



Thamirabarani civilisation 3,200 years old, suggest findings
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Protests called off in Kabul after Taliban bans demonstrations
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Govt. to release ₹56,027 cr. to exporters under various schemes
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Djokovic two wins away from calendar Slam, meets Zverev next
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NEARBY
Haryana govt. ready to investigate Karnal clash

CHANDIGARH
As the stand-off between the farmers and the government continued in Haryana's Karnal on Thursday, State Home Minister Anil Vij said they were ready to probe the protesters-police clash that erupted on August 28.
NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Teachers visiting homes to help with COVID relief
NEW DELHI
Hundreds of schoolteachers in the Capital are visiting homes to get people registered for a scheme to provide compensation to those whose family members died due to COVID infection.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

THE HINDU greets its readers on the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi. There will be no issue of THE HINDU dated September 11, 2021 as Vinayaka Chaturthi is a holiday. Readers can access the online edition at www.thehindu.com

BRICS seeks 'inclusive' intra-Afghan dialogue

5-member group adopts Counter Terrorism Action Plan

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI
The 13th BRICS summit held virtually on Thursday called for an "inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue" for stability in Afghanistan.
The virtual summit, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was dominated by the developments in Afghanistan, and adopted the BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan.
"We have also adopted the BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan. With the agreement on Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation between our space agencies, a new chapter of cooperation has begun," Mr. Modi said, highlighting the key items on the agenda of the summit.

Common ground | A joint statement by BRICS leaders underscored the need to check attempts by terrorist organisations to use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary and carry out attacks against other countries



There is a very strong consensus. Afghanistan should not become a reason for problems in the neighbourhood

On the same page: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders at the 13th BRICS summit, which was held virtually on Thursday. ■ ANI

SANJAY BHATTACHARYA
SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

"We stress the need to contribute to fostering an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue so as to ensure stability, civil peace, law and order in the country. We underscore the priority of fighting terrorism, including preventing attempts by terrorist organisations to use Afghan territory as terrorist sanctuary and to carry out attacks against other countries," declared a joint statement issued at the end of the summit.
The document, titled the New Delhi Declaration, also called for addressing the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, and urged the need to uphold rights of women, children and minorities.

The meeting gave an opportunity to the BRICS countries to discuss the situation in Afghanistan especially as two of the five members - Russia and China - continue to have a diplomatic presence in Kabul where an interim Taliban government is expected to take formal charge in few days.
BRICS countries are evidently divided on engagement with the Taliban with Russia and China adopting a proactive policy on the issue. A Russian media report said the Taliban has invited Turkey, Qatar, China and Iran for the swearing-in ceremony.
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

IITs top Centre's rankings for 2021

IIT-M once again ranked no. 1; JNU, BHU in top 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras was ranked the best higher education institution in the country for the third year in a row by the Union Education Ministry, which released its India Rankings 2021 under the National Institutional Ranking Framework on Thursday.
The IITs dominated the overall rankings, grabbing seven of the top 10 positions. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru was ranked second, followed by the IITs in Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee and Guwahati. Jawaharlal

Top schools | Only three non-IIT institutes feature among the top-10 higher-education institutes

Rank	Institute	Score
1	IIT, Madras	86.8
2	IISc, Bengaluru	82.8
3	IIT, Bombay	82.5
4	IIT, Delhi	81.8
5	IIT, Kanpur	76.5
6	IIT, Kharagpur	75.6
7	IIT, Roorkee	71.4
8	IIT, Guwahati	69.3
9	JNU, Delhi	66.6
10	BHU, Varanasi	63.1

Nehru University (JNU) and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) were at rank nine and 10, respectively.
Among universities, the IISc was ranked one, followed by the JNU, the BHU, the University of Calcutta, the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore, Jamia

Millia Islamia, New Delhi, the Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Jadavpur University, the University of Hyderabad and Aligarh Muslim University. Delhi University was placed 12 among universities and 19 overall.
Among engineering institutions, the IIT, Madras was

number one, followed by the IITs in Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati and Hyderabad, and the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) in Tiruchirappalli and Surathkhal.

