



Govt. challenges India's poor ranking in Global Hunger Index

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41 killed as suicide bombers attack Shia mosque in Afghanistan

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Lebanon on the edge after deadly sectarian flare-up

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India meets Nepal in SAFF Championships final today

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IN BRIEF

DU third cut-off list to be released today

NEW DELHI
With undergraduate admissions under the first and second cut-off lists completed at Delhi University, the third cut-off list is scheduled to be released on Saturday.

CITY PAGE 3

Fall in stubble burning incidents, says panel

NEW DELHI
There is a 70% reduction so far in instances of stubble burning in Punjab and 18% in Haryana from last year, according to a report.

NEWS PAGE 10

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2 militants behind recent civilian deaths killed: police

2 soldiers die in anti-militancy operations

PEERZADA ASHIQ SRINAGAR

Two militants, whom the police believe were behind two recent attacks in Srinagar, were killed in two separate encounters in the Valley on Friday.

And a search operation continued for the second day in Poonch, where two Army men – both riflemen hailing from Uttarakhand – died in a gunfight with militants on Friday.

"In an encounter in Pulwama on Friday, Shahid Bashir Sheikh, a resident of Srinagar, who was involved in the killing of civilian Mu-



Tight security: Motorists being frisked in Srinagar on Friday, following the encounter with militants in Poonch. • AFP

hammad Safi Dar on October 2, was killed. One AK-47 rifle and a magazine were recovered," Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar said.

In a separate encounter in Bemina, the police killed a militant, who was identified as Tanzeel from Habba Kadal area. "He was behind the killing of sub-inspector Ar-

shid Mir [on September 12 in the old city's Khanyar area]," Mr. Kumar said. "Besides the two killings, Shahid and Tanzeel were also collaborators in the recent killings of one chemist and two teachers in the city," IGP Kumar said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Tension as man's body found at farmers' protest site at Singhu

A Nihang Sikh surrenders for murder over alleged desecration of holy book

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM/NEW DELHI

Tension gripped the farmers' protest site at the Singhu border in Haryana's Sonapat on Friday after a man, in his early 30s, was found brutally murdered.

Sarabjit, a Nihang Sikh, surrendered late in the evening, taking responsibility for the murder.

Virender Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Law and Order, Sonapat, told *The Hindu* that his claims were being verified.

"He will be formally arrested if his involvement in the murder is established," said Mr. Singh.

Earlier, the Samyukt Kisan



Not giving up: Farmers continuing their protest at Singhu in New Delhi on Friday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Morcha (SKM), the front of farmer organisations jointly fighting against the Centre's farm laws, distanced itself

from the incident saying both parties to the matter – the Nihang group and the deceased person, Lakhbir

Singh – had no relations with it. Though the police refused to comment on the motive for the murder, one of the videos of the incident on social media featured a group of Nihang Sikhs standing over the victim writhing in pain and the people around talking about an alleged desecration of a Sikh holy book.

Lakhbir, a resident of Punjab's Tarn Taran, was found dead, tied to the barricade with his left wrist and a foot partially severed, when a local police team reached the spot around 5 a.m. on Friday.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

CPI (Maoist) confirms top leader's death

MARRI RAMU HYDERABAD

The Central Committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) on Friday announced the death of its member, Akkiraju Hara Gopal, aka Ramakrishna (RK), around 6 a.m. on Thursday due to kidney failure and other ailments.

His death was an irreparable loss to the party, noted a

statement issued in the name of Central Committee spokesperson Abhay.

His final rites were held in the presence of the party cadre, it said. The committee praised his "selfless service to the revolutionary movement".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
ANOTHER REPORT PAGE 5

TB deaths up in pandemic: WHO

COVID-19 reverses global progress in tackling disease

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed years of global progress in tackling tuberculosis and for the first time in over a decade, TB deaths have increased, according to the 2021 Global TB report released recently by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Worse, India (41%) was on

the list of countries that topped those which contributed most to the global reduction in TB notifications between 2019 and 2020. India, along with Indonesia (14%), the Philippines (12%), China (8%) and 12 other countries, accounted for 93% of the total global drop in notifications.

The WHO estimated that some 4.1 million people currently suffer from TB but had not been diagnosed with it or had not officially reported to the national

authorities. This figure is up from 2.9 million in 2019.

There was also a reduction in the provision of TB preventive treatment. "Some 2.8 million people accessed this in 2020, a 21% reduction since 2019. In addition, the number of people treated for drug-resistant TB fell by 15%, from 1,77,000 in 2019 to 1,50,000 in 2020, equivalent to only about 1 in 3 of those in need," it pointed out.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Hasina vows action on pandal attacks during Durga puja

Idol immersion remains largely peaceful in Bangladesh

KALLOL BHATTACHARJEE NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her Government will deliver justice in the violence of Comilla district on October 13 that was marked by mobs targeting Durga puja pandals.

The disturbances quickly snowballed into the largest communal violence in the recent history of Bangladesh and dented the spirit of Durga puja. At least four persons died in police firing, and several were arrested in a country-wide crackdown.

"A thorough investigation is under way in the incidents in Comilla. Nobody will be spared. We are getting a lot of information about the incident. It doesn't matter which religion they belong



Sheikh Hasina

Soon thereafter, a mob targeted some of the prominent puja pandals in the town. On Wednesday alone, approximately 80 locations in Comilla were attacked.

The worst violence took place in Hajiganj of Chittagong where the police had to open fire on a mob that had attacked a temple. Four persons died in the firing and many were injured.

The incidents created a bigger law and order challenge after a minority-run organisation called to suspend immersion of Durga idols as a mark of protest on Friday. However, immersion took place peacefully across the country after the administration requested the pandals to stick to the puja traditions.

CSK win fourth IPL crown



Super striker: Faf du Plessis of Chennai Super Kings plays a shot during his match-winning knock of 86 against Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2021 IPL final in UAE on Friday. • PTI (REPORT ON PAGE 13)

Stalin writes to CMs against cracker ban

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday wrote to his counterparts in Delhi, Haryana, Odisha and Rajasthan, urging them to reconsider the blanket ban on the sale of firecrackers in their respective States.

He also requested them to permit the sale of firecrackers that fell within the norms set by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal.

The firecracker industry is concentrated around Siva-

kasi in southern Tamil Nadu, and about eight lakh workers are involved in it for their livelihood.

Stating that it was the largest in the country, the Chief Minister referred to reports that the four governments had imposed a ban on the sale of firecrackers during the festival.

Later in the day, on learning the decision of the Rajasthan government to lift the ban, Mr. Stalin wrote to his Rajasthan counterpart, Ashok Gehlot, thanking him for the move.

Mudumalai tiger captured after 22-day operation

MDT23 tranquillised with a single dart

ROHAN PREMKUMAR UDHAGAMANDALAM

After a 22-day-long operation, a tiger – nicknamed MDT23 – believed to have been responsible for the death of two herders in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Gudalur, was tranquillised by the Forest Department on Friday afternoon.

The tiger was seen along Masinagudi-Theppakadu Road on Thursday night and tracked to Masinagudi and the surrounding Singara area on Friday morning.

Chief Wildlife Warden Shekhar Kumar Niraj said a single dart, fired from atop a 'kumki' elephant, hit the animal and subdued it around 2.30 p.m.

Supriya Sahu, Principal Secretary, Department of Environment and Forests, said the tiger's health parameters were checked by veterinarians who were part of the rescue operation.

Drugs administered
Medication and drugs were administered to the animal to stabilise its condition. "It is extremely weak owing to the injuries," Mr. Niraj said.



Ordeal ends: MDT23 being taken to a rehabilitation centre in Mysuru on Friday. • M. SATHYAMOORTHY

Its age apart, the tiger has suffered injuries, possibly in a territorial fight with another tiger. The tiger will be taken to a rescue and rehabilitation centre in Mysuru for further treatment.

Officials said once it recovers, a decision would be taken as to whether it would be kept in captivity at Mysore Zoo or at Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Chennai.

Forest Minister K. Ramachandran lauded the efforts to capture the tiger. He said, "All three problem tigers in the Nilgiris in the last decade were shot dead. This is the first such animal that has been captured alive."

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RISE 15:47 SET 02:07

SUNDAY, OCT. 17
RISE 06:23 SET 17:50
RISE 16:20 SET 03:07

MONDAY, OCT. 18
RISE 06:24 SET 17:49
RISE 16:52 SET 04:04

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 35 19
Safdarjang 35 19
Palam 34 20

Delhi Palam Today
35°C The morning will be hazy. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant. Short spell of light rain or thundershower to occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C Day temperature will be decrease. Few spells of moderate rain and thundershower with strong winds are expected.

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IN BRIEF

Capital to receive rain over next two days
NEW DELHI
The Meteorological Department has forecast rain in the Capital on Saturday night and Sunday under the influence of a western disturbance. The maximum temperature is also expected to fall by a few notches after the rain. The minimum temperature recorded in the city on Friday was 18.6 degrees Celsius. The forecast for Saturday said, "Partly cloudy sky with possibility of very light rain or thundershowers towards evening or night. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 34 and 20 degrees Celsius respectively."

DU third cut-off list to be released today

51,974 candidates have secured admission so far; colleges unlikely to offer any major reduction in cut-off

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With undergraduate admissions under the first and second cut-off lists completed at Delhi University, 51,974 candidates have secured admission to 70,000 seats on offer. The third cut-off list is scheduled to be released on Saturday.

But university officials said that colleges are unlikely to offer any major reduction in the required cut-off for admission in general category seats as many colleges are dealing with the problem of admitting more candidates than seats on offer despite asking for near perfect cut-off scores.

On Friday, a Delhi University admission official said that at 5 p.m., the university had received 1,18,878 applications for its undergraduate



uate seats under the second cut-off list and 51,974 had completed the payment formalities at the time of closing of the payment gateway to secure admission.

Under the first cut-off list, 36,130 candidates had secured their admission out of 60,904 applicants. A total of 2.6 lakh candidates had registered on the university portal seeking admission to various undergraduate pro-

grammes offered by the university.

Top picks

The third cut-off list is expected to have more colleges close the admission process. Under the second cut-off list, Hindu College has closed admission in courses such as English, History, Political Science, Physics, Chemistry and Maths while Lady Shri Ram College had closed admission in Maths. Ramjas had closed admission in B.Com (Hons) while Miranda House had closed admission in English, Political Science, Physics, Chemistry and Maths.

SRCC, which has asked for a 100% cut-off for its B.Com (Hons) and BA (Hons) Economics, had reduced its cut-off to 99.12%

and 99.75%, respectively, and is likely to offer a further reduction as all the seats have not been filled. Even lesser known DU colleges like Bharati College had closed admission in most of the courses it offers.

Switching options

According to the university's admission rules, a candidate who applied in any cut-off and had made the fee payment but later wishes to take admission in any subsequent cut-off, subject to meeting the eligibility conditions and required cut-off, will have to cancel his or her admission and re-apply on the admission portal. A non-refundable cancellation fee of ₹1,000 will be levied. The cancellation option will be available only once in a particular cut-off.

If, after applying for a cut-off, a candidate cancels his or her admission, she or he will not be able to apply again for the same cut-off.

"The total number of cancellations will be restricted to (n-1) where 'n' is the total number of cut-off lists. No movement will be allowed during the special cut-off/s and special drive/s," the university said. At the start of the admission process, Delhi University had said that it would release up to five cut-off lists depending on the number of seats vacant as well as special drives and special cut-off lists to fill reserved seats that remain vacant at some of the off-campus colleges over the years. The entire admission process is scheduled to be wrapped up by November 16.

On Vijayadashami, Kejriwal hopes 'Ravana-like Corona' will end soon

CM participates in Ravan Dahan programme near Red Fort

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said that Lord Shri Ramchandra had not killed any particular person, but killed adhama with his dhama, and that he prayed that the entire country gets freedom from this 'Ravana-like Corona'.

"All of us have seen Ramlika and how Lord Shri Ramchandra killed Ravana. It is not the killing of any particular person. It is in a way the victory of dhama over adhama," he said.

The CM attended the Ravan Dahan programme organised by the Luv-Kush Ramlika Committee on the



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on a crane rath at Red Fort ground on Friday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

occasion of Vijayadashami near Red Fort in Chandni Chowk. He ceremoniously lit the 30 feet effigies of the three demon kings - Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnad - by shooting arrows at them and later participated in the aarti of Lord Shri Ram.

Delhi reports 26 new cases, zero fatalities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 26 new COVID-19 cases and zero deaths, according to a health bulletin released on Friday. The Delhi government said that 59,653 tests had been conducted in the last 24 hours with a positivity rate of 0.04%.

There are currently 327 active cases, of which 104 are under home isolation. The total cases since the pandemic began now stand at 14,39,337.

Under the vaccination drive, 75,734 beneficiaries have been vaccinated in the last 24 hours, of whom 28,393 have received their first dose.

Residents oppose Friday prayers in open ground; police intervene

Agitators demand shifting of venue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A group of residents staged a protest in Sector 47 here against holding of Friday prayers in an open space earmarked for the market. The protesters demanded that the venue of prayers be shifted elsewhere. The police, however, prevented the agitators from marching towards the devotees offering namaz and disrupting the prayers.

Holding placards, residents, led by area councillor Kuldeep Yadav, gathered near the site of Jumma Na-

The Sector 47 site was earmarked by the district administration for holding Jumma Namaz after protests erupted against holding of Friday prayers in the open in 2018

ALTAF AHMAD
Prayer attendee

maz (Friday prayers) around noon. The police tried to stop them from marching towards the devotees.

Mr. Yadav said the residents were not against any religion, but were opposed to gathering of "outsiders" in the residential area.

Sunil Yadav, another resident, claimed that the permission to hold Jumma Namaz at the ground was granted only for a day in 2018, and it was being continued illegally.

Altaf Ahmad, representing his community in talks with the administration, said the Sector 47 site was earmarked by the district administration for holding Jumma Namaz after protests erupted against holding of Friday prayers in the open in 2018.

The Assistant Commissioner of Police, Aman, said the protests against the prayers had been going on for the last few weeks and efforts were on to resolve the issue amicably.

AIIMS doctor alleges rape by senior colleague

Efforts are on to nab accused: police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A doctor working at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) alleged that she was raped by a senior colleague during a house party in south Delhi's Hauz Khas in the last week of September, the police said on Friday.

DCP (South) Benita Mary Jaiker said that information was received on October 11 about a medico legal case regarding sexual harassment at AIIMS.

"When the police reached AIIMS, the victim - also a doctor - said that on September 26, one of the senior doctors had forced

himself on her when she went to his room during a colleague's birthday celebration," the officer said.

Based on her statement, a case under Sections 376 and 377 of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Hauz Khas police station.

"During the course of investigation, statement of the victim was recorded before the Magistrate, and raids have been conducted at some of the possible hideouts of the accused. But he is still at large," the DCP said.

According to the police, technical surveillance has been mounted to nab the accused.

'Arrested Pak. national had married in 2007'

Motive was to obtain identify papers: officer

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Pakistan national Mohammed Ashraf, who was arrested in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar on October 12, had married a woman in 2007, police sources said on Friday.

A senior police officer said that Ashraf, who was living in India for nearly 15 years as Ali Ahmed Noori, had married a woman in 2007 and left her after three-four months. "The reason to marry was to acquire goodwill in society and for identity documents," the officer said.

Sources said as part of his training, he was asked by his

handlers to kill officials in Jammu and Kashmir about a decade ago as well. "His main task was J&K. He needed to fulfil many requirements in J&K - from arms and ammunition to other logistical needs," the officer said.

During initial questioning, the police said, it was revealed that he was involved in the 2011 High Court blasts and so far has admitted to conducting reconnaissance before the blasts. "He has identified Gulam Sarvar, who was involved in the High Court blasts, and said that he had conducted the recon on his directions," the officer said.

HC quashes FIR against man for COVID-19 rule violation

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has quashed an FIR registered against a man for allegedly violating COVID-19 guidelines after his arrival from France in February 2020, noting that he cannot be punished for any alleged violation retrospectively.

Justice Mukta Gupta said the man had arrived in India on February 5, 2020, well before the guidelines came into effect on February 15.

"The fact that once the guidelines issued on March 24, 2020, were applicable for people entering India on or after February 15, 2020, the same could not have been given further retrospective operation for the petitioner [man] who had arrived in the country on February 5, 2020," the court ruled.

HC asks govt. to decide on plea over 'missing' trees

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has ordered the Delhi government to decide on a complaint by an environmental activist who claimed that around 77 trees had gone missing in Sarvodaya Enclave over a span of seven years.

Justice Rekha Palli directed the deputy conservator of forest (south) and the tree officer, south division, Department of Forests and Wildlife, to give a reasoned and speaking order on the complaint made by Bhavreen Kandhari, within six weeks.

The High Court order came while hearing Ms. Kandhari's plea seeking a direction that necessary action be taken on her complaint. The Delhi government's counsel told the court that it did not have any objection to deciding on her complaint expeditiously. "In the light of the aforesaid stand taken by the res-



pondent (Delhi government), the writ petition, along with the pending application, is disposed of by directing the respondent to decide on the petitioner's complaint dated December 8, 2020, by passing a reasoned and speaking order within a period of six weeks from today," the High Court said on October 11.

In her petition, Ms. Kandhari said that she made a complaint to the official concerned after two tree censuses in Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi, in 2011-2012 and 2018-2019, showed that around 77 trees had gone missing in the colony.

Elderly couple duped of over ₹5 cr.; two held

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men have been arrested for allegedly cheating an octogenarian couple of ₹5.24 crore on the pretext of high returns on their investments, the police said on Friday.

Additional Commissioner of Police (EOW) R.K. Singh said the accused have been identified as Ankit Thakur, 29, and Vinod Arya, 28, who allegedly duped the senior citizens through their firm - Ecounsellor Webtech Private Limited - that was engaged in website development.

The police said that the duo took advantage of the victim, who is a retired senior government employee with the Ministry of Labour and is visually-impaired. He and his wife were duped to the tune of ₹5.24 crore on the pretext of providing high returns.

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President meets troops at Udhampur

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UDHAMPUR
Reaching out to the Army's Northern Command troops looking after the operational area of Jammu and Kashmir, President Ram Nath Kovind broke away from tradition and had *Bada Khana* with the soldiers and their families here on the occasion of Maha Navami, the culmination of the nine-day-long Navratri, on Thursday.
The President began his visit to the region on Thursday from the Union Territory of Ladakh, where he performed the Sindhu Darshan puja at the Sindhu Ghat in Leh, the officials said.
He was received by Ladhak Lieutenant-Governor R.K. Mathur at the Leh airfield. Late in the evening, Mr. Kovind arrived at the main ground of the Army's Northern Command headquarters in Udhampur.

Teacher held for kicking Dalit boy in Tamil Nadu

Crime came to light after video shot by students went viral

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CUDDALORE
The Chidambaram town police have arrested a teacher at the Nandanam Government Boys Higher Secondary School for flogging and kicking a Class XII student belonging to the Dalit community.
Though the crime took place on Wednesday, it came to light only on Thursday night after a video shot by the students went viral on social media.
The physics teacher, Subramanian, has been suspended, following a preliminary inquiry by District Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Officer P. Chellapandi.
The police said headmaster Guganathan was doing the rounds on Wednesday when he found a student not attending classes. He took

the 17-year-old to the classroom and complained to Subramanian about it. The teacher enquired with the student and allegedly caned him. As the teacher got hold of the student's hair and started flogging and kicking him, a few students took out their phones and shot videos.
The student sustained injuries on the thighs, and was admitted to the Rajah Muthiah Medical College and Hospital at Chidambaram. Based on a complaint from the student, the police booked a case against the teacher under Sections 294 (b) (uttering obscenities), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means) and 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act, read with the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
The teacher was arrested and remanded in judicial custody.
Official sources said a team, led by Mr. Chellapandi, conducted an inquiry and found that Subramanian had assaulted and kicked the student. While in the class, the student asked permission from Subramanian to go and bring his practical notebook. However, he went and joined seven other students who did not attend the class. The headmaster took the eight students to the classroom. While the teacher caned seven students and admitted them into the classroom, he flogged the Dalit boy and kicked him for lying to him. This was found during the inquiry.

SAD, AAP hit out at Centre on BSF issue

Both term it a direct attack on federal structure of country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH
The Ministry of Home Affairs' decision to enhance the powers of the Border Security Force (BSF) to "arrest, search and seize" within 50 km from the international boundary in Punjab has created a furore among political parties in the State.
The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) accused the Centre of impugning the rights of Punjab and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) termed it a direct attack on the federal structure of the country.



Sukhbir Badal Harpal Singh Cheema

'BJP, Cong. conspiracy'
SAD leaders and workers on Thursday staged a protest near the Governor House against the decision. SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal alleged that the BJP and the Congress have both colluded to hatch the anti-Punjab conspiracy.
Mr. Badal said this was the second time that the Centre had impinged on the rights of the State. "The Centre has discriminated against the farmers of the State by bring-

ing in the three farm laws. Now it is effectively taking control over law and order over half of the State by extending the jurisdiction of the BSF," he said.
He termed the move an attack on the federal structure. "The SAD will fight to right this wrong as we stand for a genuine federal structure." He charged Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi with selling off the interests of the State and the government of not mounting an effective opposition to the new measure, which was condemnable.
Leader of the Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema of

AAP stressed that Mr. Channi should convene an all-party meeting and call for a delegation to meet the representatives of the Central government.
'Roll back decision'
He demanded a special session of the Assembly to condemn and pass a resolution seeking a rollback of the decision. An unannounced emergency like situation has been created. "Earlier also, the Union government had enacted agriculture laws without the consent of the States, thus robbing them of their rights," Mr. Cheema added in a statement.

I-T Dept. raids detect ₹184 cr. unaccounted income

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI
The Income-Tax Department's searches against two real estate groups and associated entities in Maharashtra, Goa and Rajasthan have led to the detection of ₹184 crore unaccounted income.
During the search operations, which commenced on October 7, the agency covered about 70 premises in Mumbai, Pune, Baramati, Goa and Jaipur.
Certain suspicious flow of funds pertaining to the two groups had taken place with the involvement of an influential family of Maharashtra, said the agency without disclosing the identities. "The evidence gathered has revealed several unaccounted and 'benami' transactions. Documents, evidencing the unaccounted income of the two groups, have been found," the I-T Department said. The agency also identified transactions made by the two business groups with a web of companies that appeared to be suspicious.

