



90% of deaths during second wave were needless, says Rahul

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U.S. shares plan to allocate 55 million vaccine doses globally

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NCLT approves Kalrock-Jalan plan to restart Jet Airways

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Shami and Ishant strike as India bowls out New Zealand for 249

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NEARBY

‘56% of people surveyed in Delhi had antibodies’

NEW DELHI
Over 56% of 12,000-13,000 people whose blood samples were collected in April from different parts of Delhi showed antibodies against COVID-19, a government source said. The samples were collected for the sixth serological survey, but the collection could not reach the target as it had to be stopped due to the surge in cases.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

‘Sushil Ansal concealed facts to renew passport’

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Police has told a court here that Sushil Ansal, convicted in the 1997 Uphaar cinema fire, which killed 59 people, played a fraud on authorities by concealing information about criminal cases pending against him while getting his passport renewed. Police had earlier informed the High Court that three criminal cases were pending against him in 2013.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 5

Gupkar alliance leaders decide to attend meeting with Modi

Mehbooba Mufti pitches for dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir issue

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Responding to the invitation from the Union Home Secretary to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior leaders of the Gupkar alliance – including National Conference's (NC) Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) Mehbooba Mufti – on Tuesday decided to attend the meeting on June 24 in New Delhi.

“We have received an invitation from the PM. We are going to attend the all-party meeting. We will place our stand before the PM and Union Home Minister. Later, we will apprise the people about the outcome. Our stand remains the same,” Peoples Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) president Dr. Abdullah said.

The announcement followed a meeting of the PAGD, chaired by Dr. Abdullah at his residence, attended by leaders of the NC, the PDP, the CPI(M), the Awami National Conference (ANC) and the J&K Peoples Movement.

The three invited leaders are Dr. Abdullah, Ms. Mufti and CPI(M)'s M.Y. Tarigami.

Ms. Mufti, who was said to have been reluctant to attend, said, “We are not against a dialogue process. I



Making a statement: Farooq Abdullah, centre, and Mehbooba Mufti with other leaders of the Gupkar Alliance during a press conference in Srinagar on Tuesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

did not want to be seen as one playing spoilsport or creating obstacles. It was an invite from the PM, the highest office. I was of the opinion that Dr. Abdullah should represent the alliance in the meeting since our stand is same.”

The PDP leader also called for a dialogue with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

“There is a need to establish peace in the entire region, not just in J&K. Our government is talking to the Taliban

in Doha. There should be a dialogue with people of J&K and also with Pakistan for a resolution,” Ms. Mufti said.

Ms. Mufti, who has been a vocal critic of the Centre's move to end J&K's special status and was jailed in 2019, said it would have been much better if the Centre had initiated confidence building measures ahead of the meeting.

“I will raise the issue of political prisoners too. New Delhi should have released

all the political prisoners for creating an atmosphere for talks. I will seek shifting of Kashmiri prisoners to Srinagar jails from outside,” she added.

Mr. Tarigami, Gupkar alliance spokesman, seconded Ms. Mufti on the release of political leaders. “Prisoners like Shabir Ahmed Shah are very ill in prisons, and the release of inmates is inevitable now,” he said.

CONG. TO ATTEND MEET ▶ PAGE 9

Cong. goes into damage control over Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid growing tensions between Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu, top Congress leaders, including former party president Rahul Gandhi and Leader of

the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, held back-to-back meetings on Tuesday to resolve the crisis.

Captain Amarinder Singh (retd.), who met the All India Congress Committee (AICC) panel headed by Mr. Kharge

for the second time for over three hours, is learnt to have been told by the party leaders that grievances of the MLAs need to be resolved, and the party must present a united face for the 2022 Assembly poll.

“Everybody has said that

they will fight the poll together, and the party is united under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi,” Mr. Kharge told a news agency after meeting the Punjab Chief Minister.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Yogi and RSS leaders meet BJP's Maurya

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

Amid speculation of differences within the BJP in Uttar Pradesh over the question of leadership ahead of the 2022 Assembly poll, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday called on Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya at the latter's residence.

Though Mr. Adityanath chose the occasion to offer blessings to Mr. Maurya's newly-wed son and daughter-in-law, his visit was not bereft of political significance.

Ever since the BJP stormed to power in the State in 2017, an uneasy relationship has existed between Mr. Adityanath and Mr. Maurya.

