



on Sunday



**Ayurveda guru
P.K. Warriar passes
away at 100**
page 6



**Joe Biden nominates
L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti
as Ambassador to India**
page 8



**Government is keen
to make cooperatives
more empowered: Shah**
page 9



**Barty overcomes
Pliskova's challenge,
clinches title**
page 15

PRINTED AT - CHENNAI - COIMBATORE - BENGALURU - HYDERABAD - MADURAI - NOIDA - VISAKHAPATNAM - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - KOCHI - VIJAYAWADA - MANGALURU - TIRUCHIRAPPALLI - KOLKATA - HUBBALLI - MOHALI - MALAPPURAM - MUMBAI - TIRUPATI - LUCKNOW - CUTTACK - PATNA



NEARBY
**354 kg heroin worth
₹2,500 crore seized**
NEW DELHI
In the biggest-ever drug recovery by the Delhi police, 354 kg of heroin valued at ₹2,500 crore has been seized and four persons have been arrested. The accused have been identified as Hazrat Ali, an Afghan national; Rizwan Ahmed, a resident of Delhi; Gurjot and Gurdeep Singh, both residents of Punjab.

CITY PAGE 2

SHUBHRA RANJAN
GEOGRAPHY MAPPING
By AMIT GARG
BATCH STARTING 11th JULY 2021
₹ 2500 / LIMITED SEATS
9910612719 | WWW.SHUBHRARANJAN.COM

CLASSIFIEDS PAGE 4
MAGAZINE 8 PAGES

As Taliban advance, India pulls out Kandahar consulate staff

Diplomats, ITBP personnel return to Delhi as fighting rages on in Afghanistan

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

As the claims by the Taliban about taking control of Afghanistan territory grow, India has decided to temporarily close its consulate in Kandahar, sending an Indian Air Force flight to evacuate about 50 diplomats and personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) back to Delhi, government sources confirmed to *The Hindu*.

Officials said the move was purely precautionary, and stemmed from reports that if the Taliban continue to push on to the southern city of Kandahar, which was their headquarters in the 1990s, the fighting with the Afghan Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) could get fierce.



War zone: Former Mujahideen taking position to support Afghan forces near Herat province on Saturday. *REUTERS

"Our aim is to ensure that Indian personnel are safe, and we felt the risk of fighting within the city could endanger them," an official told *The Hindu*, as a full security

review of Indian missions in Afghanistan in the wake of the pull-out of American troops continues.

At present, the Indian Embassy in Kabul and the con-

sulate in Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province remain operational.

Evolving situation

According to the officials, the personnel that returned to Delhi on Saturday would be transported back if the situation improved, while some may alternatively travel to Kabul to continue their consular operations from the Embassy, if required.

In April last year, the government had decided to suspend operations at the other two consulates in Jalalabad and Herat and pull out all personnel from there as well.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

AFGHANISTAN TO RUSH
TROOPS TO BORDER PAGE 10

Investments dip

New investments from the Union and State governments fell 41.6% from nearly ₹1.67 lakh crore in Q4 of 2020-21 to ₹97,376 crore during Q1 of 2021-22

FRESH INVESTMENTS BY THE GOVERNMENT

Sectors	Jan. - Mar. '21 (Q4FY21) in ₹Cr.	Apr. - Jun. '21 (Q1FY22) in ₹Cr.	Q-o-Q (%)
Manufacturing	2,093	481	-77.03
Mining	4,057	15,315	277.51
Electricity	7,152	11,455	60.17
Infrastructure	1,33,696	69,343	-48.13
Irrigation	19,873	783	-96.06
All sectors	1,66,870	97,376	-41.65

Source: Projects Today's survey on project investments in India

Hizb chief's two sons lose govt. jobs

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Two sons of Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin — Syed Ahmed Shakeel and Shahid Yusuf — were among 11 J&K government employees whose services were terminated on Saturday for "anti-national activities", an official source said.

While one son was working as a doctor at the Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, the other was working at the Skill Development Department.

One policeman, Rasheed Shigan, who was allegedly involved in militant activities, has also been terminated from his service.

The employees were fired under Article 311(2)(c), a law passed earlier this year in J&K under which no inquiry is required to be constituted against the accused. Services of four employees from Anantnag, three from Budgam and one each from Baramulla, Srinagar, Pulwama and Kupwara were terminated, officials said.

The J&K government on April 21 constituted a Special Task Force to identify employees, scrutinise their conduct and lodge cases against those involved in cases related to threat to security. The task force was described as "draconian" by several political parties.

Govt. infra spending dropped sharply in Q1

Fresh investments dip by 18% overall

VIKAS DHOOOT
NEW DELHI

The second wave of COVID-19 and a steep decline in new investment projects from government agencies dented fresh investment plans in the economy by 18% in the first quarter of 2021-22, compared with the previous quarter.

Despite the government's stated push for capital spending to revive the economy, public infrastructure investments almost halved compared with the January-March quarter, bringing total outlays on new infrastructure plans down by nearly 39% over April to June this year.

Nearly 2,200 new projects entailing fresh investments of ₹3,34,572.5 crore

were announced during the quarter, compared with 2,716 new projects worth ₹4,08,237 crore in the previous three-month period that had seen both private and public sector investments rebounding strongly for the first time since the pandemic hit India.

Overall new investments from the Union and State governments fell 41.6% from nearly ₹1.67 lakh crore in Q4 of 2020-21 to ₹97,376 crore, as per Projects Today's survey on project investments in India during Q1 of 2021-22.

New public sector irrigation and manufacturing projects also fell off the cliff by 96% and 77% respectively.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Meghalaya raises concern over Assam cow protection Bill

We will approach Centre if it affects transit of cattle to the State, says Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Bill proposed by the Assam government to stop the transportation of cattle or use the State for transit of the bovine animal has raised concern among its neighbours.

Many in the Christian-majority States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland consume beef. While Mizoram and Nagaland have chosen not to react, the Meghalaya government said it would seek the Centre's interven-

tion if the Assam Cattle Preservation Bill, 2021, affects its people and economy.

The Bill, approved by the Assam Cabinet on July 7, will be placed before the State Assembly in the upcoming session. It seeks to replace

the existing Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 1950, that allows the slaughter of cattle above 14 years of age after approval from local veterinary officers.

"We will raise the issue not only with the Assam go-

vernment but also the Centre if the law affects transit of cattle to Meghalaya from other States," Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Head start



Festival hues: Preparations in full swing at Jama Masjid ahead of I'd celebrations, in Old Delhi on Saturday. *SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

U.P. panel readies two-child norm plan

Bar on government jobs and welfare benefits for those who have more children

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission has prepared a proposed draft Bill for population control, under which a two-child norm will be implemented and promoted.

After the law comes into force, a person with more than two children will be debarred from several benefits such as government-sponsored welfare schemes and from contesting elections to the local authority or any body of the local self-government, the draft says. Ration card units will be limited to four persons.

A person contravening the law will also become ineligible to apply for State government jobs and be barred from promotion in government services and any kind of subsidy.

The provisions will come into force one year after the date of the publication of the



Yogi Adityanath

gazette, the draft says.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will on July 11 launch the Uttar Pradesh Population Policy 2021-2030 on the occasion of World Population Day.

Sops for sterilisation

The Commission has uploaded the proposed draft Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill, 2021 and invited suggestions till July 19.

As per the draft, several incentives have been provided

to people, including public servants, if they adopt the norm by undergoing voluntary sterilisation.

The incentives include a 3% increase in the employer's contribution fund under national pension; two additional increments during the entire service; subsidy towards purchase of plot or house site or building a house; rebate on charges for utilities such as water, electricity and house tax; and soft loan for construction or purchasing a house at nominal rates of interest.

A public servant or common citizen who adopts a one-child norm will receive additional benefits such as free healthcare facility and insurance coverage to the child till age 20; preference to the single child in admission in all education institutions, including but not limited to the Indian Institutes of Management and the All

India Institute of Medical Sciences; free education up to the graduation level; scholarship for higher studies in case of a girl child and preference to a single child in government jobs.

Cash incentive

A couple living below the poverty line that has only one child and undergoes voluntary sterilisation shall be eligible for payment of a one-time ₹80,000 if the single child is a boy and ₹1 lakh if it is a girl.

Explaining the reasons for bringing out the draft Bill, the Commission headed by Justice Aditya Nath Mittal said there were limited ecological and economic resources at hand in Uttar Pradesh and it was necessary to control and stabilise the population for the promotion of sustainable development with more equitable distribution.

Sikkim blossoms: State home to 27% of India's flowering plants

Botanical Survey of India publication lists 4,912 naturally occurring species

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Sikkim, the smallest State with less than 1% of India's landmass, is home to 27% of all flowering plants found in the country, reveals a recent publication by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI). *Flora of Sikkim - A Pictorial Guide*, released earlier this week, lists 4,912 naturally occurring flowering plants in the tiny Himalayan State.

"The total number of naturally occurring flowering plants in the country is about 18,004 species, and with 4,912 species, the diversity of flowering plants in Sikkim, spread over an area of 7,096 sq. km, is very unique," Rajib Gogoi, Scientist and Regional Head, BSI, Gangtok, and the

lead author of the publication, said.

Dr. Gogoi said the publication provides details of 5,068 taxa (including 152 cultivated taxa) belonging to 1,491 genera and 209 angiosperm families which are naturally occurring flowering plants, along with geography, ecology, vegetation pattern and forest types of Sikkim.

The other authors of the publication include Norbu Sherpa, J.H. Franklin Benjamin, D.K. Agrawala, S.K. Rai and S.S. Dash. In the 582-page publication, the authors have included more than 2,000 photographs of about 1,350 plant species from the State.

The State, which is a part of the Kanchenjunga biosphere landscape, has different



Flower power: *Rhododendron aeruginosum* and *Hypericum reptans* in Sikkim. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

altitudinal ecosystems, which provide opportunity for herbs and trees to grow and thrive. "From subalpine vegetation to the temperate to the tropical, the State has different kinds of vegetation, and that is the reason for such a diversity of flora. The elevation also varies between 300 metres and 8,598 metres above mean sea level, the apex being the top of Mt. Kanchenjunga (8,586 metres),"

Ashiho A. Mao, Director of BSI, said.

Dr. Mao emphasised the need to have updated checklist of flora of every State.

Sikkim's Minister of Forest and Environment Karma Loday Bhutia, who was present at the launch of the publication, said that along with unique geographical features, the people of Sikkim have a unique bond with nature and trees. The Minister referred



to the notification titled Sikkim Forest Tree (Amity & Reverence) Rules, 2017 which state that "the State government shall allow any person to associate with trees standing on his or her private land or on any public land by entering into a Mith/Mit or Mitni relationship."

The notification encouraged people to adopt a tree "as if it was his or her own child in which case the tree shall be called an adopted tree". Mr. Bhutia, however, expressed concern that certain activities in the State were being carried out without considering their impact on the biodiversity. "The widening of roads to Nathu La, which is of strategic interest to us (bordering China), and the hydel power plants in north Sikkim, should also take into account the environmental concerns of locals. We are not against

such activities, but it should not come at the cost of our biodiversity," he said.

Orchids galore

The publication details 532 species of wild orchids (which is more than 40% of all orchid species found in India), 36 species of rhododendron and 20 species of oak, and more than 30 species of high-value medicinal plants, among other species.

Mr. Gogoi said that the founding fathers of botany were always interested in the flora of Sikkim. Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, one of the pioneers of modern botany, conducted the first survey of Sikkim in 1848 and published *Rhododendrons of Sikkim*. In 1898, two British botanists, Sir George King and Robert Pantling, published their monumental work, *The Orchids of Sikkim-Himalayas*.

BJP wins big in block-level polls in U.P.

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The ruling BJP in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday claimed victory in 635 out of 825 block pramukh posts in the State even as the opposition Samajwadi Party accused the State government of misusing its administrative machinery to "forcefully capture" the posts in the high-intensity elections.

Meanwhile, the voting and nomination for the polls were marred by clashes and firing in some districts, including Etawah where a senior officer was allegedly slapped while trying to prevent a crowd of BJP supporters from breaching the barricade.

DETAILS ON PAGE 8

Timings
DELHI

SUNDAY, JUL. 11
RISE 05:32 SET 19:22
RISE 06:23 SET 20:39

MONDAY, JUL. 12
RISE 05:32 SET 19:22
RISE 07:22 SET 21:22

TUESDAY, JUL. 13
RISE 05:33 SET 19:22
RISE 08:22 SET 21:59

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 40 29
Safdarjung 40 29
Palam 40 30

Delhi Palam Today
36°C One or two spells of rain and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky and gusty winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Few spells of Light to moderate rain and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky and gusty winds.

© Copyright Skywet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

IN BRIEF

IIT-D felicitates alumni for climbing Mt. Everest
NEW DELHI
Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, held a flag ceremony on Saturday to mark the achievement of alumnus Neeraj Choudhary, who scaled Mt. Everest on May 31.

Up to ₹1 lakh fine for violating new noise pollution norms

Delhi Pollution Control Committee asks authorities to implement revised rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Residents will now have to pay anywhere between ₹10,000 and ₹1 lakh for violating noise pollution norms as the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has asked authorities to strictly implement revised rules.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board's revised penalties, violators will have to pay a fine of ₹10,000 for using a loudspeaker or a public address system at a public place without permission or during the night. The equipment will also be confiscated. The DPCC has issued directions to all DMs, SDMs, Delhi Police, and traffic police for strict compliance of these rules.

Permissible levels

A fine of ₹1 lakh will be issued for operating diesel generator sets of over 1,000 KVA capacity without permission, ₹25,000 for DG sets between



If an individual household bursts crackers in a residential zone, the fine will be ₹1,000. • FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

62.5 KVA and 1,000 KVA; and ₹10,000 for diesel generator sets up to 62.5 KVA.

Permissible noise levels in residential areas is 55 decibel during the day time and 45 decibel during the night. In commercial areas, the permissible sound limit is 65 decibel during the day and 55 decibel during night.

In sensitive areas, it is 50 decibel during the day and 40 decibel at night.

Other than this, there are

'silence zones' that include areas that lie within 100 metres of schools, colleges, hospitals and courts.

According to the order, in case of bursting of firecrackers beyond the prescribed limit within the premises of any RWA or at a marriage function, the organiser and the owner of the premises will have to pay ₹20,000 for the first violation. For the second violation, the organiser and the owner will have to

pay ₹40,000. Thereafter, the fine will be ₹1 lakh and the premises will also be sealed.

If noise pollution is caused by bursting of crackers beyond a limit at a marriage procession or public and religious rally, the organisers will have to pay a fine of ₹10,000. If it is in a 'silence zone', then the fine will be doubled. If an individual household bursts crackers in a residential or commercial zone, then the fine will be ₹1,000. However, it will be ₹3,000 in case of violation in a 'silence zone'. In case construction equipment emits sound beyond the permissible limit, a fine of ₹50,000 will be imposed, the order also stated.

DPCC officials said the penalties were revised by the CPCB in 2020 in which recommendations were made that violators be made to shell out more money for flouting permitted noise pollution limits.

Biggest-ever haul: 354 kg heroin worth ₹2,500 crore recovered

Four persons, including a foreign national, arrested by police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In the biggest-ever drug recovery by the Delhi police, 354 kg of heroin worth ₹2,500 crore has been seized and four persons, including an Afghan national, have been arrested.

Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Neeraj Thakur said the accused have been identified as Hazrat Ali, a resident of Afghanistan; Rizwan Ahmed, resident of Delhi; and Gurjot Singh and Gurdeep Singh, both residents of Jalandhar, Punjab.

Extensive network

The police said the racket extended across several States as well as Afghanistan and Europe. Around 100 kg of chemicals used for preparing the contraband has also been seized.

Police said information was recently received about Rizwan's whereabouts and he was arrested from Ghitori on July 5. He is allegedly in-



The seized heroin from the accused. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

involved in supplying drugs in Delhi, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

During interrogation, Rizwan allegedly told the police that he works for Isha Khan, who recently left India and is now based in Afghanistan.

Rizwan allegedly told investigators he was asked by Isha to meet Gurpreet and Gurjot, who were operating a drug racket from Faridabad. Acting on the information, the two were arrested from a housing society in Faridabad.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said a huge recovery of heroin was made from the duo. Around 166 kg of heroin was recovered from

a car, another 115 kg from a different vehicle, and another 70 kg was found in a secret cavity in a bed at their accommodation.

On Rizwan's instance, Hazrat Ali was arrested from Gurugram and 2 kg of heroin along with chemicals used to prepare the contraband was recovered.

Talking about the modus operandi, Mr. Kushwah said the opium is grown in Afghanistan and then packaged and transported to Chabhar port in Iran.

The consignment is then shipped to JNPT Jawahar Lal Nehru Post Trust Mumbai. Thereafter, the contraband is separated from legitimate exports and sent to makeshift factories in Madhya Pradesh for further extraction and processing. Locals, with the help of Afghan experts, process the heroin using chemicals. The heroin is then delivered across the country.

Further investigation is underway, said the police.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

SHIRT

TROUSER & JEANS SALE

Wedding Collection

Up to 60% off

OPEN 7 DAYS

MEN & WOMEN
By Economy Sales: 45086188

ARROW ColorPlus PARK AVENUE LOUIS PHILIPPE

• PUNCHKUIAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)
• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
• JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
• NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
• LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

**TO ADVERTISE
PLEASE CONTACT**
Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 32/2021

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railways Iztanagar for and behalf of president of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work.

S.N.-1. Description of works: Welding of rail joints 674 nos. and supply of welding portion 800 nos. of rails joints of 52 kg/90 UTS rails in the jurisdiction of Sr.DEN/II/ZN under the sanctioned work of (1) TTR (CS) 39 sets, Renewal of SEJ 87 sets & Renewal of Glued joint 789 sets (2) Renewal of DFW joints 296 Nos, Approx. Value (Rs.): - 60,76,997.82, E.M.D. (Rs.): Nil, Cost of Tender Forms: - Rs. Nil, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 12 Months. **S.N.-2. Description of works:** Raising of Rail level Platform to High level at CBR station under the sanctioned work of "Provision of Rail level PF to High level PF at different stations in jurisdiction of SR.DEN-II". (CBR, UTP, ARL, BHK, RAYA & MSN Stn). Approx. Value (Rs.): - 93,56,177.89, E.M.D. (Rs.): Nil, Cost of Tender Forms: - Rs. Nil, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 05 Months. **S.N.-3. Description of works:** Provision of Foot Over Bridge at KHH in jurisdiction of ADEN/LIZN (under sanctioned work Provision of first Foot Over Bridge (KHH & PBW= 02 nos.) in the section of DEN/HQ/IZN, Approx. Value (Rs.): - 58,32,975.83, E.M.D. (Rs.): Nil, Cost of Tender Forms: - Rs. Nil, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter 09 Months. 1. On line e-tender can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs of dated 06.08.2021. 2. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) CPRO/W-99
Iztanagar
About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Do Not Smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

M.S. Chari
Retd. S.C. Rly, attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on 06/07/2021. Dasasthu on 15/07/2021 at Aandavan Ashram, Kapra, Secunderabad. Inserted by - Family Members. Ph-9246190024.

For enquiries on announcements in this section, please contact our office at the following number between 10a.m. and 8p.m.

New Delhi : 011- 43579797
Rate for New Delhi:

(Minimum Rs. 320/- 2 Lines
Extra Line - Rs.160/-)

(B/W Display): Rs.60/Per Sq.cm
(Clr Display) : Rs.70/Per Sq.cm

Log on to
www.thehinduads.com

For Placing Advertisements
Online

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

9th Anniversary

"... I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever"
- Psalm 136:6

Mrs. Daisy Edwin
23-12-1933 - 11-07-2012 (Retd. Headmistress, Govt. School, Chennai)

In fond remembrance of my Loving wife, Daisy.

Caring mother, affectionate grand-mother, prayerful nature, humble & hard worker and helpful to the poor.

Edwin Roberts, Children, Grandchildren and Family.

In memory of your loved ones To dedicate a space in this section, Please contact:

011-43579797
from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., &
For Placing Advertisements Online log on to

www.thehinduads.com
DONATE EYES-GIFT SIGHT

Reapply for fee refund, DU tells students

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi University has asked students who have not received a fee refund after cancellation of last year's admissions, to apply afresh for the same.

Students who have cancelled their admission after February 15 will not be eligible to seek refund, the university said.

"Students who have not received the UG [undergraduation] or PG [postgraduation] admission cancellation or excess fee refund are requested to mail their bank account details afresh...along with scanned copy of the cheque or passbook and fee receipt to fin5dy@gmail.com for early action," the varsity said.

In the notice issued, DU also directed students to write their form number and send the mails to the specified email address and not to other DU authorities. "You are also advised to check refund status first in the earlier notification and not send repetitive emails," it said.

Earlier, in a notice dated May 23, the university had said that refund of the admission fees following cancellation had failed due to wrong account details provided and had urged students who had withdrawn admissions to update relevant details.

Mother Dairy hikes milk price by ₹2 per litre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Leading milk supplier Mother Dairy has increased milk prices in Delhi-NCR by ₹2 per litre with effect from Sunday on rising input cost. The milk prices were last revised in December 2019.

