



Government agencies are making efforts to complete the pending works of the beautified Chandni Chowk stretch, expected to be inaugurated soon.



Wonder in the waiting

The refurbished Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi is awaiting inauguration. Keeping the Mughal-era architectural style intact, the 1.3 km stretch from Red Fort crossing to Fatehpuri mosque is being turned into a vehicle-free zone, much to the relief of shoppers

PHOTOS:
SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



No relief in sight for parking at Sadar Bazar

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

It could be a long wait before the parking woes of the shoppers thronging the congested Sadar Bazar and the neighbouring market areas in the Old City might finally end.

Hit by the COVID-induced lockdown, legal tangles and tussle over land transfer, all the three multilevel parking projects of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram are running behind schedule and the fate of the largest of them, the 8,332-sq m six-storey parking lot with a multiplex and a commercial space, hangs in the balance.

Though the Letters of Award (LoA) have been given for all the three projects – near Jama Masjid off Old Railway Road, at Kaman Sarai, and behind the post office in Sadar Bazar – the construction is yet to kick off at two of the sites. As per the contract, all the three lots are to be constructed in two years' time.

Completion time limit

The work for the 3,186 sq m parking lot near Jama Masjid began in August last with a delay of over a year due to COVID-induced lockdown, but the project is not likely to be completed within the mandatory 24 months. An official, not willing to be identified, said that only 25% of the work was completed so far and going at the present pace, the construction could not be completed within the time frame fixed in the contract.

"This year, too, a lot of time was lost due to the lockdown restric-



The parking projects of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram are running behind schedule. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

tions. Besides, carrying out construction in a congested market area throws up many challenges. The work is carried out round-the-clock and the casting job is done mostly after 10 p.m.," said the official involved with the construction project.

Total capacity

The six-storey parking lot with three basements has a total capacity of 260 four-wheelers and 154 two-wheelers and would mostly cater to the shoppers visiting Sadar Bazar, Bhuteshwar Mandir market, Jama Masjid market, and the shops along the Basai Road and Jail Road.

Ramesh, running Bharat Handloom House, near the parking lot expressed hope that the project, once completed, would meet the parking needs in the area to a large

Hit by legal tangles and tussle over land transfer, construction is yet to start for two parking lots; the third one is also affected by COVID-induced lockdown



extent. "There is no parking space in this area, expect two small open parking lots near Sohna Chowk with a capacity of hardly two dozen of them. The motorists are forced to park their vehicles on the roadside, slowing down the traffic movement and adding to the congestion. This parking lot will be a big relief," said Mr. Ramesh, who deals in bed-sheets, wallpapers and mattress covers' business.

The work for the second and the bigger parking lot behind the post-office – measuring 3,840 sq m – and catering mostly to those coming to the Sadar Bazar has been hit due to delay in transfer of land from the Public Works Department to the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram.

The LoA for the project, with a capacity of 368 four-wheelers and

144 two-wheelers, was given to M/s Nonu Ram and Sons on February 12, 2020, but the work is yet to start. The parking lot will have five storeys and three basements.

Legal problem

However, the most ambitious of the three, one at Kaman Sarai, has landed in a legal soup over the demolition of shops and some houses forming the facade of the parking lot with the capacity to hold 1,000 four-wheelers and 195 two-wheelers.

The shopkeepers, around a dozen in number, and a family of seven brothers, claiming to be staying on the land for around a century, moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court last year over the matter and the court has directed the municipal commissioner to give them a hearing. Naresh Chawla, one of the

shopkeepers, said that they had held meetings with the previous and incumbent municipal commissioners, but there was no solution in sight.

"We have been running these shops since 1960s and provided the proof to the commissioner. It is about our livelihood. We are only a dozen shopkeepers. We have demanded that the municipal corporation allot us shops in the front in the upcoming parking lot-cum-commercial complex," said Mr. Chawla.

Raj Kumar Chawariya, the eldest of the seven brothers, claimed they had won against the Haryana Urban Development Authority and the Department of Town and Country Planning trying to displace them from their houses.

Only on condition

"The corporation came into being in 2007, but we have been staying here since 1925. We also own seven shops. We are ready to vacate the land, if the government offers us houses in return," said Mr. Chawariya, lying in a cot in his house recovering from an illness. The local unit of the Congress also owns an office on the site.

Meanwhile, the proposed site at Kaman Sarai dug up by the municipal corporation has turned into a pond inundated with rainwater attracting pigs and strays and is a potential breeding ground for mosquitoes and vector-borne diseases in the monsoon season.

2 held for threatening to attack JNU on I-Day

They had uploaded a video on Facebook

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested on Sunday for allegedly threatening to attack Jawaharlal Nehru University on Independence Day. They had uploaded a video on Facebook, the police said.

The accused have been identified as Vikas Sehrawat (30), who can be heard making the threatening statement in the alleged inflammatory video, and Raja Kumar, both residents of Utam Nagar.