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General Public is hereby informed that one male **Name: Unknown S/o: Unknown, Address: Unknown** was found dead at KM Pole No. 6/01-5/47, DN Line Railway Track, near Jhakhira Fly Over in the area of P.S. Delhi Cantt. Railway Station, Delhi on 10.10.2021. The body has been preserved in Deen Dayal Upadhyay hospital's Mortuary, Delhi for 72 hours. In this regard a case has been lodged vide **DD No. 28A U/s 174 Cr.P.C. dated 10.10.2021** at P.S. Delhi Cantt Railway Station, Delhi. The description of the dead male is as under:- **Age:** About 18-20 years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'6", **ID Mark:** A tattoo mark of Shiv Bhola and RAJ on right arm, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Hair:** Long, **Injury:** Head and arms are separated from body, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Dark purple colour printed shirt, blue colour pant and blue & black colour shoes. If any one having any information about this dead male please inform undersigned.
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Lions maul girl to death near Gir
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD
An eight-year-old daughter of a migrant farm labourer was mauled to death by two lions in Amreli district on Friday. The incident occurred on Friday morning when a pair of lions picked up the girl while the migrant labourers were sleeping in a field. "Her parents and others found her remains in a nearby field, and spotted two lions in the area," Forest officials said.

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It is hereby informed that Sh. Parveen Kumar Gandhi S/o Late Sh. Kanwar Bhan Gandhi, Prop. M/s. N.P. Dey, 38th Mile Stone, Delhi-Jaipur Highway Village-Khanda, Gurugram-122003 was the partners in allottee firm of Sh. No. 16-D, Phase-VI HSIIDC, Udyog Vihar, Gurugram, measuring 316 Sq. Mtrs., has expired on 14.04.2014. Mrs. Neeru Gandhi W/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi and Mr. Vaibhav Gandhi S/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi, has made a request to the Corporation (HSIIDC) for transfer of the aforesaid property in the name of legal heirs and also submit and legal heirs certificate dated 22.07.2021. Through this public notice, it is hereby informed that in case, any of the legal heirs of Late Sh. Late Sh. Parveen Kumar Gandhi S/o Late Sh. Kanwar Bhan Gandhi or any other person has any reservation/objection to the said transfer then he/she can file his/her objection in writing before the undersigned or to the General Manager (Estate), HSIIDC, Limited, Udyog Vihar, Gurugram along with an affidavit, within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. In case, no response is received within the aforesaid period, it will be presumed that the legal heirs or any other person has no objection for transfer of the said property in favour of Mrs. Neeru Gandhi W/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi and Mr. Vaibhav Gandhi S/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi and the Corporation (HSIIDC) will proceed further for transfer of the said plot in favour of Mrs. Neeru Gandhi W/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi and Mr. Vaibhav Gandhi S/o Late Sh. Parveen Gandhi, both resident of Flat No. 901, Citizen Society, G-1, Sector-51, Wazirabad, Sector-45, Burjurgam-122003, Distt. Gurugram. Sd/- General Manager, For and on behalf of Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited Udyog Vihar, Gurugram

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Versus
1) Smt. Mansa Devi W/o Late Sh. Hoshnar Singh S/o Harji
It is to be intimated to the aforementioned persons that the proceedings of mutation in respect of Sale deed Reg. No. 393/2014, dated 21/05/2014 executed before the Sub-registrar Baijnath in favour of Smt. Mansa Devi W/o Late Sh. Hoshnar Singh is pending but in spite of repeated notices, the above Vendors failed to appear before the undersigned and it is final notice through publication to appear on dated 25/10/2021 at 10:30am, otherwise the mutation will be attested and sanctioned in your absence.
Order by
Vijay Kumar Sharma
AC IInd Grade, Tehsil Baijnath Distt. Kangra (H.P.)

PUBLIC NOTICE
JASCH INDUSTRIES LTD
Regd. Office : 502, Block C, NDM-2, NSP Pitampura, Delhi 110034
www.jaschindustries.com
email: skverma@jasch.biz
CIN: L24302DL1985PL383771
NOTICE under Regulation 47 of SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015 is hereby given that a Meeting of Board of Directors of the Company will be held on 23-10-2021 at 12:30 hours inter alia to consider and approve standalone and consolidated unaudited Financial Results of the Company for the Quarter & Half-Year ended on 30-09-2021. Further details will be available at www.bseindia.com and www.jaschindustries.com
Sd/-(S.K. VERMA)
SONIPAT Vice President & 13-10-2021 Company Secretary

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PUBLIC NOTICE
THE PUBLIC AT LARGE IS HEREBY INFORMED THAT LATE SHARWAN KUMAR SINDHWANI S/o RAM LAL, Ro 23, HERITAGE APARTMENT, PLOT-10, SECTOR-11, DWARKA, N-75 WAS HAVING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY IN OUR PROJECT VATIKA INDIA NEXT GURGAON 122004, PLOT No.1, K-4, SECTOR-83 ADMEASURING 297.86 SQ YARD WHICH HIS LEGAL HEIR SHALLU SACHDEVA REQUESTED THE COMPANY TO BE TRANSFER TO HER NAME (SHALLU SACHDEVA). ANY PERSON HAVING ANY OBJECTION ON THIS PLEASE MAY CONTACT THE COMPANY OFFICER DETAILS AS UNDER WITHIN 15 DAYS AFTER WHICH NO CLAIM WOULD BE ACCEPTED
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011-45090051, 9818333201

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that, Swapan Kumar Gupta S/o Late Dr. B. Gupta R/o Flat No. 5104, Sector - C, Pocket - 9, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, allottee of Flat No. 9104, Sector-C, Pocket-9, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070, has applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from lease hold to free hold in DDA. The original documents i.e. DDA Allocation Letter, DDA Possession Letter, DDA Possession Slip and NOC for Water & Electricity, of the aforesaid flat has been lost. An FIR has been lodged to this effect.
Any person/s claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person or above address/phone no. 9811671707 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (LAB) H or Director (H) - 1, D Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan (N.A), New Delhi.



IN BRIEF

Kerala likely to receive heavy rainfall till Sunday

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Several districts are likely to receive heavy rainfall till Sunday under the influence of low pressure areas that have formed over the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. Indications are that there will be a reduction in rainfall over Kerala by Monday as the weather systems are not expected to intensify further.

Bommai to campaign for bypolls from tomorrow

BENGALURU
Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will start campaign for the byelections to two Assembly seats from Sunday. Veteran leader and former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa will start from October 20. The bypolls have turned out to be tricky for the Chief Minister, who will be leading the party's campaign in the 2023 Assembly polls, as he has to demonstrate his leadership abilities by winning both the seats.

Centre asks Kerala to increase generation at hydel stations

Support sought during off-peak hours till October 31 due to coal shortage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Given the severity of the coal shortage crisis, the Union Ministry of Power has asked Kerala to provide support by increasing generation at storage-based hydroelectric stations, such as the 780 MW Idukki power project, especially during off-peak hours. In an October 14 letter, the Power Ministry asked Chief Secretary V.P. Joy to issue the necessary directions for providing the support till October 31.

By then, "the demand on thermal generating stations is likely to be normalised," it said.

There is scope for increasing generation at storage-based hydel stations in the State, such as the Idukki power project, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., the daytime off-peak hours, in addition to the peak hours, the Ministry noted.

Reservoir	on Oct. 13
Idukki	86%
Pampa	85%
Sholayar	98%
Idamalayar	86%
Kundala	91%
Mattupetty	91%

Quantum not specified
With the coal situation likely to take time to stabilise, the Ministry is reportedly looking to meet the demand with "higher generation support" from other sources such as hydropower. However, the Ministry has not specified the quantum of electricity required for the Central pool or terms, State Power Department officials said.

The State is likely to respond to the letter by Saturday. It is understood that the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) are, in general, amenable to the request. However, in return, the State is looking for support from the Ministry for meeting the soaring daily peak-hour demand.

"We are looking at, say, 100 MW, for meeting the peak-hour demand. Moreover, the Centre has not specified the terms or price for the supply of power to the Central pool," a senior official of the State Power Department said.

Peak-hour shortage

Due to the coal crisis, Kerala has been faced with a shortage of approximately 300 MW during the evening peak hours (6 p.m. to 11 p.m.) in Central supply. Consequent-

ly, the State is spending an additional ₹2 crore daily on power purchase from the open market to make up for the shortfall, Electricity Minister K. Krishnankutty noted earlier this week.

There is a strong feeling in the State's power sector circles that the Centre should be capping prices in the power markets, given the seriousness of the coal crisis. Per unit prices in the power exchange had shot up to ₹20 at one point, noted a KSEB official.

Earlier this week, Mr. Krishnankutty had ruled out load-shedding and power cuts in the State till October 19, when the power situation is set to undergo a review. Following the dip in Central supply, the KSEB has already increased hydel generation. In recent days, internal hydel generation accounted for over 40% of the daily consumption.

'Rituals held in Tirumala as per Agama'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) administration has informed the Supreme Court that rituals held in the temple are true to traditions followed since the 10th century without any cause for complaint from devotees.

TTD Executive Officer K.S. Jawahar Reddy was responding to a plea filed by a petitioner, Srivari Dadaa, raising objections about the performance of sevas, utsavams and darshan provided to pilgrims at the temple dedicated to Lord Sri Venkateswara.

"Sevas/utsavams to the Lord are performed by archakas under the supervision of Pedda Jeeyangar Swamy and Chinna Jeeyangar Swamy strictly in accordance with Vaikhanasa Agama," the affidavit said.

Mr. Reddy said the system of performing sevas and utsavams was commenced by Sri Ramanujacharya in the 10th century.

BJP has put Hindutva in danger, says Uddhav

'It was a mere tool to gain power'

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

In a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena president and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday said that Hindutva is now in real danger because of those who used it as a tool to gain power in the country.

"In my opinion Hindutva is in real danger now by those who used it as a tool to gain power. They are now using the British policy of divide and rule. They will now divide us on caste lines. Then we have to stand together as a Marathi. When it comes to non-Marathi, we have to stand united as a Hindu (against BJP)," said Mr. Thackeray in his annual Dussehra rally address. This was Mr. Thackeray's first off-line speech in over two years and lasted for more than an hour.

Reiterating that he is a proud Hindu who sees his Hindutva as nationalism, the Sena chief referred to a speech by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat where he spoke of all Indians having the same

ancestors. "If our ancestors are same, then who were the ancestors of those farmers who are protesting? Of those killed in Lakhimpur-Kheri? Do you accept what is happening to them Bhagwatji? Do people accept this?" he asked.

The Chief Minister wanted to know whether the use of Central agencies such as CBI, ED and IT against political opponents is also a part of Hindutva. Targeting wives and children is not machismo, but "unmanly," he said.

'Centre's interference'

Pointing out increasing interference of the Centre in State matters, Mr. Thackeray said if the Constitution has given equal rights then all States must come together to stop Centre's interference. "It is time that the rights of State and Centre must be discussed. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar while writing the constitution had said that States and Centre will have equal rights, except in three sectors of emergency, foreign attack and foreign affairs," Mr. Thackeray said.

'Return endosulfan to company for disposal'

STAFF REPORTER
KASARAGOD

Disposal of endosulfan stocks faces a new hurdle, with a popular movement taking out a protest march to Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK) godowns in Kasaragod district. The protesters have called for the pesticide stocks to be returned to the company for safe disposal.

Inaugurating a protest march, Congress leader and MP Rajmohan Unnithan said he and his party would oppose the decision to dispose of and deactivate en-

dosulfan at the current storage. He said such a decision had been taken by authorities when the affected people had not yet been compensated as ordered by the Supreme Court.

Dinesh Kartha, State general secretary of the Kerala Congress, said in 2012, when there was threat of endosulfan leaks from old godowns, they were transferred to new godowns.

Authorities at the time announced that endosulfan in the reservoirs would be deactivated soon, but no action was taken, he added.

When RK made a dramatic appearance for talks

RAVI REDDY
HYDERABAD

It may be a coincidence of sorts that Akkiraju Haragopal alias Ramakrishna alias RK, the top Maoist leader who died due to prolonged illness in Chhattisgarh on Thursday, accompanied by gun totting personal guards and fellow comrades, drove out from the high security Manjeera Guest House in Greenlands on October 15, 17 years ago, after holding talks with the then Congress Government, headed by late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

After a dramatic appearance from the dense Nallamala forests on October 11,



Failed talks: Top Maoist leader Ramakrishna is surrounded by PLGA men at the Manjeera Guest house in 2004. FILE PHOTO

2004, at Chinna Arutla village in Prakasam district, RK, then CPI(ML) People's War Group's AP State Committee Secretary, carrying an AK-47 slung across his shoulder

arrived to a rousing welcome.

In a strange quirk of fate, the police and the naxals were face to face at the guest house and the former had to

provide security to the latter.

Over the next two days, there were hectic parleys among the government machinery and the Maoists leaders.

N. Venugopal, Editor of *Veekshanam* magazine told *The Hindu* that RK, who was the leader of the delegation, conducted the proceedings. Mr. Venugopal recalled how RK was considerate and accommodative. He would take even exact opposite view points with a smile.

With no breakthrough achieved, the naxal leaders led by RK went back to Chinna Arutla and were never to be seen again.

Belagavi wants RT-PCR waiver for businessmen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BELAGAVI

The border district of Belagavi has sought exemption from mandatory submission of RT-PCR negative certificate from persons entering Karnataka from Goa and Maharashtra.

The district administration has urged the government to allow people to freely enter Karnataka, as the incidence of the epi-

demic has reduced significantly in all the three States.

DC's letter

Deputy Commissioner M.G. Hiremath has sent a letter to Tushar Girinath, Principal Secretary, Revenue and member-secretary, State Executive Committee on COVID-19 management, to exempt the need for RT-PCR certificate.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
Electrical (General), Branch
CORRIGENDUM TO OPEN TENDER

NIT No.	Name of work with Location	Corrigendum made
JBP/LT No.-10/2021 Dtd. 06.10.2021	*Electrification of 4 Miscellaneous work (i) Electrification of FOB in 13 station at Jabalpur division (BMR, PTWA, LGCE, GRO, TKYR, PKRD, GSPR, KKB, GPC, GMD, BGTA, SOL, NWR) (ii) Augmentation of power supply to Bakhtera railway station by installation of separate 63 KVA DTR and 11 KV supply in place of LT LINE (iii) Augmentation of power supply to HARDUA railway station by installation of separate 63 KVA DTR and 11KV supply in place of LT LINE (iv) Up gradation of Neelambari substation to cater load of redevelopment of Jabalpur station at JBP div".	New Tender Document with correction & Detailed estimates for Schedule-B&C (item no-01 MBEB estimate) uploaded.

Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical General)
West Central Railway, Jabalpur

कोरोना को भगाना है, मास्क व वैक्सिन लगाना है।

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology
of Jammu, Estates Division, Chatha, Jammu (J&K) -180 009

e-NIT No: AU/Estates/21-22/24 Dated: 08-10-2021
Notice Inviting e-Tender

For and on behalf of the SKUAST-Jammu, tenders are invited by e-tendering mode from the contractors/firms registered with CPWD/ PWD /BRO/Railways/MES for the following works:-

- Construction of International Family Hostel (G+2) alongwith associated sanitary fittings & internal electrification at Main Campus, Chatha, Jammu amounting to Rs 652.63 lakhs
- Construction of 06 sets for residence of Director Research, Director Education, Dean F.O.A, Dean Students Welfare, Estates Officer and Medical Officer (G+2) alongwith associated sanitary fittings & internal electrification at Main Campus, Chatha, Jammu amounting to Rs 476.85 lakhs
- Construction of Faculty Club (G+1) alongwith associated sanitary fittings & internal electrification at Main Campus, Chatha, Jammu amounting to Rs 231.50 lakhs

Note:- Further details can be seen from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> Sd/-
No: AU/Estates/21-22/F-14/2017-22 Dated: 08-10-2021 Estates Officer, SKUAST-Jammu

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

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person **Namely**: Unknown, **S/o**: Unknown, **R/o**: Vagabond, **Age**: about 48 years, **Height**: 5'5", **Complexion**: Fair, **Face**: Oval, **Built**: Medium, **Wearing**: White Colour Lining Shirt & Chocolate Colour pant and Bare foot has been found dead at Baramda Shankar Market, Near Shop No. 06, Connaught Place, New Delhi on 08.10.2021. In this regard a case vide DD No 30A dated 08.10.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. The dead body has been preserved at Lady Harding Hospital Mortuary, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this found dead person may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO:
P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi
New Delhi Distt., Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23413800

DP/348/NDD/2021

WESTERN RAILWAY
PROCUREMENT

Advertised Tender Notice No.WTR/17/2021/09 dated 14.08.2021 for tender on E Procurement mode invited by Chief Engineer (Track Supply), Head Quarter Office, Old Building, 2nd floor, Churchgate, Mumbai: 400 020 for supply of the following item:- **Sr. No.:** 1 **Tender No.:** 216023 **Short Description:** 6 mm thick GRSP to RDSO Drg. No. T-4218 **Quantity:** 10149 **Set Date of Opening:** 23.11.2021 **Sr. No.:** 2 **Tender No.:** 216025 **Short Description:** Various types of Bolts & Nuts **Quantity:** 999.63 MT **Date of Opening:** 24.11.2021. For detailed tender conditions/Corrigendum if any please visit www.ireps.gov.in and www.indianrailways.gov.in

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SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one boy, (depicted in the photo), **Namely**: Nasir, **S/o**: Nabi Hassan, **R/o**: H.No.D-1/290, Dayalpur Khajuri Khas, Delhi, **Aged**: about 20 years, has been missing from his house since 28.05.2016 at vide DD No. 7-A dated 02.06.2016, has been lodged at P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi. His physical description is as under: **Height**: 5'8" Feet, **Complexion**: Wheatish, **Face**: Round, **Built**: Medium, **Clothing**: Blue Colour T-Shirt & Jeans.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing boy, may inform SHO, Khajuri Khas, Delhi at **E-mail**: cic@cbi.gov.in or **website** : <http://cbi.nic.in> **Tele No.** : 011-24368638 or 24368641

S.H.O
P.S. Khajuri Khas, Delhi
Ph: 011-22962735, 22195181

DP/1008/NE/2021

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male **Namely**: Unknown, **S/o**: Unknown, **R/o**: Unknown was found on 07.10.2021 at DDU Hospital on MLC No. 8168/21. Dead Body has been preserved in DDU Hospital Mortuary for identification for 72 Hrs. In this regard DD No. 82A, dated 07.10.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Hari Nagar, Delhi. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, **Age**: About 55 Years, **Height**: 5'7", **Built**: Thin, **Face**: Long, **Complexion**: Shallow, **Hairs**: Black & White, **Wearing**: Blue & White Colour Check Kurta & Payajama.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Hari Nagar, Delhi
Ph.: 011-28125719, 8750871128

DP/587/WD/2021

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-Procurement Notice

The Executive Engineer, Electrical Division HPPWD, Una on behalf of the Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites/reinvites the short terms item rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD/Principal manufacturers of Principal manufacturer fulfilling the qualifying criteria along with documents on a single/two bid system for the works as detailed in the table: The Fee payment Mode may be considered online.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost (In ₹)	Earnest Money (In ₹)	Time Limit	Cost of Form (In ₹)	Eligibility of contractor
1.	C/O Tehsil Office building at Ghanari Tehsil Ghanari District Una H.P. (Sh.- Providing E.I. therein)	16,70,683/-	32,000/-	Two Years	500/-	B
2.	C/O HPPWD Circuit House building at Una (H.P.) (Sh.- Providing E.I. therein)	22,27,466/-	44,600/-	One Year	500/-	B
3.	C/O School building at G.S.S.S.(Boys) Una District Una (H.P.) (Sh.- Providing E.I. therein)	24,62,050/-	49,300/-	One Year	500/-	B
4.	C/O Additional accommodation (Commerce block) at Maharana Partap Degree College Amb Tehsil Amb Distt. Una (H.P.) (Sh.-Providing E.I. therein)	29,85,212/-	52,300/-	Two Years	1500/-	A
5.	C/O Multipurpose Culture Center at Samoor Kalan District Una (Sh.- Supply installation Testing and Commissioning of Live Feed Monitoring and output therein.	28,30,120/-	50,000/-	Two Months	1500/-	Specialised Job
6.	Providing one No 6 Passenger Electric Elevator alongwith electrical wiring in new Court Complex una District Una (H.P.)	19,00,000/-	36,000/-	Six months	500/-	Specialised Job
7.	C/o Mother Child Health Care Centre in Regional Hospital at Bilaspur HP	53,50,467/-	88,000/-	Two Years	2000/-	A
8.	Providing 250 KVA Servo oil cooled voltage stabilizer for PSA Plant (1000 LPM) in Dr. RKGMC, Hamirpur H.P.	9,91,874/-	20,000/-	Six Months	350/-	Specialised Job

Key Dates:

1. Date of Online publication : 22-10-2021 at 17.00 HRS.
2. Document downloads start and end date : 22-10-2021 at 17.30 HRS upto 29-10-2021 at 17.00 HRS.
3. Bid submission start and end date : 22-10-2021 at 17.30 HRS upto 29-10-2021 at 17.00 HRS..
4. Physical submission of Original tender documents : 30-10.2021 at 11.00 HRS.
5. Date of Technical Bid opening, evaluation of Technical Bid followed by opening of Financial bid : 30-10.2021 at 11.30 HRS.

BID OPENING DETAILS:

1. The bids shall be opened on dated 30-10-2021 at 11.30 HRS. in the O/o Executive Engineer, Electrical Division HPPWD, Una by the authorised officer.
2. If it happens to be holiday on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bid will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue and no separate notice will be given in this regard.
3. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 120 days after the deadline date for bid submission.
4. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder's to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.
5. The competent authority on behalf of Governor of H.P. reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason.