IIM-Ahmedabad on top
For management institutions, IIM-Ahmedabad was ranked one, followed by IIM-Bangalore, IIM-Calcutta, IIT-Kozhikode, IIT-Delhi, IIM-Indore, IIM-Lucknow, Xavier Labour Relations Institute in Jamshedpur, IIT-Kharagpur and IIT-Bombay. Jamia Hamdard was ranked one for pharmacy, followed by Panjab University. Manipal College of Dental Sciences was ranked the best in the dental category.
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DU COLLEGES SHINE ▶ PAGE 2

Ford to shut Chennai, Sanand plants; 4,000 jobs on the line

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

The U.S.-headquartered Ford Motor Company has announced restructuring of its Indian operations under which it will stop manufacturing vehicles in India.
The move, which follows accumulated operating losses of over \$2 billion, will impact nearly 4,000 jobs. "Ford India will cease manufacturing vehicles for sale in India immediately...[the



company] will wind down vehicle assembly in Sanand [Gujarat] by the fourth quarter of 2021 and vehicle and engine manufacturing in Chennai by the second quarter of 2022," the company said. It, however, said it would not fully exit the In-

dian market.
The company will focus on 'Ford Business Solutions', along with engineering and engine manufacturing for export as it looks to create a "sustainably profitable" business in the country. It will rely on imports to bring global products such as Mustang Coupe and electric vehicles to India, it said in a statement
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RELATED REPORT ▶ PAGE 12

Allow spying without nod, says Kerala Bill

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI
The police can listen in on any communication, without waiting for official approval, to curb organised crimes, a draft of the Kerala Control of Organised Crimes Bill has proposed. The draft Bill suggests that an officer not below the rank of Additional DGP can authorise an application made by the IO.
DETAILS ▶ PAGE 5

Out of the blue



Hope afloat: Rescue operation under way on Thursday following a boat accident a day earlier on the Brahmaputra that left at least one person dead at Nimatighat in Jorhat district of Assam. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR (REPORT ON PAGE 8)

Centre kicks off major public outreach in J&K

70 Union Ministers to tour 20 districts in coming 9 weeks

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The BJP-led NDA government at the Centre on Thursday kicked off a major public outreach in J&K that will see around 70 Union Ministers meeting people and their representatives for the next nine weeks in the Union Territory.
Initiating the large-scale exercise, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Ministers of State Kailash Choudhary and Shobha Karandlaje met farmers, horticulturists, agriculture scientists and others at the Centre of Excellence at Zawoora in Srinagar.
They took stock of the status of the government's welfare schemes and their implementation in the UT.
Officials said the horticulturists flagged many issues during their interaction with



Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar meeting horticulturists at the Centre of Excellence in Srinagar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the Union Ministers, including the absence of lending from other banks, start-up policy, market intervention scheme for C-grade apple produce, Fasal Bima Yojana for apples and so on. They were assured of the Centre's intervention into the issues raised, officials added.
The Union Agriculture Minister also inaugurated the Technology Park and e-in-

augurated Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) for assisting farmers with issuing weather advisories.
Mr. Tomar's group is the first among the 70 Union Ministers who are slated to visit all 20 districts of J&K in the coming nine weeks.
Second such outreach
This is the second such outreach by the Centre since the

Rahul visits a shrine in Jammu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday arrived in Jammu on a two-day tour and paid obeisance at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine. Mr. Gandhi refused to make any statement. "I have come here to offer prayers to the Mata. I don't want to make any political comments."

