

3 held in visa, passport fraud case at IGIA

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three men have been arrested for their alleged involvement in passport and visa forgery cases, the police said on Saturday. A total of 99 agents or masterminds involved in passport and visa forgery cases have been nabbed by IGI Airport police during a special drive in 2020 and 2021, they said.

DCP (Airport) Vikram Porwal said the accused have been identified as Mehboob Khan, resident of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh, Mahesh Kumar, resident of Gurugram and Saif Bari, a resident of Jamia Nagar.

Four passengers arrived as deportees from Armenia via Sharjah on the ground of holding fake visas. On the complaint from immigration officials, a case was registered and all the four accused were arrested. They disclosed that the fake e-visas were arranged by the three accused.

Man stabbed to death for objecting to noise

The accused were travelling in an e-rickshaw with victim

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death by two persons after he asked them to not make noise when they were travelling in an e-rickshaw in Outer Delhi's Mohan Garden, the police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said that the accused have been identified as Lav Kumar (21), a resident of Mohan Garden, Sainik Enclave, and Deepak (23), a resident of Faridkot in Punjab. The victim has been identified as Dalip, resident of Roorkee, the police said.

The police said that on Friday, a PCR call was received at Ranhola police station around 11.30 p.m. regarding murder at main Gandhi Chowk in Mohan Garden. "When the police reached the spot, they found a man was lying on the

ground in a pool of blood. The injured was immediately shifted to DDU Hospital where he was declared dead," the officer said.

Tried to escape

The police said that Dalip received three stab injuries on the chest, waist and thigh. An eyewitness, Gopal, who said that he works as a watchman at Jayswal Vatika said that around 11 p.m., he was standing at Gandhi Chowk where he saw that a person with golden hair was beating the victim. Meanwhile, the other person standing there took a knife and stabbed him a few times. When the injured fell down, the assailants tried to escape, however, Gopal tried to stop them and managed to catch hold of one of the accused, the DCP said.

The police said that a case was registered under Sections 302 (murder) and 34

(common intention) of the IPC at Ranhola police station.

Lav Kumar allegedly revealed that he and his friend Deepak were returning to Mohan Garden from a birthday party in Dwarka.

"They boarded an e-rickshaw in which the victim was also sitting who was regularly interrupting them not to make noise, and using foul language. An argument broke out when all of them got down at Gandhi Chowk. The accused stabbed the victim. When the accused realised that Dalip has grievously injured, they tried to flee. However, one of them was caught," Mr. Singh said.

Knife recovered

CCTV footages of nearby areas were checked and co-accused Deepak was nabbed. The knife used in the crime has been recovered, the police said.

No place to call home



Afghan refugees protest outside the UNHCR office demanding resettlement options and assurance of security from the global body, in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Delhi govt. identifies 9 road stretches for beautification

Will push to remove illegal parking from bus lanes: Jain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Satyendar Jain held a meeting with department consultants and officials to take stock of the ongoing streetscaping project in the Capital here on Saturday.

The Delhi government has identified nine stretches of roads for redevelopment. Mr. Jain said that the Delhi government will make separate lanes for buses on 540 km length of roads identified for streetscaping.

The government will push to remove illegal parking from bus lanes and that special lighting will be installed to intensify the beauty of re-designed roads, he said.

Mr. Jain discussed decongestion of roads to ensure smooth movement of traffic.

The government stated it is planning to redesign and decongest nine roads which include Sri Aurobindo Marg, a 3-km stretch from Majlis



Satyendar Jain

Park to Azadpur, K.N. Katju Marg, Road no. 58 near Leela Hotel, Shanti Van road, Road opposite India Habitat Centre, Tikri border entry, Road no. 59 near Signature Bridge and Nelson Mandela Marg.

Best to be replicated

These roads will be developed keeping the aesthetics of their surroundings in mind on a pilot basis and the best-designed road will be replicated at other places, the government stated.

"We are planning to redesign and decongest 540 km length of roads in Delhi. For this, we will make separate lanes for buses and goods transport on roads. This will decongest roads and ease the flow of traffic," Mr. Jain was quoted as having said.

Mr. Jain also asserted the importance of impact-based output to the officials and said that they should think of ways to integrate surprise elements into the landscape.

Special lighting systems, Mr. Jain stated, will be made with the help of lighting consultants and installed on roads to make sure that the aesthetics of the roads are visible during the night and additionally will also eliminate the chances of black spots.

Mr. Jain further directed the officials to revamp the aesthetics of roads, keeping environmental prospects in mind. He stressed planting different varieties of trees alongside roads.

JNU to reopen in phases from tomorrow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University on Saturday said its campus will reopen in phases starting from September 6.

The campus will first reopen for PhD research scholars who have to submit their thesis by the end of this year.

The university said upon arrival on the campus, every student will produce a negative RT-PCR test report not earlier than 72 hours prior to arrival.

"All final-year PhD research scholars are allowed to enter into the campus. PhD students with disabilities are allowed to enter into the campus," the university said. The central library will be sanitised and seating arrangements of reading halls with 50% capacity will be made before reopening the library. Teaching-learning will continue to be in online mode, while school centre level libraries shall remain closed.

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Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi

Five arrested as illegal arms factory busted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GHAZIABAD

Five men have also been arrested after the police busted an illegal arms factory here and seized a huge cache of weapons and ammunition, an officer said on Saturday. Two of their accomplices are absconding, the police said.

The illegal arms factory was being run near the culvert of Shahzadpur village

road of Muradnagar town here, the police said.

Senior Superintendent of Police Pawan Kumar said that five pistols of .32 bore, 72 cartridges, 20 half-furnished pistols, 55 barrels of 32 bore, 13 magazines, 250 magazine springs, 10 semi-prepared magazines, 90 side plates, 17 trigger guards along with manufacturing instruments and other parts of pistols have been seized.

'Stay updated about latest crime trends'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana on Saturday exhorted the newly recruited constables to remain updated on latest crime trends and make optimal use of technology in conducting investigation, gathering evidence and for prosecution procedures.

He was addressing the passing out parade at Police Training College, Jharoda Kalan.

The 116th batch of 312 constables completed their training and will now be joining various districts and units of Delhi Police.

According to a statement released by the police, 171 candidates have been appointed on compassionate grounds in the place of their blood relations, who lost their lives while discharging duty.

There are 11 postgraduates, 116 graduates, three people with BTech, one with BBA and one BCA among these recruits.