Executive Engineer,
Electrical Division,
HP PWD Una

HP / 4488/21-22 SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK VIBHAG



Tackling terror

Civil society, political forces must do their best to remove fear among minorities in J&K

The uptick in the number of deaths of civilians, including those of the minority community after terror attacks recently is a major setback when the number of violent incidents in the Kashmir Valley was the lowest in five years. Orchestrated allegedly by a shadowy force calling itself The Resistance Front (TRF), termed by security forces as being set up by the LeT, the killings have resulted in fear gripping the Valley's minority Hindu and Sikh communities. Notwithstanding statements from mainstream political parties and separatist organisations condemning the violence, many Kashmiri Pandit and Sikh employees abstained from work or took leave temporarily, worried about their security. This is an unfortunate outcome that calls to mind the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits due to terror attacks in the early 1990s. The reversal of this dangerous trend requires not only a reassurance of security from the Government for members of the minority communities such as the Pandits and the Sikhs but also a commitment for solidarity with the victims from the various political forces and civil society. The targeted nature of the killings by a "faceless" terror group suggests that its aim was to use the disquiet in the Valley with the recent administrative and political measures to foment communal discord and violence.

Beyond the condemnation from the polity, civil society in such situations must take the initiative to foster communal amity and to mobilise people across communities against hatred. In this regard, the recent appeals by some masjids in Srinagar requesting the public to show solidarity with the victims and to prevent the furthering of fear among Kashmiri Pandits is a welcome step indicating an intention to not let the situation deteriorate to what happened in the early 1990s. The UT administration followed up with a strong crackdown on the insurgency seeking to isolate and quell the militant network that is allegedly responsible for the attacks. While the reactions from the polity and civil society and the administrative actions by the Government are necessary, they are not sufficient to restore normalcy in the Valley. The suspension of the polity with the absence of an elected Assembly, and the stasis and alienation that had set in since the abrogation of J&K's special status, its bifurcation and designation as a Union Territory would make the job of administration even more difficult. An immediate renewal of political dialogue to address this along with the restoration of Statehood and the complete resumption of political and press freedoms will help create the environment to isolate and tackle terror in the region.

Fast forward

Gati Shakti can cut logistics costs if it can convince all States to come on board

With the Gati Shakti National Master Plan that he launched on October 13, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expanded on the familiar theme that India's slowing economic growth engine can find renewed momentum through major infrastructure upgrades that will cut logistics costs for industry and raise all round efficiency. Essentially a technocratic administrative initiative that promises silo-breaking integration of 16 Ministries including railways, roads and ports through information technology, satellite mapping and data tools, the programme seeks to appeal to the national imagination as an umbrella integrator of ₹11-lakh crore worth of projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) for 2020-25. The importance given in the plan to rail-road multimodal connectivity and higher share of freight for the railways – articulated also by NITI Aayog – has evident multiple benefits. This includes reducing the cost of logistics to GDP that has prevailed at about 14% even at the time the NDA government took office, to an aspirational 8%. There is also the challenge of reducing vehicular emissions from road freight growth in order to meet climate change commitments and containing input costs due to extraordinarily high taxes on diesel. A similar fillip to efficiency in port operations can increase cargo handling capacity and cut vessel turnaround time. Evidently, States have a crucial role in all this, considering that key pieces of the plan such as port linkages and land availability for highways, railways, industrial clusters and corridors depend on political consensus and active partnership.

The observations in the Economic Survey for 2020-21 underscore the role of active Centre-State partnerships for infrastructure building. The Survey projects maximum investments towards NIP sectors such as energy, roads, urban infrastructure and railways for FY 2021 and 22, with about ₹8.5-lakh crore to be invested by either side annually, besides ₹4.5-lakh crore per year from the private sector. There is a steep gradient to cover here, as the effects of COVID-19 continue to be felt in terms of lost jobs, depressed wages and consumption, while the planners are pinning their hopes on infrastructure projects for a new deal outcome that will boost jobs and demand for goods and commodities, besides attracting major investments. Significant delays to projects can often be traced to incompatible and hostile land acquisition decisions that alienate communities or threaten to violate environmental integrity. Given the Centre's preference for Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing to identify potential industrial areas, policymakers would do well to reclaim lands already subjected to degradation and pollution, rather than alienate controversial new parcels. Convincing citizens that they stand to benefit from such grand plans through better social welfare, lower service costs and higher efficiencies, and respecting federal boundaries while dealing with the States are other imperatives.

It is time to rise in defence of Bollywood

Everything about it embodies the 'composite culture' that is an affront to the uni-dimensional bigotry of Hindutva



SHASHI THAROOR

The recent media frenzy targeting actor Shah Rukh Khan following the arrest of his 23-year-old son Aryan for alleged drug possession (though it has since been admitted that no drugs were found on his person) has led to a major campaign against the film industry ecosystem that allegedly enables "drug culture". While nothing yet has been established in a court of law, the episode is one more instalment in what appears to be a new drama series unleashed by the guardians of our public space – a war on Bollywood.

Smearing the industry

Last year, there was an all-out assault on the character of starlet Rhea Chakraborty who, after months of media frenzy linking her to the death by suicide of her boyfriend, actor Sushant Singh Rajput, was arrested and detained for several days for allegedly buying drugs for him, claims she denied and which were never substantiated. This in turn had already led to a huge campaign against alleged drug abuse in Bollywood, with four other actresses being called in for questioning. No charges were made, but the process, as is so often the case, proved to be the punishment.

But it is not just drugs that have been used to smear the film industry. In January this year, at least 10 police complaints were filed, in more than half a dozen States across the country, against film-makers, actors and Amazon executives of a made-for-television political drama called *Tandav*, which allegedly offended Hindu sensibilities by its depiction of a character portraying Lord Shiva. Another crime thriller, *Mirzapur*, underwent similar harassment, for similar reasons; *A Suitable Boy* had cases filed against it over a kissing

scene filmed near a temple. In March this year, properties linked to film-maker Anurag Kashyap, actress Tapsee Pannu and Reliance Entertainment group CEO Shibhashish Sarkar were raided by the Income Tax department as part of a tax evasion investigation against a company, Phantom Films, that had been dissolved in 2018.

The alarm bells have begun to go off in the minds of some in our political class. Maharashtra Minister Nawaab Malik has alleged that the raids were an attempt to suppress the voices of those who speak against the central government. Jaya Bachchan – a one-time movie star herself, wife of megastar Amitabh Bachchan, and a member of the Rajya Sabha – decried a "conspiracy to defame the film industry". The latest media campaign against Aryan Khan suggests the conspiracy is still alive.

The outside influence

As these allegations suggest, it is not really drugs that are the issue here for the powers-that-be. The alleged violation of our narcotics laws is merely a convenient cudgel to batter an industry that is disliked for other reasons. The political establishment recognises the outside influence of Bollywood entertainment on the minds and attitudes of the broad viewing – and voting – public. What those in power, who have demonstrated their intolerance of points of view other than their own for some time now, really dislike is not what Bollywood does behind closed doors, but the content of what it puts out – what one might call the political culture of Bollywood.

When I wrote my novel *Show Business* in 1990, some Indian critics were surprised that I would follow *The Great Indian Novel* with a work that dealt with the trashy world of commercial Bombay cinema. But I did so because to me, Indian films, with all their limitations and outright idiocies, represented a vital part of the hope for India's future. In a country that is still perhaps 30% illiterate, films represent the prime vehicle for the transmission of popular culture and values. Cinema offers all of us

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



In India a common world to which to escape, allowing us to dream with our eyes open. And with 570 million Internet users, India also offers a remarkable market for new cinema for the OTT (over-the-top) platforms – direct to our laptops and mobile phone screens – a market Bollywood is poised to dominate.

Plots and the message

In India, popular cinema has consistently reflected the diversity of the pluralist community that makes this cinema. The stories they tell are often silly, the plots formulaic, the characterisations superficial, the action predictable, but they are made and watched by members of every community in India. Muslim actors play Hindu heroes, South Indian heroines are chased around trees by North Indian rogues. Representatives of some communities may be stereotyped (think of the number of alcoholic Christians played by a "character actor" like Om Prakash), but good and bad are always shown as being found in every community.

I was first struck by this quality of Bollywood not long after the Bangladesh War, when the 1973 film *Zanjeer* offered a striking pointer to me of what Bollywood had come to represent in our society. In the film, Pran played Badshah Khan, a red-bearded Pathan Muslim who exemplified the values of strength, fearlessness, loyalty and courage. This was just a year after the bloody birth of Bangladesh in a war in which most of the subcontinent's Pathans were on the other side, but far from demonising the Pran figure, the film-makers chose not just to portray a strong Muslim character but to make him the most sym-

pathetic presence in the film after the hero. This would not have been possible in many other countries, but Bollywood tended to be consistently good at this sort of thing, making megahits like *Amar Akbar Anthony*, about three brothers separated in infancy who are brought up by different families – one a Christian, one a Hindu and one a Muslim. The message was clear – that Christians, Hindus and Muslims are metaphorically brothers too, seemingly different but united in their common endeavours for justice.

This kind of message is unsurprising, given who makes these films. Many have observed that Muslims enjoy a disproportionate influence in Bollywood, most apparent in the dominance of the trio of actors Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Aamir Khan for three decades (six of the 10 highest-grossing films ever made feature one of the Khans). Several other prominent Bollywood stars – Naseeruddin Shah, Saif Ali Khan and the late Irrfan Khan – are Muslim. None of them was invited when, in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted a famous photo-op with a couple of dozen Bollywood A-list personalities flown to New Delhi for the purpose.

Possible 'appeasement'

In today's charged political atmosphere, generated by the ascendancy of political figures associated with Hindutva, the photo-op suggested that the "A" in "A-list" seems increasingly to stand for "appeasement" of the authorities. Many Bollywood celebrities embarrassed themselves by participating in a Government-run social media campaign to denounce global celebrities like Rihanna and Greta Thunberg for their support to our agitating farmers, earning themselves the sobriquet "#Sellebrities".

The real problem is that the Sangh Parivar dislikes diversity, and the film world embodies the very idea of India's diversity in the way in which it is organised, staffed, and financed – and in the stories it tells. Everything about

Bollywood embodies the "composite culture" whose very existence is an affront to the uni-dimensional bigotry of Hindutva. And as India's entertainment has opened itself to more and more global influence, India's "mainstream" cinema has increasingly shown a capacity for tackling serious themes – caste discrimination, rural injustice, sanitation, women's rights, menstruation, female sexuality, interreligious marriage, homosexuality and even global Islamophobia have featured in recent films.

A chilling effect

This worries those who prefer Bollywood to continue to limit itself to formulaic entertainment, the proverbial "bread and circuses" necessary to distract the general public from governmental failures. The plot is thickening. New Internet guidelines, whose application and operations are yet to be tested, have already prompted Amazon Prime Video to suspend plans for a second season of the popular rural political series *Paatal Lok*. Other releases are reported to have been postponed indefinitely. Even the prospect of official disapproval has already had a chilling effect.

Bollywood, which makes over 2,000 films a year, has long been India's calling card to the world of entertainment. Our films and TV shows have the capacity of going global on the small screen the way Korean cinema has but Chinese has not – because censorship and intimidation stifles one set of film-makers and not the other. The remarkable creative talents available in India could make the country a global leader for such worldwide offerings. But to do that we must allow our film-makers creative freedom, stop harassing them and cease encouraging media persecution. It is time to rise up in defence of Bollywood.

Shashi Tharoor is a third-term Member of Parliament representing Thiruvananthapuram and an award-winning author of 22 books, including most recently, *The Battle of Belonging*

Vigilance, vaccination and endemic COVID-19

Continued reduced transmission is an opportunity to progressively relax restrictions, but under vaccination, mask use



T. JACOB JOHN & M.S. SESHADRI

On June 27, 2021, the daily reported COVID-19 cases (seven-day rolling average) had fallen below 50,000, and have remained so for 15 consecutive weeks (Worldometer - Corona-India). That heralded the end of the second wave of India's epidemic and marked its transition to 'endemic' state. It fell below 40,000 on September 9, and below 30,000 on September 24. The trend continues.

Population and infection

Endemic denotes steady weekly numbers without major fluctuations. Fifteen weeks of this trend spells consistency. Kerala, Sikkim, Mizoram and Meghalaya are outliers/exceptions to the national endemic state – they have not yet transitioned to endemic phase (covid19india.org) but their daily case-trends show they will soon catch up and become endemic. Country-level endemicity indicates that the vast majority of the population is already infected and immune, but how large is the majority?

The fourth ICMR sero-survey (June-July 2021) showed 67.6% had antibodies by end July – that is roughly 950 million. The reported cumulative COVID-19 cases by end-July were 30,410,577 (3.2% of 950 million). So, actual infections were -30 times the reported number. From August 1 to October 7 – 2,219,097 additional cases were reported, representing, by extrapolation, 70 million infections, tak-

ing the total to 1,020 million, the susceptible population therefore is 1,400 - 1,020 = 380 million. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) found, in the second sero-survey, that detected antibody prevalence underestimates true immunity prevalence, detecting only -70% of those who were RT-PCR positive earlier, therefore the susceptible pool may be much smaller.

Endemic transmission will be sustained by new infections in previously uninfected remnants plus new additions to population by annual birth cohorts of 25 million (less mortality) and by re-infections in those previously infected.

The second wave of the pandemic was driven by the Delta variant, with a basic reproduction number (Ro) of 6-8. The epidemiology formula (1-1/Ro) is used to calculate the herd immunity threshold (HIT) necessary to end the epidemic, which is -87.5%, in our estimations. Applying the principle of triangulation this observation corroborates the fact of epidemic-endemic transition.

On the job

India rolled out its COVID-19 vaccines on January 16, 2021, but the pace of vaccination is slow, 20% having received two doses (2.2% per month). So, the major contributor to reaching HIT was natural infection in two waves. Two recent preprints, one from Christian Medical College Hospital Vellore and the other from Israel indicate that infection-induced immunity confers greater protection than vaccination (https://bit.ly/3DKXEMC and https://bit.ly/2YWCpZE). Thus, India's immune population has good short-term protection against re-infection and disease. Indeed, the reinfection rate in India according to



the ICMR was only 4.5% (https://bit.ly/3pcZp10).

India's COVID-19 control strategy, hitherto addressing epidemic COVID-19, has to be modified now for endemic COVID-19. Two important factors will dictate the modifications: Senior citizens, those with co-morbidity/cancer treatment/organ transplant, etc. and pregnant women, who had not been infected in the past or not yet vaccinated with two doses, would have risks of severe disease, need for hospitalisation, admission in an intensive care unit, and mortality. They have to be traced individually and vaccinated.

More by re-infections

Endemic transmission will be driven more by re-infections than by first infections. A paper in *The Lancet Microbe*, October 1 (https://bit.ly/2Y0u8qc), reported the durability of immunity against re-infection in coronavirus infections, the profiles of antibody decline and probabilities of re-infection over time, under endemic conditions. Re-infection is likely three months to 5-1 years after peak antibody response, median 16 months. Hence, all previously infected but unvaccinated persons require at least one dose of the vaccine.

Studies have shown that those who had natural infection may need only one dose of any approved vaccine to stimulate long-

lasting immunity even against reinfection. A meticulous follow-up study of antibody levels in those who had infection is urgently needed to determine when such individuals will need a booster dose. Their immune response profile to one dose of different vaccines also needs to be documented.

Persons previously uninfected but vaccinated with two doses have to be given a booster dose of vaccine to offer protection against breakthrough re-infection. Immunology informs that the optimum time interval for a booster dose is six months to one year after the previous dose. We must monitor both the immune response levels and durability post-booster. Such data will then guide if and when any further booster(s) may be required.

Contact tracing, testing and quarantine requirements – very important during an epidemic spread – will now have to be confined to the elderly and vulnerable contacts so as to facilitate early recognition and treatment of COVID-19, rather than for everyone. Our two-dose vaccination coverage should be rapidly escalated – the current weekly rate of about 0.6% of the population given a second dose, is too slow and must be revved up – through intensive information-education-communication and by vaccination campaigns.

Vaccination should be targeted for the purposes of re-opening all schools and hubs of economic activities. The entire work force in India (organised, unorganised, self-employed, those in the travel and tourism industry) need to be targeted for vaccination; this is best done at the workplace with the help of the respective management and State health authori-

ties. Thereafter, all social, religious, cultural and recreational gatherings can be allowed.

Childhood infection

Childhood infection with the coronavirus is mostly mild and self-limiting as children have lower density of the ACE2 receptor (the portal of cell-entry of virus) in their respiratory passages. Multi-system-inflammatory syndrome, a severe complication encountered in children, is fortunately very rare and treatable. Under these circumstances, children are best protected by fully immunising all school personnel (teachers, non-teaching staff, transport) and all eligible subjects at home, thereby creating a protective mantle.

After any vaccine gets approved for use in children, (Covaxin and ZyCoV-D may be approved soon), they can be immunised – the easiest way forward would be school-based vaccination camps.

Continued endemic transmission is the opportunity to progressively relax restrictions of social contacts, but such return to normalcy must be under the umbrella of vaccination (as detailed above) and universal mask use. When endemicity is sustained over a longer time, seasonal outbreaks (minor waves) must be anticipated – but even they can be averted by vaccination. Vigilance cannot be let down until we ensure that no one remains at risk of severe COVID-19.

Dr. T. Jacob John is a retired professor of Clinical Virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu and former President of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. M.S. Seshadri is a retired Professor of Medicine and Clinical Endocrinology, Christian Medical College, Vellore, and currently Medical Director, Thirumalai Mission Hospital Ranipet, Tamil Nadu

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.

Reaching out

With a militant group at the helm of affairs in Afghanistan, the magnitude of the sufferings of the Afghan people are less likely to be known to the world in precise terms. However, it is easy to infer that the people of a

war-ravaged nation, unable to accept an indifferent regime emotionally, would be in dire need of assistance of all kinds. The priority should be to infuse funds into the region so that food and shelter, the pre-requisites for survival, are taken care of without

loss of time. Let all countries unite to address the humanitarian crisis instead of deliberating on issues which have no solution in the immediate future. India should send COVID-19 vaccines, as a grant first, followed by financial aid and

infrastructural assistance.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

Views in a democracy

Notwithstanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's criticism of a 'selective' reading of rights issues, there is genuine concern in

the country that there is an intolerance towards differences in opinion and the right to dissent. Characterising anything that is said against the present leadership of the country as unpatriotic and anti-national is too much bear. It will only add to the

Prime Minister's grace and stature if he would take criticisms in his stride, and in the right spirit. It goes without saying that ours is a democratic country.
C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Malappara, Kothamangalam, Kerala

How the law caught up with an artful dodger

Monson Mavunkal, a fake antiques dealer, spun a web of lies and mingled with the who's who of Kerala to allegedly swindle people of crores of rupees. **M.P. Praveen** reports on the outrageous exploits of a man who claimed to possess the Staff of Moses, the throne of Tipu Sultan and a car used by Kareena Kapoor

It was around 10 p.m. on September 25. After celebrating their daughter's engagement, the Mavunkal family got ready to retire for the evening at their house in Vallayil in Cherthala municipality of Alappuzha district. Suddenly, the police rushed in – some plain-clothed and others uniformed. They went over to the patriarch of the family, 52-year-old Monson Mavunkal, and handcuffed him. Bouncers in Monson's house, dressed in body-hugging tights, jumped in to save their master. They flexed their biceps and puffed out their chests but retreated meekly when the men and women flashed their IDs. Some took to their heels, eyewitnesses say.

"I was about to shut my shop when I heard the commotion. I saw a few young men running. I stopped some of them – they had had lemonade at my shop earlier – and asked them what was happening. But they were too flustered to reply," says Prashanth whose shop is about 50 metres from the Mavunkal household.

Monson's arrest didn't make it to the next day's newspapers as the Crime Branch (CB) managed to keep it well under wraps. But a day later, headlines flashed everywhere in Kerala about the man who had allegedly swindled tens of people of hundreds of crores; a fabulist who had wilfully blurred the line between fact and fiction for personal gain.

Seller of 'antiquities'

"Monson had moved in more than a decade ago and came across as a perfect gentleman. He would sponsor both the local church and temple festivals. He created the impression that he was a hotshot antiques dealer. So, you can imagine how his arrest came as a shock," says John Varghese, Monson's immediate neighbour in Cherthala.

The drama then shifted some 45 km from Cherthala to Kaloor in the heart of Kochi city as CB sleuths raided Monson's rented house, the size of a mansion. This house had doubled up as his private museum and stored what he had claimed were rare antiquities.

Monson boasted that his collections included the Staff of Moses, silver pieces received by Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus Christ to Roman soldiers, the throne of Tipu Sultan, a copy of the first edition of the Holy Bible, books and parchments from the libraries of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji, the original and hitherto unknown works of Raja Ravi Varma and Pablo Picasso, and crores worth of chemicals that were used for a rocket launch and were certified, he claimed, by a scientist from the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

Monson managed to pass off the majority of these cheap knockoffs as rare antiquities. He even got them showcased by media houses. He successfully made people believe that he was an antiques dealer – by the time he was arrested, after six of his victims jointly petitioned the Chief Minister, he had allegedly cheated people of crores of rupees. The six petitioners said he had cheated them of ₹10 crore.

Monson told everyone that his bank account had been credited with ₹2.62 lakh crore from selling antiquities abroad, and had been frozen under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) since July 2010. He showed bank statements, Finance Ministry papers and even Reserve Bank of India documents – all forged – to his victims to convince them to fund his (non-existent) legal fight to get his funds released.

While his collection of 'antiquities' and nearly two dozen premium cars showcased his wealth, his connections with the police, politicians, civil servants, film stars, and business fraternity were shown by countless photos and videos. These further convinced his victims of Monson's influence.

"Whenever we asked for our money, he organised a mediation by these influential people and kept fleecing us," says Anoop V. Ahammad, one of the petitioners who allegedly gave Monson nearly ₹6 crore in less than four years. Monson allegedly once organised a meeting in which a senior Congress MP from Kerala agreed to mediate on his behalf through the Public Accounts Committee, constituted by Parliament, to expedite the release of his funds.