Justifying the hike, Mother Dairy said procurement cost of milk from dairy farmers has gone up by 8-10% in the last year. Other operational costs have also risen.

On July 1, Amul hiked milk prices by ₹2 per litre across all cities.

WESTERN RAILWAY PROVISION OF TCAS & LAYING OF 48 FIBER ARMORED OFC

Principal Chief Signal and Telecom Engineer (Works), Churchgate, Mumbai invites E-Tender against Tender No. EPC_WR_Snt_02_1. Name of Work: Provision of Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) & Laying of 48 FIBER ARMORED OFC (In two routes) in connection with work of raising of speed up to 160 kmph on Automatic Section of 336 Km section Virar-Vadodra on New Delhi-Mumbai Route of Western Railway. 2. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 2068164826/- 3. Earnest Money Deposit to be deposited: ₹0.0/- 4. Date & Time for submission of e-Tender and opening of e-tender: From 01/11/2021 upto 15/11/2021 @ 15:00 hours. 5. Website particulars and notice for location where complete details can be seen etc.: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> Principal Chief Signal and Telecom Engineer, 5th Floor, Station Building, Churchgate, Western Railway, Mumbai-400 020. Bidders will be able to study their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 0252
Like us: www.facebook.com/WesternRly

Conserving rainwater today can save your tomorrow

Benefits of rainwater Harvesting

- Help cater to the potable water needs of the ever growing population
- Stop the rapid fall in Ground Water Level
- Sustainability of Ground Water Resource
- Help maintain Green Cover
- Help revive Water Bodies
- Help to Control Flood
- Any plots / properties in which functional rain water harvesting system conforming to DJB approved RWH guidelines is installed is granted rebate of 10% in the total water monthly bill amount



For assistance contact your nearest Jal Shakti Kendra

S.No.	District	Address	Phone No.
1	Central (HQ)	ERWH, Varunalya Complex, Room No. 208, Phase - I, Jhandewalan, New Delhi	78380 28278
2	East	Office of the Suptd. Engineer (East) ChitraVihar B.P.S. Delhi-110092	87003 55576
3	North-East	EE(NE)-II, R-Pocket OH Tank, Dilshad Garden, Delhi-95	96505 69988
4	Shahdara	Office of Executive Engineer (NE)-1 Janta Flats, GTB Enclave, Delhi-110093	96502 90935
5	South	DJB Office, E-Block opposite PVR Cinema, Saket, New Delhi-110017	95999 42466 96502 91239
6	South East	Room No. 002, Andrews Ganj building complex Adjacent to Defence Colony New Delhi-110024	96500 85754
7	South West	Sector-5, DDA Central Nursery, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075	96503 03799
8	Central	Office of EE (Central) Delhi Jal Board, JLN Marg, Opposite Ramliha Ground UGR & BPS New Delhi	88009 95542
9	New Delhi	Sector 7, RK Puram Water Emergency Complex New Delhi 110022	96500 94407
10	West	Office of Supt. Engineer Office G-17, OHT 1st floor, Room No. 2, PashchimVihar	96502 91617
11	North West	DJB Office, Room No. 26, First Floor MU Block, Pitampura, Near Hotel City Park, Pitampura	96502 91531
12	North	Shakti Nagar, ZE DJB Office near Shakti Nagar Chowk	96252 02927



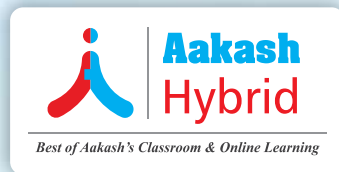
Urban Development Department, Government of NCT of Delhi

www.aakash.ac.in



Winners Start Early

Start preparing for NEET / JEE Online today
and continue in the Classroom tomorrow



A blended learning program that offers the best of Aakash's Classroom and Online learning with the flexibility to shift to Classroom anytime.

**REPEATER /
DROPPER
BATCHES**

ADMISSIONS OPEN

**Regular Hybrid Course /
Power Step Hybrid Course**

For Class 12th Passed Students

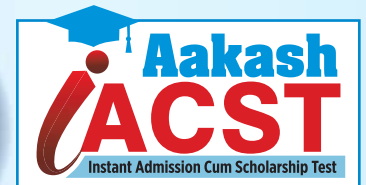
NEET / JEE 2022

**1, 2, 3rd & 4th Year Integrated
Hybrid Courses**

For Students in Class 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th & 12th

**NEET | JEE | School / Board Exams,
NTSE & Olympiads**

Conducted **ONLINE** every day



iacst.aakash.ac.in

Note: For details & availability of 1 & 3rd Year Courses for Class VIII and 3rd & 4th Year Courses for Class IX & X contact the nearest branch / centre of Aakash.
*Only on Tuition Fee / Classroom Service Fee, as may be applicable.

*Classroom coaching will start as and when our branches re-open as per the government guidelines.

Download Aakash App
for JEE & NEET



1800-102-2727

SCAN FOR
AAKASH CENTRE



**33 Year
Old Legacy
of Delivering
Outstanding
Results**

84230
(69759 Classroom + 14471 Digital & Distance)
NEET-UG 2020

AIR 2
720/720
Perfect Score

AIR 3
715/720

Akanksha Singh
4 Year Classroom

Snikitha Tummala
4 Year Classroom

1700
(1560 Classroom + 140 Digital & Distance)
JEE (Advanced) 2020

AIR 1
352/396
Highest Score

AIR 65

Chirag Falor
4 Year Classroom

Aditya Goel
4 Year Classroom

JEE (MAIN) 2021 PHASE-I

100 PERCENTILE
296/300

100 PERCENTILE
291/300

Pravar Kataria
5 Year Classroom

Ranjim Prabal Das
5 Year Classroom

OUR BRANCHES AT: Janak Puri (Medical Wing): 8800013110 Janak Puri (Engineering & Foundation Wing): 8800013017 South Extn., (Medical Wing): 8800013111 South Extn., (Engineering Wing): 8800015936 South Extn., (Foundation Wing): 8800013018 Dwarka (Sec-11): 8800013019 Noida (Sector-18): 8800013020 Noida (Sector-62): 8800013021 Greater Noida: 8800013024 Faridabad: 8800013022 Ambala: 8800012946 Bhiwani: 8800012950 Hisar: 8800013035 Kaithal: 8800012949 Karnal: 8800012947 Kurukshetra: 8800013036 Narnaul: 8800013042 Palwal: 8800013038 Panchkula: 8800013039 Panipat: 8800013040 Rohtak: 8800013037 Sirsa: 8800012948 Yamuna Nagar: 8800012945 Amritsar: 8800013076 Bathinda: 8800013078 Chandigarh: 8800013079 Ferozepur: 7428490291, 7428490290 Ludhiana: 8800013080 Patiala: 8800013082 Patiala: 8800013098 Prayagraj: 8800013100 Gorakhpur: 8800013101 Jhansi: 8448289995 Kanpur (Kakadeo): 8800013102 Kanpur (Phoolbagh): 8800013103 Mathura: 7428899147 Meerut: 8800013105 Saharanpur: 8800013106 Haridwar: 8800013109 Dehradun (Ballupur Chowk): 8800013108 Dehradun (Rajpur Road): 8800013107 Jaipur (Gopalpura Bypass): 8800013083 Jaipur (Subhash Nagar): 8800013084 Jaipur (Vaishali Nagar): 8800013085 Jodhpur: 8800013088 Kota: 8800013087 Ajmer: 8800013118 Bikaner: 8800015946 Udaipur: 7357621555, 7357628555 Sri Ganganagar: 7428593083, 7428593085 Bhopal: 8800013060 Gwalior: 8800013064 Jabalpur: 8800013063 Indore (Geeta Bhawan): 8800013061 Indore (Ranjeet Hanuman): 8800013062 Ujjain: 8800013119 **OUR CENTRES AT:** Pusa Road: 8447299285, 8447299386, 8377956764, 7011910618 Pitam Pura (Medical Wing): 9560292031, 9560292036 (Engg. Wing): 9560292026, 9560292029 Model Town-II: 9560197324, 9311272550 Punjabi Bagh: 9560197322, 9560197321 Rohini (Sector-4) Foundation Wing: 9821821392, 9821396805 Rohini (Sector-15) Foundation Wing: 9821821392, 9821396805 Preet Vihar: 8468807500, 8468807501 Vasant Kunj: 9711786886 Dilshad Garden: 9350395559 Bareilly: 9997690099, 8881122111 Moradabad: 9119918585, 7455022493, 9720017271 Ghaziabad: 8826050187, 8882546640 Gurugram (Sector-14): 9717508555, 7042494290 (South City-II): 9958064196, 9599488141 Rewari: 9053008274, 9053008275 Bilaspur: 9630098105 Raipur: 7611110515, 7611110512 Bhilai: 7611110533, 7611110534 Haldwani: 9997699977, 8881122111 Rudrapur: 9997693344 Jammu (Gandhi Nagar): 9419607066, 8491907880 (Kachi Chawni): 9419607066, 8899979323 Udhampur: 9419607066, 8899984223 Srinagar (Raj Bagh): (0194) 2454540, 8491047228 / 229 (Nigeen): 9107926842 (Rawalpora): (0194) 2436550, 6006750448.

Registered Office: Aakash Tower, 8, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110005. Ph.: (011) 47623456 | E-mail: care@aes.in | SUNDAY OPEN |

Delhi reports 76 new cases, one death

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 76 fresh infections and one death in the last 24 hours, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

There was a reduction of six active cases with 81 recoveries and 81,451 tests having been conducted bringing the total tally of COVID-19 cases in Delhi to 14,35,030 with 14,09,226 recoveries and 25,012 deaths since the pandemic began.

There were currently 792 active cases in the city even as the total number of vaccine doses had been administered reached 88,10,952 with 1,31,143 doses having been administered on July 9, as per the Delhi government's vaccination bulletin.

Vaccine stock low

According to the government, 95,341 doses administered were first doses while 35,802 second doses were administered on Wednesday. The bulletin also stated that the Capital currently had less than a day's stock of vaccine doses remaining.

AAP and BJP trade barbs over inquiry report on 'DTC scam'

Sisodia says probe exonerates govt., BJP claims 'great wrong has been caught'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government and the Delhi BJP locked horns on Saturday over a report by a committee constituted by Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal to investigate alleged irregularities in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the BJP had lost face yet again after levelling allegations of corruption to the tune of ₹5,000 crore against the Delhi government "continuously for the last three months".

Former Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly and BJP Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta, who filed the complaint that led to the formation of the committee, shared portions of the findings on social media. He added that the panel's recommendation of cancelling the maintenance tender worth ₹3,500 crore and issuing a fresh one in its place proved



The BJP has alleged irregularities in maintenance tender worth ₹3,500 crore. ■ FILE PHOTO

that a scam had taken place.

"The investigation committee of the BJP-led Central government has not been able to find any flaws or irregularities in the purchase of buses. The report of the inquiry committee has made it clear that the government led by Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi is honest and the Delhi BJP leaders in the opposition are trying to malign the image of the government," Mr. Sisodia said.

"The Delhi government is working day and night for the people but instead of learning from it, BJP leaders

are spreading hatred and lies. They are stopping the good work in public interest. BJP leaders should be ashamed and they should come in front of the public to apologise," he added.

BJP demands resignation

The BJP, however, demanded a probe by the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) in the alleged ₹5,000-crore 'DTC bus scam' and also sought the resignation of Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot and the removal of the responsible Transport Department officials.

Mr. Gupta said there were only two companies which came forward with regard to bus purchase. The Delhi government also decided that the companies can bid for bus maintenance as well.

"It is now evident the same two companies supplying buses will also get the maintenance job which would be worth ₹3,500 crore. In this way, the government in the name of buses purchase and their maintenance has committed fraud worth ₹5000 crore. The ACB must be allowed to probe the case," he said.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the opposition had "caught the government in the middle of doing a great wrong". "As DTC has its own depots, workshops and employees, why keep an outside agency for maintenance? Now, even the committee report is saying the tender of ₹3,500 crore for maintenance should be issued afresh," Mr. Bidhuri said.

Fake call centre busted in Rohini, 24 arrested

They promised cheap phones to victims

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A fake call centre has been busted and 24 people, including 15 women, have been arrested from Rohini, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Pranav Tayal said the owners of the call centre, Ramkumar (34), Shyam Kumar (35) and Govind (22), all residents of Sultanpuri, are in custody.

The police received information on Friday regarding a fake call centre operating in Sector 7, Rohini. The accused allegedly duped people on the pretext of offering them mobiles at cheap rates through a lottery scheme.

"Police raided the call centre and nabbed the accused. During inquiry, it was revealed that most of the vic-

tims belonged to northeastern States," Mr. Tayal said.

Talking about the modus operandi, Mr. Tayal said the accused used to collect mobile numbers from the Internet and randomly made calls. They used to tell people that their number had been selected for a lottery scheme in which they could get a mobile phone worth ₹17,000 on payment of just ₹4,500.

In order to gain the customers' trust, they used the post office as the logistics service provider.

"However, instead of sending mobiles, they would send cheap wallets, belt and soaps," the officer said.

Police have also raided the warehouse where the accused allegedly kept the articles and found packets that were ready to be delivered.

'Haryana solely responsible for water crisis hovering over Delhi'

Supply to Delhi BJP chief's house will be cut if rightful portion of water is not released in 24 hours: AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice Chairman Raghav Chadha on Saturday alleged that the Haryana government was "solely responsible" for the water crisis hovering over Delhi.

Haryana's "careless and apathetic" behavior may lead to water scarcity in New Delhi Municipal Council and VIP areas including the PM's residence, the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and major ministries. Water supply in parts of central, west, and south Delhi will also be affected, he warned.

Mr. Chadha said the Haryana government had stopped water that is released into the Yamuna for Delhi's needs and was providing 120 MGD less, which had decreased production of water in Delhi by 100 MGD.

Water production at the



DJB chief Raghav Chadha said many areas across Delhi may face water shortage soon. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Chandrawal WTP has come down from 90 MGD to 55, at Wazirabad WTP from 135 to 80 MGD and at Okhla WTP from 20 to 15 MGD, he said.

The daily water production in Delhi had come down from 245 MGD to 150-145 MGD, despite the Upper Yamuna River Board having directed Haryana to provide an additional 150 cusecs of water, he added.

"It is the legal responsibility of the Haryana government to provide water to Delhi as per Supreme Court orders and the Memorandum of Understanding," Mr. Chadha said.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana, citing data regarding water supply received from Haryana, accused Mr. Chadha of lying and contended that the Haryana government had not stopped the supply of water to the Capital.

Pink Line metro curbs from July 12-15

Delhi Metro will be undertaking OHE interlinking work

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Saturday said that services on the Pink Line will be restricted between July 12 and 15 to undertake interlinking work of overhead equipment (OHE) on the yet to be operational corridor between Mayur Vihar Pocket 1 and Trilokpuri Sanjay Lake metro stations.

In a statement issued, the

DMRC said, "Metro services will not be available between IP Extension and Trilokpuri and between Mayur Vihar Phase-I and Mayur Vihar Pocket-I stations. Also, Mandawali West Vinod Nagar, East Vinod Nagar, Mayur Vihar Phase-II, Trilokpuri and Mayur Vihar Pocket-I stations will remain closed in the above said period."

Officials added that the first and last train timings from the modified terminal

stations — Mayur Vihar Phase-I and IP Extension — will remain unchanged during this period.

Long waiting time

Meanwhile, the DMRC said that with social distancing and other safety norms in place, the average waiting time at the busy Rajiv Chowk metro station went up to over 50 minutes for over three-and-a-half hours on Saturday.

One held after police bust factory manufacturing duplicate bike tyres

The accused used to sell them under fake brand name

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Saturday said that a factory manufacturing duplicate tyres of a brand has been busted in Outer North Delhi's Siraspur village. The accused has been arrested, they said.

DCP (Outer North) Ravj Ranjan Singh said that the accused has been identified as Mohammed Akram (41), a resident of Azad Market. The police said that one

Neeraj Kumar approached the police and complained that a factory in Siraspur was manufacturing duplicate two-wheeler tubes of a brand. A team raided the factory where a huge quantity of duplicate tyres were found along with packaging material and dyes. Akram was then arrested.

Mr. Ranjan said that during interrogation, Akram told the police that he had been in the business of trad-

ing of two-wheeler and four-wheeler tubes and his brother Sultan had a shop in tyre market in the Capital. After demolition of the market, Akram started his own manufacturing unit in a rented godown in Khera village but finally switched to the present location.

Akram revealed that he used to sell the duplicate products under a fake brand name in Delhi-NCR," Mr. Ranjan said.

NGT directs panel to look into tanneries

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed a newly constituted committee to submit a report on pollution caused by slaughter houses and tanneries in Ghaziabad.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted several shortcomings in the operation of the units, including illegal extraction of groundwater in over-exploited zones.

The committee will have four members and they will visit the sites within a month and prepare a report thereafter.

The State Pollution Control Board will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance, said the Bench.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI DIVISION (PHE) KULGAM... E- NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS... Table with columns: S. No., Name of work, Estimated cost, Class of contract, Earnest money, Cost of Tender document, Time for completion, Head of account.

INDIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS, NEW DELHI... Dr. Jitendra Singh, Dr. Bharati Pawar, Dr. Bhagwat Karad, Hon. Shri. Narendra Modi Prime Minister, Dr. Subhas Sarkar, Dr. Mahendra Munjpara, Indian Medical Association Congratulates & thanks Honorable Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi Ji...



IN BRIEF
Sivasankar's suspension extended for third time
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, will remain suspended from service for a further period of six months.

Video of DKS 'slapping' party worker goes viral
MYSURU
Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president D.K. Shivakumar found himself at the centre of a controversy after a video purportedly showing him slapping a fellow party worker walking next to him went viral.

CPI(M) panel to probe Ambalappuzha fiasco
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has formed a two-member party commission to investigate the "organisational limitations" that hobbled the Left Democratic Front (LDF) Assembly election campaign in the Ambalappuzha constituency in Alappuzha.

Sabarimala temple to open on July 16
PATHANAMTHITTA
The Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala will be opened on July 16 for the five-day monthly puja during the Malayalam month of Karkidakam.

Weapons seized in Bengaluru jail raid

Parallel searches at homes of habitual offenders yield knives, machetes, drugs



Big haul: Police recovering weapons, marijuana and mobile phones from inmates of Parappana Agrahara jail.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU
Early morning raids on Saturday by the Bengaluru City Police, including the Central Crime Branch (CCB), in various parts of the city including at Central Jail, Parappana Agrahara, led to the recovery of weapons such as knives and daggers, marijuana and mobile phones and SIM cards from inmates.

The police were also probing the possible involvement of prison officials who failed to check the trade of narcotics. Another cause for concern is the number of mobile phones seized despite jammers in place. "We are analysing the mobile phones and SIM cards to ascertain illegal activities," said Sandeep Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime).

ries are being conducted," said a senior police officer.

Residences searched
In Whitefield, the police conducted operations on the re-

"Three rowdies have been booked under NDPS Act while 15 have been booked under Section 110 (security for good behaviour from habitual offenders) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)," D. Devraj, DCP, Whitefield said.

Two murders
These raids were conducted in the backdrop of two brazen murders in the city in broad daylight at public places over the last two weeks - financier Madan and former civic councillor Rekha Kadiresh.

The police have also been cracking down on the sale of drugs in the city, increasing border checks and inspecting premises of private courier firms that are often used to ship consignments of narcotics.

Telangana's offer exceeded that of other States, says Kitex

'No harassment from local bodies, political leaders'

'Bid to tarnish Kerala's image'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOCHI
The incentives offered by the Telangana government exceeded the promises made by the governments of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and Maharashtra, the Kitex Group said in a communication, explaining its decision to invest ₹1,000 crore in the Kakatiya Mega Textiles Park in Telangana.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said that there seems to be a 'planned move' to 'shame and brand' Kerala as an investment unfriendly destination.

attention-grabbing move to shift his investment from Kerala to Telangana, citing political harassment by the LDF government. Mr. Vijayan said any attempt to put a stain on Kerala's investment-friendly image tantamount to trespass against the developmental aspirations of the people.

K.T. Rama Rao, the Industries Minister of Telangana, had promised that the industrial unit would not be harassed by local bodies, political leadership or State government agencies, said the communication. The Telangana government had promised all help, it said.

The Kitex team, comprising Sabu M. Jacob, managing director of Kitex Garments, was flown to Telangana by a private jet on Friday by the Telangana government. The team is slated to return to Kerala on Sunday, the company press release added.

P.T. Thomas, Congress MLA, said here on Saturday that he stood by his allegations against the Kitex Group. The MLA had alleged that the dyeing, bleaching and printing units of the company were polluting the Kadambray river.

Doyen of Ayurveda P.K. Warriar passes away

He took Arya Vaidya Sala to great fame

STAFF REPORTER MALAPPURAM

Doyen of Ayurveda and managing trustee of Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala P.K. Warriar died at Kottakkal on Saturday.