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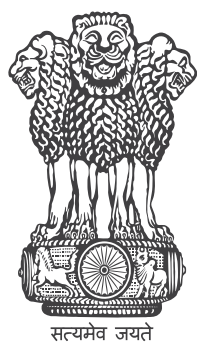
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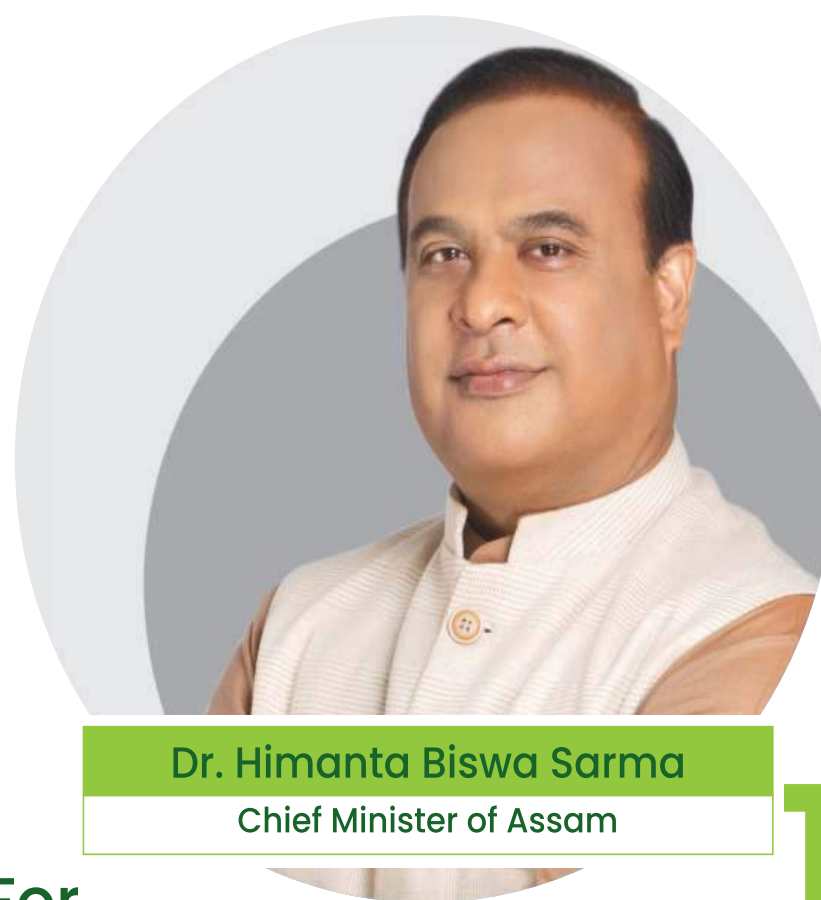
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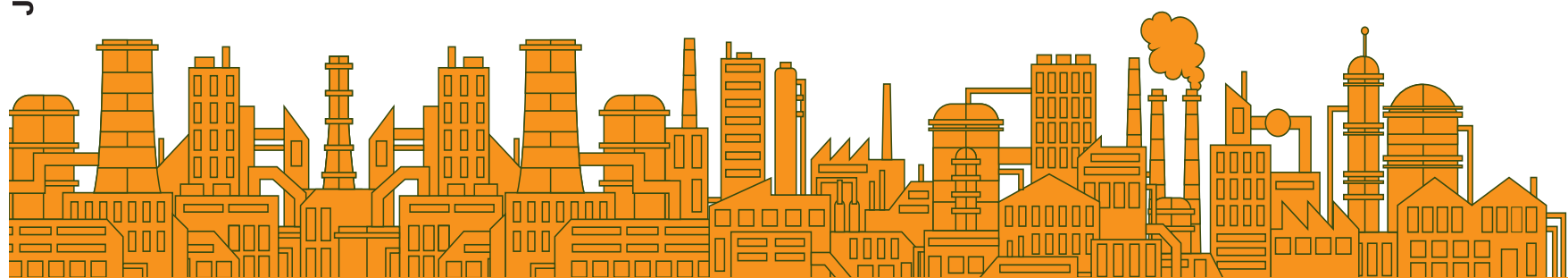
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Taliban, opposition battle for Panjshir

New government will be announced next week, say Taliban; global community in a flurry of diplomacy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REUTERS
KABUL

Fresh fighting was reported on Saturday between the Taliban and resistance forces in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley, as the hardline Islamists are in the process of finalising a government that will set the tone for their rule.



Vantage point: Afghan resistance forces on a hilltop in Darband area in Anaba district, Panjshir province. ■ AFP

Taliban sources said on Friday its fighters had taken the Valley, although the resistance denied it had fallen.

The Taliban have so far issued no public declaration that they had taken the Valley, which resisted their rule when they were last in power from 1996 to 2001.

The National Resistance Front of Afghanistan, which groups opposition forces loyal to local leader Ahmad Massoud, said Taliban forces reached the Darband heights on the border between Kapisa province and Panjshir but were pushed back.

"The defence of the stronghold of Afghanistan is unbreakable," Front spokes-

man Fahim Dashty said in a tweet on Saturday.

A Taliban source said fighting was continuing in Panjshir but the advance was slowed by landmines placed on the road to the capital Bazarak and the provincial Governor's compound.

"Demining and offensives are both going on at the same time," the source said.

Former Vice-President Amrullah Saleh, holed out alongside Ahmad Massoud –

the son of legendary anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud – admitted the perilous position of the NRF.

Situation difficult: Saleh "The situation is difficult, we have been under invasion," Mr. Saleh said in a video message.

It was not immediately possible to get independent confirmation of events in Panjshir, which is walled off

by mountains except for a narrow entrance and had held out against Soviet occupation as well as the previous Taliban government.

The Taliban source also said the announcement of a new government would be pushed back to the next week.

Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, reported by some Taliban sources to be in line to lead the new government, said in remarks on Qatar's Al Jazeera channel that the new administration "will include all factions of the Afghan people."

"We are doing our utmost efforts to improve their living conditions. The government will provide security, because it is necessary for economic development," he said.

Meanwhile, there were some signs of normality creeping back in the Afghan capital.

Qatar's Ambassador to Afghanistan said a technical

team was able to reopen Kabul airport to receive aid, according to Al Jazeera, which also cited its correspondent as saying domestic flights had restarted.

Women stage protest In Kabul, dozens of women protested for a second day on Saturday to demand the right to work and inclusion in the government.

Social media clips showed Taliban fighters and officials attempting to disperse the demonstrators and stopping people from filming with mobile phones.

Away from the Valley, the international community was coming to terms with having to deal with the new Taliban regime with a flurry of diplomacy.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is due on Sunday in Qatar, a key player in the Afghan saga and the location of the Taliban's political office, though he is not expected to meet with the militants.

President Biden declassifies secret files on 9/11 attacks

He responded to pressure from families of 2,977 killed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday ordered declassification over the next six months of still secret documents from the government investigation into the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Mr. Biden is responding to pressure from families of some of the approximately 3,000 people killed by al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001.

They have long argued that the classified documents might contain evidence that the government of Saudi Arabia, a close U.S. ally, had links to the hijackers who flew into the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"Today, I signed an executive order directing the Department of Justice and other relevant agencies to oversee a declassification review of documents related to the Federal Bureau of In-



Joe Biden

vestigation's September 11th investigations," Mr. Biden said in a statement.

Declassification must take place "over the next six months."

"We must never forget the enduring pain of the families and loved ones of the 2,977 innocent people who were killed during the worst terrorist attack on America in our history," Mr. Biden said.

The move comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of the

attack, which spurred then-president George W. Bush soon after to order the invasion of Afghanistan, where the Taliban sheltered al-Qaeda's leadership.

Mr. Biden pulled the last U.S. troops out of Afghanistan this week, completing a dramatic evacuation from Kabul's airport after the Taliban defeated the U.S.-backed government and surged back to power.

The push for more information is being driven by victims' families suing Saudi Arabia for alleged complicity in the horrific attack. The families have long expressed frustration at the number of documents that remain off limits.

The official 9/11 Commission, which was set up by Congress, said there was "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" al-Qaeda.

ISI chief rushes to Kabul

The visit comes as militants struggle to form a new govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD

In a surprise move, Pakistan's powerful intelligence chief Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed on Saturday dashed to Kabul, according to media reports here, amidst the Taliban struggling to finalise and install an inclusive government in Afghanistan that would be acceptable to the international community.

A delegation of senior Pakistani officials led by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lieutenant General Hameed arrived in

Kabul to conduct discussions with the incoming Taliban government, the *Pakistan Observer* newspaper reported.

The ISI chief is expected to meet top Taliban leaders and commanders. "Issues relating to Pak-Afghan security, economy, and other matters will be taken up with the Taliban leadership," the report said, quoting sources.

According to the *Express Tribune*, Gen. Hameed will also meet Pakistan's envoy in Kabul to discuss the matter of repatriation and transit through Pakistan of fo-

reign nationals and Afghans fleeing Taliban rule.

The intelligence chief will spend a day in the Afghan capital, the Geo News reported. Border management is another important issue that will come under discussion during the visit of Hameed, it said.

Gen. Hameed's visit to Kabul came as Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa met with British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab earlier in the day and said that Pakistan will assist in the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

17 killed in celebratory gunfire in Kabul: reports

Avoid firing in air: Taliban spokesman

REUTERS
KABUL

At least 17 people were killed in celebratory gunfire in Kabul, news agencies said on Saturday, after Taliban sources said their fighters had seized control of Panjshir, the last province in Afghanistan holding out against the Islamist group.

Leaders of opposition to the Taliban have denied that the province has fallen.