One of Monson's immediate neighbours, who wished to remain anonymous, in Kaloor recalls how the narrow lane along his house was often choked with the vehicles of visiting celebrities.

Monson even took some of the petitioners to Delhi, where he reportedly got them to exit through the green channel at the airport and arranged a three-star vehicle, purportedly allotted to senior police officials, to shift them to a premium hotel to further prove his influence. He gave away premium vehicles and rare 'antiquities' to placate the petitioners at various points.

Then, some eight months ago, the pe-



DAZZLED, THEN FADED: "The petitioners ran out of patience as Monson's claims turned even more outrageous – as he even invoked the Prime Minister to sell his story." The house in Kaloor where Monson Mavunkal was staying. (Below) Mavunkal (blue shirt), now in custody. • THULASI KAKKAT; SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



tioners ran out of patience as Monson's claims turned even more outrageous – he even invoked the Prime Minister to sell his story. "That was when we turned really suspicious and started gathering evidence against him and cross-verifying his claims. We wanted to bind him to something legally tenable. We insisted on an agreement to get our money back," says Anoop.

As the demand for a refund got shriller, Monson even sent two of the petitioners to West Asia to generate funds through the sale of antiquities, convincing them that he could not accompany them as there was a travel ban in place. When they demanded ownership documents of the antiquities, he instead gave them police documents calling for high security for his 'rare collections'.

As persuasion no longer worked, Monson apparently turned to coercion. He flashed the three guns he had and even invoked his connection with the gangster Dawood Ibrahim. He weaved a story of how he killed a person and hung the body from a metro pillar in Mumbai using his connections. He even showed injury marks on his body as proof of his rough life.

Nevertheless, the petitioners got him to agree to return the money within three months earlier this year. At the same time, they started digging into his past.

The lies unravel

Monson was one of four children of a family from a humble background in Cherthala.

"Though he carried his father's family name, he wasn't in contact with the Mavunkal family. He grew up at his mother's place in Chaaramangalam in Cherthala. He moved to Idukki after getting married. Then he moved to Vallayil and built a home on the land he got as his share from his father more than a decade earlier. To be honest, we had

suspected something fishy as he turned up escorted by premium cars and bodyguards," says Jose Mavunkal, a relative.

Monson's life in Rajakumari, Idukki, where his wife got a job as a school-teacher, remains largely unknown. He reportedly used to deal with used cars and electronic equipment.

"He was a very decent bloke who did pretty much everything. He was mostly in Ernakulam even then before he left the place permanently after his wife opted for voluntary retirement," says Joshy, a wiring worker who was very close to Monson during his days in Rajakumari.

But Aji Nettoor, his driver for over 10 years, does not speak of Monson glowingly. Instead, he has some damning things to share about his former employer. "I left him eight months ago after I found that he had transacted over ₹2 crore through my account without my knowledge. He had opened bank accounts in the names of his employees using his address and had also handled the passbook, chequebook, and ATM. I confronted him when he asked me to lie about a transaction made through my account and left him soon after that," he says.

It emerged then that Monson had a case registered against him at Panthalam police station in Pathanamthitta in 2020 for cheating a man called Rajendran Pillai of Sreevalsam Group of ₹6.27 crore using the same FEMA plot.

"We were promised an interest-free loan of up to ₹100 crore to tide over our financial crisis once his frozen funds were released. But then we realised that he was a fraud and registered the case," says Shahul Hameed, manager of Sreevalsam Group.

As a counter, Monson registered a case alleging that the group didn't pay the remaining lease running into crores for using his 20-odd premier vehicles kept at the group's yard. Despite the alleged high-level police intervention to stop it, the Alappuzha District Crime Branch took over the case and found it

to be without basis. Now 19 of those vehicles, which Monson had claimed included the one used by Bollywood actor Kareena Kapoor, remain in the custody of Cherthala police.

In another case, Rajeev Sreedharan, a resident of Pala in Kottayam district, allegedly lost ₹1.72 crore after falling for Monson's offer to get 500 acres of an estate at Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad which was on lease to the Madhya Pradesh government.

Monson is also accused of blackmailing a sexual abuse victim with the footage of the abuse to withdraw the case in which his friend was the perpetrator. Ernakulam South Police registered a case in this regard earlier this year and has sent his mobile phone for forensic examination.

The Monson saga keeps throwing up names along the way. These include Anitha Pullayil, a Malayali expatriate with Italian citizenship, whose association with the accused and the high echelons of the State Police made headlines. Pullayil has since then gone on record saying she came to know Monson through the Loka Malayali Sabha, which consists of Malayali expatriates. She admitted to having recommended, as an acquaintance, Monson's private museum to a former State Police chief but claimed to have distanced herself from him after being warned of his fraudulent ways. She even warned the petitioners about Monson.

Monson used his multiple self-styled profiles to his advantage. Besides claiming to be a German-trained cosmetologist and having an honorary doctorate, he claimed to be the managing director of Kalinga Kalyan Foundation, patron of the Pravasi Malayali Federation and allegedly impersonated the chairman of TV Samskara channel, a charge which is now being investigated by CB.

A storm in Kerala

Monson's arrest and the pictures and videos that bombarded social media from then also triggered a political storm. De-

tractors of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president K. Sudhakaran found it a perfect weapon to attack him as he was mentioned in the petition. Sudhakaran's photograph at the alleged trickster's house went viral. Sudhakaran denied any association with Monson, but this did not cut any ice with them.

The ruling Left Democratic Front was cornered as well, after top police officers, including then State Police chief Loknath Behera, were found pictured with Monson's fake antiquities. This even forced Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who also holds the Home Ministry portfolio, to warn the police that they should be careful about their contacts. Behera, now the managing director of Kochi Metro Rail Limited, found himself in a tight spot and he even had to explain that his current leave of absence was not due to the Monson episode, but was for something unrelated.

Monson's alleged trickery also touched a raw nerve with Malayali society when it emerged that a copper inscription from his collection was used to prove a point in favour of the entry of women into Sabarimala, the hilltop Ayyappa temple, during the violent protests of 2018. A reporter with a television news channel, who is now in the dock for his alleged close connections with Monson, first broke the story, which was later followed up by the CPI(M)'s mouthpiece.

The inscription, claimed to be over three centuries old, reportedly stated that the hill shrine had followed a Dravidian ritualistic tradition in the olden days, thus justifying women's entry. The Pandalam royal family, trustees of the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple, has sought an investigation into the authenticity of the inscription.

Suresh Kumar, a Thiruvananthapuram-based sculptor, is another of Monson's alleged victims. He is steeped in debts after he sold nine sculptures worth ₹80 lakh to Monson in 2019 but received only ₹7 lakh. "I had been visiting him at least once every week to get my money. Now, I am left with a debt of ₹30 lakh and live in a single room. I had an open-heart surgery and the meagre pension of ₹1,600 is not even enough to buy medicines," says the sculptor with 45 years of experience. Investigators have recovered four of the sculptures, which Kumar says were badly redone, probably to pass off as antiquities.

About 70% of Monson's fake antiquities were bought from a man called Santhosh in Ernakulam who used to rent them for film shoots. Most of his premium vehicles were bought from a Bengaluru-based dealer to whom Monson allegedly still owes a large sum.

"Only three of the eight premium cars in his house in Kaloor were road-worthy. Most of them were registered outside the State and we don't have the

details in our database. Even the details of the three cars in our database will have to be verified," says Ernakulam Regional Transport Officer P.M. Shabeer.

Customs also initially showed some interest in the vehicles but lost interest as none of them were imported in Monson's name. "In the case of antiquities, the owner is bound to explain their procurement. But in this case, even that didn't apply as the majority of them were fake," says a senior Customs official.

Monson also claimed to possess ivory and a number of valuable conches, forcing forest officers to wade in. "The ivory pair and conches prima facie appear to be fake. But we will send them to the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology for scientific assessment nevertheless," says Geo Basil Paul, Range Officer, Kodanad.

Chasing the money trail

Since his arrest, CB has registered five cases against Monson – four for cheating and one for impersonation. What seems to trouble the investigation team is the fact that he had reportedly collected only part of the money that he had allegedly swindled through bank accounts, and that too belonging to his employees; most of the funds were received by hand. For a man accused of cheating people of crores, his bank account was found to have a balance of merely ₹200. He reportedly spent about ₹25 lakh a month to maintain his lavish lifestyle, including an array of bouncers.

"It will be hard to make the cheating charges stick since there is little money trail through his account. It is too early to say whether he had stacked the money elsewhere," say senior CB sources.

With Monson's alleged frauds growing, State Police Chief Anil Kant has formed a special investigation squad headed by Sparjan Kumar, Inspector General, Thiruvananthapuram Range, to probe the cases against him. Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court has lambasted the State police. It even went to the extent of wondering whether the CB investigation will be effective considering the allegations against officers of various ranks.

Justice Devan Ramachandran asked the State Police Chief why the police gave Monson protection instead of taking action against him when he claimed to be in possession of valuable articles.

Monson, it seems, was arrested in the nick of time, for the petitioners who conducted a parallel probe against him allege that he was in the midst of some new fraudulent activity. He apparently claimed to have sold ₹3 articles to the Qatari royal family for ₹15,000 crore for display in a museum there.

Going by his strike rate in conning people, Monson would have probably pulled off even that with ease.



FROM PAGE ONE

Tension grips protest site after body found

Inspector General of Police, Rohtak Range, Sandeep Khirwar, said there were several claims and counter-claims with regard to the involvement of a religious group but he could not confirm anything now. "The matter is under investigation," he said. The victim sustained injuries inflicted with a sharp-edged weapon, he added.

Condemning the murder, the SKM said it was against the sacrilege of any religious text or symbol, but no one had the right to take the law into their own hands. It demanded that the culprits be punished in accordance with the law.

Although Nihang warriors have frequently been seen around the Singhu main stage area, farm leaders said they had no official role and had never been a part of the meetings or decision-making of the movement.

"You must understand that this is not a kisan group. The Nihangs are a religious group, not a farmers' union. They have a separate camp, and the incident has hap-

pened within their own camp," said All India Kisan Sabha general secretary Hannan Mollah. He also warned against attempts to link the murder to the SKM, calling it a "conspiracy".

Farmers and Nihangs at the protest site expressed shock, but there was also a sense of anger over the alleged act of sacrilege committed by the victim.

Bhagwant Singh, a Nihang, claimed it was not possible to identify who killed the man as everyone was angry and he was killed in the heat of the moment.

Probe sought

Former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal demanded a fair and impartial probe into all angles of the "heinous crime, including the brutal murder and allegations of sacrilege of the holy Sikh scripture."

"Allegations that the entire sequence of events is a part of a deep-rooted conspiracy to sabotage the peaceful struggle of the farmers against the three black laws also need a fair probe," he said.

2 militants behind recent civilian deaths killed: IGP

After the recent civilian killings, a total of eight encounters took place in the Kashmir Valley, in which 11 militants were killed since October 8

Meanwhile, the Army said its anti-militancy operation in the Nar Khas Forest in Poonch's Mendhar area, which began on Thursday evening, was continuing for the second day on Friday.

On Thursday, during the

operation, there was an heavy exchange of fire. "In the gunfight, Rifleman Vikram Singh Negi and Rifleman Yoganagar Singh were critically injured. They later died," a Jammu-based Army spokesman said. Rifleman Negi, 26, was a resident of Viman Gaon, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, and rifleman Singh, 27, belonged to Sankari, Chamoli in Uttarakhand.

TB deaths up in pandemic: WHO

In 2020, more people died of TB, with far fewer people being diagnosed and treated or provided with preventive treatment compared with 2019, and overall spending on essential TB services falling, it noted.

It explained that the first challenge was disruption in access to TB services and a reduction in resources. In many countries, human, financial and other resources had been reallocated from tackling TB to COVID-19. The second was that people struggled to seek care during lockdowns.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus observed in a release, "This report confirms our fears that the disruption of essential health services due to the pandemic could start to unravel years of progress against tuberculosis. This is an alarming news that must serve as a global wake-up call to the urgent need for investments and innovation to close the gaps in diagnosis, treatment and care for the millions of people affected

by this ancient but preventable and treatable disease."

TB services are among many others disrupted by COVID-19 in 2020, but the pandemic's impact on TB has been particularly severe. Approximately 1.5 million people died from TB in 2020 (including 2,14,000 among HIV positive people).

Huge burden

The increase in the number of TB deaths occurred mainly in the 30 countries with the highest burden of the disease. WHO modelling projections suggest that the number of people developing TB and dying from the disease could be much higher in 2021 and 2022.

"Challenges with providing and accessing essential TB services have meant that many people with TB were not diagnosed in 2020. The number of people newly diagnosed with TB and those reported to national governments fell from 7.1 million in 2019 to 5.8 million in 2020," the WHO disclosed.

CPI(Maoists) confirm top leader's death

The cadre would be motivated by his style, simple life and affection towards people and complete the democratic revolution, the committee statement said

Born in 1958 in Palnadu region of Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, RK completed his post-graduation and worked as a teacher along with his father.

He was drawn to revolutionary politics and took the membership of the CPI-ML (People's War Group) in 1978.

Later, he joined the PWG as a full-time worker. Within four years, he became PWG's Guntur district secretary. In 2004, the PWG and

the Maoist Communist Centre of India were merged and the CPI (Maoist) was born.

The party shifted him to the AOB (Andhra-Odisha Border) area after alleged attempts to eliminate him began following the failure of "peace talks" with the Andhra Pradesh government in 2004. The Central Committee made him polit bureau member in 2018.

RK married Shirisha while leading the revolutionary movement. The couple had a son, Munna (Pruthvi). He was killed in an encounter at Ramaguda in 2018, according to the party.

Aim is to make India a military power on its own strength: PM

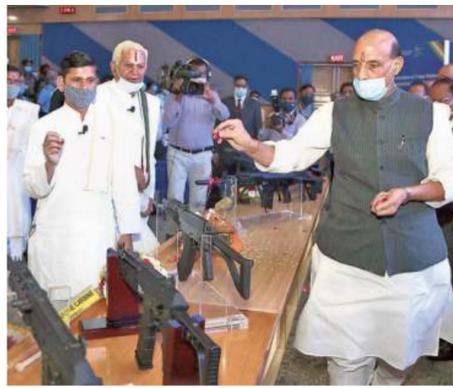
Modi formally launches 7 DPSUs, incorporated after dissolution of the OFB

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Under the initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the goal is to make India a military power globally on its own strength and also develop a modern indigenous defence industry, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday.

Formally launching seven new Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU), incorporated after the dissolution of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), he stated, "As India enters 75 years of Independence, we are completing projects that were stuck for a long time. The decision to revamp 41 Ordnance Factories, the launch of seven new companies, is a part of that journey. This decision was pending for the last 15-20 years. I am confident that these seven companies will become a major base of India's military strength in the times to come."

Today, there was more transparency, trust, and technology-driven approach in the defence sector than ever before, the Prime Minister said. Defence exports have increased by 325% in the last five years. "While



Guns and roses: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the formal launch of seven defence companies on Friday. ■PTI/MOD

competitive cost is our strength, quality and reliability should be our identity," he asserted.

On June 16, the Union Cabinet approved a long-awaited reform to corporatise the OFB, following which effective October 1, all its assets, employees and management were transferred to the incorporated DPSUs.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has converted all pending orders with the 41 factories of the OFB into

deemed contracts worth over ₹65,000 crore for the new companies. It has also decided that 60% of the annual price of the indents would be paid by the Services to the new DPSUs as mobilisation advance against the targets of FY 2021-22 amounting to ₹7,100 crore.

The over 70,000 employees of the OFB (Group A, B & C) belonging to the production units and also the identified non-production units have been transferred

en masse to the new DPSUs on terms of foreign service without any deputation allowance initially for a period of two years.

'Strategic asset'

Speaking at the event, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh observed that the infrastructure and skilled manpower of the OFB were an important and strategic asset of the country, but in the last few decades, "concerns have been raised regarding high costs, inconsistent quality and delay in supply of OFB products by the armed forces".

"The new structure will help overcome these various shortcomings in the existing system of OFB and encourage these companies to become competitive and explore new opportunities in the market including exports," he noted.

The seven new companies are Munitions India Limited, Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited, Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited, Troop Comforts Limited, Yantra India Limited, India Optel Limited, and Gliders India Limited.

Former CECs flag security concerns over e-voting

Opinion comes at a time when Telangana SEC is set to carry out a smartphone-based experiment on October 20

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Former Chief Election Commissioners (CEC) have raised a range of concerns, from maintaining secrecy of ballots to bringing political parties on board, around the idea of online voting and remote voting, at a time the Telangana State Election Commission (SEC) is set to carry out an e-voting experiment and the Election Commission of India (EC), too, is exploring remote voting.

The Telangana SEC would be carrying out a smartphone app-based online voting experiment on October 20, the State Government had announced last week. The EC, on the other hand,

had said last year that it was looking at the option of remote voting for those electors unable to reach the polling stations they are registered at. However, this could entail voting from another location set up by the authorities and not Internet-based voting from home.

Former CEC S.Y. Quraishi said he wished the Telangana team the best, but "developing an app is child's play". He said the EC had ruled out the option.

"Even the simplest technology, the Electronic Voting Machine [EVM] that is based on the 17th Century calculator, is a matter of legal disputes... The technology is simple, credibility and trust



O.P. RAWAT, FORMER CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER

One has to see to it that during voting, the voter identity, the environment [that is if there is any coercion], and the security of ballots cast till the time of counting are maintained

in the technology is the issue," he said. He asked if EVMs were still being challenged, how could an Internet-based system of voting be acceptable.

O.P. Rawat, who was the CEC in 2018, agreed with Mr. Quraishi's argument that if the security of EVMs that are standalone devices was questioned from time to time, then Internet-based

voting would have even more critics.

"It is a dicey proposition because elections are conducted with the total trust of voters, political parties, candidates and the public at large. One has to see to it that during voting, the voter ID, the environment [that is if there is any coercion], and the security of ballots cast till the time of counting are

CWC meet likely to see heated debate

Loyalists of the Gandhi family and reformists to discuss a range of issues today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Saturday may see an intense debate between the reformists and the loyalists of the Gandhi family over a range of issues, including the party's performance in recent Assembly polls, number of desertions and the question of having a full-time party chief.

The meeting comes barely a fortnight after Kapil Sibal, one of reformists or the group of 23 (G-23) leaders who had written to party president Sonia Gandhi last year to seek internal re-



The meeting will be held at the AICC headquarters.

forms, openly questioned the decision-making process in the organisation as well as the high rate of attrition.

"In our party, at the moment, we don't have a president. So, we don't know who's taking these decisions," Mr. Sibal said at a press conference on September 29.

This triggered a backlash.

Youth Congress workers protested in front of Mr. Sibal's private residence with messages that read "Get Well Soon".

While several G-23 leaders rallied around Mr. Sibal and condemned the protest, loyalists, including Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, former Union Minister Salman Khurshid came out in support of the Gandhis.

Though Ms. Gandhi quickly announced a CWC meet to quell the Congress versus Congress story, the debate is likely to continue in the party's highest decision making

forum. Apart from the leadership issue and desertions, some of the G-23 leaders are also wondering if the CWC would discuss the reports on why the party fared poorly in the last round of Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry.

After these polls, Ms. Gandhi, in May, constituted a five-member committee under former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan to examine the reasons. Though the panel submitted its reports in June, they have neither been discussed in any party fora nor made public.

Himachal bypolls: BJP and Congress in a direct fight

Critical test ahead of next year's Assembly election

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Himachal Pradesh is all set to see a direct fight between the ruling BJP and the Congress party in the bypolls to one parliamentary and three Assembly seats, slated to be held on October 30.

In the hill State, the bypolls are being seen as a "critical test" to ascertain the BJP government's performance and popularity and the Congress's preparedness to pose a challenge to the ruling party ahead of the Assembly polls, due next year.



Poll fervour: Jai Ram Thakur campaigning for the BJP candidate in Mandi constituency of Himachal Pradesh. ■PTI

The battle for the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, which fell vacant after BJP MP Ram Swaroop's death, is being keenly watched as Mandi

happens to be the home turf of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and the BJP has a challenge to retain the seat.

The Congress has fielded

former MP Pratibha Singh, wife of former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh, from Mandi and is seeking sympathy votes in the name of the late politician. The BJP has named Brigadier Kushal Chand Thakur (retired), a recipient of Yudd Seva medal, as its candidate.

Ambika Shyam of the Rashtriya Lokniti Party, Munshi Ram Thakur of the Himachal Jankranti Party and Independent candidates - Anil Kumar and Subhash Mohan Snehi - are also in the fray.

Development issues

As the electioneering is gradually picking up, the Congress party led by state president Kuldeep Singh Rathore

Bhagwat calls for more vigilance along borders

'Be prepared for all possibilities'

STAFF REPORTER
PUNE

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday stressed the need for the country to remain militarily vigilant at all times against the backdrop of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. It was imperative to shore up security along the country's borders and the nation needed to be careful and "prepared for all possibilities", he stated.

"We know what their [Taliban's] past character is. Sometimes they say they have changed; at other times they say they are still the same. This is a clear signal for us to be very careful. And while the Taliban may have changed, has Pakistan changed? Has China changed its intentions towards India? Even considering the possibility of a change in heart, and of dialogues meant to resolve issues, we still need to be prepared and remain ever vigilant," he said.

The RSS Sarsanghchala's made these remarks during his annual Vijayadashami speech at the Sangh headquarters in Nagpur.

He contended that while



Mohan Bhagwat

the people of Jammu and Kashmir were reaping the benefits of the scrapping of Article 370, there was a pressing need for Kashmir's public to be "emotionally integrated" with the rest of the country.

Terrorism in J&K

"After Article 370 was done away with, the fear or terrorists had been banished from people's minds. However, terrorists have again begun 'targeted killings' of citizens, especially those in among the Hindu community, in a bid to destroy their morale and re-establish the reign of terror in the Valley. The administration needs to expedite its efforts for finishing off terrorist activities," he noted.

maintained," Mr. Rawat said. He said that based on what was known about the e-voting plan publicly so far, it was not clear how verification of voter identification, maintaining a free voting environment and secrecy of ballots would be maintained. "It is near impossible," he said.

