



on Sunday



**Blinken likely to raise human rights issues during India visit**  
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**Children of Odisha village cross State border chasing Internet**  
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**CISCE announces Class 10, 12 results; no merit list this year too**  
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**India takes on Sri Lanka in T20I series from today**  
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**NEARBY**



**'Centre violating Delhi govt.'s rights through L-G'**

**NEW DELHI**  
 Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday said the Centre's attitude towards Delhi was unconstitutional and undemocratic. "The constitutional rights of the elected Delhi government are continuously violated by the Central government through the Lieutenant-Governor and all the decisions are being obstructed," Mr. Sisodia said.

CITY PAGE 3

**Former SC judge raises concerns over UAPA**

**NEW DELHI**  
 Former Supreme Court judge, Justice Madan B. Lokur, on Saturday said the courts, society and the state should consider the mental trauma afflicted on the families of activists, journalists and civil society members accused of sedition under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and languishing in jails.

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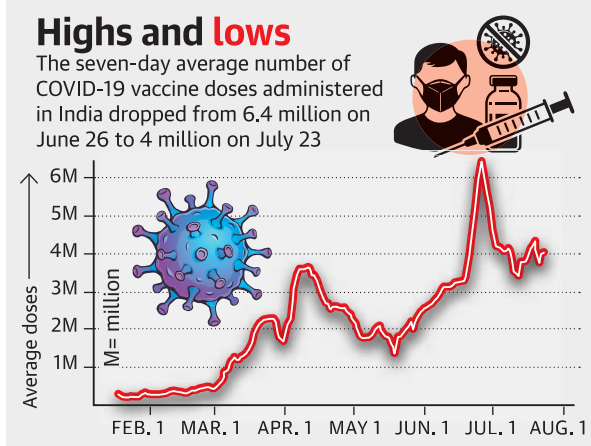
## Private sector lagging in vaccination drive: Goyal

But Centre committed to free vaccine for everyone, he says

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI**

Taking on the private sector for failing to pick up the 25% quota of COVID-19 vaccines allotted to it in adequate quantities, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said the government would ensure that everyone in the country got free vaccine with or without the sector's help.

Stressing that the Union government has been "responsive" to the demands of the industry and the States for a greater say in the vaccination drive, the Minister said business groups had made lofty promises about going to the hinterland and administering crores of jabs, but had failed to deliver. "You demanded and I remember how much you all fought with me and sought that vaccination be opened up for the private sector. Today, you are not even buying those 25% of vaccines [allotted to you]," Mr. Goyal said. "Please also calibrate your actions once you get



what you demanded... But don't worry, our government is committed to providing free vaccine to everybody that is eligible irrespective of whether the private sector does take the 25% quota," he said. "I remember one industry group said, 'I will do one crore vaccinations', and another said, 'We will go to remote areas and do it.' Nobody has gone to Bihar, northeast, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh to run cam-

paigns to remove vaccine hesitancy and use up that 25% quota," the Minister said in an address at the plenary session of the CII-Horasis India meeting. Underlining that vaccination is critical to the economy's turnaround, Mr. Goyal said he expected almost every adult to have at least one dose by December, with most of them getting the second dose as well.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Mirabai wins India's first medal in Tokyo

Weightlifter bags silver in 49 kg category

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 CHENNAI**

It was an incredible Saturday for India at the Tokyo Olympics as Mirabai Chanu won a silver in the 49 kg weightlifting category.

Hailing from Manipur, the 26-year-old lifted a total of 202 kg to emerge second behind China's Hou Zhihui, who won the gold at 210 kg.

Mirabai lifted 87 kg in snatch and in the clean and jerk segment, she hoisted 115 kg and helped India open its account.



**Scripting history:** Silver medalist Mirabai Chanu showing her medal during the victory ceremony of the women's 49 kg weightlifting competition in Tokyo on Saturday. • AFP

OLYMPICS REPORTS PAGE 15

## No imminent threat of Taliban influx in Kashmir, says official

'Developments in Afghanistan could embolden terror groups'

**DINAKAR PEIRI  
 NEW DELHI**

There is no immediate threat of the Taliban moving towards Kashmir, but there is apprehension that the Afghan situation could embolden Pakistan-based terror groups operating in Kashmir, a defence official said.

The manner of the U.S. military exit from Afghanistan and the Taliban gaining

ground may encourage such groups, the official said.

They may do something with the confidence, the official said. "The next four to five years, we do not see any Taliban coming in."

With the U.S. military almost exiting Afghanistan, the Taliban have made major advances in the past few weeks and gained new ground, raising apprehen-

sions of their possible influx into Kashmir.

As far as counter insurgency operations in Kashmir are concerned, India is very strong on the Line of Control (LoC), the official said, adding, "Be it troops, sensors or drones we have the LoC fully covered."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7  
 MOTIVE QUESTIONED PAGE 10

## 'IT searches detected huge irregularities'

**DEVESH K. PANDEY  
 NEW DELHI**

Two days after the Income Tax Department searched the premises linked to the Dainik Bhaskar Group and Bharat Samachar Group, the agency on Saturday issued statements without naming any companies, alleging that it had detected income escapement of ₹700 crore and unaccounted transactions exceeding ₹200 crore in two cases.

DETAILS ON PAGE 8

## Bengal Governor, LoP not eligible for beacon light

List issued after vaccine racket bust

**BISHWANATH GHOSH  
 KOLKATA**

West Bengal has issued a fresh list of VIPs and officials who are eligible to have beacon lights atop their cars, the idea being to check misuse of the entitlement by those not eligible as well as impostors.

The list does not include the Governor and the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in



Jagdeep Dhankhar

the Assembly. The last time such a list was issued, in 2014, the Governor was mentioned right on top and the Leader of the Opposition was

also specifically mentioned. "The omission of the Governor and the Leader of Opposition doesn't seem to be an oversight," an official in the Transport Department, which issued the order on Friday, told *The Hindu*.

There is no love lost between the current Governor, Jagdeep Dhankhar, and the Trinamool Congress government, while the Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, deserted the Trinamool Congress ahead of the

election and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party.

"Had someone else been the Opposition leader, the government might have been kinder," the official said, adding that Mr. Adhikari could well be entitled to the beacon light because his rank is that of a Cabinet Minister. All Ministers - Cabinet Ministers as well as Ministers of State - are allowed to use a light atop their cars.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## Green light for Delhi metro, buses to run at full capacity

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI**

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Saturday decided to allow metro trains and public buses to run at full capacity for the following fortnight.

Cinemas, auditoriums and spas will also be allowed to open, subject to enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour.

According to the DDMA order, for two weeks starting Monday (July 26 to August 9), metro trains and public buses will be allowed to carry passengers up to 100% of their capacity.

The number of attendees at funerals and marriage ceremonies has also been increased to 100.

Cinemas and auditoriums, according to the order, are allowed to open at 50% of their total capacity.

**No deaths in Delhi**

The city reported 66 new COVID-19 cases over 24 hours, taking the tally to 14,35,844, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday. No new death was reported and the total number of deaths stood at 25,041.

In all 76,308 tests were conducted over 24 hours and the test positivity rate was 0.09%. Of the total cases, 14,10,216 people have recovered and there are only 587 active cases at present.

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## Standing travel still not allowed, says DMRC

'50 people can now sit in each coach'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation on Saturday said that in view of the revised guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), entry to metro stations will continue to be regulated as standing travel is still not permitted.

In its notification, the DDMA said that metro trains can operate at "100% seating capacity", but specified that standing travel is not permitted. Standing travel compris-

es around 80% of the total capacity of each coach.

Till now, the metro was operating at 50% capacity and allowed only 25 people per coach, in alternate seats. Under the new rules, around 50 passengers will be able to sit in each coach.

According to sources, an eight-coach metro train can accommodate around 2,400 passengers. With the revised guidelines, an eight-coach train will be able to accommodate 400 passengers seated next to each other.

## Driver attacks policeman

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 38-year-old tempo driver has been arrested for allegedly attacking a Delhi Police Head Constable following a parking issue in south Delhi's Fatehpur Beri on Saturday, the police said.

A video of the incident surfaced online showing a police official forcing the

driver into a vehicle.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Thakur said Head Constable Manoj had repeatedly asked the tempo driver to park the vehicle properly as it was blocking traffic.

The accused, Kishan, allegedly abused and man-handled Manoj, following which he was arrested.

With **Deepak Kumar, Manika Batra, Amoj Jacob and Sarthak Bhabri** participating in the Tokyo Games, the Capital has a realistic chance of contributing to India's medal haul this time

# The four pillars of Delhi's Olympic dream

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
DELHI

Delhi has some of the best sports facilities in the country, thanks to the massive investment made for the Commonwealth Games in 2010. The Capital was also projected as a possible Olympics host, before Odisha and some other States took over the risk of nursing such an expensive dream.

The nation as a whole needs to harvest a rich haul of medals in the Olympic Games to convince everyone that it would be a good idea to invest huge money to host the quadrennial event, easily the biggest spectacle that unites the world.

Support in nurturing talent and rewards are the key to having more athletes winning Olympic medals. The national capital has taken a big step forward in both directions, first by setting up Delhi Sports University with the Sydney

Games medallist, Karnam Malleswari, as its Vice-Chancellor, and then by announcing a cash prize of ₹3 crore for athletes from the city winning gold medal in the Tokyo Olympics.

It is not surprising that Delhi has only four athletes – Deepak Kumar, Manika Batra, Amoj Jacob and Sarthak Bhabri – who will compete in Tokyo. With Haryana having a very rewarding sports programme for many years, the best talents have been inclined to stake allegiance to the State. Of the 127 athletes representing the country in the Tokyo Olympics, the neighbours of Delhi – Haryana (31) and Punjab (19) – account for the lion's share. It is perhaps some consolation to Delhi that the big State of Uttar Pradesh has only eight athletes going to Tokyo, the same number as from sporting States such as Kerala and Maharashtra.

It is not the numbers but the

performance in Tokyo that would be remembered. To that extent, Delhi has a realistic chance to strike an Olympic medal this time.

### Medal prospects

It may be hard for the relay runners, Amoj Jacob and Sarthak Bhabri, to dream of an Olympic medal considering the harsh fact that Indian athletics from Milkha Singh and P.T. Usha's time to the more immediate past of Anju George and Krishna Poonia has been finding an Olympic medal most elusive.

Shooting offers the best prospects for medals in Japan for India, and Delhi has a bright shooter in the Asian Games silver medalist, Deepak Kumar, 33, who serves the Indian Air Force.

Coached by Manoj Kumar, Deepak has made rapid strides towards excellence and matching world standards in a very short time. He joined the national team only in



Clockwise from far left: Shooter Deepak Kumar, table tennis player Manika Batra, and athletes Sarthak Bhabri and Aamoj Jacob.

Commonwealth Games gold medallist Manika Batra. Indian table tennis has not reached such standards yet to eye an Olympic medal but there is a realistic chance for Manika in the mixed event with the seasoned Sarthak Kamal, who would be competing in his fourth Olympics. The Indian pair will open against the third seeds from Chinese Taipei in the mixed event on Saturday.

Manika, 26, who has already been bestowed the nation's highest sports honours – Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna and Arjuna awards – will be competing in her second Olympics in Tokyo. She has won mixed event medals in both the last Commonwealth Games and Asian Games in 2018.

In the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, Manika not only won the individual gold but helped the Indian women's team get top honours by beating four-time champion Singapore. The highlight of that triumph was Manika's win over world No. 4 Feng Tianwei. She also won the doubles silver medal with Mouma Das.

Manika and Sarthak will have to be at their best to make it memorable for Indian table tennis.

### Missing out

Tennis ace Divij Sharan, who had won the Asian Games gold with Rohan Bopanna, would have also strengthened Delhi's representation in Tokyo, but he missed the entry.

Another Delhi boy, Yuki Bhabri, was also in line to get an Olympic entry in tennis on his injury-protected rank but has been unable to play owing to a recent knee surgery in the U.S. The chance went to junior Wimbledon champion and the country's No. 1 Sumit Nagal, who lives in Delhi but hails from Haryana.

The Tokyo Games in these difficult times would perhaps inspire the youth of Delhi to take up sports in a big way. The best support from the Delhi government will ensure that the youth do not move away to greener pastures but take pride in representing the Capital, at every level.

**WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY COMM. BRANCH, KOTA DIVISION**

**Tender Notification No-18/2021 & 19/2021**

No. C/45/3/1 SMU & C/45/3/Vol-2 GMU Date: 22.07.2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Kota Division, West Central Railway invites sealed Bids on Open Competitive, single packet tender system for "Provision of Catering Services at Special Minor Unit Number/Name (SMU) for Reserved category from Individuals/Sole Proprietors & single stage two packet tender system from food and catering service providers at General Minor Unit (GMU) for Unreserved category at following locations of 'A1, A & B' category stations of Kota division: Details mentioned as under:

S. N.	Station & Category	Catering Stall No.	PF No.	Location at station	SMU Category
1	Kota (A1)	R4	01	Near main entrance in front of UTS officer RHS concourse hall	Divyang (W)
2	Kota (A1)	R5	01	Back side of Pay & Use in concourse hall	S.T.
3	BTE (A)	R1	45	In front of FOB Ramp	FF/WW/W/ Rty/Emp & dislocated/displaced by the Railway (Women)
4	RMA (B)	R3	29	At Km No. 648/24	BPL
5	RMA (B)	R3	01	At Km No. 848/25	FF/WW/W of Rty/Emp & dislocated/displaced by the Railway
6	BWM (B)	R2	29	Between Km No. 820/14 & 820/18	ST
7	BWM (B)	R1	01	At Km No. 820/16	Divyang
8	BUDI (B)	R1	01	At Km No. 32/02	DBC (Women)

**Cost of Bid Document:** For S.N. 1 & 2: ₹ 7,080/-, For S.N. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8: ₹ 3,540/-  
**Indicative License Fee/PP per annum:** For S.N. 1 & 2: ₹ 19,80,111/-, For S.N. 3: ₹ 2,69,068/-, For S.N. 4 & 5: ₹ 1,42,161/-, For S.N. 6 & 7: ₹ 1,49,909/-, For S.N. 8: ₹ 95,457/-, **Cost of Tender (For Five Years):** For S.N. 1 & 2: ₹ 99,00,555/-, For S.N. 3: ₹ 13,45,340/-, For S.N. 4 & 5: ₹ 7,10,805/-, For S.N. 6 & 7: ₹ 7,49,545/-, For S.N. 8: ₹ 4,77,285/-, **Earnest Money:** For S.N. 1 & 2: ₹ 5,00,000/-, For S.N. 3: ₹ 70,000/-, For S.N. 4, 5, 6 & 7: ₹ 40,000/-, For S.N. 8: ₹ 30,000/-

S. N.	Station & Category	Catering Stall No.	PF No.	Location at station	GMU Category
1	Kota (A1)	R1	04	Pole No. 1363 A near FOB	Gen (Women)
2	Kota (A1)	R3	01	Near Pole No. 20A	Gen (Women)
3	Kota (A1)	R9	29	Near Pole No. 2A	Gen (Women)
4	Kota (A1)	R10	29	KM No. 920/25 opposite crew lobby	Gen (Women)
5	SWM (A)	R3	04	Near Water Booth Kota End	Gen (Women)
6	GGC (B)	R1	01	Behind OHE Pole 1092	Gen (Women)
7	HAN (B)	R1	02	Pole No. 1136/30 MTJ	Gen (Women)
8	HAN (B)	R2	02	Pole No. 1136/20 Kota End	Gen (Women)

**Cost of Bid Document:** For S.N. 1, 2, 3 & 4: ₹ 7,080/-, For S.N. 5, 6, 7 & 8: ₹ 3,540/-  
**Indicative License Fee/PP per annum:** For S.N. 1, 2, 3 & 4: ₹ 19,80,111/-, For S.N. 5: ₹ 10,78,786/-, For S.N. 6: ₹ 1,92,800/-, For S.N. 7 & 8: ₹ 1,00,428/-, **Cost of Tender (For Five Years):** For S.N. 1, 2, 3 & 4: ₹ 99,00,555/-, For S.N. 5: ₹ 53,93,930/-, For S.N. 6: ₹ 9,64,000/-, For S.N. 7 & 8: ₹ 5,02,140/-, **Earnest Money:** For S.N. 1, 2, 3 & 4: ₹ 5,00,000/-, For S.N. 5: ₹ 3,00,000/-, For S.N. 6: ₹ 50,000/-, For S.N. 7 & 8: ₹ 30,000/-

**Cost of Bid Document:** As described in above column for each SMU & GMU Separately.  
**Reserve Price per annum:** As described in above column for each SMU & GMU Separately.  
**Cost of Tender (For 5 year):** As described in above column for SMU & GMU Separately.  
**EMD:** (5% of total value of tender) As described in above Column for each SMU & GMU Separately.

**Note:** 1. The scope of work terms of reference is provided in section A in tender form. 2. **Bid Document:** The interested bidders may purchase "Bid documents for SMU" between 10.00 hrs. to 17.00 hrs. on all working days from 22.07.2021 to 19.08.2021 and for GMU from 22.07.2021 to 12.08.2021, in person from the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, West Central Railway, DRM's office, Kota on payment of non-refundable document fee (Cost of Bid Document) as above mentioned, in the form of Demand Draft/Banker's cheque in favour of Sr. DFM/WCR/KOTA, drawn on any scheduled commercial bank in India. Cash deposited at any Railway Station/Cash office of Kota Division, West Central Railway duly supported with original Cash Receipt/Money Receipt indicating the Bid Number and due date of Submission. 3. **Bidding document:** Bidding document can also be downloaded from the website <http://www.wcr.indianrailways.gov.in> and the bids can be submitted on the downloaded document along with a separate Demand Draft as above serial no. 3 towards the cost of bidding documents as the time of bidding, failing which the offer will be summarily rejected without original Bank Draft. 4. **Earnest Money:** The bid must be accompanied by Earnest Money as mentioned above in the form of DD/Bankers cheque in the name of "Sr. Divisional Finance Manager, West Central Railway, Kota drawn on my scheduled Bank in India. The Bids can be submitted on the downloaded document along with a separate demand draft of tender document cost and earnest money failing which the offer will be summarily rejected. 5. **Receipt of Bids:** Sealed bids should be dropped in the designated box kept in the Office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, West Central Railway, DRM's office Kota, not later than 13.00 hrs on 20.08.21 for SMU and 13.00 hrs. on 13.08.2021 for GMU. Bids shall be opened on the same day at 15:00 hrs in presence of Bidder/Bidders' representative who wish to attend. For this an authority letter of the firm is required. The onus of dropping the bid in the box lies with the bidder. Bids received after 13.00 hrs on 20.08.2021 for SMU and 13.00 hrs. on 13.08.2021 for GMU will be called "late" bid and will not be considered further for evaluation. 6. Railway reserves the right to accept/reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof. 7. The Bidder fulfilling the eligibility criteria will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria given in this Bid document. 8. **Address for Communication:** Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Divisional Railway Manager's office, Kota Jn. Kota (Rajasthan)-324002, Phone:-0744-2467014, Fax -0744-2467160. **DRM (C)/KOTA, WCR**

For and on behalf of the President of India

कोरोना कें भयाना है, मास्क व वैक्सिन लयाना है

### IN BRIEF

#### NGT seeks report on encroachment

NEW DELHI Following a plea seeking enforcement of a 2016 National Green Tribunal order to remove encroachments on a water body in south-west Delhi, the NGT has directed the district administration and the Delhi Jal Board to provide a factual position and action-taken report within two months.

#### Man arrested for killing truck driver

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly robbing and killing a truck driver in Swaroop Nagar, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said the accused, Rehan, is a resident of Bareilly.

The police said that a body of a man was found lying on G.T. Karnal Road on July 3 and a murder case was registered. Subsequently, the police got information that a truck driver along with the truck was missing.

During investigation, the incidents were found to be connected after which the truck driver was identified as Satpal Singh, a resident of Uttar Pradesh. Later, the abandoned truck was recovered from KMP Highway in Bahadurgarh, Haryana.

The police scanned CCTV footage following which "a raid was conducted and Rehan was nabbed near Bareilly."

During interrogation, it was revealed that Rehan along with his associates Barkat and Sahid had tried to steal the truck, loaded with pan masala, in Alipur.

When the driver resisted, the accused killed him and dumped his body in Swaroop Nagar.

Barkat and Shahid have also been arrested.

## NGT sets up panel to look into cause of factory fire

Blaze had claimed lives of six workers

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has constituted a joint panel to ascertain the cause of a fire at a shoe and garments factory in west Delhi on June 21 this year that claimed the lives of six workers.

The green panel directed the committee, comprising officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the district administration, to collect facts independently and ascertain remedial measures for compensating the families of the victims.

The Tribunal has sought a report within one month.

The directions came as the NGT initiated proceedings following media reports that the manufacturing unit was allegedly operating in violation of green norms.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said that before



Firefighters douse the blaze at the manufacturing unit in Udyog Nagar. ■ FILE PHOTO

passing a final order, it was necessary to have "authentic information about the factual position of the nature of activity and nature of violation of law".

"It is also necessary to require compliance of safety norms to avoid such incidents in the future. The committee may particularly ascertain whether any hazardous, inflammable material was stored on the premises. The committee may visit the site and interact with the stakeholders, including the owner of the unit," the Bench said.

## Man caught trying to dispose of body

Policeman spots legs of a man dangling from wooden cart

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 41-year-old man was arrested on Saturday for allegedly killing a man and attempting to dispose of the body in southwest Delhi's Mahipalpur.

A head constable caught the accused while he was taking the body to a garbage dump in a cart. The body was covered with a white cloth but the feet were hanging out, which caught the policeman's attention.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh said the accused, Suresh, told investigators he had killed Santosh, 25, as he had been harassing and stalking his daughter.

Suresh, who works as a

security guard, told the police that Santosh was their neighbour and had been troubling his daughter for the last three years.

### Harassment angle

"The accused said Santosh used to pass comments on his daughter and often follow her when she would go out. Suresh had told Santosh to stop many times but he did not," said a senior police officer. However, Suresh had never given a formal complaint regarding harassment of his daughter, the police added.

On Thursday night, Santosh allegedly came to Suresh's house drunk and started arguing with him. "During the argument,

## Police rescue minor who was abducted, 'sold' for ₹50,000

Accused in custody; victim was catfished, sexually assaulted

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 16-year-old girl who was abducted, sexually assaulted, and 'sold' to a person for ₹50,000 – with whom she was also forcibly married, has been rescued from Madhya Pradesh's Bhand district, the police said on Saturday. The accused has also been arrested.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Monika Bhardwaj said the accused has been identified as Rajeev Garg, a resident of Bhand. Police said that on May 29, the girl had told her parents that she was going to a friend's house.

### Call detail records

When she did not return, the family launched a search operation and subsequently approached the police.

A case was registered at Ranhola police station on

charges of kidnapping.

During the probe, call detail records of the victim were scrutinised, and the police focused on a mobile number whose location was found to be in Uttar Pradesh's Etawah, then Gwalior and finally Bhand in M.P.

"The location of that number was in Delhi on the day the girl went missing. Its movements were followed and the police apprehended Rajeev on July 22 from Bhand," Ms. Bhardwaj said. On Rajeev's instance, the victim was rescued from a house in Bhand.

### Befriended online

The girl allegedly told the police that Rajeev had befriended her online by pretending to be a girl named Mahi Garg. When the victim realised she was talking to a man, she broke off contact and blocked his number.

"But Rajeev called her from some other number and emotionally exploited her to continue the friendship and unblock his number. He also convinced her to meet him at Madhuban Chowk," said a senior police officer. On May 29, the girl met Rajeev, who abducted her and took her to Bhand.

### Forced into marriage

"The victim was subjected to physical and sexual assault by Rajeev. She also said that the accused sold her to one Ram Mohan, a resident of Bhand, for ₹50,000, and she was forced to marry him," the officer said.

The police said they are looking for Ram Mohan.

The police said that Rajeev had spent seven months in Gwalior jail in connection with a dowry case. "Ram is a tenant of Garg and is absconding," they added.

## Six labourers injured as speeding car jumps kerb

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Six labourers sitting on the roadside sustained injuries when a speeding car hit them in outer north Delhi's Narela, the police said on Saturday. The accused is absconding.

A PCR call regarding an accident in Narela Industrial Area was received on Friday. By the time the police reached the site, the injured had been taken to a hospital. The offending vehicle was found at the spot.

"An inquiry revealed that the car was coming from Narela and going towards Bawana. The driver lost control due to speeding and hit the labourers who were sitting on the side of the road.

They were taken to a hospital in an ambulance," the police said.

The injured have been identified as Narender, 43, Sharad, 40, Sanjay, 35, Sunil, 30, Nand Lal, 32, and Sukhdin, 21.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said a case under Sections 279 (rash driving) and 337 (causing hurt by act of negligence) of the Indian Penal Code has been lodged. "The registered owner of the vehicle is a resident of Sonapat. Upon interrogation, he said that a person named Dharmender had taken the car. Dharmender's phone was found inside the offending car. He is absconding," said the DCP.



**Timings DELHI**

**SUNDAY, JUL. 25**  
RISE 05:39 SET 19:17  
RISE 20:38 SET 06:36

**MONDAY, JUL. 26**  
RISE 05:40 SET 19:16  
RISE 21:17 SET 07:41

**TUESDAY, JUL. 27**  
RISE 05:41 SET 19:16  
RISE 21:51 SET 08:42

**Delhi Weather**

	max	min
Delhi City	36	27
Safdarjang	36	27
Palam	35	28

**Delhi Palam Today**  
37°C Very warm and humid day. Light rain and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
33°C Few spells of light to moderate rain and thunder-shower likely at some places with cloudy sky and gusty moderate winds.

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**THE HINDU**  
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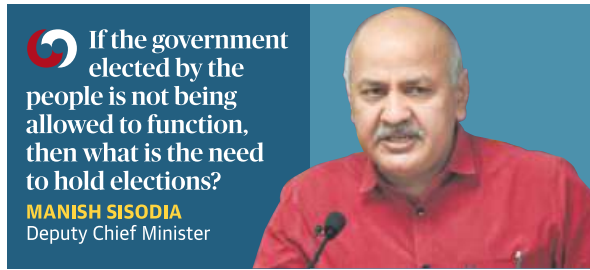
# Centre violating Delhi's rights via L-G: Sisodia

'Baijal overturned our decision on lawyers for farmers' cases'

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**  
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday said that the Central government's attitude towards Delhi was unconstitutional and undemocratic.

"The constitutional rights of the elected Delhi government are continuously violated by the Central government through the Lieutenant-Governor and all the decisions are being obstructed. The Central government needs to read the Constitution and reflect that if the government elected by the people is not being allowed to function, then what is the need to hold elections, and what is the need for the Constitution? This shows the unconstitutional and undemocratic attitude of the BJP-led Central government," Mr. Sisodia said.

Mr. Sisodia claimed that



If the government elected by the people is not being allowed to function, then what is the need to hold elections?  
**MANISH SISODIA**  
Deputy Chief Minister

the Lieutenant-Governor has rejected the panel of lawyers decided by the Delhi Cabinet to appear for cases filed against farmers who were protesting, because the latter does not want BJP's "anti-farmer" stance to be exposed.

**Farmers' case**  
"It was decided in the Delhi Cabinet on July 19 that lawyers would be appointed by the Delhi government with respect to the farmer agitation cases going on in the court. However, the

Lieutenant-Governor reversed this decision of the Delhi government on Saturday and sent the file to the President," he said.