On Tuesday, Mr. Adityanath, Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma and top RSS leaders Dattatreya Hosabale and Krishna Gopal visited Mr. Maurya. Soon after, Mr. Maurya released pictures of the meeting on social media, including one where he is offering a saffron scarf to Mr. Adityanath.

The show of unity within the BJP in U.P. comes days after Arvind Kumar Sharma, former bureaucrat who is now a BJP MLC, wrote a letter to the party's State president Swatantra Dev Singh affirming that though the party could win solely with the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it would enter the polls under the joint leadership of Mr. Modi and Mr. Adityanath.

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Sushil Ansal hid facts to renew his passport, police tell court

3 criminal cases, including the Uphaar fire, were pending against him at the time

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police told a court here that Sushil Ansal – convicted in the 1997 Uphaar cinema fire incident that killed 59 people – played a fraud on authorities by concealing information about criminal cases pending against him while getting his passport renewed.

"From the investigation, it is clear that Sushil Ansal had deliberately concealed the information regarding criminal proceedings pending against the applicant in any court of law or that she/he has not been convicted by any court of law for any criminal offence in the past," the police said in its chargesheet.

It also said Mr. Ansal was issued a passport in 2013 on a "tatkaal" application. The affidavit under the "tatkaal"



Sushil Ansal • FILE PHOTO

C Ansal was fully aware of the provisions of the Passport Act. He deliberately left the relevant boxes in the application form pertaining to criminality or court proceedings unticked

The accused benefitted from the said passport...He has on oath misled the government authority [Regional Passport Office] that he has not been convicted in any criminal proceedings by any court," the police added.

"**Misled govt. authority'**
"This affidavit was filed by Ansal alongwith his application, which resulted in the issuance of a passport in 2013.

scheme required specific designation by the applicant to the effect that there were no criminal proceedings pending against the applicant in any court of law or that she/he has not been convicted by any court of law for any criminal offence in the past," the police said in its chargesheet.

The police had earlier informed the High Court that in 2013, three criminal cases, including the Uphaar fire tragedy matter, were pending against Ansal.

Krishnamoorthy, who lost her two children in the tragedy, has been fighting a legal battle on behalf of the victims' families for the last 20 years. A fire at Uphaar cinema during the screening of Hindi film "Border" on June 13, 1997, killed 59 people.

The inquiry was initiated on the direction of the High Court after a petition was filed by Association of Victims of Uphaar Tragedy (AVUT) through its chairperson Neelam Krishnamoorthy claiming that the real estate tycoon deliberately made false declarations about his criminal proceedings while applying for passport.

The police had earlier informed the High Court that in 2013, three criminal cases, including the Uphaar fire tragedy matter, were pending against Ansal.

Krishnamoorthy, who lost her two children in the tragedy, has been fighting a legal battle on behalf of the victims' families for the last 20 years. A fire at Uphaar cinema during the screening of Hindi film "Border" on June 13, 1997, killed 59 people.

The men reported to be missing have been identified as Sonu, Vikram, Shamshad, Abhishek, Ajay and Neeraj, said the police. Sonu and his

brother Vikram had come to Delhi from Ghazipur for work, their family members told the police.

Day after godown fire, human remains found

It will be sent for DNA profiling; extreme heat causing hindrance in examination

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after a fire broke out at the shoe godown in Outer Delhi's Udyog Nagar and six workers were reported to be missing, the Delhi Fire Service found on Tuesday charred human remains on the first floor of the building.

The police said the remains will be sent for DNA profiling to ascertain the identity even as a search operation is under way to trace the six workers.

They added that it is yet to be ascertained if the remains found belong to more than one person.

The fire broke out on Monday at the building where shoes were assembled and packed for sale. As many as 35 fire tenders and around 140 fire personnel were pressed into service to douse the blaze.

The men reported to be missing have been identified as Sonu, Vikram, Shamshad, Abhishek, Ajay and Neeraj, said the police. Sonu and his



Firefighting operation under way at the godown in Udyog Nagar. • FILE PHOTO:
SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

DNA profiling. The samples will be collected from the family members of those reported missing for DNA matching, which will help in ascertaining the identity," said DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh.

During a search operation at 7 a.m. on Tuesday, Assistant Divisional Officer Rajesh Kumar Shukla also sustained severe injuries as he slipped from the staircase of the building, said a senior fire official. He sustained injuries in his ribs and is undergoing treatment at Balaji Action hospital, he said.