'Long journey'

Former CEC N. Gopalaswami was of the view that "security issues can be overcome", but it would be "political hurdles" that would be difficult to cross.

He said the EVM itself had had a long journey. "It took 10 years for the required law to be passed," he said.

On the proposal of remote voting, Mr. Gopalaswami gave the hypothetical example of a State election, say the Bihar Assembly polls, where 50,000 to 1 lakh registered voters from there live in Tamil Nadu. The voters would be registered across the 243 constituencies of Bihar and it would be impossible for the ECI to keep 243 EVMs in each of the remote voting locations, so an electronic solution would be needed, he explained. Then the issue of campaigning for outstation voters would also crop up, he said.

Ultimately, it would be the political parties that would have to find it acceptable, he said.

Manmohan's family upset over photo in hospital

Health Minister had visited former PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The family of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is upset about him being photographed when Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya called on him at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

In a statement on Friday, Mr. Singh's daughter, Damini Singh, said her mother had objected to the presence of a photographer during the Minister's visit to Dr. Singh's room but her objections were ignored.

"My father is being treated for dengue at AIIMS. His

condition is stable but his immunity is low. We have restricted visitors due to the risk of infection. It was nice of the Health Minister to visit and express his concern. However, my parents were in no state to be photographed at the time," she stated.

"My mother insisted that the photographer should leave the room, but she was completely ignored. She was very upset. My parents are trying to cope in a difficult situation," she added.

Mr. Singh, 89, was admitted to AIIMS on Wednesday after he developed a fever.

SBSP may announce U.P. poll alliance on Oct. 27

PRESS TROUPE OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief Om Prakash Rajbhar on Friday said an alliance for the next year's Uttar Pradesh Assembly poll is likely to be announced at a 'Mahapanchayat' to be held at Haladpur in Mau district on October 27. Mr. Rajbhar, a former BJP ally who heads the 'Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha', told reporters that the Morcha was formed for people who have been deprived of their rights for many years.

Hunger Index: poor ranking devoid of ground reality and facts, says Govt.

Ranked at 101, India is behind neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

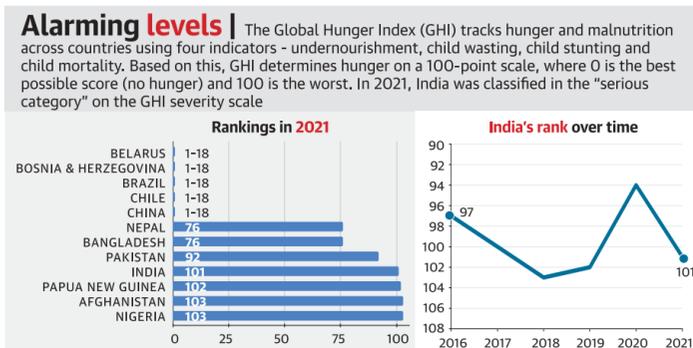
The Government on Friday challenged India's poor ranking in the Global Hunger Index 2021 and the methodology used calling it "devoid of ground reality and facts".

The Index launched on Thursday ranked India at 101 position of 116 countries. India is also among the 31 countries where hunger has been identified as serious. India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) released last year.

'Unscientific method'

"The publishing agencies of the Global Hunger Report, Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe have not done their due diligence before releasing the report. The methodology used by FAO is unscientific. They have based their assessment on the results of a 'four question' opinion poll, which was conducted telephonically by Gallup," the Ministry of Women and Child Development said in a statement.

According to the Index,



only 15 countries fare worse than India. They are Papua New Guinea (102), Afghanistan and Nigeria (103), Congo (105), Mozambique and Sierra Leone (106), Timor-Leste (108), Haiti (109), Liberia (110), Madagascar (111), Democratic Republic of Congo (112), Chad (113), Central African Republic (114), Yemen (115) and Somalia (116).

India was also behind most of the neighbouring countries. Pakistan was placed at 92, Nepal and Bangladesh at 76 and Sri Lanka at 65.

The Government has con-

tested the performance of these neighbouring countries on the Index.

"It is noted with surprise, from the FAO report 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021', that other four countries of this region - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka - have not been affected at all by COVID-19 pandemic induced loss of job/business and reduction in income levels, rather they have been able to improve their position on the indicator 'proportion of undernourished population' by

4.3%, 3.3%, 1.3% and 0.8% points respectively during the period 2018-20 over 2017-19," the statement adds.

The GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators - undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. Each country's GHI score is classified by severity, from low to extremely alarming.

Undernourishment data are provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and child mortality data are sourced from the U.N. Inter-agency Group for Child

Mortality Estimation. Child wasting and stunting data are drawn from the joint database of UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, among others.

It is the FAO report used for assessing undernourishment that the Government has questioned. This is also the only indicator in the report that has shown deterioration in India, the other three either show an improvement or have remained unchanged.

Figures on the rise

The Government has questioned the poll-based assessment that "has increased the value of 'proportion of population undernourished' from 14.0% for the previous period 2017-19 to 15.3% for the latest period 2018-20," according to an official.

According to the FAO report, prevalence of undernourishment in a population is calculated in a very scientific manner that includes habitual dietary energy intake levels, information on the population structure and median height in each sex and age.

All issues sorted out, says Sidhu

Punjab Congress leader meets Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Punjab Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday claimed that "all the issues have been sorted out" after a meeting with former party chief Rahul Gandhi at the latter's residence.

All India Congress Committee's (AICC) Punjab in-charge, Harish Rawat, who was also present in the meeting, claimed that Mr. Sidhu has assured Mr. Gandhi about withdrawing his resignation as Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee chief.

"He [Mr. Sidhu] shared his concerns with Rahul Gandhi. We have told him that his concerns will be taken care of. He assured Rahul Gandhi that he has withdrawn his resignation and he will resume his duties as the PCC president," Mr. Rawat told reporters.

Mr. Sidhu, though, somewhat remained ambivalent. "Whatever concerns I had, I have shared with Rahul ji and everything is sorted out," Mr. Sidhu told reporters after his meeting. Asked if he would continue in his post as PCC chief, he said, "Whatever I am doing is in front of you."



Navjot Singh Sidhu, after meeting Congress leaders in New Delhi on Thursday.

Subsequently, he tweeted, "I have shared my concerns with @RahulGandhi Ji, was assured they will be sorted out."

This was the first meeting between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Sidhu after the Punjab Congress chief sprang a surprise on September 28 by posting his resignation on Twitter to protest against certain government appointments by Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi.

On Thursday, Mr. Rawat, Mr. Sidhu and Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, had an hour-long meeting, following which Mr. Sidhu had said he had full faith in the leadership of the Gandhis.

Iran irked by Adani port's cargo boycott

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Iran has conveyed to India its displeasure over a decision by the Adani Ports not to handle any cargo originating from it along with Pakistan and Afghanistan following the seizure of nearly 3,000 kg of heroin at its Mundra port last month.

Iran said it was praised even by the United Nations for its fight against drug trafficking and that it has again been "targeted unfairly" through denial of trade and banning its consignments while describing the restriction as an "unprofessional and imbalanced move".

The Iranian embassy issued a statement on the matter but did not directly mention the Adani Ports.

The Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd (APSEZ), which operates Mundra Port in Gujarat, on Monday said it will not handle container cargo originating from Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan at all its terminals from November 15.

Unhappy over the move, Iranian authorities is learnt to have taken up the matter with Indian narcotic drug control authorities.

Drawing to a close



Curtailed festivities: A Durga idol being immersed in a water tank as part of the culmination of Durga puja festivities in Mayur Vihar, New Delhi, on Friday. •MORTHY R.V.

Bhutan, China sign MoU for 3-step process to expedite boundary talks

Timing significant for India given the impasse on talks on the LAC standoff

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

In a step towards resolving their boundary disputes, Bhutan and China signed an agreement on a three-step roadmap to help speed up talks, at a meeting of Foreign Ministers held via videoconference on Thursday, a development that New Delhi said it has 'noted'.

The roadmap "for Expediting the Bhutan-China Boundary Negotiations", is expected to kickstart the progress on the boundary talks process that has been delayed for five years, first due to the Doklam standoff in 2017 and then by the pandemic. The timing of the agreement is particularly significant for New Delhi, given the border talks on their 17-month old standoff at the



A total 24 rounds of talks and 10 expert group meetings have been held in the past 37 years. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Line of Actual Control appear to have hit an impasse this week.

"The [Bhutan-China] Memorandum of Understanding on the three-step roadmap will provide a fresh impetus to the boundary talks. It is expected that the implementation of this road-

map in a spirit of goodwill, understanding and accommodation will bring the boundary negotiations to a successful conclusion that is acceptable to both sides," said a press release issued by Bhutan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi declined to comment on the details of the three steps and sources said information on the process of negotiations is 'sensitive' and could not be shared at this stage. According to the MFA statement, the roadmap had been finalised during the 10th expert group meeting in Kunming in April 2021, and presented for approval to their Governments in Thimphu and Beijing respectively.

The Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to a question from *The Hindu* about whether India was informed about the details of the MoU in advance, and whether a possible 'exchange' of disputed territories involving the Doklam tri-junction area was a particular concern for India.

11 killed as tractor-trolley overturns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JHANSI (U.P.)

At least 11 people, including four children, were killed here on Friday after a tractor-trolley in which they were travelling overturned when the driver suddenly applied the brakes to avoid hitting an animal, the police said. Six people were also injured, they said.

SSP Shivhari Meena said 30 families were going to a temple in Erach the tractor-trolley.

Prayers disallowed at Srinagar mosque

Police forced us to close all gates, say caretakers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

The Anjum Anqaf, a caretaker body of historic Jama Masjid, on Friday said the police locked up the mosque and dissuaded worshippers from offering the congregational noon prayers, days after the J&K administration allowed a major congregational prayer at the Khawaja Naqshband shrine in the city.

"The authorities did not



A number of worshippers, including women and children, had gathered outside the mosque. •FILE PHOTO

allow congregational Friday prayers at the Jama Masjid, as heavy deployment of forces was carried out since morning. When the Anqaf employees opened up the

gates of the mosque, the police personnel forced them to close all the gates and no 'namazis' were allowed inside," a spokesman of the body said.

Mufti seeks details of arrested youth

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti has asked the Jammu and Kashmir administration to reveal the names of youths rounded up in the latest clampdown on militants, in the wake of civilian killings this month.

"The administration failed to safeguard the minorities. It's now venting its anger against people," Ms. Mufti said.

A number of worshippers, including women and children, had gathered outside the mosque after the Atqaf announced they would re-open it.

Compassion cannot be forever, says SC

Court passes order on Kashmiri migrants

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Compassion cannot continue in perpetuity, the Supreme Court said in an order holding that Kashmiri migrants who retired as government officers cannot stay in official accommodation indefinitely.

The order was passed by a Bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and A.S. Bopanna in applications filed by retired officers occupying government accommodation in Delhi and Gurgaon. Some of



The court said government accommodation cannot continue indefinitely.

these officers had been victims of terrorism and served in critical intelligence offices.

"Applicants are occupying the government accommo-

datation at the cost of other government servants. The compassion shown to Kashmiri migrants has to be balanced with the expectations of the serving officers to discharge their duties effectively," the recent order said.

The court struck down an arbitrary office memorandum allowing government accommodation to retired employees who were Kashmiri migrants.

It said post retirement, the government employees, including Kashmiri migrants, were granted pensionary benefits including monthly pension. The classification made in favour of government employees who

stood on the same footing as that of other government employees or public figures.

Reasonable clause

The court said statements like these employees would return to the Valley when the situation improved was "open-ended statement capable of being interpreted in different ways".

However, the court found it reasonable that Kashmiri migrants were allowed government accommodation for a period of three years from the date of retirement so as to make alternative arrangements within such period.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION ORGANIZATION
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. DYCE-GC-4-TPJ-1-2021-EOT
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. DYCE-GC-11-TPJ-03-2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Deputy Chief Engineer, Gauge Conversion-I, Southern Railway, Tiruchirappalli invite E-Tender for the following works as per notice inviting tender (NIT) e-Tender Portal www.ireps.gov.in. The tenderers intending to apply for the tender need to get enrolled in the portal www.ireps.gov.in and only Online tenders will be accepted. e-Tender Form shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. All the tenders involves Bid Security Declaration in lieu of Bid Security (Earnest Money Deposit) and all the tenderers are requested to submit the same as prescribed, while submitting the tender.

Sl. No	Tender No & Name of the Work	Advertised Value in ₹
1	Tender No. DYCE-GC-4-TPJ-1-2021-EOT: Repairs to existing centralised stores Depot (DSK/CN/GOC) in Ponnmalai/Golden Rock	52,36,326.86
2	Tender No. DYCE-GC-11-TPJ-03-2021_01: Gauge Conversion work between Tiruthurai and Agasthyampalli Section: Supply of welding portion for 60 Kg (90 UTS)-R260, 60 Kg (90 UTS), 60 Kg R260/90 UTS, 52Kg (90 UTS) and combination welding portions for 60/52Kg (90 UTS) rail Joints, welding of rails by Alumino thermit welding technique with single shot crucible SKV process between Tiruthurai and Agasthyampalli stations.	1,40,14,931.40
3	Tender No. DYCE-GC-11-TPJ-03-2021_02: Mayiladuthurai-Thiruvavur-Thiruthurai-Karaikkudi Gauge Conversion project: Proposed construction of goods office building, Earth work in forming platform in goods platform and other miscellaneous works at THIRUTHURAI/PUNDI junction station	1,08,61,087.32

Period of Completion in months/days: 135 (4) MONTHS FOR SL.No.1 & 2
FOUR (4) MONTHS FOR SL.No.3

Closing / Opening date @ 15.00 hrs on : 08.11.2021

For further details refer to website portal www.ireps.gov.in or contact office of the Deputy Chief Engineer, Gauge Conversion-I, Southern Railway, SBI Road, Trichy-620001.
Deputy Chief Engineer // Gauge Conversion-I/Tiruchirappalli

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Opposite Trauma Centre, Civil Hospital Campus, Asarwa, Ahmedabad - 380 016, Gujarat, India
http://www.guts.education, e-mail:info-guts@gujarat.gov.in

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE NO. 03/2021

GUTS & IKDRC-ITS (Institute of GUTS) invites applications for the post of Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Tutor in Department of Urology, Nephrology, Abdominal Organ Transplantation Surgery (Liver), IHBT, Intervention Radiology, Infectious Disease, Hepatology, Radiology, Pathology, and Principal (Nursing College)

Last date for receiving the application is 09/11/2021 (up to 16:00 hrs). For Eligibility norms, other details and instructions, visit our website : <https://www.guts.education> or <http://career-guts.com>

Date: 16/10/2021
No INF/ABD/1056/2021

Registrar

No. A.12026/7/2021-Estt.IV
Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources,
River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation

Narmada Control Authority (NCA) is a Body Corporate setup by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 6A of the Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956, for the purpose of securing compliance with the implementation of the decision and direction of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal. The Narmada Control Authority has its headquarter at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

2. Applications are invited from eligible and suitable officers for filling up one post of Member (Power) in Narmada Control Authority, Indore in the Pay Matrix Level-14 (Rs.144200-218200/-) on deputation (including short-term contract) basis.

3. The last date for receipt of applications for appointment on deputation (including short term contract) basis to the post of Member(Power) in Narmada Control Authority, earlier published in the Employment News on 14-20 august.2021 is hereby further extended up to 11.11.2021.

4. Details of the post, eligibility conditions etc. are available at mowr.gov.in, dopt.gov.in and nca.gov.in. Applications (in triplicate) complete in all respects of suitable and eligible officers and who can be spared immediately in the event of selection may be sent through proper channel to:- The Under Secretary (Estt.IV), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Room No. 435, Shram Shakti Bhavan, Rafi Marg, New Delhi - 110 001 and by email at usbm-mowr@nic.in & soe4-mowr@gov.in through proper channel.

5. Advance copies of application or application received after the prescribed period or not accompanied with the requisite information/ documents are liable to be rejected.

(Shalini Juneja)
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India



IN BRIEF

Aryan speaks to parents from jail via video call

MUMBAI Aryan Khan, son of actor Shah Rukh Khan, who is lodged in Arthur Road prison in Mumbai in a drug case, has spoken to his parents through a video call from inside the prison once, an official said on Friday. Aryan also received ₹4,500 though money-order sent by his father, he said. PTI

Lookout notice withdrawn against Rane's wife, son

PUNE Lookout circulars issued by the Pune police against Union Minister Narayan Rane's wife Nilam and MLA son Nitesh in connection with unpaid loans taken from a financial institution were withdrawn recently after the amounts were settled, an officer said. PTI

Classes to resume after Pujā holidays in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR The Odisha government on Friday announced the resumption of physical classes for students of Class XI and Class VIII after the Durga Pujā vacation on October 21 and October 25 respectively as the State is witnessing a declining trend in COVID-19 cases, a notification by the School and Mass Education Department said. PTI

Fall in stubble burning incidents in Punjab & Haryana, says panel

This, however, is a preliminary analysis as harvesting is still on, says CAQM

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

There is a 70% reduction so far in instances of stubble burning in Punjab and 18% in Haryana from last year, according to a report on Friday by the Commission for Air Quality Management.

Last year in Punjab, there were 4,216 instances of stubble burning from September 15 to October 14. This dropped to 1,286 in the corresponding period this year. There were 487 incidents this year compared with 596 last year, a press statement by the commission claimed.

In eight districts of Uttar Pradesh, there were 22 instances of burning this year compared with 42 last year.

This, however, is a preliminary analysis as harvesting is still under way and the day-to-day variation in the number of fires is extremely high.

Ravinder Khaiwal, who closely tracks pollution trends and its impact on health at PGIMER, Chandigarh, and monitors data from a NASA satellite that can detect thermal radiation, told *The Hindu* that when comparing data till October 15 in Haryana, there's

Burning issue | A look at how States have controlled stubble burning so far



- Between Sept. 15 and Oct. 14, stubble burning dropped 69.49% in Punjab, 18.28% in Haryana and 47.61% in the eight NCR districts of Uttar Pradesh compared with the corresponding period last year
- To check stubble burning, Uttar Pradesh has claimed it will spray

- bio-decomposer in 10 lakh acres, Haryana in 1 lakh acres, Punjab in 5 lakh acres and Delhi in 4,000 acres
- Stubble burning in these States peaks between the last week of October and early November. Burning can, however, last till December
- In 2016, there were nearly 1,00,000 instances of stubble burning in Punjab alone. It reduced to 50,000 in 2019, according to the Economic Survey

an increase in fires by 24% and till October 13 – a 30% decrease in fires. Similarly, in Punjab, a comparison till October 15 shows a reduction by 5%, whereas till October 13 it was a reduction of 67%. “Because we are far from the peak of harvesting there will be a significant variation every day and we will have to wait for a few weeks to know if there are fewer fires this year than in previous years,” he told *The Hindu*.

Dr. Khaiwal added that he was optimistic there would be a decrease in fires this

year because of a decrease in the area allotted to paddy sowing this year.

“There are several initiatives taken such as the increased use of happy seeder [harvesting equipment] and the use of bio-decomposers but this will take time for results to show. Also, it is important to underline that meteorological conditions play a significant role in worsening pollution.”

The CAQM made a similar observation last week reporting that a 7% decrease in the area allotted to paddy and moving crops away from

the popular variety PUSA 44 (that leaves behind more stubble in its wake) along with measures by the governments of Punjab and Haryana were likely to reduce fire count instances.

Over the years it has been observed that fire counts increase when there is too little time between the paddy being ready for harvesting and the right time to sow wheat. This year, excessive moisture in northern India due to an overhanging monsoon and a delay in the markets opening for trading, may further squeeze the time available for farmers to harvest and sow, further forcing them to set their fields alight.

This year the major districts in Punjab that reported instances of burning were Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Patiala and Ludhiana that accounted for 72% of burning events. In Haryana, Kaithal, Karnal and Kurukshetra accounted for 80% of the instances.

Of the total 1,795 sites where burning had been reported, 663 fields had been inspected by officials and fines, or “environmental compensation” as they are called, were imposed on 252.

Mridul Agarwal tops IIT entrance examination

Kavya Chopra is topper among girls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Mridul Agarwal from Jaipur scored 96.6% to become the common rank list topper in the JEE Advanced examination, which is the entrance test for the Indian Institutes of Technology.

Kavya Chopra of Delhi was the only girl in the top 100, scoring 79.4% and achieving the 98th spot on the common rank list. Almost 30% of the 1.4 lakh candidates who attempted the exam qualified this year. However, only 15% of the 41,862 students who qualified were girls.

Students had a rocky road to the JEE examination, with their education over the last year and a half having been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic which forced school closures, exam delays and even cancellations. However, Mr. Agarwal said the lockdown was “an unexpected blessing” for him. “Since there was no need for a commute, there was time saved as I did not have to travel for school or coaching classes as both were online. I actually found there was less pressure, and it gave me time to develop sharper skills,” he said.

Mr. Agarwal plans to stu-

dy Computer Science and then travel abroad for further studies, but his long term ambition is to contribute to building India's own education sector, so that Indian students don't have to leave the country.

Ms. Chopra also intends to specialise in Computer Science, preferably at IIT Delhi, and hopes that campus life will resume as quickly as possible in the post-COVID era. From her own observations of her classmates, she offered a perspective on why fewer girls succeed in entering the IITs.

“I have seen this repeatedly in my coaching class, that often when girls make a mistake, they get anxious, associating it with their self-worth. Many of them think, ‘I am a failure, I can't do anything.’ But most of the boys just think they have made a mistake and look how they can correct it and learn from it,” she said. Although girls do well in the CBSE board exams, she felt that the better quality of questions in the JEE, as well as the focus on science and maths alone amplified the anxiety often experienced by girl students. Only 19% of female candidates qualified this year, in comparison with 30% of the boys.