P.K. Warriar

The Arya Vaidya Sala had celebrated his 100th birthday in the first week of June. Dr. Warriar had recovered from COVID-19 two months ago. His health had weakened in the last few days.

Dr. Warriar took Arya Vaidya Sala to heights of global fame by carefully synthesising the traditional Ayurveda with modernity. By introducing modern practices and methods to Ayurveda, Dr. Warriar earned respect all over the world. In 68 years of service as managing trustee of Arya

Vaidya Sala, he was instrumental in branching out the 119-year-old institution across the world. Arya Vaidya Sala has 26 branches and more than 1,000 authorised dealers across the world.

The country honoured Dr. Warriar with Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhusan in 2010.

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 Sunday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Saurashtra & Kutch, central Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Table with columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN, CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists data for 24 cities including Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Gangtok, Goa, Guwahati, Hubballi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Kohima, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Kurnool, Lucknow, Madurai, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Mysuru, New Delhi, Patna, Port Blair, Puducherry, Raipur, Ranchi, Shillong, Shimla, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchi, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam.

Table with columns: CITIES, AQI, AQI CODE, YESTERDAY. Lists AQI data for 24 cities including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune, Visakhapatnam.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI). SO2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

NORTH & EAST

Doctors in Punjab to go on 3-day strike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

Perturbed over the Punjab government's "indifferent attitude" towards their demands, doctors in government hospitals have announced three-day strike from July 12.

The doctors have been protesting against the State's Sixth Pay Commission recommendations on delinking of Non-Practising Allowance (NPA) from the basic pay and reduction in the NPA from 25% to 20% among other demands.

The call for strike has been given by the Joint Government Doctors Coordination Committee. JGDCC convener Dr. Indveer Gill said the agitation is to the save the public healthcare system. "We will oppose any move of the government that is directed to destroy it. The government is pursuing a policy of evasion instead of resolving the issue of NPA."

'There is breakdown of governance in U.P.'

Retired civil servants raise concern over 'violation of rule of law'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

A group of retired civil servants have written an open letter to raise concerns over what they termed was the "breakdown of governance" and "blatant violation of the rule of law" in Uttar Pradesh.

The letter, signed by 87 members of the Constitutional Conduct Group and endorsed by 236 others, including Justice (retired) A.P. Shah, activists and academics, stated: "We note with mounting alarm that the present ruling regime in U.P. has ushered in a model of governance which swerves further and further away from the values of the Constitution and the rule of law with each passing day."

The letter stated that detentions, criminal charges, and recoveries were commonly used against those who exercised their right to protest.

It added that the case of Kerala journalist Siddique Kappan, who was arrested while on his way to report on the case of gang rape of a 19-year-old Dalit girl in Hathras, was particularly egregious. The letter highlighted the number of encounter killings from 2017 to 2020 and termed "encounter injuries and killings as official hate targeting".

"From 2017 to 2020, 124 alleged criminals were shot dead in 6,476 "encounters", according to data compiled and released by the U.P. police to the media. The word "encounters" has been used to also include the infliction of serious injuries caused, for example, by shooting a person in both knees and

leaving him disabled for life," the letter said, adding that Muslims, Dalits and other backward castes were killed predominantly.

The letter also flagged the State's handling of COVID-19 during the second wave, in which sightings of "dead bodies floating in the Ganga" were seen. "The world bore witness to the catastrophe that the people of U.P. had to endure owing to the failure of the government to act in time. Reports from crematoria show that across districts, deaths are being massively undercounted in Uttar Pradesh," it said.

The group called for an end to arbitrary detentions and torture as well as the policies of institutionalisation and legitimisation of vigilantism.

Police encounters continue in Assam

Opposition alleges State police has turned 'trigger-happy' under the new CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA GUWAHATI

Amid the Opposition parties decrying the rising number of police encounters under the Himanta Biswa Sarma government, one more murder accused was killed and two alleged ganja smugglers were injured as they "attempted to escape from custody" in separate incidents in Assam on Saturday.

With the fresh casualties, at least 13 suspected insurgents and criminals have been killed and dozens, including rape accused and cattle smugglers, injured in police encounters in the State since the second BJP-led government assumed power two months ago.

In BTR

The latest incidents took place in Chirang and Kokrajhar districts, both part of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). A person accused of the murder of a homeguard



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

was killed while attempting to escape from police custody in Chirang district.

"Within 24 hrs Chirang Police cracked the case of brutal murder of Homeguard Eyad Ali. 3 persons arrested & the murder weapons were recovered. In an attempt to flee from Police custody, escaping accused Abdul Khalek sustained bullet injuries and later succumbed to his injuries," Chirang district police tweeted.

In another incident, Kokrajhar district police inter-

cepted a truck allegedly smuggling 840 kg of ganja worth over ₹2 crore, at Sri-rampur near the Assam-West Bengal inter-State border.

"While recovering another 10 kg of ganja, which the accused had hidden along the highway, the duo attacked the police personnel & tried to escape from the custody. In order to prevent it, Police team resorted to control firing, in which both the accused were grievously injured," the Kokrajhar district police said in a Twitter post.

On July 6, a suspected drug peddler from Manipur was critically injured when he had allegedly tried to escape from police custody near Rani in Kamrup district.

The rising number of encounters in the last two months has whipped up a political furor in Assam with the Opposition alleging that the police has turned "trigger-happy" under the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma-led regime. Justifying the series of encounters since he assumed power, Mr. Sarma had on July 5 said that shooting at criminals "should be the pattern" if they attempt to escape from custody or try to snatch guns from the police to fire at them.

People will pull down BJP govts., says Vivek Bansal

The government, which has harassed farmers, is not a protector but predator: Haryana Cong. in-charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

Haryana Congress in-charge Vivek Bansal on Saturday said the people suffering from inflation, poverty and unemployment would pull the Central and State government down, adding that the government, which had harassed and exploited the peasants, was not a "protector" but "predator".



Congress leaders and workers participating in a bicycle rally in Charkhi Dabri in Haryana on Saturday. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kumari Selja and senior leader Kiran Chaudhary as part of Congress' State-wide protest against the rise in prices of petrol and diesel and cooking gas.

A procession was also taken as part of the demonstration through the city, which included bullock carts and mule carts along with a large number of cycles. Attacking the Modi government for price rise, Mr. Bansal alleged that the country was suffering due to inflation, but Prime Minister Modi didn't have ears to listen to grievances. Referring to the second wave of Covid, Mr. Bansal said there was no oxygen for patients, there were no beds in hospitals and helpless people were dying on the streets, but Mr. Modi's focus was only on the

BJP expels Punjab ex-Minister for 6 years for 'anti-party' acts

against the party, whereupon State BJP chief Ashwani Sharma, on the recommendations of a disciplinary committee, expelled him from the party for six years, the statement said.

Earlier, in a two-page reply to the show-cause notice, Mr. Joshi said he never spoke against the Centre's farm laws and asked the State party chief if it was discipline to talk about farmers. The former Amritsar North MLA asserted that he always spoke about the party's interests. "I neither spoke against the Centre's farm laws nor against the Central leaders," Mr. Joshi replied.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHANDIGARH

The Punjab BJP on Saturday expelled former State Minister Anil Joshi from the party for six years. The action against Mr. Joshi came after he gave his reply to a show-cause notice issued by the BJP's State unit for his "anti-party" activities. According to the notice, Mr. Joshi had been making statements against the Centre, the party's central leadership and policies. Mr. Joshi was expelled on the directions of State unit chief Ashwani Sharma, according to a party statement. Mr. Joshi did not give up his stubborn attitude of going

Virbhadr Singh cremated

Former Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh was cremated with full State honours at a royal crematorium in Jogni Bagh near Shimla's Rampur on Saturday afternoon.

His son Vikramaditya Singh performed the last rites around 4.30 p.m. A police contingent gave the guard of honour and gun salute to the former Chief Minister. Thousands of his well-wishers gathered at the crematorium to bid adieu to the leader.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SHIMLA

Dalit youth beaten up in U.P. village

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A 19-year-old Dalit youth was tied to a tree and thrashed at a village in Kanpur Dehat, Uttar Pradesh, for befriending a woman from another community. A video of the incident was widely shared on social media, following which the police arrested one person. Sarman Shankhwar, who sets up tents for a living, was spotted in the past by the main accused, Sanjay Kumar Pal, while he was talking to his sister.

Mr. Pal, who belongs to an Other Backward Class (OBC) community, objected to this, the police said.

On July 6, Mr. Shankhwar again went to the Pal family house. Following this, Mr. Pal, along with two others, thrashed Mr. Shankhwar with a stick.

Keen to empower co-ops: Shah

Delegation apprises Minister of challenges facing cooperative movement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Union government is determined to make cooperatives and all cooperative institutions more empowered, said Union Minister Amit Shah, who met some leading figures of the country's cooperative sector on Saturday.

The meeting came three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi reallocated the portfolios of his Ministers. Mr. Shah was given charge of the newly created Ministry of Cooperation.

Those who met the Union Home Minister included National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) chairman Dileep Sanghani; chairman and managing director of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) B.S. Nakai and U.S. Awasthi, respectively; and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing



Federation of India (NAFED) chairman Bijender Singh.

"Today met @ncuicoop Chairman Shri Dileep Sanghani, @IFFCO PR Chairman Shri B.S. Nakaiji, Managing Director Shri U.S. Awasthi and @nafedindia Chairman Dr. Bijender Singhji... Under the leadership of Modiji, we are determined to make cooperatives and all cooperative institutions more empowered," Mr. Shah tweeted in Hindi.

Officials added that even though Mr. Shah had not yet assumed charge of the Ministry of Cooperation, he had

begun to meet people.

In the meeting, the Minister asked cooperatives such as IFFCO and KRIBHCO to work in the field of seed production using vacant land of 38,000 hectares as well as in organic farming, the NCUI said in a separate statement.

'Strengthening co-ops'

He also promised that the Union government was committed to strengthening the cooperative movement in the country, the benefits of which would go to the grassroots-level cooperatives, it said.

Mr. Shah also assured the delegation that the same benefits and concessions given to Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) would be provided to primary agriculture cooperatives in the country for strengthening them, it added.

In the meeting, the Minister desired that a conference with representatives of State-level cooperatives should be organised by NCUI, IFFCO and other cooperatives for discussing pertinent issues confronting the cooperative movement.

The delegation apprised the Minister of the problems and challenges confronting the cooperative movement.

The Union government had carved out the new Ministry for Cooperation, which earlier was a small department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Biden nominates Garcetti as Ambassador to India

His closeness to U.S. President seen as key factor in choice

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday nominated Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti to the post of Ambassador to India. Mr. Garcetti's nomination, which had been expected for weeks, was announced by the White House as part of a set of ambassadorial nominations.

Mr. Garcetti, 50, who has been the Mayor of Los Angeles since 2013, is a former intelligence officer from the Navy and is a Rhodes Scholar. He also served on the California Board of the Human Rights Watch, a rights advocacy organisation that has frequently criticised the Indian government's rights record.

Mr. Garcetti, in a statement, said he was honoured to accept the nomination and would "forge partnerships and connections that will help strengthen Los Angeles' place on the world stage". If confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Garcetti would replace Kenneth Juster, a Trump appointee who was the Ambassador till January. The Embassy in New Delhi is being run by interim Chargé



Eric Garcetti

d'affaires Atul Keshap, a South Asia hand and senior career diplomat.

Mr. Garcetti's closeness to Mr. Biden is seen as a key factor in his nomination. Having someone in New Delhi who "can call Joe" is important to both New Delhi and Washington.

"We are excited that President Biden has nominated a reputed leader who has proven himself on several fronts," said M.R. Rangaswami, a Silicon Valley-based investor, who runs a diaspora organisation called Indiaspora. "It speaks volumes to the importance of the U.S.-India relationship that a close and trusted ally of President Biden may be America's point person in Delhi." The India-U.S. relation-

ship has strong support on both sides of the aisle in Washington, though it is not without its critics, particularly with regard to the Modi government's record on democratic processes and minority rights. As India experienced its second wave of COVID-19 earlier this summer, the U.S. government, the private sector and individuals contributed over \$500 million in assistance, according to U.S. government estimates.

The defence and security dimensions have also been growing. While bilateral trade has been growing, the trading relationship has had challenges, especially around data flows, agricultural commodities and preferential trade status for India.

The two countries have sought to develop their relationship via multilateral forums (such as the U.N. Security Council) and smaller "plurilateral" groupings such as the Quad - India, the U.S., Japan and Australia. Plans are in the works for a summit level in-person meeting of the Quad likely to be held in Washington this autumn.

BJP wins big in U.P. block-level polls

State machinery used to capture posts, says SP; clashes reported in 17 districts

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The ruling BJP in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday claimed victory in 635 out of 825 block pramukh posts in the State even as the opposition Samajwadi Party (SP) accused the State government of misusing its administrative machinery to "forcefully capture" the posts in the high-intensity elections.

Meanwhile, the voting and nomination for the polls were marred by scuffles, clashes and firing in some districts, including Etawah where an officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police, City, was allegedly slapped while trying to prevent a crowd of BJP supporters



Celebratory mode: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and BJP leader Swatantra Dev Singh celebrating in Lucknow. *PTI

from breaching the barricade near a polling booth.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the BJP and its ally, the Apna Dal, were set to win 635 seats. Out of the 825 seats that went to the polls in 74 districts, the BJP had candidates backed by it

on 735 seats and the Apna Dal in 14, while on 76 seats the BJP had friendly fights, Mr. Adityanath said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated his party workers and Mr. Adityanath for the victory. "The benefits that the public got from the

Yogi Adityanath government's politics and schemes for public welfare have been reflected in the party's massive victory," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Adityanath, in turn, said the victory was a result of the faith of the people in Mr. Modi's "mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas".

The State police said incidents of clashes, sloganeering and scuffles were reported in 17 districts.

SP president Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the BJP used its power to get votes in its favour, and that block pramukh candidates and kshetra panchayat members were openly kidnapped in the State.

Three LeT militants killed in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Three local Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants were killed in an anti-militancy operation of the security forces in Anantnag, south Kashmir, on Saturday.

"All the three slain were affiliated to the LeT. One militant, identified as Arif Hajam from Anantnag, was involved in the killing of a Territorial Army soldier on June 6, 2019," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said. The three militants were trapped at Kawarigam village on Saturday.

The two others were identified as Basit Ahmad and Suhail Ahmad.

Vlogger's wife challenges govt's move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

YouTube vlogger Karl Edward Rice's wife has approached the Delhi High Court challenging the Central government's alleged "arbitrary and unreasonable" decision to blacklist him and deny him visa to enter India.

The petitioner said by virtue of denying a visa to her husband, who had been "arbitrarily blacklisted" by the

respondents (Centre), she was deprived from living with him, thereby violating her fundamental right to life and dignity as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The plea, which is likely to come up for hearing next week, said petitioner Manisha Malik and her husband, popularly known as Karl Rock, were YouTube vloggers and had visited most of India to capture its beauty

and contribute to the promotion of tourism here.

Union Home Ministry officials had on Friday said the New Zealand national has been restricted from entering India till the next year for violating terms and conditions of his visa. He was found to be doing business activities on a tourist visa and also violating other visa conditions, they had said without specifying the violations.

Will hold stir against price rise: Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With the spiralling fuel prices coupled with the food inflation hitting household budgets, the Congress is planning an extensive nationwide campaign on the issue.

Sources said a series of press meets would be kicked off from next week with a press conference by former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram in Delhi.

Assigned cities

Senior leaders have been assigned a metropolitan city each to amplify the party's message.

As per the schedule, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge would speak in Mumbai, Gaurav Gogoi in Kolkata, Shashi Tharoor in Chennai, Anand Sharma in Jaipur, Manish Tewari in Ahmedabad, Deepender Hooda in Hyderabad, Sachin Pilot in Dehradun and Kamal Nath in Lucknow.

Repeal Defence Services Ordinance, Raja tells PM

'Legal rights of workers being denied'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Defence Services Ordinance, 2021 (EDSO) snatches the constitutional, democratic and legal rights available to civilian workers in the defence establishments and needs to be withdrawn, Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D. Raja said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

The EDSO provides for the dismissal of employees without even an inquiry, which is against the constitutional protection given to a Central government employee. The Ordinance also provides for imprisonment of any union leader calling for a strike and any employee participating in a strike.

"You will appreciate that employees and their trade unions resort to strike action as a last weapon when all other means of protest/representation on genuine



D. Raja

grievances are ignored by the employer," Mr. Raja wrote.

Protesting employees

The employees of 41 ordinance factories are protesting against the government decision to reorganise the factories into seven corporations.

In his letter, Mr. Raja asked: "The government has already assured the federations in writing that none of the ordinance factories would be closed. Does the government still stands by this assurance?"

Unions to hold stir against Ordinance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A joint platform of 10 Central trade unions (CTUs) on Saturday called for nationwide protests on July 23 against the Essential Defence Services Ordinance, 2021, and the larger government effort to privatise defence production.

"The CTUs note with concern that, simultaneously, a substantial part of the defence related production is being outsourced to private sector, both indigenous and foreign, permitting 100% FDI... The Ordinance bans the right to strike," it said.

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY
PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION (A Central University)
ADMISSION NOTIFICATION
Applications are invited for admission to the **PGCTE (DISTANCE MODE) Programme** for the academic year 2021-2022.
The application form, with instructions, is available on the University's website, www.efluuniversity.ac.in
The last date for receipt of filled in applications is July 26, 2021. Sd/- Registrar /lc

Big OBC representation in Cabinet: Adityanath

It represents India, says U.P. CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday evoked the ideals of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia, considered an icon by the Opposition Samajwadi Party, to state the efforts made by the BJP government for the Other Backward Class (OBC) communities.

Mr. Adityanath said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had granted constitutional status to the OBC Commission and provided big representation to OBC leadership in his Cabinet.

He said Lohia believed a mature democracy was only

possible by giving power to the backwards. "If Lohiaji were here today, he would have been full of joy to see his thoughts bearing fruit," said Mr. Adityanath in a series of tweets in Hindi.

The U.P. CM, whose party banks on the consolidation of the sizeable non-Yadav OBC votes, said the representation and participation of people envisioned by Lohia and B.R. Ambedkar were being realised from "sarkaar to samaaj" or government to society under the leadership of Mr. Modi.

Mr. Modi's Cabinet really represents entire India, he said.

KISHORE VAIGYANIK PROTSAHAN YOJANA
किशोर वैज्ञानिक प्रोत्साहन योजना
KVPY
NATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR STUDENTS INTERESTED IN RESEARCH CAREERS
KVPY Fellowship-2021

- Stream SA:** Students enrolled in/planning to join XI Standard (Science Subjects) during the academic year 2021-22 and aspiring to join an undergraduate program in basic sciences (B.Sc./B.S./B.Stat./B.Math./Int. M.Sc./Int. M.S.) during the academic year 2023-24.
- Stream SX:** Students enrolled in/planning to join XII standard (Science Subjects) during the academic year 2021-22 and aspiring to join an undergraduate program in basic sciences (B.Sc./B.S./B.Stat./B.Math./Int. M.Sc./Int. M.S.) during the academic year 2022-23.
- Stream SB:** Students enrolled in/planning to join First Year B.Sc./B.S./B.Stat./B.Math./Int. M.Sc./Int. M.S. in basic sciences during the academic year 2021-22.

Rank certificates will also be available to an extended list of candidates.

1	Start of online submission of Application	12 th July 2021@ 1700 Hrs.
2	Last date for closing of online Application	25 th August 2021
3	KVPY Aptitude Test	7 th November 2021

For more details please visit: <http://www.kvpy.iisc.ac.in>
Convener, KVPY, IISc, Bengaluru-560 012

For close to 4 decades, the men's hockey teams representing India were the undisputed kings of the event at the Olympics. The technique and the skills of our sportsmen were so superior, some of the competitors even believed that the Indians used black magic to win matches. Good that the players were too busy collecting medals to pay heed to the gossip.

THE WESTERN WORLD HAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED INDIA THE LAND OF MAGICIANS. LOOKS LIKE THEY HAD THEIR REASONS.

For more such stories and a comprehensive coverage of the Tokyo Olympics 2020, get your 5 Collector's Edition issues dedicated to the games from Sportstar.

SPORTSTAR

Grab your copy at the nearest store or visit www.sportstar.thehindu.com/subscription
To catch all the live updates, visit www.sportstar.thehindu.com

CoWIN crucial to service delivery: FM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said India would share the CoWIN platform with other nations for free, saying that humanitarian needs outweigh commercial benefits.

On the second day of the ongoing G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting, Ms. Sitharaman shared India's successful experience in integrating technology with inclusive service delivery during the pandemic, the Finance Ministry said in a series of tweets. The CoWIN application was key to vaccination efforts.

"In policies for recovery session, FM discussed 3 catalysts of economic recovery: #Digitalization #ClimateAction & #SustainableInfrastructure; shared India's successful experience in integrating technology with inclusive service delivery during the pandemic," a tweet from the Ministry said.

Calibrated opening up is key: Centre

States advised to closely monitor situation and take prompt action to contain COVID, govt. tells HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Union government has informed the Delhi High Court that it has asked all States and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure strict compliance with the national directives for COVID-19 management and take necessary measures under the Disaster Management Act.