A three-member team of forensic experts from FSL visited the spot on Tuesday for an examination, but they could not carry out their operation due to the extreme heat inside the building. "Once the temperature reduces, our team will visit the spot again," said an FSL official.

Prima facie, an electric short-circuit is suspected to be the reason but only a de-

tailed examination will reveal the exact cause of the fire. The terrace of the two-storey building has collapsed and due to extreme heat and water used to douse the blaze, the structure of the building remains weak, a senior police officer said. The police said they have written to the civic authority concerned seeking details about the building's plan and its legality.

No fire safety

The building did not have any fire safety equipment in place and was heavily jammed with highly combustible materials due to which the fire spread faster, according to fire officials.

"We are scanning the building and its adjacent premises. Our teams have managed to enter some parts of the building," the officer said.

The building has been declared dangerous by the area's civic body on Monday following the blaze.

Not allowed to fly without RT-PCR report, man creates ruckus at IGIA

The businessman was arrested and later released on bail

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A man from Uttar Pradesh was arrested for creating ruckus at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) after allegedly being denied boarding by an airline for not carrying a mandatory RT-PCR test report, the police said on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old passenger, Suraj Pandey, a businessman, was arrested on Monday based on a complaint received from Deputy Manager of Vistara Airlines Deepak Chadha.

Mr. Chadha said the passenger had come to IGIA's

Vistara airline counter to board his flight for Mumbai but did not have an RT-PCR report, which is mandatory as per government guidelines. He was then not allowed to board the aircraft, the police said.

The airline official said at 3 p.m., Mr. Pandey turned violent and started shouting.

"He got onto the baggage belt and started walking on it," the police said.

DCP (IGI Airport) Rajeev Ranjan said: "From the contents of the complaint, CCTV footage and enquiry conducted so far, Mr. Pandey committed offence under relevant sections of the Delhi Police Act. Subsequently, he was arrested, and his medical examination was also conducted." Since it was a bailable offence, the accused passenger was released on bail and will be produced before a court here, he added.

An official statement issued by the Vistara spokesperson said: "He behaved badly with our staff and other customers. His acts threatened the safety of ground operations. We have provided a full refund of the booking to the customer and notified the authorities of the incident."

Bank officials had hired accused for renovating strong room

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 34-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly de-camping with over ₹50 lakh after breaking into a bank from an adjoining under-construction building in east Delhi's Farsh Bazar.

On Tuesday, the police said on Tuesday.

Six months ago, the bank officials had called him for renovation work at the strong room, which is inside the premises, they said.

The accused, Hariram, was wearing a helmet at the time of the crime to hide his

identity. The police said another person, 39-year-old Kalicharan, was arrested in connection with the crime.

The accused are both residents of Vishwas Nagar.

On Monday at 10.15 a.m., the police received information regarding the burglary in a bank in Vishwas Nagar.

During preliminary probe, the police found that two holes were made – one into the server room of the bank and another in the strong room in the basement. The accused had fled with ₹55,03,330 cash from the vault, a senior officer said.

Teams were formed to collect details of frequent visitors, guards, contractual staff and of people who entered the locker room in the last six months, the police said.

C Hariram [main accused] said when he was called for renovation work, he conducted a detailed recce of the place

POLICE OFFICER

A CCTV camera installed near an ATM located near an under-construction building, was found facing upward, the officer said.

"The direction of the camera was changed but it captured the palm and some portion of the face of the person," he added.

He gathered all the information about the cash and possible entry and exit routes," an officer said.

He got access into the under-construction building by replacing old locks with new ones, the DCP added.

Hariram further revealed that his heist plan had been ready for last three months

but could not do it due to the lockdown in the city.

As soon as he got an opportunity, he entered the under-construction building, made small holes there and another one in the strong room. He said he wanted to use the money for gambling.

On his instance, ₹54,48,730 was recovered from a house in the same area where he was working as a guard, and ₹49,200 from Kalicharan. The accused had spent the rest of the money.

Hariram, who comes from Madhya Pradesh, is a trained construction worker.

He lives in the city with his wife and two children.

Kalicharan has a small business and is also involved in illegal gambling activities, the police added.

Two in police net for ₹55-lakh bank heist in east Delhi

He used fake website to get account details of victims

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly cheating people on the pretext of providing them jobs, the police said on Tuesday.

DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena said the accused has been identified as Ashish Arana, a resident of Najafgarh.