One killed, 16 injured as car ploughs into devotees

ANUP DUTTA
BHOPLAL

One person died and more than 16 were injured after a speeding car, which was laden with ganja, ploughed into a group of devotees at Pathalgaoon in Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh on Friday.

According to unconfirmed reports, the incident took place around 1 p.m. when residents of the Bazarpara locality were taking Durga idols for immersion. A sports utility vehicle coming from the Kansabel side ploughed into the procession.

The two occupants of the car tried to escape but were nabbed by locals. They were identified as Bablu Vishwakarma and Shishupal Shori, residents of Singrauli district in Madhya Pradesh. The vehicle was found to be burning when the police reached the spot. The car was hauling drugs from Odisha to Madhya Pradesh, Ajay Yadav, IG, Jashpur, told mediapersons.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said an inquiry had been ordered. “No one will be spared. Justice will be done to all...,” he tweeted.

Research centre for Indian art set up in Zurich museum

Rajasthan artist is first research fellow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Museum Rietberg, based in Zurich, Switzerland, has established a unique research centre and fellowship programme with a focus on Indian art.

The GBF Centre is meant for scholars, curators, and artists who specialise in Indian painting.

The public-private partnership takes its name from the initials of its founders, three renowned names in art historical research, Prof. B.N. Goswamy from India, Prof. Milo Cleveland Beach from the U.S., and Dr. Eberhard Fischer from Switzerland.

Research fellows will get a chance to engage with original art works from renowned collections for three to six months in a project of their own design. They will work with the museum's team of scholars as well as experts from Switzerland and Europe. Their papers will be presented at lectures and conferences and feed into the work at the Rietberg.

The programme aims to enhance international scientific, artistic, and curatorial exchange on Indian



A view of Museum Rietberg in Zurich, Switzerland. MUSEUM RIETBERG

art and advance the museum's own collections through dialogues from different perspectives.

Museum Rietberg is the only art museum for non-European art in Switzerland, and houses collections from Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Oceania. It holds exhibitions, cultural events, and global collaborations. Founded in 1952, its Indian paintings collection is ranked alongside those in London, Paris, and Berlin.

First research fellow

The GBF Centre has named Sonika Soni as its first research fellow. Ms. Soni is an artist and art historian from Rajasthan, whose interests lie in the connection between Indian painting and traditional Indian music.

Gulabo Sitabo actor Farrukh Jafar dies at 89

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

Veteran actor Farrukh Jafar, known for her performance in films *Gulabo Sitabo* and *Sultan*, died on Friday at a hospital here. She was 89.

Her elder daughter Mehru Jafar said her mother was unwell and was admitted to Sahara Hospital earlier this month. “She was admitted to the hospital on October 4 due to breathlessness. She was not well. She passed away at around 6 p.m.,” Ms. Mehru said.

Jafar's grandson Shaaz Ahmad also shared the news of her demise on Twitter. “My grandmother and wife of Freedom fighter, ex-MLC S.M. Jaffar and Veteran Actress Mrs Farrukh Jafar passed away today in Lucknow,” he wrote.

Her last rites will be performed on Saturday morning. Jaffer, who was one of the first radio announcers of Vividh Bharti Lucknow in 1963, began her screen journey with the 1981 classic *Umrao Jaan*, in which she played Rekha's mother. She later appeared in some TV shows but found further acclaim with the 2004 Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Swades*.

India opens to foreign tourists; too late, says travel industry

Chartered flights not enough, sudden influx unlikely, it says

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

The government's decision to issue fresh tourist visas for those arriving on charter planes from Friday has received a tepid response from the travel industry, which says the move has come too late to help reap any benefit during the travel season.

“Unfortunately, charter operations in Europe are planned six to eight months in advance and we are already booked for destinations like Dominican Republic, Mexico, Maldives and Kenya. India is very late in opening itself to foreign tourists, and it is unlikely that at this stage there will be a sudden influx of foreign tourists,” J.J. Singh, president, Indo-Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and president of IATA Travel agents in Poland, told *The Hindu* from Warsaw.

According to a DGCA official, by Friday they had only received a few queries on charter operations but there were no formal applications for chartered flights. He said they were waiting for detailed guidelines to seek greater clarity on important



The industry said scheduled international flights should be resumed.

issues such as RT-PCR tests for arriving passengers.

While the government has said that from November 15, foreign tourists entering into India by flights other than chartered aircraft will be issued fresh visas, travel and tour operators have been left flummoxed. “The government has provided us with bullets, but there is no gun to use them. How will tourists come into India if the government doesn't restart scheduled international flights,” Subhash Goyal, chairman, Stic Travels, said.

India allows international travel only with 28 countries with which it has signed air bubble agreements. “The decision shows that the government is not opening up with confidence. Without

opening international flights, the government will fail in encashing the tourism season and helping the industry to revive,” said Jyoti Mayal, president, Travel Agents Association of India.

Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Arvind Singh, told *The Hindu* that in the beginning the government planned to issue visas only to those who arrive from one of the 28 countries with which India had air bubble agreements. Sources also said that the Ministry of Civil Aviation could hold consultations to expand air bubbles to more countries as well as increase the number of flights with those it already had bubble tie-ups depending on the travel demand.

“We welcome the decision announced by the government. However, it should be accompanied with opening up of commercial international flights as well as back-end work for e-visa documentation so that people don't face bottlenecks,” said Ashish Gupta of The Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH).

BJP, ally go one up in byelections in northeast

NDPP candidate elected unopposed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A regional party has opened the byelection account for a forum fronted by the BJP in the northeast by winning an Assembly seat uncontested in the Opposition-less Nagaland.

Byelections to nine Assembly seats in the northeastern region will be held on October 30. Five of these are in Assam, three in Meghalaya and one in Mizoram.

Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) candidate S. Keoshu Yimchunger was declared elected to the Shamator-Chesore constituency unopposed on October 13.

The NDPP rules Nagaland in alliance with the BJP and the Naga People's Front (NPF), which joined the government after three years in the Opposition. The NDPP now has 21 MLAs in the 60-member House, while the NPF has 25 and the BJP 12. There are two Independents, also a part of the government.

In Meghalaya, the United Democratic Party (UDP), another regional ally of the BJP, has pinned hopes on the “scoring skills” of footballer Eugeneon Lyngdoh

to deliver the Mawphlang seat. Mr. Lyngdoh, a midfielder who played for India and last appeared for the Kolkata-based East Bengal club in the Indian Super League, is the son of Syntar Kas Sunn, the UDP legislator whose death necessitated the byelection for Mawphlang. His main rival is expected to be Kennedy C. Khyriem of the Congress.

The National People's Party (NPP), which heads the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance government as the single largest party, has lent support to Mr. Lyngdoh. It is contesting the other two seats – Mawryngkneng and Rajabala – where its main rival is the Congress.

K. Laldinthara, the BJP spokesperson in Mizoram and a former student leader, is the poorest of the four candidates in the fray for the Tuirial Assembly seat.

According to his affidavit, he has ₹5.5 lakh in movable assets and has no immovable property. All of his three rivals – Chalrosanga Ralte of the Congress, K. Laldawnghiana of the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) and K. Laldinthara of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) – are millionaires.

THE CROSSWORD + 13378 Display keystrokes of genius. Type your answers in our online grids. @ <https://qr.go.page.link/jjpTn>

(set by Incognito)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8			9			10
11			12			
13	14			15		16
17			18		19	20
				21		
22		23		24	25	
26	27			28		29
30			31		32	

- 17 Garish skit about Chinese yen (7)
 - 19 Enters frisky pets in greed, for example (5,2)
 - 22 Ointment's on right tray (6)
 - 24 Surprise! To some extent, Edgbaston is humid (8)
 - 26 Managed bags and rifles (8)
 - 28 Pardon old copper's excesses at first (6)
 - 30 American state doesn't have a source of ore (4)
 - 31 Plan, includes one flier (5)
 - 32 First lady's new flat (4)
- DOWN**
- 1 Still one creature from the Himalayas, perhaps? (4)
 - 2 Messages from young lady initially inviting very excited suitors (8)
 - 3 Meandering tow path providing facility to travel in both directions (3-3)
 - 4 Someone... Andrew... captivated silly boy (7)
 - 5 Songwriter Cyril composed first (8)
 - 6 Margaret ate Indian bread in Malaysian state (6)
 - 7 For example, Lothario's boss (4)
 - 14 Board for spiritual communication? Yes, in France and Germany (5)
 - 16 Sees ship carrying food (5)
 - 18 Insanely chop a dry printout (4,4)
 - 20 Father stole and got uncontrollably anxious (8)
 - 21 Mess lad cooked for girls (7)
 - 23 Container-ship? (6)
 - 25 Agreement at Tyre modified (6)
 - 27 For starters, a Middle-Eastern individual and royal (4)
 - 29 Look for and espy king (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13377

L	S	A	I	M	T	C
T	I	N	T	V	I	D
B	E	A	E	B	L	D
O	R	D	E	R	A	N
A	P	O	L	T	N	
S	R	I	L	A	N	K
I	E	S	R	G	H	
B	A	S	S	N	E	S
N	O	A	A	O	C	
I	S	O	B	A	R	M
B	A	R	M	A	N	D
B	A	R	C	H	A	R
N	K	T	U	E	L	I
L	O	V	E	L	E	T
N	D	S	U	V	S	T

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Dharma in practice

Prakriti and the three gunas are the source of the variety of modes and forms in the universe. It is important to understand the extent to which these rule over the complex pattern of the life of all beings, the devas, the humans and the asuras. A story quoted in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad exemplifies this truth in a very striking way, pointed out Sri K. Srinivasan in a discourse.

Once, the devas, the asuras and the human beings seek instruction from Prajapati for their suffering. Prajapati merely utters the syllable “Da” thrice as instruction to all the three of them. Each of them gets the message intended for them. This is because they are self introspective and each of them is able to derive the meaning of the instruction with reference to the inherent defects in their individual natures. The devas understand their weakness as desire and when it is manifest they are led astray. They should learn to curb their own desires. The asuras being by nature powerful lack compassion and so they have to cultivate the quality of mercy. The human beings learn that they should be willing to give to others in charity. They should consciously nurture the habit of being generous to all and not be selfish about their possessions. These are qualities that make up one's worth. The wise speak of Dharma as a bull resting on four legs, namely Truth, Purity, Compassion and Charity.

Brahman is synonymous with Satyam and when we swerve from truth we come under the control of Maya, symbolic of untruth. The second leg stands for purity in all aspects. Compassion, the third leg motivates the practice of the highest dharma, ahimsa. The fourth pada is charity, Dana, which reinforces the principle that the world has got to feed the need of everybody and not the greed of few.

41 killed in blast at Afghan Shia mosque

Taliban say it was a suicide attack; eyewitnesses spoke of gunfire alongside the explosions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KANDAHAR

Suicide bombers attacked a Shia mosque in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar during Friday prayers, witnesses said, killing at least 41 people and injuring scores more.

The assault came just a week after a suicide attack on Shia worshippers at a mosque in the northern city of Kunduz, which was claimed by the Islamic State group.

There has not yet been any claim of responsibility for the attack in Kandahar, the spiritual heartland of the Taliban.

"Our initial information shows it was a suicide bomber who blew himself up inside the mosque. We have launched an investigation to find out more," a local Taliban official said. Hafiz Abdulhai Abbas, director of health for Kandahar, said: "Information from the hospitals



Spreading terror: A Taliban fighter standing guard on the top of a mosque entrance after a suicide attack in Kandahar. ■ AFP

shows 41 killed about 70 wounded in today's mosque attack." At least 15 ambulances were seen rushing to and from the scene, as Taliban security threw a cordon around the area.

Eyewitnesses spoke of gunfire alongside the explosions, and a security guard assigned to protect the mosque

said three of his comrades had been shot as the bombers fought their way in.

Sayed Rohullah told AFP: "It was the Friday prayer time, and when we were preparing I heard shots. Two people had entered the mosque."

"They had opened fire on the guards and in response

the guards had also opened fire on them. One of them committed a suicide blast inside the mosque."

Two more attackers detonated their bombs in crowded areas outside the main building, he and other witnesses said.

"We are saddened to learn that an explosion took place in a mosque of the Shia brotherhood in the first district of Kandahar city in which a number of our compatriots were martyred and wounded," tweeted Taliban Interior Ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti.

Inside the mosque, after the blast, the walls were pockmarked with shrapnel and volunteers swept up debris in the ornately painted prayer hall. Rubble lay in an entrance corridor.

Last Friday, an Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) suicide bomber targeted a Shia mosque in Kunduz, killing scores

of people.

The group, a bitter rival of fellow Sunni Islamist movement the Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attacks against Shiite worshippers, whom it regards as heretics.

U.K.-based conflict analysis firm ExTrac said that if claimed by the IS-K, Friday's assault would be the first by the group in Kandahar, and the fourth mass casualty massacre since the Taliban took Kabul. ExTrac researcher Abdul Sayed said the attack was "challenging the Taliban claims of holding control on the country. If the Taliban can't protect Kandahar from an IS-K attack, how could it protect the rest of the country?"

The UN mission in Afghanistan tweeted: "The UN condemns latest atrocity targeting a religious institution and worshippers. Those responsible need to be held to account."

U.K. Conservative lawmaker David Amess stabbed to death

He was attacked during a meeting with locals in a church

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LEIGH-ON-SEA

British lawmaker David Amess was killed on Friday after being stabbed multiple times, according to the police, in the second death of a U.K. politician while meeting voters since 2016.

The pro-Brexit Conservative MP, 69, a father-of-five first elected to Parliament in 1983, was attacked inside a church while holding a fortnightly consultation with his local constituents in Leigh-on-Sea, east of London.

Essex police said a 25-year-old man had been arrested on suspicion of murder and a knife was recovered at the scene.

"The investigation is in its very early stages and is being led by officers from the specialist counter-terrorism command," police chief Ben-



David Amess

Julian Harrington told reporters.

Flags were lowered to half-mast outside Parliament, and tributes poured in from across the political spectrum for Mr. Amess, whose death came just over five years after the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by a far-right extremist.

In a book last year called *Ayes & Ears: A Survivor's*

Guide to Westminster, Mr. Amess noted that Cox's death had prompted new security guidance to MPs which threatened to limit their access to constituents.

"I myself have over the years experienced nuisance from the odd member of the general public at my own property," he wrote.

"These increasing attacks have rather spoil the great British tradition of the people openly meeting their elected politicians."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was chairing a meeting with Ministers in the west of England but promptly returned to London. "The reason I think people are so shocked and saddened is above all he was one of the kindest, nicest, most gentle people in politics," he said of Mr. Amess.

'IS fighters amassing in Afghanistan'

IS leaders want to project the group's influence across former Soviet States: Putin

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday said hundreds of fighters loyal to the Islamic State militant group were massing in northern Afghanistan with plans to move between ex-Soviet Central Asian countries disguised as refugees.

"According to our intelligence, the number of (IS) members alone in northern Afghanistan is about 2,000 people," the Russian leader said during a video conference meeting with leaders of other ex-Soviet States.

The Russian President earlier this week warned of



Vladimir Putin

the threat of veteran fighters from Iraq and Syria with IS links crossing into Afghanistan, while Russia's Foreign Ministry said it expected the Taliban, which recently

gained control of the country, to deal with the threat.

On Friday, he said IS leaders in Afghanistan are seeking to project the group's influence across former Soviet States in Central Asia — which Moscow sees as its backyard — to stir up religious and ethnic discord.

"Terrorists are seeking to infiltrate the Commonwealth's territory, including under the guise of refugees," Putin said, referring to a group of ex-Soviet countries — some of which border Afghanistan.

The Taliban, which seized control of Kabul from a pro-Western government in mid-

August, are seeking international recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster.

Talks next week

Mr. Putin's special envoy to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, told Russian news agency Interfax on Friday that Taliban representatives would attend an international conference in Moscow next week alongside regional players Iran, China and Pakistan.

President Putin on Friday said there was no need to rush with official recognition of the Taliban but noted that "we understand that we need to interact with them".

SPD, Greens, liberals reach initial deal

A new beginning is possible, says Olaf Scholz, leader of Social Democratic Party

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BERLIN

German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz took a step closer to succeeding Angela Merkel as Chancellor, as his Social Democrats, the ecologist Greens and liberal FDP won Friday announced a preliminary deal to form a new government.

The three parties have been holding talks since Mr. Scholz's centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) won the general elections on September 26 with Ms. Merkel's conservatives in second place as she prepares to leave politics.

"Overall, we can sense

here that a new beginning is possible, brought about by the three parties that have come together here," Mr. Scholz told reporters. "We have agreed on a text from the exploratory talks," he said, adding that this "is a very good result that clearly shows that a government that aims to ensure we achieve progress can be formed in Germany."

Greens co-leader Annalena Baerbock said the initial agreement heralds a "coalition of progress" to "really use the next decade as a decade of renewal".

The agreement that will form the basis of formal coa-

lition talks all but means that Merkel's CDU-CSU alliance is headed for the opposition benches after scoring their worst post-war election result.

CDU leader and chancellor hopeful Armin Laschet had recently said his party remains open to forming a governing coalition, but even his own job is hanging on a thread.

Facing their worst crisis in decades, the conservatives are planning a clean sweep of their leadership, with a congress by December to elect their new bosses.

Mr. Scholz, who is also Ms. Merkel's Vice-Chancel-

lor, this week voiced confidence that the three-way talks involving his party will produce Germany's next government before Christmas.

'Approval ratings at 62%' A coalition of SPD, Greens and FDP — known as "traffic light" after the three parties' red, green and yellow colours — has found favour with Germans, with 62% approving the constellation as the next federal government, according to a poll published on Friday.

Mr. Scholz's approval rating was even higher, as three in four say it was "good" for him to become Chancellor.

ELSEWHERE



Mental illness may have triggered Norway attack

A bow-and-arrow attack in Norway that left five people dead this week appears to have been motivated by mental illness, police said on Friday, as the perpetrator was ordered to be kept in a medical facility. Espen Andersen Brathen, 37, a Danish citizen who converted to Islam and is believed to have been radicalised, has confessed to the killings. ■ AFP

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton in hospital

Former President Bill Clinton was admitted to a hospital with an infection but is "on the mend," his spokesman Angel Ureña said. Clinton, 75, was admitted to the University of California Irvine Medical Center on Tuesday for a non-COVID-19-related infection, he said. ■ AP

U.S. to allow fully vaccinated travellers from November 8

They need to continue to show a negative COVID-19 test

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The Biden administration is expected to announce that its new travel policy requiring foreign nationals travelling to the U.S. to be fully vaccinated will be operational November 8 onwards. The new policy will replace disparate rules that have applied so far to different countries of origin and will provide consistent guidelines based on vaccination status. Specifically, it will ease pandemic-related restrictions for travel from India, the U.K., Ireland, South Africa, Brazil and the Schengen Zone.

Canada, Mexico borders The imminent announcement, which was first reported by Reuters, will apply to air travel as well as travel for non-essential purposes via



land borders shared with Mexico and Canada. By January, those using land borders for "essential" travel will need to fall in line with vaccine requirements, as per the White House's forthcoming announcement.

"This puts in place a global international travel policy that is guided by public health, stringent, and consistent," a statement from the White House, sent to *The Hindu* said.

In addition to providing

proof of vaccination status from November 8, travellers will need to continue to show a negative COVID-19 test taken within three days of departure from their point of origin.

So far exemptions have not been announced but a few are expected.

The announcement will follow vaccine recognition guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), i.e., vaccines will need to be approved or authorised by the FDA (the U.S. pharma regulator) or have Emergency Use Listing status from the WHO.

"Further guidance on the very limited exceptions to these vaccination requirements, what will be acceptable proof of vaccination, and other operational details are forthcoming," the White House said.

Lebanon on edge after sectarian unrest

Seven died and dozens wounded as a result of violence that erupted a day ago

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIRUT

Lebanon buried on Friday the victims of its deadliest sectarian unrest in years after gunfire gripped central Beirut for hours and revived the ghosts of the civil war.

Seven people died and dozens were wounded as a result of violence that erupted on Thursday following a rally by Shia protesters demanding the dismissal of the judge investigating last year's devastating Beirut port blast.

The Shia movements Amal and Hezbollah that organised the protest in front of the Justice Palace accused the Lebanese Forces (LF), a Christian party, of engineering the chaos by aiming sniper fire at the demonstrators. "This massacre was com-



In turmoil: A member of Lebanon's Hezbollah fires his weapon in the air during a funeral procession in Beirut on Friday. ■ AFP

mitted by the LF movement," senior Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine said during a Beirut funeral on Friday, accusing the party of seeking to "start a civil war".

"We will not be dragged into sectarian strife... but at the same time we cannot al-

low the blood of our (martyrs) to go to waste," he added.

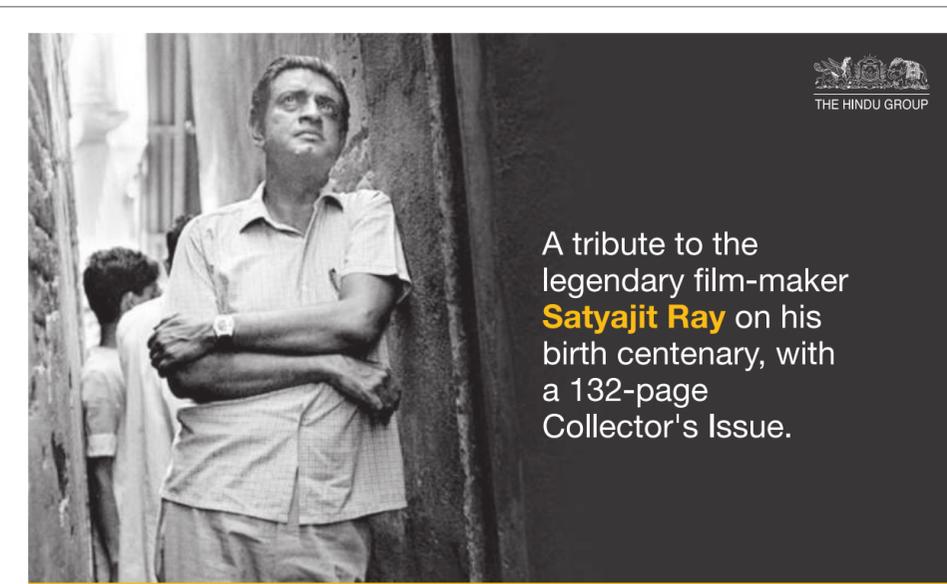
In Beirut's southern suburbs, Hezbollah held burials for two of its members as well as a woman who was shot in the head by a stray bullet while she was stand-

ing on her balcony.