'Clarify stance in interfaith marriage case'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court has asked the State government to file an affidavit explaining by September 20 its objections in an interfaith marriage case, in which the police have lodged an FIR against the husband, in-laws, and the person who solemnised the marriage, under the amended Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021, for forceful conversion through marriage.
The woman had categorically denied the police allegation and said she wanted to remain married to the person.
FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 9

Proceedings stayed in Gyanvapi dispute

High Court comes down heavily on lower court for 'departing from traditional way'

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday placed an interim stay on the proceedings in a lower court in the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Vishwanath temple title dispute in Varanasi, including the April order of the lower court that had directed the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a comprehensive physical survey of the Gyanvapi mosque compound adjacent to the temple.
The High Court put a stay on further proceedings in the original suit of 1991 pending before the court till the next date of listing on October 8. Justice Prakash Padia came down heavily on the lower court in Varanasi, stating that



The Kashi Vishwanath temple and the adjacent Gyanvapi mosque. ■ FILE PHOTO

served by the High Court on March 15. "...the court below should wait for the verdict in the petitions pending before this court and not to proceed further in the matter till the time a judgment is delivered. The judicial courtesy and decorum warranted such discipline which was expected from the court below but for the unfathomable reasons, neither of the courses were taken," said the High Court.
'Judicial responsibility' Justice Padia also regretted that the lower court judge "departed from this traditional way" in the present case and chose to examine the question himself. "I have said so with the fond hope that judicial enthusiasm

should not obliterate the profound responsibility that is expected from the court below," he said.
The court allowed the amendment applications filed by the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board and the managing committee of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, and directed their counsel to make necessary amendments in the petition in three days.
The lower court had in April directed the ASI to find out whether the Gyanvapi mosque was a "superimposition, alteration or addition or there is structural overlapping of any kind, with or over, any other religious structure".

HC rejects man's plea to return to Afghanistan without paying fine

'Very bleak chance' of his coming back to India, says court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has rejected the plea of an Afghan national, who is embroiled in a customs case, to go to his country to look after his family, noting there was "very bleak chance" of his coming back to India in view of the prevailing situation there.
Justice Mukta Gupta said there was no ground to release the man's passport and permit him to leave India without depositing the penalty of ₹13 lakh imposed on him.
Ruhulla Amin was intercepted at the IGI Airport here carrying certain medi-

cines illegally to Afghanistan. The value of the seized goods was calculated at ₹90.5 lakh.
A redemption fine of ₹9 lakh was imposed on the petitioner besides a penalty of ₹13 lakh under Section 114 of the Customs Act. Mr. Amin has not paid the penalty.
Ready to deposit 20% The petitioner stated that he has 11 children, his first wife has been killed by militants and he has to look after his family. The plea stated that he was not in a position to deposit the penalty amount. He urged the court to permit him to deposit 20% of the amount and leave for

Afghanistan.
His counsel argued that Mr. Amin is not inclined to take the goods to Afghanistan, hence the redemption fine of ₹9 lakh is not required to be paid and only the penalty has to be deposited.
"In view of this fact and particularly the fact that there is very bleak chance of the petitioner being able to come back to India, in view of the prevailing circumstances in Afghanistan, this court finds no ground to release the passport of the petitioner and permit him to leave the country without depositing the penalty of ₹13 lakh," the court said.



Catching up

The success of the PLI is likely to hinge on how entrepreneurs weigh the risk-reward equation

The Cabinet's approval of a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the textile sector that is expressly targeted at the man-made fibre (MMF) and technical textiles segments is a belated acknowledgment by the Government...

The aim of the scheme is to specifically focus investment attention on 40 MMF apparel product lines, 14 MMF fabric lines and 10 segments or products of technical textiles. These 64 items have been chosen on account of being among the top-traded lines in the global market...

Return of the Mullahs

Taliban have sent a clear message that they care little about what the world thinks of them

The debate on whether the Taliban would form an "inclusive government" representing all sections of Afghan society was laid to rest by the Taliban themselves on September 7 when the group's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, announced the formation of the new administration of the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan'...

Today's Taliban appear to be stronger than their last avatar. In the 1990s, only three countries recognised the Islamic Emirate; the Taliban also never controlled the whole of Afghanistan. But now, more regional powers are ready to engage with them, including China and Russia.