**Unconstitutional stand**  
The AAP Minister claimed that the L-G is repeatedly interfering unconstitutionally in the functioning of the Delhi government, which is elected by the people. "The L-G is repeatedly abusing his powers, going against the decision of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court," he added.

# Delhi continues to face shortage of vaccines

The Capital continued to face a shortage of vaccines and the number of doses of vaccines administered daily was also low.

The COVID-19 vaccine stock will last for only less than a day, as per a vaccination bulletin released by the Delhi government on Saturday. The city has been facing a similar situation for about two weeks and the Health Minister had said last week that 500 vaccination centres were shut due to shortage in the city.

On Saturday morning, the city had only 1,08,460 doses of Covishield vaccine and 2,26,760 doses of Covaxin, as per the data. Till now, 96,03,697 doses of vaccines have been administered in the city.

A total of 72,69,780 of vaccine doses have been supplied to Delhi and 19,989 doses have been wasted, as per Central government data

# Relief given to only 15-20 families of 'corona warriors', says Bidhuri

'Kejriwal's U-turn on compensation scheme is shameful'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Saturday accused Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of making a U-turn when it came to compensating the families of 'Corona Warriors'.

Mr. Bidhuri termed "shameful" that the Chief Minister had allegedly not lived up to his promise of paying every 'Corona Warrior' who died in performing his or her duty and had to be reprimanded by the courts to fulfil the promise.

**Constable case**  
Referring to the case of Delhi police constable Amit Kumar, he said Kumar died last year while performing his duty in dealing with the COVID-19 situation and the Chief Minister had tweeted that his family would be paid ₹1 crore compensation. "However, his family is



Ramvir Singh Bidhuri

still to receive the compensation once again highlighting the fact that the Chief Minister and his party are a classic example of lies and deceit. His widow had approached the court after which the court had advised the Chief Minister to live up to his promise and pay the compensation," Mr. Bidhuri said.

"In an earlier case also, the court had asked Mr. Kejriwal to fulfil his promise made during the last year's lockdown that the Delhi go-

vernment would pay the rent for people who are not able to pay it due to the prevailing lockdown situation," he said.

Mr. Bidhuri said around 500 Corona Warriors have sacrificed their life till date while performing their duties during the pandemic.

**'Betrayal of sacrifice'**  
But, he alleged, the Delhi government had only paid compensation to around 15-20 families till date which was "a betrayal of their sacrifice".

"Such a sensitive issue of sacrifice and valour was being used by the Kejriwal government for PR stunts and to gain cheap brownie points. The residents of Delhi expect their Chief Minister to live up to the promises he has made to the people. It will reflect poorly on him and his party if he fails to live up to these promises," he alleged.

# 'North body evicting Gaffar Market shops'

**STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI**

The AAP on Saturday alleged that the BJP-ruled North Corporation is evicting shopkeepers from Gaffar Market to build new shops and then give them to other people.

"The civic body in connivance with big builder mafias is coming up with a new technique. The markets in which shops should have been on freehold, where shops were given on a lease for 99 years, surveys are now being conducted to find out fallacies and evict people from those buildings," AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said. He claimed that the BJP is marking these buildings to be dangerous and forcing the shopkeepers to empty the markets.

# Vendors, hawkers to march to CM, L-G house tomorrow

'Allow weekly markets or give us adequate compensation'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

Street vendor and hawkers' association on Saturday announced that they would on Monday march to the residences of Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with begging bowls for compensation due to loss of livelihood.

Ashwani Bagri, convener of Delhi Weekly Bazaar United Front and president of Hawkers' Joint Action Committee, North Delhi unit, said the "begging protest march" was being organised to highlight that the city's busy markets and liquor vendors had been opened but the precarious conditions of street vendors were being



Vendors will march with begging bowls seeking compensation for livelihood loss. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

neglected. He demanded that the authorities concerned immediately allow street vendors or else compensate them for loss of livelihood at the rate of ₹18,000 per month.

"If the appropriate decision is not taken soon, then the indebted and helpless

street vendors will be forced to intensify agitations in the streets and the insensitivity of the government will be responsible for such a situation," Mr. Bagri said.

Dharmendra Kumar, president of All India Hawkers' Joint Action Committee said, "Street vending is the last refuge for poor, disabled."

# Vintage golf carts to offer last-mile connectivity at Chandni Chowk

Govt. submits specifications; decision likely tomorrow

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI**

The Delhi Transport Department has submitted specifications of vintage golf carts for last-mile connectivity at redeveloped Chandni Chowk with the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) paving the way for them on the 1.3-km stretch in days to come.

According to a senior government official, a decision on these is likely to be taken at a meeting of the Corporation on Monday.

The issue of electric vehicles – especially for the infirm and elderly – to serve visitors to the market had come up for discussion at a

meeting of the corporation on June 25. It had been decided to deliberate on the issue in detail.

"After these deliberations, we have submitted suggestions to the SRDC regarding the modalities and approvals which will be required to allow such vehicles on the stretch," said a senior government official.

"These will most likely be operated on a PPP mode with market and residential associations chipping in for their procurement and operationalisation. We expect more clarity on this by next week," the official said.

In addition to vintage golf carts, as many as 107 cycle

rickshaws, which will be allowed to ply on the pedestrianised stretch soon, are being refurbished in accordance with a "better" and more "user-friendly design" in addition to being RFID-enabled.

**RFID equipped**  
They will also be equipped with RFID for effective regulation and their number can be increased later in a phased manner.

The stretch between Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid is a vehicle-free zone – no vehicles are allowed between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. – though non-motorised vehicles are allowed.

# ₹295 cr. salary dues released to employees'

Former Mayor of North Corporation Jai Prakash on Saturday said that the civic body has released ₹295 crore salary of A, B, C and D category employees for June and teachers' salary for May and one pension of retired employees.

"If the Delhi government had given this outstanding fund to the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, then the latter would have released the salary to all the employees till the month of July. Every effort is being made to fulfil the promises made to all the employees of the corporation," he said.

He termed the act of firing on police party without any provocation as "abhorrent and brutal" and said this itself showed that he was not only a threat to the society but was also an enemy of the State.

# Ashram underpass work delayed

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**

The construction of a 750-metre-long underpass at the Ashram intersection on Mathura Road is delayed yet again and the deadline has been pushed by two months, Public Works Department officials involved in the project said on Saturday.

The revised deadline of the project is now August 31, an official said. The earlier one was June 30.

The delay will add to the traffic woes of thousands of commuters who rely on the stretch.

# Batla House encounter: convict moves High Court challenging death sentence

Ariz Khan files appeal against trial court's March 8 verdict

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**

Ariz Khan, who was awarded the death penalty for the murder of decorated Delhi police inspector Mohan Chand Sharma in connection with the sensational 2008 Batla House encounter case, has moved the Delhi High Court challenging his conviction and sentence.

**Inspector killing**  
Khan has filed an appeal against the trial court verdict which said the offence fell under the "rarest of the rare category" warranting the

maximum sentence and Ariz be "hanged by neck" till death.

Inspector Sharma of the Delhi Police's Special Cell was killed during the 2008 Batla House encounter between the police and the terrorists in Jamia Nagar in south Delhi following serial bomb blasts in the national capital in which 39 people died and 159 were injured.

The appeal has been filed by Ariz through advocates M.S. Khan and Quasar Khan. The trial court had on March 8 convicted Ariz saying that it was duly proved

that he and his accomplices murdered the police official and fired gunshots at him.

The trial court had, on March 15, sentenced Ariz to capital punishment and also imposed a fine of ₹11 lakh on him, making it clear that ₹10 lakh should be immediately released to the family members of Sharma.

It had termed the act of firing on police party without any provocation as "abhorrent and brutal" and said this itself showed that he was not only a threat to the society but was also an enemy of the State.

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3	North- East	EE(NE)-I, 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	9810191138
8	Central	Office of EE (Central) Delhi Jal Board, JLN Marg. Opposite Ramlila 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
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Urban Development Department, Government of NCT of Delhi



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HINDU(EZHAVA) BOY, uppr-middle class family, 35/172cm, wrking as trader in stock market, looking for alliancecarniurapuram@gmail.com, 9947512499

NRI 37, SOFTWARE Eng, 5'5.5, Athletic, USA (Illinois) seek bride. shaadi1290@gmail.com

VISWAKARMA 29/155 maham Ph.d scientist well settled in newyork, seeks bride studying /working in usa or indian doctor willing to settle in usa. caste no bar. ct: 7200771188

SAURASTRA SOWRASTRA -PALCAR Hashtam Kanni 35 B.Com MBA Pvt Manager Chennai 90K Pm (Ragu Kethu) Deg. Bride 9381725577

TAMIL HINDU SC Adiravidar, 33, MTech Civil Engineer, Thiruvonam Magaram, Working in Dubai. Ph: 96003 82674

SENGUNTHAR / Pillai (CNB) 165cm 36yrs B.E. Middle Class, Settled Chennai, Seeking Good Family Bride Ph: 8838909035 / WhatsApp - 9952906501

RC, 29 / B.E., Cognizant 1 Lakh (PM) seeks Bride - 98845 10869

CANADA PROFESSOR, 48, Christian BE, ME, Ph.D., Own properties, Issueless Divorced sought good-looking Christian / Hindu unmarried or divorced bride below 38 years without kid. All denominations Welcome Caste no bar. Visiting India this week. Contact Parents in Chennai 9944418154, WhatsApp CANADA: 001647537375.

TAMIL MUSLIM, 29yrs/ 168cm, B.E, MBA (PGDHR), ASM in Nigeria seeks Fair, Slim, MBBS MD/ MS Bride from well settled family. Ct: 97891 39261

TELUGU

BALUJA NAIDU 26/155V Fair, B.Com CA Working MNC Seeks Fair Educated Eml Groom Decent Family 944361010

KAMMA NAIDU BE, MS in USA, 1980/ 163, Uthiram seeks BE, MS Groom. Ct: 99762 54300.

SMU , Divorce Girl M. E. 33/174.Na.mazi seeks pious divorcee Groom, min graduate decent job, within TN, with or without issue. 8939447800, khader090837@gmail.com

URDU MUJSLIM, 38yrs Divorcee, Govt. Asst Prof, Fair, Issueless. Seeking Chennai Based Groom. 9025067019

BRIDES WANTED COSMOPOLITAN DKV 32/173/73 B.E. Hashtam, Manager, Govt bank seeks bride from educated family. 9940507235

DOCTOR MBBS MS (Govt Dr) age 31 1Lakh per month Good Looking Well Settled. Need Dr / BE any PG 6374767370

DOCTOR MD (Radiology) 34 years Hindu Tamil SC Pondicherry seeks doctor groom contact 7708756395

HINDI 1985/175CM. IT, 25 Lakhs PA. Chennai. Father Doctor. Seeks well educated bride. WhatsApp: 96290 12248

KANYAKUBJ/ SARUPARINI brahmin working girl. My son is 32 years, fair, 5'8" tall, works in US top bank Wells Fargo at Bangalore, earns 25+ lakh per year. He also owns apartment. Preference for Lucknow girl. Pls contact- 9853218210

ELITE GROOMS WANTED BRAHMIN, 26, 165 cms, Professional, pursuing Masters in Business Administration. Lives in Chennai. Father is a working Professional. Looking for a compatible match. Contact: 6366448343

MUDALIYAR, 26, 168 cms, Professional, Masters in Human Resource. Lives in Hosur. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for a suitable well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448346

MUDALIYAR/AGAMUDAYAR, 31, 163 cms, Masters in Medicine from a reputed Institute. Lives in Ranipet. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for a suitable well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448345

NADAR, 28, 157 cms, Entrepreneur, Bachelors in Engineering. Lives in Chennai. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for an amiable well educated match. Contact: 6366448345

NADAR, 28, 157 cms, Entrepreneur, Bachelors in Engineering. Lives in Chennai. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for an amiable well educated match. Contact: 6366448345

CASTE NO BAR, 26, 164 cms, Bachelors in Engineering. Lives in Coimbatore. Father is an affluent Businessman with a good net worth. Looking for a well educated match. Contact: 6366448344

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TAMIL

MUDALIAR 29, M.Tech, MBA, 16L P.A, 176cm, Smart, Well Settled Family Seeks Bride CNB 8778514465/ 7200866346

SAIVAPILLAI ALLIANCE invited for our son 34, 5'11", handsome, B.E., M.B.A., Manager, Chennai. Seeking good looking, vegetarian bride from decent educated family. Contact 9585012908

MUDALIAR 38yrs High Status Innocent divorcee govt 12LPA. Simple educated bride FC, BC, MBC. 8778934848

BRAHMIN - Divorcee 42 BE, MBA, IT, Clean Habit. Seeks Suitable Bride 34 to 40 Yrs Caste No Bar 9003052848

HINDU NADAR, Boy 34years, BE, 1.5 Lac-2.0 Lac. Nadar/Caste No bar. Tee totaller Suitable Bride 7200109069

CANADA BOY holding PR Naidu 32/185 MS Engg from USA, Pooram/Simhasri, working in Toronto Earning 1 Lakhs CAD PA. Seeking a Good Looking, Height min157cm & Professionally Qualified bride from affluent Hindu family willing to settle in Canada. Sub Caste No bar. Contact: 841370031, athaluvvijayarengan@gmail.com

SC 38, 178 B.Tech, M.Sc. M.B.A Clean Habits Dr/Er any suitable Working Bride. Caste No Bar. Ct: 9952089394

HINDU THEVAR, B.Com, 45 years, Legally divorced, Own House & Business in Chennai. Seeks suitable bride with respectable family. Caste no bar. Ct: 9941872820

HINDU SC, AD, 44/173cm, Anusham/ Virichikum, B. TECH, MBA Working in Central Govt Company, Chennai Looking for Suitable Bride. First Marriage Only. Caste / Religion No Bar 806626333 / perumalvs@hotmail.com

IYER VADAMA Native Trichy 42, Fair, Employed in Chennai, Clean Habits. Only Son. 9791453205 / 9962917322

ELITE BRIDES WANTED BRAHMIN, 31, 173 cms, Businessman, Masters in Management from a premier Institute. Lives in Bangalore. Father is a working Professional. Looking for a well educated match. Contact: 6366448343

BRAHMIN, 35, 168 cms, Divorced, Professional, Chartered Accountant. Lives in Bangalore. Father is a working Professional. Looking for a suitable well educated match. Contact: 6366448343

VANNIAKULA KSHATHIRI, 26, 173 cms, Businessman, Bachelors in Engineering. Lives in Chennai. Belongs to an affluent business family with a good net worth. Looking for an affable well educated match. Contact: 6366448346

UDAYAR/CASTE NO BAR, 30, 173 cms, Professional, Masters in Engineering. Lives in USA. Father is retired. Family is financially well off. Looking for a compatible well educated match from any community. Contact: 6366448346

MUSLIM, 24, 168 cms, Professional, Masters in Engineering. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Professional. Family is affluent. Looking for a compatible and well educated match from the same community. Contact: 6366448344

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TAMIL

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TWO SONS AGE: 29Yrs, HEIGHT: 5ft 9in, CHARACTER: A well-disciplined, Well-mannered, and intelligent person. AGE: 28Yrs, HEIGHT: 5ft 9in, CHARACTER: A well-disciplined, Well-mannered, and intellectual person.

SPE GROUP Share your Profile & Photograph to Below mentioned mail ID Email ID: sperealtors@gmail.com NAME: MALATHY CONTACT NO: 99406 44309

BALUJA NAIDU 36yrs, Aswini, B.E, PGDM from IIM working in Central govt P.S.U in Hyderabad. Ct: 9445412753

OWN TEXTILE Showroom (5 Floors) Chennai, Padma Saliyar Chettiyar 29/M.Sc. Monthly 1 Crore above Rich. Seeks Bride. Chennai - 98845 10761

YADAVA TELUGU 32 yrs, 168 cm, M.Tech 85K pm Chennai good net worth seeks qualified fair bride 9677003920

Lingayat 37Y Veg M.Sc, IT Job, Seeks Telugu/Kannada, Lingayat/ Brahmin Girl, 30-37 Y Ct: 9688230917.

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FINANCE UNIQUE AND EASY FINANCING SOLUTIONS FOR INDIAN BUSINESS

PERSONAL CHANGE OF NAME I Gupesh, S/o Anil Kumar R/o V.P.O Kherian, Teh. Dehra, Dist. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh Change Name to Gopesh Dhillion vide Affidavit Dt: 03/07/2021 Sworn before Notary Virender, Dehra.

HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG "NOTICE INVITING TENDER"

Online bids on lump sum basis are invited by the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division No-4 Kasumpti Shimla-9 (HP) on behalf of Governor Himachal Pradesh in electronic system in three covers for the under mentioned work from contractors/Firms of appropriate class enlisted with Jal Shakti Vibhag.

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of Work, Estimated Cost, Earnest Money, Time, Cost of form

Key Dates:- I. Date of online publication 24.07.2021 at 5:00 PM

II. Downloading of e-tender Documents From 24.07.2021 at 5:00 PM Up to 09.08.2021 at 5:00 PM

III. Date of submission of e-tendering From 24.07.2021 at 5:00 PM Up to 09.08.2021 at 5:00 PM

IV. Pre Bid Meeting date 05.08.2021 at 11.00 AM in the chamber of Engineer-in-Chief Jal Shakti Vibhag, Tutikani Shimla-5

V. Physically submission of EMD and cost of tender if not submitted online as per NIT/ Form PWA 6 1. FDR: Fixed deposit./NSC, 2. DD- Demand Draft From 24.07.2021 at 5:00 PM Up to 10.08.2021at 11.00 AM

VI. Date of opening of technical bid 10.08.2021 at 11.30 AM Shall be intimated Separately

AVAILABILITY OF FORMS:- 1) Tenders are to be submitted only on PWD forms/BOQ as prescribed and can be downloaded from https://hptenders.gov.in As the bids are to be submitted online are required to be encrypted and DSC (Digital Signature Certificate). The bidders are advised to obtain DSC from suitable vender and for any authorized agency at the earliest.

2) Tender documents consisting of the detailed plans, specifications, schedule of quantities of various items of work, and the set of conditions of to be complied with can be download or viewed online from the portal https://hptenders.gov.in on the date(s) & time given above by the firms/individual registered on the website which is free of cost. For any clarification please contact the O/o Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division No-4, Kasumpti Shimla-171009. Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division No-4 Kasumpti Shimla-171009. (HP) Phone Off: 0177 - 2620591

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK e-mail: kasumptidivision@gmail.com

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URDU

SUNNI MUSLIM Urdu, New York employed, 38, 5'11" engineer, Columbia University alumnus, only son of professional family, seeks suitable bride. Contact : 8050010888

SMU 31Y 6ft khula no issue B.E own Business 2L PM Chennai seeks Gud Looking Bride CT 9043572940/ 8056285940

SENIOR EXECUTIVE/MNC Chennai 37/5.6 Divorcee seek Unmarried or Khula Namazi SMU Girl. 9962398590

LOOKING FOR Sunni Muslim Bride for my son 35, 5.2 " B.Com settled in Canada. Girl between



## Governor appointment copy denied

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

The President of India's secretariat has denied giving copy of order of appointment of Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya under the Right To Information Act, 2005, on the pretext that the said warrant is a communication between two constitutional functionaries (President and Governor) in a fiduciary relationship.

Hemant Kumar, an advocate at Punjab and Haryana High Court had through RTI, sought the copy of order of appointment of Mr. Dattatreya as Governor of Haryana.

In the reply to the RTI application, the President's Secretariat on July 23, said, "The Warrant of Appointment of the Governor is a communication between two constitutional functionaries in a fiduciary relationship. Hence a copy of the same can't be provided in terms of Section 8(I)(e) of the RTI Act, 2005." Mr. Kumar has filed an appeal to the appellate authority of the secretariat.

## Mucormycosis brought under Rajasthan govt. health insurance scheme

State had declared it epidemic in May

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
JAIPUR

The treatment of mucormycosis or black fungus, which affects people recovering from COVID-19 infection during the second wave of the pandemic, has been added to a flagship health insurance scheme of the Rajasthan government with the expansion of its ambit. A large number of these cases were reported from Jaipur, Jodhpur, Sirohi and Kota districts.

The State government had in May this year declared mucormycosis an epidemic and a notifiable disease, and made it mandatory for the health facilities to report every case of the disease. The notification issued under the Rajasthan Epidemic Diseases Act, 2020, directed "integrated and coordinated" treatment of mucormycosis along with that for COVID-19.

Though the Chief Minister's Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojana has benefited over 1.20 lakh people with

free medical treatment in less than three months of its launch, the authorities have taken note of reports that some empanelled hospitals charged the beneficiaries for treatment relating to COVID-19 and mucormycosis. State Health Assurance Agency chief executive officer Aruna Rajoria said here on Saturday that a provision had been made for refund in such cases. The State government had assigned nodal officers in all zones to resolve complaints in this regard.

**Cashless cover**  
Launched on May 1, the Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojana has registered more than 1.30 crore families, comprising nearly 80% of the State's population. The scheme is acclaimed as the most affordable health policy, offering cashless annual cover of up to ₹5 lakh for all.

The beneficiaries are required to pay an annual premium of ₹850 per family. Registration is free for families.

## 'Victory of farmers top priority'

Whenever they call me, I will go barefoot and take their blessings, says Sidhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Newly appointed Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu on Saturday said for him the "victory" of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) is the top priority and he will go "barefoot" to meet farmers protesting against the Centre's farm laws whenever they call him.

Farmers have been protesting at Delhi borders since late November, demanding the repeal of the laws.

"I consider the victory of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha as my top priority. I have been calling the farmers' agitation as sacred for the past one year," Mr. Sidhu told reporters at Chamkaur Sahib, where he got a rousing reception from party workers, a day after taking charge as the State Congress chief.

Party supporters showered flower petals on Mr. Sidhu as his cavalcade passed through various places. The cricketer-turned-politician also visited various religious places. Later, he told reporters at Morinda that he wants to ask the protesting farmers how can the State government assist



Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu coming out of his residence in Patiala on Saturday. •PTI

them in their cause.

"I want to ask them how our government's power can help them in a big way. Look, rising cost, declining yield and income for the past 25 years are forcing farmers to hold agitation. It is our intention that this social movement should convert into an economic power," Mr. Sidhu.

He recalled that he had put up a black flag at his house in support of the agitating farmers. "Whenever they call me, I will go barefoot and take their blessings," he added.

He also raised the issues concerning the desecration

cases, power tariffs and drug menace. "Every Punjab wants justice in 'beadbi' (desecration) of the Guru Sahib," Mr. Sidhu said. He said people want to know the names of the big fish behind the drug menace.

**High power tariff**

"Why we have a power purchase contract at ₹18 a unit when it is available at ₹2 per unit. When we know every year, solar power rates are declining by 20%, then why Punjab pays from ₹7 to ₹18 per unit. Why should it not be bought from the national grid? We have to give answers to all these questions,"

## Farmers show black flags

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RUPNAGAR

A group of farmers showed black flags to Navjot Singh Sidhu when he arrived here to pay obeisance at a gurudwara. They also raised slogans against him for his "thirsty walks to the well" remark made on Friday.

Mr. Sidhu said raising the issue of power high tariff.

He further said his party has an 18-point agenda. "Every MLA, MP and worker is a guard of this agenda and it has to be implemented," asserted Mr. Sidhu.

"We have no option other than this to move forward," said Mr. Sidhu while pointing towards the 18-point agenda.

The party high command last month had asked Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to act on 18 issues, including the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib, drugs and power purchase agreements.

## Villagers clash with police in eastern Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

At least six people were injured when scores of people from Bahgjan village in Tinsukia district of eastern Assam clashed with the security forces on Saturday demanding compensation for damage caused by a natural gas well blowout more than a year ago.

The Well No. 5 in the Bahgjan oilfield operated by Oil India Ltd. (OIL) caught fire less than a fortnight after the blowout on May 27, 2020.

Foreign experts could kill the well only after 173 days.

By that time, three OIL employees and birds and aquatic animals in the adjoining Maguri-Motapung wetland had died.

The protesters claimed large swathes of paddy fields were rendered unproductive and ponds too contaminated for aquatic life.

"We have paid a compensation amount of almost ₹103 crore according to the guidelines of the National Green Tribunal," an OIL official said.

# JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

# eAuction

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### OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

**BIRTHDAY REMBRANCE**

**MRS. ANGELINA LAWRENCE**  
Who passed away on 7.6.2021  
Former Headmistress of VIDYADAYA GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL, CHENNAI.  
A loving mother & grandmother, and a teacher loved by many of her colleagues & students.  
**FONDLY REMEMBERED** by her loved ones

**DEATH**

**Dr. Vasanthi Subramanyam**  
30.11.1962 - 22.07.2021  
Deeply mourned by Ravi, Indu, Aparna, Family and Friends

**DEATH**

**SAD DEMISE**  
**M.V. Butchi**  
(son of Late Sri M.K. Raju)  
07.11.1954 - 19.07.2021  
Deeply mourned by:  
Wife: Rajeswari  
Contact No. 98400 95850  
Brothers: M.V. Ananthakrishna, M.V.S. Srinivas & Families  
V.K. Magapu, Karthikraj, Salmi & families  
And Palepu Family

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### SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Namely: Kajal, D/o Raju, R/o: H.No. A-2/48, Nand Nagri, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since **09.07.2021** from her house from the area of P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi in this regard a case vide **DD No. 42A dated 10.07.2021** has been registered at P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped girl is as under: **Age:** About 21 years, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Yellow colour suit-salwar and slipper in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl kindly inform to the following.  
**Website:** <http://cbi.nic.in>  
**E-mail Id -** [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
**Ph.:** 011-24368638, 24368641  
**Fax No.** 011-24368639  
**DP/905/NE/2021** **SHO P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi 8750870733**

### SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General Public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo) **Namely Shivangi D/o Ramnath R/o Vill. Behgecha, P.S. Alohah, Distt. Azamgarh, UP Aged-14 Years** has been reported missing since 05.07.2019 at 7:00 AM from Rose Udaan Shelter Home, Kamla Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a **FIR No. 95/19 U/s 363 IPC Dated 05.07.2019** lodged at Police Station Roop Nagar, North Distt., Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-  
**Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Clothing:** Yellow coloured top, white coloured lower and bare footed.  
Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform **SHO, Roop Nagar, North Distt. Delhi** at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>.  
**Tele No.:** 011-23014046 (Direct), **SHO, Roop Nagar, North Distt. Delhi**  
011-23015229 & 23015218 Extn. 210, **SHO, Roop Nagar, North Distt. Delhi**  
011-23011334, **SHO, Roop Nagar, North Distt. Delhi**  
011-23844632, 23849120  
**DP/589/N/2020**

### SIDDHA CLINICAL RESEARCH UNIT, NEW DELHI

A Unit under Central Council for Research in Siddha Min. of AYUSH, Govt. of India

**Advertisement No. 1/2021**  
SCRU, New Delhi proposes to engage the service of Research Associate - Siddha (Female) on contract basis through Virtual Interview to be held on 09.08.2021.  
1. Research Associate - Siddha-1 Age: Not Exceeding 40 Years  
Place of Posting - SCRU, New Delhi  
Remuneration: Rs. 36,000/- + HRA Monthly  
Further details regarding the essential desirable qualifications/venue etc. are available at the council's website: [www.siddhacouncil.com](http://www.siddhacouncil.com)  
**Research Officer - Siddha, I/C SCRU, New Delhi**

### केनरा बैंक Canara Bank

POSSESSION NOTICE (SECTION 13(4))  
(For Immovable Property)  
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Canara Bank** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the borrower and also owner of the property/surety to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from date of the said notice.  
The borrower and also the owner of the property surety having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the owner of the property and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 & 9 of the said rules on the dates mentioned against account. The owner of the property in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Canara Bank** for the amount and interest/costs thereon, mentioned against account herein below.  
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.  
**BRANCH : JAMUAON BRANCH**  
**Borrower: M/s Shivam Medical Agency, Prop.- Shiv Kumar Prasad, Amount out-standing of ₹ 34.02 Lakhs** (Rupees Thirty four lakhs and two thousands only) with interest and incidental charges and costs, **Date of Demand Notice- 12.04.2021, Date of Possession- 22.07.2021.**  
**Description of the Immovable property:** Title holder - Shiv Kumar Prasad S/o Vishwas Prasad. At Mauza- Piro, Plot No. 2946(N), 1768(O), C.S Khata No. 659(N) 67(O), Thana No. 88, Ward No. 09, PO+PS: Piro, Dist.: Bhajpur, Area: 3/3/8 katha, Boundaries:- North: Narbadeshwari Rai, South: Brajmohan Sahay, East: Hridayanand Chaudhary & Others, West: Bihar Govt Rasta.  
**Date: 24.07.2021**  
**Place: Jamuaon**  
**Authorized Officer CANARA BANK**

### APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of an unknown male R/o Gali No. 19, Over Bridge Stair, Madangir, New Delhi, **Age:** Approx 51-55 years, **Complexion:** Dark, **Height:** 5'4", **Built:** Thin, **Face:** Oval, was wearing Black Pant, was found dead in the area of P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a **DD No. 34A, dated 16.07.2021**, has been lodged at P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi.  
Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.  
**SHO P.S. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi Ph.: 011-29052304, 29051917, 8750870832**  
**DP/610/SD/2021**

### SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE FOR SUPPLY OF STORE ITEMS

**E-TENDER NOTICE NO: NIT/14/21/30, Dated: 20-Jul-2021.**

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Description	Tender Closing Opening Date	Qty.
1	05215120	Electrical Point Machine	12.08.2021	130 Nos.
2	08215169	High quality ENT operating Microscope	13.08.2021	01 Nos.
3	03211009A	High capacity thermoplastic polyester elastomer lower washer	16.08.2021	6504 Nos.
4	05211203	Low Maintenance Lead Acid Stationary Secondary Cell	16.08.2021	1608 Nos.
5	03212917	Polycarbonate Sheet	17.08.2021	15 Nos.
6	03211394	Fabricated Hand Brake Wheel	18.08.2021	4284 Nos.