Hundreds of mourners chanting in support of the Iran-backed group carried caskets wrapped in the party's yellow flag as prayers rang out from loudspeakers.

The LF has denied any involvement in Thursday's violence and said Hezbollah was "invading" off-limits neighbourhoods when the violence broke out.

A heavy army presence was visible on the streets Friday amid fears of an escalation. On Thursday, Amal and Hezbollah militiamen filled the streets around Tayouneh, a notorious civil war flashpoint near the spot where the April 1975 bus attack often presented as the trigger of the conflict occurred.



A tribute to the legendary film-maker **Satyajit Ray** on his birth centenary, with a 132-page Collector's Issue.

“Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing in the world without seeing the sun or the moon.”
- Akira Kurosawa

Such was the genius of Satyajit Ray that Frontline dedicates a curated special edition to the legendary film-maker who put Indian cinema on the world map after his Pather Panchali nearly six decades ago. The lead piece is written by Andrew Robinson, Ray's biographer, and the special issue will feature over a dozen articles and interviews of actors who worked closely with him and directors who were inspired by him.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

Watch out for tributes by legendary directors: **Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Girish Kasaravalli, Gautam Ghose and Sandip Ray**

Understand Ray through the memories of actors: **Dhritiman Chatterji, Sharmila Tagore, Aparna Sen, Barun Chanda and Kathak dancer Saswati Sen.**

A treasure trove of never-seen-before vintage photographs - both black & white, and colour by **Nemai Ghosh (Ray's photographer), Raghu Rai and more.**

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FRONTLINE
LEADING THE DEBATE SINCE 1984

Festivals drive gold to premiums

REUTERS

Physical gold flipped back to premiums in India this week as key festivals ushered in jewellery buying.

The December quarter accounts for about a third of India's gold sales as it takes in the start of the wedding season as well as festivals.

"Retail demand has improved to pre-pandemic level," said Ashish Pethe, chairman of the All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council. Dealers charged premiums of up to \$2 an ounce over official domestic prices — versus last week's \$2 discounts.

U.S.-India ministerial dialogue adds focus on climate finance

FM Sitharaman, Yellen participate in 8th economic, financial partnership meet

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen met on Thursday for the eighth ministerial meeting of the U.S.-India Economic and Financial partnership. Also in attendance were Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das (who attended virtually).

The ministerial held a session dedicated to climate finance for the first time, as per a joint statement.

In the run-up to the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow at the end of the month, India has been pushing for rich countries to meet their Paris Ac-



Keeping a promise: India has urged rich nations to meet their Paris accord climate finance pledge of \$100 billion a year. • AP

cord climate finance commitment of \$100 billion per year. The two sides "reaffirmed the collective developed country goal to mobilise \$100 billion annually for developing countries from public and private sources, in the context of meaningful

mitigation actions and transparency on implementation," the statement said.

Holding such a session, the statement said, reflected the "critical" role climate finance has to play in achieving global climate goals and the two sides' commitments

to drive "urgent progress" in combatting climate change.

"We intend to engage further on addressing climate change between our two ministries, as well as through the Finance Mobilization pillar of the recently launched Climate Action and Finance Mobilization Dialogue under the U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership."

India has been under pressure, including from the U.S. and U.K., to provide a deadline to reach 'Net Zero' emissions. India has so far not made commitments beyond its Paris-related goals and has argued that rich countries must move towards 'net minus' commitments.

India showing signs of steady economic recovery, says FM

Policy, jobs disparity spur uneven global uptick: IMF panel

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attended the Development Committee — i.e., the Joint Ministerial Committee of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank and IMF — on Friday and told the Committee that the Indian economy was showing signs of steady recovery despite pandemic-related challenges, the Ministry of Finance said.

Ms. Sitharaman also welcomed the World Bank Group's \$157 million in support to more than 100 countries and for approving vaccine projects in 50-plus countries, enabling the purchase of 290 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Ministry said via Twitter.



Nirmala Sitharaman

The International Monetary and Finance Committee (IMFC) — which directs the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and sets its agenda — had met on Thursday as part of the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank.

Finance ministers and central bankers, who constitute the committee, including Ms. Sitharaman, were present. A communiqué

from the IMFC noted that while the world economy is recovering from the pandemic, divergences exist between various economies driven by differences in vaccine availability and different levels of policy support.

The IMFC also welcomed the new SDR (Special Drawing Rights) allocation, reserve assets of the IMF, \$650 billion of which were newly created this year.

In her statement, Ms. Sitharaman called for closer examination of the impact on emerging markets of "faster than expected" normalisation of policy in advanced economies. She said the Fund would need to play a key role in ensuring the smooth transition of policy withdrawals.

Rooftop solar: 'India most cost-effective'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A global study has found that India is the most cost-effective country for generating rooftop solar energy at \$66 per megawatt-hour, while the cost in China is marginally higher at \$68 per megawatt-hour.

Due to the lower cost, rooftop solar photovoltaics (RTSPV) technology, such as roof-mounted solar panels used in homes, and commercial and industrial buildings, is currently the fastest deployable energy generation technology.

This is projected to fulfil up to 49% of the global electricity demand by 2050. According to the study, India has a significant solar rooftop potential of 1.7 petawatt-hour per year.

Paradeep Phosphates to raise ₹1,255-crore capital

Funds to part-finance Zuari unit buy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Paradeep Phosphates Ltd. (PPL) is planning to raise up to ₹1,255 crore through an IPO to part finance the acquisition of the Goa facility of Zuari Agro Chemicals and retire a part of its debt.

Post acquisition of the Goa facility, PPL's capacity would increase to a combined 3 MMTPA (million metric tons per annum) for DAP/ NPK (Di-ammonium Phosphate/ Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potassium).

"PPL will selectively explore inorganic growth opportunities and target acquisitions that will strengthen our market position, enable us to expand our product portfolio and increase our sales, marketing and distri-



Sabaleel Nandy

bution network," said Sabaleel Nandy, president and COO, PPL.

"The acquisition will help PPL to access the high fertilizer demand markets of Maharashtra and Karnataka," Mr. Nandy added.

PPL would also utilise the fresh funds towards repayment/prepayment of certain borrowings and to meet general corporate purposes.

'SpiceJet can't carry unsafe goods for now'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Aviation regulator DGCA has temporarily suspended SpiceJet's licence for the transportation of 'dangerous goods' for alleged violations, as per sources.

The suspension is for 30 days, and during this period, SpiceJet will not be allowed to carry dangerous goods, including lithium-ion batteries, on its domestic as well as international flights, the sources told PTL. When contacted, a SpiceJet spokesperson did not directly mention the suspension.

The airline said there was a 'minor issue' with a package being declared as 'non-dangerous goods' by a shipper, who has been blacklisted.

Indian retailers seek probe into Amazon, Senator urges break-up

'E-tailer copied products, rigged search results in country'

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren called for breaking up Amazon.com Inc., and Indian retailers demanded a government probe of the company after a Reuters investigation showed the e-commerce giant had copied products and rigged search results in India.

The Reuters report reviewing thousands of internal Amazon documents, found that the U.S. company ran a systematic campaign of creating knockoffs and manipulating search results to boost its own private brands in India, one of its largest growth markets.

Wednesday's report showed that, at least in In-

dia, manipulating search results to favour Amazon's products, as well as copying other sellers' goods, were part of a formal strategy at Amazon, and that at least two senior executives had reviewed it.

The investigation drew bipartisan criticism of Amazon from U.S. lawmakers.

Linking to the story on Twitter and Facebook, Ms. Warren, a long-time critic of Amazon, said "these documents show what we feared about Amazon's monopoly power — that the company is willing and able to rig its platform to benefit its bottom line while stifling small businesses and entrepreneurs. This is one of the many reasons we need to break

it up," she said. In sworn testimony before the subcommittee last year, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos said the firm prohibits its employees from using data on individual sellers to help its private-label business.

A group representing millions of India's brick-and-mortar retailers said on Thursday the country's government must start an investigation into Amazon.

"Amazon is causing a great disadvantage to the small manufacturers. They are eating the cake that is not meant for them," Praveen Khandelwal of the Confederation of All India Traders told Reuters. The group says it represents 80 million retail stores in the country.



TVS rolls out 1,00,000th BMW bike

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

TVS Motor Company has rolled out the 100,000th unit of BMW Motorrad's 310cc series motorcycles.

The motorcycle was rolled out from the Hosur facility by K.N. Radhakrishnan, director and CEO, TVS Motor Company and Rainer Baumel, head of products, BMW Motorrad, according to a statement.

SPORT

India starts favourite against Nepal

Stimac's side, eyeing its eighth title, should guard against complacency

SAFF C'SHIPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MALE

Having endured a topsy-turvy beginning to its campaign before a fine turnaround, seven-time champion India will start title favourite when it takes on first-time finalist Nepal in the summit clash of the SAFF Championships here on Saturday.

The final will be the 12th for India in 13 editions which shows the domination of the Blue Tigers in this regional tournament. The third-place finish in 2003 was the worst performance.

A win against Nepal will also be head coach Igor Stimac's first trophy after taking charge of the Indian team. Should the team come good, he will become the sixth coach to win the SAFF Championships title and third foreigner after Jiri Pesek (1993) and Stephen Constantine (2015).



Let's do it: Stimac has a chat with the players ahead of the final. • AIFF MEDIA

Stimac will, however, not be in the Indian team dugout on Saturday as he was shown a red card (second yellow card) in the Maldives match apparently for protesting the referee's decisions.

Shanmugam to guide

His assistant Shanmugam Venkatesh, himself a SAFF Championships winner, will guide the side.

The frayed nerves before the must-win Maldives match are no longer there after a dominant win over the defending and two-time champion, which was considered the toughest opponent in the region but the job is not yet done.

Nepal, ranked 61 places below India at 168th, has shown that it is no pushover in this tournament and it

needed a late goal (82nd minute) from Chhetri for India to beat it in the round-robin match.

India has the psychological advantage as recent statistics will show that Stimac's side is the clear favourite to lift the title yet again.

In the three matches played between the two sides so far this year, India won twice and drew once.

Raphinha delights as Brazil routs Uruguay

Argentina takes full points with a narrow win over Peru

WC QUALIFIERS

REUTERS
MANAUS (BRAZIL)

Raphinha turned in another eye-catching performance for Brazil on Thursday by scoring twice in the home side's 4-1 victory over Uruguay in a World Cup qualifier.

Brazil is now six points clear in the South American qualifying group, ahead of second-placed Argentina who beat Peru 1-0 with a goal from Lautaro Martinez.

Brazil took the lead after 10 minutes when Neymar chested down a pass from Fred and rounded the 'keeper Fernando Muslera before firing low between two defenders on the goal-line.

Raphinha made it 2-0 after 18 minutes when he bundled home a parried shot from close range and then made it 3-0 after 58 minutes.

Luis Suarez scored a consolation goal for Uruguay with a 77th minute free kick



Marksman: Raphinha, right, celebrates with fellow-scorer Neymar after a strike. • AFP

before Gabriel Barbosa restored Brazil's three-goal cushion with a header seven minutes from time.

Memorable

"This couldn't be more memorable for me," Raphinha said. "This is me fulfilling my childhood dream. It's so gratifying to score."

Both Neymar and Raphin-

ha could have scored more, with Muslera thwarting both in quick succession early in the second half.

Also on Thursday, Chile beat Venezuela 3-0 to record its second successive win, while Bolivia won its second game in a row to keep the chances of reaching a first World Cup since 1994 alive with a 4-0 win over Para-

guay. In the CONCACAF region, Mexico claimed a 2-0 win at El Salvador while Canada thrashed Panama 4-1 at home as both teams remained unbeaten.

Leader Mexico is on 14 points from six matches, three clear of the USA, who beat Costa Rica 2-1. Canada is third on 10 points.

The results:

South America: Bolivia 4 (Ramallo 21, Villarreal 53, Abrego 84, Fernandez 90+4) bt Paraguay 0; Colombia 0 drew with Ecuador 0.

Argentina 1 (L. Martinez 43) bt Peru 0; Chile 3 (Pulgar 18, 37, Breton 73) bt Venezuela 0; Brazil 4 (Neymar 10, Raphinha 18, 58, Gabriel Barbosa 83) bt Uruguay 1 (Suarez 77).

CONCACAF: USA 2 (Dest 25, Moreira 66-og) bt Costa Rica 1 (Fuller 1); Canada 4 (Murrillo 28-og, Davies 66, Buchanan 71, David 78) bt Panama 1 (Blackburn 5).

Honduras 0 lost to Jamaica 2 (Roofe 38, Fisher 79); El Salvador 0 lost to Mexico 2 (Moreno 30, Jimenez 90+3-pen).

Indians lose to Denmark in Thomas Cup quarterfinals

Women crash out of Uber Cup, going down to Japan in the last eight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AARHUS (DENMARK)

The Indian men's badminton team suffered 1-3 defeat to formidable Denmark in the quarterfinals to bow out of the Thomas Cup here on Friday.

Only the pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy could post a win for the team which made it to the Thomas Cup quarterfinals for the first time since 2010. K. Srikanth was outplayed by his World No. 2 opponent Viktor Axelsen, who won 21-12, 21-13.

Earlier on Thursday, The

Indian women's team crashed out of the Uber Cup losing to Japan in the quarterfinals. The men completed their group engagements in the Thomas Cup with a 1-4 defeat to China. Malvika Bansod was no match for World No. 5 Akane Yamaguchi, who won 21-12, 21-17, before Tanisha Carsto and Rutaparna Panda suffered an 8-21, 10-21 defeat to Yuki Fukushima and Mayu Matsumoto.

Aditi Bhatt was outplayed 21-16, 21-7 by Sayaka Takahashi as Japan sealed the best-of-five tie.

The results: Uber Cup: Quar-

terfinals: Japan bt India 3-0 [Akane Yamaguchi bt Malvika Bansod 21-12, 21-17; Yuki Fukushima & Mayu Matsumoto bt Tanisha Carsto & Rutaparna Panda 21-8, 21-10; Sayaka Takahashi bt Aditi Bhatt 21-16, 21-7].

Thomas Cup: India lost to Denmark 1-3.

China bt India 4-1 [Shi Yu Qi bt K. Srikanth 12-21, 16-21; He Ji Ting & Zhou Hao Dong lost to Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty 14-21, 14-21; Lu Guang Ju bt Sameer Verma 21-14, 9-21, 22-24; Liu Cheng & Wang Yi Lyu bt M.R. Arjun & Dhruv Kapila 26-24, 21-19; Li Shi Feng bt Kiran George 21-15, 21-17].



Lone bright spot: Satwiksairaj and Chirag eased past Ji Ting and Hao Dong in straight games. • FILE PHOTO

Praggnanandhaa in semifinals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

R. Praggnanandhaa made a dream start to his campaign in the \$40,000 Challengers Chess Tour Finals by blanking Russian talent Volodar Murzin 3-0 in the quarterfinals on Thursday.

In the best-of-four-game encounter, Praggnanandhaa won twice with black pieces and emerged triumphant.

After dominating the opening game with black pieces and signing off in style with a queen-offer in 38 moves, Praggnanandhaa needed five moves less with white pieces to take a 2-0 lead.



Praggnanandhaa. • FILE PHOTO

In the third game, where Murzin needed a win to stay alive in the match, Praggnanandhaa relentlessly at-

tacked the white's castled king with a twin-rook attack. A hapless Murzin gave up after 44 moves.

The talented Indian will now face the winner of the quarterfinal contest involving India's Leon Mendonca and Germany's Vincent Keymer.

In the other quarterfinals of the day, Christopher Yoo (USA) won 3.5-2.5 after getting extremely lucky when facing a possible loss in the second blitz game against Lei Tingjie (China).

In the semifinals, Yoo will take on either Awonder Liang (USA) or Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzbekistan).

Clinical Super Kings outplay Knight Riders, clinch fourth IPL title

Dhoni's men complete a remarkable turnaround after the 2020 disappointment; du Plessis' 59-ball 86 and cameos from Uthappa and Moeen do the trick



Fantastic finish: Chennai Super Kings' produced a dominant performance when it mattered most to emerge triumphant for the fourth time in the IPL at the Dubai International Stadium on Friday. •SPORTSPICS/IPL

IPL 2021

SPORTS BUREAU

Marshalled expertly by M.S. Dhoni, Chennai Super Kings overcame Kolkata Knight Riders by 27 runs to win its fourth title in the Indian Premier League, at Dubai, on Friday.

Defending a combative 192 on a good batting surface, Dhoni rang in the changes cleverly, closed down the angles in the field, and kept finding wickets after a blistering 91-run partnership in 10.4 overs between the exciting Venkatesh Iyer and Shubman Gill.

Formidable total

Earlier, riding on Faf du Plessis' 59-ball 86, CSK, put in to bat, posted a formidable 192 for three.

Then it defended the tar-

get with verve although Venkatesh, on zero, was dropped by Dhoni, when Josh Hazlewood got one to seam away.

Southpaw Venkatesh made CSK pay. The next delivery was pulled for a six. And the nerveless Venkatesh proceeded to essay a string of shots against pacemen between cover and point, and dismissed Ravindra Jadeja ruthlessly for sixes.

Venkatesh eventually fatally sliced Shardul Thakur. Then left-handed Nitish Rana drove a cross-seamer straight to mid-off. Thakur's double strike hurt KKR.

Sunil Narine was superbly taken at deep mid-wicket by Jadeja off Hazlewood. Pace variations were on view.

Opener Gill was keeping one end going although he was not able to up the tempo, save a few shots of grace and timing.

He was fortunate on 27 when Ambati Rayudu 'caught' a skier off Jadeja but replays revealed the ball had struck the spider cam on its way up. Gill was trapped leg-before by a full delivery from Chahar for 51.

KKR proceeded to lose a bunch of wickets. Dinesh Karthik was prised out by Jadeja, who then trapped Shakib Al Hasan leg-before. If the choice was between the explosive Andre Russell and Shakib for the final, KKR had picked the wrong man. The out-of-form skipper Eoin Morgan was taken out by Hazlewood. It was all over for KKR.

Earlier, du Plessis was fortunate to be let off on two by Karthik, who missed a leg-side stumping off Shakib. It was a huge moment in the game.

The Kolkata bowlers took a

■ Rituraj (635 runs) went past Rahul to win the Orange Cap

■ A blistering 91-run opening stand between Venkatesh and Gill wasn't enough for KKR

pounding. There was some more bad news for KKR. The in-form Rahul Tripathi hurt his hamstring while fielding.

du Plessis and the light-footed Rituraj Gaikwad disrupted the bowlers' length, found the gaps, hit over the infield, or cleared the ropes. Incredibly, both finished with 600 plus runs in this edition.

From his back-and-across movement, du Plessis launched his attack. Ferguson received the treatment, pulled, punched through covers, and struck through the straight-field. And he also cleared the ropes off the spin-

ners. Meanwhile, Rituraj (635 runs) went past K.L. Rahul to get his hands on the Orange Cap. Rituraj, on 32, was caught in the deep off Narine.

There was no let up in the barrage of CSK shots. The powerful Robin Uthappa smote Shakib and clubbed Varun Chakravathy, both over mid-wicket, for a brace of sixes. And Uthappa lifted Narine over mid-wicket for another six. Uthappa's hurricane 15-ball 31 enabled CSK to maintain its momentum. The bold Uthappa perished attempting a reverse sweep to Narine.

In the innings' climactic phase, the left-handed Moeen Ali timed the ball sensationally, picking Varun's carrom ball and googly and making a 20-ball unbeaten 37. This was a night when CSK made all the right moves.

HONOURS BOARD

2008	Rajasthan Royals
2009	Deccan Chargers
2010	Chennai Super Kings
2011	Chennai Super Kings
2012	Kolkata Knight Riders
2013	Mumbai Indians
2014	Kolkata Knight Riders
2015	Mumbai Indians
2016	Sunrisers Hyderabad
2017	Mumbai Indians
2018	Chennai Super Kings
2019	Mumbai Indians
2020	Mumbai Indians
2021	Chennai Super Kings

Innings scan

CSK	Dots	KKR
31	49	
12	13	
10	7	
50/0	PP	55/0
9.60	RR	8.25

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Rituraj Gaikwad c Mavi b Narine 32 (27b, 3x4, 1x6), Faf du Plessis c Venkatesh b Mavi 86 (59b, 7x4, 3x6), Robin Uthappa lbw b Narine 31 (15b, 3x6), Moeen Ali (not out) 37 (20b, 2x4, 3x6); Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-3, nb-1): 6; Total (for three wkts. in 20 overs): 192.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-61 (Rituraj, 8.1 overs), 2-124 (Uthappa, 13.3), 3-192 (du Plessis, 19.6).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING
Shakib 3-0-33-0, Mavi 4-0-32-1, Ferguson 4-0-56-0, Varun 4-0-38-0, Narine 4-0-26-2, Venkatesh 1-0-5-0.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
Shubman Gill lbw b Deepak Chahar 51 (43b, 6x4), Venkatesh Iyer c Jadeja b Shardul 50 (32b, 5x4, 3x6), Nitish Rana c du Plessis b Shardul 0 (1b), Sunil Narine c Jadeja b Hazlewood 2 (2b), Eoin Morgan c Deepak Chahar b Hazlewood 4 (8b),

Dinesh Karthik c Rayudu b Jadeja 9 (7b, 1x6), Shakib Al Hasan lbw b Jadeja 0 (1b), Rahul Tripathi c Moeen b Shardul 2 (3b), Lockie Ferguson (not out) 18 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), Shivam Mavi c Deepak Chahar b Bravo 20 (13b, 1x4, 2x6), Varun Chakravathy (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (w-8, nb-1): 9; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 165.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-91 (Venkatesh, 10.4), 2-93 (Rana, 10.6), 3-97 (Narine, 11.3), 4-108 (Gill, 13.2), 5-119 (Karthik, 14.5), 6-120 (Shakib, 14.6), 7-123 (Tripathi, 15.4), 8-125 (Morgan, 16.3), 9-164 (Mavi, 19.5).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Deepak Chahar 4-0-32-1, Hazlewood 4-0-29-2, Shardul 4-0-38-3, Bravo 4-0-29-1, Jadeja 4-0-37-2.