According to the police, Sehrawat was arrested earlier for allegedly threatening and using foul language on senior Delhi Congress leader and former MLA Alka Lamba in a video.

VHP association

He told police that he has been associated with the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) since 2018. The police, however, said they are verifying his credentials.

Sehrawat has no association with JNU and made the video to seek attention, the police said. Kumar is the owner of the phone from which the video was uploaded.

"We received a PCR call from a JNU student on Sunday at 1.51 a.m. at Vasant Kunj (North) police station stating that a video has been uploaded on Facebook page 'Mahakal Youth Brigade' alleging that the university would be attacked," Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh said.

After receiving the call, police personnel were deployed in plain clothes at all gates. A few other calls were also received in this regard, the police said.

"The students came to the police station and filed a complaint. The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students'

The campus is safe. We celebrated the 75th Independence Day today [Sunday]. There is absolutely nothing to fear

M. JAGADESH KUMAR
JNU Vice-Chancellor

Union (JNUSU) office-bearers wrote a similar complaint where they alleged that the video promotes disharmony and enmity, using inflammatory language and also openly issuing threats of physical hurt," the DCP said.

Later in the day, JNU Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar said the campus was safe and there was nothing to fear.

"The campus is safe. We celebrated the 75th Independence Day today [Sunday]. There is absolutely nothing to fear," he said.

Whenever such things happen, security is ramped up, the V-C said. "I myself went around the campus to see the situation and everything is normal," he added.

In its police complaint, the JNUSU said an "open call to gather and march into the JNU campus on August 15 from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m., to hoist the saffron flag" was given in the videos.

A case registered against the threat video under sections of the Indian Penal Code, the police said, adding that an investigation is under way.

Last year's violence

On January 5 last year, a mob of masked miscreants had stormed the campus and targeted students.

While clamour grew for the V-C's removal after the incident, the Delhi police faced criticism for inaction when the mob was running riot on the campus.

We won't back off from Mokedatu: Bommai

Will utilise Cauvery Tribunal allocation, says Karnataka CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Sunday that Karnataka would implement the Mokedatu drinking water project despite opposition from neighbouring States.

"The State government is awaiting the approval of the Centre on the Detailed Project Report on the Mokedatu drinking water project to utilise the additional water allocated by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and Supreme Court," he said in his Independence Day address after hoisting the Tricolour here. "We will implement the Mokedatu project despite opposition from the neighbouring States. Our government will not back off from this project, which is necessary for drinking water and power generation."



Basavaraj Bommai arriving to flag off a cycle rally during the Independence Day celebrations in Bengaluru. *K. MURALI KUMAR

The State has resolved to make the efficient use of river water allocated to Karnataka by faster implementation of irrigation projects, Mr Bommai said. He, however, said the State was committed to having a cordial relationship with neighbours under the federal system based on the Constitution.

"Our commitment to the protection of land, water, language, and culture of our State is unquestionable. We will take all steps under the law to use our rightful share of water." He added that the government was capable of protecting Kannada, Kannadigas, and the pride of Karnataka.

Surenran booked for 'disrespecting' Tricolour

He hoisted it upside down for a few feet

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The police have booked Kerala BJP president K. Surendran for allegedly disrespecting the national flag.

During the Independence Day celebrations organised at the party's State committee office here on Sunday, Mr. Surendran hoisted the flag upside down for a few feet before realising the folly and pulling it down and hoisting it correctly.

Following a complaint,

the police registered a case against him under the provisions of the Prevention of Infringement of the National Flag Act, 1971, that prohibits desecration of or insult to the country's national symbols.

Meanwhile, the Youth Congress submitted a complaint before the Cantonment police against the hoisting of the national flag close to the CPI(M) party flag at its headquarters, AKG Centre, here. The police are yet to register a case.



THE HINDU

EDUCATION PLUS GET THE EDGE

Language for SOCIAL CHANGE

Why integrating global issues into English Language Teaching and going beyond the textbook is becoming increasingly important

ALBERT P. RAYAN



Some actors use the medium to create awareness about social issues and make viewers think. Similarly, teachers too have a social responsibility. They teach not only a particular subject assigned to them, but also enable students to think and act.

Versatile roles

There have been debates on whether English language teachers (ELTs) should teach only the language and thus enable students to become proficient in it, or whether they have a greater role to play – should teachers discuss real-world issues and help students become aware of what is happening around them? Should ELTs enable students to become

critical thinkers and, thus, agents of social change? Is it important to include various social and global issues in ELT?

A few years ago, I found an interesting article about human rights violation and thought that it would serve as a useful resource in the English classroom. I discussed including it in an English language coursebook with a group of teachers at a workshop. Most felt that it would help develop students' thinking skills and instil a sense of social responsibility.