The fall of Afghanistan, the fallout in West Asia

While Pakistan takes a lead role, it is West Asia's influence that will shape the future of the beleaguered country



TALMIZ AHMAD

On September 7, three weeks after they walked into Kabul without any resistance, the Taliban announced an interim Council of Ministers. This government-formation was tightly controlled by Pakistan...

The chord with Pakistan

Pakistan appears to have got its way. Afghanistan's acting Prime Minister is Mullah Hassan Akhund, close associate of former Taliban founder Mullah Omar. But this could be a short-term appointment...

Pakistan's true protégés are Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister, and Mohammed Yaqoob, the acting defence minister, a son of Mullah Omar...

should be the real wielders of power in Kabul.

The West Asian players

While Pakistan is playing the lead public role in Afghan affairs, the country's West Asian/Gulf neighbours will be a significant influence in shaping the future of that beleaguered country.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran have been direct role-players in Afghan affairs for over 25 years. In the 1990s, the first two were supporters and sources of funding for the Taliban, while Iran was an antagonist...

In the 2010s, when the U.S. began to engage with Iran on the nuclear issue, Saudi Arabia became more directly involved in Afghan matters to prevent Iran's expanding influence among Taliban groups.

In 2012, Qatar, on U.S. request, allowed the Taliban to open an office in Doha as a venue for their dialogue with the Americans. This has made Qatar an influential player in Afghan affairs...



many of whom keep their families in Doha.

Competitions for influence

The low-key reactions of the Gulf countries to recent developments in Kabul reflect the uncertainties relating to the Taliban in power, i.e., their ability to remain united, their policies relating to human rights...

Three sets of regional players are active in Afghanistan today: one, the Pakistan-Saudi coalition, which has been the principal source of support for the Taliban-at-war. They would like to remain influential in the new order...

Two, Turkey and Qatar represent the region's Islamist coalition and, thus, share an ideological kinship with the Taliban. Both would like to see a moderate and inclusive administration...

The national security discourse is changing

Policymakers and practitioners are leading the emerging consensus on the need to fundamentally reassess assumptions



HARSH V. PANT

The global security landscape is undergoing a churn, creating complexities and new realities unlike any time in the recent past. From a rising China to the pressures of climate change...

Change in the U.S.

The U.S. policymakers have started changing their cognitive lens when it comes to national security policy making. A process that was started by former U.S. President Donald Trump has been taken forward with gusto by the Biden Administration.

U.S. President Joe Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has suggested that his team's task is to re-imagine American "national security for the unprecedented combination of crises we face at home and abroad: the pandemic, the economic crisis, the climate crisis, technological disruption, threats to democracy, racial injustice, and inequality in all forms".

The U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, too has reiterated this message in his comments that "more than at any other time in my career - maybe in my lifetime - distinctions between domestic and foreign policy have simply fallen away".

Both Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Blinken have taken their cue from their boss, President Biden, who had campaigned on a "foreign policy for the middle-class" and has been unabashed about the need for the U.S. "to invest in our people, sharpen our innovative edge, and unite the economic might of democracies around the world to grow the middle-class and reduce inequality".

There is a growing bipartisan acknowledgement in the U.S. today that if the requirements of American national security during



the Cold War could be largely met by its fleets of bombers, nuclear missiles, aircraft carriers and overseas bases, today's strategic environment requires a different response: one that shores up domestic industrial base, helps in maintaining pre-eminence in critical technologies...

Not a novel idea

The idea that foreign and domestic policies are tightly intertwined is not a novel one. All serious grand strategic thinking in democracies, at the end of the day looks for sustenance in popular public support. Mr. Trump's rise and his ideas challenged both the liberals and the conservatives in the U.S. foreign policy establishment...

Qatar remains a rival for the kingdom as it backs political Islam and improved ties with Iran. The interplay of these rivalries will resonate in Afghanistan.

The third player is Iran: while many of its hardliners are overjoyed at the U.S. "defeat", more reflective observers recall the earlier Taliban emirate which was viscerally hostile to Shias and Iran. Iran also sees itself as the guardian of the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara minorities in the country.