Toss: KKR; **MoM:** du Plessis.
Chennai Super Kings won by 27 runs to clinch fourth IPL title.

We have to decide what is good for CSK: Dhoni

Asked about his future plans, skipper says he still hasn't left

SPORTS BUREAU

M.S. Dhoni has left the door open on possibly continuing to play in the IPL after guiding Chennai Super Kings to its fourth title on Friday.

Speaking about his plans for next year, Dhoni said, "basically it depends on the BCCI, you know with two new teams coming in. We have to decide what is good for CSK. It's not really about me being there in the top three or four or whatever the retained number of players is."

"It is about, you know, making a strong core and

making sure that the franchise doesn't really suffer because it will be an auction where you have to make the team for the next 10 years," Dhoni said.

"We were definitely in 2008, the core group that carried on for more than 10 years, but we have to have a hard look as to in the next 10 years who are the people, you know, will contribute in a similar manner," he added.

When presenter Harsha Bhogle pointed out that he could be proud of the legacy he has left behind, Dhoni quipped with a smile, "But still I haven't left behind."

Milestone



Remarkable journey: Dhoni became the first captain to lead in 300 T20s, reaching the landmark during the IPL final between CSK and KKR in Dubai on Sunday. •SPORTSPICS/IPL

We had match-winners: Dhoni

SPORTS BUREAU

M.S. Dhoni felt the team had match-winners

stepping in at different points of time as a key for the team's success in this year's IPL. "We shuffled a

few players, we used them in different ways and important was to take the responsibility and I felt we - we had match-winners - came in game after game performing and doing really well," said Dhoni at the post-match conference. "So people who are in form made sure that they are scoring throughout the tournament and everybody else was chipping in," he added.

Dhoni also spoke about the importance of individual performances, especially in knockouts and closing out games.

Individual sport

"Once you get into the knockout stages, from a team sport, it also becomes an individual sport where, you know, you may come up with 10 minutes of special performance, and that can really help you win the game," said the skipper.



Seasoned campaigner: Faf du Plessis must be among the top match-winners that M.S. Dhoni referred to. •SPORTSPICS/IPL

Extremely proud of the fight we showed: Morgan

Venkatesh has a huge future ahead of him, says the KKR skipper

SPORTS BUREAU

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Eoin Morgan credited his side for showing great character to bounce back from a poor start to its IPL campaign.

"I'm extremely proud of the fight that we showed. We didn't start the tournament as well as we would have liked, but the comeback epitomised the fight and character of our team."

"We must thank the owner Shah Rukh Khan and the team management for supporting us. We also had overriding support from our fans, who stood by us even after the first phase of the IPL," Morgan said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

On opening batters Shubman Gill and Venkatesh Iyer, Morgan said, "They've been outstanding. Gill is a very classy player, while Venkatesh is new to the big stage. Venkatesh has a huge future ahead of him. He has been the cornerstone of our batting."

KKR head coach Brendon McCullum echoed the sentiments of Morgan.

"We are very proud of what the guys did. Congratulations to Chennai Super Kings. It's been an amazing journey, with things we can remember for a long time. "The way the guys stepped up and performed, particularly the young Indians, was great. We thank our owner for his immense support," McCullum said.



Outstanding show: Venkatesh Iyer proved he has it in him to shine on the big stage. •SPORTSPICS/IPL

... And the caps go to

ORANGE CAP

RUTURAJ GAIKWAD (CSK)
Matches: 16 | Runs: 635
HS: 101 n.o. | SR: 136.26

PURPLE CAP

HARSHAL PATEL (RCB)
Matches: 15 | Wickets: 32
BB: 5/27 | Econ: 8.14

Individual honours

- **Gamechanger of the Season, MVP and Purple Cap:** Harshal Patel (RCB, 32 wickets, 15 games, one five-for, one four-for)
- **Emerging Player of the season and Orange Cap:** Rituraj Gaikwad (CSK, 635 runs, four 50s, one 100)
- **Fair Play Award:** Rajasthan Royals
- **Catch of the Season:** Ravi Bishnoi (Punjab Kings)
- **Super striker of the season:** Shimron Hetmyer (Delhi Capitals, strike rate: 168)
- **Most sixes:** K.L. Rahul (Punjab Kings, 30)

They relied on experience and they kept the core of the team together under Dhoni. What a revelation! Absolutely outstanding! **BRIAN LARA**

Brilliant is just not the word to describe Chennai. No. 4 and well deserved. Brilliant captaincy by Dhoni. **K. SRIKANTH**

What a turnaround from last season. All credit goes to Dhoni for his leadership. Must appreciate KKR for playing amazing cricket and making it to the finals. **PRETTY ZINTA, PUNJAB KINGS OWNER**

To hit rock bottom and then claim the summit says it all... doff your hat and simply say don't teach the Dads' Army how to play cricket. **MURALI KARTIK**

Congratulations Chennai! Well done, Fleming! Fantastic season. **MAHELA JAYAWARDENE, MUMBAI INDIANS COACH**

Congratulations to Chennai for lifting the prestigious IPL 2021 trophy. **JAY SHAH, BCCI SECRETARY**

Congratulations Chennai for winning its fourth title... well done KKR for playing brilliant cricket. **HARBHAJAN SINGH, KKR**

Form is temporary, class is permanent. Congratulations on a fourth IPL title. Superbly led by MS Dhoni. **IAN BISHOP**

TV PICKS

Badminton: Thomas & Uber Cup: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), Star Sports 3, 4.30 p.m.
Premier League: 55 Select 1 (SD & HD), 5 p.m., 7.30 p.m. & 10 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.
SAFF Championships: (final), Eurosport (SD & HD), 8.15 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Raducanu withdraws from Kremlin Cup

MOSCOW
US Open champion Emma Raducanu has pulled out of the October 18-24 Kremlin Cup citing a "tournament schedule change". Raducanu has played just one match since she won the US Open trophy — a second-round defeat to Aliaksandra Sasnovich at the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells. ANI

Women's Tour de France to start at Eiffel Tower

PARIS
The route for the inaugural women's Tour de France was unveiled on Thursday with eight stages, starting from the Eiffel Tower on July 24 next year. The first complete edition of the women's version of cycling's iconic race starts on the day the 109th edition of the men's Tour ends. AFP



Pedri inks Barca deal with €1b release clause

MADRID
Barcelona midfielder Pedri has agreed a contract extension until 2026, with the deal including a one-billion-euro release clause. Pedri has emerged in recent months as one of the world's most exciting young talents. He joined Barca from Las Palmas in 2020. AFP

Anand to commentate on World Chess match



Anand. ■ FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHENNAI

Viswanathan Anand will be one of the official commentators for the FIDE World Chess Championship match between the champion Magnus Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi beginning in Dubai from Nov. 24.

Replying to a tweet by FIDE announcing him as a commentator for the match, Anand said he was looking forward to the assignment. "Looking forward to being in Dubai. What promises to be a great match. It's even better when you can say 'How come he didn't play the move' see you soon," Anand wrote.

FIDE had tweeted: "Who better to be a commentator for the upcoming World Championship in Dubai than a person who has fought Carlsen in two matches himself?" "FIDE is proud to announce five-time world champion @vishy64theking as the first of our commentators for the official broadcast."

The match will be a best-of-14 contest, with tie breaks between the Norwegian and his Russian challenger.

Also, Anand will be one of the lecturers at the training camp organised by the FIDE Chessable Academy, the world chess federation said.

All eyes will be on Newcastle as it hosts Spurs

Manchester United, looking to get back on track, grapples with injuries

PREMIER LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Struggling Newcastle finds itself in the unusual position of being the Premier League's headline act at the start of its Saudi-led revolution this weekend.

So often consigned to the margins during decades of underachievement, all eyes will be on the club on Sunday when it hosts Tottenham in its first match since the controversial takeover that has Magpies fans dreaming of joining Europe football's elite.

Manchester United must defy injury problems as it looks to get back on track at Leicester, while leader Chelsea cannot underestimate a Brentford team unfazed by big reputations.

A look at some of the talking points ahead of the weekend action:

Sky is the limit

Newcastle can suddenly look forward to a brighter future thanks to the blockbuster £305 million (\$418 million) takeover driven by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, which has taken an 80% stake in the club.



Time to regroup: After Ronaldo's goal spree on his return to Manchester United, the side has been a bit inconsistent. ■ AFP

The departure of disliked former owner Mike Ashley and the vast financial resources provided by the Saudis could turn Newcastle into a major force in years to come.

But while it aims to emulate cash-rich Manchester City, for now it must focus on the fight for survival.

The only way is up for the Magpies, whose new owners arrive with the team lan-

guishing in the relegation zone, winless after their first seven league games.

Manager Steve Bruce is expected to make way for a high-profile replacement but Newcastle hinted at a stay of execution on Thursday when it said the beleaguered boss will handle media duties before the Spurs game.

After the adrenaline rush of Cristiano Ronaldo's re-

turn to Old Trafford, reality has started to bite for Manchester United.

Ronaldo's goal spree at the start of his second spell with United following his move from Juventus papered over some cracks in Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side that threaten to derail its bid for a first major trophy since 2017.

Hampered by inconsistent attacking play and de-

fensive blunders, United has won just two of its past six games in all competitions.

Brentford test for Chelsea

Off the pitch, the financial gulf between European champions Chelsea and its west London neighbour Brentford is vast, but Saturday's first league match between the clubs for 74 years could be a lot closer than it appears on paper.

While Chelsea can call on some of the most expensive players in Europe, its unheralded neighbour has returned to the top flight for the first time since 1947 thanks to the shrewd use of analytics in the transfer market and manager Thomas Frank's tactics.

Chelsea's hopes of retaining its narrow lead at the top of the table rest on matching Brentford's intensity levels.

The fixtures:

Saturday: Watford v Liverpool, Aston Villa v Wolves, Leicester v Manchester United, Manchester City v Burnley, Norwich v Brighton, Southampton v Leeds, Brentford v Chelsea.

Sunday: Everton v West Ham, Newcastle v Tottenham.

Monday: Arsenal v Crystal Palace.

Klopp questions Newcastle buyout

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LIVERPOOL

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp called on the Premier League on Friday to explain the reasons for approving the buyout of Newcastle by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund amid human rights concerns in the kingdom.

Speaking at length about the potential effects of the Saudi ownership, Klopp said Newcastle was now "owned by a country" and would have a "guaranteed" spot in the Champions League within a few years.

The Premier League approved the protracted \$409 million takeover last week after saying it was satisfied that the Public Investment Fund (PIF) produced "legally binding assurances that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will not control Newcastle." That fund, which has bought 80% of the club, is chaired by Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, while there are six Saudi ministers and an advisor to the royal court on the PIF's board.

Activists have highlighted to the Premier League Saudi human rights violations, including the 2018 killing of



Jurgen Klopp. ■ AFP

journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul after US intelligence services said they believe the slaying came at the crown prince's orders. The kingdom has denied that.

"Actually, I was waiting for some official statements about it from (Premier League chief executive) Richard Masters or somebody else, because we all know there are concerns about human rights issues," Klopp said.

"I think that's all clear, we all think the same there," he said. "Obviously," Klopp added, "the Premier League, or Richard Masters, thought, yeah, let's give it a go. It's not the first time, but as far as I know, it's the first club which is now owned by a country."

Karan meets Aman in the boys' final

Suhitha stands between Shruti and girls' crown

TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Karan Singh demonstrated his big game and a sound temperament in overcoming a spirited challenge from top seed Nishant Dabas for a 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 victory in the semifinals of the National junior tennis championship at the DLTA Complex on Friday.

In the final, Karan will face the second seed Aman Dahiya who cruised past Sandesh Kurale 6-2, 6-1.

Both Nishant and Aman, the two best-ranked juniors in the country, were scheduled to compete in South

Africa, but had to stay back to bolster the quality of the national championship.

For the sparse gathering, it was a glimpse into the future, as Karan revealed his immense potential.

Karan has been focusing on the men's circuit, and played a matching game with explosive serves and all-court power play blended with a touch of finesse. It was to the credit of Nishant that he weathered the storm to make a battle of it.

However, after aligning his game better in the third set, Karan shut out the escape routes for his fellow trainee at the National Ten-



On course: Shruti Ahlawat stunned top seed Reshma Maruri on way to the girls' final. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

nis Centre. It had to be admitted that National coach Zeeshan Ali has been admirably tuning some of the best talent in the country.

In the girls' section, Shruti Ahlawat stayed on course in her quest for the title, as she outplayed top seed Reshma Maruri for the loss of four games. However, Reshma's sister Suhitha kept her composure to outgun Anjali Rathi 3-6, 6-4, 6-4.

The results:
Under-18 boys (semifinals): Karan Singh bt Nishant Dabas 6-2, 3-6, 6-3; Aman Dahiya bt Sandesh Kurale 6-2, 6-1; **Quarterfinals:** Nishant Dabas bt

Aayush Bhat 6-2, 3-6, 6-3; Karan Singh bt Rushil Khosla 6-1, 6-2; Sandesh Kurale bt Denim Yadav 6-3, 6-1; Aman Dahiya bt Daksh Prasad 6-1, 6-0.

Doubles (final): Karan Singh & Ajay Malik bt Aayush Bhat & Rushil Khosla 7-5, 6-3.
Under-18 girls (semifinals): Shruti Ahlawat bt Reshma Maruri 6-4, 6-0; Suhitha Maruri bt Anjali Rathi 3-6, 6-4, 6-4; **Quarterfinals:** Reshma bt Hitakanya Singh Narwal 6-1, 6-0; Shruti bt Lakshmi Prabha 6-3, 6-2; Anjali bt Sanjana Sirimalla 6-2, 6-3; Suhitha bt Ruma Gaikawari 6-2, 2-6, 6-0.

Doubles (final): Riya Uboveja & Sudipta Senthilkumar bt Shruti Ahlawat & Ruma Gaikawari 7-5, 6-7(1), [10-7].

Bopanna and Shapovalov bow out

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
INDIAN WELLS

Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov lost 6-4, 6-4 to Russians Andrey Rublev and Aslan Karatsev in the doubles quarterfinals of the Indian Wells Masters here.

The Indo-Canadian pair collected 180 ATP points and \$59,740.

In the Challenger doubles semifinals in Italy, Arjun Kadhe and Jay Clarke of Britain lost 7-6(3), 6-2 to fourth seeds Marco Bortolotti and Sergio Martos Gornes.

The results: Indian Wells Masters, USA: Quarterfinals: Aslan Karatsev & Andrey Rublev (Rus) bt Denis Shapovalov (Can) & Rohan Bopanna 6-4, 6-4.

€44,820 Challenger, Napoli, Italy: Semifinals: Marco Bortolotti (Ita) & Sergio Martos Gornes (Esp) bt Jay Clarke (GBr) & Arjun Kadhe 7-6(3), 6-2.

€44,820 Challenger, Villena, Spain: Semifinals: Denis Molchanov (Ukr) & David Vega Hernandez (Esp) bt Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Purav Raja

6-4, 6-4.

\$25,000 ITF men, Loule, Portugal: Second round: Adria Soriano Barrera (Esp) bt Sasi Kumar Mukund 6-2, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Pratja D'Aro, Spain: Quarterfinals: Max Houkes & Niels Visser (Ned) bt Miguel Damas (Esp) & Manish Sureshkumar 4-6, 6-1, [13-11].

\$15,000 ITF men, Doha, Qatar: Second round: Oscar Moraing (Ger) bt Saketh Myneni 6-7(4), 6-3, 7-5. **Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Patrik Niklas-Salminen (Fin) & Saketh Myneni (Ind) bt Adrian Oetzbach & Niklas Schell (Ger) 7-5, 6-1.

\$25,000 ITF women, Lagos, Portugal: Quarterfinals: Naiktha Bains & Emily Webley-Smith (GBr) bt Riya Bhatia & Prarthana Thombare 6-1, 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF women, Norman, USA: Second round: Dana Guzman (Per) bt Y. Pranjala 6-2, 6-3. **Doubles: Quarterfinals:** McKenna Schaeffbauer (USA) & Kelly Williford (Dom) bt Ayaka Okuno (Jpn) & Pranjala Yadlapalli 7-6(2), 6-7(7), [10-3].

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: Quarterfinals: Laura Boehner (Ger) & Mihaela Djajkovic (Srb) bt Ni Ma Zhuoma (Chn) & Jennifer Luikham 6-1, 6-4.

Joshi is champion at Jaipur

Turns the tables on overnight leader Dharma

GOLF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

Khalin Joshi's final round of three-under 67 was good enough for him to turn the tables on overnight leader M. Dharma and emerge victorious at the ₹40 lakh Jaipur Open golf tournament, organised by Rajasthan Tourism, here on Friday.

Joshi (61, 66, 64, 67), who made a dramatic three-putt from four feet on the last hole to end the tournament with a bogey, won by one shot at 22-under 258.

Khalin's fifth career trophy ended a three-year title drought.

The 29-year-old Joshi, who hails from Karnataka, overcame the disappointment of his runner-up finish in Delhi last week and took home a winning cheque for ₹6,46,600 to move up from fifth to third in the PGTI Order of Merit.

He ended the week with a total of 21-under 259.

Sunit Chowrasia (64) of Kolkata and Harendra Gupta (65) of Chandigarh tied for third place at 20-under 260. Chowrasia's round featured seven birdies and a bogey while Gupta had an eagle, four birdies and a bogey.



Staying strong: Khalin Joshi ended a three-year title drought despite a bogey on the final hole. ■ FILE PHOTO

Chandigarh's Yuvraj Singh Sandhu produced the best round of the tournament, a 10-under 60, but ended tied seventh at 18-under 262. Yuvraj sank an eagle on the 18th from five feet and a bogey during his round.

Olympian Udayan Mane (64) was tied ninth at 17-under 263.

Amateer Avani Prashanth, who shared the overnight lead with Amandeep after two rounds, was left three shots behind despite a fine four-under 68. She finished in second place.

Vani Kapoor tripped to one-over 73 and was fourth, while Jahnavi Bakshi (68) was third.

Amandeep, for whom this was her first title in 2021, finished with a superb nine-under 207, while Avani was six-under 210 and Jahnavi was four-under 212. Vani also had an under-par total of one-under 215.

Amandeep had started the week with 4-under 68 before slipping on the second day with 74.

In the final round, she fell back by two shots after the

Husband held for Tirop's murder

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NAIROBI

The husband of Olympic runner Agnes Tirop has been arrested and will be charged with her murder after Kenyan police launched a nationwide manhunt and found him in the coastal city of Mombasa trying to flee the country, authorities said.

Ibrahim Rotich was arrested on Thursday, police said, but only after crashing his vehicle into a truck in a car chase with the police and escaping a first attempt by officers to apprehend him about 460km from Mombasa. He was finally arrested hours later in the eastern city.

Gruesome

Rotich was detained a day after Tirop, a two-time World championship bronze medalist, was found stabbed to death at her home in the western town of Iten, more than 800km from Mombasa on the other side of the country. The 25-year-old Tirop's body was found in a pool of blood with stab wounds in the abdomen, police said.

Rotich was immediately identified as the prime



National hero: Tirop was a rising star with two Worlds medals and a 5000m fourth-place finish at Tokyo. ■ AFP

suspect and police said he went on the run after making a tearful phone call to his family confessing he had done something terrible.

Rotich was arrested along with another man he was travelling with and had Tirop's cell phone with him, police said. The Directorate for Criminal Investigations said Rotich was being questioned at a police station and would be charged with murder.

Rotich and Tirop were married in a traditional Kenyan ceremony but were estranged at the time of her killing. Their families had convinced them to try to reconcile and they had apparently met this week to do that.

Tirop was a rising star in Kenya after winning the 2015 World cross-country title at the age of 19, the second youngest athlete ever to win that event.

She also claimed bronze in the 10,000m at the 2017 and 2019 World championships and finished fourth in the 5,000m at the Tokyo Olympics. Last month, she broke the world record for the women-only 10km road race.

Mark of respect

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta was one of many who expressed outrage at her killing. Kenyatta said Tirop was a "Kenyan hero" and ordered police to find her killer.

Amandeep triumphs

Bounces back to beat Avani Prashanth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Amandeep Drall bounced back with one of the best rounds of the season as she drilled eight birdies against just one bogey for a superb seven-under 65 in the final round to win the 10th leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour by three shots here.

Amateer Avani Prashanth, who shared the overnight lead with Amandeep after two rounds, was left three shots behind despite a fine four-under 68. She finished in second place.

Vani Kapoor tripped to one-over 73 and was fourth, while Jahnavi Bakshi (68) was third.

Amandeep, for whom this was her first title in 2021, finished with a superb nine-under 207, while Avani was six-under 210 and Jahnavi was four-under 212. Vani also had an under-par total of one-under 215.

Amandeep had started the week with 4-under 68 before slipping on the second day with 74.

In the final round, she fell back by two shots after the

first hole as she bogeyed the first and playing partner and overnight co-leader, Avani had a birdie on the same hole.

Soon after Amandeep found her form as she birdied second, fourth, sixth and seventh to turn in 3-under 33. Avani dropped a shot on fourth where Amandeep had a birdie for a two-shot swing.

That helped Amandeep go ahead by one. Like Amandeep, Avani also birdied the sixth and seventh but was still one behind at the turn.

On the back nine Amandeep drove off on her own with three birdies in a row from 11th to 13th, while Avani had gains only on 13th.

Both birdied the 16th but with two holes left and three shots clear Amandeep made no mistake and Avani was unable to find any more birdies.

The win also cemented Amandeep's place on top of the Hero Order of Merit, which she was already leading.