In the past, English language teachers thought that their role was limited to teaching grammar, pronunciation, poems, essays, short stories, and preparing

Teachers of English are not just language instructors: they are educators with a responsibility to future generations.

students for exams. The question of discussing real-world issues such as poverty, caste discrimination, human rights, and thus making students think beyond the textbook was never raised or considered important. Most of us who teach English as a second or foreign language now are products of such a pedagogical system. Now, the need is to focus on developing critical thinking skills, instilling a sense of social responsibility and

preparing students for life. The Global Issues Special Interest Group of the International Association of Teachers English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) "provides a forum among ELT practitioners to stimulate awareness and understanding of global issues to exchange ideas on integrating peace education, human rights education, development education, and environmental education into English language teaching". The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) also has an SIG called "Global Issues in Language Education" and publishes a regular newsletter.

The resource book, *Integrating Global Issues in the Creative*

English language Classroom: With reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, edited by Alan Maley and Nik Peachey covers topics such as poverty, food security, gender equality, climate change, access to justice, and inclusive and sustainable industrialisation. The objectives are to help students develop critical thinking skills and creativity, and increase awareness of various issues and thus help them become real global citizens.

Expert views

Recently, I contacted Maley and Peachey to ask about the role of ESL/EFL teachers in promoting global issues? Maley responded, "A growing number of ELT

professionals have come to believe that language teachers are more than just teachers of language. Through what they teach and their attitudes and practices, they have an enduring influence on the future attitudes and personalities of their students. Basically, teachers of English are not just language instructors; they are educators with a responsibility to future generations." Peachey agreed with Maley that "The future belongs to our students and they need to be able to develop their awareness and voice their views on issues, which will have a huge impact on their lives. The global dominance of English as a means of international communication can help students extend the reach of their voice and give them access to broader channels of information."

Maley also felt that teachers could be role models for students "showing them, through their own actions and behaviours, how important these issues are and how even individuals can have an impact. They can also incorporate activities that involve students thinking critically about the world they live in and the human abuse of it. Given the abundance of material about global issues on the Internet these days, they can also engage students in small research projects using the internet as a resource."

Peachey says that teachers can look for content related to global issues and make students aware of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. "Teachers need to help students understand that they can have a voice in the future of their planet and show them ways that they can get involved in a responsible way."

The author is an ELT resource person, teacher educator and columnist. rayanal@yahoo.co.uk

Fulfil ideals of founding fathers, says Pinarayi

'Constitutional bodies must work in line with principles'

STAFF REPORTER
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Urging the nation to introspect on whether it has remained faithful to its founding ideals, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the country could achieve independence in the truest sense only when parliamentary democracy and Constitutional bodies functioned in line with their fundamental principles.

The nation must also remain steadfast to the dream of its founding leaders to progress as a secular, socialist and pluralistic society, he said in his address after unfurling the national flag during the 75th Independence Day celebrations at the Central Stadium on Sunday.

'Ecology an investment' The Chief Minister also used the opportunity to lay stress



Pinarayi Vijayan inspecting the guard of honour at the Independence Day parade in Thiruvananthapuram.

on environmental protection. Pointing out that biodiversity conservation was equally important as national security, he emphasised on the need to consider ecology as an investment for the future.

The greatest challenge

faced in environmental conservation is carbon emission from industries and vehicles. Considering the various hazards including climate change and pollution, the State government has focused its efforts on achieving carbon neutrality. Priority was being ensured to protect nature even while undertaking developmental initiatives, Mr. Vijayan said.

Pointing out that the platinum jubilee of the country's Independence coincided with the 25th anniversary of the People's Plan campaign in the State, the Chief Minister said Kerala had succeeded to a great extent in ensuring public participation in governance.

After delivering his address, Mr. Vijayan interacted with some of the COVID-19 front line warriors who were invited to the event.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	33.8	27.4		Kozhikode	8.1	31.0	23.4
Ahmedabad	34.8	25.7		Kurnool	32.6	24.2	
Aizawl	28.1			Lucknow	36.5	27.8	
Allahabad				Madurai	36.0	26.2	
Bengaluru	28.0	20.0		Mangaluru	16.6	23.8	24.4
Bhopal	31.6	21.9		Mumbai	24.6	28.1	23.6
Bhubaneswar	33.9	25.2		Mysuru	26.9	22.0	
Chandigarh	35.6	26.8		New Delhi	37.0	27.0	
Chennai	32.6	27.7		Patna			
Coimbatore	31.3	21.6		Port Blair	7.0	29.2	24.1
Dehradun				Puducherry	20.4	34.4	22.3
Gangtok	2.3	20.5	17.8	Pune	5.2	25.9	20.7
Goa	31.1	25.6		Raipur			
Guwahati	0.3	33.0	25.4	Ranchi	56.6	31.2	22.7
Hubballi				Shillong	19.8	24.6	19.3
Hyderabad	0.2	32.6	23.6	Shimla	38.5	25.0	15.5
Imphal	29.1	22.0		Srinagar	29.7	15.8	
Jaipur		25.2		Thiruvananthapuram	31.8	24.3	
Kochi	7.0	29.6	24.0	Tiruchi	0.4	35.4	25.8
Kohima		25.2	18.0	Vijayawada			
Kolkata	1.9	35.0	27.7	Visakhapatnam	0.1	34.0	27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	51	46	19	58	98	Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
Bengaluru	6	52	37	23	72	In observation made at 4:00 p.m., Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 204 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 18
Chennai	8	25	67	30	79	
Delhi	52	36	141	202	102	
Hyderabad	5	4	91	10	23	
Kolkata	13	26	14	53	69	
Lucknow	11	10	66	91	128	
Mumbai	16	10	84	103	136	
Pune	67	28	109	71	63	
Visakhapatnam	20	45	38	47	74	