The outlook for security

Besides the challenges that individual countries are grappling with, in West Asia there is the larger issue of regional security after the U.S. withdrawal. The region now has two options: one, an Israel-centric security order in which the Arab Gulf states would link themselves with Israel to confront Iran.

This is being actively promoted by Israeli hawks since it would tie Israel with neighbouring Arab states without having to concede anything to meet Palestinian aspirations. The weakness of this arrangement is that while the regimes of some Gulf states could be attracted to it, their populations are likely to be opposed.

The other option is more ambitious: a comprehensive regional security arrangement. The facilitators and guarantors of this security arrangement are likely to be

China and Russia: over the last few years, both have built close relations with the major states of the region. i.e., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Recent developments suggest that this need not be a far-fetched proposition any more: one, in January, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states led by Saudi Arabia lifted the over three year blockade of Qatar; two, since April, there have been three rounds of discussions between Iran and Saudi Arabia and plans are in place for the next meetings...

Other significant events have also taken place recently. On August 24, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Defence, Khalid bin Salman, the younger brother of the Crown Prince, signed a military cooperation agreement with Russia, in Moscow. This is an obvious case of "strategic hedging" as the U.S. has placed restrictions on defence supplies to the kingdom. Besides this, there were the two conferences in Baghdad - one set up by a coalition of Iraq, Jordan and Egypt for economic cooperation, while the other, on August 28, brought together the principal regional states to confront shared challenges - all these interactions have taken place without U.S. presence.

These developments suggest that the germ of a new regional security order in West Asia is already sown in fertile ground.

Talmiz Ahmad is the former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and holds the Ram Sathe Chair for International Studies at Symbiosis International University, Pune

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Democracy at stake The recent statement of the Chief Justice of India, that the Government is not obeying Court orders, is unprecedented in a constitutional democracy. It is destructive of democracy itself because the Constitution has pride of place for the enforcement of the Supreme Court's orders, under Articles 141, 142 and 144. It is needless to cite, much less recite, that the Supreme Court, under those Articles, has ample powers to see that its orders are implemented. It is their restraint which has led to the present state of affairs. Far from lamenting over the Government not

implementing its orders, the top court should turn the question to itself. Therein lies the answer. The present Government's sense of majoritarianism without any constitutional direction has led to this state of affairs. This has to be corrected. And it is not too late. N.G.R. PRASAD, Chennai

Monetising assets The 'monetising of public assets' carries the risk of ultimately putting more wealth in the hands of a select few in the country. In fact these buyers are sure to be utilising the assets only in the businesses which suit them the most. It may also

lead to clandestine transitions by the buyers of such assets who may 'sublet' such assets or properties on perpetual basis to others on which the Government of India will virtually have no control. If the businesses of these buyers flop on account of the many global reasons of depression, there are chances that banks and financial institutions could face difficulties. The Government of India must tread carefully by putting in place a regulatory framework so that private players do not exploit consumers by levying irrational charges in airports, railway or road utility projects.

Transparency in the monetisation of assets has to be ensured. BRIJ B. GOVAL, Ludhiana, Punjab

Learning Hindi There are many who would agree with Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu's views about the fallout of having opposed Hindi blindly. Apart from being spoken and understood across several States, Hindi is the easiest language to learn. I found myself in trouble when I moved to Vrindavan-Mathura from Chennai, being unable to communicate in Hindi. Of course I managed to overcome the handicap by acquiring a fair amount of

spoken Hindi watching children's serials! Let us approach this issue of learning Hindi with an open mind. M.R. ANAND, Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh

Srinivasa Sastrri Teacher's Day, on September 5, has passed, which also marks the birthday of scholar-statesman Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. There is another tall Indian, acclaimed for his oratory and command over the English language, who deserves recognition too - V.S. Srinivasa Sastrri whose birthday falls on September 22. Both sons of India brought

their share of plaudits to our country. Srinivasa Sastrri made a mark at the Round Table Conferences. That Sastrri was a spitting image of Demosthenes, that grandiloquent orator and peerless patriot, was the confirmed opinion of all the delegates. The Tamil Nadu government has been recognising noteworthy contributions of the past made by tall citizens, and can perhaps think of honouring Sastrri, who was a walking encyclopaedia. Perhaps an academic prize in his honour would be ideal. MANI NATARAJAN, Chennai



To read more letters online, scan the QR code

IN BRIEF

Harman's spell
helps S B Youth

NEW DELHI
Timely strikes by Harman (3/37) helped Sadar Bazar Youth score a narrow three-run victory over Rajnish Gautam Cricket Academy in the Push Academy (u-13) league.