**Tender Closing/Opening Time: At 10:30 hrs.**  
Railway reserve the right to issue any corrigendum to the tenders. Corrigendum & important Notice to vendors may be seen in the link [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).  
**DP/10/107**  
**Dy. CMM/S&T, For Principal Chief Materials Manager S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur**  
**South East Central Railway @seccrail**

### WESTERN RAILWAY LICENSE FOR OPERATING & MAINTENANCE OF NORMAL PAY & USE TOILETS ON PAY & USE BASIS

Divisional Railway Manager, Commercial Department, Pay & Use section, Mumbai Central, Mumbai-400008 invites tender as per details given as follows:  
**Executive:** Sr.CDO-CD-MMCT, Tender **Notice No. & Date:** MMCT-FIBA-2021, dttd.: 23.07.2021. **Work and location:** FIBA Modification of Air Spring fitted in LHB Coaches at Coaching Depot Mumbai Central. **Approx Cost of Work:** ₹ 47,10,636/- (All Inclusive). **EMD:** Nil, **Date & Time of submission (Closing):** 24.08.2021 at 15:00 hrs. **Date & Time of opening:** 24.08.2021 at 15:30 hrs. Note: Please visit our website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. 0290  
Like us on: [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

### WESTERN RAILWAY Notice No. WR-MMCTOCOMM(CLQT)/1/2020 (6165) Dated: 22.07.2021

Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Western Railway, Mumbai Division, Mumbai Central invites quotation in sealed covers from registered leaseholders of Mumbai Division, Western Railway for temporary leasing contract for a period not exceeding 30 days at a time or till finalization of tender whichever is earlier for train compartments as listed below. All terms & conditions of C/PLP of 2014 along with amendments issued from time to time will be applicable. Bidder should specifically and clearly mention Train No. and Location of SLR on cover of their offer & should enclose valid registration certificate.

Sr. No.	Train No.	Station from	Station to	Frequency	Compartment & Carrying Capacity	RP per trip
1.	04671	BDTS	SVDK	Mon, Thu, Fri, Sunday	FwLRM (3,9 Tonnes)	28,017
2.	02971	BDTS	BVC	Daily	FSLR-I (4 Tonnes)	4,380
3.	04708	DDR	BKN	Daily	FSLR-II (4 Tonnes)	13,032

Reserve Price is exclusive of Development Charges and GST which are presently @ 2% and 5% respectively. These shall be remitted in addition to accepted rate. The percentages of these charges are subject to revision as advised by Railway Board from time to time and any variation in taxes shall be borne by the leaseholder.  
**Date & Time of submission of Quotation:** up to 02.08.2021 at 10:30 hrs. **Date & Time of opening of Quotation:** at 11:00 hrs. on 02.08.2021 Quotation form is available on [www.indianrailway.gov.in](http://www.indianrailway.gov.in) for download. 0288  
Like us on: [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly) | Follow us on: [twitter.com/WesternRly](https://twitter.com/WesternRly)



# Rain eases in Karnataka, but toll rises to nine

Swollen rivers submerge small bridges and roads; landslips reported from many areas; thousands evacuated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Incessant rain and floods have claimed nine lives in Karnataka since July 22, with highest fatality count of four reported from Uttara Kannada. Two deaths have been reported from Belagavi and one each from Chikkamagaluru, Dharwad, and Kodagu districts.

Landslips have been reported, mostly in the hilly terrains of Kodagu, Shivamogga, Uttara Kannada, Hassan, and Chikkamagaluru. Intermittent rain continued in Kodagu, parts of Mysuru, Mandya, and Chamarajanager districts, though it was less than the rainfall in the previous 24 hours.

On Saturday, despite rain subsiding in northern Karnataka and southern Mahara-

ashtra, Krishna river continued to be in a spate, affecting normal life in the districts of North Karnataka. At least three persons were washed away in floodwaters between Friday and Saturday alone.

Swollen rivers have caused the inundation of small bridges, cutting road connectivity. Several residents of villages have been evacuated to safer places.

## Train services resume

The railway track in the ghat section of Hubballi division near Dudhsagar on the Karnataka-Goa border, where landslide was reported at two places, has been restored and train services have resumed.

In Belagavi district alone, 19,035 people have been



In safe hands: Personnel from the Naval Emergency Response Team, Karwar, evacuating people from villages in Uttara Kannada district. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

evacuated to safer places and 8,795 have been shifted to 89 rehabilitation centres, ac-

ording to Deputy Commissioner M.G. Hiremath. Two persons have been killed in

Belagavi district and 37 road links were cut off in the district.

Deputy Chief Minister Govind Karjol, who assessed the flood situation in Mirji at Mudhol taluk in Bagalkot district, told presspersons that the initial estimate of loss due to rains and floods in Belagavi division alone is ₹550 crore.

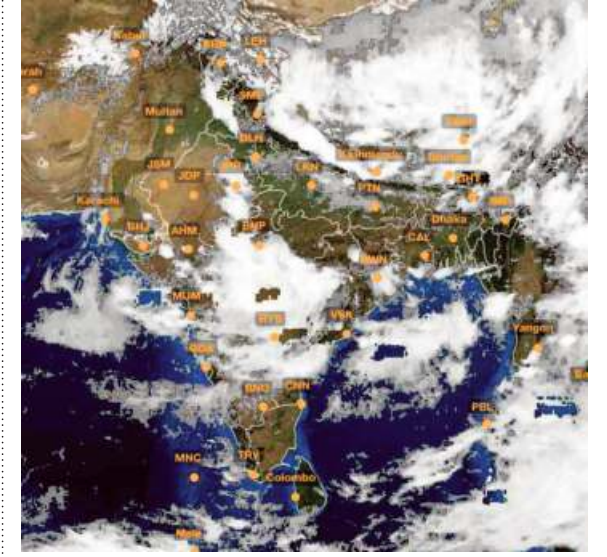
CM's aerial survey today He said he had requested Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa to immediately release ₹50 crore.

The Chief Minister is scheduled to conduct an aerial survey of the district on Sunday.

In Uttara Kannada district, personnel from the Indian Naval Emergency Response Team from Karwar, safely evacuated 160 persons from two flood-affected villages.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17:00 HRS)

**Forecast for Sunday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Odisha, central Maharashtra, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty wind likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, West Bengal, Sikkim, Karailak and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.5	32.5	27.1	Kozhikode	8	31.2	24.9
Ahmedabad	33.9	26.6		Kurnool	33.5	24.7	
Aizawl	26.0	19.9		Lucknow	15	35.6	26.7
Allahabad	34.0	27.4		Madurai	36.4	26.5	
Bengaluru	0.4	28.0	20.0	Mangaluru	4.5	28.0	24.0
Bhopal	23.3	27.3	23.2	Mumbai	6	31.5	26.2
Bhubaneswar	31.6	25.0		Mysuru	4	28.8	20.0
Chandigarh	37.5	28.2		New Delhi	36.0	27.3	
Chennai	36.3	27.6		Patna	1	33.2	27.2
Coimbatore	32.0	23.0		Port Blair	9	29.7	25.3
Dehradun	34.4	25.0		Puducherry	36.8	24.7	
Gangtok	0.4	21.0	18.3	Pune	92	29.6	22.2
Goa	3	30.7	25.2	Raipur	15	30.0	24.5
Guwahati	36.5	26.2		Ranchi	43	27.2	22.6
Hubballi	27.0	21.0		Shillong	5	25.6	18.0
Hyderabad	6	30.8	21.9	Shimla	14	27.2	20.5
Imphal	13	31.4	21.4	Srinagar	32.9	19.8	
Jaipur	10	35.0	26.5	Thiruvananthapuram	49	31.0	22.4
Kochi	22	28.6	23.6	Tiruchi	35.8	27.0	
Kohima	3	26.4	18.0	Vijayawada	7	34.8	24.5
Kolkata	60	29.4	25.9	Visakhapatnam	2	32.6	24.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

## Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE	Yesterday
Ahmedabad	52	37	27	47	91	■	
Bengaluru	7	29	40	24	100	■	
Chennai	5	25	46	30	78	■	
Delhi	8	17	60	209	118	■	
Hyderabad	2	67	17	16	29	■	
Kolkata	4	17	26	16	38	■	
Lucknow	6	14	94	90	90	■	
Mumbai	41	10	63	103	90	■	
Pune	27	18	56	18	90	■	
Visakhapatnam	14	48	42	54	92	■	

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>2</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# Srisaillam reservoir set to brim as incessant rain raises inflow

Storage improve by 20 tmc ft in a 36-hour period

B. CHANDRASHEKHAR  
HYDERABAD

The prospects of Srisaillam reservoir, one of the two common water storage facilities of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, reaching the surplus position have improved considerably, with the catchment areas in the Upper Krishna Basin continuing to record heavy to very heavy rainfall.

"Storage of the reservoir improved by nearly 20 tmc ft during the 36-hour period till 6 p.m. on Saturday, in spite of sizeable amount of water being let out downstream with power generation in the Left Bank power



Gushing out: Water being let out from Himayathsagar lake in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■NAGARA GOPAL

house," a senior engineer monitoring flood at Srisaillam told *The Hindu*.

With water level in the Godavari at Bhadrachalam reaching 48.30 feet, officials issued a second warning. Water level has been rising

and may cross the third warning level, the Central Water Commission authorities said. Revenue, police, irrigation, tribal welfare, medical and health department officials have been put on high alert.

# Low pressure likely, all Kerala districts put on yellow alert

Brace for heavy rainfall today, says Met department

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Heavy rainfall is likely to continue in Kerala on Sunday also, as per the latest weather updates. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has put all 14 districts on yellow alert on Sunday for isolated heavy rainfall.

Rainfall is likely to taper off by Tuesday although some districts can expect isolated heavy rainfall till then.

A fresh low pressure area is expected to form over Bay of Bengal around July 28. Nonetheless, below normal rainfall has been forecast for Kerala and Mahe during the



Traffic along the Palarivattom-Edappally NH was disrupted after a big tree fell on the carriageway. ■THULASI KAKKAT

week from July 30 to August 5, according to an IMD extended range forecast.

Meanwhile, one more team of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) was moved to Idukki in view of the heavy rainfall in the dis-

trict. With this, Idukki will have two teams for handling rainfall-related emergencies.

The IMD has advised a halt to fishing activities till Monday as strong winds have been forecast along the Kerala coast.

## WEST

# Thousands bereft of power as high-voltage towers fall

Mahad and Poladpur talukas in Raigad plunge into darkness

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVI MUMBAI

About 80,000 power consumers in Mahad and Poladpur talukas of Raigad district have been plunged into darkness after two 220 KV towers of the Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (MSETCL) collapsed following heavy rain on Thursday. Telecommunication services in the district were also affected.

The collapse led to the closure of Mahad substation and four substations in Chambharkhind, GBL, Koloase, and Turbhe in Pen division. Power was snapped in 260 areas, including Mahad city, Birwadi, Vinhere, Vahur, Nangalwadi, Nagaon, Kumble, Mahad MIDC, Poladpur city, Turbhe, Pitalwadi, and Varandh.

"Work to repair the towers and restore electricity is on. MSETCL is supervising the work. Once the towers are repaired, electricity



Knocked down: Two high-voltage towers of MSETCL collapsed following heavy rainfall on Thursday. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

snapped from the switching station of the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) would be restored," a spokesperson of MSEDCL said.

## 52 missing in Taliye

The death toll from the torrential rains that battered the district over the last week and triggered land-

slides in some areas rose to 60 on Saturday, including 49 from Taliye village in Mahad taluka. Of the 242 residents in the village, 109 were out for work when the landslide occurred. While 49 bodies have been recovered from Taliye so far, the district administration has released a list of 52 missing people from the village.

# Nine killed in Gujarat cylinder blast

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AHMEDABAD

Nine people, including four children, have died of severe burn injuries sustained in an explosion triggered by leakage of gas from an LPG cylinder on July 20 in a small room on the outskirts of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, a police official said on Saturday.

While eight victims died in the last couple of days during treatment, another one succumbed on Saturday. They were labourers from Madhya Pradesh, the police official said.

"Three people died during treatment on Thursday, five others succumbed on Friday, and one more on Saturday morning," inspector P.R. Jadeja said.

Labourers and their family members were sleeping in the room when the gas started leaking. When their neighbour knocked on their door to alert them, one of them got up and switched on the light, which triggered the blast.

## Savouring success



Silver Lining: Students of Gurukul Art School paint portrait of Mirabai Chanu, who won the first silver medal for India in the Olympic Games 2020 in Tokyo, in Lalbaug on Saturday. ■EMMANUEL YOGINI

# Barge P305 case: court denies bail to 3 accused

'Matter of negligence than human error'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

A court has rejected the bail plea of two officials and a director of the commercial Barge P305 that sank off the Mumbai coast during Cyclone Tauktae, in which 71 people lost their lives.

Sessions judge U.M. Padwad on Friday denied bail to Prasad Rane, office administrator of PAPAA Shipping; Nitin Singh, one of its direc-

tors; and Akhilesh Tiwari, the firm's technical superintendent. The order was made available on Saturday.

The prosecution said the accused did not exercise caution and control over the situation. The court, while rejecting the bail plea, said the chief engineer's version of the events indicates that it was more a matter of negligence than a genuine human error of judgement.

# Four dead as lift collapses in Worli

One injured at building under construction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Four people were killed and one injured on Saturday after a construction lift carrying them came crashing down at an under-construction building at Worli.

The incident occurred at 5.45 p.m. at near a BDD Chawl at Hanuman Gully, an official said. Police and fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and launched a res-



Tragedy: Rescue workers at the under-construction building in Worli, where a lift collapsed on Saturday. ■EMMANUEL YOGINI

cue operation, he said.

Of the six people who were injured in the incident, one was declared dead at

KEM Hospital in Parel. Three others were declared brought dead at the civic-run Nair Hospital, he added.

# Court rejects bail plea of software engineer held in 2014 for terror plot

'Material in charge sheet shows intention of causing terror'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

A Mumbai court has rejected the interim bail application of Anees Ansari, a software engineer who was held in 2014 for allegedly conspiring to blow up U.S. establishments in the city.

Mr. Ansari sought temporary bail citing COVID-19, but his plea was rejected by Additional Sessions Judge S.H. Gwalani. The Maharashtra

Anti-Terrorism Squad told the court that Mr. Ansari, while working as an associate geographic technician at a private company, had set up a false Facebook account and published objectionable information using the company's computer. He had also supported the activities of terror group ISIS, the agency told the court.

The court observed that the material in the charge

sheet disclosing a conversation between the accused and one Omar Elhaji was sufficient to show the intention of causing terror in the country. "Considering the attitude of the accused, he is not entitled to bail," the court said in its order on Friday, the copy of which was made available on Saturday.

The court said he could obstruct the prosecution's case if released on bail.



**FROM PAGE ONE**  
**Private sector lagging in vaccination drive: Goyal**



A beneficiary being inoculated in Siliguri on Saturday. ■ AFP

While vaccine hesitancy remained a concern, the Minister said "India should be proud of being the world's largest vaccinator" with about 42-43 crore jabs already completed. "Our run rate is now 12 crore or so every month and soon to become 15 crore in the next one or two months and possibly, 20 crore by the end of the calendar year," he said.

"Obviously, we have 1.3 billion people, the U.K. has 60 million. If you compare the percentages, it is quite irrational if you ask me," he said. "When vaccination started, recall the hesitancy. Even today, in Delhi, a very enlightened city, 20% of the frontline workers who started getting vaccinated six months ago, are still not jabbed, and a lot of places have hesitancy." Mr. Goyal said, urging industry bodies such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to run campaigns to remove doubts about the COVID-19 vaccine among the people.

**'No imminent threat of Taliban influx in Kashmir'**

With intense fighting taking place around Kandahar, India evacuated all Indian staff from its consulate there on July 11. With the advance made by the Taliban in Mazar, there is an increased threat to Indian consulates, intelligence inputs have warned, a second official said.

State Antony Blinken will be in India on a two-day visit during which Afghanistan is expected to figure prominently in his talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

In a related development, Afghan Army chief Lt. Gen. Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai is scheduled to visit India from July 27 to 29 during which he will meet Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. Also on the same day, U.S. Secretary of

Afghanistan has long requested India for offensive military hardware and had on several occasions given a wish list of equipment which included tanks and artillery guns, among others. In the past few years, India has gifted four Mi-24 attack helicopters and three Cheetah utility helicopters to Afghanistan, apart from regularly training Afghan officers at its training academies.

**Bengal Governor, LoP not eligible for beacon light**

Other notable omissions include the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Advocate-General. Soon after the order was issued, lights were removed from the cars of officials no longer eligible; among bureaucrats, only those of the rank of Principal Secretary

and above can use a light on top of their cars. The fresh list, according to officials, was necessitated after the busting of a fake vaccine racket in Kolkata, masterminded by a man called Debanjan Deb, who masqueraded as an IAS officer and travelled in an SUV fitted with a blue beacon light.

**Criminal killed in encounter in Odisha**

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

A notorious criminal was killed in Balasore district of Odisha on Saturday after security personnel opened fire to allegedly prevent him from escaping from the police van.

Seikh Haider, a gangster who was serving life imprisonment, was being shifted from Choudwar Circle Jail in Cuttack to another jail in Baripada. According to the police, Haider sought permission to answer nature's call around 3.20 p.m. While getting off from the police van, he snatched the rifle of a policeman and tried to flee.

"From a security point of view, Haider was being shifted from Choudwar jail to Baripada jail. An escort team comprising an inspector, a sub-inspector and a section of force was taking him to Baripada," said Saumendra Priyadarshi, Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Mr. Priyadarshi added, "He requested the escort team to get off from the bus to attend to nature's call at Simulia. However, he tried to escape by snatching a gun from one of the escort personnel. To prevent him from fleeing, he was fired upon in a controlled manner. He sustained bullet injury in his stomach." He was rushed to a hospital where he died.

**Maharashtra rain death toll touches 112**

Army, IAF join NDRF in rescue efforts amid landslips and rivers flowing above danger mark

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

The death toll in the torrential rain that inundated Konkan and western Maharashtra rose to 112 on Saturday. Over 99 are still missing. Water discharge from dams led to floods in Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara. Over 1.3 lakh people have been shifted to safer places as rescue work continued throughout Saturday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted gradual reduction in rain over the region in four or five days, though severe weather and intense rainfall is forecast in isolated places.

Apart from the 17 teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in the State, eight extra teams were called in from Bhubaneswar. In addition, rescue teams from the Army, the Navy, the Coast Guard and the Air Force have been working to evacuate people.

**CM visits Taliye**  
Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday visited Taliye village in Mahad tehsil of Raigad district, promising rehabilitation of the



Seeking solace: Villagers consoling a woman who lost a relative following a landslide at Taliye, about 22 km from Mahad city in Maharashtra on Saturday. ■ AFP

affected villagers. A total of 36 bodies were found at the village, while 34 persons are missing, according to the NDRF. However other reports put the number of dead at 49 and those missing at 52.

State Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad announced that the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority will rebuild the

village as promised by Mr. Thackeray.

A fund of ₹2 crore has been provided to Raigad district through the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

"The tragedy that befell on you is huge. So, you first look after yourself and stay safe and leave the rest of the problems to the government. You will be taken care

of, don't worry," said Mr Thackeray told the villagers who had surrounded him during his visit.

**Overflowing dams**

Satara district in western Maharashtra has also been hit by the deluge.

The famous hill station of Mahabaleshwar received more than 1,100 mm of rainfall in less than 48 hours, re-

sulting in heavy discharge from the Koyna dam, one of the largest in the State. The heavy rainfall has caused multiple landslips.

The NDRF said 10 persons were missing in Mirgaon while six bodies have been recovered in Ambeghar and eight persons are missing. "We are not sure how many more are trapped inside," said State minister Balasaheb Patil.

In Ratnagiri district, towns of Chiplun and Khed were flooded by discharge from the Koyna dam and subsequently, the Koltewadi dam, leading to the rising levels in the Vashisti river.

Thousands of people were stranded on rooftops and upper floors of the houses as the water levels rose to over 15 to 20 feet in many places.

Helicopters of the Air Force were also deployed for rescue and air dropping of food and water packets. Relief camps were set up at three locations. One column of the Army and Coast Guard teams were despatched for relief work.

(With inputs from Raina Assainar)

**U.K. urged to review travel ban from India**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

The U.K. Foreign Office officials have been briefed on the current COVID-19 pandemic situation in India, where many big cities are practically COVID-free, and encouraged to consider a review of the travel ban on visitors from India, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Saturday.

Harsh Vardhan Shringla, who arrived in the U.K. for a two-day visit on Friday to take stock of the Roadmap 2030 towards closer U.K.-India ties, agreed between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Boris Johnson, also shared plans for a reciprocal vaccine certification system to be unveiled by the Indian government soon to facilitate international travel amid the pandemic.

"Mumbai, Delhi, big cities are practically free of COVID. But we can't rest on that situation because we are constantly vigilant, telling our citizens to take precautions so that we don't have a third wave," Mr. Shringla said.

**CBI searches officials' homes in J&K and Delhi**

Agency is probing alleged illegal issuance of arms licences

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Saturday searched the premises of the then District Magistrates and nearly 20 gun dealers in Jammu, Srinagar, Udhampur, Rajouri, Anantnag, Baramulla and Delhi in connection with the alleged illegal issuance of over 2.78 lakh arms licences in Jammu and Kashmir from 2012 to 2016.

"Among the officials whose premises have been searched are Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, a 2009-batch IAS official who was District Magistrate (DM) of Udhampur. He is currently Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department, in J&K. Neeraj Kumar, a 2011-batch IAS official, was also the DM of Udhampur. He is currently the Resident Commissioner in Delhi," a CBI official said.



Under scanner: The CBI searched 40 locations across Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi on Saturday morning. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Mr. Choudhary, through his Twitter handle, said the agency found nothing incriminating. "I am fully answerable to the CBI for my tenure," he said, stating that in the Reasi, Kathua and Udhampur districts, only 56,000 (12.4%) arms licences were issued from 2012 to 2016.

The premises of Shabir Ahmed Bhatt, former DM of Rajouri and the former Additional District Magistrate of Baramulla, Kupwara, Bandipora, Poonch and Ramban Farooq Ahmed Baba, Abdul Hafiz Shah, Khurshid Ahmed Sanai, Gurvinderjeet Singh, and Babu Ram, respectively, were searched.

**Former Supreme Court judges raise concerns over UAPA**

They point to the trauma suffered by the kin of the accused

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B. Lokur on Saturday said the courts, society and the state should consider the mental trauma afflicted on the families of activists, journalists and civil society members accused of sedition under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and languishing in jail for months.

Justice Lokur asked what kind of society was being built where the families and friends of these incarcerated people had to face barbs about their loved ones being branded traitors for expressing their dissent.

"Look at the emotional, psychological impact on his family, him... His children... They will go to school where classmates will say your father is a 'terrorist' for something



Justice Madan B. Lokur

bad hygiene within their walls.

Justice Deepak Gupta, a former Supreme Court judge, referred to the death of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, who suffered from Parkinson's disease, in custody.

"Are we human," Justice Gupta asked in his address. The retired judge spoke about the case of an activist in Manipur, who said cow urine was not a cure for COVID and was put in jail for sedition. He asked whether we were living in a "Police State".

"The UAPA should not remain in this form," he said.

Justice Aftab Alam, a retired Supreme Court judge, said by focussing on dissent, the government runs the danger of shifting its attention from the actual 3% of terrorism cases.

**HAM radios to aid in cyclone relief**

Communication turns out to be a major challenge during the time of cyclones

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

In the last week of May, hours before Cyclone Yaas made landfall in northern coastal Odisha and battered coastal West Bengal, Ambarish Nag Biswas, secretary of the West Bengal Radio Club (Amateurs Club), got a call from a senior bureaucrat about deployment of some HAM radio operatives in Purba Medinipur district, where the most damage was expected.

Mr. Biswas said it was difficult for the operators who had already positioned themselves in different areas to move to Purba Medinipur. Communication turns out to be a major challenge during the cyclones and particularly in the Sunderbans with more than 50 inhabited islands located in remote areas — some of them at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal. They remain cut off often for days.

**Barrage of cyclones**

The State had in the past three years faced four tropical cyclones, Fani (May 2019), Bulbul (November 2019), Amphan (May 2020) and Yaas (May 2021) and on all occasions the administration had to wait for connection to be restored to assess damage and send relief.

A few months after Yaas, Mr. Nag Biswas got a call from the district administration of the South 24 Parganas



Learning the ropes: The HAM operators use high frequency signals to connect with other operators. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

to train local youth from the Sunderbans in operating Ham Radio sets. This was to augment the community-based disaster preparedness of the region.

**Training locals**

"To establish a dedicated wireless communication system at vulnerable areas under the South 24 Parganas district during different disasters, you are requested to train following civil defence volunteers for smooth and effective conduct of the above system," read a letter dated July 13 by Office of the Controller of the Civil Defence, South 24 Parganas, addressed to Mr. Nag Biswas.