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

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

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

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

SCHOLARSHIPS

Nikon Scholarship Programme

Nikon India Private Limited invites applications to support students from underprivileged sections of the society.

ELIGIBILITY: Open for students (Class 12 passed onwards) pursuing photography courses of three-month or more. Annual family income should be less than ₹6 lakhs.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Up to ₹1 lakh

DEADLINE: September 01

APPLICATION: Online www.nikonindia.com/education

Keep India Smiling Foundational Scholarship Programme

Colgate-Palmolive (India) Ltd. is giving financial aid to students to continue their education and proceed towards a career of their choice.

ELIGIBILITY: Students who have passed Class 10 with at least 75% marks or Class 12 with at least 60% marks in 2020 board exams are eligible to apply for pursuing their higher secondary, three-year graduation, four-year engineering programme, Diploma and, one-year vocational course studies respectively. Annual Family income must be less than ₹5 lakhs per annum.

PRIZES AND REWARDS: Selected scholars can avail scholarship award of up to ₹30,000 per year for up to three years depending on their current level of education.

DEADLINE: August 31

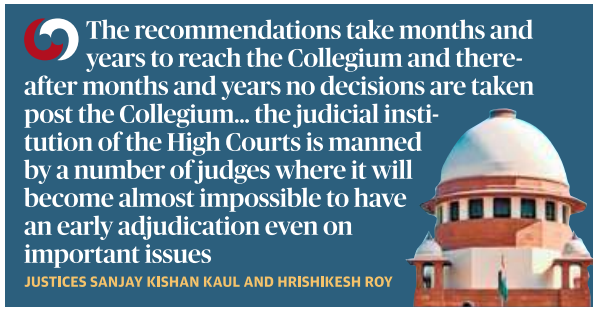
APPLICATION: Online www.keepindiasmiling.com

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Rising judicial vacancies pose challenge

The SC has said that the government's 'recalcitrant attitude' has affected resolution of important cases

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI



Justice Rohinton Nariman's retirement and the entry of Justice L. Nageswara Rao into the five-judge Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, come at a crucial time when judicial vacancies in the Supreme Court are set to climb to 10 with the retirement of Justice Navin Sinha in three days.

The present Collegium of Chief Justice Ramana and Justices U.U. Lalit, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Rao will remain intact for about 10 months and could even script history by appointing a woman judge who could one day be India's first woman Chief Justice of India.

Justice Rao, a direct appointee from the Bar, may evince interest to have more direct appointments from the Supreme Court Bar to the Bench of the highest court, given the exhortations from the Bar. Justice Rao will also be the first to exit the Collegium with his retirement in June 2022, followed by Justice Khanwilkar in July and Chief Justice Ramana himself in August the same year.

Justice Lalit will then take over as the top judge as per seniority. His tenure as the Chief Justice of India will, however, be of just a little over two months till November 2022. Justice Chandrachud, again as per seniority, will succeed Justice Lalit as CJI till November 2024.

Frozen since 2019
Judicial appointments to the Supreme Court have remained frozen since September 2019. That year saw 10 appointments to the Supreme Court in three batches. Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Sanjeev Khanna were appointed in January 2019. Justices B.R. Gavai, Surya Kant, Aniruddha Bose and A.S. Bopanna were appointed in May 2019. The last batch of Supreme Court appointments in September

2019 were of Justices Krishna Murari, S. Ravindra Bhat, V. Ramasubramanian and Hrishikesh Roy. The oldest vacancy is that of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, who retired in November 2019.

The tenure of Chief Justice S.A. Bobde did not see a single judicial appointment to the Supreme Court, though frequent discussions were held by the Collegium.

The present Collegium can remedy the drop in judicial strength in the Supreme Court. Proportionate representation from the High Courts and seniority, though old conventions and not constitutional or legal mandates, carry weight during the appointment process. Merit is a dominant criterion.

According to the Law Ministry records of August 1,

the senior-most Chief Justices of High Courts, as per their initial appointments in 2003, 2004 and 2005, are Karnataka Chief Justice A.S. Oka in 2003, followed by Delhi Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Tripura Chief Justice A.A. Kureshi. Both Chief Justices Patel and Kureshi share the same date of initial appointment - March 7, 2004. Gujarat Chief Justice Vikram Nath was initially appointed in September 2004 while Uttarakhanda Chief Justice R.S. Chauhan, Punjab and Haryana Chief Justice Ravi Shanker Jha and Sikkim Chief Justice J.K. Maheshwari were all initially appointed in 2005. The parent High Courts of these judges, except in the cases of Chief Justices Jha and Maheshwari, are already represented in the Supreme Court. The parent High Court of the two judges is Madhya Pradesh.