The police said they received a complaint by one Sartaj Khurana on June 12, who said he had received a call from a woman named Muskan – "executive of a leading job portal".

She had asked him to pay ₹10 on their website www.naukricareer.in, promising him a job. Next, the victim paid ₹10 but instead ₹5,000 got debited from his account.

During investigation, the police nabbed the accused.

During interrogation, the accused allegedly told police that he used to purchase data of job seekers from job portals and create similar websites before calling the victims. The accused would ask them to pay ₹10 on the payment page of his fake accounts.

website, which would direct them to a payment gateway.

This way he would get all the details added by the victim and make further transactions.

From the online accounts, the money is routed to fake bank accounts and taken out via ATMs the same day.

Accused further disclosed that he along with his accomplices had been operating several websites from last one year," Mr. Meena said, adding that efforts are being made to trace his accomplices.

76-yr-old man held for killing his wife over 'family issues'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 76-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly killing his wife in north-east Delhi's New Umsampur on Tuesday afternoon, the police said.

A senior officer said a PCR call was received regarding the murder of an elderly woman in Brahmpuri. On reaching the spot, the police found 70-year-old Zenab lying dead and her daughter-in-law injured. The two were rushed to hospital where Zenab was declared dead and her

daughter-in-law was discharged after treatment.

During investigation, it was revealed that Zenab's husband Haji Abdul Kareem often quarreled with her over family issues. A similar incident took place on Tuesday when Kareem got a kitchen knife and slit her throat. "When the daughter-in-law tried to intervene, she also got injured," the officer said.

A case under relevant sections was registered. The couple has four sons and two daughters.

Youth held for abducting 15-year-old girl

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old youth has been arrested for allegedly kidnapping a minor from south Delhi's Neb Sarai, the police said on Tuesday.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said the accused has been identified as Tanzeel Ahmed, a carpenter, who belongs from Bijnor.

The police said they received a complaint from a 25-year-old man that his 15-year-old sister has been missing since 7 a.m. on Monday. The victim's elder sister suspected the involvement of a boy whom the minor had met on a dating application, said an officer.

A kidnapping case was then registered and investigation was taken up. A team was sent to Bijnor with the girl's family from where she was rescued.

"The girl is a student of Class VII. Further investigation is in progress," the officer added.

Police file FIR in DSSSB exam questions case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police registered a case against unknown persons following the HC's in a case of caste-based questions being allegedly asked in the primary teachers' recruitment exam by the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection

Board (DSSSB), officials said on Tuesday.

The FIR was registered on Monday against unknown persons. The court said whether the DSSSB was aware of the contents of the papers set or not, is a matter which can be ascertained only through investigation.

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RISE 19:12 SET 04:37		
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RISE 05:26 SET 19:23		
RISE 20:17 SET 05:38		

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	40	27
Safdarjung	40	27
Palam	40	27

Delhi Palam Today
40°C Dry and hot weather would prevail. Light to moderate winds during day likely. Evening would remain slight warm.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
40°C Warm moderate gusty winds likely during day. Day will remain hot and sunny.

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THE HINDU
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56% of people surveyed have antibodies against COVID-19'

Delhi govt. yet to officially announce the results of sixth serological survey

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Over 56% of 12,000-13,000 people whose blood samples were collected in April from different parts of the city, showed antibodies against COVID-19, a Delhi government source said.

The samples were collected for the sixth serological survey, but the sample collection could not reach the target as it had to be stopped in April due to the surge in virus cases. The Delhi government is yet to officially announce the results of the study.

Only 141 wards covered

"The current survey shows a seroprevalence of 56.09%, which is almost the same as the previous one," the source said. The fifth such survey done in January had shown a seroprevalence of 56.13%, but it had covered 28,000 people spread across all 272 wards of the city, whereas the current survey could reach only 141 wards, officials said. "We cannot completely com-



A woman undergoes an RT-PCR test in north Delhi.

SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

pare this result with the previous survey as we have covered only 141 wards. At best, we can compare the wards from where we have collected samples this time with last time," another official said.

The next serological survey is likely to start in June end or July first week and this might show a considerable change, said officials.

Jugal Kishore, head of the community medicine department at Safdarjung Hospital,

said the result is almost same as the previous study due to two reasons: first, the study did not cover different types of population in the city and thus, is not truly representative. Secondly, after the previous survey in January, the cases were low till April and significant number of new people would not have been infected to develop antibodies against the virus.