Accordingly, training of 60 volunteers mostly residing in the Sunderbans has started earlier this month. Dipak Giri, 24, of Patharpratima and Gautam Dinda, 26, of Sagar Island are

among those who are undergoing the training. Both recalled the challenges faced in disaster management during cyclone Yaas.

"There was no connectivity in Patharpratima for almost seven days after cyclone Yaas and large parts of the region were inundated due to the ingress of saline water," Dipak Giri said.

**Communication crucial**

Gautam Dinda from Sagar Islands, who is also undergoing training, said communication becomes critical in rescuing people in times of cyclone.

"When we are deployed at a flood rescue centre, someone might suddenly fall ill or we may run out of drinking water. Sometimes the flood rescue centres are also flooded," Mr. Dinda said.

"For three to four days after the cyclone, there was no

connectivity in Sagar and there was nothing we could communicate," he added.

The administrations of other coastal districts like the North 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur are also in talks with HAM Radio operators to train youth.

**Licensed operators**

Pashupati Mandal, an expert of HAM Radio technology who is training amateurs operators, said: "After weeks of training, the volunteers have to take an exam by the Ministry of Communication following which one can get the licence to operate the amateur radio device."

"As this moment, we have about 350 licensed Ham Radio operators under the West Bengal Radio Club," said Dr. Mandal, principal of the Indian Academy of Communication and Disaster Management.

The HAM operators employ high frequency signals to connect with other operators. The technology comes handy when mobile connectivity is down.

So far, the State government has been engaging HAM operators at the annual Gangasagar pilgrimage on Sagar Island and natural disasters.

The empowerment of local youth to operate the technology will help the State's disaster preparedness and management, he said.

**Telcos tried to alter AGR dues, says SC**

No scope for recalculation, court says

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court said what major telecom service providers (TSPs) like Vodafone, Airtel and Tata really wanted, under the guise of correcting "arithmetical errors", was a recalculation of their adjusted gross revenues (AGR) running into crores.

The copy of the order pronounced by a three-judge Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao on Friday was published on July 24.

The applications by the telecom majors to 'correct' math mistakes, which at "first blush" look 'innocuous', was a roundabout way to recompute their AGR debts — a path expressly forbidden by the Supreme Court in an order on July 20 last year.

"The dispute relating to AGR dues had remained pending in courts for a very long period of time and bearing this in mind, this court was at pains to emphasise, at the cost of repetition, that the AGR dues payable by TSPs cannot be the subject matter of any future litigation. The order of July 20, 2020 makes it clear that there is no scope for any recalculation/re-computation of AGR dues," the eight-page Supreme Court order of the Justice Rao Bench reminded the tele-



The court said it forbade reassessment through a July 20 order last year.

com majors. The court said this was not the first time the companies had tried to alter the dues.

"Even at the time of passing of the July 20 order, an attempt was made to seek recalculation and reassessment, which was rejected by this court outright," said the apex court, dismissing the applications.

The July 20 order had "made it clear that no dispute could be raised in respect of AGR dues that had been arrived at, on the basis of calculations made by the Union of India".

"No telecom operator shall raise any dispute in respect of the demand raised by the Department of Telecommunications pertaining to AGR dues, based on the judgment of this court of October 24, 2019," the Supreme Court reiterated.

**Shah vows to connect NE capitals**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Centre would connect the capitals of all the northeastern States by rail and air by 2024.

Development in the region needs connectivity to gather pace, he said at a programme in Meghalaya capital Shillong on Saturday.

"It will be difficult to fast-track development here without connectivity. This is the reason why the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) has since the formation of the BJP-led government in 2014 laid thrust on connectivity in the northeast," he said.

"Road connectivity has to be also strengthened" he added.

The Home Minister attended a meeting at the North Eastern Space Applications Centre in Shillong.

"Mapping of forest gap areas, expansion of the land area for horticulture development, identification and rejuvenation of wetlands, are a few among many key ideas that were discussed during the meeting," he said in a tweet.

Mr. Shah also met the Chief Ministers of the region in the evening to discuss various issues, including the inter-State boundary disputes between Assam and its north-eastern neighbours.



## India lodges strong protest with Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAMMU

India on Saturday lodged a strong protest over drone activities by Pakistan authorities in Jammu areas, during a sector commander-level meeting between the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Pakistan Rangers, officials said.

The meeting was held at the request of Pakistan Rangers on the International Border (IB) in the Sutchetgarh area and it was decided to re-energise instant communication between field commanders, whenever required, to resolve the operational matters, a BSF spokesperson said.

Commanders of both the border guarding forces discussed various issues with the main emphasis by the BSF delegation on Pakistani drone activities, terrorist activities and digging of tunnels from across the border and other issues related to border management, he said.

## 3 militants killed in Bandipora

Soldier injured in the encounter evacuated to Army's Base Hospital in Srinagar

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Three militants were killed and a soldier was injured on Saturday in an encounter between security forces and hiding militants in a forest area of Bandipora in north Kashmir.

The police said two militants were killed in a gunfight that broke out during a search-and-cordon operation. Officials said one more militant was killed after a fresh contact with hiding militants was established in the adjacent Aragam forest area, hours later.

"The operation is still going on in the area," officials said. One soldier was injured in the encounter. He has been evacuated to the Army's 92 Base Hospital, Srinagar.

This is the second major encounter in Kashmir in 24 hours. Two Lashkar-e-Taiba militants were killed in Sopore on Friday.

Security forces launched the operation in the Shokhaba forest in the Sumblar area



On their guard: Army personnel in action during an encounter at Shakoba forest, in Bandipora on Saturday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

of Bandipora in north Kashmir following inputs about the presence of militants there, they said.

The officials said as the forces were conducting searches in the area, the militants fired upon them. The forces retaliated, they said.

The Srinagar-based Defence PRO, Col. Emron Musavi, said an Army man was injured in the gunfight. The officials said the identity and group affiliation of the slain ultras were being

ascertained.

### Jawan killed in mine blast

A 27-year-old Army jawan was killed in a mine blast along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said on Saturday.

Sepoy Kamal Dev Vaidya was on operational duty in the Krishna Ghati sector on Friday. He accidentally stepped on the mine and it exploded injuring him critically, a defence spokesman

said. The soldier was evacuated to the nearest medical facility but he died of injuries there, the official said.

Sepoy Vaidya hailed from Ghumarwin village in Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh, the spokesman said. "He was a brave, highly motivated and sincere soldier. The nation will always remain indebted to him for the supreme sacrifice and devotion to duty," he said.

Ghumarwin village plunged into mourning after the news of his death reached his family. A large number of people gathered at the jawan's residence and raised anti-Pakistan slogans.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur expressed grief over the demise of the soldier. Former Chief Minister P.K. Dhumal also offered condolences to his family, and said the jawan's contribution to the nation will always be remembered.

The soldier is survived by his mother Vanita Devi. (With PTI inputs)

## Bhupen Borah is new Assam PCC chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday announced a new team for the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) by appointing Bhupen Borah as the new PCC chief.

Mr. Borah, known to be close to be former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, is among those leaders who had strongly opposed the party's alliance with the Badruddin Ajmal-led All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in the recently concluded Assembly elections in the State.

The party has also appointed three working presidents that includes All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary Rana Goswami and two current legislators, Kamakhya Dey Purkayastha and Jakir Husain Siddikar.

Mr. Goswami, a former MLA, was working as All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary for Uttar Pradesh, where Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is in-charge.

## Gehlot likely to expand his Cabinet next week

Senior Cong. leaders arriving for talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
JAIPUR

The Congress-ruled Rajasthan is likely to see Cabinet expansion and political appointments next week, party sources said on Saturday.

The sources said AICC general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal and All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge for Rajasthan are arriving here on Saturday night to hold a discussion with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot over Cabinet reshuffle, appointment of district heads of the party organisation and other political appointments.

"Both the leaders are arriving in Jaipur tonight by road," they said.

Mr. Venugopal is also a Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan.

The meeting of both the leaders with Mr. Gehlot is likely to be held at the Chief Minister's residence late at night.

### Focus on Rajasthan

After Punjab, the party high command has shifted focus on Rajasthan, where demands for Cabinet expansion and political appointments gained momentum after reports of resentment in the camp led by former Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, who along with 18 MLAs had rebelled against the leadership of Mr. Gehlot last year.

A couple of days ago, Mr. Pilot had indicated that the Congress would take suit-



CM Ashok Gehlot

ble steps soon to address issues raised by him.

He had said that he is in touch with the party high command over the issues raised by him and hoped that the required steps would be taken soon.

Mr. Pilot was sacked as the Deputy CM and PCC chief in July last year after he rebelled against the leadership of Mr. Gehlot after one-month-long political crisis, the party high command announced to form a three-member committee to look into the issues raised by him.

### Promises to Pilot camp

Last month, MLAs from the Pilot camp said the party should fulfil the promises made to Mr. Pilot last month, following which the demand for Cabinet expansion and political appointments gained momentum.

At present, there are 21 members in the Council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, and nine slots are vacant.

Rajasthan can have a maximum of 30 ministers.

## I-T Dept. says huge irregularities detected in searches

### Statement does not reveal names of companies

DEVESH K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI

Two days after the Income Tax (I-T) Department searched the premises linked to the Dainik Bhaskar Group and Bharat Samachar Group, the agency on Saturday issued statements without naming any companies, alleging that it had detected income escapement of ₹700 crore and unaccounted-for transactions exceeding ₹200 crore in two cases.

The searches carried out on the Dainik Bhaskar Group and Bharat Samachar Group premises on Thursday have triggered widespread criticism.

With respect to the first case, the agency said the group was involved in businesses in various sectors, including media, power, textiles and real estate, with a turnover of over ₹6,000 crore a year.

"Twenty residential and 12 business premises spread over nine cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Bhopal, Indore, Noida and Ahmedabad have been covered," the I-T



A tax search was held at the home of the Dainik Bhaskar Group MD in Bhopal.

Department said. The group has over 100 companies.

"During the search, it was found that they have been

operating several companies in the names of their employees, which have been used for booking bogus expenses and routing of funds... several of the employees, whose names were used as shareholders and directors, have admitted that they were not aware of such companies and had given their Aadhaar card and digital signature to the employer in good faith," the agency alleged.

It is alleged that some were relatives who willingly and knowingly signed the papers, but had no knowledge or control over the en-

ties in which they were supposedly directors and shareholders.

"Such companies have been used for multiple purposes namely; booking bogus expenses and siphoning off the profits from listed companies, routing of funds so siphoned into their closely held companies to make investments, making of circular transactions, etc.," the agency alleged, adding that income escapement detected so far was ₹700 crore spread over six years.

The I-T Department's second statement pertained to the searches in Uttar Pra-

desh's Lucknow, Basti, Varanasi, Jaunpur and Kolkata, on the group dealing in mining, hospitality, news media, liquor and real estate. The agency seized ₹3 crore in cash and placed under restraint 16 lockers.

"Evidence found during searches establishes that the group has been earning huge outside-the-books income through mining, processing and sales in liquor, flour business, real estate, etc.," said the agency, alleging that the consequent unaccounted-for income exceeded ₹90 crore as per preliminary findings.

## 'Blinken will raise human rights issues'

Official says the U.S. will continue that conversation because of common values

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

During his visit next week to New Delhi, the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will raise concerns around human rights in India, according to a U.S. official.

Mr. Blinken is expected to arrive in New Delhi late on July 27 and will meet with his counterpart S. Jaishankar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi (according to the U.S. version of Mr. Blinken's schedule).

"And with respect to the human rights and democracy question, yes, you're right; I will tell you that we will raise it, and we will continue that conversation, because we firmly believe that we have more values in common on those fronts than we don't," Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Dean Thompson told reporters on Friday, when asked

**We believe India is going to be a really important part of continuing those conversations [on democracy and human rights] and building strong efforts on those fronts in partnership as we go forward**

DEAN THOMPSON,  
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS

how important human rights were to the meeting agenda.

"And we believe India is going to be a really important part of continuing those conversations and building strong efforts on those fronts in partnership as we go forward," he said, adding that the U.S.-India bilateral relationship was "strong" and has, and would, endure through all types of U.S. administrations.

**On Pegasus spyware**  
On the question of the Pegasus spyware story, Mr.

Thompson was more circumspect. The phones of a number of Indian citizens and foreigners in India were hacked using this software, produced by an Israeli firm - NSO Group - which has said it sells its software only to government clients.

"We - I don't have any particular special insights into the India case. I know this is a broader issue, but I will say that we've been, I think, quite vocal about trying to find ways for companies to be able to ensure that their technology is not used in these types of ways.

And we will certainly continue to press those issues," he said.

The Biden administration - which only days earlier had accused China and Russia of "protecting" and "accommodating" cyber hackers and their hacking - has been apparently reluctant to apply the same standards to democracies Israel (one of America's closest allies) and India (a partner of growing significance).

The meetings next week will cover a host of issues such as expanding cooperation on the security, cyber, defence and counter-terrorism fronts.

It will also include discussions on the Indo-Pacific and a partnership among Quad countries to roll out at least a billion COVID-19 vaccines in 2022 to the Asia region. Cooperation on climate action is also expected to be on the agenda.

## How a squirrel sparked off a scientific quest

A 13-year study has finally got to the root of Alison's colour change

T. NANDAKUMAR  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A black squirrel is indeed a rarity, at least in India, but what would have ended up in captivity as a curious exhibit or a laboratory specimen, instead became the subject of a 13-year-long scientific quest by a multidisciplinary team of 15 researchers from various Indian institutes.

Employing the most modern scientific techniques, including morphological and bioinformatic studies and molecular and genetic tools, the scientists embarked on a mission to unravel the cause for the colour change.

Ever since it was captured from the outskirts of Kerala's capital city in 2008, Alison, the black squirrel, named after a U.K.-based scientist who helped identify the ani-



The latest issue of 'Current Science' features Alison on the cover.

mal, had been the subject of intense scientific scrutiny.

Following up on the preliminary investigations that confirmed the black animal to be a variant of the Indian three-striped palm squirrel (*Funambulus palmarum*), scientists went on to decipher the genetic causes of

the colour change. Finally, after 13 years of research, the team found that it was caused by gene mutation. The study found that the melanocortin-1 receptor (MC1R) gene in the animal acted as a switch to activate the change in pigmentation.

The study has been published in the latest issue of *Current Science*.

"At first, we thought it was a tree shrew but the bushy tail resembled that of a squirrel. Once it was confirmed as a female melanistic variant of the Indian palm squirrel, we realised that it was the first black one of its kind to be reported from the Indian subcontinent," says Oommen V. Oommen, former chairman, Kerala State Biodiversity Board and co-author. Unlike the U.K., U.S., and

Canada where the black squirrel has attained sizeable populations, there have been no reports of the mutant version being sighted anywhere in India.

The next job was to find out whether it was a new species, for which the scientists compared the genes of the wild squirrel with the black melanistic variant and found they were 98% similar. Having confirmed it as a palm squirrel, they moved on to the quest to study the mutation. "Our attempt was to understand the basic science behind the colour change, what it is that throws the switch," Prof. Oommen said. Computational docking studies suggested the mutation in the MC1R gene was responsible for the melanism.

## HOW BASKETBALL AND HOCKEY COMBINED TO WIN INDIA ITS FIRST MEDAL IN TENNIS.

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# Open schooling: children of Odisha village cross State border chasing Internet

They traverse a patch of forest and sit for online classes in Jharkhand

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

For Sony Sanjukta Dung Dung, a geographical border does not mean all that much. Though she stays in a remote Odisha village, on most days she leads a group of students to Jharkhand so that they all can study.

Ms. Sanjukta, who belongs to a tribal community and has studied till Class 12, is from Rangamati, a village in Sundargarh district under the Kutra block. Like millions of students whose classes were interrupted by COVID-19, the children of Rangamati too faced a big setback because of the lack of access to Internet.

Ms. Sanjukta also realised that the lack of connectivity did not only limit access to education, it also rendered children vulnerable to being forced to work from a very early age. She thus took the

brave decision of following the mobile signal, even if it took her across the Odisha-Jharkhand border.

Thus, for the past several months, Ms. Sanjukta, along with a small group of primary school children of her village, walks to Kadopani in Jharkhand's Bolba block, about 5 km from her village Rangamati. As a forest has to be traversed, villagers often escort them.

## 'Nothing new'

"Telephone connectivity in my village and its surroundings has been very inconsistent. Chasing a mobile signal is nothing new to us. At odd hours, people have to cross the State border to call ambulances. When educational institutes were shut down and online classes were offered as the only alternative mode of teaching, we were left with no option but to



Long journey: Children from Rangamati in Odisha sit down for classes at the State border with Jharkhand after picking up Internet connectivity. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

start classes wherever signal is available," says Ms. Sanjukta.

The Odisha government has been live-streaming les-

sons for Classes 1 to 10 on YouTube.

"Wherever I pick strong Internet speed, I download study materials immediately

and store it to refer while conducting offline classes at the village. We also carry mats with us. We sit down for online classes upon find-

ing connectivity," she says. Kutra block Education Officer Guru Charan Sahoo concedes that since the last academic session, education has been adversely impacted.

## State effort

"Internet penetration in Kutra block is very poor. As a matter of fact, we are able to reach merely 20-25% students through online education. We have persuaded our teachers to conduct offline classes after taking the consent of parents. However, we have not been able to reach out to all students through our intervention," Mr. Sahoo said.

The situation is somewhat similar in other Sundargarh blocks such as Subdega, Nuagaon, Bisra and Kuanarmunda. Odisha's School and Mass Education Secretary Satyabrata Sahu too admitted that only 40% of students in the State were able access online classes.

In another desperate ef-

fort to continue studies, Kavita Nisika, a Kondh tribal girl from Hadia village in Rayagada, had to take a one-room house on rent in the district headquarters in order to access Internet connectivity. Her widowed mother, a daily wageer, and older sister, toil hard to fund her stay at Rayagada.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Nisika had enrolled in Bhubaneswar's Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. She had almost lost a year without a smartphone or connectivity. When she was contacted by her institute on the continuation of her studies, she had to work along with her mother and sister to buy a smartphone.

In Rangamati village, Sibilian Gudia, who would have been in Class 10 this year, has started assisting his father in wage-work, leaving behind his schooling.

There have been innumerable instances of hardship in rural Odisha, especially in

tribal pockets, where students trek mountains and climb trees to find mobile networks.

In the Machhkund area of Koraput, students keep visiting bordering areas to catch the signal from the Jio telecom brand's towers in Andhra Pradesh. They have been seen attending online classes in the middle of roads.

## Tele-density figures

According to the Odisha Economic Survey, tele-density and Internet penetration is lower than the national average in the State.

"The overall tele-density of Odisha is 76.46%, while the national average is 87.37%. Similarly, Internet subscribers per 100 population of the State are 43.95 in comparison to the national average of 55.12. The Internet subscription per 100 population in rural areas stands at 34.51 whereas it is 85.98 in case of urban areas," the survey says.

## What the nose tells of COVID prognosis

Reasons for severe disease analysed

RAMYA KANNAN  
CHENNAI

A new study has suggested that the responses to the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the nose and throat might help determine who will develop severe disease and who will get through with mild disease or not develop the illness.

SARS-CoV-2, like other respiratory coronaviruses, enters through the mouth or nose and initially replicates within the epithelial cells of the human nasopharynx region, generating an upper respiratory infection over several days, the authors explain. A subset of patients develop symptoms of lower respiratory infection, and a complete understanding of why some people lapse into a serious disease while others don't is still elusive.

The study that was published in the journal *Cell* tries to provide answers to this question. Which cells does SARS-CoV-2 primarily target and how does the infection influence the respiratory epithelium, or the tissue that lines the respiratory tract, it asked, and went on to suggest that "failed nasal epithelial anti-viral immunity may underlie and precede severe COVID-19".

Teams from the Boston Children's Hospital and the University of Mississippi Medical Centre collaborated to study the SARS-CoV infection in the nasopharyngeal area from those with COVID-19, ranging from sub-



Failed nasal epithelial anti-viral immunity may precede severe COVID-19.

jects who were mildly symptomatic to those who were critically ill.

## Interferon response

José Ordovás-Montañés of the Boston Children's Hospital, and co-senior investigator of the study, has been quoted: "Why some people get more sick than others has been one of the most puzzling aspects of this virus from the beginning.... many studies looking for risk predictors have looked for signatures in the blood, but blood may not really be the right place to look." Further, he explained: "Everyone with severe COVID-19 had a blunted interferon response early on in their epithelial cells, and were never able to ramp up a defense."

Despite equivalent viral loads, in people with mild or moderate COVID-19, the epithelial cells express antiviral/interferon-responsive genes, whereas the cells in patients with severe COVID-19 have muted anti-viral responses, the authors wrote.

## 'No plans for two child policy'

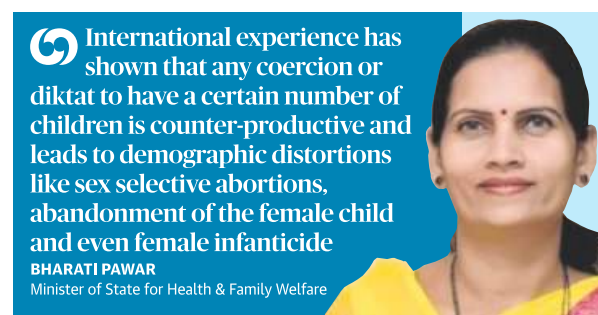
Centre does not have any such proposal, says Minister of State for Health

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has denied having a two child policy, a question that has gained resonance following the Uttar Pradesh government's draft policy under which it proposes to disincentivise those with more than two children and even bar them from government benefits. The State's policy, set out in a draft Bill, is now open for public comment.

On Friday, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Bharati Pawar underlined that the Centre had no plans for a two-child policy, in response to a question from BJP MP Uday Pratap Singh in the Lok Sabha.

The Centre, she said, has been implementing the National Family Planning Programme, which provided voluntary and informed choices to all citizens regardless of their religion or sects through a target-free ap-



International experience has shown that any coercion or diktat to have a certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions like sex selective abortions, abandonment of the female child and even female infanticide. BHARATI PAWAR, Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare

proach with the objective of checking population growth in the country.

India's national population policy was framed in 2000 with the long term objective of attaining "population stabilisation" by 2045 and several initiatives had been taken under the National Family Planning Programme towards this, the Minister said.

These included a Mission Parivar Vikas to include access to contraceptives and family planning services in 146 high fertility districts in

seven high focus States, expanding contraceptive choices by making condoms, combined oral contraceptive pills, emergency contraceptive pills, intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCDs) and sterilisation more accessible. A scheme to compensate those who undergo voluntary sterilisation for any loss of wages and for the service provider and team for conducting sterilisation is also in place.

As a result, said Dr. Pawar, India's total fertility rate had declined from 2.7 to 2.2 from

2005-06 (NFHS III) to 2015-16 (NFHS IV); 28 out of 36 States and Union Territories have already achieved the replacement level fertility of 2.1 or less and the Crude Birth Rate has declined from 23.8 to 20.0 from 2005 to 2018.

The Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994, to which India is a signatory, is unequivocally against coercion in family planning, said Dr. Pawar.

International experience had shown that any coercion or diktat to have a certain number of children was counter-productive and led to demographic distortions like sex selective abortions, abandonment of the female child and even female infanticide due to intense son preference, all of which eventually resulted in a skewed sex ratio, the Minister said in her written reply.

## Buddha's teachings have served us well, says PM

'All the more relevant during pandemic'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said Lord Buddha's teachings have become all the more relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and that India had shown how it could face adversities by following his path.

As a part of the Dhamma Chakra and Ashadha Purnima programme organised by the International Buddhist Confederation, Mr. Modi said in a video message: "Lord Buddha is all the more relevant in today's times of corona pandemic. India has shown how we can face even the most difficult challenges by following the path of the Buddha. Today all the countries are moving in solidarity and becoming each other's strength by following the teachings of the Buddha."

According to an English



Narendra Modi

translation of his speech released by the PMO, Mr. Modi cited Buddha's teachings and said "enmity does not quell enmity".

"Rather, enmity is calmed with love and by a big heart. In times of tragedy, the world has experienced this power of love and harmony," he said.

The programme also included a video message from President Ram Nath Kovind.

## 'Mid-century target for net zero inadequate'

India wants G20 pledge for 2030

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

At the conclusion of the G20 climate meet, India on Saturday said that pledges by some countries to achieve net zero GHG emissions or 'carbon neutrality' by mid-century were inadequate, when considering the rights of developing countries to economic growth.

"We have noted the pledges made by some countries to achieve net zero GHG emissions or carbon neutrality by or around mid-century. However, this may not be adequate in view of fast depleting available carbon space. Therefore and keeping in view, the legitimate need of developing countries to growth, we urge G20 countries to commit to bringing down per capita emissions to Global average by 2030," said the Indian statement.

The G20 climate summit, which concluded on Friday, comes roughly about 100 days before the Conference of Parties (COP 26) is set to begin in Glasgow, Scotland.

## Forest cover

The net zero emissions refer to a situation where a country is able to remove at least as much carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as it is emitting.

This can be done by increasing forest cover or through technologies such as carbon capture. India's position as the third largest greenhouse gas emitter but also with among the lowest per capita emissions means



India has emphasised that developing countries have a "legitimate need" to grow.

that it has always resisted a hard deadline — some countries have set their target years as 2050 or 2060 — to commit to a net-zero future. It is expected that the forthcoming COP 26 talks in Glasgow will see a commitment by the United States.

## Plan outline

Countries periodically submit the National Determined Contributions (NDC) that outline their plans towards capping emission. As per the NDCs submitted to the UNFCCC under Paris the Agreement, the pledge of the United States falls short of its fair share by 12 tonnes of CO2 per capita, of the U.K. by 14.1 tonnes, of China by 0.2 tonnes, and of India by 0.4 tonnes, according to Council on Energy Environment and Water, a New Delhi based think-tank.

The fair share represents the reductions countries must achieve to ensure that the greenhouse gas levels are below that to prevent a 1.5 average temperature rise over the globe by the turn of the century.

## CISCE announces Class 10, 12 results

Over 99% clear ICSE & ISC exams; no merit list to be published this year too

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) announced the results for Classes 10 and 12 on Saturday.

Girls and boys achieved the same pass percentage of 99.98% in Class 10, while girls outshone boys by a margin of 0.2% in Class 12. "In Class 12, the pass percentage of girls is 99.86%, while that of boys is 99.66%," CISCE chief executive and secretary Gerry Arathoon said.

The CISCE, which conducts the ICSE (Class 10) and ISC (Class 12) examinations, had cancelled them this year in view of the second wave of COVID-19. The results have been prepared on the basis of an alternative assessment policy decided by the CISCE.



ICSE students who celebrated in school followed COVID norms.

The CISCE said that as last year, there would be no merit list this time too in view of the exceptional circumstances in which the results had been prepared.

Mr. Arathoon said the option of rechecking of answer scripts would not be available this year as candidates

had been awarded "imputed marks".

## Grievance resolution

However, a dispute resolution mechanism would be in place for correction of calculation errors, if any.

A total of 2,422 schools had presented candidates for the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) exam, while 1,166 schools had presented candidates for the Indian School Certificate (ISC) exam. A total of 2,19,499 students, including 54.14% boys and 45.86% girls, appeared for Class 10 exams, while 94,011 candidates, including 53.67% per cent boys and 46.33% girls sat for the Class 12 exams.