On the criterion of proportionate representation, according to the Ministry records, Patna Chief Justice Sanjay Karol's parent High Court of Himachal Pradesh is not represented in the Supreme Court. Similarly, Rajasthan Chief Justice Indrajit Mahanty's parent High Court of Orissa is not represented

in the top court. There will be no representation from the Patna High Court in the Supreme Court after the exit of Justice Navin Sinha on August 18. Jharkhand Chief Justice Ravi Ranjan's parent High Court is Patna.

Women judges
Telangana Chief Justice Hima Kohli is the sole woman High Court Chief Justice now. The name of Justice B.V. Nagarathna from the Karnataka High Court was reported some months ago to be under consideration to replace Justice Indu Malhotra's vacancy in the Supreme Court.

An equally serious issue is the fading judicial strength in the 25 High Courts. Ministry figures of August reveal 455 judicial vacancies in the High Courts where the total sanctioned strength is 1,098.

A few days ago, a Supreme Court Bench led by Justice S.K. Kaul lashed out at the Centre's delay, for years on end, to act on the recommendations of the Collegium and appoint judges to High Courts. The Bench said that the government's "recalcitrant attitude" has affected the adjudication of important cases, especially high-stake commercial issues.

Pegasus: Govindacharya asks SC to revive his 2019 petition

Former RSS ideologue had sought an investigation

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ideologue K.N. Govindacharya has asked the Supreme Court to revive his 2019 petition seeking a court-monitored investigation into the Pegasus spyware case and lodging of an FIR against Facebook, WhatsApp, the NSO Group and others involved in the "illegal surveillance".

Mr. Govindacharya said the Pegasus surveillance amounted to "cyberterrorism" and was punishable under the Information Technology Act. He said the entities involved should be brought to book for violating the privacy and personal liberty of citizens.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana is scheduled to hear 10 petitions, including one filed by senior journalists N. Ram and Sashi Kumar, who are also seeking a direction from the court to direct the Centre to come clean on whether it had used the military-grade Pegasus technology, created by the Israeli-based NSO Group, to spy on



K.N. Govindacharya

Mr. Govindacharya said he was an apolitical person and was "not swayed by shades of politics that surround the subject of privacy". He said he "always had the national interest in mind".

Illegal surveillance
"The targeted nature of Pegasus has caused huge fear in the minds of the public. This illegal surveillance presents the biggest threat to life and personal liberty... A fair, impartial and responsible investigation is required to ascertain the magnitude of the use of Pegasus in India, and the entities responsible for the same," he submitted in an application filed by advocate Sachin Mittal.

Mr. Govindacharya said the protection of fundamental rights was essential to the rule of law.

"Privacy of crores of Indians cannot be curbed without following the procedure established by law, and any such instances is violative of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution," he submitted.

In I-Day greetings, Biden lauds ties

'Friendship will continue to flourish'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Guided by Mahatma Gandhi's message of truth and non-violence, India achieved its long journey towards Independence, U.S. President Joe Biden said on the country's 75th Independence Day, asserting that the commitment to respecting the will of the people through democracy continued to inspire the world.

Greeting Indians, Mr. Biden said that in this moment of great challenges and opportunities, the partnership between India and the United States was more important than ever.

"On this day, August 15, 1947, India achieved its long journey toward independence, guided by Mahatma Gandhi's message of truth and non-violence," Mr. Biden said in a statement on Saturday.

"Today, that foundational commitment to respecting the will of the people through democracy continues to inspire the world and is the basis of the special bond between our two nations. Over the decades, the ties between our people, including a vibrant community of more than four million Indian-Americans, have sustained and



Joe Biden

strengthened our partnership," he said.

Mr. Biden pointed out that in the past one year, the two nations have come together in new ways as they tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, including working in partnership with Japan and Australia - through the Quad grouping - to expand global manufacturing of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines.

"Together, we must show the world that our two great and diverse democracies can deliver for people everywhere. And as we do, the friendship between our nations will continue to flourish and grow," Mr. Biden said.

"I wish all those celebrating today, in India, in the United States, and throughout the world, a safe and happy Indian Independence Day," he said.

Tram turns into museum on freedom struggle

Mamata calls for strengthening voices against forces that stifle liberty

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Commemorating the 75th Independence Day, West Bengal's Transport Department on Sunday launched a mobile museum on the freedom struggle and the partition of Bengal by turning two trams into galleries.

This museum on wheels has been curated by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Trust in collaboration with the West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC).

It will be on display at Esplanade in the heart of the city till December. It will move to other parts of the city from January 1.