An order was also issued to them to consider the implementation of targeted and prompt actions for COVID-19 management until July 31, the Union government has said.

The government also stated that while the opening of activities after a decline in COVID-19 cases was essential, States and UTs must ensure that "the whole process was carefully calibrated".

The statement was made in a status report filed by the Union government through its standing counsel, Anil Soni, in connection with the High Court's *suo motu* proceedings on violation of COVID-19 protocols in various markets in the national capital.



Fighting the virus: The Centre's framework has a five-fold strategy for COVID-19 management — test, track, treat, vaccinate and comply with COVID-appropriate behaviour. — A.M. FARUQUI

The Union government submitted that national directives for COVID-19 management included face masks, social distancing, not spitting in public places, working from home, staggering of work/business hours, screenings and frequent sanitisation.

Clarifying that the decision to impose or ease res-

trictions had to be based on an assessment of the ground situation, the Union government added that State/UT authorities should ensure that there was "continuous focus on containment efforts" and "uniformity in implementing graded restrictions/relaxations".

The High Court was also informed that the "frame-

work for implementation of prompt and target action" was also shared by the Union government with the States.

The framework, the government said, had a "five-fold strategy for effective management of COVID-19", — test, track, treat, vaccinate and adherence to COVID-appropriate behaviour.

The framework also em-

phasised that "COVID-19 management can succeed only through a whole of government and whole of society approach".

The States were nonetheless at liberty to plan additional public health measures based on their local situation, it said.

The Union government also submitted that a letter was addressed to the Chief Secretaries of all States and Administrators of UTs, stressing effective management of COVID-19 by following advisories issued by the Home and Health Ministries.

A Vacation Bench of the High Court had initiated a public interest litigation (PIL) petition last month after it took note of certain photographs sent to one of the High Court judges on WhatsApp by an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) doctor showing scant regard for COVID-19 protocols by street vendors in markets.

The court had observed that such breaches would only hasten the third wave of COVID-19.

'Caregivers of disabled need priority for jobs'

Social Justice Ministry supports appeal

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry earlier this week asked the Health and Family Welfare Ministry to ensure that caregivers of persons with disabilities (PwD) are vaccinated against COVID-19 at the same centre as the PwD on priority basis.

The Department of Empowerment of PwD (DEPWD) under the Ministry wrote in an office memorandum on July 7 that it had received an email from Anjee Agarwal, a PwD, requesting the facility.

"Caregivers are required to come in close proximity with persons with disabilities for providing support services to PwDs to enable them to perform activities of daily living. As such, it is important to ensure vaccination of such caregivers alongside persons with disabilities," the DEPWD wrote.

The Health Ministry was asked to issue instructions to all Central and State health-

care authorities and vaccination centres to this effect.

Ms. Agarwal, an activist and wheelchair user, said she had to go to a West Delhi school for the first dose with her two caregivers.

"To my utter shock, upon reaching the Tilak Nagar school, the people at the vaccination centre refused to vaccinate my caregivers with the excuse that they were not disabled and the vaccination drive was organised for PwD," she said.

She said her caregivers were finally able to get the vaccine after the intervention of senior officials.

"I'm a person with high support needs. There are other PwD who cannot raise their voice like I did or write to the authorities. We remain at risk if the people assisting us are not vaccinated. And many PwD are at greater risk of severe disease if they get infected," she said, adding that an order or instructions to vaccination centres was the need of the hour.



Keeping track: States continue to test for COVID-19 as the tourism sector opens up. — SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Home Secretary Bhalla sounds note of caution

Second wave not yet over, he says

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Saturday reviewed the steps taken by State governments for checking the spread of COVID-19 in hill stations and other tourist destinations.

The overall management of the situation and the vaccination status in Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and West Bengal was discussed. "The Union Home Secretary sounded a note of caution in view of media reports showing blatant disregard of COVID-appropriate behaviour," said a government release.

Mr. Bhalla said the second wave was not yet over; and the States should ensure strict adherence to the protocols.

The case positivity rate in

certain districts of Rajasthan, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh was over 10%, which was a cause for concern.

The States were asked to follow the five-fold strategy of test-track-treat-vaccinate and COVID appropriate behaviour.

"Adequate health infrastructure preparedness [especially in rural, peri-urban and tribal areas] was also advised, to tackle any potential future surge," it said.

Among those who attended the meeting were NITI Aayog Member (Health) V.K. Paul, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, Indian Council for Medical Research Director General Balram Bhargava, the Chief Secretaries, DGPs and Principal Secretaries (Health) of the eight States.

Colleges to reopen in Gujarat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

With COVID-19 cases declining, the Gujarat government on Friday announced that schools for Standard XII and colleges for undergraduate programmes will be allowed to reopen from July 15. However, the presence of students will be on a voluntary basis and those not attending the classes will not face any adverse action for their absence.

"We have decided to reopen the education institutions from July 15 in a phased manner with 50% strength initially. All COVID-19 norms will be enforced by the school and colleges who reopen their classes," a State government release said.

Also, coaching centres for Standard IX onwards will be allowed to reopen with COVID-19 norms, including maintaining distances and reduced participation of students.

Meanwhile, the State government has also decided to lift the night curfew in 10 out of 18 urban areas amid a sharp drop in daily new COVID-19 cases. Currently, a curfew between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. is in force in 18 cities and towns. From July 10, the night curfew will be in force in only eight major cities — Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh and Gandhinagar.

Packed crowd



In good faith: Devotees waiting to offer prayers at the Lord Jagannath temple ahead of the annual Rath Yatra in Ahmedabad. While many wore masks, social distancing was not followed. — AP

HC orders inquiry into 'medical negligence'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

The Orissa High Court has ordered an inquiry into alleged medical negligence in the treatment of patients during COVID-19 pandemic in the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) at Burla, a premier State-run medical institute in western Odisha.

The Orissa HC had received a complaint through

e-mail from a person identified as Gyanadutta Chouhan about lack of proper medical facilities at VIMSAR and insensitivity shown by doctors and paramedics.

On the direction of the court, the Sambalpur District Collector had constituted a three-member committee to investigate the veracity of the allegations. The committee in its report said there was no shortage of medicine and no instances of lack of

treatment. Subsequently, petitioner Mr. Chouhan had filed nine affidavits of persons whose close relatives purportedly suffered on account of lack of proper or timely treatment at VIMSAR during the pandemic.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice Savitri Ratho observed that each of the nine affidavits revealed prima facie that the victims did not receive the requisite

medical treatment at VIMSAR and that needless deaths had occurred as a result. Stating that these were only prima facie conclusions and the proof of the averments would require to be established by a proper inquiry, the HC appointed A.B.S. Naidu, a former District Judge, as inquiry officer to examine the instances set out in the nine affidavits and whether there was medical negligence.

Six held for alleged human trafficking

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The South Bengal Frontier of the BSF arrested 30 women from Bangladesh who were illegally crossing the international border between January to July 10. Six Indian nationals, whom they described as touts for allegedly trafficking these women into the country, were also arrested.

According to BSF officials, most of the women were lured by these traffickers on the pretext of jobs or marriage.

Subhasree Raptan of the Goranbose Bram Bikash Kendra and Taftesh, a collective working against trafficking, said, "There are scores of cases where survivors of trafficking are rescued from States like Maharashtra and Delhi, but such cases are not taken up for inter-State investigation."

She said the draft of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Act, 2021 Bill has not defined the role of the Anti Human Trafficking Units.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) has invited suggestions for the draft.

Ms. Raptan suggested that there be fast-track courts for trafficking cases and emphasis on streamlining the implementation of the compensation process for victims.

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Dhama seeks PM's guidance on yatras

Uttarakhand Chief Minister calls on Narendra Modi in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and sought his directions on the possible third wave of coronavirus, the proposed kanwad yatra and the Char Dham Yatra against the backdrop of the pandemic.

He also sought the establishment of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Kumaon region on the lines of AIIMS, Rishikesh.

Mr. Dhama said he sought the blessings of the Prime Minister. "Sought his directions on the State's development, the possible third wave of COVID-19, Char Dham Yatra and kanwad yatra. The Prime Minister assured all possible help for the State's development," he tweeted.

The PMO also tweeted pictures of the meeting.

On Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's comments asking why the people of the



Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhama with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

hill State, which generates electricity, cannot get free power like the consumers in the national capital, Mr. Dhama said AAP leader may have his agenda but the only agenda for the BJP is the State's development and offering the best to people.

According to an official release in Dehradun, Mr. Dhama said an AIIMS in Kumaon will give access to the people of the region to world class medical facilities, adding the State government will give land for it.

Mr. Dhama also sought speedy implementation of

the 300 mW Lakhwar multi-purpose project from which six States — U.P., Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh — will benefit. The project has all the clearances and work on it can begin after a Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs by the Centre gives its go-ahead, he said.

Meets Ministers

The meeting lasted one hour and 15 minutes. Mr. Dhama also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Visva-Bharati yet to pay June salaries

Delay is being seen as a fallout of feud between V-C and faculty

BISHWANATH GHOSH
KOLKATA

Santiniketan, whose economy largely depends on the Visva-Bharati, is witnessing — according to teachers — a "human crisis" with the university yet to pay its staff for the month of June.

Salaries in Visva-Bharati are always paid on the last day of every month, but the salaries for June were yet to be released until the evening of July 10. What is surprising is that the university has not put out any circular explaining the delay. Its PRO, the only official there authorised to speak to the media, did not respond to calls for comment.

"This is an unprecedented situation. A human crisis is building up in Santiniketan, considering its economy depends on Visva-Bharati. People have EMIs and rents to pay. Think of the elderly pensioners — how will they survive, that too in these difficult times," said a professor who has spent 25 years at the un-

iversity. So unpleasant is the situation now that an organisation called the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights on Saturday filed an FIR at the Santiniketan police station against the non-payment of salaries. Local media is pointing out how retired lower-rung employees are left with no money and are unable to buy medicines.

'Informed the PM'

Many in the campus see the delay as a fallout of the running feud between Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakrabarty and the Visva-Bharati University Faculty Association (VBUFA), which has been openly critical of the V-C. The Union has, from time to time, written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chancellor of the university, bringing to his attention the alleged high-handed functioning of the V-C and earlier this week had also raised the issue of non-payment of salaries.

According to a union

member, most employees in Visva-Bharati got less salary for the month of May without explanation and when a professor sought to know the reason during an online faculty meeting, he was asked by the V-C to take charge of salary disbursement. A verbal showdown between the two followed and the delay in the salary was a result of that spat, the union member said, adding that the V-C, during another meeting of faculty members held during the pandemic, had openly ridiculed teachers "for earning fat salaries while sitting at home".

This is not the first time that salaries have been delayed. Last year too, the disbursement was delayed during February, June and July. The reason given was lack of funds but the Education Ministry insisted that there was no such paucity and had pulled up the authorities. But this is the longest the employees have remained unpaid.

Afghanistan to rush troops to border

Taliban say they have taken over an arc of territory from the Iranian border to the frontier with China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Afghan authorities prepared on Saturday to try to retake a key border crossing seized by the Taliban in a sweeping offensive that the insurgents claim has helped capture a vast swath of the violence-ravaged nation.

As U.S. troops continued their withdrawal, the Taliban said its fighters had seized two crossings in western Afghanistan – completing an arc of territory from the Iranian border to the frontier with China.

It now held 85% of the country, a Taliban official said on Friday, controlling about 250 of Afghanistan's nearly 400 districts – a claim impossible to independently verify, and disputed by the government.

On Friday Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP their fighters had captured the border town of Islam Qala on the Iranian frontier and the Torghundi crossing with Turkmenistan.

Herat Governor spokesman Jilani Farhad said on Sa-



In the ruins: A journalist films the site of a bomb explosion in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Saturday. Police say they are investigating the explosion that killed multiple people. • AP

turday the authorities were deploying fresh troops to retake Islam Qala post, the biggest trade crossing between Iran and Afghanistan. "They will be sent there soon," he said.

The Afghan government has repeatedly dismissed the

Taliban's gains as having little strategic value, but the seizure of multiple border crossings and the taxes they generate will likely fill the group's coffers with new revenue.

In a clear sign fighting was getting closer to major urban

centres, an official at one hospital in Kandahar – the country's second-largest city and the birthplace of the Taliban – said on Saturday dozens of wounded had been admitted in the past 24 hours, including at least 15 service members.

With the Taliban having routed much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, the government holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air.

Severe strain

The air force was under severe strain even before the Taliban's lightning offensive overwhelmed the government's northern and western positions, putting further pressure on the country's limited aircraft and pilots.

On Thursday, President Joe Biden said the U.S. military mission would end on August 31. Afghan commandos clashed with the insurgents this week in a provincial capital for the first time, with thousands of people fleeing Qala-i-Naw in northwest Badghis province.

On Friday, the Afghan Defence Ministry said government forces had "full control" of the city, but a local official said on Saturday the insurgents had attacked again during the night.

Haiti asks U.S., UN for troops as fears of instability grow

U.S. is sending FBI and other agents to Port-au-Prince

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PORT-AU-PRINCE

Haiti has asked Washington and the UN for troops to secure its ports, airport and other strategic sites after the assassination of President Jovenel Moise opened a power vacuum in the crisis-hit Caribbean nation, an official said Friday.

The U.S. has already said it will send FBI and other agents to Port-au-Prince, two days after Moise was shot dead in his home.

In the wake of the slaying "we thought that mercenaries could destroy some infrastructure to create chaos ... During a conversation with the U.S. secretary of state and the UN we made this request," Elections Minister Mathias Pierre told AFP.

The U.S. State Department and Pentagon both confirmed receiving a request for "security and investigative assistance" and said officials remain in con-



Chaos reigns: Haitians gather in front of the U.S. Embassy in the country's capital Port-au-Prince on Friday. • AP

tact with Port-au-Prince, but did not specify whether military troops would be deployed.

The UN did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A UN diplomatic source had earlier indicated that a Security Council resolution was needed to do as the Haitians had asked.

Washington had already signaled its willingness to help the Haitian investigation, and White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki added

Friday that senior FBI and other officials would be heading to the Caribbean as soon as possible.

The development came as questions swirled about who could have masterminded the audacious assassination, with most members of a hit squad of Colombians and Americans either dead or in custody, and no clear motive made public.

Amid the uncertainty, three men are being touted as potential leaders.

China evacuates citizens from Afghanistan

Foreign Minister set to discuss Afghan situation with counterparts from Russia, India, Pakistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China evacuated 210 nationals from Afghanistan as U.S. troops stepped up their withdrawal from the war-torn nation, the airline that carried out the emergency chartered flight said.

A Xiamen Airlines flight departed the capital Kabul for the city of Wuhan, Hubei province, on July 2 carrying Chinese citizens who had been stranded in Afghanistan, it said in a Thursday social media post.

Among them were 22 peo-

ple who were later confirmed to be infected with coronavirus, despite the airline taking "top-notch epidemic prevention measures" during the flight and upon landing, it added.

COVID patients

The Chinese Foreign Ministry confirmed that recent returnees included coronavirus patients and called on all nationals to leave Afghanistan, without revealing further specifics of the evacuation flight.

"In order to ensure the sa-

fety of Chinese citizens in Afghanistan, the Chinese government has reminded citizens in Afghanistan to leave the country as soon as possible and provided necessary assistance," its Consular Affairs Department said in a Wednesday social media post.

Chinese health authorities reported 25 new imported coronavirus cases in Hubei province on Wednesday, 22 of which were from the Kabul flight.

The flight was organised by the Chinese government,

reported the state media tabloid *Global Times*.

In recent weeks, Beijing has harshly criticised what it sees as a hasty and chaotic withdrawal by Washington.

"The U.S. disregards its responsibilities and duties and withdraws troops from Afghanistan hastily, dumping the mess and war on the Afghan people and countries in the region," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a routine briefing Friday.

"The U.S., as the original culprit of the Afghan issue,

bears unavoidable responsibility for the current situation in Afghanistan."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is set to discuss the deteriorating Afghan security situation with counterparts from Russia, India, Pakistan and numerous Central Asian countries at a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation next week.

The evacuation flight was hailed as a patriotic victory by Chinese social media users, with related trending hashtags gaining more than 300 million views on Weibo.

Bangladesh factory owner held after fire kills 52

It had employed children as young as 11

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

The owner of a factory where 52 people died in a fire was arrested for murder Saturday as it emerged that children as young as 11 had been working there.

Police said Abul Hashem and four of his sons were among eight people detained over the inferno, which broke out Thursday and raged for more than a day. A separate inquiry has been launched into the use of child labour at the food factory.

Jayedul Alam, police chief for Narayanganj district where the factory is located, said the entrance had been padlocked along with multiple other breaches of safety regulations. "It was a delib-



A view of the burnt factory in Rugganj industrial town, on Saturday. • AFP

erate murder," the police chief told AFP.

Before his arrest, Mr. Hashem had told *The Daily Star* newspaper the fire "may have been a result of workers' carelessness" and a discarded cigarette could have sparked the carnage.

U.S. city removes two Confederate statues

They had become the focus of protests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CHARLOTTESVILLE

The southern U.S. city of Charlottesville on Saturday took down two statues honoring Civil War generals for the pro-slavery Confederacy which had become the focus of protests, including a deadly 2017 rally of white supremacists.

The statues of generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson are among hundreds of Confederate monuments in the United States now widely considered symbols of racism, even if their supporters argue they are a historical legacy.

Workers in the Virginia city used a crane to remove the statues – which depicted the men in uniform

mounted on horses – as a crowd watched and cheered. No clashes were immediately reported.

Mayor's statement

"Taking down this statue is one small step closer to the goal of helping Charlottesville, Virginia, and America, grapple with the sin of being willing to destroy Black people for economic gain," Charlottesville Mayor Nikuyah Walker, who is African-American, told reporters before the monuments' removal.

Tensions over the fate of the Lee statue led to violence in August 2017, when a white nationalist drove his car into a crowd of demonstrators in Charlottesville, killing a woman.

IN BRIEF



Black Sea drills showcase NATO-Ukraine relations

ABOARD USS ROSS
Ukraine and NATO have conducted Black Sea drills involving dozens of warships in a two-week show of their strong defense ties and capability following a confrontation between Russia's military forces and a British destroyer off Crimea last month. • AP

Bandits kill 35 villagers in northwest Nigeria

KANO
Armed raiders killed at least 35 people in five villages in northwest Nigeria's Zamfara State, police said on Saturday, in the latest deadly attack to hit the violence-torn region. "Thirty-five people were killed by the bandits in the five villages," State police spokesman Mohammed Shehu told AFP. • AFP

Indian-origin aeronautical engineer to fly into space

She will be part of Virgin Galactic flight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HOUSTON

Sirisha Bandla, a 34-year-old aeronautical engineer, is set to become the third Indian-origin woman to head to space when she flies as part of Virgin Galactic's first fully crewed flight test on Sunday.

Ms. Bandla, who was born in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, and brought up in Houston, Texas, will join Sir Richard Branson, the company's billionaire founder, and five others on board Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo Unity to make a journey to the edge of space from New Mexico.

"I am so incredibly honoured to be a part of the amazing crew of #Unity22, and to be a part of a company whose mission is to make space available to all," she tweeted.



Sirisha Bandla

Ms. Bandla will be astronaut no 004 and her flight role will be Researcher Experience, according to her profile on Virgin Galactic.

She will become the third Indian-origin woman to fly into space after Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams.

Ms. Bandla started in her role as the Vice President of Government Affairs and Research Operations at Virgin Galactic in January 2021.

Iran: 'cyber disruption' hits transport

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran's transportation Ministry said Saturday a "cyber disruption" had affected its computer systems and website, while its the country's national railway company denied reports of being hit by a cyber attack.

The disruption started before noon (0730 GMT), taking down the body's website and links associated with it, the Ministry said in a statement reported by state news agency IRNA.

It said "technical experts" were investigating the issue and will announce when they are back up, without elaborating further. The website was still inaccessible around 5 p.m. (1230 GMT).

The announcement came a day after Fars news agency reported "unprecedented chaos" at stations.

No more confusion

STEP for Competitive Exams is your one-stop solution to ace English requirements for any exam!

PSC

UPSC

SSC

IBPS

STEP for Competitive Exams is a 40-day custom-built course to help you improve your English skills and crack competitive exams. It includes relevant video lessons, interactive practice sets & exercises on key topics:

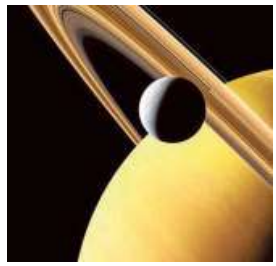
- Grammar - Extensive coverage of concepts like reported speech, direct & indirect speech, subject and verb agreement
- Writing - Para jumbling, word reordering, idioms and phrases
- Reading - Step-by-step video lessons to tackle reading comprehension problems. Practice sets with fully solved solutions
- Vocabulary & Interview preparation - Answering common interview questions, building effective presentations.

Scan the QR code

Limited seats only

Visit [BIT.LY/S4CEPF](https://bit.ly/s4cepfp)

SNAPSHOTS



Life on Enceladus?