The Shamshad news agency said "aerial shooting" in Kabul on Friday

killed 17 people and wounded 41. Tolo news agency gave a similar toll.

At least 14 people were injured in celebratory firing in Nangarhar province, said Gulzada Sangar, spokesman for a hospital in Jalalabad.

The gunfire drew a rebuke from the main Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid. "Avoid shooting in the air and thank God instead," Mujahid said on Twitter.

"Bullets can harm civilians, so don't shoot unnecessarily."

Thai protesters hit the streets as PM wins no-confidence vote

Prayut govt. slammed over virus response, economic woes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BANGKOK

Pro-democracy protesters vented their anger in Bangkok on Saturday after Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha survived a no-confidence vote in Parliament.

More than 300 demonstrators marched in central Bangkok's main shopping mall district carrying red flags and wearing ponchos in the downpour.

"The government should

be gone. If things were good why would we come out to protest?" a 28-year-old demonstrator said.

Ahead of the rally, police used shipping containers to block major routes to the advertised protest site at the central Lumpini Park where protesters had planned to march.

This week Thai lawmakers debated an opposition-instigated censure motion about the government's han-

dling of the pandemic and economic management – Saturday was the third no-confidence motion vote since the 2019 election.

The sluggish rollout of Thailand's vaccination programme and financial pain from restrictions has heaped political pressure on Mr. Prayut's government.

The country is reeling from its worst economic performance since the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.

Ardern vows to tighten terrorism laws

IS-inspired terrorist wounded 7 people with knife at New Zealand supermarket

REUTERS
WELLINGTON

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern vowed on Saturday to tighten counter-terrorism laws this month after a knife-wielding militant known to the authorities stabbed and wounded seven people in a supermarket.



Ahamed Aathil Mohamed Samsudeen in court. ■ AP

Police shot dead the 32-year-old attacker, Ahamed Aathil Mohamed Samsudeen, a Sri Lankan national who had been convicted and imprisoned for about three years before being released in July.

Ms. Ardern said earlier the man was inspired by the Islamic State group and was being monitored constantly but could not be kept in prison by law any longer.

"I am committing, that as soon as Parliament resumes, we will complete that work – that means working to pass

the law as soon as possible, and no later than by the end of this month," Ardern told a news conference.

The Counter Terror Legislation Bill criminalises planning and preparation that might lead to terror attack, closing what critics have said has been a loophole allowing plotters to stay free.

But Ms. Ardern said it would not be fair to assume

Sri Lanka offers help in probe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will cooperate with New Zealand's investigation into the knife rampage, authorities said on Saturday. "Sri Lanka condemns this senseless violence, and stands ready to cooperate with New

Zealand authorities in any way necessary," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kohularangan Ratnasingam said.

Police said they had interviewed the attacker's brother, who lives in Colombo, and were looking into all possible links.

that the tighter law would have made a difference in this case. "This was a highly motivated individual who used a supermarket visit as a shield for an attack. That is an incredibly tough set of circumstances," she said.

Ms. Ardern said the attacker came to the attention of the police in 2016 because of his support for a violent ideology inspired by IS.

Police were following the man when he went into the Countdown supermarket in New Lynn mall in Auckland.

They said they had thought he had gone in to do some shopping but he picked up a knife from a display and started stabbing people.

Police said they shot him within a minute of the start of the attack.

'28% of 1,38,000 assessed species face extinction'

'Habitat loss, overexploitation to blame'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MARSEILLE

Some 28% of the 1,38,374 species assessed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for its survival watch-list are now at high risk of vanishing forever, the global conservation body said on Saturday.



Indonesia's Komodo dragons listed as "endangered". ■ AFP

Habitat loss, overexploitation and illegal trade have hammered global wildlife populations for decades, and climate change is now kicking in as a direct threat as well, the IUCN reported.

Komodo dragons, the largest living lizards, which are found only in the World Heritage-listed Komodo National Park and neighbouring Flores, were listed as "endangered".

Some 37% of the 1,200 shark and ray species as-

essed by experts are directly threatened by extinction, a third more than only seven years ago, it warned on Saturday.

The IUCN on Saturday officially launched its "green status" – the first global standard for assessing species recovery and measuring conservation impacts. "It makes the invisible work of conservation visible," Molly Grace, a professor at the University of Oxford and Green Status co-chair, said.

ASEAN envoy holds talks with Myanmar junta

Diplomat seeks access to Suu Kyi

REUTERS
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

The Brunei diplomat appointed by a Southeast Asian regional bloc as its special envoy to Myanmar said on Saturday he is still negotiating with the military on the terms of a visit and has sought access to ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been trying to end violence in Myanmar and open a dialogue between the military rulers and their opponents following the overthrow of Ms. Suu Kyi in February.

ASEAN tasked Erywan Yusof, Brunei's second Foreign Affairs Minister, last month with leading these efforts.

"There is an urgent need to go now to Myanmar. But I

think before all that, I need to have assurances," Mr. Erywan told Reuters. "I need to be able to have a clear picture of what I'm supposed to do, what they are going to allow me to do when I visit."

Mr. Erywan wants to visit before late October when ASEAN leaders are to meet, but said no date has been finalised.

"They haven't put a condition yet but they haven't been clear about it," he said.

Requests seeking access to Ms. Suu Kyi have been made to the State Administrative Council, chaired by junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, Mr. Erywan said. But access to the deposed leader was not a requirement under a five-point consensus reached by ASEAN in April, he added.

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App store challenge

How does South Korea's 'anti-Google' law free up in-app payments? Will it hit the commission online behemoths charge?

P.J. GEORGE

The story so far: On August 31, the South Korean Parliament passed an amendment to the country's Telecommunications Business Act that has been dubbed the "anti-Google" law. The law prevents dominant app store operators — effectively Alphabet's Google and Apple — from forcing South Korean app developers to use their in-store payment systems. This effectively prevents Apple and Google from charging commissions on payments made in their app stores. The law also empowers the South Korean government to intervene in payment disputes within app stores, and to haul up app store operators for delaying the publishing of apps or deleting them.

What have Google and Apple been doing?

Google's Play Store and Apple's App Store strictly regulate how apps in their environment charge money from their users. Till recently, app publishers had been allowed to deploy only Google's and Apple's proprietary payment systems to collect money from app store users for digital purchases, which include the apps themselves, or 'in-app purchases' such as additional content or services. Google and Apple charged a 30% commission on all such purchases. As many app developers started to push back against what they said was a steep commission, Google announced in March this year that it was cutting the commission to 15%. However, it later announced that the change was being postponed to March 2022. In November 2020, Apple cut its commission to 15% for developers with less than \$1 million in annual sales on its platform. On September 2, in response

The South Korean law is the first legal restriction on Google and Apple's control over how money changes hands within their app stores. This could become a template for other countries

to a fair trade probe in Japan, Apple changed its policy to allow some app developers like Netflix and Spotify to add links that will send their users outside the app to make payments, effectively bypassing its commission. Recently, in response to a U.S. lawsuit, Apple agreed to let app developers email users about other options of payment. On the apps front, Google has a more relaxed approach than Apple, which does not allow users of its iPhones to download apps from any other source than the App Store. Phones with Google's Android can 'sideload' apps; that is, download and install apps from websites or other sources. Android phones also support downloads from multiple app stores.

What makes the South Korean law important?

It is the first legal restriction on Google and Apple's control over how money changes hands within their app stores. This could become a template for the many countries that have been looking at ways to control the clout of these online behemoths that take a cut from the digital sales of everyone from the gaming industry to publishers. The European Union has a draft Digital Markets Act in the pipeline that would force large internet "gatekeeper companies" that act as platforms for others to conduct transactions to change their business practices and level the playing field for smaller companies. In the U.S., Senators have introduced a Bill similar to the South Korean one that would force Apple and Google to allow app makers to deploy different payment systems. There is more trouble brewing in the U.S. as a federal judge is set to rule on the case by Epic, the makers of the 'Fortnite' videogame, against Apple's in-app payment practices. Epic has sued Google in a separate case but on the same grounds. Adding to Google's woes is another case filed by 36 U.S. States. In another indication that the trend is spreading globally, Reuters is reporting that Apple faces a legal challenge to its in-app payment system in India. The case is reportedly being reviewed by the Competition Commission of India.