Two tram cars have been used to put together the museum. The first car highlights the rising resistance against the British Raj from the 1900s and key moments during from 1900 to 1947. The second car focuses on the mass migration and rehabilitation that took place post-Partition.

The museum was inaugurated by Minister of Transport and Housing Firhad Hakim. "The museum on wheels beautifully depicts the efforts of our freedom fighters and also the impact of the division of Bengal and



Posters and photographs on display at the museum on wheels in Kolkata. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Punjab on the national psyche," Mr. Hakim said.

Transport Secretary Rajesh Sinha said there will be no entry fee to visit the museum. Rajanvir Singh Kapur, Managing Director of the WBTC, who has been instrumental in other novel initiatives like curating Tram library and Tram world, said, "We are reviving the importance of trams and reshaping its use to go beyond just a mode of travel to rich cultural space in the

modern context. This is a great way for people to learn about one of the most defining events in the subcontinent's history."

The exhibition tells the story through newspaper reports and documents and archival & personal photographs.

A 7,500-sq. feet national flag was unfurled at the Victoria Memorial Hall here.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hoisted the tricolour at the Red Rod

here. In a social media post, she called for strengthening the voices against forces that stifle freedom.

"On the 75th Independence Day, let us all come together to strengthen our voices against all forces that aim to stifle our freedom. We must never forget the sacrifice of those who fought a long and hard battle for this day. Warm wishes to all my brothers and sisters. Jai Hind!" Ms. Banerjee tweeted.

Diaspora group protests in London

It seeks PM Modi's resignation

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has imprisoned a large number of dissenters amidst a global pandemic, South Asia Solidarity, an Indian diaspora organisation said on August 15, launching a protest on the Westminster bridge in London demanding Mr. Modi's resignation. The group spearheading the event alleged that under the current government, India had normalised violence against religious minorities and the Dalits.

"As India's 75th Independence Day dawns, the country's secular Constitution lies in tatters. Communal and caste violence stalk the land. Thousands of political prisoners languish in COVID-infected prisons, and hundreds of thousands of people are grieving the loss of their loved ones as a result of the callous negligence and mismanagement of the coronavirus crisis", Mukti Shah of South Asia Solidarity said in a written statement.

The organisers pointed out violence against the Muslim community, sexual violence against Dalit women and girls, corporate dominance of agriculture,



Protesters on Westminster Bridge. •@SASIASOLIDARITY

crackdown on dissenters, and tampering with EVMs and ballot boxes as some of the features of the rule of Mr. Modi.

"We, a group of diaspora members and friends standing in solidarity with the people of India, are demanding the resignation of Narendra Modi, the chief architect of this violence, injustice, and criminal negligence," said South Asia Solidarity. The protest began early in the morning in London with the giant banners bearing "Resign Modi" placed on the bridge. Before that the protesters held a candle-light vigil outside the Indian High Commission.

In recent months, London has witnessed several protests critical of the present Indian government on issues such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens among others.

CROSSWORD puzzle grid with clues and solutions for 'DOWN' and 'ACROSS' categories.

SUDOKU puzzle grid and solution for puzzle 13326, including a difficulty rating and solution to yesterday's puzzle.

FAITH article titled 'Rama a role model' discussing the Ramayana and the role of Rama in Hinduism.

Afghans fear a return to brutal Taliban regime

There are indications of going back to the harsh version of Islamic rule the people lived under from 1996 to 2001

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISTANBUL

As the Taliban mass at the gates of Kabul, they are promising a new era of peace in Afghanistan, with amnesty for those they have been battling for two decades and a return to normal life.

But Afghans who remember the Taliban's brutal rule and those who have lived in areas controlled by the Islamic militants in recent years have watched with growing fear as the insurgents have overrun most of the country while international forces withdraw.

In a stunning rout, the Taliban seized nearly all of Afghanistan in just over a week, despite the billions of dollars spent by the U.S. and NATO over nearly two decades to build up Afghan security forces.

On Sunday, the insurgents entered the outskirts of Kabul but initially remained outside of the city's downtown. Meanwhile, Taliban



At the ready: Members of U.K.'s 16 Air Assault Brigade arrive in Kabul to assist with evacuation of British nationals. • AP

negotiators in the capital discussed the transfer of power, said an Afghan official who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. The official described the discussions as "tense."

The fall of Kabul marks the final chapter of America's longest war, which began after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks masterminded by al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden, then harboured by the Taliban government.

A U.S.-led invasion dislodged the Taliban.

The negotiators on the government side included former President Hamid Karzai, leader of Hizb-e-Islami political and paramilitary group Gulbudin Hekmatyar and the head of the Afghan National Reconciliation Council Abdullah Abdullah, who has been a critic of President Ashraf Ghani, who has reportedly fled the country. Mr. Karzai himself ap-

peared in a video posted online, saying he remained in Kabul. "We are trying to solve the issue of Afghanistan with the Taliban leadership peacefully," he said.