"IgG antibodies [which is measured in the serological

survey] are developed about six weeks to 12 weeks after getting the infection. Since our peak of infection was in April-May, people with antibodies should be high now if we do a sero survey," Dr. Kishore said.

Past surveys

The first such survey done in the city in June-July last year had shown that 23.4% people surveyed have developed antibodies against the virus.

Similar surveys in August showed 29.1% people had antibodies, 25.1% in September, and 25.5% in October.

Blood samples collected from across the city are tested in a lab using antibody testing kits to understand whether the person was infected by the virus and developed antibodies.

A positive result would imply that the person has developed antibodies against the virus. This means that the person was infected at some point by the virus and developed immunity against it.

'Improve vaccination policy instead of targeting Delhi CM'

AAP hits out at Hardeep Puri for tweets criticising Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party MLA Atishi on Tuesday said Union Minister Hardeep Puri and other BJP leaders should concentrate on improving the vaccination policy instead of abusing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"BJP's leaders and Ministers have only one job and that is abusing Arvind Kejriwal and the Delhi government. It is my request to Hardeep Puri, that instead of tweeting and holding press conferences, work on improving the country's vaccination policy. Since the time, India's vaccination policy has started, in every phase, it has been a failure," Ms. Atishi said.

Replying to a tweet by Mr. Puri, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said: "Hardeep ji, please focus on providing enough vaccines for the youth, rather than just abusing Arvind Kejriwal all the time. Central government's vaccination flip-flops have created a crisis situ-



A beneficiary gets a COVID-19 vaccine dose at a centre in New Delhi on Tuesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Centre running a "fake" vaccination campaign, Mr. Puri via a tweet and the Centre through a press release told the Delhi government to use the 45+ stock for everyone.

'U-turn by Centre'

"So, when the Delhi government was repeatedly asking to do the same, i.e., to let us use the 45+ vaccine for 18+, the Centre disapproved. And now, today, when their mistake is in front of everyone, the Centre quietly issued a press release saying that the vaccine meant for 45+ can be easily used for 18+ as well," she said.

Capital records eight deaths, 134 new COVID-19 infections

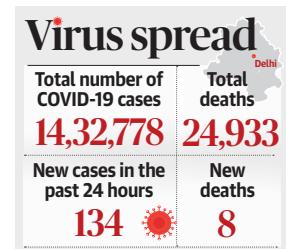
'Govt. should approve more vaccines to protect people'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 134 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,32,778, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Tuesday.

Also, eight deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 24,933.

Positivity rate
A total of 67,916 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said, and that test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.2%. Of the total cases, 14,05,927 people have recovered and there are 1,918 active cases.



The bulletin said that 263 positive cases, pertaining to earlier weeks were added on the ICMR portal on Monday by Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and associated Safdarjung Hospital.

The Delhi government did not clarify how then the new cases as per Tuesday's bulletin was less than 263.

Delhi's stock of Covaxin for 18-44 age group would last only for a day and for people of 45 years of age and above it will last for four days, according to a bulletin on vaccination.

On Monday, 76,062 doses of vaccine were administered and a total of 66,02,835 doses have been administered till now, as per the bulletin.

"The government must approve Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines as soon as possible. The faster the vaccination, the safer India gets from the next COVID-19 wave," Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi said.

Delhi govt. depriving the poor of ration'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The NSUI on Tuesday condemned the UGC's order to put up banners thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for vaccines. It questioned why he needed to be thanked as he has not addressed any issue the students had faced during the pandemic.

NSUI national President Neeraj Kundan said that since the pandemic broke in India, the Centre focused only on building the image of the Prime Minister, leaving people to suffer. "They are doing the same this time, rather than prioritising to vaccinate students and focus on policies to

compensate their lost academic year. The government is busy hiding their failures behind self-appreciating posters," Mr. Kundan said.

The NSUI in a statement said that the PM does not deserve a thank you and deserves questions as to why people of the country died under his watch. The NSUI questioned why no relief packages or fee, loan relaxations had been announced for the students. They also questioned the lack of vaccination policy for students.

"The NSUI plans to reply to these PM posters at the university campuses by initiating a campaign of 'thank you for what?' posters.

DoE announces results of Class 9 and 11 students

Results sent to them via WhatsApp, SMS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) on Tuesday announced the Class 9 and 11 results of students in Delhi government schools. It was the first time that the results were uploaded on the DoE's web portal as well as sent to students via WhatsApp and SMS so that they do not have to visit schools to collect them.

