sports cricket and tennis continue to be omitted from the disciplines offered by Sports Authority of India (SAI) Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) for obtaining a diploma in sports coaching.

No space

In an invite for applications for the 2021-22 batch, SAI has included 24 disciplines – including yoga, wushu and kho-kho – but there was no space for cricket and tennis.

The two sports were last included in the diploma course two years ago. It was learnt that the SAI management had planned to include cricket and tennis once in two years, but it was not to be.

The omission comes as a blow to those who want to pursue a career in coaching in these two lucrative disciplines.

Would be interested in trying out more No-Castling chess, says Anand

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

The last time Viswanathan Anand was in Germany, the world was slowly waking up to the reality of a pandemic. He was stuck there for three months before he could finally fly home to Chennai.

It was a pleasanter Germany he found when he landed in Dortmund last week for his No-Castling chess match for the Sparkassen Trophy with Vladimir Kramnik. He won the four-game event in convincing style.

Less predictable

The match was Kramnik's idea. By doing away with castling – a single move by which you can take your king to safety even as making the rook more active – the Russian wanted to make the game less theoretical and predictable. If the chess

'Kamalpreet could produce a big surprise'

If she does 66-plus, I think she can win a medal in Tokyo, says Krishna Poonia

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI

She quit sport soon after the 2016 Rio Olympics but now Krishna Poonia is excited with discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur's stunning progress this year. And she feels the 25-year-old could pull off a big surprise at the Tokyo Olympics.

"I was happy when she crossed 65m to break my national record and she has done that twice this year. If she does 66-plus like she did recently, I think she can win a medal in Tokyo," said Krishna, the first Indian woman to win a Commonwealth Games gold (2010, New Delhi), in a chat with *The Hindu* from Jaipur.



On the right track: Kamalpreet Kaur has made stunning progress this year. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Four discus throwers have crossed 68m this year, two have gone past 70m, and there are many more who

have been consistent but Krishna, who was sixth at 2012 London – the best by an Indian thrower ever at the

Summer Games, feels the global pandemic could throw up plenty of surprises in Tokyo.

Massive throws

Surprises were aplenty in India too. While all eyes were on former Asian Games champion Seema Antil-Punia, Kamalpreet, who had a personal best of 61.04m prior to this season, shocked everybody with those two massive throws – 65.06m in March and 66.59m in June – which saw her jump to the sixth spot in the world list.

Kamalpreet's sudden rise has not surprised Krishna.

"Every athlete has a time. Seema (the 37-year-old has also qualified for Tokyo) is senior and has had her good time earlier but I think she will find it very difficult to

cross 65m. Kamalpreet is a young athlete," said Krishna.

"If someone young is doing well, I can say my discus throw event is getting recognised and athletes are coming in. If we don't have people coming, nobody will remember the event."

Virendar Poonia, Krishna's husband who was also her coach, feels Kamalpreet's arm length gives her an advantage.

"Her strong point may be her arm length, that's the main thing in discus. I think it is longer than Krishna's," he said.

"Her only weakness is that this is her first major competition. She has not been to the World championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games or the Diamond League."

England pulls off a tense win

PAK IN ENG

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MANCHESTER

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid posted career-best figures to help England secure a tense three-wicket win over Pakistan in the third Twenty20 and clinch the series 2-1 here.

Rashid took four wickets for 35 and Pakistan finished on 154/6 after winning the toss and opting to bat on Tuesday.

Jason Roy (64 off 36) gave a good start before the visitors chipped away with wickets, leaving it to No. 8 Chris Jordan to sprint through for the winning runs with just two deliveries and three wickets remaining as England reached 155 for seven.



Adil Rashid. •GETTY IMAGES

The scores: Pakistan 154/6 in 20 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 76, Adil Rashid 4/35) lost to England 155/7 in 19.4 overs (Jason Roy 64, Dawid Malan 31, Mohammad Hafeez 3/28).

Toss: Pakistan. **MoM:** Jason Roy. **MoS:** Liam Livingstone. *England won by three wickets to clinch 3-match series 2-1.*

Milwaukee Bucks end a half-century title drought

Antetokounmpo comes up with a historic 50-point performance

NBA FINALS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MILWAUKEE

Giannis Antetokounmpo delivered a historic 50-point performance when it mattered most in leading the Milwaukee Bucks to its first NBA title since 1971 by defeating the Phoenix Suns 105-98 on Tuesday.