How have Apple and Google responded?

Both companies point to the cost of maintaining the app store environment to justify the commissions. Responding to The Verge, an American technology news website, on the South Korean law, Apple said opening up the payment system will expose users to fraud and security breaches. Google argues these charges are a major reason why it is able to keep its Android mobile phone operating system free, and hence lower the cost of phones running on it. "Just as it costs developers money to build an app, it costs us money to build and maintain an operating system and app store," a Google spokesperson told The Verge. "We'll reflect on how to comply with this law while maintaining a model that supports a high-quality operating system and app store."

What are the new I-T rules on PF savings?

Why has the government decided to implement a fresh tax on Provident Fund contributions? Has the limit been raised?

VIKAS DHOOT

The story so far: The Finance Ministry on Tuesday notified new Income Tax rules to impose a fresh tax on Provident Fund (PF) savings. In her 2021-22 Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed taxing the income on PF contributions of over ₹2.5 lakh a year. This limit was later enhanced to ₹5 lakh for PF accounts wherein employers make no contributions. However, there was a lack of clarity on how this tax was to be levied and the new rules seek to address it.

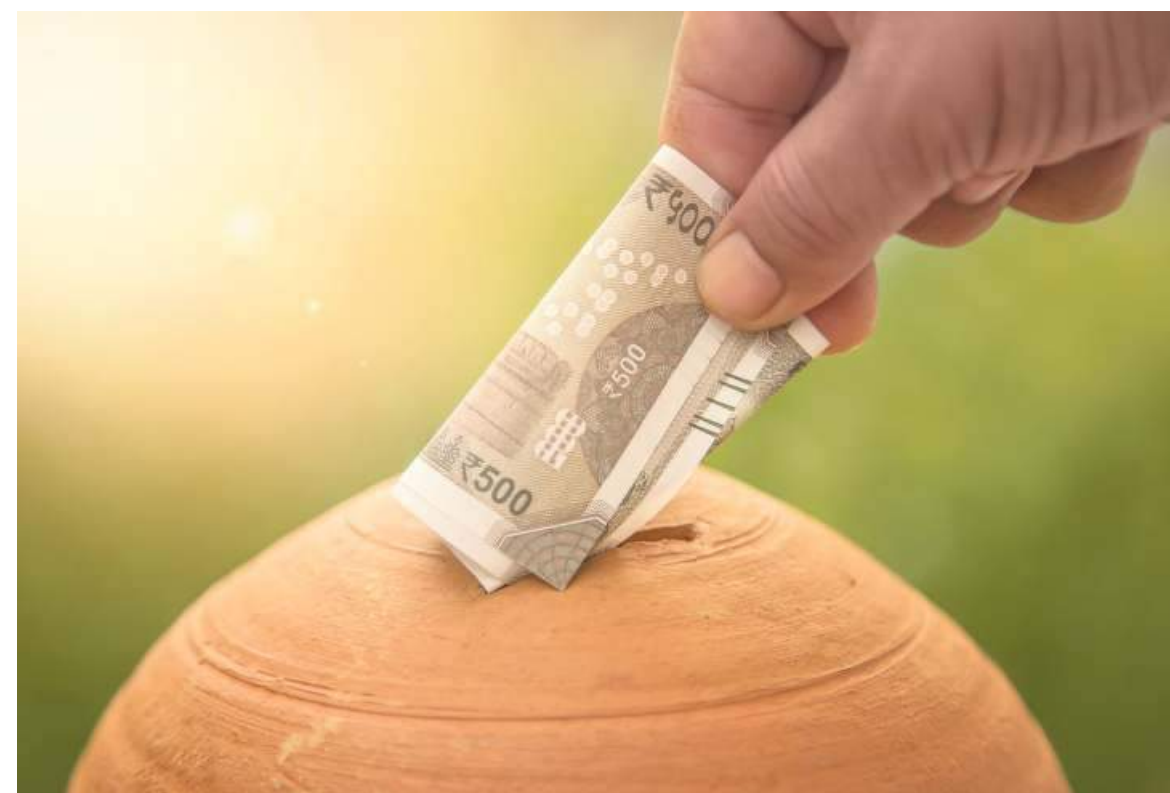
What is the government's rationale behind the move?

Till this year's Budget, all income on provident fund savings was exempt from tax. The provision aimed at ensuring people retire with an adequate nest egg was being misused, according to the Finance Ministry. Ms. Sitharaman asserted at her press conference after her Budget speech that "some people go to the extent of contributing ₹1 crore each month [into their PF accounts]". For such people to get tax concessions as well as an assured income is not comparable with an employee who earns ₹2 lakh and gets 8% return on PF savings, she said. "This exemption without any threshold benefits only those who can contribute a large amount to these funds as their share," the Budget documents explained.

After facing criticism over the proposal, the Revenue Department later highlighted that more than 1.23 lakh high net worth individuals (HNIs) had deposited over ₹62,500 crore in their employees' provident fund (EPF) accounts in 2018-19. The largest EPF account has a staggering ₹103 crore balance, they pointed out, while the top 20 HNIs have a cumulative balance of ₹825 crore. Of an estimated 4.5 crore EPF accounts, the source said about 0.27% members had an average corpus of ₹5.92 crore and so were earning over ₹50 lakh a year as 'tax-free assured interest'. This is the second time the NDA government has sought to tax EPF savings — in 2016, a Budget announcement to tax 60% of EPF account balances at the time of withdrawal was rolled back. In the previous year's Budget, contribution by employers into employee welfare schemes like the EPF or the National Pension System (NPS) or a superannuation plan was capped at ₹7.5 lakh a year.

Which PF accounts will be affected?

EPF accounts managed by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the General Provident Fund (GPF), where government employees save for retirement, will be impacted. There are also a few thousand large companies that manage the retirement savings of their workforce in-house through 'exempt' PF trusts, in order to ensure their employees don't have to run from pillar to post to access these savings when in need or at the time of retirement. Public Provident Fund (PPF) accounts are not affected by the new tax, nor are retirement savings accumulated under the NPS. EPF accounts are mandatory for employees earning up to ₹15,000 a month in firms employing over 20 workers, with 12% of the basic pay and dearness allowance deducted as employees' contribution and another 12% remitted by the employer. However, government as well as private sector employees are allowed to make voluntary contributions over and above the statutory



Stringent measure: The provision, aimed at ensuring people retire with an adequate nest egg, was being misused, says the Finance Ministry. *GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

deductions into the GPF or the EPF respectively. The ₹2.5 lakh annual contribution limit shall apply to EPF members, while in the GPF or other PFs wherein there is no contribution from the employer, the threshold has been set at ₹5 lakh.

Why were new rules needed to implement this tax?

A similar tax provision was introduced in the Budget for income from annual premium payments of over ₹2.5 lakh into unit-linked insurance products, but that clearly stated that maturity benefits will be subjected to capital gains tax. In the case of PFs, though the intent of the tax levy was elaborated on, there was no clarity on how it was to be operationalised. For instance, practitioners were not clear if the tax had to be imposed at the time of retirement or withdrawal from the PF account, or each year at the time of annual income accrual. If it had to be done annually, should the PF trustees deduct the tax at source on such income, or should a tax assessee include it in her or his income tax return and pay taxes. There were also concerns that this tax could be levied on future income on past PF contributions over the new tax-free limits. The

Chairperson of the Central Board of Direct Taxes at the time, P.C. Mody, had told *The Hindu* that taxpayers should factor in the interest income earned on contributions beyond ₹2.5 lakh or ₹5 lakh, as the case might be, at the time of filing their tax returns. As interest credits from the EPFO are seldom effected in the same year, due to delays in the declaration of the annual EPF rate and actual credits to the members' accounts, this

formulation posed another problem in implementation.

What do the new I-T rules say about levying the PF tax?