For evaluating Class 12 candidates, the parameters included average marks of

papers and subjects scored in Classes 11 and 12. The average of Class 10 marks, including English and best four subjects, and marks of project work and practical exams during Class 12 were taken into consideration.

For Class 10, the result has been tabulated on the basis of average marks scored by candidates in various exams and tests in Classes 9 and 10 besides internal assessment marks, including the project and practical work.

The southern region had the best pass percentage (100) followed by the western region with a pass percentage of 99.99 in Class 10.

In Class 12, southern and western regions registered a pass percentage of 99.91 followed by northern region at 99.75%.

## Another elephant electrocuted in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER  
BHUBANESWAR

Another elephant was killed on Friday in Odisha's Dhenkanal district after coming into contact with live electric wire. Since April alone, five elephants have died of electrocution.

The incident was reported from the Hindol Range of the Dhenkanal Forest Division. "Some people had set up a trap with live electric wire fence for wild boar. The elephant from a seven-member herd accidentally came into contact with it, leading to the death," said Dhenkanal Divisional Forest Officer Prakash Chand Gogineni.

"From our initial investigation, we got to know about involvement of six persons. Four persons have been arrested. Two will soon be apprehended," Mr. Gogineni said. This was the second electrocution in the Dhenkanal division.

## Preventable deaths

"Despite a large number of elephant deaths in the State due to electrocution, which are completely avoidable, no visible step is being taken to prevent them," said Biswajit Mohanty, who heads the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO).

According to the WSO, 389 elephants have died in



The elephant that got electrocuted in Dhenkanal.

Odisha since 2016-17. Of the 389, as many as 60 elephants died accidentally by contact with live wires. While earlier,

sagging overhead transmission lines were responsible for electrocution deaths, more recently, traps to kill wild animals have claimed elephants.

"Minimum measures could have saved precious elephants in the State. Regular patrolling by field level forest staff can keep miscreants at bay. At the same time, the power distribution companies should have installed earth-leakage circuit breakers (ELCB), which would have ensured power disconnection upon elephant coming in contact with live wire," Mr. Mohanty said.

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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



# Biden, Ghani question Taliban's motives

U.S. reaffirms commitment to continue supporting Afghan security forces to defend themselves

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani have, during a Friday phone call, concluded that the Taliban's brutal campaign in Afghanistan after the departure of most U.S. and NATO troops is not consistent with the group's claimed support for a negotiated peace settlement in Afghanistan.

"President Biden and President Ghani agreed that the Taliban's current offensive is in direct contradiction to the movement's claim to support a negotiated settlement of the conflict. President Biden also reaffirmed the United States' commitment to continue supporting the Afghan security forces to defend themselves," a White House readout of the leaders' phone call said.

The two leaders "deplored" the loss of innocent lives via targeted killings and the displacement of civilians and the damage to infras-



**Show of strength:** Taliban supporters at the border town of Spin Boldak in Afghanistan on July 14. •AP

structure and buildings.

According to the White House, Mr. Biden reaffirmed continued U.S. support and aid for the country, including for Afghan women, girls and minorities — whose status is extremely precarious given the Taliban's history of repression of these groups.

"President Biden urged continued work for unity among Afghan leaders on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the values on which it is based. The

two leaders discussed the importance of Afghans coming together to support their common interest in security and peace, and President Biden underscored continued U.S. diplomatic engagement in support of a durable and just political settlement," the readout said.

Earlier in July, Mr. Biden had said that it was "highly unlikely" that there was going to be one unified government controlling the whole of Afghanistan.

## Night curfew imposed to stem Taliban advance

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

Afghan authorities on Saturday imposed a night-time curfew across 31 of the country's 34 provinces to curb surging violence unleashed by a Taliban offensive in recent months, the Interior Ministry said.

The Taliban have

captured key border crossings, dozens of districts and encircled several provincial capitals since early May. "Night curfew has been imposed in 31 provinces across the country," except in Kabul, Panjshir and Nangarhar, it said. The curfew will be effective between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. local time.

## U.S. unveils \$100 million fund for Afghan refugees

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday authorised up to \$100 million from an emergency fund to meet "urgent" refugee needs stemming from the situation in Afghanistan,

including for immigration visa applicants, the White House said. The first batch of evacuees and their families is expected to be flown by month end to Fort Lee, where they will wait for the final processing of their visa applications.

# Amnesty seeks moratorium on surveillance tech

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Allegations that governments used phone malware supplied by an Israeli firm to spy on journalists, activists and heads of state have "exposed a global human rights crisis," Amnesty International said, asking for a moratorium on the sale and use of surveillance technology.

In a statement on Friday, the NGO warned of "the devastating impact of the poor-

ly regulated spyware industry on human rights worldwide."

The NSO Group's Pegasus software — able to switch on a phone's camera or microphone and harvest its data — is at the centre of a storm after a list of about 50,000 potential surveillance targets was leaked to rights groups.

Amnesty International and French media nonprofit Forbidden Stories collaborated with a clutch of media

companies, including the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian* and *Le Monde*, to analyse and publish the list.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who was on the list of alleged targets, had to change his phone number.

"Not only does it expose the risk and harm to those individuals unlawfully targeted, but also the extremely destabilising consequences on global human rights and

the security of the digital environment at large," Agnes Callamard, Amnesty's Secretary General, said in the statement. Israel group NSO "is just one company."

"This is a dangerous industry that has operated on the edges of legality for too long, and this cannot be allowed to continue," she said.

"Now, we urgently need greater regulation over the cyber surveillance industry, accountability for human

rights violations and abuses, and greater oversight over this shadowy industry."

Amnesty called for an immediate moratorium on any export, sale, transfer and use of surveillance technology "until there is a human rights-compliant regulatory framework in place."

The list of alleged targets includes at least 180 journalists, 600 politicians, 85 human rights activists and 65 business leaders.

## Thousands pour in for Budapest Pride march

Law on LGBTQ issues sparks row with EU

REUTERS  
BUDAPEST

Thousands of Hungarians joined the annual Budapest Pride march on Saturday to support LGBTQ people and protest against a law that limits teaching about homosexuality and transgender issues in schools.

Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, in power since 2010, has introduced social policies that he says aim to safeguard traditional Christian values from Western liberalism, stoking tensions with the European Union.

The European Commission has launched legal action against Mr. Orban's government over the new law, which came into force this month, saying it is discriminatory and contravenes European values of tolerance and individual freedom.

Demonstrators at the march through the streets of central Budapest said the legislation was dividing the former Soviet-bloc nation

and now a member of the European Union.

"The law is an outrage. We live in the 21st century, when things like that should not be happening. We are no longer in communist times, this is the EU and everyone should be able to live freely," Istvan, 27, said at the march with his boyfriend.

Orban's Fidesz-Christian Democrat government, which faces a tough election next year, says LGBTQ rights and other such social issues are matters for national governments to decide. It says the law aims to protect children not target homosexuals.

Organisers said in a statement the rally would show opposition to "power-hungry politicians" and reject intimidation of LGBTQ people. "Instead of protecting minorities, the Fidesz-Christian Democrat government is using laws to make members of the LGBTQ community outcasts in their own country," they said.

# China braces for Typhoon In-fa

In Philippines, thousands flee flooded villages after days of torrential rains

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MANILA

Airline flights were cancelled in eastern China and cargo ships were ordered out of the area on Saturday as Typhoon In-fa churned toward the mainland after dumping rain on Taiwan. This comes amid ongoing rescue efforts to move residents out of flooded neighbourhoods in central China after torrential rains killed at least 56 people

In-fa is likely to hit the coast of Zhejiang province, south of Shanghai, on Sunday afternoon or evening, the provincial weather department announced.

The storm had sustained winds of 155 km per hour with gusts up to 191 km per hour as it moved northwest away from Taiwan, the island's weather bureau reported.

Schools, markets and businesses in Zhejiang were ordered to close, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said road traffic would be suspended when necessary.

The airport in the provin-



**Safe passage:** Residents crossing a flooded street on a loader after heavy rains in Xinxiang, China. •AFP

cial capital of Hangzhou, southwest of Shanghai, canceled 90% of flights on Sunday and was expected to cancel more on Monday, the newspaper Zhejiang Daily reported on its website.

Large container ships were evacuated from Yangshan Port in Shanghai, one of the world's busiest shipping centers, according to Xinhua. It cited port management as saying winds off the coast were 89 to 102 kph (55 to 65 mph) and would accelerate.

Meanwhile, thousands of

15,000 residents were evacuated to safety overnight as waters rose alarmingly in a major river.

"This situation will be too difficult if there won't be a permanent solution to flooding, especially now with the threat from the delta variant," Marikina Mayor Marcelino Teodoro said.

Many of the residents were evacuated from flood-prone villages in Marikina overnight, depriving them of sleep, said Mr. Teodoro. He blamed years of illegal logging in nearby mountains and heavy siltation in Marikina River for constant flooding in his city.

In-fa has churned off the country's eastern coast. A cargo boat overturned after being lashed by strong waves on Saturday close to a port in Pio Duran town in Albay province, southeast of Manila. Its 10 crewmen were rescued by firefighters and villagers, who used a rope to pull the overturned boat closer to the coast, the coast guard said.

Officials said they struggled to open more emergency shelters in order to allow social distancing among the displaced residents and prevent evacuation camps from turning into epicenters of COVID-19 infections. In the hard-hit city of Marikina in the capital region, nearly

# Protesters, police clash over Australia lockdown

Violence after officials said curbs could be extended till Oct.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

Thousands marched through Australia's two biggest cities in anti-lockdown protests on Saturday, sparking violent clashes with police in Sydney.

Dozens of protesters were arrested after an unauthorised march flouted public health orders in Sydney, while several confrontations with police broke out during the hours-long rally.

Officers were pelted with pot plants and bottles of water as opponents of Sydney's month-long stay-at-home order took to the streets in numbers.

Thousands also crowded several streets in Melbourne after gathering outside the state Parliament.

The largely maskless protesters were flouting rules on non-essential travel and public gatherings, a day after authorities suggested the restrictions could remain in place until October.

"I am utterly disgusted by the illegal protesters in the city today whose selfish actions have compromised the safety of all of us," the premier of Sydney's state of New South Wales, Gladys Berejiklian, said in a statement. Hundreds of police responded to the Sydney protest, with several demonstrators pulled from the crowd in handcuffs by officers. Police said they issued nearly 100 fines and arrested 57 people.

Police in Melbourne said six people were arrested.



**Growing unease:** Protesters and mounted police clash at Sydney Town Hall on Saturday. •AP

**Protests in Italy against COVID-19 certificates**

ROME

Thousands of people protested in cities across Italy on Saturday against the government's introduction of restrictions on unvaccinated people as Rome tries to slow an uptick in COVID-19 infections. They were protesting against Green Pass, an extension of the EU's digital COVID-19 certificate, which will be required from August 6 to enter cinemas, museums, indoor swimming pools or sports stadiums, or eat indoors at restaurants. •AFP

**French protesters reject Bill mandating passes**

PARIS

Tens of thousands of people, including far-right activists and members of France's yellow vest movement, protested on Saturday across the country against a Bill requiring everyone to have a special virus pass to enter restaurants and mandating vaccinations for all health care workers. Most French adults are fully vaccinated and multiple polls indicate a majority of French people support the new measures. But not everyone. •AP

New South Wales Police Minister David Elliott said detectives would be scouring footage to identify and charge as many people as possible. "What we saw today in Sydney is unfortunately something that we've seen in cities that we all shake our head at," Mr. Elliott said.

Organisers had dubbed

the protest a "freedom" rally and publicised it on social media pages frequently used to spread vaccine disinformation and conspiracy theories.

Attendees carried signs and banners reading "Wake up Australia" and "Drain the Swamp" — echoing messages seen in similar demonstrations overseas.

## Terrorists behind Baghdad bombing held

IS-claimed attack had killed 30 people

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BAGHDAD

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi announced on Saturday the arrest of members of a "terror cell" behind the Baghdad market bombing that killed dozens and was claimed by the Islamic State group.

The attack sparked revulsion and renewed fears about the reach of IS, which lost its last territory in Iraq after a gruelling campaign that ended in late 2017, but retains sleeper cells in remote desert and mountain areas.

The bombing took place on Monday at Al-Wehail market in Sadr City, a Shiite suburb in the capital, and officially killed 30 people, excluding the direct perpetrator.

"We have arrested all the members of the cowardly terrorist cell that planned and perpetrated the attack," Kadhemi said on Twitter, "and they will be put before a judge today."

The Prime Minister did not specify the number of people arrested, but a source at the interior ministry said the suspects were anticipated to make televised "confessions", a common occurrence for major crimes in Iraq.

Deadly attacks were common in Baghdad during the sectarian bloodletting that followed the US-led invasion of 2003, and later on as IS swept across much of the country in a lightning offensive in 2014.

Iraq declared IS defeated in late 2017 after a fierce three-year campaign and attacks became relatively rare in the capital — until January this year when a twin IS-claimed suicide bombing killed 32 people in another market.

The US-led coalition that supported Iraq's campaign against IS has significantly drawn down its troop levels over the past year, citing increased capabilities of Iraqi forces..

## ELSEWHERE



**'UNESCO criticism over Hagia Sophia is biased'**

ISTANBUL

Turkey on Saturday rejected the UNESCO's criticism of the conversion of Byzantine-era Hagia Sophia cathedral into a mosque last year. UNESCO asked Turkey on Friday to submit a report about the state of conservation of the Hagia Sophia, expressing "grave concern" over its conversion into a mosque. •AFP

**Russia sends aid to Cuba after anti-govt. protests**

MOSCOW

Russia dispatched nearly 100 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Cuba, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday, following protests over the communist country's worst economic crisis in decades. The delivery was ordered by President Vladimir Putin, it said. •AFP

# China forces tutoring companies to go non-profit

New rules aimed at easing pressure on students, parents

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SHANGHAI

China is forcing after-school tutoring companies to register as non-profits and banning classes on weekends and holidays, according to government documents published by state media on Saturday.

The new rules, aimed at ease pressure on children, parents and teachers, are a major blow to the country's multi-billion-dollar private education industry.

Chinese authorities will stop approving new after-school educational institutions and all existing organisations must now be registered as non-profits, according to the document published by CCTV and authored by China's State



**Policy change:** New rules are a big blow to China's multi-billion-dollar private education industry. •ISTOCKPHOTO

Council and the Communist Party's Central Committee.

**No weekend classes**

These institutions will also be barred from giving classes on weekends, public holidays and school vacations.

Chinese schoolchildren have a notoriously large amount of homework,

which can often keep them up late into the night, as parents fight to give their children a leg up in an intensely competitive and exam-centric education system.

That has spawned a massive private tutoring industry, which was worth \$260 billion in 2018, according to L.E.K. Consulting.

## New cars for Uganda MPs spark outrage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KAMPALA

Uganda this week doled out €25 million euros to MPs to buy new cars, sparking outrage in a poor country where the pandemic has wreaked havoc.

Each of the 529 lawmakers were handed 200 million shillings (€48,000 euros) to buy new vehicles at a time when COVID-19 cases are surging.

"It is unacceptable for a government to buy luxuries to a small group in Parliament, who receive monthly pay of over 30 million shillings (about \$8,000) while the larger population are unable to feed themselves," said Anet Nana Namata, a human rights defender. A labourer earns monthly salary of about €24 while a teacher gets about €64.

**COUNCIL OF ARCHITECTURE**  
A Statutory Authority of Government of India  
India Habitat Centre, Core 6A, 1st Floor, Lodhi Road,  
New Delhi-110003

**EXAMINATION NOTICE: NATA-2021**

**Subject:- Announcement of Third Test of NATA-2021**

The Council of Architecture is pleased to announce that the Third Test of National Aptitude Test in Architecture (NATA) 2021 shall be conducted on September 3, 2021.

**As per the Regulations of 2020, all candidates need to qualify an Aptitude Test conducted by the Council (i.e. NATA) for admission to B.Arch. course. Therefore, all candidates who have passed in any other aptitude test in Architecture conducted by other authorities shall also be required to qualify NATA in order to be eligible for admission to the B.Arch. course.**

**As per NATA 2021 Brochure, a candidate shall be allowed to appear for NATA 2021 only for a maximum of two times. Therefore, candidates who have not appeared in either one or both tests of NATA are eligible to register and appear for Third NATA Test. Further, those candidates who, after registering themselves for NATA, could not appear or remained absent in the either one or both tests of NATA due to any reason, may also register for Third NATA Test.**

The NATA portal shall also be opened shortly to facilitate the students to register for Third NATA Test. The NATA-2021 Brochure with details of registration & other important dates for Third test shall be soon uploaded on the websites [www.nata.in](http://www.nata.in) and [www.coa.gov.in](http://www.coa.gov.in).

The eligible candidates desirous to take admission into 1st year of 5-year B.Arch. degree course are advised to register themselves for Third Test of NATA-2021.

**July 25, 2021**  
**New Delhi**

**Registrar**



SNAPSHOTS



**First sight**  
It is a puzzle how newborn mammals can make visual sense of the world around them, even though they have not seen anything earlier. An article published in *Science* draws attention to waves of dreamlike activity that emanate from the neonatal retina before they open their eyes. This activity disappears soon after birth. The waves mimic the activity that would occur if the animal was moving forward in the environment.



**Gut inheritance**  
A study of over 16,000 gut microbiome profiles collected over a period of 14 years from baboons in Kenya's Amboseli National Park found that many of the gut bacteria are heritable. This heritability is not a constant but changes over time, seasons and with age. While genes played a significantly smaller role than the environment, the study, published in *Science*, also found that several traits that were heritable in baboons were also heritable in humans.

# Can vaccinating health workers be made mandatory?

France has already made it mandatory for healthcare workers to get vaccinated, like in the case of Greece and Italy

R. PRASAD

On July 12, France made it mandatory for healthcare workers to get vaccinated. Beginning September 15, all unvaccinated healthcare workers in France will not receive salary or be allowed to work.

Likewise, Greece and Italy too have made vaccination mandatory for healthcare workers from fall this year. In the U.K., care home workers would be required by law to have the COVID-19 vaccination.

Virologist Dr. Shahid Jameel, Director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences at Ashoka University, cites mandatory smallpox vaccination in several European countries.

Similarly, polio vaccination was made mandatory in several European countries. At this time childhood vaccination is mandatory in several EU countries and recommended in others, Dr. Jameel adds.

**Wide exemptions**

"Compulsory vaccination has never meant people should be vaccinated against their will. These provisions have always been implemented with fairly wide exemptions on religious, social and philosophical grounds," says Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, physician-epidemiologist in an email.

In France, it is not the

healthcare workers alone who have been targeted. As per the announcement, all unvaccinated people will be denied entry into certain public places like theatres, sports venues and festivals involving more than 50 people in France from July 21, and cafes, bars, restaurants, shopping malls, and long-distance trains from August 1. Entry will be permitted only when unvaccinated people show a negative test result.

**Age-old measure**

Enforcing reasonable restriction in access to public places to prevent virus transmission appears fair and is an age-old public health measure. Individuals still retain the choice – whether to get vaccinated or not. "Such policies serve more of a nudge to get vaccinated. There is a qualitative difference between being denying entry to a venue and denying salary or refusal to allow to work, as this would impact their economic and social well-being and can have implications beyond the individual," says Dr. Anant Bhan, global health and bioethics researcher.

"Denying salary unless vaccinated would be coercive as it puts an individual at disadvantage," says Dr. Lahariya.

Dr. Giridhara Babu, Epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India,

## The case against compulsion

■ Compulsory vaccinations have always been implemented with exemptions on religious, social and philosophical grounds

■ Denying salary unless vaccinated would be coercive as it puts an individual at disadvantage

■ Coercive measures can be counterproductive. They only cause further panic and fail to increase vaccine uptake



■ Using a PPE kit, mask, face shield, other protective gears are other ways to ensure that an unvaccinated healthcare worker and the patients are protected

■ Unvaccinated staff may be redeployed for services which do not require direct patient engagements

Bengaluru is of the opinion that getting vaccinated is an individual's choice, and none can be forced out of their will to get the shot. "It is important to educate and have strong social mobilisation strategies to empower people to be aware and get vaccinated. In the case of healthcare workers, vaccination can be made an essential criteria for employment, which can be part of medical fitness after a pre-employment health assessment."

**Ways of protecting**

In healthcare settings, there are other ways to ensure that an unvaccinated healthcare worker and the patients are protected – using a PPE kit, mask, face shield, other protective gears and redeployment of unvaccinated staff

for services which do not require direct patient engagements, Dr. Babu says.

Dr. Jameel strongly disagrees. He says: "Healthcare professionals provide an essential service and work in a high-risk environment. They are at high risk to get infected and to pass infection to others. Therefore, when licensed vaccines are available, they must take them. No one in a hospital who is exposed to blood and other body fluids is allowed to work without hepatitis B vaccination. COVID-19 vaccination should be no different."

**Effect of nudges**

Incidentally, two days after France announced its vaccine policy, 2.2 million people signed up to get vaccinated. It could suggest that

nudges can play a role in health promotion, but it could also indicate fear or apprehensions about denial of access to key services or social opportunities which people value, says Dr. Bhan. According to Dr. Lahariya, a majority of those who signed up were in the 18-35 years of age group, who in all likelihood were willing but delaying their vaccination. The compulsion seems to have nudged people to prioritise their own vaccination. At the end of it, it is people who are making a choice about vaccination.

Though only less than 7% have been fully vaccinated in India, according to India's Health Ministry, nearly 80% of healthcare workers and 90% of frontline workers were already fully vaccinated

by early July. Any attempt to make vaccination mandatory for healthcare workers in India will surely exacerbate the inequities of differential access to vaccines, says Dr. Babu. There is also the possibility that any coercion might lead to more fake vaccination certificate scams.

**Inform and empower**

"I am not for making it mandatory for any section or class. This will not only undermine the public support but will also be counterproductive and create newer problems where none exist. As per evidence, coercive measures are always counterproductive; they will only create further panic and fail to increase vaccine uptake," says Dr. Babu. "The purpose of risk communication is to inform and empower people and respect individual choice. Mandating anything will fundamentally alter this dynamic by overriding personal autonomy."

Dr. Lahariya says that prior to making any intervention compulsory, a few principles have to be adhered to. "The benefit of such an intervention should be scientifically supported. Vaccines should be easily available and accessible to every eligible citizen, and there should be reasonable exemptions. India does not fulfil one or more of these principles," he says.

With demand outstripping supply, vaccine shortages have been reported by several States. Also, if the core argument of compulsory vaccination is to protect others and stop virus transmission, then the role of currently used COVID-19 vaccines in India is not backed by scientific evidence. Clinical trials have documented vaccine efficacy against moderate to severe disease, hospitalisation and deaths; there is limited data on their role in preventing virus transmission.

**Breaking the chain**

"It is clear that while those vaccinated can still get infected, they produce much less virus, thus reducing the chances of transmission. Further, they are protected from severe disease and in a pandemic situation you want your healthcare and frontline workers to be protected and available as much as possible," says Dr. Jameel.

Dr. Bhan agrees that vaccination contributes to breaking of the transmission chain and case reduction even if it does not completely stop the possibility. This makes a strong case for promoting vaccination particularly among healthcare workers. "But this does not necessarily mean we should be exploring the mandatory vaccination route to push this," Dr. Bhan adds.

## Moon-forming region seen around exoplanet for the first time

REUTERS

Scientists for the first time have spotted a moon-forming region around a planet beyond our solarsystem - a Jupiter-like world surrounded by a disc of gas and dust massive enough that it could spawn three moons the size of the one orbiting Earth.

The researchers used the ALMA observatory in Chile's Atacama desert to detect the disc of swirling material accumulating around one of two newborn planets seen orbiting a young star called PDS 70, located 370 light years from Earth. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, about 9.5 trillion km.

**Known exoplanets**

More than 4,400 planets have been discovered outside our solar system, called exoplanets. No circumplanetary discs had been found until now because all the known exoplanets resided in "mature" - fully developed - solar systems, except the two infant gas planets orbit-



**Rare find:** Among over 4,400 exoplanets discovered so far, none had a circumplanetary disc. ■  
GETTY IMAGES

ing PDS 70.

The study was published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

In our solar system, the impressive rings of Saturn, a planet around which more than 80 moons orbit, represent a relic of a primordial moon-forming disc, said study co-author Stefano Facchini of the European Southern Observatory.

The orange-coloured star PDS 70, roughly the same mass as our Sun, is about 5 million years old. The two planets are even younger. Both planets are similar (although larger) to Jupiter, a gas giant. It was around one of the two planets, called PDS 70c, that a moon-form-

ing disc was observed. Researchers have now confirmed initial evidence of a disc around this planet.

**Birth of a moon**

Stars burst to life within clouds of interstellar gas and dust scattered throughout galaxies. Leftover material spinning around a new star then coalesces into planets, and circumplanetary discs surrounding some planets similarly yield moons.

The dominant mechanism thought to underpin planet formation is called "core accretion," said study co-author Richard Teague of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

"In this scenario, small dust grains, coated in ice, gradually grow to larger and larger sizes through successive collisions with other grains. This continues until the grains have grown to a size of a planetary core, at which point the young planet has a strong enough gravitational potential to accrete gas which will form its atmosphere," Teague said.

## Study proposes repurposed drug to treat COVID-19

The drug is now in Phase-II trials to evaluate efficacy, safety, tolerability to treat COVID-19 patients

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

A long wait for drugs to treat COVID-19 may come to a close, if Phase II trials of the drug niclosamide deliver positive results. The repurposed drug, an anthelmintic originally used to treat tapeworm infection, was found to show promise in an exploratory study undertaken by Bengaluru-based National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR) and Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (IN-STEM) along with Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu.

Based on the recommendations of this preliminary study, the drug is now under "multi-centric, phase-II, randomized, open label clinical study to evaluate efficacy, safety and tolerability of Niclosamide for the treatment of hospitalized Covid-19 patients," according to a press release of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) dated July 5.

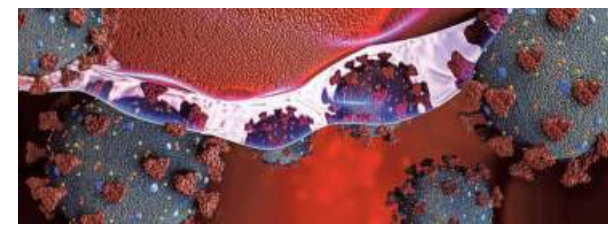
Among those following the news about the novel coronavirus, it is well known that the spike protein of the receptor binding domain attaches itself to the ACE2 receptor present in the cell. This is a route the virus uses to enter the cell.

There is also another way of entering the cell, especially in cells that do not carry ACE2.

**Alternative route**

"The stomach and proximal intestinal epithelium have cells that do not carry the ACE2 receptor but also are infected by the virus, and the cell line we are working with may be a surrogate model for such a system," explains Satyajit Mayor, Director of NCBS-TIFR, who is an author of the study which has been published in *PLoS Pathogens*.

To enter such cells the spike glycoprotein finds a different pathway using alternative binding proteins on the surface of the cell. These are not yet fully



**Infection route:** When the virus tries to enter the cell, the drug interferes with the process. ■ GETTY IMAGES

characterised.

"The other pathway is something that we have been involved in uncovering and working on for the past 20 years at NCBS, and therefore we could immediately deploy our knowledge in seeing how we could influence this route," says Prof. Mayer.