The scores: Sadar Bazar Youth 173/7 in 40 overs (Arjun Chaudhary 65 bt Rajnish Gautam Academy 170/8 in 40 overs (Pratyush Singh 54 n.o., Shivai Malik 44, Harman 3/37).

Tanvar and
Shams shine

NEW DELHI
Aditya Tanvar (5/23) and Asseer Shams (57 not out) set up R. K. B. Academy's nine-wicket victory over V. K. Academy in the 11th Ghevara Cup u-16 tournament.

The scores: V. K. Academy 128 in 35.4 overs (Shubham 45, Vipin Kumar 31, Aditya Tanvar 5/23) lost to RKB Academy 130/1 in 21.2 overs (Asseer Shams 57 n.o., Manthan Tanvar 31 n.o.).

It's all about Ronaldo in Premier League

Though it remains to be seen whether he helps or hinders Manchester United in its bid for titles

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

One of the best players in the history of soccer is making an emotional return for a second spell at one of the world's biggest teams, so it's understandable that Cristiano Ronaldo has been the talk of the town since his stunning transfer from Juventus to Manchester United was completed last week.

His first appearance back at United is likely to be against Newcastle on Saturday and it is one of the most anticipated occasions in the history of the Premier League.

Does his presence virtually ensure United will be "closer to winning" trophies?

Certainly, Ronaldo is a still a guarantee of goals. He has a staggering 785 goals in 1,075 appearances for club and country, after all.



Will he deliver? Cristiano Ronaldo is on the poster for United and fans will hope that he can conjure up match-winning moments. • REUTERS

The top scorer in Champions League history with 134, Ronaldo has delivered the following number of league goals in his last five seasons at club level: 29 in 33

games (2020-21), 31 in 33 games (2019-20), 21 in 31 games (2018-19), 26 in 27 games (2017-18), and 25 in 29 games (2016-17).
His three years in Turin

should perhaps act as a warning for United.

Juve steadily declined with Ronaldo there, to the extent that the team only just scraped a fourth-place finish

last season to qualify for the Champions League. In the Champions League, Juve reached the quarterfinals just once with Ronaldo — before he arrived, it got to the final in two of the previous four seasons.

Does Ole Gunnar Solskjaer turn his team into one whose main function is to supply Ronaldo, and is that a wise strategy? If Ronaldo starts as a lone striker, does United have the wingers who can deliver a regular supply of crosses that he lives off?

In Marcus Rashford and Mason Greenwood, who — when fit — might be first choice, that could be a no, given they are inverted wingers who like to cut inside and shoot.

Solskjaer has said he sees Ronaldo as "more of a centre forward for me at the moment." "I want him in the box, scoring goals," he said.

Europe united against
biennial WC plans

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

European Leagues, the body representing professional competitions in Europe, said on Thursday it was against FIFA's proposal of staging a World Cup every two years.

On Wednesday, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the extensive shake-up would cut out "too many meaningless matches".

European Leagues, whose board of directors include members from La Liga, the Premier League, the Bundesliga, Ligue 1 and Serie A, met on Tuesday.

"On this occasion, the Leagues have firmly and unanimously opposed any proposals to organise the FIFA World Cup every two years," the group said in a statement.

"The Leagues will work together with the other stakeholders to prevent foot-

ball governing bodies to take unilateral decisions that will harm domestic football which is the foundation of our industry and of utmost importance for clubs, players and fans across Europe and the world," it added.