For calculation of taxable interest relating to contribution in a provident fund or recognised provident fund, exceeding the specified limit, a new Rule 9D has been added. The rule requires all PF accounts to be split into separate accounts — one with the taxable contribution and interest earned on that component, and the other with the non-taxable contribution that shall include the closing balance of the PF account as on March 31, 2021, and all fresh non-taxable contributions and interest thereon.

While the government has said this will help arrive at the taxable PF income for a year, it is still not clear if the tax has to be deducted from the EPF account concerned or the taxable part added to one's total income at the time of filing returns. As things stand, the proposed solution to create two accounts seems to suggest that the EPFO and PF trusts may have to deduct tax on the income earned on the 'taxable contribution' of the EPF account and remit it to the exchequer each year. Maintaining two separate accounts is an onerous requirement for the EPFO and the trustees of the other PFs to comply with. To put the administrative overhaul required for such accounting in perspective, consider that the EPFO has 24.77 crore members with EPF accounts, of whom 14.36 crore members had been allotted Unique Account Numbers (UANs) by the end of 2019-20. About 5 crore of these members were active contributors to their EPF accounts during 2019-20. Even if a technological solution is devised to rejig the existing systems and provide for two EPF accounts for each member, there are other concerns. Deducting tax at source would require the EPFO or the trustees of individual PFs to issue tax deduction certificates or IT Form 26 AS for all such members. Whether the EPFO, India's largest retirement fund manager with around ₹15 lakh crore of assets, was consulted over the rules or is prepared for the transition to the proposed system, is not known at this point.

Why are 'breakthrough' infections a concern?

Why are people who are double-vaccinated still getting COVID-19? Do vaccines work against variants?

JACOB KOSHY

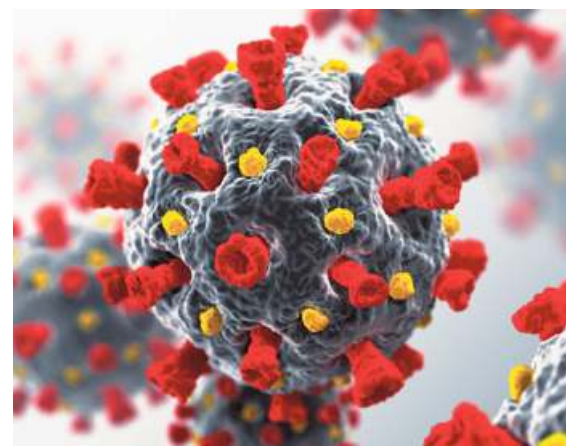
The story so far: India's second wave has not fully dipped and over the past seven days, daily infections of COVID-19 have logged over 40,000 cases. The rise in daily infections is primarily seen in Kerala and Maharashtra, which paradoxically are also among the States which have a high rate of vaccination. In this context, there are concerns about the rise in 'breakthrough infections' or confirmed infections in those who have got the second dose of the vaccine at least two weeks earlier.

Are those who are doubly vaccinated getting COVID-19?

If a person gets infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus 14 days after the second shot of the vaccine, it is called a 'breakthrough infection'. The two-week window is the time it takes for the body to produce necessary antibodies following a shot of the vaccine. A 'breakthrough infection' refers to the virus being able to penetrate the protective barrier of antibodies. There are no official estimates, nationally, of how many 'breakthrough infections' have been reported in India but news reports in mid-August, quoting unnamed officials, estimated that 80,000-100,000 people got infected, nearly half in Kerala. The State has a COVID-19 genome surveillance programme that periodically monitors the prominent coronavirus variants as well as whether some variants are more closely linked to instances of 'breakthrough infections'. According to the latest update on August 30, 7,202 coronavirus samples, or about 0.1% of its cumulative caseload of 400,000 confirmed cases, had been sequenced. A subset of those who tested positive in April, May and June had 'breakthrough infections'. The total number is not known yet, but 155 such breakthroughs were analysed, 147 of whom were fully vaccinated with Covishield and eight with Covaxin.

How significant are such infections?

It appears that so far breakthroughs are not translating into serious disease requiring hospitalisation. In the Kerala analysis, 151 were "mildly symptomatic" and four were asymptomatic. A third were healthcare workers, who because of prolonged and close exposure to a variety of patients are at a greater risk of contracting infection. In recent months, more studies are emerging on 'breakthrough infections'. A preprint by researchers at the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB) and Max Hospitals in Delhi found that nearly a quarter of 600 fully vaccinated healthcare workers contracted the virus after vaccination. Earlier, studies from the CMC, Vellore, and PGIMER, Chandigarh, too had



Shield broken: A 'breakthrough infection' refers to the virus being able to penetrate the protective barrier of antibodies. There are no official estimates of how many such cases have been reported in India. *GETTY IMAGES

reported that between 1% and 10% of fully vaccinated healthcare workers had contracted the infection. Less than 5% needed hospitalisation and no lives were lost, indicating that vaccines were effective in preventing severe sickness and death. Internationally, the trend is not too different either. Israel and the U.S., despite high vaccination coverage, continue to report fresh cases, though the infection rate is much higher in the unvaccinated.

There was a qualitative difference between the CSIR study and the others. While the CMC and PGIMER reports showed 'breakthrough infections' as those confirmed by a gold-standard RT-PCR test, the CSIR study relied on a blood test that measured levels of antibodies directed towards the nucleocapsid region of the coronavirus, which is different from the region (spike protein) that vaccine-generated antibodies normally target. Currently, all the vaccines are designed to produce antibodies against the spike protein and so high levels of antibodies against the nucleocapsid region were presumed markers of a fresh coronavirus infection. None of the infections made the healthcare workers sick enough to warrant a test and so it could well be that the number of 'breakthrough infections' are much higher than those confirmed by RT-PCR tests. The bigger concern, however, is that those with a 'breakthrough infection', under the belief that they are fully protected, may be less stringent with using masks and could be carriers of infection. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the viral load in those with a 'breakthrough infection' can be as much as those unvaccinated, which is why

mask mandates are back despite significant vaccination coverage.

That 'breakthrough infections' occur is not a surprise. In clinical trials, all vaccines available have reported efficacy rates between 70% and 90%. This implies that between 10% and 30% of a vaccinated population will be vulnerable to infection. Vaccines, however, were

premised on inuring the body to disease and so far the evidence is that they are overwhelmingly effective.

Is the Delta variant responsible for the rise in cases?

When the underlying coronavirus variants were analysed in the Kerala study, 126 were found to have the Delta variant (B.1.617.2), nine had the Kappa variant (B.1.617.1) and six had Delta-Plus variants, that is

sub-lineages of the Delta with one or more of its defining mutations. These mutations mostly help the virus escape detection by antibodies. The India SARS-CoV-2 Genome Consortium (INSACOG), which monitors emerging variants nationally, has analysed 51,651 coronavirus genomes as of August 30. Of them, 31,721 cases were international variants of concern and among them 21,449 were Delta variants. A mere 393 cases were Delta-Plus, though many Delta variants are in the process of being reclassified as Delta-Plus (there are 13 such sublineages) because, while it does not necessarily make them more virulent or harmful, they serve as markers of an evolutionary change in the coronavirus and need to be tracked, say genome scientists. Delta has also been demonstrated to reduce antibody levels elicited by vaccines. Antibody levels are not the only measure of protection and immunity by T-cells, which cannot be easily evaluated in a lab, are also important for neutralising the virus. However, vaccine production technologies such as m-RNA and DNA are premised on their ability to be tweaked quickly for newer variants. The makers of Covaxin claim that their vaccine, being an inactivated whole virus, is geared up to be more effective against variants than other vaccines primarily targeted at the spike protein. An ICMR study showed a 65.2% protection against the Delta variant in a double-blind, randomised, multicentre, Phase 3 clinical trial of Covaxin.

HURRIYAT CONFERENCE

The alliance after the death of its patriarch

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

Syed Ali Shah Geelani's death is the latest setback to the platform of many religious and political outfits which was already weak and divided

PEERZADA ASHIQ

The death of Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the 92-year-old separatist leader in Kashmir, came as a body blow to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, which was already divided and weak, and particularly the pro-Pakistan segment in it. Ailing and living in a house-turned-detention centre for over a decade, Geelani, who co-founded Hurriyat, died on September 1, just five months after his close aide and lieutenant Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai, 78, died in a Jammu jail. The two had stirred the political cauldron of Kashmir as Jamaat-e-Islami members for around six decades. The Jamaat was banned by the Centre on February 28, 2019, two weeks after the Pulwama attack left 40 CRPF jawans dead in south Kashmir.