A study published in the journal *Nature Astronomy* analysed data collected by Cassini spacecraft from the giant water plumes erupting from Enceladus, one of Saturn's moons. The study has concluded that these data imply either microbial activity or processes not involving life forms but which are very different from those known to occur on Earth. The study thus holds the tantalising possibility of evidence of microbial life on Enceladus.



Tipping point

The current rates of plastic emissions across the globe may trigger effects that it may not be possible to reverse, according to a study published in the journal *Science*. As of 2016, total emission of plastics into water bodies was between 9 and 23 million metric tonnes per year. If things continue as they are, this is expected to double by 2025. Plastic pollution, together with environmental triggers can lead to exacerbation of climate change, ocean biodiversity loss, the study speculates.

Can schools be reopened during the pandemic?

It is more than a year since the first nationwide lockdown to contain COVID-19 in India started in March 2020, when schools were closed

TARUN BHATNAGAR

By the end of June 2021 over 150 million children in 19 countries were either attending virtual classes or had no schooling at all. It has been more than a year since the first nationwide lockdown to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in India in March 2020 when schools were closed and online classes came in vogue. Parents, teachers, administrators, governments and children themselves have raised major concerns over this potentially life-altering decision for the school-going children.

The recent second wave of the pandemic has made everyone all the more anxious and apprehensive about the safety and wellbeing of children. This situation has not only led to the loss of education but also their social and mental wellbeing with hitherto unknown long-term consequences.

Lessons learnt

Moving beyond the emotional conundrum, let us look at what we have learnt over this past year about COVID-19 and its impact on children so as to make a scientific rationale towards the return of young pupils to the classrooms and hallways of school buildings.

Children get infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus but the overall risk of infection remains much lower than that of the adults. Studies suggest that children are half as susceptible to infection as adults

mainly due to the biological difference of having fewer ACE2 receptors and that too mostly in the upper respiratory tract. These are the receptors in human cells through which the spike protein of the virus binds to the cells. Although mutations in spike proteins have been identified among the virus variants such as beta and delta, it is expected that children will continue to be less susceptible as long as ACE2 receptors remain the major binding sites for the virus.

It is known that 90% of infections among children remain asymptomatic or mild, and although the few children with severe disease will need hospital care, only 1-2% require intensive care unit management. Children with underlying health conditions could be at higher risk for severe disease. With a low incidence of 12 per 100,000 children, according to the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, the most life-threatening complication that can occur is called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) but most children have recovered well with few deaths mostly attributable to management issues.

The last nationwide serosurvey (December 2020-January 2021) reported that the proportion of children 10-17 years old with prior infection was similar to the adults at around 25%. This indicates that children were not at a higher risk of infection than the adults. It has been sug-

Getting back to school

Some measures to ensure safe return of young pupils to school



- Classroom routines redesigned to limit student interaction inside and outside classrooms
- High levels of testing and contact tracing within schools
- Vaccination of teachers and other school staff should be prioritised

- Stringent adherence to universal masking for staff and students, matched by hand hygiene, physical distancing, adequate ventilation
- The level of community transmission in a district should be the key parameter to guide school reopening

The recent second wave of the pandemic has made everyone all the more anxious and apprehensive about the safety and wellbeing of children.

gested that children had a relatively higher infection rate during the second wave of the pandemic. However, we did not see any rise in the overall proportion of COVID-19 positive children in the country.

Global studies

Globally and in India schools have never been reported as the focal point of any super-spreader event. Data over the past year from several

countries where schools were functional at various levels clearly show that the rate of COVID-19 transmission among students in schools was much lower than in the community.

These include studies from the U.S. of more than 90,000 students and teachers in North Carolina, and over 20,000 students and staff from 17 schools in rural Wisconsin. Researchers in Norway, Salt Lake City and New York City, U.S. found attack rates ranging from 0.5% to 1.7% in schools suggesting that infected students do not tend to spread the virus at school. Very low secondary attack rates - the risk of spread from one infected person to others in a closed

setting - have been reported from school-based investigations in Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, Singapore and the U.S. However, attack rates of around 15% were reported from Israel when schools reopened in mid-May 2020 and were attributed to poor implementation of mitigation measures. We also need to watch out for the emergence of variants and the influence on transmission and detection of the virus in children.

The level of community transmission in a district should be the key parameter to guide a graded approach to reopening of schools. For this purpose, a matrix of two indicators - the reported number of cases per

100,000 population and the test positivity rate - could be helpful to categorise districts. Pragmatic thresholds for each will need to be delineated upon by public health experts. Districts with the lowest case burden as well as positivity rate would be the ideal places for resuming in-person classes.

Safe return plan

We need to have a safe return plan. This would entail stringent adherence to universal masking for staff and students, hand hygiene, physical distancing (more so between the students themselves) and adequate ventilation (keeping doors and windows open, use of fans and no air conditioning). Outdoor areas may be used as classrooms, when possible. Classroom routines will have to be redesigned to limit student interaction inside and outside classrooms, such as staggered timetables for different classes, fewer classes per day, shorter duration of classes etc. High levels of testing and contact tracing within schools would be critical after reopening of schools.

Children are likely to remain asymptomatic even when infected, and hence facility for routine testing of students once or twice every week is a must. Although PCR testing is the current norm, antigen tests with high sensitivity and specificity and authorised for children and asymptomatic indivi-

duals are in the pipeline and could greatly increase access to testing in school settings. Protocols for contact tracing of infected students or staff, quarantine, isolation, temperature checks and symptom screening should be in place.

Younger children seem to be less likely to get sick or transmit the virus than teenagers and adults. Modelling studies indicate that reopening secondary schools will impact community transmission more than reopening primary schools. These findings suggest that reopening of primary schools should take precedence over secondary schools until the community prevalence becomes relatively low to allow secondary schools to reopen. Vaccination of teachers and other school staff should be prioritised.

It would not only influence transmission inside school premises but overall high vaccination coverage will reduce the COVID-19 burden paving the way towards safer schools.

As parents, educators, health officials and public administrators now is the time to ask not if our schools should reopen but how and when we can make it happen. The intellectual, social, emotional and mental development of our children is at stake.

(Dr. Tarun Bhatnagar is a senior scientist at Chennai's National Institute of Epidemiology, an ICMR institution.)

Cuba develops the world's first conjugate vaccine for COVID-19

The design and manufacturing of the conjugate vaccines allows them to be stored in regular refrigeration settings of 2-8 degree Celsius

JACOB KOSHY

Cuba's State-run corporation, BioFarma, said on Friday that its indigenously produced Soberana 2 vaccine was 91.2% efficacious in phase-3 trials. This follows closely on an announcement that another of its vaccines, Abdala, had reported an efficacy of 92.8% in late stage trials.

The greater-than-90% efficacy puts them in a select league; however, unlike the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines that had reported an efficacy of over 90%, both the Soberana and Abdala are three-shot vaccines.

Both are subunit vaccines, meaning that a part of the virus forms the antigen and is hitched on to another construct. In Abdala the spike protein of the coronavirus is combined with a chemically

manufactured adjuvant, whereas in Soberana 2, the spike protein is chemically linked to the tetanus toxoid, making it a conjugate vaccine. The design and manufacturing allows the vaccine to be stored in regular refrigeration settings of 2-8 degree Celsius.

Conjugate vaccines

The most common conjugate vaccines are those used for Haemophilus influenzae type b and the pneumococcal bacteria. However, a unique aspect of the Soberana vaccine is that it is by far the only one among coronavirus vaccine candidates that relies on the conjugate vaccine technology.

Marlene Ramirez Gonzales, one of the scientists involved in the Cuban vaccine development project, in a March letter to the *British*

The island's four vaccine candidates are subunit vaccines - the type for which Cuba has the greatest know-how.

MARLENE RAMIREZ GONZALES
CUBAN VACCINE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Medical Journal explained the rationale:

"The [Caribbean] island's four vaccine candidates against COVID-19 are developed as subunit vaccines, one of the most economical approaches and the type for which Cuba has the greatest know-how and infrastructure. From protein S - the antigen or part of the SARS-CoV2 virus that all COVID vaccines target because it induces the strongest immune response in humans - Cuban [vaccine] candidates are based only on the part that is involved in contact with the

cell's receptor: the RBD (receptor-binding domain) which is also the one that induces the greatest number of neutralising antibodies...Cuba had already developed another vaccine with this principle. It is Cheimi-Hib, 'the first of its kind to be approved in Latin America and the second in the world', against haemophilus influenzae type b, coccobacilli responsible for diseases such as meningitis, pneumonia and epiglottitis."

Experts say that while there are no inherent disadvantages to taking a conjugate-vaccine approach for coronavirus vaccines, they have generally been used against bacteria and not viruses.

The two parts of a conjugate vaccine are typically connected by chains of polysaccharides, according to

Subunit vaccines of Cuba



- In Abdala, the spike protein of the coronavirus is combined with a chemically manufactured adjuvant
- In Soberana 2, the spike protein is chemically linked to the tetanus toxoid, making it a conjugate vaccine

• In a subunit vaccine, a part of the virus forms the antigen, and it is hitched on to another construct

epidemiologist and public health expert, Chandrakant Lahariya, and they generally induce a weaker immune response in young children. "Cuba has a long history of vaccine development and has developed certain platforms that work to their advantage. So it makes sense for them to adopt this route. There is nothing inherently disadvantageous, though, to

this approach," he said.

Effective response

For an effective vaccine response, not only antibodies but even killer T-cells, or those produced by the immune system and capable of destroying infected cells, must be produced. In a protein sub-unit vaccine, the spike protein may be able to elicit a strong antibody res-

ponse but when combined with the tetanus toxoid, a very widely used childhood vaccine and therefore one which the immune system recognises, such a T-cell response could also be generated and conferring more effective protection, said Shahid Jameel, virologist and Director, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University.

He added that while there could be "logistic" concerns with a three-dose vaccine, it wasn't right to compare efficacies of various vaccines as those numbers had different contexts. "Every vaccine's efficacy results are in comparison to placebo, and not against another vaccine.... each trial was done differently."

While the efficacy results of the Cuban vaccines haven't been published in

peer-reviewed journals, that the vaccines have been developed entirely by the public health system and amidst a U.S. trade embargo, are among the reasons why they have evoked interest in several other Caribbean countries as well as beyond.

Global response

Iran's Pasteur Institute has said it will participate in phase-3 clinical trials for Soberana 02, with another 60,000 to be enrolled in Venezuela. Other countries including Mexico, Jamaica, Vietnam, Pakistan and India have expressed an interest in the Cuban vaccines, as has the African Union (on behalf of all 55 of the African nations). Cuba, which exports medical services, has said it will apply different rates for vaccines depending on the importer's ability to pay.

The 2020 Millennium Technology Prize goes to...

Balasubramanian and Klenerman for DNA sequencing techniques



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

The 2020 Millennium Technology Prize, announced in May, has been awarded to Shankar Balasubramanian and David Klenerman, "for their development of revolutionary DNA sequencing techniques." Their work is a perfect blend of science and innovation, and very apt as we have all heard a great deal about genome sequencing in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

Emphasis on innovation

Awarded by the Republic of Finland, along with top Finnish academic institutions and industries, The Millennium Prize has a 21st century outlook, with a strong emphasis on innovation. Past winners include Tim Berners-Lee (for implementing the world-wide web) and Frances Arnold (for her work on directed evolution in a

laboratory setting). Three of the eleven awardees so far have subsequently won Nobel prizes. We wait, with bated breath, for Balasubramanian and Klenerman!

Shankar Balasubramanian was born in Chennai, and has lived in England for most of his life. After his PhD, he joined the Chemistry Department, Cambridge University. He teamed up with David Klenerman, recruited by the Department around the same time. The initial aim was to build a microscope that could follow single molecules. Of special interest to him was the molecular machinery that DNA uses to make copies of itself. Somewhere in their discussions arose the germ of the idea for a new way to read the alphabet that make up DNA, and to thereby access the information stored in them.



Perfect blend: The work of Shankar Balasubramanian (right) and David Klenerman brings together science and innovation.
* MILLENNIUM TECHNOLOGY PRIZE

DNA (or RNA, in some viruses), the genetic material of life forms, is made of four bases (A, T, G and C; with U replacing T in the case of RNA). A chromosome is the duplex of a long linear chain of these - and in the DNA sequence is information - the blueprint of life. Life famously can replicate, and DNA replicates when an enzyme, DNA polymerase, synthesises a complementary strand using an existing DNA strand as the template.

Breakthrough idea

The breakthrough idea of Balasubramanian and Klenerman was to sequence DNA (or RNA) using this process of strand synthesis. They cle-

verly modified their ATGC bases so that each shone with a different colour. When copied, the "coloured" copy of DNA could be deciphered from the colours alone, using miniature optical and electronic devices.

A very significant advance in their "Next Generation Sequencing" (NGS) method lies in the size of DNA that could be sequenced at one go - more than a million base pairs can be sequenced, which translates to hundreds of genes or even the whole genome of an organism. This is made possible by simultaneously sequencing hundreds of pieces of DNA at the same time. Many copies of this long DNA "sentence" are

randomly broken up into small pieces, each no more than a few hundred bases long, which are all sequenced together. The "reads" are then fitted together, in the manner of a puzzle, to give the final sequence.

This technology was spun off as a commercial entity, Solexa, with the initiative of Balasubramanian and Klenerman. This phenomenally successful startup was later acquired by the biotech company Illumina.

Falling cost

What about the cost of all this sequencing? When the Human Genome Project delivered the first, near-complete sequence of our genome, the cost was estimated to have been 3 billion dollars. As all our chromosomes together have 3 billion base pairs, it becomes an easy calculation - One dollar per sequenced base. By the year 2020, Next Generation Sequencing technologies had pushed the price for sequencing your genome down to a thousand dollars - when this technology becomes prevalent in India, this sum should become a few thousands of rupees!

To think that a coronavirus genome has not 3 billion but 30,000 RNA bases - not surprisingly, this has resulted in an explosion of data on the genomes of the novel coronavirus and its variants. Health authorities in the United Kingdom have sequenced the viral genome of one out of sixteen people who have tested Covid-positive. The popular genomic data sharing site GSAID has over two million submissions of Cov-2 genomic sequences, from 172 countries. NGS has been at the heart of monitoring the spread of viral variants across the globe, and tracing the source of outbreaks.

Shankar Balasubramanian continues to run a fine laboratory, focused on the design of therapeutic molecules that would tune down the uncontrolled expression of certain genes, and so control the damage they cause in conditions such as cancer.

(This article has been written by D. Balasubramanian in collaboration with Sushil Chandani who is a professional computational biologist, sushilchandan@gmail.com)

dbala@lvpei.org



Question Corner

Scream signals

Do humans perceive joyful or fearful screams more strongly?

Most often, a human scream signals fear of imminent danger. But screaming can also express joy or excitement. For the first time, researchers at the University of Zurich have demonstrated that non-alarming screams are more efficiently perceived and processed by the brain than their alarming counterparts.

The researchers investigated the meaning behind the full spectrum of human scream calls. The results revealed six emotionally distinct types of scream calls indicating pain, anger, fear, pleasure, sadness and joy. They found humans respond to positive screams more quickly and accurately

and with higher neural sensitivity than to alarming screams.

In the trials, 12 participants were asked to vocalise positive and negative screams that might be elicited by various situations. A different group of individuals rated the emotional nature of the screams, classifying them into categories. The brain activity of participants listening to the screams was monitored using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to know how they perceived, recognised, processed and categorised the sounds. They found different brain regions showed much more activity and neural connectivity when hearing non-alarm screams. "It's highly possible that only humans scream to signal positive emotions like great joy or pleasure. Unlike with alarm calls, positive screams have become increasingly important over time," Sascha Frühholz says in a press release.

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



Recently installed solar lights mark the burial sites at Cowessess First Nation. • REUTERS

Unmarked graves and 'cultural genocide'

What's the history behind the remains of children found at former residential school sites in Canada?

STANLY JOHNY

The story so far: In late June, Cowessess First Nation, an indigenous organisation, found the remains of 751 people, mainly indigenous children, at the site of a former residential school in Saskatchewan province in Canada. This, as per Cowessess, was "the most significantly substantial" discovery of graves of indigenous children to date in the country. Indigenous groups have uncovered two more sites at former residential schools in recent months, both in British Columbia, taking the number of unregistered graves found since May 29 to 1,148. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, "Canadians today are horrified and ashamed of how our country behaved." Indigenous organisations have urged his government to probe the schools and expedite measures for reconciliation. This week, Cowessess First Nation signed an agreement with Saskatchewan and the federal government reclaiming its right to look after its own children.

What's the residential school system?

The residential school system was a federal government initiative aimed at forcefully assimilating indigenous children into the European way of life. Started in the 19th century, there were at least 130 residential schools across the country. The schools were funded by the federal government's Department of Indian Affairs and run by churches, mostly the Catholic Church.

In 1883, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald defended the system in Parliament. "When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages... It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men," he said. An amendment to the Indian Act in 1894, under Prime Minister Mackenzie Bowell, made attendance at these schools compulsory for indigenous children. They were forcefully taken away from their families. Between 1883 and 1996, an estimated 150,000 indigenous children were sent to these schools. Many of them never reunited with their families.

Murray Sinclair, who headed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, said the number of deaths in the residential school system could be 'well beyond 10,000'

What happened to the children? In the residential schools, the children were not allowed to speak their language or practise their culture. Many of them were emotionally, physically and sexually abused.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up in

2008, estimated that some 4,100 children attending these schools either died or went missing. The Commission said it was impossible to reach a conclusion on the exact number of deaths because of the schools' burial policy and poor record-keeping. In most cases, the authorities did not even hand over the bodies of the children to their families. The Canadian government's Indian Affairs policy was to "hold the schools responsible for burial expenses when a student died at school". The Commission wrote, "Parental requests to have children's bodies returned home for burial were generally refused as being too costly." The children died mainly due to tuberculosis, malnutrition and other illnesses caused by the inhuman conditions inside the schools. Murray Sinclair, a former judge and Senator who headed the Commission, said recently that the actual number of deaths could be "well beyond 10,000". Indigenous organisations have also claimed that the actual number is more than the official estimates.

How has the Canadian government responded?

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued the first formal government-level apology to the indigenous community for the residential schools. The government-appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commission gathered some 7,000 statements from survivors of the schools to prepare a detailed report uncovering the truth behind the system. It also made 94 recommendations for reparation and reconciliation. The Commission report, published in 2015, concluded that the school system amounted to a "cultural genocide". The recommendations included independent investigations into the crimes of the past and measures to protect Aboriginal rights and culture.

Mr. Trudeau had promised during the campaign that addressing the indigenous question would be central to his agenda. But indigenous groups say the federal government has been slow in its response to the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. Several First Nations, which are using ground-penetrating radar technology to mark human remains buried underground, have asked for government help in quickly uncovering graves. The Trudeau government had set aside 27 million Canadian dollars to search for graves, but did not release the funds until after the findings of the remains in British Columbia were announced earlier this year.

Has the Catholic Church apologised?

The Commission also asked the Catholic Church to issue an apology and take steps for reconciliation. After the latest discovery of graves, Pope Francis said "the sad discovery further raises awareness of the pains and sufferings of the past", but stopped short of issuing an apology. In 2018, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said the Pope could not personally apologise for the residential school system.

What makes the UAPA so stringent?

How is Section 43D(5) of the law interpreted by courts and why does it make obtaining bail difficult?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

The story so far: The death of Father Stan Swamy, a Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, while in judicial custody, has brought to focus the law under which he was imprisoned. The stringent nature of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), which renders it difficult for one held under it to obtain bail, is being seen as one of the principal reasons for Fr. Swamy's death as a prisoner in a hospital. This has raised questions about the liberty of many others, including 15 others arrested in the Elgar Parishad case and incarcerated under the same law, which is also India's main anti-terrorism legislation.

What is the origin of the UAPA?

The Union government was considering a stringent law against calls for secession in the mid-1960s. In March 1967, a peasant uprising in Naxalbari imparted a sense of urgency. On June 17, 1966, the President had promulgated the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Ordinance "to provide for the more effective prevention of unlawful activities of individuals and associations".

Its stringency created a furore in Parliament when it was tabled, leading to the government dropping it. Instead, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, which was not identical to the ordinance, was passed.

What is its scope and how has it been expanded over the years?

The Act provided for declaring an association or a body of individuals "unlawful" if they indulged in any activity that included acts and words, spoken or written, or any sign or representation, that supported any claim to bring about "the cession of a part of the territory of India", or its "secession", or which questions or disclaims the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Prior to the UAPA's enactment, associations were being declared unlawful under the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1952. However, the Supreme Court held that the provision on bans was unlawful because there was no judicial mechanism to scrutinise the validity of any ban. Therefore, the UAPA included provisions for a Tribunal which has to confirm within six months the notification declaring an outfit unlawful.