**Blocking the virus**

To study the path taken by the virus, the group isolated and purified the spike glycoprotein, attached it to a pseudovirus and tagged it with a fluorescent dye. When the virus tries to enter the cell, it is first engulfed in a membranous vesicle. This vesicle provides an environment of low pH (acidic medi-

um) which is necessary for the virus to infect the cell. Thus, a substance that would alter the pH of the environment would block the entry of the virus. This role can be played by, for instance, niclosamide.

"Niclosamide is a drug used for tapeworm treatment. Other worms, such as pinworms and roundworms, are not affected. It is taken orally so can be used right off the shelf if the dosage and efficacy is proved for Covid," says Varadharajan Sundaramurthy from NCBS-TIFR, a co-author.

The group has used this method to block the real SARS-CoV-2 virus in culture. "As the pandemic started,

we established dedicated space in our biosafety level 3 suite for SARS-CoV-2 infection assays and obtained relevant approvals. So, when baflomycin and niclosamide showed inhibitory effect in pseudovirus assays, we could immediately test them in real SARS-CoV-2 infection assays," says Dr. Sundaramurthy. "We could further extend these results to the gastric AGS cells with and without ACE2."

**Clinical trials**

The drug is being taken through a clinical trial by CSIR. Ram Viswakarma of CSIR-IIIM, another co-author, said the following in an email to *The Hindu*: "CSIR New Delhi (through its constituent laboratory CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad) with an Industry partner received DCGI approval for a Phase II clinical trial, which is currently [underway] in multiple hospitals across India. Once the trial is complete, the results will be submitted to the drug regulator."

## Keep your mind alert and active

Adopting beta-sitosterol-rich diets, plant food and nuts, exercises and yoga practice can make fitter bodies and brains



**SPEAKING OF SCIENCE**

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15% of the world's population, or about 785 million people, are mentally disabled - with dementia, memory loss, anxiety and stress-related disorders, Alzheimer's disease and similar disabilities. In India, a recent study reported in this newspaper states that 74% of senior citizens (people above 60 years of age) reported stress and 88% reported anxiety, after the coronavirus pandemic and the associated lockdown. By the year 2050, the number of senior citizens in India can be about 20% of the population.

**Treating aged people**

Given this situation, we need a variety of methods to detect and treat such mental disabilities in aged populations, and indeed even in 'junior citizens' before they at-

tain the senior stage. Several traditional practices such as Ayurveda, Unani, Yoga and breathing exercises have been going on for centuries. Yet, we need to use modern science and technology, new detection and treatment modes.

**Reduces anxiety**

It is here that a recent report from a group at the Weizmann Institute in Israel is of interest. They have shown that the compound called beta-sitosterol (BSS) reduces anxiety and synergises with established anxiety drugs in mice. Their paper explores the effect of BSS on various parts of the brain and its chemistry, and can be accessed (*Panayotis et al., 2021, Cell Reports Medicine* 2,100281).

We need more drugs to treat anxiety and stress-related disorders. The discovery and development of such



**Preventing dementia:** A variety of methods are needed to detect and treat such mental disabilities in aged populations, and indeed even in younger citizens. ■ GETTY IMAGES

compounds is a challenge. The most common sources of BSS are plants (called phytosterols). They have been used in traditional Indian medicine and are vegetarian since they are plant-derived. The most abundant source of BSS is canola oil, which has over 400 mg of this molecule per 100 grams, and so does corn (makki, cholam) and its oil. However, canola is not easily available in India. The easiest source of BSS in any supermarket across the country are nuts such as pistachio, almonds, walnuts, and even chickpeas (with 198,

132, 103 and 160 mg/100 grams of BSS).

Dementia is a term that describes a group of conditions affecting the gradual impairment of brain function. It is associated with memory loss, and impaired cognition and mobility. An individual's personality may also change, and functional ability decline as the condition progresses. Dementia can also impose a burden on the sufferers and their families. An excellent and comprehensive review, titled "The Dementia Epidemic: Impact, Prevention and Chal-

lenges for India", published by R. Sathianathan and S. J. Kantipudi in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* (2018, Vol 60(2), p 165-167), is available for free on the net.

**Biomarkers of dementia**

Scientists and clinicians are concentrating on detecting the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's, by looking for biomarkers such as the deposition of insoluble plaques leading to neurodegeneration. In addition, imaging methods, that use magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) can detect the onset of dementia conditions ahead of time. We have quite a few centres in several cities with MRI and PET scanning facilities. But we need more clinical and biological laboratories that can detect the roles of genetic and neurobiological aspects even before imaging techniques are used. We also need organic chemists to synthesise newer and more efficient drug molecules to act on neurological problems at their very early stage, inhibiting the neural

system from degrading.

India has been a world leader in the area of the chemistry of natural products - identifying key molecules of health interest and synthesising and marketing them across the country and the world. We also have world class biology laboratories that study genetic and molecular biological aspects. In addition, we have centuries-old herbal medicine centres (in Ayurveda and Unani systems) which continue to produce effective cures for dementia. If the country's Central and State governments, plus private foundations can come together to support research, there is no reason why we cannot reduce the number of dementia and Alzheimer's disease cases. Senior (and junior) citizens can offer their support by adopting diets rich in BSS, eating plant food and nuts, doing exercises- walking, bicycling, vigorous outdoor games - and yoga practices that help in making fitter bodies and brains.

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## Question Corner

**Memory matters**

**Can age-related memory loss be reversed?**

Scientists at Cambridge and Leeds have successfully reversed age-related memory loss in mice and say their discovery could lead to the development of treatments to prevent memory loss in people as they age.

The researchers show that changes in the extracellular matrix of the brain - 'scaffolding' around nerve cells - lead to loss of memory with ageing, but that it is possible to reverse these (*Molecular Psychiatry*).

Recent evidence has emerged of the role of perineuronal nets (PNNs) in neuroplasticity - the ability of the brain to learn and adapt - make memories. The main

function of PNNs is to control the level of plasticity in the brain. They appear at around five years of age in humans. Then, as one ages, plasticity is partially turned off, making the brain more efficient but less plastic. The researchers investigated whether manipulating the composition of the PNNs might restore neuroplasticity and alleviate age-related memory deficits. They used old mice for their studies. The team has already identified a potential drug, licensed for human use, that can be taken orally, which inhibits the formation of PNNs. When this compound is given to mice and rats it can restore memory in ageing and also improves recovery in spinal cord injury. The researchers are investigating whether it might help alleviate memory loss in animal models of Alzheimer's disease.

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





**On appeal:** European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen on July 22 refused to renegotiate the post-Brexit trade deal with the U.K. •AP

## Brexit in troubles

Why does the U.K. want to renegotiate the Northern Ireland Protocol and what is it proposing?

G. SAMPATH

**The story so far:** On July 21, the Boris Johnson administration informed the European Union (EU) that it wants to renegotiate the Brexit deal's Northern Ireland Protocol. The EU has ruled out a renegotiation, but says it is open to "practical, flexible solutions".

### What's behind Northern Ireland Protocol?

The sovereign territory of the U.K. includes England, Wales, Scotland, and what is known as Northern Ireland, which occupies a portion of the island of Ireland. The lion's share of the island (26 of the 32 counties) forms the independent Republic of Ireland. Ireland has long seen tensions between the Catholics/Nationalists, who want a unified Irish republic, and the Protestants/Unionists, who are loyal to the British crown. The long and violent conflict between the two sides – known as The Troubles – ended with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, whose fragile peace rests on a principle that Brexit has now disrupted: there won't be a border (and all that entails, such as checkpoints and customs) between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the U.K. that shares a land border with the EU, as Ireland is an EU member-state. As long as the U.K. was part of the EU, there was no problem. But Brexit took the U.K. out of the EU's customs union. It created a problem whose solution needed two seemingly contradictory outcomes: preserving the sanctity of the EU's single market, as well as that of the U.K.'s domestic market. The Protocol's solution was to avoid a customs check on the island of Ireland. Instead, it envisaged a "sea border" at the ports of Northern Ireland. Certain goods – meant only for Northern Ireland but not for Ireland, which falls within the EU market – would undergo checks here before entering the island.

The two sides will seek a solution through talks. But if talks fail, the U.K. could invoke Article 16, which allows the unilateral suspension of a part of the agreement in extreme circumstances

**Why does the U.K. want changes?**  
The creation of an economic barrier between the British mainland and Northern Ireland has affected the free flow of goods between the two. Businesses in Northern Ireland have been complaining about cumbersome paperwork and compliance costs. Some British companies

would like to avoid the hassle altogether by withdrawing supplies to Northern Ireland. All this has angered the Unionists, who see it as another attempt to dilute their links with the U.K., pushing them into the arms of the Irish republic. April this year saw rioting in Northern Ireland for nearly two weeks, with government vehicles being burned and 90 police officers injured. Clearly, apart from the economic irritants, Brexit seems to have resurrected old sensitivities about political identity, with the Unionists questioning why they alone – among U.K. citizens – should suffer differential treatment. While the Johnson regime has expressed concerns over the "febrile" situation in Ireland, the U.S. – which helped broker the 1998 Agreement – has warned the U.K. against disturbing the fragile peace over Brexit.

### What is Britain proposing?

In a nutshell, the U.K. is telling the EU, "Trust us to protect your single market." It has proposed five changes to the Protocol: no more checks on goods moving from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland where a business self-certifies that its products are not meant for use in the EU; a dual regime wherein goods made to either U.K. standards or EU standards can circulate anywhere in Ireland; removal of the need for any 'export declarations' on goods going from Northern Ireland to Great Britain; rewriting of the clause in Article 10 that requires the U.K. subsidies that affect trade with Northern Ireland to comply with EU rules; and finally, ending the right of EU institutions such as the European Court of Justice to enforce the Protocol.

### What lies ahead?

These proposals would be unacceptable to the EU, as they outsource the enforcement of the Protocol – and the European customs union – entirely to the U.K. Besides, it's only last year that the U.K. signed the Protocol, and given that nothing has changed since then, the EU will insist that the U.K. honour the deal.

The two sides will certainly seek a solution through talks. But if talks fail, the U.K. could invoke Article 16, which allows the unilateral suspension of a part of the agreement in extreme circumstances. In such a scenario, the economic barrier might shift to a land border on the island, which would basically shred the 1998 Agreement, and the peace that came with it. Interestingly, one U.K. legislator has admitted that the Northern Ireland Protocol was not a sincere effort to address the problem but merely a 'fudge' that sought to close the Brexit deal by kicking the can down the road. Now that 'fudge' has returned to haunt the Brexiters.

# What are the surveillance laws in India?

In light of the Pegasus spyware scandal, what are the checks and balances to prevent abuse of procedures?

P.J. GEORGE

**The story so far:** An international group of news publications are reporting that a spyware known as Pegasus has been used to spy on politicians, journalists, and activists, primarily in 10 countries. Reports from the grouping called the Pegasus Project, which includes *The Wire* in India, *The Guardian* in the U.K., and *The Washington Post* in the U.S., suggest that in India, at least 40 journalists, Cabinet Ministers, and holders of constitutional positions were possibly subjected to surveillance. The reports are based on a database of about 50,000 phone numbers accessed by the Paris-based non-profit Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International, which they say are numbers of interest to clients of NSO, the Israel-based company that created Pegasus. According to *The Guardian*, Amnesty International's Security Lab has tested 67 of the phones linked to these numbers and found that "23 were successfully infected and 14 showed signs of attempted penetration".

### What do we know about Pegasus?

Pegasus can take multiple routes to reach a target's phone. Its earliest avatars used spear phishing, a hit-or-miss method in which a malicious link is embedded in a message customised to entice the target to click. However, it has now evolved to include "zero-click" attacks, where the target need not take any action for the phone to be infected. In 2019, WhatsApp released a statement saying that Pegasus could enter phones via calls made on the platform, even if they were not attended. Pegasus uses several such "exploits", or weaknesses, in Android and Apple phones to enter phones; and many of these exploits are reportedly "zero day", which means it is not a weakness that the device manufacturers are aware of. Forbidden Stories reports that frequently used exploits are bugs in iPhone's iMessage communication app. Pegasus can also be delivered over the air from a nearby wireless transmitter, or manually inserted if the target phone is physically available.

Once inside the phone, Pegasus seeks "root privileges", Claudio Guarnieri, who runs Amnesty International's Security Lab, told *The Guardian*. Root privileges is a level of control over the phone that is beyond what a regular user has. It enables Pegasus to set up shop within the phone and establish communications with its controllers through an anonymised network of internet addresses and servers. It can then start transmitting any data stored on the phone to its command-and-control centres. This level of control also means Pegasus can turn on the phone's cameras and microphones to turn it into a spying device without the owner's knowledge.

### Who are its clients?

The NSO Group which developed Pegasus officially claims it has 60 clients in 40 countries, though the company has not revealed their identities. Going by the Pegasus Project's analysis of the phone numbers that the spyware possibly targeted, its clients have interests primarily in 10 countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, India and the United Arab Emirates.

Reading this together with NSO's statement that Pegasus is graded as a cyberweapon and can be sold only to authorised government entities as per Israeli law, most reports have suggested that the governments in these countries are the clients.

Forbidden Stories is also reporting that the Israeli



**Outraged:** Protests erupted across India after it emerged that a spyware was used to snoop on politicians, journalists and activists. Here, Youth Congress workers are seen protesting in New Delhi on July 20. •PTI

Ministry of Defence has a significant role in deciding whom NSO sells the software to, and apparently got it sold to Saudi Arabia despite the company's reservations. This is significant as reports have indicated that Pegasus was used to spy on Jamal Khashoggi before the Saudi journalist and dissident was lured to the kingdom's embassy in Turkey and assassinated. In India, the government has neither confirmed nor denied that it has purchased the NSO software at any point of time.

### Who has been targeted?

The NSO has stated that Pegasus is not a tool for mass surveillance, but the 10,000 numbers that are in the Moroccan cluster of the database suggest otherwise, says Forbidden Stories. While the stated aim of Pegasus is to fight crime and terrorism, the database also has the numbers of over 200 journalists worldwide, including 40 from Indian media houses such as *The Wire*, *The Hindu*, and *Hindustan Times*.

The database also contains the numbers of about 13 heads of state, such as French President Emmanuel Macron, who has probably been spied on from Morocco; South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, probably spied on from Rwanda; and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, probably spied on from India.

A cluster of 2,000 Indian and Pakistani phone numbers, identified as being of possible interest to the Indian client, has the contacts for Opposition politicians, civil rights activists, and judges.

### What do Indian laws outline?

Section 5(2) of The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, states that the government can intercept a "message or class of messages" when it is "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for

preventing incitement to the commission of an offence".

The operational process and procedures for it appear in Rule 419A of the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951. Rule 419A was added to the Telegraph Rules in 2007 after the verdict in the *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCIL) vs Union of India* case in 1996, in which the Supreme Court said telephonic conversations are covered by the right to privacy, which can be breached only if there are established procedures. Under Rule 419A, surveillance needs the sanction of the Home Secretary at the Central or State level, but in "unavoidable circumstance" can be cleared by a Joint Secretary or officers above, if they have the Home Secretary's authorisation.

In the *K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India* verdict of 2017, the Supreme Court further reiterated the need for oversight of surveillance, stating that it should be legally valid and serve a legitimate aim of the government. The court also said the means adopted should be proportional to the need for surveillance, and there should be procedures to check any abuse of surveillance.

The second legislation enabling surveillance is Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which deals with electronic surveillance. It facilitates government "interception or monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource" if it is in the interest of the "sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order" or for preventing or investigating any cognizable offence.

The procedure for electronic surveillance as authorised by Section 69 is detailed in the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009. These rules, according to Apar Gupta, lawyer and executive director of the Internet Freedom Foundation, are very broad and allow even the redirection of traffic to false websites or the planting of any device to acquire any information.

Mr. Gupta is of the opinion that the use of Pegasus is illegal as it constitutes unauthorised access under Section 66 of the Information Technology Act.

Section 66 prescribes punishment to anyone who gains unauthorised access to computers and "downloads, copies or extracts any data", or "introduces or causes to be introduced any computer contaminant or computer virus," as laid down in Section 43.

# Where did the Centre go wrong on cooperatives?

Why has the Supreme Court struck down part of the 97th Constitution Amendment and will it impact federal principles?

K. VENKATARAMANAN

**The story so far:** The recent Supreme Court verdict striking down a part of the 97th Constitution Amendment, insofar as it dealt with cooperative societies under the domain of the States, has brought the focus on the extent to which the Centre can seek to lay down policy for the functioning of cooperative societies. The correctness of the erstwhile United Progressive Alliance government's move to amend the Constitution to provide a reformist framework for the functioning of cooperatives is in question.

### What is the 97th Constitution Amendment?

The Union government, in its Statement of Objects and Reasons for the amendment, referred to the "weaknesses" in safeguarding the interests of members of cooperatives and the fulfilment of the objectives of these institutions. It referred to delayed elections, nomination of office-bearers for long durations, reduced accountability in management and inadequate professionalism in many societies. It spoke of the need to initiate fundamental reforms to revitalise these institutions and ensure "their autonomy, democratic functioning and professional management".

Recognising that 'cooperative societies' came under Entry 32 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule, the Amendment proposed to create a framework for the functioning of cooperative societies. State laws on cooperatives should conform to this framework. It introduced Part IXB in the Constitution so that the concept of cooperative societies gains constitutional recognition. It was on the lines of Part IX, which deals with panchayats, and Part IXA, which deals with urban local bodies. The idea was to empower Parliament to frame laws for cooperative societies that function across States (multi-State cooperative societies) and State legislatures to make laws for all other cooperative societies falling under their jurisdiction.

The Amendment set out basic rules such as a maximum of 21 directors in a society, a fixed term of five years for elected members, a six-month cap on the time limit for which a society's board of directors can be kept under supersession or suspension, and

reservation of one seat for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes, and two seats for women on the board of every cooperative society, that is, every society that has members from these sections.

### What was the legal infirmity in the Amendment?

On a legal challenge to the validity of the 97th Amendment, the Gujarat High Court struck down Part IXB in its entirety on two grounds. First, the Amendment required not only a two-thirds majority in Parliament, which was obtained, but also had to be ratified by 50% of the State legislatures. This was because the Amendment impinged on a subject over which only the State legislatures had law-making powers. In the absence of such ratification, the Part was declared unconstitutional. It also ruled that the Part violated the basic structure of the Constitution in that it was in breach of federal principles.

### What was the Supreme Court's view?

The Centre's defence was that the Amendment did not alter the entry in the State List on 'cooperative societies'. In fact, it specified that the State legislatures would enact the relevant laws based on a common framework. There was no need for ratification by the Assemblies, as no subject was shifted from the State List to the Central or Concurrent List. However, the Supreme Court rejected the argument. The Amendment had the effect of limiting and circumscribing the scope and extent to which States could frame laws on cooperative societies. This impacted on their legislative power and would therefore amount to a change that would require ratification by the Assemblies.

All three judges on the Bench that heard the Union government's appeals agreed with the Gujarat High Court that the ratification by the State legislatures was required for Part IXB, and in the absence of such ratification, the Part had to be struck down. However, the majority, comprising Justices Rohinton F. Nariman and B.R. Gavai, declared the Part inoperative only in respect of cooperative societies that came under the States. It would be valid as far as multi-State cooperative societies were concerned as Parliament had the power to regulate their functioning.

Justice K.M. Joseph, in his dissenting view, ruled that Part IXB could not be severed into two sections, one covering State cooperatives and the other for multi-State cooperatives. It set out a framework for the State cooperatives and only added a clause that in respect of multi-State cooperatives, Parliament will enact the relevant law. As the latter provision had no independent

**The Ministry of Cooperation cannot compel States to bring their cooperative laws in conformity with the Centre's vision. But the Centre can re-enact the Amendment and get it ratified by 50% of the State Assemblies**

life if the portion concerning the State cooperatives was struck down, the 'doctrine of severability' cannot be applied, and the entire Part had to be declared unconstitutional.

### What now survives in the 97th Amendment?

The Amendment added the words "or cooperative societies" to Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution to expand the fundamental right to form associations or unions to cover cooperative societies too. It also added a 'Directive Principle' through Article 43B, which says: "The State shall endeavour to promote voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic control and professional management of cooperative societies." These clauses remain undisturbed. In line with the Supreme Court's judgment, Part IXB dealing with cooperative societies will survive, but only with reference to multi-State societies.

**How does the ruling affect Cooperation Ministry?**  
The Ministry of Cooperation was formed recently, apparently with a view to giving a fillip to the cooperative movement and reforming the functioning of cooperative societies. Until now, the subject was dealt with by the Agriculture Ministry. It administered the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. The new Ministry will continue this work. For now, it will not be in a position to compel States to bring their cooperative laws in conformity with the Centre's vision. Regarding the fate of the constitutional framework for all cooperative societies in the country, the Centre has the option of re-enacting the Amendment with a two-thirds majority in Parliament and obtaining ratification by 50% of the State legislatures.



NSO GROUP

# The spy who came in for the phone

The Israeli company that sells military-grade surveillance tools to governments is in the eye of a global storm after reports alleged that its product Pegasus was used to spy on journalists, dissidents and activists

STANLY JOHNY

On October 1, 2018, a day before Jamal Khashoggi was murdered and dismembered inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Citizen Lab, a University of Toronto-based project that investigates cyber espionage against civil society, released a report titled, “The Kingdom came to Canada”. It alleged that a cellphone used by Omar Abdulaziz, a Saudi dissident activist living in exile in Canada, had been infected by Pegasus, the notorious malware sold by Israeli company NSO Group. “We have high confidence that the cellphone of Omar Abdulaziz... was targeted. Abdulaziz has been outspoken on an ongoing diplomatic feud over human rights issues between Canada and Saudi Arabia,” the report said.

But neither Citizen Lab nor Mr. Abdulaziz knew then that the alleged spying saga had a lethal subplot. Mr. Abdulaziz was a close friend of Khashoggi, the Saudi dissident journalist who was critical of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He spent hours talking to Mr. Abdulaziz on the phone. By infecting Mr. Abdulaziz’s phone, Pegasus might have got information on Khashoggi’s thoughts and movements. In December 2018, two months after his friend was killed by Saudi agents, Mr. Abdulaziz filed a lawsuit in Israel against NSO. The company fiercely dismissed the allegations that its products had anything to do with Khashoggi’s killing, but refused to say if it sold Pegasus to the Saudi authorities.

Asked about the reports that he had travelled to Saudi Arabia to sell Pegasus for \$55 million, NSO chief executive Shalev Hulio told CBS’s *60 Minutes* in March 2019, “I’m not gonna talk about [a] specific customer.”

This has been the standard response of NSO whenever it’s hit by serious allegations – deny any involvement and refuse to divulge further details.

Last week, when a media consortium, including *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian* and *The Wire*, reported that thousands of numbers were selected by NSO’s clients for potential surveillance, including that of journalists, activists, dissidents and world leaders, the company dismissed the reports. The consortium, which got a leaked database of 50,000 numbers, reported that at least 37 phones were infected by Pegasus, including that of Hatice Cengiz, Khashoggi’s fiancée. Hundreds of numbers from India is on the list. The malware can remotely spy on a device and steal its data without the victim ever knowing about it.

NSO, in a statement, said the list “is not a list of Pegasus targets or potential targets. The numbers in the list are not related to NSO Group in any way. Any claim that a name in the list is necessarily related to a Pegasus target or potential target is erroneous and false.” On Wednesday, it issued another statement, saying it would no longer respond to media inquiries.

**Origins**

The company that is at the centre of a global controversy today has had humble ori-

gins on the outskirts of Tel Aviv a decade ago. It was founded by three Israelis – Niv Carmi, Shalev Hulio and Omri Lavie – in 2010. The name NSO comes from the first letters of the founders’ names. Mr. Lavie and Mr. Hulio are reported to be former members of Israel’s ‘Unit 8200’ signals intelligence arm. Mr. Carmi was a former operative of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency. Headquartered in Herzliya, near Tel Aviv, NSO had some 50 employees at the beginning. A group of investors headed by Eddy Shalev, a partner in Israeli venture capital fund Genesis Partners, had invested some \$1.8 million in the company for a 30% stake.

NSO started making headlines after Mexico announced in 2012 that it had bought the group’s solutions to fight drug lords. Apparently, NSO’s tools helped Mexican authorities track the movement of ‘El Chapo’ Guzman that led to his arrest in 2014 – something Mr. Hulio confirmed in the *60 Minutes* interview. In the same year, American private equity fund Francisco Partners took a majority stake in the company for about \$130 million. NSO saw rapid growth in its business in the following years. With governments across the world turning to cyber intelligence to fight terrorism and serious crimes as well as track down dissidents and critics, the solutions NSO offered were in high demand. Besides Pegasus, the company offers a host of technologies to fight drone incursions, improve search-and-rescue operations and advanced data analytics solutions.



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

**In Focus**

NSO was founded by three Israelis – Niv Carmi, Shalev Hulio and Omri Lavie – in 2010. The name NSO comes from the first letters of the founders’ names

Besides Pegasus, the company also offers a host of technologies to fight drone incursions, improve search-and-rescue operations and advanced data analytics solutions

It now has 60 customers in 40 countries. Fifty-one percent of its clients are intelligence agencies, 38% law enforcement agencies and 11% military

“NSO Group develops best-in-class technology to help government agencies detect and prevent terrorism and crime,” the company says on its website. In a 32-page Transparency and Responsibility Report released earlier this year, NSO dismisses allegations that Pegasus is a mass surveillance tool. “Data is collected only from individual, pre-identified sus-

**NSO says it licenses Pegasus to sovereign states and state agencies, does not operate the software, has no visibility into its usage, and does not collect data about customers**

pected criminals and terrorists,” it says. However, the same report adds: “NSO licenses Pegasus to sovereign states and state agencies, does not operate Pegasus, has no visibility into its usage, and does not collect information about customers.”

Co-founders Mr. Lavie and Mr. Hulio bought back the company from Francisco Partners in 2019 with investments from Novalpina Capital, a London-based private

equity firm. At the time of the transaction, NSO was valued at \$1 billion. Between 2012 and 2021, NSO has seen a manifold rise in its client list. The tightly held company never reveals the names of its clients, but the 2021 report states it has 60 customers in 40 countries. Fifty-one percent of its clients are intelligence agencies, 38% law enforcement agencies and 11% military. Israel has identified Pegasus as a cyber weapon and its exports are controlled.

**Ties with Israel**

In 2019, after the company was bought back, Mr. Lavie, Mr. Hulio and Novalpina Capital promised to establish “a new model for public transparency” and do “whatever is necessary” to prevent their technologies being misused. This was a rare public acknowledgement from the top management that all is not well with the use of NSO’s products. Citizen Lab had released several reports alleging that NSO products were being used by governments to target their critics. Before Mr. Abdulaziz’s case, the Lab had reported that Ahmed Mansoor, a human rights defender and critic of the UAE government’s policies who is currently in prison, was targeted. The researchers later

discovered Mexican journalist Rafael Cabrera and the Lab’s own researchers were also targeted. In 2019, months after the company’s leaders promised transparency, WhatsApp sued NSO over allegations that 1,400 of its users, including at least 100 members of civil society, were attacked by NSO’s spyware. According to a report in *Financial Times*, NSO had developed malware that can infect a phone simply by making a call. The potential victim doesn’t have to click a link or even answer the call. Once it rings, the malware is in and can start stealing data and exit without leaving any trace on the phone’s call log. The WhatsApp case is still under way.