"They sold the country" Afghanistan's acting Defence Minister, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, didn't hold back his criticism of the fleeing President.

"They tied our hands from behind and sold the country," he wrote on Twitter. "Curse Ghani and his gang."

The Taliban tried to calm Kabul residents, insisting their fighters wouldn't enter people's homes or interfere with businesses. They also said they'd offer an "amnesty" to those who worked with the Afghan government or foreign forces.

"No one's life, property and dignity will be harmed and the lives of the citizens of Kabul will not be at risk," the insurgents said.

But there have been re-

ports of revenge killings and other brutal tactics in areas of the country the Taliban have seized in recent days.

Government offices, shops and schools are still shuttered in areas recently captured by the Taliban, with many residents either lying low or fleeing to the capital, Kabul. But already there are indications of a return to the harsh version of Islamic rule Afghans lived under from 1996 until 2001.

Many fear the Taliban will roll back two decades of gains by women and ethnic minorities while restricting the work of journalists and NGO workers. An entire generation of Afghans was raised on hopes of building a modern, democratic state — dreams that seem to have melted away.

As the insurgents reached the capital early on Sunday, a photo circulated on social media showing the owner of a beauty salon painting over posters depicting women.

Young men raced home to change out of their jeans and tee-shirts and into the traditional salwar kamiz outfit.

Last month, after capturing Malistan district of Ghazni province, the insurgents went door to door looking for people who had worked with the government, killing at least 27 civilians, according to Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. After capturing Herat, the insurgents paraded two alleged thieves through the streets with black makeup on their faces.

These days, the Taliban leadership says it is open to women's education, but rights groups say the rules vary depending on local commanders and the communities themselves.

Fear is running high among the ethnic Hazara minority, Shia Muslims who were persecuted by the Taliban and made major gains in education and social status over the past two decades.



People outside the Petit Pas Hotel, destroyed by the earthquake in Les Cayes, Haiti, on Saturday. • AP

After quake kills 724, Haiti looks for survivors

'At least 2,800 people injured'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PORT-AU-PRINCE

The death toll in Haiti's powerful earthquake jumped to over 700 on Sunday as crews desperately dug through collapsed buildings for survivors in the Caribbean nation still reeling from its president's assassination.

At least 724 people were killed in the 7.2-magnitude tremor that struck Saturday about 160 km to the west of the densely populated capital Port-au-Prince, which was devastated in a massive 2010 quake.

Churches, businesses, schools and homes crumbled in Saturday's quake that trapped hundreds of victims under rubble and left at least 2,800 people injured, the country's civil protection agency said in an update.

Heavy damage was reported in the center of the city of Jeremie, home to around 2,00,000 people and composed primarily of single-story buildings. The damage in Les Cayes also appeared to be significant, including the collapse of a multi-story hotel.

Amid ongoing fear of aftershocks, virtually the entire population of that city spent on Saturday night out-

doors, sleeping in front of their homes — or what was left of them.

Rescue efforts could be hampered by Tropical Storm Grace, which is expected to bring heavy rainfall and possible flash floods to Haiti from late Monday, according to the U.S. National Weather Service.

The U.S. and other nations immediately pledged support, with President Joe Biden approving "immediate" aid efforts.

USAID head Samantha Power tweeted on Sunday that her agency had deployed an urban search and rescue team to join its earthquake disaster response team in Haiti.

Some 1,500 buildings were destroyed and over 5,000 damaged, trapping hundreds under rubble and leaving at least 2,800 people injured, the country's civil protection agency said in an update.

Haiti's neighbour the Dominican Republic said it was shipping 10,000 food rations and medical equipment. Cuba and Ecuador dispatched medical or search-and-rescue teams.

And Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela also offered help, as did the United Nations.

Kabul airport closed to commercial flights

U.S. Embassy tells Americans to take shelter, says airport reportedly taking fire

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL

Senior U.S. military officials say Kabul's international airport has been closed to commercial flights as military evacuations continue.

The suspension of commercial flights cuts off one of the last avenues to escape the country for Afghans fearful of Taliban rule. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing operations.

Scenes of chaos played out at the airport earlier, as Afghans rushed to get on the last flights out of the country.

Videos circulating online

showed airport personnel struggling to coral crowds boarding a plane on the tarmac, while a man with an injured leg lay on the ground. In the background, a U.S. Air Force plane was landing.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul said on Sunday that the security situation at the airport in the Afghan capital was changing quickly, and that there were reports of gunfire as U.S. troops aided the evacuation of U.S. personnel.

"There are reports of the airport taking fire; therefore we are instructing U.S. citizens to shelter in place," the Embassy said.

A source familiar with the situation could not confirm reports of firing there.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken had said earlier on Sunday that Embassy staff were leaving the diplomatic compound and moving to the airport as Taliban insurgents entered Kabul.

Diplomats were being ferried by helicopter to the airport, where U.S. troops were providing security amid an exodus of Americans and allies and other foreigners.