Earlier this week, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin warned hosting the World Cup every two rather than four years would "dilute" the tournament.

Fans from across the globe were also in favour of keeping the World Cup status quo.

Decision soon

Meanwhile, Infantino promised "decisions by the end of the year" on the controversial proposal.

The plan is backed by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who is now FIFA director of develop-

Ankit strives for international excellence

I believe in quality training rather than quantity, he says

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Coaching comes naturally to Ankit Patel, the founder and director of Tennis Vidyalaya in Gurugram. Son of the late Rajesh Patel, a legendary basketball coach who made Chhattisgarh a remarkably strong team, the 34-year-old Ankit is preparing his trainees to excel at the international level.

"To become a good player one needs to become a better human being. The right attitude and positive approach are important to succeed. It was my father's dream that I should have my own academy," said Ankit, who has a few experts to drive the kids on the right path.



Ankit Patel.

Sayantana Dutta doubles up as fitness trainer and sports psychologist, apart from Vishal Kumar who serves as fitness trainer.

Manav Bajaj is highly qualified in sports nutrition, sports performance analysis and sport and exercise science. After having trained under highly successful

coach Aditya Sachdeva, when he was ranked No.3 junior in the country behind Rupesh Roy and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan and worked for him at the Team Tennis Centre for more than 11 years, Ankit opened his centre in 2017. Wrist surgery in both his hands had put an end to his playing career.

Sandeepi Rao has been one of his prominent trainees, and he trains a number of bright youngsters like Victor Mohan Ram, Meher Mishra, Raja Sarvagya Kilaru, Tamanna Tikoria, Param Pratap Singh, Arjun Pandit, Yana Dhamija, among many others.

The trainees not only work on tennis and fitness, but have yoga and meditation in a holistic approach towards

development.

"I believe in quality training, rather than quantity," said Ankit, who works in two sessions from 6 a.m. every day.

Ankit believes in sustaining the good work, not worrying about the results. "You don't have to run after success. Do such things that success comes to you automatically. I am confident that my trainees will make a mark at the world level. The journey has just begun," he said.

Ankit's brother Rohit Patel serves as the coach at the Basketball Stadium in Bhilai, named after their father Rajesh, who passed away while travelling from the Federation Cup basketball in Chittoor to the National junior championship in Ludhiana.

Svayam celebrates paralympians

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The contingent of 54 athletes, which returned with 19 medals including five gold from the Tokyo Paralympics, was felicitated at a dinner hosted by accessibility partner Svayam on Thursday.

The athletes were provided specially modified accessible vehicles by Svayam right before their departure for the Games, and for their visit to the Prime Minister's home on Thursday.

"It is possible for every individual to discover the best version of themselves if given the right opportunity. We can do that by making our infrastructure and facilities accessible to everyone. India's triumph at the Paralympics is a clear example. Accessibility for all is what we strive for at Svayam," said Sminu Jindal, founder Svayam.



Moment to cherish: Deepa Malik, president, Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), with Sminu Jindal, founder of Svayam, at the felicitation function. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Deepa Malik, president Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), thanked Svayam for its efforts and stressed the importance of accessibility.

"Accessibility is one of the most important features of Para Games. If we are able to make our grounds and stadiums accessible for our para

athletes, we will definitely get champions. "Our association with Svayam has been very fruitful. It also reminds us that there is still so much to do in this field," she said.

Gursharan Singh, secretary general PCI, stressed that accessibility was not restricted to persons of

disability.

"Our athletes will inspire the youth and spread awareness about the need for holistic development of infrastructure for the differently abled. It is for everyone," said Gursharan.

In its comprehensive drive towards accessibility, Svayam has made the PCI website accessible and had a social media campaign to cheer the paralympians right through the Games.

Svayam has played a significant role in making the Indira Gandhi International airport in the capital, and many other airports across the country, accessible.

It has been a constant drive by Svayam. A lot has been done to encourage and inspire the Indian athletes to win 19 medals in Tokyo, a big leap from four medals in the last edition in Rio in 2016.

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