With Geelani and Sehrai dead and the Jamaat banned, the constituency that sees a solution to the Kashmir dispute in merging with Pakistan is now without a structure or a face. Masrat Alam, another prominent pro-Geelani face in the valley, who heads the Muslim League, has been in jail since 2014.

The rise

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), widely known as the Hurriyat, came into being in July 1993. It was an outcome of the armed rebellion that swept through Jammu & Kashmir in 1989. The unprecedented militancy broke out just three years after the Muslim United Front — of which Geelani and Jamaat-e-Islami were also a part — saw a crushing defeat in the polls, which was touted to be widely rigged in favour of the National Conference and its partners.

By 1993, the armed rebellion saw itself split into different ideological compart-

ments, including those that demanded complete independence like the J&K Liberation Front (JKLF) of Yasin Malik; and those which sought a merger with Pakistan such as the Hizbul Mujahideen of Syed Salahuddin.

When the special envoys from New Delhi and abroad started meeting to discuss the future of Kashmir, they demanded to see a joint political front from the Kashmir militants.

So, around 26 political parties, civil society members and traders' organisations came together to form the Hurriyat. In its constitution, all the parties agreed that Kashmir was a "disputed State", called for a "peaceful struggle" and a solution "as per the resolutions passed by the United Nations", which calls for the right to self-determination of people of J&K. Kashmir's head cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who was 19 years old in 1993 and had mooted the idea of forming a joint forum, became the first chairman of the amalgam that had both pro-Pakistan and pro-independence organisations in it.

The Hurriyat, which wielded influence over the militant outfits and was able to control the streets, became a formidable force in the 1990s. In an address made at Burkina Faso in 1995, then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, in an apparent offer to separatists, said "short of *azadi* (freedom), sky was the limit as far as the demand in Kashmir for autonomy was concerned".

Riding high on its growing popularity among the masses, the Hurriyat's call for boycotting the 1996 Assembly elections and the 1999 Lok Sabha elections saw noticeable impact on the ground, with many polling booths registering zero voter turnout.



Most Hurriyat leaders, including Geelani and Yasin Malik, were lodged in different jails for their anti-election campaign in 1999.

Pakistan also started recognising the Hurriyat as "the sole voice" of Kashmir. The Pakistani Embassy and visiting dignitaries from Islamabad started inviting the Hurriyat-affiliated political outfits for dinners and discussions over the Kashmir issue to the chagrin of New Delhi.

This necessitated more engagement with the Hurriyat leaders by the Centre. However, the government exploited the personality clashes within the Hurriyat to pick and choose the leaders to negotiate separately. The engagement, however, did not lead to anything concrete.

The September 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S. saw worldwide anger growing against Islamist armed movements. As the West's attention turned against Islamism militancy and started perceiving it through the prism of terrorism, the Hurriyat also saw

its goodwill waning and divisions started cropping up.

The split

The first major fissure emerged when the Hurriyat constituents accused the Peoples Conference, headed by Abdul Ghani Lone, of fielding proxy candidates in the

The Hurriyat, which wielded influence over militant outfits and was able to control the streets, became a formidable force in the 1990s, and called for election boycotts

2002 Assembly elections. Later, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's decision to engage with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) further deepened the divide, with Geelani raising questions about the futility of engaging New Delhi without a concrete road map for Kashmir.

As the growing differences resulted in the Hurriyat's split in 2003, 12 out of 26 constituents removed Maulana Abbas Ansari, who was pro-Mirwaiz, as its chairman and named Masrat Alam of the Muslim League, who belonged to the Geelani faction, as its head. Later, the Ansari faction met deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani in 2004 to initiate a dialogue on Kashmir. It also supported former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's four-point formula and advocated a triangular dialogue between Delhi-Srinagar-Islamabad after 2005. The ouster of Musharraf from power and the end of the term of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh put the curtain on the four-point formula, which many see as the closest ever Kashmir got to a final settlement in the past three decades.

BJP's approach

After its emphatic election victory in 2014, the BJP's approach towards the Hurriyat

also steadily changed.

The first major salvo from the BJP came in 2015 when India put a precondition to Pakistani National Security Adviser (NSA) Sartaj Aziz not to meet Hurriyat leaders in New Delhi ahead of the NSA-level talks. Since then, Hurriyat leaders' meetings with the Pakistani Embassy were discouraged or barred.

The government started a crackdown on the Hurriyat in 2017 when many leaders, including Mirwaiz's spokesman Shahid-ul-Islam and Geelani's son-in-law Altaf Shah, were arrested. Pro-independence JKLF was banned in March 2019, immediately after the Pulwama attack, and its chairman Yasin Malik was arrested.

The frequent raids and questioning of Hurriyat leaders by the National Investigation Agency and the Enforcement Directorate silenced the separatist groups. Both Geelani and Mirwaiz were placed under house detentions. By the time the Centre ended J&K's special constitutional position on August 5,

2019, the Hurriyat factions were rendered paper tigers with no structure or manpower to mobilise supporters.

The Hurriyat's inability to respond forcefully to the Centre's decision has earned it a bad name even among its supporters, who have started questioning the entire leadership. Now, with Geelani's death, the alliance faces a vacuum.

The Hurriyat appears to be weakened organisationally, but the sentiment it represents still remains strong among a sizeable population of Kashmir. The Centre's recent statement that it's not going to ban the Hurriyat immediately suggests that removing the platform completely from the political landscape of J&K is not a favourable idea. The Hurriyat's absence will remove an interface between the underground militant outfits and the government. In the future, for any talks, the Centre may have to engage with militants directly, if the Hurriyat goes off the scene.

RAKESH ASTHANA

Capital commissioner

Delhi's police chief is awaiting a court ruling on his appointment

DEVESH KUMAR PANDEY

It's been just about a month since Rakesh Asthana, a 1984-batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre, took up his new assignment as the Delhi Police Commissioner. The appointment came about two months after Mr. Asthana's name was dropped from the CBI Director race as he did not have six months left in service, a condition laid down by the Supreme Court in 2019.

Mr. Asthana has held top posts in multiple central agencies such as the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). For a brief period, he also served as an interim chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Given his vast experience, there would be high expectations from him within the rank and file of the force. He has already initiated structural and functional changes in the Delhi Police. However, Mr. Asthana's appointment is being challenged in court by petitions filed by Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), an NGO, and one Sadre Alam.

The government's order dated July 27 allowed an inter-cadre deputation and extension of service to Mr. Asthana by one year for his appointment as Police Commissioner just days before his superannuation on July 31. The Delhi High Court has issued a notice to the government and posted the



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

matter for the next hearing on September 8. The High Court has also allowed an application filed by the CPIL for making it a party in the case. Earlier, the Supreme Court had asked the High Court to decide on the issue of Mr. Asthana's appointment, preferably within two weeks.

SC directive

The petitioners have contended that the appointment is a clear breach of the Supreme Court's directive as he did not have a minimum residual tenure of six months; no UPSC panel had been constituted for the appointment; and the appointment violated inter-cadre deputation policy of the All India Service Officers.

While the legal validity of the arguments of both sides would be decided in the court, it is not the first time an IPS officer of a different State cadre has been made the Police Commissioner of Delhi. Ajai Raj Sharma, a

1966-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, had headed the force from July 1999 to June 2002.

In the past, Mr. Asthana's appointment as the CBI Special Director on October 22, 2017, was also challenged by an NGO, Common Cause. However, after hearing the case, the Supreme Court dismissed the PIL plea, holding that the decision was not illegal.

Back then, CBI Director Alok Kumar Verma had submitted a two-page dissent note to the administrative supervisory body, Central Vigilance Commission

(CVC), opposing Mr. Asthana's elevation. He had mentioned that Mr. Asthana's name had come up in connection with a case involving Gujarat-based Sterling Biotech and Sandesara Group. Later, he got a clean chit in the matter.