The latest reports by the Pegasus Project on illegal surveillance call into question, once again, NSO’s claims on “transparency” and “accountability”. This time the allegations are wider in scale and graver in nature. On the list of potential targets are 14 world leaders – three Presidents, including France’s Emmanuel Macron, three sitting Prime Ministers, seven former Ministers and a King – and hundreds of civil society members.

NSO is not just a private tech company that’s gone rogue. It has deep ties with

the Israeli state, which it has never hidden from the public. The Israeli government itself is using its technology, NSO has said. Many of the company’s 500-plus staffers, including the founders, are from Israel’s military intelligence units. In 2019, NSO’s lawyers argued in a court that revealing clients’ names “will meaningfully harm the foreign relations of the state”. Last year, Defence Minister Naftali Bennett, who’s now the Prime Minister, proposed to deploy NSO’s tools to track down Israel’s movements to check the spread of the coronavirus. It did not pass the Cabinet, but was a testament to the company’s clout in the establishment. In recent years, Israel has built stronger diplomatic ties with Gulf monarchies and right-wing governments elsewhere by offering clandestine security solutions.

John le Carré once wrote, “A desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world.” Now, it’s the phone. In theory, NSO’s spyware can take over a potential target’s phone. If not checked, it’s the ultimate toy in the hands of a surveillance state. The allegations pose serious questions on both NSO’s practices and Israel’s policies. It’s to be seen whether they will come clean on them.

BLUE ORIGIN

# The race to space

Bezos wants to build a future where ‘we humans can explore the solar system’

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

In 2005, six years after he was named the Time magazine’s Person of the Year for helping “build the foundation of our future” and already a multi-billionaire by this time, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos walked into the nondescript office of *Van Horn Advocate*, a local weekly newspaper in Van Horn town in west Texas, to talk about a project that he had shielded from media for many years till then.



Over the next half-hour, Mr. Bezos spoke to the newspaper’s Larry Simpson, a meeting described by Brad Stone, author of *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*, as an “impromptu interview” with “its bewildered editor”. It was an interview where Mr. Bezos opened up on his space venture, Blue Origin. By then, he had purchased vast amounts of land – by Mr. Stone’s account, “an area about a third of the size of Rhode Island” – around here. Mr. Simpson was later quoted by NBC News as saying, “He told me their first spacecraft is going to carry three people up to the edge of space and back.” Just a few days ago, 16 years after the interview, Mr. Bezos, now the richest person on the planet, made it to space and back safely from this very town with three others in a space vehicle developed by Blue Origin.

He was accompanied by his brother Mark Bezos, 82-

year-old Wally Funk, who trained to be an astronaut in the 1960s but never got a chance to fly to space until now, and Oliver Daemen, an 18-year-old student. Mr. Daemen is the first paying customer for Mr. Bezos’ space venture. He only got a chance in the inaugural flight because the person who bid \$28 million for a seat had to reschedule. Ms. Funk and Mr. Daemen are now the oldest and the youngest, respectively, to travel to space.

Van Horn, media reports say, has changed over these years, with the venture bringing in money to the town. What has also changed over this period is the space industry, which not long ago was the exclusive domain of governmental agencies. Mr. Bezos isn’t alone in trying to figure out a business out of space travel. Fellow businessmen Richard Branson, who successfully completed space travel a week before Mr. Be-

zos on a spaceship built by his venture Virgin Galactic, and Elon Musk, who runs SpaceX, have made big investments in this area. Mr. Musk’s venture has already been involved in transporting astronauts to the International Space Station.

The Amazon founder’s idea, expressed in a speech at Carnegie Mellon University in 2011, was to help “build a future where we humans can explore the solar system first hand and in person”. What Blue Origin needed to do, therefore, he said, was to drive down cost and make the technology safe. In fact, all the space entrepreneurs seem to have realised the importance of building and perfecting a reusable space vehicle.

**Reusable rocket**

Blue Origin made its breakthrough with a reusable vehicle in 2015. It was then that its New Shepard space vehicle, named after Alan Shepard, the first American in

space, successfully made it to space and back. “Now safely tucked away at our launch site in West Texas is the rarest of beasts – a used rocket,” Mr. Bezos was quoted as saying in the venture’s blog. “Full reuse is a game changer, and we can’t wait to fuel up and fly again.”

Just a few months later, in a blog headlined ‘Launch. Land. Repeat’, Mr. Bezos wrote how the New Shepard flew and then landed vertically from where it launched. Reuse demonstrated. And then in elaborating on why he is a “huge fan” of rocket-powered vertical landing, he said this is the technology which scales well to achieve his “vision of millions of people living and working in space”. New Shepard has since made many test trips, carrying with it the dummy Mannequin Skywalker as well as research payloads for NASA and the German Aerospace Centre, among others.

Blue Origin has planned two more crewed flights this year and “many more” in 2022. But “the billionaire space race,” as it is often called, sometimes derisively, has only just begun. Mr. Bezos’ friend Danny Hillis has been quoted by Mr. Stone in his book about Amazon as saying, “Space for Jeff is not a year 2000 or a year 2010 opportunity.” Rather, “It’s been a dream of humanity’s for centuries and it will continue to be one for centuries. Jeff sees himself and Blue Origin as part of that bigger story.”

PEDRO CASTILLO

# The 21st century socialist

Peru’s President-elect backs constitutional reforms and economic redistribution

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

More than a month after he won the second round of the presidential elections in Peru, Pedro Castillo has finally been declared the winner. A former schoolteacher and union organiser, Mr. Castillo’s victory was a narrow one – he defeated his challenger Keiko Fujimori by a small margin of 44,263 votes after gaining just about 50.13% of the votes in the run-off.



ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

The narrow margin of her loss was disputed by Ms. Fujimori, who alleged that “votes were stolen from her party”. The daughter of convicted former President Alberto Fujimori, she acknowledged her loss after it took weeks for the election authorities to reject her false claims. Mr. Castillo delivered the third electoral defeat in the presidential polls to the Fujimori scion in what was clearly a mandate against the Peruvian elite. Ms. Fujimori’s party, the Popular Force, undertook a conservative-populist campaign that relied on social media bombardment of “fake news”, seeking to brand Mr. Castillo as a “radical communist”.

Mr. Castillo, a socialist and an agrarian leftist, was born in a poor peasant family in the socio-economically poor but mineral-rich northern region, Cajamarca, and grew out of poverty as a teacher. As a social activist, he combated the Maoist Shining Path’s influence in

the region. Later, he organised teachers’ unions and made a mark in the 2017 teachers’ strike that bargained for higher salaries and increases in the education budget.

The strike spread through Peru and finally then President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski took part in the negotiations that conceded benefits to the teachers.

Mr. Castillo ran as a candidate of the Peru Libre (PL) party, even though he is not a member of it. The party is led by Vladimir Cerron, who was a former provincial Governor and had been convicted on charges of corruption that disallowed him from contesting elections.

The PL has a Marxist-Leninist party programme and is committed to nationalisation of strategic sectors such as mining, but Mr. Castillo has repudiated any links with communism and has instead articulated positions that talk of economic redistribution while holding so-

cial conservative positions. His victory reminds some of another left-wing populist candidate, Ollanta Humala, who won the presidential polls in 2006 on a leftist platform. Mr. Humala later went on to govern from the political centre and tacked on to neoliberalism, before corruption scandals widely discredited his presidency.

Mr. Castillo, on the other hand, has promised that he will not acquiesce to the political elite or that he would seek to calm vested interests stoking fears about capital flight and stock market collapses.

**Changing state’s role**

Instead, he has argued for the need for constitutional reform through a popular constituent assembly that will orient the governing system towards one in which the state will have a greater role in the economy and a better balance with the private sector, drawing comparisons with former

Bolivian President Evo Morales. Peru has suffered significantly from COVID-19. It is among the countries with highest per capita mortality rates, and has seen a severe economic contraction – GDP fell by 30.2% in the second quarter of 2020. Widespread anger against the centrist political parties in a country with loose party affiliations resulted in Mr. Castillo and Ms. Fujimori becoming the key candidates in the presidential elections.

Mr. Castillo garnered the support of the marginalised sections with strong endorsement in the “internal regions” of the country compared to Ms. Fujimori’s bases in Lima and in the more affluent coastal regions. The fragmented polity had resulted in a fractured verdict in the first round of elections with only Mr. Castillo, Ms. Fujimori and two others cracking more than 10% support in a crowded field.

The fractured verdict was mirrored in elections to the legislature, with traditional parties drawing a blank while the PL and Ms. Fujimori’s Popular Force won 37 and 24 seats, respectively, in the 130-member House.

Establishing a redistribution-based economic policy while retaining power through democratic means has been a challenge that was only partially successful in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia. Mr. Castillo is now the new flag-bearer of what is popularly called “21st century socialism”.



# July exports poised to hit \$33 bn: Goyal

Commerce minister says many labour-intensive sectors showing good traction, more reforms coming

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

July's exports are likely to reach about \$33 billion, keeping India on track to cross the \$400 billion mark in outbound trade for the first time this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows were also expected to hit a fresh record in 2021-22, he added.

Dismissing investor concerns about land acquisition and labour laws, the minister asserted that land, labour and capital were no longer a hindrance for investing in India, and a lot more reforms were in the pipeline at the Central government level as well as in States administered by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

"Despite the COVID-19



**On track:** Till July 21, exports are above \$22 billion and well poised to cross \$32-33 billion, says Goyal. \*K.R. DEEPAK

pandemic, our FDI inflows were the highest ever last year when other countries saw investments falling. This year, we are confident of continuing the seven-year streak of new record highs in FDI," Mr. Goyal said.

"Exports are looking up and we had a record \$95 billion of exports in the first quarter. This has energised us to set a target of \$400 billion for 2021-22 and I am confident we can achieve that. Even in July, till July 21, ex-

ports are above \$22 billion and well poised to cross \$32-33 billion by the end of the month," he said at a CII-Horasis India meeting.

The government said exports had risen 45% to hit \$22.48 billion by the third week of July, 25.4% higher than the pre-COVID level. Engineering goods exports were up 33.7% so far in July, 51.2% above July 2019 levels.

"We are now in the top-10 list of agri-produce exporters... and many sectors which are labour-intensive are showing good traction," Mr. Goyal, who also handles the Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution ministries, said.

**Land, labour 'old issues'**  
Responding to queries about pending reforms in land acquisition and labour laws,

Mr. Goyal said: "Sometimes, we often just go about the same complaint about an issue which may not necessarily be so on the ground. I have been a minister for seven years and am yet to meet an industrialist who came to me and said they are not investing in India because of labour laws.

The Centre had identified lakhs of acres for investors to tap, but some business in a particular area may have faced resistance because of political motivations or inability to market the project.

"Today, land, labour and capital - with so many venture capitalists and other private investors, banks much stronger than ever before, having cleaned up most of their balance-sheets - are issues which were discussed 10 or five years ago," he said.

ITC Q1 profit rises 30.2% to ₹3,343.44 cr.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

ITC Ltd. on Saturday reported a 30.2% increase in consolidated net profit to ₹3,343.44 crore for the first quarter ended June 30.

The company had posted a net profit of ₹2,567.07 crore during the April-June quarter of the previous fiscal, ITC said in a filing to the stock exchanges.

Revenue from operations climbed 35.9% to ₹14,240.76 crore during the quarter under review, as against ₹10,478.46 crore in the corresponding three-month period of the previous fiscal year.

Total expenses were at ₹10,220.49 crore, an increase of 28.3% in Q1 FY2021-22, from ₹7,967.71 crore in the corresponding year-earlier period.

ICICI Bank net rises 78% to ₹4,616 cr.; slippages up

Retail loan book drags, NPA ratio rises

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

ICICI Bank Ltd. on Saturday reported first-quarter standalone net profit rose 78% to ₹4,616 crore, from ₹2,599 crore a year earlier, due to lower provisioning and a rise in interest income. Digital initiatives helped the bank improving its performance, top executives said.

However, the lender witnessed higher slippages from its retail loan book with the absence of any moratorium from the RBI and the second wave severely denting people's incomes.

Despite the second wave affecting a major part of the quarter, net interest income (NII) rose 18% to ₹10,936 crore, while the net interest margin increased to 3.89% from 3.69% in the corresponding period last year.

Non-interest income, excluding treasury income, grew 56% year-on-year to ₹3,706 crore and fee income grew by 53% to ₹3,219 crore.

During the period it made lower provisions (excluding provision for tax) of ₹2,852 crore compared with ₹7,594 crore in the year-earlier period. In view of the current scenario the bank said it had changed its policy on non-performing loans to make it more conservative from Q1.

"The change in policy resulted in higher provision on non-performing advances amounting to ₹1,127 crore for aligning provisions on outstanding loans to the revised policy," the bank said in a regulatory filing.

Based on current assessment of its portfolio, the bank wrote back COVID-19 provisions amounting to ₹1,050 crore made in earlier periods and as on June 30 it held COVID-related provisions of ₹6,425 crore.

The bank's net non-performing assets increased to



₹9,306 crore as on June 30 compared with ₹9,180 crore in the March quarter. The net NPA ratio was 1.16%, compared with 1.14% as on March 31, 2021.

The net addition to gross NPAs during the quarter was ₹3,604 crore, the bank said adding the gross NPA additions were ₹7,231 crore during the quarter.

**'Not worried'**

"The fresh slippages included approximately ₹6,700 crore of retail loans," executive director Sandeep Batra said on a media conference call. "Out of this ₹961 crore was Krishi Credit Card loans and ₹1,130 crore of jewellery loans," he noted, adding "we are not worried about the retail book."

Mr. Batra observed that the second wave-related restrictions had had a significant impact on collections and recoveries.

Despite this, the bank had recoveries of ₹3,627 crore during the quarter. Gross NPAs written off were to the tune of ₹1,589 crore.

The bank said total deposits grew 16% year-on-year to ₹9,26,224 crore and the retail loan portfolio grew by 20% and comprised 61.4% of the total loan portfolio.

Domestic advances grew by 20% and total advances increased by 17% to ₹7,38,598 crore, it said.

Consolidated assets grew by 9% to ₹15,72,772 crore.

## Apollo Tyres bullish on Indian, global economies

'Pandemic gave us renewed vigour'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Apollo Tyres, which has drawn up an ambitious target of reaching \$5 billion in revenue by 2025-26, is bullish on the Indian and global economies and has started mapping possible scenarios for the coming months.

"Despite the uncertainty of the third wave, I remain bullish on the strength of the Indian and global economies," said chairman Onkar S. Kanwar, addressing the 48th AGM.

He said the pandemic had made the company's leadership work with renewed vigour towards achieving cost reduction and in enhancing manufacturing efficiencies across the organisation.



Onkar S. Kanwar

During FY21, Apollo Tyres had differentiated between good cost and avoidable cost, Mr. Kanwar said.

The company continued to invest in good costs such as R&D and marketing and drastically reduced other costs. It also renegotiated advertising costs and relooked at warehousing expenses, he added.

## IndusInd Bank to raise up to ₹30,000 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

IndusInd Bank on Saturday said it plans to raise up to ₹30,000 crore through a mix of equity and debt to fund its business growth.

The bank's board approved a proposal for raising funds through debt securities or equity instruments or convertible debt in any permitted mode such as Qualified Institutional Placement or American Depository Receipts or Global Depository Receipts, it said in a filing.

The funds would be raised on a private placement basis.

However, the private sector bank did not specify a timeline for raising debt and equity capital.

## Tesla eyes at least 'temporary relief' on import duty in India

Musk says firm may set up plant if it succeeds with imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Electric vehicle maker Tesla may set up a manufacturing unit in India if it first succeeds with imported vehicles in the country, according to CEO Elon Musk.

However, at present import duties in India were "the highest in the world" and he was hoping for "at least a temporary tariff relief for electric vehicles", Mr. Musk tweeted. Interacting on Twitter with followers who asked him to start selling Tesla cars in India, Mr. Musk said, "We want to do so, but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country!" Current-



Elon Musk

ly, India levies 100% duty on fully imported cars with CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight) value more than \$40,000 and 60% on those costing less. Mr. Musk further said, "Clean energy vehicles are treated the same as diesel or petrol, which does

not seem entirely consistent with the climate goals of India." He, however, said, "We are hopeful that there will be at least a temporary tariff relief for electric vehicles. That would be much appreciated." Asked if Tesla could start with assembly in India, he said, "If Tesla is able to succeed with imported vehicles, then a factory in India is quite likely." A senior government official on Friday had said Tesla had asked for reduction in import duty.

Recently, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari had said Tesla has a golden opportunity to set up its manufacturing facility in India given the country's thrust on e-vehicles.

## Aditya Birla Group invests ₹1,500 crore in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Aditya Birla Group has made an investment of about ₹1,000 crore in the State with its recent foray into paints and another ₹500 crore in setting up a cement unit in Rajpura, informed Punjab Chief Minister Captain (retd.) Amarinder Singh. He said the investment would act as a catalyst for industrial activity in the region.

The Chief Minister said that Punjab offered a congenial climate to prospective entrepreneurs and industrialists coupled with robust infrastructure in terms of excellent road, rail and air connectivity.

Mr. Singh added that Punjab had been ranked second in ease of logistics in the country and would soon be connected to both the eastern and western freight corridors.

In a statement, Mr. Singh said that Punjab, due to its pro-investor industrial policy and lucrative incentives, had now emerged as the most preferred investment destination in the country.

"Invest Punjab", as a one-stop shop, had seamlessly facilitated the garnering of investments worth ₹91,000 crore in more than 2,900 project proposals received during the last four years. "Out of these... nearly 50% have already started commercial production and the State has been able to attract such meaningful investments even during the peak of the pandemic," Mr. Singh said.

He also referred to the massive employment generation plan through which gainful employment had been facilitated in government, private and self-employment ventures for almost 17.63 lakh of the State's youth.

## INTERVIEW | DEBASHIS CHATTERJEE

# 'Mindtree expects Europe to grow faster than U.S. in FY22'

Focused M&As are key to our growth strategy, says MD

MINI TEJASWI

Larsen & Toubro-owned mid-tier tech firm Mindtree is actively looking at suitable, but selective M&A targets that will help the company further its digital vision for its global clients, said CEO & MD Debashis Chatterjee. Excerpts:

**What gives Mindtree confidence to anticipate double-digit revenue growth throughout FY22?**

■ The context is that an unprecedented disruption caused by the pandemic has created a sense of urgency among businesses to leverage technology to stay relevant. Strategic initiatives that we undertook through last year are yielding good results. All these are positioning us well to deliver industry-leading double-digit growth this year.

We just delivered our fourth consecutive quarter (Q1) of solid growth despite difficult times. We reported broad-based growth across service lines, industry segments and geographies. Our order book of half-a-billion U.S. dollars, up 34.2% sequentially, is the highest ever in our history.

**What would be the impact of fiscal stimulus in the U.S. and EU on IT spends?**

■ As businesses look to strengthen their digital backbone and reimagine business models leveraging technology, the demand for our capabilities has risen significantly across both North America and Europe.

With the U.S. economy gradually returning to normalcy and Europe opening up to strategic technology partnerships, we are winning impor-

tant deals across all key verticals.

**Are you expecting any additional headwinds in the travel, transport and hospitality sectors?**

■ Having borne the brunt of the pandemic, travel, transport and hospitality (TTH) sectors are beginning to show early signs of recovery. Volumes are picking up. Vaccinations and easing of travel restrictions are expected to give a further boost to the sector. Client focus is shifting from cash conservation to discretionary spend with a direct bearing on customer experience, outreach, revenue growth, business resilience and security. We remain cautiously optimistic about the sector as it is hard to predict the impact of future variants of the virus.

**What is the outcome of Mindtree's increased focus on Europe and reduced concentration in North America?**

■ Our investments in Continental Europe, U.K. and Ireland have helped us deliver strong growth of 11.2% q-o-q and 52% y-o-y for the region in Q1. In dollar terms, North America grew 7.7% sequentially and 18.9% y-o-y. For FY22, we expect Europe to grow faster than the U.S., albeit on a smaller base.



Size often plays a critical factor in the global markets... what's your game plan to quickly gain scale and increase market dominance?

■ We think of size as more of an outcome than a strategy. Our focus will continue to be on bringing our clients the competitive benefits of our agile frameworks and approaches in their digital transformation journeys. Our strategy is built around the guiding principles of 'simplify', 'differentiate' and 'change', which are our strategic levers in our role as a business transformation partner to our clients. We continue to focus on enhancing our domain expertise in chosen areas such as healthcare, cybersecurity and deep domain technologies. We are also strengthening our consulting and technology capabilities across our service lines, and deepening and expanding strategic relationships with clients, partners and hyperscalers. Focused M&As are key to our growth strategy.

**Backed by L&T, Mindtree now can afford a big-ticket acquisition... when will that happen?**

■ M&As will be more about complementing or augmenting our capabilities in strategic focus areas, as evident in our recent acquisition of L&T NxT, which has opened new opportunities for us around AI, IoT and Industry 4.0. We are actively looking at companies that will help us further our digital vision for our clients.

But we will be selective in the type of companies we go after.

Special Publications from The Hindu Group

# National Parents Day

Dear parents, thank you for everything.

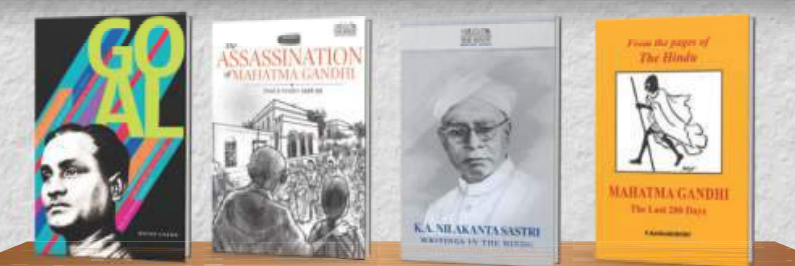
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# Gutsy Mirabai brings cheer to Indians

Her silver is the country's second weightlifting medal after Malleswari's bronze at Sydney 2000



**SHYAM VASUDEVAN**  
TOKYO  
Mirabai Chanu could not believe she had won India's first medal of the Tokyo Olympics.

The Manipuri's silver on Saturday made her the second Indian weightlifter, after Karnam Malleswari in 2000, to win a medal at the Olympics.

"It felt like it was a dream. I forgot where I was and the fact that I was standing on the Olympics podium. Everything blurred for a bit.

"I realised I had won the silver only when they called my name and I felt the medal around my neck!" she said.

Mirabai breezed through the snatch with lifts of 84kg and 87kg on her first two attempts, but failed on her third attempt of 89kg, which



**Lifting the nation's spirits:** Mirabai Chanu on way to the silver in the 49kg category. • AFP

would have been a personal best.

Meanwhile, China's Hou Zhihui set a new Olympic record of 94kg. American Jordan Elizabeth Delacruz lifted 89kg on her final lift, but it was ruled out due to a technical flaw.

An appeal by the Delacruz

camp was rejected.

In clean and jerk, where Mirabai set the world record of 119kg at the Asian Championships in Tashkent this April, she lifted 110kg on her first attempt and broke into a wide smile, assured of a medal as Delacruz had failed in all her lifts. The Indian then

hoisted 115kg on her second attempt, before failing at 117kg. But it did not matter, for the 26-year-old had made history. Mirabai finished with a total lift of 202kg.

"I am ecstatic! I am so happy to win the silver. I tried really hard for the gold but I am happy with the sil-

ver. I failed in 2016 and learnt a lot from that experience and where I have to improve and that's what got me here," she said with a 1000-watt smile.

She called home right after the medal ceremony. "The gang in Patiala (her mates at the national camp) called me and were dancing in happiness," she said.

## The gameplan

Her coach Vijay Sharma revealed that they had chosen to scale down her starting weight to reduce the load on her body.

"We were going to start with 86 in snatch and 113 in clean and jerk but decided to start at a slightly lower weight so that we could be safe. We planned to scale up once the competition cleared up," he said.

Hou, world record-holder in snatch (96kg) and total (213kg), hoisted 94kg, 116kg and 210kg to set Olympic records in snatch, clean and jerk, and total on her way to the gold. Indonesian Windy Aisah (84, 110, 194) bagged the bronze.

## The Mirabai Chanu file

- **Age:** 26
- **State:** Manipur
- **Family:** Father (Kriti), Mother (Tombi), two brothers and three sisters
- **Awards:** Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Padma Shri

- **Achievements:** **Gold:** Women's 48kg, World championships, Anaheim, USA, 2017; Women's 48kg, Commonwealth Games 2018, Gold Coast; **Silver:** Women's 49kg, Tokyo Olympics, 2020; Women's 48kg, Commonwealth Games, Glasgow, 2014; **Bronze:** Women's 49kg, Asian championships, Tashkent, 2021.

- Mirabai is the first lifter to win a silver at the Olympics and the second to win a medal after Karnam Malleswari's bronze in Sydney 2000
- She is the second Indian woman to clinch an Olympic silver after P.V. Sindhu
- Her first coach was L. Anita Chanu who trained her at the Khuman Lampak training centre in Imphal

■ *Compiled by Y.B. Sarangi*



## Tributes to Mirabai

Heartiest congratulations to Mirabai Chanu for starting the medal tally  
PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND

Could not have asked for a happier start to @Tokyo2020! India is elated by @mirabai\_chanu's stupendous performance  
PM NARENDRA MODI

Your glorious Olympic silver has touched a billion hearts  
KARNAM MALLESWARI

Such an inspiring performance that will be remembered for a long time to come and will inspire generations  
ABHINAV BINDRA

The way you have transformed yourself after your injury and clinched a historic silver for #TeamIndia is absolutely stupendous  
SACHIN TENDULKAR

## INDIAN ODYSSEY

**Archery: Mixed team: Quarterfinals:** Deepika Kumari & Pravin Jadhav lost to An San & Kim Je Deok (Kor) 2-6; **1/8 eliminations:** bt Tang Chih-chung & Lin Chia-en (Tpe) 5-3.

**Badminton: Group stage: Men: Doubles:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty bt Lee Yang & Wang Chi-Lin (Tpe) 21-16, 16-21, 27-25; **Singles:** B. Sai Praneeth lost to Misha Zilberman (Isr) 17-21, 15-21.

**Boxing: Men's welterweight (round of 32):** Vikas Krishan lost to Sewonrets Quincy Mensah Okazawa (Jpn).

**Hockey: Men (Pool A):** bt New Zealand 3-2; **Women (Pool A):** lost to Netherlands 1-5.

**Judo: Women's 48kg (round of 32):** Shushila Likmabam lost to Eva Csernoviczki (Hun).

**Rowing: Men's lightweight double sculls (Heat 2):** 5. Arjun Jat and Arvind Singh (qualified for repechage round).

**Shooting: Men's 10m air pistol: Final:** 7. Saurabh Chaudhary; **Qualification:** 1. Saurabh, 17. Abhishek Verma.

**Women's 10m air rifle: Qualification:** 16. Elavenil Valarivan, 36. Apurvi Chandel.

**Table tennis: Mixed doubles (round of 16):** Sharath Kamal & Manika Batra lost to Lin Yun-ju & Cheng I-Ching (Tpe) 0-4.

**Women's singles (first round):** Manika Batra bt Tin-Tin Ho (GBR) 4-0; Suthirtha Mukherjee bt Linda Bergstrom (Swe) 4-3.