The DoE said that 2.58 lakh students were enrolled in Class 9 in 2020-21, out of which 2.45 lakh appeared for

mid-term exams. Final results of students were evaluated based on mid-term and internal assessments. The passing percentage in Class 9 is 80.3%. Last year, the passing percentage of students was 65%, which increased to 85% based on project-based assessments, the DoE said.

Similarly, out of 1.70 students in Class 11, 1.69 lakh students appeared for exams and 96.9% students were promoted to Class 12. In 2019-20, 99.25% students passed the compartment exams, the DoE said.

Party leaders were illegally detained: AAP

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party MP Sushil Gupta alleged that the police "illegally detained" him and other party leaders on Tuesday during the protest against the eviction of Khori Basti residents.

"Today morning when I reached the village, the Haryana police detained me illegally. I made it very clear that they have detained me illegally and they have tried to suppress my right to protest," Mr. Gupta said.

"Our district president along with many other leaders of the AAP Haryana unit is still in jail. This is the real picture of the Haryana government," he said.

'Teachers should help transitioning students'

Sisodia meets civic officials to discuss

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

To ensure smooth integration of students joining Class 6 in DoE schools from municipal feeder schools, Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Manish Sisodia chaired a meeting with Municipal Commissioners of North, South and East Delhi Corporations at which several strategies were discussed.

Mr. Sisodia said that due to the pandemic, there was a need to have correct contact details of students joining Delhi government schools

from municipal schools so that their Class 6 teachers can reach out to them quickly.

Last year, at the beginning of the session, only about 30-35% students' phone number were correct due to which a large number of students could not be engaged. Mr. Sisodia said. He said that students and teachers have faced a lot of challenges due to the COVID crisis and that students' transition should get support from their teachers.

ment, said Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta.

11 lakh doses available

"Till June 21 morning, there were more than 11 lakh doses of vaccines. But still an atmosphere of panic was created as if there was acute shortage of vaccines," Mr. Gupta alleged.

"Kejriwal's only aim is to somehow blame the Centre

to hide his own shortcomings," he said.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said he would urge Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal to handover vaccination to the three municipal corporations, which have done a "great job" despite alleged roadblocks created by the Delhi government.

"Instead of trying to save the lives of Delhiites, Kejriwal is deliberately delaying the task of giving vaccine shots so that if something goes wrong, he could, as he always does, blame the Central government for it. This shows the mindset of Kejriwal and the extent to which he can go for cheap political gains," Leader of the Opposition alleged.

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SIT questions ex-CM Badal in firing case

Congress politicising probe in the Kotkapura sacrilege and police firing incident, alleges Akali Dal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal leader Parkash Singh Badal was on Tuesday questioned by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Punjab police, probing the 2015 Kotkapura police firing incidents.

The team, led by Additional Director General of Police L.K. Yadav, questioned Mr. Badal at his official residence here for over two-and-a-half hours.

The Shiromani Akali Dal accused the Congress government of yet again politi-

cising the SIT probe by deputing an unauthorised person to question the former Chief Minister during the investigation.

Senior SAD leaders Prem Singh Chandumajra, Mashesinder Singh Grewal and Daljit Singh Cheema alleged that the run up to the questioning as well as making a former Director (Prosecution) a part of the team indicated that the Congress government was bent upon politicising the issue.

"The retired officer, who did not hold any official position, was made part of the



SIT team. The prosecution steps in only when the challenger is presented in the court. How can the former Director,

(Prosecution), be made part of the SIT team?" they asked, addressing a press conference here.

The leaders said it was unfortunate that the State government was misusing the police force to target the SAD. "The SAD was committed to identifying those responsible for the heinous acts of sacrilege as well as ensuring strict punishment in the cases. The party would protest against any probe which seeks to politicise investigation into such cases as they were linked with the sentiments of the Guru Nanak

Naam Leva sangat," they added.

Narco test

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party MLA and Kisan Wing State president Kultar Singh Sandhu and senior leader Manwinder Singh Giasparia said that 'narco test' of Mr. Parkash Singh Badal must be conducted.

In 2015, incidents of sacrilege of religious text and police firing at people protesting against it took place in Faridkot.

Mr. Prakash Singh Badal was the then Chief Minister.

Spread awareness on laws, Haryana CM tells farmers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Amid controversies surrounding the Centre's farm laws, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal on Tuesday said a group of 30-40 farmers having factual knowledge about the laws should be constituted to spread awareness among their peer groups in each village.