In its present form, the Act, after the amendments in 2004 and 2013, covers the declaration of associations as unlawful, punishment for terrorist acts and activities, acts threatening the country's security, including its economic security (a term that covers fiscal and monetary security, food, livelihood, energy ecological



People walking past a church in Mumbai where a memorial mass is being held for Father Stan Swamy on July 6. • AP

Under Section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), bail cannot be granted to a suspect if the court is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the charges are *prima facie* true

and environmental security), and provisions to prevent the use of funds for terrorist purposes, including money laundering.

The ban on organisations was initially for two years, but from 2013, the period of proscription has been extended to five years.

After the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002, was repealed, the UAPA was expanded to include what would have been terrorist acts in

earlier laws. The 2004 amendments were also aimed at giving effect to various anti-terrorism resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

In 2012, there was a set of amendments, which was notified from early 2013, seeking to bring the UAPA in line with various requirements of the Financial Action Task Force, an inter-governmental body, to combat money laundering and terrorism financing. In 2019, the Act was amended to empower the government to designate individuals as terrorists.

How do UAPA provisions differ from regular criminal law?

Just like other special laws dealing with narcotic drugs and the now-defunct laws on terrorism, the UAPA also modifies the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to give it more teeth. A remand order can be for 30 days instead of the usual 15, and the maximum period of judicial custody before the filing of a chargesheet is extendable from the usual 90 days to 180 days. This extension, however, depends on the Public Prosecutor filing a report on the progress in the investigation and giving reasons for seeking another 90 days to complete it. The law also makes it more difficult to obtain bail.

What is the controversy about its bail provisions?

Under Section 43D(5) of the Act, bail cannot be granted to a suspect if the court is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the charges are *prima facie* true. A Supreme Court judgment on this has clarified that this meant that the court considering bail should not examine the evidence too deeply, but must go by the prosecution version based on broad probabilities. This means that the onus is on the accused to show that the case is false but without inviting the court to evaluate the available evidence. This is why human rights defenders feel that the provision is draconian, virtually rendering it impossible for anyone to obtain bail until the completion of the trial.

Cauvery and the row over Mekedatu project

Why are Karnataka and Tamil Nadu sparring over a proposed dam in the river basin and what lies ahead?

T. RAMAKRISHNAN

The story so far: On July 6, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said in Bengaluru that his government would go ahead with the long-pending Mekedatu dam project in the Cauvery Basin to cater to the drinking water needs of the Bengaluru Metropolitan City and surrounding areas. On the same day, in New Delhi, Tamil Nadu's Water Resources Minister Durai Murugan met Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and impressed upon him not to grant Centre's clearance for the project. This was preceded by a July 3 letter Mr. Yediyurappa wrote to his Tamil Nadu counterpart M.K. Stalin, calling for talks on the subject. However, the latter did not explicitly react to Mr. Yediyurappa's offer of negotiations, even as he explained why Tamil Nadu continued to oppose the project. Mr. Stalin has called an all-party meeting in Chennai on July 12.

What do the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and the Supreme Court say?

The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, in its final order on February 2007, made allocations to all the riparian States - Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, apart from the Union Territory of Puducherry. It also stipulated "tentative monthly deliveries during a normal year" to be made available by Karnataka to Tamil Nadu.

Aggrieved over the final order for different reasons, the States had appealed to the Supreme Court. In February 2018, the court, in its judgment, revised the water allocation and increased the share of Karnataka by 14.75



PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN

thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) at the cost of Tamil Nadu. The enhanced quantum comprised 4.75 tmc ft for meeting drinking water and domestic requirements of Bengaluru and surrounding areas.

What is Karnataka planning?

Encouraged by the Supreme Court verdict, Karnataka, which sees the order as an endorsement of its stand, has set out to pursue the Mekedatu project. Originally proposed as a hydropower project, the revised Mekedatu dam project has more than one purpose to serve. Estimated to cost ₹9,000 crore, the project envisages the construction of a reservoir of 67.16-tmc ft capacity, which will come up about 4 km away from the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border. A hydropower plant of nearly 400 MW has also been proposed.

The Karnataka government has argued that the proposed reservoir will regulate the flow to Tamil Nadu on a monthly basis, as stipulated by the Tribunal and the Supreme Court. This is why Mr. Yediyurappa has

contended that the project will not affect the interests of Tamil Nadu farmers.

Why is Tamil Nadu opposed to it?

Tamil Nadu feels that Karnataka, through the project, will impound and divert flows from "uncontrolled catchments" to it, a component which was taken into account by the Tribunal in the 2007 order while arriving at the water allocation plan for the State. As per an estimate, around 80 tmc ft of water flows annually to Tamil Nadu, thanks to the catchments including the area between Kabini dam in Karnataka and Billigundulu gauging site on the inter-State border, and the area between Krishnaraja Sagar dam in Karnataka and the gauging site. As the upper riparian State has adequate infrastructure even now to address the water needs of Bengaluru, there is no need for the Mekedatu project, according to Tamil Nadu. The Mekedatu project also does not find mention in the Tribunal's final order or the Supreme Court judgment. Besides, given the unpleasant experiences that it has had with Karnataka in securing its share of the Cauvery water over the years, Tamil Nadu is wary of the assurances of the other side.

What happens next?

Tamil Nadu's petitions against the project are pending with the Supreme Court. The project is yet to get environmental clearance from the Centre. A way out can be found if the two parties agree to the idea of a joint execution, operation and maintenance of the project or a third party's participation.

Are COVID-19 curbs telling on immune systems?

Amid a gradual easing of lockdowns, why are some countries reporting a higher number of respiratory infections?

RAMYA KANNAN

The story so far: As countries start lifting curbs imposed on societies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, news reports have indicated higher rates of respiratory infections, even unseasonal diseases such as influenza and the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Doctors have called this the "immunity debt" brought on by non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) put in place to reduce the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

What is 'immunity debt'?

The NPIs, including social distancing, use of masks, and hand hygiene, were seen as being effective in breaking the chain of transmission of the SARS-CoV-2. During the pandemic, they have been employed to do exactly that, and have succeeded at varying levels in countries, depending on the level of compliance.

However, they have had unintended consequences for other respiratory infections as well. Rachel E. Baker *et al* have highlighted the issue in a Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) paper titled "The impact of COVID-19 nonpharmaceutical interventions on the future dynamics of endemic infections". America is among the nations seeing an increase in the number of RSV cases in the infant population. "Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) have been employed to reduce the transmission of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), yet these measures are already having similar effects on other directly transmitted, endemic diseases. Disruptions to the seasonal transmission

patterns of these diseases may have consequences for the timing and severity of future outbreaks," it states.

Gagandeep Kang, Professor of Microbiology, Christian Medical College, Vellore, explains: "Basically, when you are constantly exposed to infectious agents, what you are doing is boosting the immune response in the human body. If you don't see the bugs you normally see, there is a possibility that there are unseasonal outbreaks, and with greater severity than usual."

Q. Sue Huang, Tim Wood and others record in *Nature Communications* that New Zealand, which has seen a

number of RSV cases, has a well-established influenza circulation pattern with peak incidences in the winter months. "Remarkably, influenza virus circulation was almost non-existent during the 2020 winter, a 99.9% reduction compared with previous years," the report said. They postulated that the country's use of stringent lockdowns and border controls had resulted in substantial reduction in contact between individuals, leading to the fall in the number of cases in 2020.

Is the impact only on respiratory viruses or on other viruses as well?

RSV can be severe in very young infants, but it is commonly a winter infection. Babies gain some protection from mothers, but the mother must have had

some exposure to the virus. If mothers are not exposed, it leaves the baby unprotected, and if it is not very severe, children can be supported through the infection, explains Dr. Kang. A monoclonal antibody is used to treat RSV. In adults, an outbreak of seasonal influenza is expected.

While lockdowns, as they reduce the chances of transmission, might affect other respiratory infections, it is possible that there might be a rash of other infections as well, for instance, gastrointestinal (GI) infections? Ashish Bavdekar, a Pune-based paediatric gastroenterologist, says this may be possible, although data to support it is not available in India. "We do not have very good data on this. In fact, we don't have data on the number of cases of RSV too, but we will know about GI-related infections in a few months," he says. "This is such an unusual phenomenon that has occurred. But I don't think the change of season will have long-term epidemiological effects, they will go back to the regular seasonal impact in a while."

Should there be a rethink on lockdowns?

Despite the huge social and economic costs, lockdowns and social distancing have shown demonstrable success in containing the pandemic. But how stringent should lockdown measures be in future?

The *Nature Communications* article calls for a reassessment of the role of NPIs and an analysis to identify the most effective components to prevent respiratory virus transmission and infection. This might yield "new and sustainable interventions that can minimise and prevent seasonal and epidemic respiratory viral illnesses in the future".

THE RAJAPAKSAS

Four brothers in one government

With Basil joining the govt. as Finance Minister, the Sri Lankan Cabinet has five Rajapaksas, four brothers and one from the next generation

MEERA SRINIVASAN

To track the Rajapaksa family tree is to track the most important positions in the Sri Lankan government. With the recent appointment of Basil Rajapaksa, the youngest of the Rajapaksa brothers, as the country's new Minister of Finance, Sri Lanka's first family has further fastened its clasp on power.

In Focus

At the centre of Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa brand of politics is Prime Minister and former two-time President Mahinda Rajapaksa

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was the Defence Secretary in the Mahinda administration, is now the President and Mahinda is the Prime Minister

While Mahinda and Gotabaya are prominent faces in public, Basil is seen to be the organisation man, who played a key role in building their party, SLPP

The Cabinet has five Rajapaksas – President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (who is also Defence Minister), Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Irrigation Minister Chamal Rajapaksa, Basil Rajapaksa, and PM's son and Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa. The government has a few more, holding junior ministerial posts and key positions in state-run institutions. They remind sceptics of "family bandyism", a term commonly used in Sri Lanka in the past, to refer to the Bandaranaike ruling clan. Together, the Rajapaksas in government control a substantial chunk of the budget and policy. For the near 22-million people of the country, this means being steered by one powerful family. One that derives political legitimacy from its core support base of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists, with a known suspicion of Tamil and Muslim minorities and an unmistakable aversion to their rights.

For the family, this means a seat at the country's helm, even if it must navigate mounting challenges facing the administration – at a time when the country is still emerging out of its long civil war and into a fast-aggravating economic crisis – and preparing the ground for



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

their respective bids to power in future.

At the centre of Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa brand of politics is Prime Minister and former two-time President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Though his father D.A. Rajapaksa was a prominent politician in the island's southern region, it was Mr. Mahinda who elevated the family's profile to the national and international arena. As the "war victor" under whose leadership the LTTE was decimated, he became the camp's reliable political mascot with wide appeal in the country's Sinhala majority south.

Following a decade in office, he was defeated by his former colleague Maithripala Sirisena, who defected to form an unlikely coalition with the Opposition and became President in 2015. At that time, Mr. Mahinda may have taken a step back, just briefly, only to bounce back at the earliest opportunity. He saw one in October 2018, during Sri Lanka's infamous "constitutional crisis", when President Sirisena sacked then PM Ranil Wickremesinghe and appointed Mr. Ma-

hinda to the post. However, with the Supreme Court ruling that the move was illegal, Mr. Mahinda was forced to resign, in less than eight weeks after his sudden appointment.

A year later, the Rajapaksas did capture power with a resounding victory in the presidential polls. Except, it was a new Rajapaksa at the forefront. A two-term cap on Presidency, introduced by the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe administration, barred Mr. Mahinda from contesting for the country's highest office.

'The doer'

With a class of professionals and elite businessmen propping him up as a fresh face and "doer", Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 72, hit the campaign trail promising "vistas of prosperity and splendour" that found wide resonance among Sinhala Buddhist voters. Monks supporting him likened the former military man to Adolf Hitler, and his brother Mr. Basil called him a "Terminator" who would end corruption. The remarks, obviously, were meant as compliments.

While Mahinda is still their repository of political capital, Gotabaya has displaced him from being the sole leader even as Basil enjoys greater influence as a chief strategist

But minorities feared him. Mr. Gotabaya is not only credited with helping defeat the LTTE but is also linked to several allegations of rights violations during and after the war. He is accused of having run "death squads" targeting dissidents, including journalists. He has denied the allegations, but is yet to inspire confidence among minorities as their empathic vote against him showed. There is little indication that President Gotabaya worries about how minorities perceive him.

While Mr. Mahinda and Mr. Gotabaya were prominent faces in public, Mr. Basil, relatively less visible, was

working behind the scenes, building their new party, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP or People's Front), enticing willing defectors from the Opposition, crafting its poll campaign and skilfully ensuring their return to and consolidation of power, in both the 2019 presidential and 2020 parliamentary elections.

If Mr. Mahinda's former terms in power, from 2005 to 2015, were marked by his powerful leadership, with Mr. Basil (then a Presidential Adviser and Economic Development Minister) and Mr. Gotabaya (then Secretary to the Ministry of Defence) reporting to him, 2019 brought out a different dynamic among the brothers. While Mr. Mahinda is still their repository of political capital, Mr. Gotabaya displaced him from the position of sole leader, and Mr. Basil commanded greater influence as a chief strategist.

Appointed as Prime Minister after the August 2020 general elections, the 75-year-old Mr. Mahinda was relegated to the second spot, with younger brother Mr. Go-

tabaya wielding greater power as Executive President, only enhanced by the 20th Amendment passed by his government in October 2020. And last week, Mr. Basil, 70, took over the finance portfolio from Mr. Mahinda, who has, in turn, been given a newly created, but apparently less powerful Economic Policies and Planning Ministry.

Economic challenges

At one level, it may seem like a game of musical chairs played by members of the Rajapaksa clan, each with their own, distinct strength and baggage. But read within the larger context of the country's economic crisis, the challenge of the pandemic's third wave, and a growing disenchantment among people, including Rajapaksa voters, in the face of acute economic distress is bound to test the brothers' collective political mettle.

Ensuring smooth governance at such a time is only one of their problems, as political pressures surface periodically, even if not from the Opposition that is neither

coherent nor formidable yet. The pressure often emerges from within the administration, manifesting in frequent clashes between different interest groups, their loyalties, and in their clamour for influence.

President Gotabaya is under considerable pressure. He must prove to his supporters that he is the "doer" they backed. Whether the military men – over two dozen – he appointed to key administrative posts, or the bureaucracy, with sections reportedly feeling sidelined, will help him accomplish the urgent tasks ahead of him remain to be seen. He has not ruled out a second term.

As for Mr. Basil, his supporters see him as the country's leader in waiting. They are not perturbed by the fact that he is also an American citizen, or that he faced corruption allegations in the past.

A 2007 U.S. Embassy cable published by WikiLeaks called him "Mr. Ten percent", citing commissions he allegedly took from government contracts. In his backers' view, he is the "saviour" the country needs.

Meanwhile, the youngest Rajapaksa in the Cabinet, Mr. Namal, 35, and projected as Mr. Mahinda's political heir, is seen to be working hard, both within the scope of his Ministries – he holds a state ministry too – and outside. Tapping the social media audience that he steadily built over the last few years, he communicates regularly and clearly, drawing many young supporters. Sporting the trademark maroon shawl worn by his father and two uncles, Mr. Namal too is said to have set his eyes on the country's top office.

Amid this apparent contest within the family, President Gotabaya, speaking at a public event in March, said the Rajapaksa siblings stand "firmly united", and vowed they would take Sri Lanka forward. Despite differences and fissures, the brothers have indeed stood together so far.

DIDI

A bump in the road

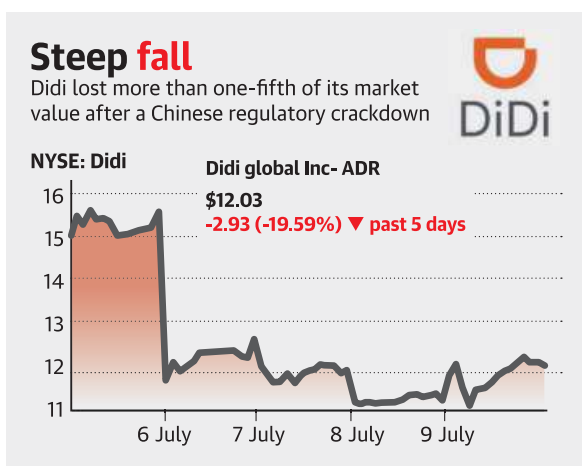
Chinese authorities are investigating the company over its use of data

ANANTH KRISHNAN

What was meant to be a moment of pride for one of China's Internet giants turned, in a matter of days, into an epic car-crash. On June 30, the ride-hailing app Didi, which dominates the China market, raised \$4.4 billion in its much anticipated listing on the New York Stock Exchange, the biggest Chinese listing since Alibaba raised a record \$25 billion in 2014. Didi's IPO valued the company at \$73 billion.

Within a week, Didi would have not only lost more than one-fifth of its market value, but found itself facing the threat of lawsuits from angry U.S. investors as Chinese authorities, days after the IPO, said they were investigating the company over its use of data, citing privacy and national security concerns. On July 9, Chinese regulators then took an extraordinary step of banning the country's biggest ride-hailing app from registering new users, as well as removing 25 of its apps from app stores.

An uncertain fate now awaits Didi, which has pledged to cooperate with the authorities. The rise and sudden fall of Didi is the latest episode of a tug-of-war between the Communist Party and big tech companies, which burst into global attention in November when the IPO of Alipay, the financial payments arm of Alibaba, was suspended in



Shanghai at the last minute. A number of investigations into tech companies then followed, with regulators taking aim at both monopolistic practices and the wealth of data that companies have accumulated.

Didi's story began in 2012, when founder Cheng Wei launched an app in Beijing for hailing taxis, called Didi Dache. In 2015, the company merged with another hailing app, Kuaidi Dache. Thus was born Didi Kuaidi, later renamed Didi Chuxing (or Didi, for short).

Didi expanded beyond taxis to a range of services, from carpools to even luxury limos. Today, Didi corners a dominant share of the market in China – estimates range from 80 to 90% – along with an expanding global footprint in 16 countries, with a presence across Latin America, as well as in Australia, Japan and Russia. It has close to 500 million active users and around 15

million drivers, three times as many drivers as on Uber (although Uber is valued higher). After a bruising battle for the China market with Uber, Didi emerged on top, acquiring its rival Uber China in 2016. Uber is among its major investors today, along with SoftBank, Alibaba and Tencent.

Roadblocks

In 2018, Didi's safety protocols became a matter of wide debate in China. A woman using its hitch-a-ride service was murdered by a driver in Shenzhen, and three months later that year another woman was raped and murdered by a driver in Zhejiang. Both drivers were sentenced to death, and the company suspended the hitch service.

The company promised to tighten its safety protocols. It also rolled out a service the following year seen as aimed at pleasing the Communist Party, that al-

lowed passengers to choose to be driven by "verified party members" as it identified which drivers were members of the Communist Party.

Following the Didi IPO, authorities have said they will tighten oversight on how companies can list overseas. The Cyberspace Administration of China, which is leading the battle to tame tech companies citing their use of personal data, is now considering "a new regulation requiring companies with more than 1 million users' data to apply for a cybersecurity review before seeking listing overseas", the Party-run *Global Times* reported. "The government will not allow internet giants to become rules-makers of data collection and usage," the newspaper said.

China's tech giants have seen "a combined \$823 billion wiped from their market value since a February peak", according to Bloomberg, coinciding with the raft of measures aimed at tightening control including anti-trust investigations.

In the last 10 years, as tech companies grew rapidly, data regulation in particular has become a priority issue for President Xi Jinping and the Party, notes Santosh Pai, an honorary fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi who studies Chinese regulatory issues. "This is a pattern we have seen, from Alipay to Didi. Data, for the party, is becoming a national treasure."

KITEX GROUP

Business and politics

Alleging harassment, the Kerala-based group is shifting investments out of State

K. A. MARTIN

Kitex Group, a Kerala-based business group with a market capitalisation of around ₹930 crore that makes a range of products from garments to curry powder, has run into a stand-off with the State government in recent weeks over raids at one of its factories.

Kitex, which also founded a political organisation that won several seats in the 2015 and 2020 local body elections, has alleged harassment by government agencies.

On Friday, Telangana Industries Minister K.T. Rama Rao, after meeting a delegation from the company headed by managing director Sabu M. Jacob, announced that Kitex Group will invest ₹1,000 crore in Warangal.

On June 29, Mr. Jacob said the group was withdrawing from a proposal to invest ₹3,500 crore to build an apparel park and three industrial parks (Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Palakkad) with a total job potential of 35,000. The proposal was submitted by the group at Ascent Kerala (investors' conference) in January 2020. The group, based in Kizhakkambalam, about 25 km east of Kochi, has a string of enterprises with a total sales of around ₹1,700 crore. Kitex Group employs around 15,000 people, drawn from across India. Mr. Jacob said Kitex had invi-



tations from other States as well as Bangladesh.

Raids at factory

He said he was "disappointed" with Kerala where it is hard to run businesses. In June, State agencies raided Kitex Garments factory premises 11 times. Most of the raids lasted three to four hours. The 26-year-old company was "being treated like a band of thieves and scoundrels", he said, and pointed out that Kerala was almost at the bottom in the "ease of doing business" rankings in the country.