More U.S. forces had been sent in to get U.S. officials out of the country "in a safe and orderly fashion" while main-

taining a "core diplomatic presence," he added.

"We're working to make sure that our personnel are safe and secure. We're relocating the men and women of our Embassy to a location at the airport," Mr. Blinken said.

Sources had told Reuters that most U.S. staff were expected to be evacuated from Kabul in the coming day or two.

Germany on Sunday moved its diplomatic personnel in Kabul from the Embassy to the airport ahead of an evacuation planned from Monday.

France will dispatch two military transport planes to the UAE during the night and on Monday for the evacuation of French citizens in Afghanistan.

A NATO official said the group was maintaining its diplomatic presence in Kabul and helping to keep the airport running.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said nobody should bilaterally recognise the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, adding it was clear that there would be a new administration in the country soon. (With Reuters inputs)

Ghani says left Kabul to avoid bloodshed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said that he had fled the country on Sunday to "prevent a flood of bloodshed".

Mr. Ghani, who did not say where he had gone, said he believed "countless patriots would be martyred and the city of Kabul would be destroyed" if he had stayed behind. "The Taliban have won... and are now responsible for the honour, property and self-preservation of their countrymen," he said in a statement posted to Facebook.

ELSEWHERE



Malaysia PM to offer resignation today
KUALA LAMPUR
Malaysia's PM Muhyiddin Yassin will offer his resignation to the king on Monday, a Minister said, potentially spelling an end to his 17-month-old government. He urged the Opposition MPs to support him in exchange for institutional reforms. The offer was rejected. AFP

Lebanon fuel tank explosion kills 28
BEIRUT
A fuel tank blast in Lebanon early on Sunday killed 28 people and injured nearly 80, authorities and medics said. The military said a fuel tank that "had been confiscated by the Army to distribute to citizens" exploded. AFP

Japan Ministers visit controversial shrine

China, S. Korea register their protest

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TOKYO

Three Japanese Cabinet Ministers visited a shrine seen by neighbouring countries as a symbol of Tokyo's past militarism on Sunday, the anniversary of the nation's Second World War surrender.

It came after two Cabinet members, including Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, visited Yasukuni Shrine on Friday.

The shrine in central Tokyo honours 2.5 million war dead, mostly Japanese, who have perished since the late 19th century. But it also enshrines senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal.

Around 200 people participated in the ceremony,



People outside Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on Sunday. • REUTERS

which usually gathers 6,000 and was scaled back because of the coronavirus.

On Friday, Beijing expressed "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition" to Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi's visit to Yasukuni.

South Korea summoned the Japanese Embassy's deputy chief of mission to protest Friday's visits.

Hong Kong democracy group disbands

ASSOCIATED PRESS
HONG KONG

A pro-democracy group that organised some of the biggest protests during the political upheaval in Hong Kong in 2019 is dissolving, the group said on Sunday.

The Hong Kong Civil Human Rights Front said it could no longer operate. The decision comes as the group faces a police investigation for possible violation of a national security law, according to local media.

Earlier this week, the city's largest teachers' union disbanded in light of what it said were drastic changes in the political environment.

The crackdown follows Beijing's imposition of the national security law on Hong Kong last year.

Israel condemns Poland restitution law

It recalls top envoy over legislation that restricts rights of Holocaust survivors

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WARSAW

Israel on Saturday condemned Poland's approval of a law that restricts the rights of Holocaust survivors or their descendants to reclaim property seized by the country's former communist regime and announced it was recalling its top diplomat in protest.

The move ignited a diplomatic crisis between Israel's government and the nationalist conservative government in Poland. After years of close ties under former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's new government, which includes top officials who are the children of Holocaust survivors, has taken a far more confrontational approach.

Polish President Andrzej Duda earlier in the day signed the law, which ad-



Survivors and guest walk past the barracks at the former concentration camp in Auschwitz, Poland. • REUTERS/FILE

dresses appropriations done by the communist government that ruled Poland from the end of Second World War until 1989.

The law itself says nothing about the Holocaust or Second World War. Instead it establishes that any administrative decision issued 30 years ago or more can no longer be challenged, mean-

ing that property owners who had their homes or business seized in the communist era can no longer get compensation.

International pressure

It is expected to cut off for all time the hopes of some families — both Jewish and non-Jewish — of reclaiming property seized during that era.

Both the U.S. and Israeli governments had strongly urged Poland not to pass the law and Israel had warned it would harm ties.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett called Duda's signing of the law "a shameful decision and disgraceful contempt for the memory of the Holocaust" and said "Poland has chosen to continue harming those who have lost everything."

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said that he had instructed Israel's charges d'affaires in Warsaw to return home immediately and that the new Israeli Ambassador to Poland, who was scheduled to leave for Warsaw, will remain in Israel.

The Israel Foreign Ministry also said it was recommending that the Polish Ambassador, who is on vacation home, not return to Israel.

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