The feud between Mr. Verma and Mr. Asthana continued for months. It culminated in the registration of

an alleged bribery case against Mr. Asthana and others in October 2018. As it turned out, he had, in a communication to the Cabinet Secretary in August 2018, highlighted the alleged irregularities on the part of Mr. Verma.

After the battle shifted to the court of law, the Central government stepped in to divest both officers of their responsibilities after a CVC recommendation. A special investigation team was set up to look into the charges against the two officers. Mr. Asthana was later cleared of the allegations.

Born in 1961 in Ranchi [then in Bihar], Mr. Asthana did his schooling from Netarhat School and pursued higher studies in St. Xavier's College (Ranchi) and then in Jawaharlal Nehru University. Among the cases pursued by Mr. Asthana were the Purulia arms drop case and the fodder scam. He headed the probe into the 2002 Godhra train burning case in which 59 Hindu pilgrims were killed.

In January 2019, Mr. Asthana was appointed BCAS chief and in July, he was given the additional charge of the NCB. He then became the BSF Director-General in August 2020. Under his supervision, the NCB conducted investigations into the drug smuggling allegations after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, and made several arrests, including that of Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Shiwik.

JALLIANWALA BAGH

Monument of a massacre

Renovations spark a controversy on how the killings should be remembered

DAMINI NATH

A debate over how the Jallianwala Bagh massacre should be remembered was sparked off last week after the government unveiled the renovated look of the site, leading some historians to say history was being distorted.

Should the site of the brutal killing of Indians by British forces on April 13, 1919 be restored to the state it was in on that day, a largely barren ground at the end of a narrow entrance where victims became trapped, or should it be spruced up for visitors today and in the future? For the Culture Ministry, which supervised the renovation work carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and NBCC India, a government-owned construction company, the changes were required to preserve the site and make it more visitor-friendly. Some historians, however, argued that turning the site into a well-manicured garden and covering the entrance corridor with bright metallic murals was an attempt at changing history.

Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar was closed for renovations for about a year-and-a-half till Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated it to the nation on August 28. Four new galleries were also inaugurated by the Prime Minister that day. The well in which victims jumped to their deaths trying to escape the bullets has been cleaned and cordoned off with glass.



A lily pond, a sound and light show and new amenities for visitors have been created.

The project was designed by a Gujarat-based company, Vama Communications, which has in the past developed museums on Mahatma Gandhi in Gujarat as well as the National Police Museum in Delhi. While inaugurating the renovated memorial, Mr. Modi said the new look of Jallianwala Bagh would inspire Indians for years to come. "It is the responsibility of every nation to preserve its history," he said.

A site of protests

Before Independence, Jallianwala Bagh was one of a site of protests and meetings. Professor Amandeep Bal, head of the history department at Amritsar's Guru Nanak Dev University, said the site may have been a "bagh" [garden] earlier, but was a barren ground with a few trees in 1919. Surround-

ed by the back walls of houses in the cramped Walled City, the bagh remained a site for protests and meetings till 1947. On the day of what became the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, it was the festival of Baisakhi. People had gathered at the site to protest against the arrest of freedom fighters Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal a few days earlier.

Forces under the command of General Reginald Dyer opened fire on the unarmed crowd. The exact number of deaths that day remains unclear. Prof. Bal said that while the government had a list of 379 victims, another list of 492 names was found at the DC's office and committees headed by Madan Mohan Malviya and the Congress estimated the figure to be around 1,500 and 1,200, respectively. Guru Nanak Dev University has been tasked with researching the exact number of martyrs by the Punjab Government, a task, Prof.

Bal said, is a tough one given that many families did not come forward in the aftermath of the massacre. Among the documents, she said, are mentions of a large number of unidentified bodies. While the exact number of martyrs, hundreds or thousands, is unknown, Prof. Bal says one thing is clear. "Massacres should be remembered, not celebrated. When visitors enter the place, they should automatically bow their heads. The atmosphere should be very sombre".

Over the years, starting with the creation of a trust after 1947 and landscaping in 1974, Prof. Bal said there have been changes to the site. The latest round of changes, some say, have gone too far. Retired Jawaharlal Nehru University professor Chaman Lal said renovations of heritage sites should be limited to strengthening the structures to increase longevity, not changing the appearance. London-based historian Kim A. Wagner, whose book *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* tells the story of the events leading up to massacre and its aftermath, went as far as saying the last traces of the event had effectively been erased.

Responding to some of the criticism, Culture Secretary Raghendra Singh said the "conservation was carried out under direct supervision of the ASI" and that "there was nothing factually incorrect".

Vodafone Idea pays ₹149 cr. to Franklin MF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI
Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund said it had received a payment of close to ₹149 crore from Vodafone Idea Ltd. as interest on its securities investment, which will be distributed among investors of the segregated portfolios.
“The interest amounting to ₹148.75 crore due from Vodafone Idea Ltd. on September 3, 2021 for the security... (Non-convertible debenture) held in the segregated portfolio of five schemes has been received,” a Franklin Templeton MF spokesperson said.
Of the six debt schemes of the fund house, which were wound up in April 2020, five had made investments in the telecom firm.

India urges early TRIPS waiver ruling on COVID shots at WTO

Goyal makes pitch at meeting attended by BRICS trade and economic ministers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI
India has pitched for an early outcome of the TRIPS waiver proposal for COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the government said in a release on Saturday.
Addressing a meeting attended by trade and economic ministers of BRICS countries on Friday, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal also stressed on finding a permanent, adequate and equitable solution to the public stock holding programmes for food security purposes.
The minister emphasised



Common cause: In May, 62 nations including India, South Africa and Indonesia sent in a revised proposal. ■REUTERS

“the need for a permanent, adequate and equitable solution to the Public Stock Holding programmes for food security purposes; early outcome of the TRIPS Waiver proposal for vaccines,”

sions of the TRIPS Agreement in relation to the prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19.
In May this year, a revised proposal was submitted by 62 co-sponsors, including India, South Africa, and Indonesia. Mr. Goyal also said the BRICS countries should work together for strengthening the multilateral system, stating that there was a need for a balanced and inclusive outcome in the forthcoming WTO Ministerial Conference.
“In this era of exponential jump in the use of e-commerce... a common action plan among BRICS countries will help,” it said.

‘Demand revival to facilitate 33% jump in textile exports’

Several factors favour Indian exporters: Textiles Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE
Demand for textile and clothing from India has revived, particularly in the U.S., EU and U.K. markets, and lends confidence that the industry can achieve a 33% growth in exports this financial year, said Upendra Prasad Singh, Secretary, Union Ministry of Textiles.
Asserting that several factors were now in favour of Indian exporters, with many top brands looking at alternative sources to China and that India was one of the main options, Mr. Singh said that government policies, especially RoSCTL and RoD-



TEP, would help exporters this year. Textile and clothing exports had been almost stagnant for the last seven years at less than \$40 billion, the Secretary told *The Hindu* on Saturday.
Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Tex-

tiles, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal had on Friday urged the industry to aim to raise textile and clothing exports to \$100 billion, from \$33 billion, at the earliest and called on them to lift domestic output to \$250 billion.
Stakeholders should collectively look at achieving \$44 billion exports in 2021-2022 for textiles and apparel, including handicrafts, Mr. Goyal told exporters. The different segments of the industry should support each other so that India was able to tap opportunities across the value chain in the global market, he added.

DRL sells anti-cancer agent to Citius Pharma

Drug firm to receive \$40 mn upfront

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories said it had agreed to sell all rights to E7777, an investigational anti-cancer agent, and certain related assets to Citius Pharmaceuticals Inc.
In March 2016, it had acquired exclusive global rights, excluding for Japan and Asia, to E7777 (an engineered IL-2-diphtheria toxin fusion protein) from Japan's Eisai Co.
Dr. Reddy's will receive \$40 million upfront on closing of the transaction followed by a milestone payment of up to \$40 million related to the CTCL (cutaneous T-cell lymphoma) indication approval and up to



\$70 million for additional indication approvals. Further, it will receive certain sales-based milestones and tiered earn-out payments, the drugmaker said in a release on Saturday.
E7777 has significant potential as an important component of systemic therapy for CTCL and other cancers.