**Tennis: Men's singles (first round):** Sumit Nagal bt Denis Istomin (Uzb) 6-4, 6-7(6), 6-4.

**Weightlifting: Women's 49kg:** Mirabai Chanu (silver medal).

## GOLDIES



Yang Qian... first gold medalist of the Games  
• GETTY IMAGES

**South Korea: Archery: Mixed team**  
**Richard Carapaz (Ecu):** Cycling: Men's road race  
**Aron Szilagy (Hun):** Fencing: Men's individual sabre  
**Sun Yiwon (Chn):** Fencing: Women's individual epee  
**Distria Krasniqi (Kos):** Judo: Women's 48kg  
**Naohisa Takato (Jpn):** Judo: Men's 60kg  
**Yang Qian (Chn):** Shooting: Women's 10m air rifle  
**Javad Foroughi (Iri):** Shooting: Men's 10m air pistol  
**Vito Dell'Aquila (Ita):** Taekwondo: Men's 58kg  
**Panipak Wongpattanakit (Tha):** Taekwondo: Women's 49kg  
**Zhihui Hou (Chn):** Weightlifting: Women's 49kg

# India men ride on Harmanpreet's brace, Sreejesh's saves; women lose

## HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TOKYO

Harmanpreet Singh scored a brace while goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh stood like a wall in the closing minutes as the Indian men overcame a late surge from New Zealand to eke out a 3-2 victory in a Pool A match here on Saturday.

Harmanpreet found the target in the 26th and 33rd minutes after Rupinder Pal Singh had equalised for India in the 10th minute. For the Kiwis, Kane Russell scored off a penalty corner in the sixth minute before Stephen Jenness (43rd) reduced the margin.

The Indians were in for an early shock as Russell found the top right corner of the goal with a fierce flick.

Even though he was not among the goal-scorers, skipper Mandeep Singh was a livewire. He earned a penalty corner, which resulted in a penalty stroke, and Rupinder made no mistake.

Harmanpreet then put India 2-1 ahead before enhanc-



**Marksmen:** Harmanpreet, left, and Rupinder Pal helped India fight back from a goal down against New Zealand. • AP

ing the margin with an accurate shot off another penalty corner.

The match came to life when Jenness scored with a lovely finish past Sreejesh in the near post in the 43rd. The India goalkeeper ensured that the citadel was not breached again. India plays Australia on Sunday.

The Indian women fought valiantly in the first two quarters before losing steam to go down 1-5 to World No. 1 Netherlands. Felice Albers gave Netherlands the lead in

the sixth minute before India skipper Rani Rampal levelled in the 10th minute.

The Dutch came out all guns blazing after the change of ends and pumped in three goals. Margot van Geffen (33rd) restored the lead before the team scored in quick succession through Albers (43rd) and Frederique Matla (45th). Caia Jacqueline van Maasakker slammed home a penalty corner in the 52nd minute.

India meets Germany on Monday.

## INDIANS IN ACTION ON SUNDAY

**Artistic Gymnastics:** Women's qualification: Pranati Nayak, 6.30 a.m.

**Badminton: Group stage: Women's singles:** P.V. Sindhu vs Ksenia Polikarpova (Isr), 7.10 a.m.

**Boxing: Round of 32: Women's flyweight:** Mary Kom vs Miguelina Hernandez (Dom), 1.30 p.m.; **Men's lightweight:** Manish Kaushik vs Luke McCormack (GBR), 3.05 p.m.

**Hockey: Men (Pool A):** vs Australia, 3 p.m.

**Rowing: Men's lightweight double sculls (Repechage 2):** Arjun Jat and Arvind Singh, 6.40 a.m.

**Shooting: Women's 10m air pistol:** Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker, Qualification, 5.30 a.m.; Final, 7.45 a.m.

**Men's skeet:** Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, Mairaj Ahmad Khan, Qualification - Day 1, 6.30 a.m.; **Men's 10m air rifle:** Divyansh Singh Panwar, Deepak Kumar, Qualification, 9.30 a.m.; Final, noon.

**Sailing: Women: Laser Radial (from 8.35 a.m.):** Nethra Kumanan. **Men: Laser (from 11.05 a.m.):** Vishnu Saravanan.

**Swimming: Women's 100m backstroke (Heat 1):** Maana Patel, 3.30 p.m.; **Men's 100m backstroke (Heat 3):** Srihari Nataraj, 4.25 p.m.

**Table tennis: Second round: Men's singles:** G. Sathiyam vs Lam Siu Hang (Hkg), 10.30 a.m.; **Women's singles:** Manika Batra vs Margaryta Pesotska (Ukr), noon.

**Tennis: Women's doubles (first round):** Sania Mirza & Ankita Raina vs. Liudmyla Kichenok & Nadia Kichenok (Ukr), 7.30 a.m.

*Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD). All times IST.*

## MEDAL EVENTS ON SUNDAY

**18 Golds will be awarded on the third day of the Olympics**

- Archery:** Women's team
- Cycling:** Women's road race
- Diving:** Women's synchronised 3m springboard
- Fencing:** Women's foil individual, Men's epee individual
- Judo:** Women's 52kg, Men's 66kg
- Shooting:** Men's 10m air rifle, Women's 10m air pistol
- Skateboarding:** Men's street
- Swimming:** Women's 400m ind. medley, Women's 4x100m freestyle relay, Men's 400m freestyle, Men's 400m ind. medley
- Taekwondo:** Men's 68kg, Women's 57kg
- Weightlifting:** Men's 61kg, Men's 67kg

# Mixed luck for paddlers

## TABLE TENNIS

AMOL KARHADKAR

Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra surrendered tamely in their mixed doubles first round, but Manika and debutant Suthirtha Mukherjee won their women's singles first round in contrasting styles on the opening day of the table tennis competition on Saturday.

The day started with Sharath and Manika putting up an insipid display and going down to Lin Yun Ju and Cheng I Ching of Taipei 8-11, 6-11, 5-11, 4-11 in the round of 16.

Manika made short work of Great Britain's Ho Tin Tin



Manika in full flow against Great Britain's Ho Tin Tin.  
• AP

11-7, 11-6, 12-10, 11-9 to set up a second-round clash against World No. 32 Margaryta Pesotska.

Suthirtha ended the day by wiping out a 3-1 deficit against Sweden's Linda Bergstrom to prevail 5-11, 11-9, 11-13, 9-11, 11-3, 11-9, 11-5. She will next play Portugal's China-born Yu Fu.

## TOKYO TITBITS



**Sumit Nagal advances**  
Sumit Nagal posted a 6-4, 6-7(6), 6-4 first round win over Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin, to become the first Indian male tennis player since Leander Paes at Atlanta (1996) to win an Olympics singles match, here on Saturday. Nagal's reward for his fine effort is a second round clash with Russia's Daniil Medvedev.

"To play for my country. That's what I'm looking for in my next match as well, to have India written on my back and play for my nation," Nagal told ITFTennis.com.

## Deepika-Pravin combine comes up short in mixed team event

Indian archers crumbled under pressure as the ninth-ranked mixed team, comprising Deepika Kumari and Pravin Jadhav, lost to the top-slotted South Korea 6-2 in a quarterfinal contest here on Saturday.

San An and Je Deok Kim piled on the pressure on the Indians by taking the first two sets, with scores of 35-32 and 38-37, to establish a 4-0 lead. However, the Indians fought back to win the next set 37-35 before Korea rode on a couple of 10s from Kim to beat India 36-33 in the fourth set to seal the match. Earlier, Pravin and Deepika beat the Chinese Taipei pair of Chih-Chun Tang and Chia-En Lin 5-3 in a last-16 match. Now, Pravin, Atanu Das and Tarundeep Rai will be seen in action in men's team and individual events, while Deepika will compete in women's individual events.

## Fencer Aron Szilagy completes a hat-trick

Hungarian fencer Aron Szilagy made Olympic history on Saturday when he won the men's individual sabre event, defending his title and becoming the first man to take three gold medals in a single discipline in the sport. When he won the final point over Italy's Luigi Samele, Szilagy took his mask off and broke into a wide smile, pointing a finger to the sky. "It's amazing. I can't tell you my feelings, but I'm very much overwhelmed," said Szilagy.



## Boxer Vikas Krishan loses in the opening round

India had a disappointing start in boxing as former World championships bronze medalist Vikas Krishan crashed out in the first round on his third Olympic appearance on Saturday. The 29-year-old, who won a bronze in the Asian championships this year, lost to Japan's Sewonretes Okazawa 5-0 in a men's 69kg contest. Asian silver medalist Okazawa, born to a Ghanaian father and Japanese mother, moved around the ring well and attacked with confidence to keep the seasoned Indian in check. In a bout involving two southpaws, Okazawa landed his combination of jabs and follow-up punches even as Vikas tried his best to get in and out to score some points. Vikas, bleeding from his left eye, needed some medical attention during the bout.

# Saurabh flatters to deceive

Tops qualification but finishes seventh

## SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

Saurabh Chaudhary qualified on top with 586 but finished seventh in men's air pistol in Tokyo on Saturday.

It was a disheartening day for the Indians as Abhishek Verma (575) missed the final by three points, having dropped six points on his last four shots in air pistol.

In women's air rifle, Elavenil Valarivan shot 626.5 and missed the final by two points. World record-holder Apurvi Chandel was unable to step it up in her second Olympics and shot 621.9 for the 36th place in a field of 50.

What was remarkable was the convincing fashion in which Javad Foroughi of Iran shot 244.8 in the final, after a modest 580 in qualification, to clinch the men's air pistol gold with a 6.9 point margin over Damir Mikec of Serbia, the last entrant into the final.

Youth Olympics champion and Asian Games gold medalist Saurabh had re-

vered after shooting 95 in the first series of qualification. He followed with 98, 98, 100, 98 and 97. In the final, a string of 9s and an 8.8 forced him to an early exit.

**The forces: Men's air pistol:** 1. Javad Foroughi (IRI) 244.8 (OR) 580; 2. Damir Mikec (Srb) 237.9 (578); 3. Pang Wei (Chn) 217.6 (578); 7. Saurabh Chaudhary 137.4 (586); 17. Abhishek Verma 575.

**Women's air rifle:** 1. Yang Qian (Chn) 251.8 (OR) 628.7; 2. Anastasia Galashkina (ROC) 251.1 (628.5); 3. Nina Christen (Sui) 230.6 (628.5); 16. Elavenil Valarivan 626.5; 36. Apurvi Chandel 621.9.



Saurabh lost his way after a great start. • GETTY IMAGES

# Satwik and Chirag shock the World No. 3 pair

Pip Yang and Chi-Lin in a three-game thriller; Sai Praneeth goes down to Zilberman



**Nicking it:** Chirag and Satwik slugged it out before winning 27-25 in the decider. • REUTERS

## BADMINTON

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TOKYO

The Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty shocked the World No. 3 pair of Yang Lee and Chi-Lin Wang of Chinese Taipei in a thrilling Group A match on Saturday.

Satwik and Chirag, ranked 10th in the world, notched up a stunning 21-16, 16-21, 27-25 win over third seeds Lee and Wang, who had claimed back-to-back titles at the Thailand Open, Thailand Open and World Tour Finals in Thailand earlier this year.

The Indians had five match points, but the Chinese Taipei pair - bronze medalist at the 2018 World Championship - saved all of them before grabbing one themselves.

However, Satwik and Chirag proved equal to the task and had the last laugh, winning a marathon third game.

In singles, B. Sai Praneeth, the 13th seed, suffered a 17-21, 15-21 reverse at the hands of World No. 47 Misha Zilberman of Israel in a 41-minute Group D match.

"I didn't play 100%. I need to pick myself up for the next match," said a disappointed Sai Praneeth.



## Youngest competitor, just 12, content despite defeat

Syria's table tennis player Hend Zaza, the youngest athlete at the Tokyo Olympics at just 12, said just reaching the Games was "an achievement" despite bowing out in the preliminary round on Saturday.

"Reaching the Tokyo Olympics was already an achievement. I wasn't asked to win, I was asked to play well," Zaza, the youngest Olympian since 11-year-old Romanian Beatrice Hustu competed in figure skating at the 1968 Winter Olympics, told Olympics.com.

## Legendary 'King Kohei' slips on the horizontal bars

Japanese gymnastics star Kohei Uchimura (32) crashed out on day one when he lost his grip and was eliminated from the horizontal bars competition. The all-around 2012 and 2016 Olympic champion, who has said he will retire after these Games, did not compete in the parallel bars. The 32-year-old chose not to go for a third successive all-around title following a shoulder injury. Regarded as one of the greatest gymnasts of all time, "King Kohei" also has 10 world titles. With fans banned, the small crowd of onlookers - most of them coaches and administrators from various countries - gasped as Uchimura fell to the mat. He completed his routine, sticking to his dismount. He picked up just 13.866 points which robbed him of the chance to end a much-decorated career on a golden high on home soil.



## TV PICKS

**TNPL 2021:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m. & 7.30 p.m.  
**Sri Lanka vs India:** 1st T20I, Sony Ten 1, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 8 p.m.  
**Tokyo 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 3 a.m. onwards (Monday)

## IN BRIEF



## Djokovic pulls out of Toronto tournament

**TORONTO**  
World No. 1 Novak Djokovic, who is bidding for tennis gold at the Tokyo Olympics, has withdrawn from next month's ATP Toronto event. World No. 6 Dominic Thiem, No. 20 David Goffin and No. 29 Stan Wawrinka have also withdrawn from the main draw, organisers said. **AFP**

## Ramkumar defeats Prajnesh in quarterfinals

**CARY (USA)**  
Eighth seed Ramkumar Ramanathan beat second seed and compatriot Prajnesh Gunneswaran 3-6, 7-6(5), 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the \$52,080 Challenger tennis tournament here. It was the third win on the professional circuit for Ramkumar over Prajnesh. The other two wins were in 2015.

**The results: \$52,080 Challenger, Cary, USA:**  
**Quarterfinals:** Ramkumar Ramanathan bt Prajnesh Gunneswaran 3-6, 7-6(5), 6-4. **Doubles (semifinals):** Christian Harrison & Dennis Novikov (US) bt Lukas Lacko (Svk) & Ramkumar 7-5, 6-3.

## Tottenham signs up Gollini

**ASSOCIATED PRESS LONDON**

Tottenham signed goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini from Italian club Atalanta on a season-long loan with an option to make the move permanent, the Premier League team said on Saturday.

The 26-year-old Gollini will be expected to challenge stalwart Hugo Lloris. The 34-year-old Frenchman has been with Tottenham since the 2012-13 season but his contract expires next June.

## India favourite as focus turns to T20Is

Varun likely to make his international debut; toss up between Padikkal and Gaikwad likely



**Ready to step up:** Varun Chakravarthy has proved himself worthy of taking the big stage. **•TWITTER/BCCI**

## INDIA IN LANKA

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO**

Mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy could well be in line for international debut as India, with a galaxy of powerhouse IPL performers, start overwhelming favourite against Sri Lanka in the opening T20 International here on Sunday.

## IPL credentials

Coach Rahul Dravid will want to check out Varun, who proved his prowess in the IPL. Having missed out on a series in Australia and a home series versus England due to fitness and injury related issues, the 29-year-old Varun would be aware India is looking at one spinner for the T20 World Cup in the UAE.

Another debutant could be either Devdutt Padikkal or Ruturaj Gaikwad, both of

whom are proven IPL performers. With Prithvi Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav set to leave for England, the team management might not risk playing both.

Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson may be included in the playing XI from which Manish Pandey is likely to be dropped.

The Pandya brothers – Hardik and Krunal – are automatic choices in this format. Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Deepak Chahar, after a well-earned rest, will be back in the mix and Yuzvendra Chahal is likely to join Krunal and Varun in the slow-bowling department.

For Sri Lanka, the first ODI win in nine years on home soil against India could just be the turnaround the country needs. Dasun Shanaka is a young captain, but quality players like Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Chamika Karunaratne and Avishka Fernando would pose quality challenge for

the Indians.

**The teams (from): India:** Shikhar Dhawan (Capt.), Prithvi Shaw, Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Suryakumar Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar (Vice-Capt.), Manish Pandey, Hardik Pandya, Nitish Rana, Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Yuzvendra Chahal, Rahul Chahar, K. Gowtham, Krunal Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini and Chetan Sakariya.

**Sri Lanka:** Dasun Shanaka (Capt.), Dhananjaya de Silva, Avishka Fernando, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Pathum Nissanka, Charith Asalanka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Ashen Bandara, Minod Bhanuka, Lahiru Udara, Ramesh Mendis, Chamika Karunaratne, Binura Fernando, Dushmantha Chameera, Lakshan Sandakan, Akila Dananjaya, Shiran Fernando, Dhananjaya Lakshan, Ishan Jayaratne, Praveen Jayawickrama, Asitha Fernando, Kasun Rajitha, Lahiru Kumara and Isuru Udana.

**The T20Is schedule:** July 25, 27 and 29. Matches start at 8 p.m.

## 'Winning the series is the priority'

Will try out new guys but only in the last game, says Dhawan

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO**

India captain Shikhar Dhawan said the team management will try out new faces but only if they fit into the best playing XI during the upcoming three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka, starting here on Sunday.

Like India blooded as many as five newcomers in the final ODI, Dhawan indicated on Saturday that he is not averse to experimenting with new men like Ruturaj Gaikwad, Varun Chakravarthy and Devdutt Padikkal in the coming games, but series win will remain a priority.

## Opportunity

"New guys definitely have the opportunity to play. We have to win the series. In the last ODI, there was a good opportunity to give some youngsters a chance and give them a taste of international cricket, because we had already won the series," Dhawan told mediapersons ahead of the first game.

"Now it's a new series, so we will of course go in with our best XI first. We will try



**Task on hand:** Dhawan knows he has to do well in the series to strengthen his case for selection in the World Cup squad. **•AFP**

to win the first two matches, and then according to the situation, we can experiment in the last game, if needed," Dhawan said.

He agreed that the IPL has made these youngsters ready for international cricket.

"Of course they are ready, that's why they are here.

"As you saw, youngsters have performed so well in the ODI series, so they'll be taking that confidence

ahead in the T20I series. You will see them perform really well.

On a personal note, Dhawan knows that even he is auditioning for a place in the T20 World Cup side.

"So, on a personal note, I am really looking forward to perform over here and make my place stronger for the World Cup.

"Then we'll see how it goes in the future."

## Shaw, Suryakumar set to leave for England

**AMOL KARHADKAR MUMBAI**

Opener Prithvi Shaw and middle-order batsman Suryakumar Yadav are set to join India's injury-hit Test squad in England ahead of the Test series.

Shaw and Suryakumar, representing India in the limited-overs series in Sri Lanka, are likely to leave for England from Colombo as soon as the logistical arrangements are made.

With opener Shubman Gill, back-up all-rounder Washington Sundar and reserve pacer Avesh Khan having been ruled out of the forthcoming five-Test series starting August 4, India's

team management had requested for at least two replacements.

The national selectors, after being given a go-ahead by the BCCI hierarchy, are understood to have informed the touring party in Colombo to make arrangements for Shaw and Suryakumar's departure to England.

Despite K.L. Rahul's presence as a reserve batsman in the middle-order, considering fitness concerns about captain Virat Kohli and vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane, the selectors have decided to draft in a middle-order batsman since the five Tests are scheduled in six weeks.

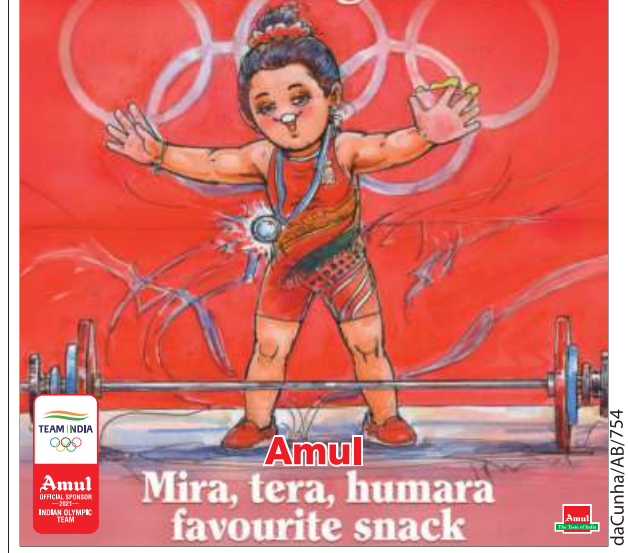
## Windies, Aussie squads test COVID-19 negative

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BRIDGETOWN**

All 152 people involved in the ongoing West Indies and Australia One-Day International series returned negative COVID-19 tests on

Friday, a day after the second game was postponed after a positive analysis, officials said. Following the negative tests, the third and final match was rescheduled for Saturday.

## Worth her weight in silver!



## Vidit Gujrathi reaches fifth round

## CHESS WC

**RAKESH RAO NEW DELHI**

Vidit Gujrathi became the first Indian to reach the fifth round of the chess World Cup when he completed a 2-0 drubbing of USA's Jeffery Xiong in Sochi on Friday.

The win also saw Vidit overtake 23rd-ranked P. Harikrishna in live ratings and occupy the 21st spot.

Viswanathan Anand heads the Indian list by

holding the 14th place on the world ranking list.

It was a double blow for Harikrishna as he joined R. Praggnanandhaa in exiting the competition.

Iran's M. Amin Tabatabaee held Harikrishna in 115 moves on Friday for a 1.5-0.5 victory.

Earlier, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave ended Praggnanandhaa's campaign by winning with a similar margin after easily taking the second game.

## Award for para shuttler Pramod Bhagat

## GENERAL

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI**

World No. 1 para shuttler Pramod Bhagat was on Saturday named Differently Abled Sportsman of the Year at Indian Sports Honours for 2019.

The delay in announcement was due to COVID-19 pandemic, a release said.

"I am really honoured to receive the award and it has come at the right time, this award will give me a boost to perform better at the Paralympics," Bhagat said.

## Traning hard

"I have been training really hard and my dream is to win Gold and make India proud." Bhagat will be participating in singles and



Pramod Bhagat. **•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

mixed doubles events at the Paralympics which opens in Tokyo from August 24.

Indian Sports Honours are awards given annually by the RPSG Group in association with the Virat Kohli Foundation to outstanding sports personalities of India.

The awards were founded in 2017.

## Arthur says Sri Lanka is getting better but needs depth in batting

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO**

Sri Lanka head coach Mickey Arthur on Saturday said his team is improving fast but needs to have depth in batting as they gear up for the T20I series against India.

Sri Lanka lost the ODI series 1-2 to India but the win in the final ODI gave confidence to Arthur.

## Consistency needed

"We are creating depths across all the departments now. We just have to get that little bit of consistency and that same depth into our batting," Arthur said at a virtual pre-match press conference ahead of the first T20.



Mickey Arthur. **•FILE PHOTO**

"For numerous reasons we never seem to put our best batting line-up out there. It is being about creating depth for me, but also trying to be consistent. Giv-

ing guys clear roles but then allowing them to go out and playing with freedom. We saw a really good example of that in Charith (Asalanka) the other night," added the South African.

## Fantastic growth

"The growth I have seen in these players has been fantastic and the growth comes from giving them confidence and giving them that consistency that they are going to play. We will see the rewards of that in the future for sure," the 53-year-old noted.

Arthur also said that the Sri Lankan team learned a "massive amount" from the ODI series against India.

"We are right at the embryonic stage of this journey and it is about us playing against ourselves every-day we go out on the ground. We have got benchmarks, which we want to meet in every game.

## Measuring ourselves

"We are measuring ourselves and the progression in terms of those KPIs has been outstanding. We are getting better and better," he added.

The head coach was also "hopeful" that young spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, who picked three wickets in the second ODI against India, would be available for the first T20.

## Solskjaer signs contract extension with United

'We have built a squad with a good balance of youth and experienced players'

## FOOTBALL

**ASSOCIATED PRESS MANCHESTER**

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has signed a contract extension through at least the 2023-24 season, the club said on Saturday.

The show of confidence in Solskjaer follows a second-place finish in the Premier League and a trip to Europa League final. The deal includes an option for 2024-25.

"Ole and his staff have worked tirelessly putting the foundations in place for long-term success on the pitch," United executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward said.

"The results of that have become increasingly visible over



Solskjaer. **•REUTERS**

er the past two seasons and we are all looking forward to seeing this exciting team develop further in the years ahead."

The Norwegian was hired in December 2018 as an interim replacement for Jose Mourinho, and he was made

permanent later that season.

"Everyone knows the feeling I have for this club," Solskjaer said, "and I am delighted to have signed this new contract. It is an exciting time for Manchester United. We have built a squad with a good balance of youth and experienced players that are hungry for success."

United ended last season without silverware after losing the Europa League final to Villarreal on penalties. It's the longest drought for United since the 1980s, in the early days of Alex Ferguson's otherwise trophy-filled reign.

Solskjaer said United is "ready to take that next step."

"Manchester United wants

to be winning the biggest and best trophies and that's what we are all striving for," Solskjaer said. "We have improved, both on and off the pitch, and that will continue over the coming seasons."

Solskjaer played for United from 1996-2007 and scored 126 goals. His most famous goal was his late winner in the 1999 Champions League final.

## Sancho finalises move

On Friday, England winger Jadon Sancho finalised his move to United by signing a five-year contract with an option for a sixth season. United paid Borussia Dortmund a transfer fee of €85 million for the 21-year-old Sancho, the German club said.



**Tough luck:** Horner said the crash has cost the team approximately \$1.8 million. **•LARS BARON/GETTY IMAGES**

## Hamilton was given a light penalty, says Horner

Red Bull team principal also takes a swipe at Toto Wolff of Mercedes

## FORMULA ONE

**ASSOCIATED PRESS PARIS**

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner is still angry at the crash which knocked Formula One leader Max Verstappen out of the British Grand Prix last weekend, allowing winner Lewis Hamilton to close the gap at the top of the drivers' championship to eight points.

"We felt at the time, and still feel, that Hamilton was given a light penalty," Horner wrote in his Red Bull column

on Friday. "We are reviewing all data and have the right to request a review. We are therefore still looking at the evidence and considering all our sporting options... That crash has cost us approximately \$1.8 million."

Hamilton's victory was his first in two months, and he risked slipping even further behind Verstappen. His win prompted relief, but Horner felt the elation was too much.

"I am also still disappointed about the level of celebrations enjoyed in the wake of

the accident. The Mercedes team were aware of the gravity of the crash with Max widely reported as having been hospitalised.

## Unimaginable

"It is unimaginable not to inform your driver of the situation, moreover, to protect your driver in case they do not show the necessary restraint in celebrating. I spoke to him again on Monday and he felt like he'd done a few rounds with (world heavyweight boxing champion) Tyson Fury," Horner said.

Horner said Hamilton was reckless under pressure after losing pole position and trailing Verstappen by 33 points heading into the race.

"This was a moment of extreme pressure for Hamilton in the championship, becoming the hunter as opposed to the hunted, and in front of his home crowd," Horner said. "We all know that these situations can bring out a different driving style and one that is not characteristic of a world champion."

Horner also took a swipe at Mercedes team principal

Toto Wolff, claiming he lobbied stewards for Hamilton to escape a penalty.

"It was brought to my attention through the TV broadcast that Toto was going to see the stewards with information he had tried to email to (FIA race director) Michael (Masi) before they had ruled on a penalty," Horner said.

"It is a little bit like trying to lobby a jury while they make their final verdict."

Verstappen entirely blamed Hamilton, who said he did nothing wrong.

"I don't think I am in a position to have to apologise for anything. We are out there racing," he said after the race. But his reference to Verstappen's aggressive racing style irked Horner.

## Unjustified

"The narrative that Max was being 'overly aggressive' at that stage was unjustified. You only have to look at the fact Max has zero penalty points on his license and has not been found guilty of any on-track misjudgments in recent years," Horner argued.