Kitex Group was founded 53 years ago by M.C. Jacob, who passed away in June 2011, aged 78. His son Bobby M. Jacob heads the Anna Kitex group with domestic operations as well as exports to West Asia and Europe. The group manufactures aluminium products, including pressure cookers, curry powders and school bags. Kitex Garments, headed by

Mr. Sabu, looks after exports to the U.S.

The garments company is about a quarter century old. The company had complained of harassment from the government in the past as well. One notable incident in 2012 involved the Kizhakkambalam panchayat, which served a stop memo notice on the garments unit following complaints from residents in the neighbourhood about effluent from the dyeing and bleaching units flowing into waterbodies. The then State government under the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) negotiated a truce to allow operations to continue. Then in 2013, Kitex Group formed Kizhakkambalam Twenty20, a voluntary body using CSR funds with the declared aim of turning Kizhakkambalam panchayat into "the best in India" by 2020.

In the 2015 local body elections, Twenty20 fielded

candidates in all the 19 wards of the panchayat. It won 17 of the 19 council seats, stunning both the Left Democratic Front, led by the CPI(M), and the UDF. Since then, the group has increased its political presence in the State.

In the 2020 local bodies elections, Twenty20 won 18 of the 19 seats in the Kizhakkambalam panchayat. It also spread its influence to neighbouring panchayats – Mazhuvannoor, Aikaranad and Kunnathunad, where it won a comfortable majority. Twenty20 also tested its popularity in the May 2021 Assembly election, though none of its candidates made it to the Assembly.

While Twenty20 appeared to be gaining political mileage, P.T. Thomas, of the Congress party, accused the company of being mainly responsible for polluting the Kadambayur, a river that is a drinking water source for thousands of people in Kizhakkambalam and neighbouring areas. A resolution was also passed in the District Development Committee, backed by two other MLAs, to have a special session on pollution caused by the company.

With Twenty20 securing political space, many have described the present developments as a political rivalry between Kitex and mainstream parties. Others have said corporations taking up political space would be detrimental to the democratic values of society.

Fuel demand rebounded in India in June

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Fuel demand rebounded in June after slumping to a nine-month low in the previous month as curbs to stop the spread of the pandemic were eased, helping economic activity and mobility to pick up.

Fuel consumption rose 1.5% to 16.33 million tonnes in June from a year earlier and by 8% over May 2021, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas showed.

Petrol sales rose 5.6% year-on-year to 2.4 million tonnes. It was up 21% from May's 1.99 million tonnes.

Diesel - the most used fuel in India - rose 12% from May, but was down 1.5% from June 2020 and 18.8% from June 2019.

Services panel charts roadmap to double exports in five years

Export promotion council seeks incentives for sector, parity with merchandise

K. BHARAT KUMAR
CHENNAI

The Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) is preparing a roadmap to achieve doubling of services exports in the next five years, said Chairman Maneek E. Davar.

Separately, the SEPC has urged the government to ensure that the new foreign trade policy, being formulated, also includes incentives for services exports by according parity to the sector with merchandise exports, he said. The current trade policy, whose validity was to have ended in March 2020, has been extended till September this year.

The council has tagged areas such as tourism and



In focus: The council has tagged tourism and hospitality, and medical value travel as 'champion' sectors. *FILE PHOTO

hospitality, logistics and medical value travel as 'champion' sectors meriting additional focus.

"Take the example of Netflix, which recently announced plans for a studio with post-production facilities in India; if we wish to attract other companies to set up such facilities for entertainment technology across the country over the next five years, we have to understand what they need - in terms of infrastructure and

human skills," said Mr. Davar. "In education services, we had some 45,000-odd foreign students in FY19-20. We could aim to double that within 3-5 years."

'Vital part of economy' Stressing the need for policy backing, Mr. Davar said, "The perception is that services don't require any support or incentives from the government, which is not correct. Services form a very vital part of our economy."

Acknowledging that manufacturing faced a very competitive environment globally and therefore required support, he said the SEPC was only seeking a 'level playing field' for services.

INTERVIEW | RAJIV MITTAL

'Water market gaining traction in India, abroad'

Our order book gives us 3x revenue visibility: Wabag MD

N. ANAND

Chennai-based Va Tech Wabag Ltd., a pure-play water technology multinational firm that offers a portfolio of solutions across water and wastewater treatment, braved the COVID-19 pandemic and posted double-digit growth last fiscal. MD Rajiv Mittal discusses how the firm secured an order book of ₹9,500 crore. Excerpts.

Tell us about your performance in Q1 of FY22?

By and large, we are ensuring operational continuity at our O&M sites, as water and sanitation falls under essential service. As far as engineering, procurement and construction sites are concerned, we are ensuring operations in our construction sites with minimal disruption. However, we are hopeful that our Q1 performance would be better compared with the corresponding period last year.

How do you foresee the rest of the fiscal year 2021-22?

Right now, we are having a strong order book and a good cash position will help us in speeding up execution. Going forward, we foresee the water market gaining traction, both in India and overseas. We will be focussing on further strengthening our order book, especially targeting the high technology jobs, which is an area of expertise for Wabag.

What is your order book value and how did you manage to get it?

Currently, we have an order book of ₹9,500 crore. Our excellent order book gives us a revenue visibility of 3x. Some large-scale or-

How did you manage to stay afloat during the second wave of the pandemic?

As you would have seen last year, in spite of a very strict lockdown, we closed the year on a positive note with a double-digit growth on top line and bottom line. During this time, our engineering and procurement functions were working at full capacity, even while operating from home, ensuring business continuity.

In recent times, there have been lockdowns in India in various States. However, we transitioned to the new normal to ensure minimum disruption, carrying forward the lessons we learnt from the first wave.

At our construction sites, we ensured provision of all basic essentials, regularly sanitised accommodation and ensured adherence to COVID safety norms for our workforce for continuity of construction with minimal disruption. Being an essential service provider, our operations and maintenance (O&M) sites were operating at full capacity to ensure safe and clean drinking water and sanitation to help people stay at home safely during the pandemic.

What are some of the key projects the company has implemented in Tamil Nadu?

ders contributing to this order book are O&M contracts of Agra and Ghaziabad under One City, One Operator model, our hybrid annuity model (HAM) projects in Kolkata and Patna, our Jeddah Airport 2 sewage treatment plant in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Ipswich Biel water treatment plant in Switzerland.

What is the capex for the current year and revenue outlook for FY22?

We have always been an asset light organisation and the same will be our focus going forward.

Even for our HAM projects, we have partnered with financial partners who will be investing in debt and equity, and we will only be investing a small portion of the total project cost.

As the situation over the last two years has been uncertain owing to the pandemic, we have refrained from giving a guidance. We are confident that Wabag will continue to grow, as in the past.



Kharif planting lags as monsoon rains taper off

Farmers have sown 10.4% less this year

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

Indian farmers have planted 49.9 million hectares with summer (kharif) crops, down 10.4% from a year earlier, according to the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, as monsoon rains taper off after a strong start last month.

Farmers typically start planting summer-sown crops on June 1, when monsoon rains usually reach India. Planting then continues until early August.

Planting of rice, the key summer crop, was at 11.5 million hectares as of July 9 versus 12.6 million hectares in the previous year, the ministry said.

The area planted with cotton was at 8.6 million



hectares versus 10.5 million hectares.

Planting of overall oilseeds, including soybean was at 11.2 million hectares, down from 12.6 million hectares.

India has received 5% below average rainfall since June 1, when the four-month rainy season began. Monsoon rains were 46% below average in the week to July 7.

Avenue Supermarts Q1 PAT rises 130%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Avenue Supermarts Ltd., which operates under the D Mart brand, reported standalone profit after tax (PAT) for the quarter ended June 30 more than doubled to ₹115 crore, from ₹50 crore a year earlier.

First-quarter PAT margin was 2.3%, compared with 1.3% in Q1 FY21, the company said in a filing. Total standalone revenue for the quarter stood at ₹5,032 crore, compared with ₹3,833 crore in the same period last year.

On a consolidated basis, first-quarter PAT was ₹95 crore, as against ₹40 crore in the year-earlier period.

The consolidated PAT margin was 1.8%, as against 1.0% in Q1 FY21.

Digital cards helped our clients in crises: Sodexo

'Going fully digital ensured operations'

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Full digitisation has helped employee benefit solutions firm Sodexo BRS India to increase its market share, a top company executive said.

"Digitisation has helped reimagine benefits with new clients and new consumers increasing our market share successfully," said CEO Anish Sarkar. Since the time it went fully digital in 2016, Sodexo had introduced an array of digital solutions for employee benefits such as meals, fuel, telecom, learning and development, health and wellness through its multi-benefits pass.

"Digital cards and digitisation have helped clients navigate crises in the last one year," Mr. Sarkar said.

"Our solutions are trusted by over 11,000 clients across public and private companies and that reinforces our vision to design solutions that improve everyday quality of life of our clients, consumers and merchants," the CEO asserted.

In calendar 2020, the company had ensured complete continuity of operations.

"This can be attributed to the fully-digital business model and delivery of digital cards during the pandemic," he said.

"The business continued to stay resilient due to all four stakeholders, namely employees, clients, consumers, and merchants, going fully digital and adapting rapidly to the changing times," Mr. Sarkar added.

SPORT

TV PICKS

Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 3.45 p.m.
Wimbledon 2021: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.; SS Select 1 & Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
England Women vs India Women: 2nd T20I, Sony Six (SD & HD), 7 p.m.
Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Monday)
NBA: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. (Monday)

IN BRIEF

Former England striker Mariner passes away
LONDON Paul Mariner, the former England striker who played at the World Cup in 1982 and later coached in MLS, has died. He was 68. Mariner scored 13 goals in 35 games for England. AP

Batra flags fresh concerns

Indian athletes may face issues during immigration process

TOKYO OLYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Indian Olympic Association president Narinder Batra on Saturday highlighted fresh concerns that India's Olympics-bound athletes may face on arrival in Tokyo, including spending long hours in immigration without food and water.

Batra was informed of the inconveniences athletes from other countries faced on landing in Tokyo by the Indian Chef de Mission on Friday.

He has raised the issue



Narinder Batra. *FILE PHOTO

wait nearly four hours for the immigration process to begin.

No food or water

This was followed by another three hours of waiting for transport. No food or water was provided during this time. Also, according to the German contingent, volunteer services were almost non-existent, he said.

The first batch of Indian athletes is set to depart for Tokyo on July 17.

Meanwhile, the organising committee has assured delegates that all issues are being addressed.

Anti-Olympic protesters demonstrate

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

About 40 protesters gathered in Tokyo on Saturday calling for the Tokyo 2020 Games to be cancelled, as the Olympics open in just two weeks.

Participants in the demonstration gathered in front of a five-star hotel in the capital, where the International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach stays, chanting 'no more Olympics'.

Awake Yoshida, 38 year-old resident of Tokyo, who lost her job during the COVID-19, said holding the Olympics under the



Go back: Locals make their views known as they confront police officers in Tokyo on Saturday. *AP

pandemic and state of emergency has made her angry.

Decision reversed

Meanwhile, the Fukushima prefecture will bar

spectators from the Olympic events it hosts due to rising COVID-19 infections, its governor said on Saturday, reversing a position announced two days earlier by organisers.

Pankaj Singh calls it a day



Pankaj Singh. *FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Pacer Pankaj Singh, who contributed in Rajasthan's two Ranji Trophy triumphs and briefly played for India, announced his retirement from all forms of cricket on Saturday.

The 36-year-old Pankaj made the announcement through a letter to the Rajasthan Cricket Association (RCA).

Pankaj's maiden ODI appearance came against Sri Lanka in a tri-series in Zimbabwe in 2010, while his two Test outings came against England in 2014 when he took two wickets.

■ Pankaj played two Tests for India claiming as many wickets, while he was wicketless in his only ODI

Mahmudullah retires from Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA

Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah has decided to stop playing Test cricket, a day after recording a career-best score in the one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Harare.

In 49 Tests, Mahmudullah has made 2,764 runs with four centuries.

Windies stun Australia



The real thing! Obed McCoy, centre, is congratulated by teammates after he claimed the last Australian wicket. *AFP

AUSTRALIA IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE (GROS-ISLET, SAINT LUCIA)
Obed McCoy and Hayden Walsh combined for seven wickets to trigger a stunning Australian collapse as the West Indies pulled off an 18-run victory in the opening fixture of the five-match T20 International series at the Darren Sammy Stadium here on Friday.

Seamer McCoy (four for 26) and leg-spinner Walsh

(three for 23) turned the match on its head as the tourists, chasing 146, lost their last six wickets for 19 runs to be dismissed for 127 in 16 overs.

The scores: West Indies 145/6 in 20 overs (Lendl Simmons 27, Andre Russell 51; Josh Hazlewood 3/12) bt Australia 127 in 16 overs (Matthew Wade 33, Mitchell Marsh 51; Obed McCoy 4/26, Hayden Walsh 3/23). Toss: Australia; MoM: McCoy; West Indies won by 18 runs to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

Bangladesh in command

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HARARE

Chasing a victory target of 477, Zimbabwe was 140/3 in its second innings against Bangladesh at close on the fourth day of their one-off Test here on Saturday.

Unbeaten hundreds

Earlier, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Shadman Islam scored unbeaten centuries as Bangladesh declared its second innings at 284/1.

Batting at No. 3, Najmul averaged run a ball for a total which included five fours and six sixes.

Shadman was more cautious, facing 196 deliveries to compile his finest Test innings that was laced with nine fours.

Cheruiyot aces 1500m

DIAMOND LEAGUE

REUTERS
MONACO

Reigning world champion Timothy Cheruiyot got sweet redemption after coming up short at Kenya's Olympic team trials last month, winning the men's 1,500m in a world-leading 3 minutes and 28.28 seconds at Friday's Diamond League meet in Monaco.

Nijel Amos won the men's 800m in 1:42.91, Ethiopia's Lamecha Girma clinched the men's 3,000m steeplechase in 8:07.75 and Olympic champion Faith Kipyegon took the women's 1,500m in 3:51.07.

In the men's 100m, American Ronnie Baker upset a stacked field to clinch his second back-to-back Diamond League win in 9.91 seconds.

Karsten Warholm followed up his world-record performance eight days ago with another Diamond League win, clinching the men's 400m hurdles in a meet record 47.08 seconds.



Strong comeback: Timothy Cheruiyot leads the pack on way to his 1500m triumph. *AFP

Mollema wins stage 14

Pogacar retains yellow jersey

TOUR DE FRANCE

REUTERS
QUILLAN

Dutchman Bauke Mollema won the 14th stage of the Tour de France on Saturday, a 183.7km ride from Carcasonne to Quillan, for his second career victory in 11 appearances at cycling's most popular race.

Austrian Patrick Konrad took second place, with Colombia's Sergio Higuita coming home third, both one minute four seconds off the pace.

Slovenian Tadej Pogacar retained the overall leader's yellow jersey at the end of a hot day, on roads peppered with short but brutal climbs.

"I knew I had a good chance to make it to the end, I paced myself and when I saw I had a minute at the top of the last climb I knew it was done," said Mollema.



Bauke Mollema. *AFP

change in the general classification, however, as France's Guillaume Martin jumped from ninth to second after taking part in the day's breakaway.

Pogacar leads Martin by 4:04, with Colombian Rigoberto Uran in third place.

Sunday's 15th stage is a lung-busting 191.3km mountain trek to Andorra as the race reaches its highest point at the Port d'Envalira, 2,408m above sea level.

Barty lives a dream, scripts history

Beats Pliskova and emulates mentor Goolagong, ending a 40-year wait

WIMBLEDON

AGENCIES LONDON
Ashleigh Barty became the first Australian woman to win the singles trophy at Wimbledon since Evonne Goolagong in 1980, beating Karolina Pliskova 6-3, 6-7(4), 6-3 on Saturday. This was her second Slam overall, after French Open 2019.



The Holy Grail: Ash Barty stayed true to her top billing and won her first Wimbledon. ■ AP

Inspired by Goolagong, she wore an outfit at Wimbledon that was a tribute to the dress her mentor wore when she won the tournament for the first time in 1971. Fittingly, in her victory speech, a teary-eyed Barty said, "I hope I made Evonne proud."

She was off to a perfect start on Saturday, collecting the first 14 points and racing to a 3-0 lead, before holding off a comeback from Pliskova to take the set.

- 1 Barty is the first women's top seed to win Wimbledon since Serena Williams in 2016 and the first to win any Major since Halep at 2018 French Open
- 4 The Aussie is the fourth junior Wimbledon champion to lift the senior title (2011 & 2021), joining Ann Jones (1956 & 1969), Hingis (1994 & 1997) and Mauresmo (1996 & 2006)
- 6 Barty is the sixth woman in the Open Era to win her first two Major titles at the French Open and Wimbledon, after Goolagong, Evert, Graf, Muguruza and Halep
- 6 Pliskova, who lost her second Major final, was broken six times by Barty, including thrice in the first set. In the six matches before this, she had been broken only four times
- 35 The final was Barty's 35th Tour win this year, the most for any women's player

THE RESULTS

Women's Final: 1-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) bt 8-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) 6-3, 6-7(4), 6-3.
Doubles: 3-Su-wei Hsieh (Tpe) & Elise Mertens (Bel) bt Elena Vesnina & Veronika Kudermetova (Rus) 3-6, 7-5, 9-7.

Djokovic eyes Slam No. 20, Berrettini his first

A triumph will help the Serb pull level with Federer and Nadal

ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON

The man standing between Novak Djokovic and a record-tying 20th Grand Slam title, Matteo Berrettini, remembers being wowed by Wimbledon when he played in the junior event as a teenager.

"For me, it was just absurd. I asked myself, 'Who knows if one day I'll return and play in the main tournament, even just in qualifying? I have no idea.' And now I'm in the final," he said, then laughed at the thought of it all.

"So it's all a bit strange," continued the barrel-chested, big-hitting Berrettini, now 25. "But what's beautiful is that I'm much more aware of what I can do now. I know I can do this, because I'm here." That he is.

Multiple firsts
On Sunday at the All England Club, the No. 1-seeded Djokovic's 30th Major final will

be No. 7 seed Berrettini's first – and the first for any man from Italy since Adriano Panatta won the 1976 French Open.

It will also be the first men's final at Wimbledon with a woman chair umpire – Marija Cicak.

Djokovic recalled what it felt like to play in a Slam final for the first time. He was 20 and lost to Roger Federer in three tight sets, including two tiebreakers, at the 2007 US Open. "I was just so

thrilled to be in the final," Djokovic said.

"I was close. I had a good match against Roger, but I just probably did not, maybe, believe enough, I guess, in the victory at certain moments when the scoreline was close."

Self-confidence is not an issue for Djokovic these days, however. He's won his past 18 sets and his last 20 matches at Wimbledon. Can the Italian end the Serb's streak? Sunday will tell.

Fascinating FINALE

Djokovic will be looking for his sixth Wimbledon title and a men's record-equaling 20th Major that would tie him with Federer and Nadal

■ Berrettini will be aiming for his maiden Grand Slam crown and a first for an Italian at SW19. The last Italian man to win a Major was Adriano Panatta (French Open 1976)

■ Djokovic is bidding to become only the fifth man in the Open Era to clinch the French Open - Wimbledon double, after Laver (1969), Borg (1978, 79 & 80), Nadal (2008 & 10) and Federer (2009)



[My] first Slam final. I'm just so happy for everything. I think I fully deserve to be here. I want to enjoy my first final. Whoever's going to win, I just appreciate what's happening

BERRETTINI looking ahead to the final
■ Berrettini can become the first man since Federer in 2003 to claim his maiden Major at Wimbledon. But Djokovic is 5-1 in Wimbledon finals, the lone loss coming against Murray in 2013

■ Berrettini is 11-0 on grass this season and has won 23 of his last 25 matches on the surface since the start of 2019. Djokovic is on 20-match winning streak on grass, stretching back to Wimbledon 2018, the best run of his career

■ This is the first time Djokovic has advanced to the Wimbledon final with the loss of just one set (to Draper, first round). Berrettini has lost three en route

It would mean everything. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm playing. He's [Berrettini] arguably the guy in the best form on grass. He's red hot. It's going to be a great battle

DJOKOVIC on equalling Federer and Nadal

PLAY BEGINS AT 6.30 P.M. IST

Who will sing the redemption song at Wembley: Italy or England?