TV PICKS

Tokyo 2020 Paralympics: DD Sports & Eurosport (SD & HD), 5.45 a.m.; **Closing Ceremony,** DD Sports & Eurosport (SD & HD), 3.45 p.m. onwards
England vs India: Fourth Test, day 4, Sony Six & Sony Ten 3 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
European WC 2022 Qualifiers: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Monday)
F1: Dutch GP: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
US OPEN 2021: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 8.30 p.m. & 2 a.m. (Monday)

IN BRIEF

Rihaan's half-century goes in vain
NEW DELHI
Rihaan Kohar's 50 proved in vain as Delhi Capitals managed to script a narrow 12-run victory over Florence Cricket Academy in the Push Academy (u-13) league on Saturday.
The score: Delhi Capitals 138 in 31.2 overs (Mohak Kumar 45; Aarav Jeph 3/26) bt Florence Cricket Academy 126 in 38 overs (Rihaan Kohar 50).

Mario Mandzukic announces retirement
ZAGREB
Iconic Croatian striker Mario Mandzukic has retired from the game, three years after playing his last international. AFP

Abhinand takes 1500m gold
BHUBANESWAR
Army's Abhinand Sundaresan clocked a personal best 3:45.83s and won the 1500m gold in the 70th Services athletics championships at the Kalinga Stadium here on Saturday.
The gold medalists: Men: 1500m: Abhinand Sundaresan (Army) 3:45.83s. **10,000m:** Kartik Kumar (Army) 30:49.38s. **400m hurdles:** Dhaval Utekar (Air Force) 51.20s. **High jump:** V. Bharathi 2.19m. **Hammer:** Jaswinder Singh (Navy) 61.08m. **4x100m relay:** Mohay (Naitam Saurabh Rajesh, Mohammed Sadath, Muhammed Ajmal, K.S. Pranav) 4:00.8s. **Decathlon:** Usaid Khan (6978 pts).

Manu still enjoys lead

Chikkarangappa cards a six-under 61 to be T-2

GOLF

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD
Gurugram's Manu Gandas maintained his overnight five-shot advantage with a three-under 64 in round three of the Vooty & Haldi-sponsored Golconda Masters Telangana Open golf championship at the Hyderabad Golf Association (HGA) course.
Manu (64-58-64), looking for his maiden win, totalled 20-under 186 after three days. He mixed an eagle and three birdies with two bogeys in the penultimate round.
Bengaluru's Chikkarangappa (67-63-61), the 2019 champion, shot a six-under 61 to rise three spots to tied second place at 15-under 191. The others in joint second were Chandigarh's Yuvraj Singh Sandhu (67-62-62) and Noida's Amardeep Malik (66-61-64), who fired



In his element: Chikkarangappa's display was among the best of the day. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

third round scores of five-under 62 and three-under 64 respectively.
The 25-year-old Manu had a rather sedate front-nine on Saturday as he missed several short birdie putts and also bogeyed the seventh after finding the water hazard. His only bright spot on the front-nine was the up and down from the bunker for par on the sixth.
Manu then got going on the back-nine to reassert his

dominance. He birdied the 10th and 11th thanks to a couple of brilliant tee shots. After a good chip-putt for birdie on the 14th, he came up with another outstanding tee shot on the par-4 15th where he drove the green and converted a seven-footer for eagle.
The scores: 1. Manu Gandas (20-under 186), 2. Amardeep Malik; Yuvraj Singh Sandhu & Chikkarangappa (15-under 191).

Qamar to meet Sood in summit clash

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

Fardeep Qamar beat top seed Chandril Sood 6-4, 7-6 (2) to set up a title clash against Anuj Malik in the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament here on Saturday. Anuj brother Chandril's twin brother Lakshit Sood 6-1, 6-4 in the other semifinal.
The results (semifinals): Fardeen Qamar bt Chandril Sood 6-4, 7-6(2); Anuj Malik bt Lakshit Sood 6-1, 6-4.
Quarterfinals: Chandril Sood bt Chinmay Dev Chauhan 7-5, 6-0; Fardeep Qamar bt Neeraj Yashpaul 6-2, 6-4; Lakshit Sood bt Jagmeet Singh 6-2, 6-0; Anuj Malik bt Amit Bzad 6-4, 6-4.
Pooja reigns
In the ₹1,00,000 AITA women's ranking tennis tournament at Jhajjar, third seed Pooja Ingale emerged champion, beating the top seed Jagmeet Kaur 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 in the final on Saturday.

Holder Gokulam leads the charge

Five ISL sides will also be seen in action

DURAND CUP

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA KOLKATA
Defending champion Gokulam Kerala FC will lead the charge in the 130th edition of the Durand Cup football, which gets underway here at the Salt Lake Stadium on Sunday. The opening match will see local outfit Mohammedan Sporting taking on Indian Air Force in a group A fixture.
The initial league stage will feature a total of 16 teams divided into four groups. With the tournament coming just ahead of

the Indian Super League pre-season a total of five ISL sides will be seen in action.
The knock-out stage starts with the quarterfinals on September 23 while the semifinals are scheduled on September 27 and 28. The final is on October 3.
Impressive
The most impressive among the participants is FC Goa, which has committed four foreigners with Spain's Edu Bedia the standout. The other ISL teams like Hyderabad FC, Jamshedpur FC, Kerala Blasters and Bengaluru FC will have a mix of age-group

and first team players.
Gokulam Kerala FC has announced a squad that is a mix of young recruits from the hinterland in north Kerala and three foreign signings under Italian head coach Vincenzo Alberto Anese. Sudeva Delhi FC and Mohammedan Sporting are the other two I-League teams in the fray.
Delhi Football Club and FC Bengaluru United are the two Second Division clubs while Army Red and Green, Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, CRPF and Assam Rifles are the six defence and paramilitary sides.

Tiana shows Aishwarya the door

Anjali gets the better of Janet in straight games

SQUASH

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GREATER NOIDA
Tiana Parasrampuriah knocked out fourth seed Aishwarya Khubchandani 9-11, 11-3, 5-11, 11-3, 11-9 in the women's pre-quarterfinals of the HCL PSA Challenger squash tournament here on Saturday. Tiana will play Anjali Semwal in the quarterfinals. Anjali beat the fifth seed Janet Vidhi in three straight games.
Akshaya Sri beat eighth seed Aradhana Kasturiraj to set up a quarterfinal against Tanvi Khanna, the champion of the last event in Chennai. Young Anahat Singh won two rounds against quality players to set up a quarterfinal against top seed Sunayna Kuruvilla.
The results (pre-quarterfinals): Men: Abhishek Agarwal bt Mohit Bhatt 12-10, 11-1, 12-14, 11-5; Sandeep Ramachandran bt Kanhav Nanavati 11-6, 11-5, 11-8; Jaideep Sethi bt Rounak Yadav 13-11, 11-9, 11-7; Abhishek Pradhan bt Tarun



Good day: Anahat Singh won two rounds against quality players. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mammen 11-3, 11-9, 11-7; Navaneeth Prabhu bt Ravi Dixit 11-9, 8-3 (retd.).
Women: Sunayna Kuruvilla bt Sunita Patel 11-7, 11-3, 11-3; Anahat Singh bt Rathika Seelan 11-8, 11-8, 11-1; Abhishek Shannon bt Radhika Rathore 11-4, 11-9, 12-10; Urwash Joshi bt Shameena Riaz 11-4, 11-4, 11-5; Tiana Parasrampuriah bt Aishwarya Khubchandani 9-11, 11-3, 5-11, 11-3, 11-9.
Anjali Semwal bt Janet Vidhi 11-8, 11-8, 11-1; Akshaya Sri bt Aradhana Kasturiraj 11-3, 11-9, 11-3; Tanvi Khanna bt Mithali Surana 11-5, 11-6, 11-3.