The Bucks captured the best-of-seven NBA Finals by four games to two, becoming only the fifth team to claim the crown after dropping the first two contests.

Antetokounmpo, only the seventh player in finals history with a 50-point game, made 17 of 19 free throws while adding 14 rebounds and five blocked shots as the Bucks went a NBA-best 10-1 at home in the playoffs to end a half-century title



No stopping Giannis: Bucks rode on Antetokounmpo's excellent show to beat Suns. •AP

drought. "I want to thank Milwaukee for believing in me. I want to thank my teammates for playing hard with

me," Antetokounmpo said. "I'm thankful I was able to get it done."

The 26-year-old Greek forward matched the greatest scoring night in a close-out game in finals history, the 50-point effort by Bob Pettit

in 1958 for the St. Louis Hawks over Boston.

"He put us on his back. When we needed him, he told us to just feed him," Bucks guard Khris Middleton said. "It's amazing to be on this journey with him."

Equals Jordan

Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Antetokounmpo also equalled Michael Jordan and Hakeem Olajuwon as the only players to take NBA Finals MVP and NBA Defensive Player of the Year awards in the same season.

The Suns were foiled in their bid for the first crown in their 53-year history. Phoenix guard Chris Paul, playing in the first NBA Finals of his 16-year career at age 36, led the Suns with 26 points. "It hurts. Badly," Suns coach Monty Williams said.

Starc takes five as Australia wins big

AUSTRALIA IN WI

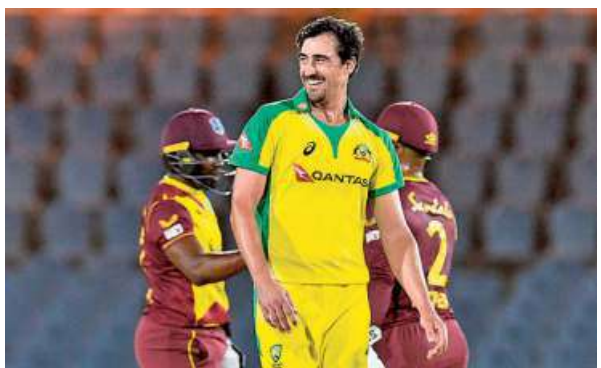
ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRIDGETOWN

Mitchell Starc took five for 48 and Josh Hazlewood three for 11 as Australia bowled out the West Indies for 123 to win the first One-Day International by 133 runs here on Tuesday.

West Indies was struggling at 27 for six in the eighth over and was finally all out in the 27th over chasing a revised total of 257 in 49 overs in a rain-affected match.

Captain Kieron Pollard helped the home team fend off the threat of a record low score, making 56 and putting on 68 for the seventh wicket with Alzarri Joseph (17).

Earlier, Australia's stand-in captain Alex Carey also made a half century in a 104-run fifth-wicket partnership with Ashton Turner to lead



Incisive: The West Indians found Mitchell Starc too hot to handle. •AFP

the team to 252 for nine in 49 overs. Carey took over the captaincy for the first time in a ODI from Aaron Finch who was ruled out of the match with a knee injury.

Walsh Jr. excels

Leg-spinner Hayden Walsh Junior took five for 39, a maiden five-wicket bag in ODIs, and narrowly missed a hat-trick to limit the Australian

total. But the complete failure of the West Indies' top order in the face of accurate bowling from Starc and Hazlewood gave Australia a convincing win.

The scores: Australia 252/9 in 49 overs (Alex Carey 67, Ashton Turner 49, Walsh Jr. 5/39) bt West Indies 123 in 26.2 overs (Kieron Pollard 56, Mitchell Starc 5/48). **Man-of-the-match:** Starc. *Australia won by 133 runs under D/L method and leads three-match series 1-0.*

Vece was part of the Indian hockey team at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Jennifer captained the Indian basketball team at the Asian Basketball Championship in 1980. They had a son. He won India's first medal in tennis at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. His name, as some of you might have guessed by now, is Leander Paes.

HOW BASKETBALL AND HOCKEY COMBINED TO WIN INDIA ITS FIRST MEDAL IN TENNIS.

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