Azzurri look for first major title since the 2006 WC while the Three Lions are desperate to end decades of disappointment

Relentless Italy vs Solid England

When Mancini's men take on Southgate's side in an eagerly awaited Euro summit clash, there's nothing to choose between the sides. The Azzurri are on a record 33-match unbeaten run while the Three Lions have had a roaring time in the tournament

H 2 H	Italy	England
Matches	27	8
Goals	10	8

In Euro, the two last met in 2012. Italy emerged winner in a penalty shootout after the quarterfinal finished goalless

PENALTY SHOOTOUT AT EUROS	Italy	England
Goals	W3	L3
Goals	L3	W1
Goals	L3	L3

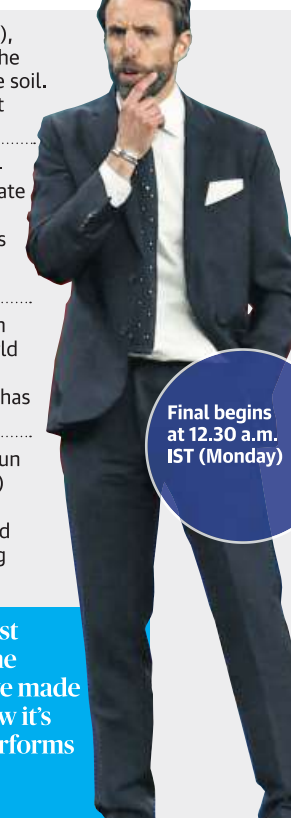


■ Italy has never lost to a major tournament (W3 D1)

■ England will look to emulate Spain (1964), Italy (1968) and France (1984) to become the fourth team to lift the Euro trophy on home soil. Portugal (2004) and France (2016), the last two home finalists, went on to lose

■ Kane, who has netted four goals in six games, can claim the Golden Boot with a brace in the final. The England striker was the 2018 World Cup Golden Boot winner (6 goals)

■ Italy's previous Euro final appearance ended in a 0-4 defeat to Spain in 2012. Bonucci and Chiellini played in that final



Final begins at 12.30 a.m. IST (Monday)

EURO 2020

AGENCIES LONDON

England and Italy are counting down to Sunday's Euro 2020 final, with Gareth Southgate's men seeking to end a 55-year trophy drought and Mancini's side aiming to spoil the Wembley party.

England began as one of several contenders to lift the trophy and has taken advantage of playing all but one of its matches at home.

Southgate's men will be willed on by the vast majority of a crowd that created a crackling atmosphere for England's second-round match against Germany and the semifinal against Denmark.

Standing in England's way is a battle-hardened Italy side which has restored the nation's pride after failing even to qualify for the 2018



Bulwark: Chiellini will look to ward off the threat posed by target man Kane. ■ GETTY IMAGES

World Cup. England has never beaten Italy at a major tournament, although meetings between the nations have been few and far between.

The Azzurri have lit up Euro 2020 ever since beating Turkey 3-0 in the opening game a month ago. They are on a national record 33-match unbeaten run under coach Roberto Mancini.

The Azzurri are looking to end a long wait to win the Euro title. The four-time World Cup winners have been continental champions only once, when it was just a four-team event in 1968.

For all the differences in style and approach, there is a remarkable symmetry to the journeys taken by England and Italy towards the final.

Both nations found themselves at historic low points with fans despairing at their

decline and then discovered men who could bring change and quickly lead them on a path to success.

Southgate was able to draw on an exciting young generation of talent but his most significant decision was to change the culture around the England team.

Like Southgate, Mancini turned to youth, but his biggest impact has been on the style of football produced by the Azzurri.

Italy uses a 4-3-3 formation, with two playmakers in midfield, usually Jorginho and Marco Verratti, supporting two wingers who like to cut inside and full backs pushing forward to offer width. There has been a greater emphasis on aggressive pressing and the result has been one of the most enjoyable Italian teams to watch in years.

From the 'hated one' to the star of Euro

Sterling has inspired England's run

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Raheem Sterling will complete a remarkable journey from vilified scapegoat to England legend if the forward inspires his side to victory in Sunday's Euro 2020 final against Italy.

Sterling has been England's most influential player during its memorable run. If England is to make history at Wembley this weekend, it needs Sterling to unleash his pace and trickery on the Italians.

When Sterling started England's first group game against Croatia, there were some who claimed it was a mistake to pick him instead of Jack Grealish.

But Southgate is a firm believer in Sterling's "incredible resilience and hunger"

and the forward rose to the occasion with England's winner against Croatia. It was his first goal in a major tournament after some wretched experiences in the international arena.

His lowest ebb came at Euro 2016 when England fans turned on him after a series of lacklustre performances, culminating in the humiliating exit against Iceland.

On social media, Sterling branded himself the "hated one" during that tournament and he had to deal with negative stories in the press about his perceived lavish lifestyle. The backlash could have ruined someone with a more fragile personality, but Sterling's tough upbringing prepared him for football's slings and arrows.



Putting his weight: Sterling has repaid Southgate's faith with match-winning performances. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Anand beats Kasparov

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR KOZHIKODE

In the battle between the legends who have 11 World titles between them, Viswanathan Anand defeated Garry Kasparov in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour at Zagreb on Saturday.

Their fourth round game in the blitz section ended with Kasparov, who no longer is active as a player, losing on time. Anand was in a winning position, however.

The day, though, had been

gun badly for the Chennai Grandmaster, going down to Anish Giri of the Netherlands. But he bounced back with a win over Jan-Krzysztof Duda of Poland and then drew with France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

The standings: 1-2. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) and Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 16 points; 3. Anish Giri (Ned) 15; 4. Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol) 14; 5. Viswanathan Anand 14; 6-7. Alexander Grischuk (Rus) and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze) 12.5; 8. Anton Korobov (Ukr) 11; 9. Garry Kasparov (Rus)/Ivan Saric (Cro) 10.5; 10. Jorden Van Foreest (Ned) 8.



When the legends met: Anand and Kasparov tried to outwit each other before the Indian prevailed. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sciver sizzles, sets up England's victory

India falls short under the DLS method in rain-affected match

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NORTHAMPTON

England defeated India by 18 runs via the DLS method in the rain-curtailed first T20I here on Friday.

All-rounder Nat Sciver's 27-ball 55, that included eight fours and a six, and wicketkeeper Amy Jones' 43 off 27 balls took England to 177 for seven in 20 overs. Sciver's fifty was England's joint fastest in the format.

In reply, India failed to keep up with the required run-rate despite vice-captain Smriti Mandhana's quickfire 29 off 17 balls.

Rain came down with the visitors at 54 for three in 8.4 overs, 18 runs behind England under the DLS method. Chasing 178, India was off to the worst possible start as pacer Katherine Brunt bam-

boozed the big-hitting Shafali Verma for a duck.

Smriti and Harleen Deol (17 not out) then got the tourists back on track. With rain on the cards, the duo quickly stitched a 44-run partnership with Smriti hitting six boundaries, including successive fours off Brunt.

But Sciver struck, getting rid of Smriti in the sixth over. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's (1) prolonged lean patch continued, falling to Sarah Glenn in the very next over.

The quick loss of the skipper cost the Indians dear as they were behind in DLS.

The scores: England 177/7 in 20 overs (Danni Wyatt 31, Nat Sciver 55, Amy Jones 43, Shikha Pandey 3/22) bt India 54/3 in 8.4 overs (Smriti Mandhana 29). England won by 18 runs via DLS method.

Second T20I: July 11, Hove, 7 p.m. IST.



Airborne! Harleen Deol's sensational catch to send back Amy Jones has caught the cricketing world's attention. ■ REUTERS

India-Lanka rescheduled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI/COLOMBO

India's limited-overs series in Sri Lanka will now start on July 18, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday, after a COVID-19 outbreak in the home team camp forced the postponement.

The series, scheduled to start with the three ODIs on July 13, had to be

rescheduled after Sri Lanka's batting coach Grant Flower and data analyst G.T. Niroshan tested positive on their return from the UK tour, which meant extended quarantine for squad members.

The schedule: ODIs: July 18, 20 and 23; T20Is: July 25, 27 and 29.

The Gregory show gives England the series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

Lewis Gregory (40 & three for 44) helped England beat Pakistan by 52 runs in the second ODI at Lord's on Saturday and take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Chasing the hosts' 247, in a match reduced to 47 overs

due to rain, Pakistan was dismissed for 195.

Hasan Ali's five-for went in vain for the visitors.

The scores: England 247 in 45.2 overs (Phil Salt 60, James Vince 56, Lewis Gregory 40, Hasan Ali 5-51) bt Pakistan 195 in 41 overs (Saud Shakeel 56, Gregory 3-44).

Olympic team to leave for Tokyo on July 16

The entire squad will meet in Amsterdam before boarding the flight

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

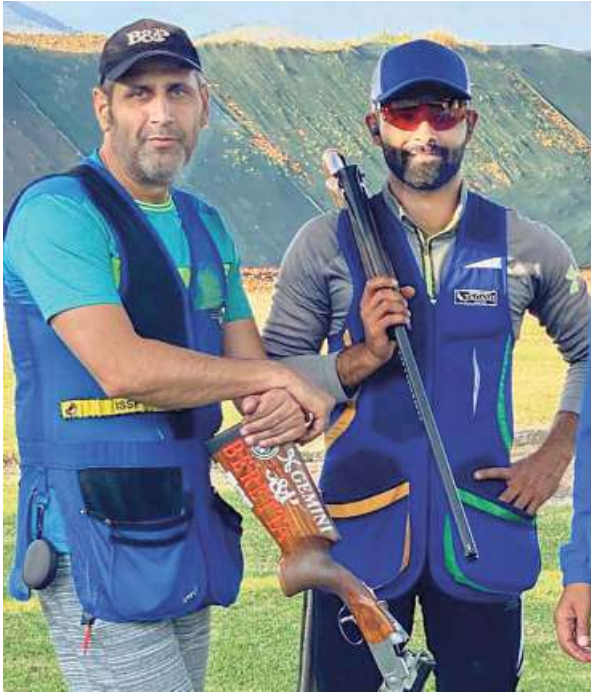
Indian shooters, training in Croatia and Italy, are scheduled to leave for Tokyo on July 16, for the Olympic Games.

The 13 rifle and pistol shooters, training in Zagreb, will leave with the coaches and a physio.

The two skeet shooters – Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, along with coach Mansher Singh – training in Italy, will leave from Rome on the same day.

The entire shooting team will meet in Amsterdam to board the flight which will take the team to Tokyo on July 17.

The rifle and pistol shooters will have coaches Suma Shirur, Deepali Deshpande, Oleg Mikhailov, Samaresh Jung, Ronak Pandit travelling with them. It is understood that accreditation procedures are being worked out for coaches Pavel Smirnov and Jaspal Rana.



Ready to roll: Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, who are training in Italy will link up with the rest in Amsterdam before proceeding to Tokyo. ■ FILE PHOTO

Both Jaspal and Mansher joined the teams recently, and had spent time in isolation, according to the prescribed protocol.

Even though the entire team has been vaccinated for the coronavirus, the organisers do not insist on the same.

They have a uniform testing procedure for all the athletes and officials arriving for the Games in Tokyo.

In fact, the testing protocol and the health study starts a week or two before they board the flight to Tokyo.

The IOC president Thomas Bach who reached Tokyo recently is scheduled to be on three days isolation, which goes to show that the Olympic family is being treated on par with everyone, as far as the sensitive COVID-19 situation is concerned.

The athletes and officials have a 70-page instruction playbook to follow.

Every team will have a COVID-19 liaison officer to specifically take care of testing and medical procedures related to it.

The athletes will be tested every day.

The organisers have clearly said to anyone with COVID-19 symptoms in the 14 days prior to the departure for the Games, "Don't travel to Tokyo".

Women shooters outnumber men

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The number of women participants will, for the first time ever, exceed the total strength of their male counterparts in the individual shooting events of the Olympic Games.

Because of double starters, the number of registered entries in individual women's events exceeds for the first time the number of expected participants in individual men's events – 239 and 208 respectively.

"356 athletes representing 100 NOC (National Olympic Committee) from five continents are entered to take part in the shooting sport competitions at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics," the ISSF said in a statement.

The largest number of participants is expected in 10m air pistol women and 10m air rifle women events – 53 and 49 respectively. In the men's events, the largest number of participants will be in the 10m air rifle and 50m rifle 3 positions – 47 and 39 respectively.

Bandovic to coach Chennaiyin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Bozidar Bandovic has been appointed as the new coach of Chennaiyin FC on a one-year contract ahead of the 2021-22 ISL season.

The 51-year-old from Montenegro will replace Csaba Laszlo after a disappointing season which saw it finish eighth. "I am delighted to join the Chennaiyin family," said the new head coach.

We don't fear stronger opponents anymore, says Navneet Kaur

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

Tokyo Olympics-bound forward Navneet Kaur feels the Indian women's hockey team's mindset has changed in the past few years and added that the side does not panic while playing against top teams now.

"A lot has changed in the mindset of our team in the past few years, we don't fear stronger opponents anymore," Navneet was quoted in a Hockey India release.

"Earlier, when we used to play against the Netherlands or Great Britain, we used to panic. That's not the case

now. We fight until the final whistle. It's not over until it's over."

Childhood dream

Navneet, who has played 79 matches for the national team, is all set to take part in her first Olympics. "Playing the Olympics is my childhood dream and I will leave no stone unturned to make it wonderful."

She feels heading into the matches with a clear mindset will be the key.

"This team is like a family. Rani and Savita keep exchanging their ideas with us on how we can improve. The coaches and the entire team are working towards that goal."



Navneet Kaur. ■ FILE PHOTO

We want to honour Bryant: Durant

US team aiming to claim 16th gold at the Olympics

BASKETBALL

REUTERS
LOS ANGELES

Brooklyn Nets forward Kevin Durant has said the United States basketball team has Kobe Bryant's DNA embedded in it and will look to honour the Los Angeles Lakers great with their play during this year's Tokyo Olympic Games.

Bryant, a five-time NBA champion and twice Olympic gold medal winner, died last year aged 41 in a helicopter crash with his daughter and seven others, shocking the world of sport and sending legions of fans into mourning.

Durant, who was the team's leading scorer at both the 2016 Rio Games and 2012 London Games, leads a 12-member U.S. squad looking to claim their 16th gold medal at the Olympics which begin on July 23.

"Kobe Bryant is the guy all



Gunning for glory: Kevin Durant dunks during training for the national basketball team in Las Vegas. ■ AP

of us looked up to and watched as kids. Even when he was alive and playing, his DNA was embedded in us as players.

"From afar he taught us what the game is about, what work ethic is about," Durant told reporters.

"And we all kind of pulled from him when he was playing and when he was alive. And now that he's not with us, we all want to honour his teachings by going out there and playing with that passion, with that energy every single play."

Ellyse Perry pulls out of The Hundred

Cites personal reasons; Joins Healy, Lanning and Haynes

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Star Australian all-rounder Ellyse Perry has pulled out of the inaugural season of the Hundred citing personal reasons.

The 30-year old was set to turn up for Birmingham Phoenix in the 100-ball tournament scheduled to get underway on July 21.

"We are obviously very

disappointed that Ellyse Perry has had to withdraw from the Hundred due to personal circumstances, but we completely understand her decision and wish her all the best," Beth Barrett-Wild, head of the women's competition, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

A blow

Her withdrawal came as a blow for Phoenix who are already without the services of New Zealand's Sophie De-

vine, who had pulled out of the tournament last month.

Perry's compatriots Alyssa Healy, Meg Lanning and Rachael Haynes have also pulled out from the Hundred ahead of their home series against India, which begins on September 19.

As many as five Indian women's cricketers, including teen sensation Shafali Verma and T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, have signed up with different teams for the Hundred.



Ellyse Perry. ■ AFP

MARUTI SUZUKI

NEXA

NOW IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY.

Avail exciting offers on Baleno and Ignis.



Scan the QR code for more details about the New Ignis.



Scan the QR code to discover the bold side of Baleno.

CREATE. INSPIRE.



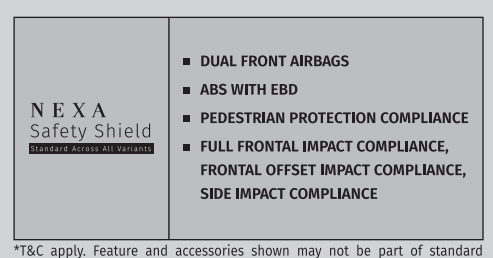
Advanced Automatic Transmission (CVT)
(*Available in Baleno from Delta variant onwards)



1.2L VVT Petrol Engine



New 17.8 cm Smartplay Studio
(*Available in Baleno and Ignis from Zeta variant onwards)



- DUAL FRONT AIRBAGS
- ABS WITH EBD
- PEDESTRIAN PROTECTION COMPLIANCE
- FULL FRONTAL IMPACT COMPLIANCE, FRONTAL OFFSET IMPACT COMPLIANCE, SIDE IMPACT COMPLIANCE

*T&C apply. Feature and accessories shown may not be part of standard fitment. Black glass shade on the vehicle is due to lighting effect. Images used are for illustration purposes only. Offers may vary across variants. Maruti Suzuki reserves the right to withdraw offers at any point in time.

VISIT YOUR NEAREST NEXA DEALERSHIP TO GET EXCITING OFFERS UP TO ₹ 40,000

Contact us at
1800-200-6392
1800-102-NEXA

www.nexaexperience.com
NOW YOU CAN ALSO BOOK ONLINE

NORTH DELHI: NEXA WAZIRPUR (COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 9582668646), NEXA ROHINI SEC 10 (JAGMOHAN AUTOMOTIVES PVT. LTD. PH: 7290054930), NEXA NARELA (DD MOTORS (A DIV. OF DD INDUSTRIES LTD. PH: 9081900800), NEXA PITAMPURA (KRISH AUTOMOTORS PH: 7838550047), NEXA GT KARNAL ROAD (RANA MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 7289999111), **WEST DELHI:** NEXA DWARKA SECTOR 9 (MAGIC AUTO PH: 7290075604), NEXA RAJOURI GARDEN (TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 999925750), NEXA MOTI NAGAR (AAA VEHICLEAS PVT. LTD. PH: 8448993400), NEXA DWARKA SECTOR 14 (COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 8860011600), NEXA PUNJABI BAGH (DD MOTORS (A DIV. OF DD INDUSTRIES LTD) PH: 9081900800), NEXA MAYAPURI (KRISH AUTOMOBILES PH: 7838550047), **EAST DELHI:** NEXA PREET VIHAR (TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 7290091122), NEXA AKSHARDHAM (FAIR DEAL PREMIUM WHEELS PRIVATE LIMITED PH: 999925161), NEXA PATARGANJ (MAGIC AUTO PH: 971221234), NEXA DILSHAD GARDEN (COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 837007962), NEXA GOKULPURI (VIPUL MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 9870194313), **SOUTH DELHI:** NEXA OKHLA PHASE 1 (PREM MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 011-42900000, 7065074531), NEXA EAST OF KAILASH (RANA MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 9999788886), NEXA GREEN PARK (TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 7290099520), NEXA LAIPAT NAGAR (BAGGA LINK MOTORS PH: 9818199367), **NOIDA:** NEXA SECTOR 1 (ROHAN MOTORS PH: 8376800026), NEXA SECTOR 63 (VIPUL MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 9999499797), NEXA SECTOR 10 (FAIR DEAL PREMIUM WHEELS PRIVATE LIMITED PH: 9953993450), **GREATER NOIDA:** NEXA IND AREA GREATER NOIDA (ROHAN MOTORS LTD. PH: 8744000600), **MANESAR:** NEXA IMT MANESAR (PLATINUM MOTOCORP PH: 9953345301), **GHAZIABAD:** NEXA SAHIBABAD (MOTORCRAFT SALES PVT. LTD. PH: 8130582222), NEXA MEERUT ROAD (ROHAN MOTORS LTD. PH: 9599040601), **FARIDABAD:** NEXA BATA CHOWK (VIPUL MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 9599814771), NEXA MATHURA ROAD (PASCO AUTOMOBILES PH: 9999120572), NEXA NIT (BVA AUTO PVT. LTD. PH: 1294121212), **PALWAL:** NEXA PALWAL CENTRAL (AUTONATION (A UNIT OF TAYAL INDIA MOTORS) PVT. LTD. PH: 9311864040), **GURUGRAM:** NEXA MG ROAD (PASCO AUTOMOBILES PH: 971290001), NEXA RAJIV CHOWK, GURUGRAM (RANA MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 8585991111), NEXA SECTOR 29 GURUGRAM (TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES PH: 999925740), NEXA SOHNA ROAD (COMPETENT AUTOMOBILES PH: 0124-2877000, 7290025353), NEXA SECTOR 62 (VIPUL MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 7404666666), NEXA IDC SEC 14, GURUGRAM (PREM MOTORS PVT. LTD. PH: 0124-4440000, 7065074501), **SOHNA:** NEXA SOHNA (PASCO AUTOMOBILES PH: 9899961000), **REWARI:** NEXA DELHI ROAD (DINCO 4 WHEELS LLP PH: 7082100301).

*T&C apply. Features and accessories shown may not be part of standard fitment. Auto Gear Shift (AGS) is available in Ignis from Delta variant onwards. Black glass shade on the vehicle is due to the lighting effect. Images used are for illustration purposes only. All offers are brought to you by NEXA dealers only. Offers may vary subject to the model and variant purchased. Offers shown above include consumer offer and exchange bonus. Maruti Suzuki reserves the right to withdraw offers at any point in time without any advance notice. All offers are applicable till 31st Jul'2021. Maruti Suzuki Smart Finance is now available pan-India. Maruti Suzuki Subscribe available only in selected cities.

SMART FINANCE
AN ONLINE END-TO-END CAR FINANCE SOLUTION

- Pre-approved loans
- Custom generated loans
- Multiple financiers
- Loan status tracking