He gave this suggestion to a group of representatives of farmer outfit, Bharatiya Kisan Union (Mann), led by Guni Prakash, who met the Chief Minister here. "Rather than agitating, every farmer should be well versed about

the benefits so that those who are trying to spread misinformation and mislead them fail."

According to an official press release, Mr. Lal said if needed, training of the farmers be conducted.

The delegation submitted a letter of support to the Chief Minister on the farm laws. "Those agitating on Delhi borders are political representatives," alleged Mr. Prakash. Udhay Bhan, general secretary of the outfit, said, "The Opposition, especially the Congress, is playing politics with the lives of the farmers."



One of the pygmy hogs reintroduced in Assam's national park on Tuesday.

8 rare pygmy hogs released in Manas National Park

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Eight of 12 captive-bred pygmy hogs, the world's rarest and smallest wild pigs, were on Tuesday released in the Manas National Park of western Assam. The remaining four would be released on June 25.

Second batch
This is the second batch to have been reintroduced into the wild under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP) in a year. Fourteen of these animals were released in Manas in 2020.

The PHCP is a collaboration among Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK, Assam Forest Department, Wild Pig Specialist Group of International Union for Conservation of Nature and Union Environment Ministry and is currently being implemented by NGOs Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.

Six hogs – two males and four females – were captured from the Bansbari range of the Manas National Park in 1996 for starting the breeding programme. The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (35 hogs), Orang National Park (59) and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary (22).

With Tuesday's release, the number of pygmy hogs reintroduced into the wild under the PHCP reached 142, which is more than their current original global wild population.

"Manas has been doing well in conservation in recent years," Amal Chandra Sarma, Manas' Field Director said.

"Conservation of pygmy hog was initiated by noted naturalist Gerald Durrell and his trust in 1971. The pygmy hog was brought back from near-extinction by the partnership effort, and now we are moving towards the establishment of a population across the entire range," PHCP's Project Director Parag Jyoti Deka said.

U.P.: Ambedkar statue damaged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BALLIA

A statue of Bhimrao Ambedkar was found damaged on Tuesday morning in Rampur Ashi village here, leading to protests by locals, police said. They said some unidentified people damaged the statue late on Monday night. The incident led to protests by locals who blocked the Gadwar-Nagra road, Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjay Yadav said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

CENTENARY



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IN BRIEF



'My dream is to make women entrepreneurs'

GUNTUR
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday released the second tranche of YSR Cheyutha benefit, crediting ₹4,339.39 crore into the accounts of 23.14 lakh women beneficiaries. "This is yet another scheme close to my heart and it fulfils my dream of seeing women as entrepreneurs," he said.

Papikonda park getting ready for tiger census

RAJAHMundryravaram
The Rajahmundryravaram Wildlife Division is preparing the ground for the All India Tiger Estimation-2022. It will install more than 200 camera traps in Papikonda National Park, which is spread over 1,013 sq km in the East and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Police probe accident in Kerala that killed five

KOZHIKODE
The Kozhikode police are piecing together evidence in the case related to the accident that claimed the lives of five persons at Ramanattukara on Monday. A case was registered at the Feroke police station. Now the Karipur police have taken over the case of the gang allegedly involved in gold smuggling.

Jagan welcomes Vamsadhara verdict

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has welcomed the judgment of the Vamsadhara Tribunal permitting Andhra Pradesh to construct Neradi barrage across the Vamsadhara river. He directed the officials to focus on the construction of the barrage, once the gazette was released.

Court tells Gowda to pay ₹2 cr. to NICE in defamation case

The firm claimed that the charge by ex-PM on land utilisation was inaccurate

IMRAN GOWHAR
BENGALURU

A City Civil and Sessions Court in Bengaluru has directed former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) leader H.D. Deve Gowda to pay damages of ₹2 crore to the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprise (NICE) Limited for 'loss of reputation'. NICE had filed a case alleging 'defamatory comments' by the former Prime Minister in an interview to a Kannada news channel in June 2011.

The order issued by judge Mallanagouda also retrained Mr. Gowda from making defamatory statements against the company in the media in future.



A file photo of the road built by Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprise Limited in Bengaluru. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

COVID-19 claims famed lyricist Poovachal Khader

He wrote over 1,000 songs in 5 decades

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Poovachal Khader, who died in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday at the age of 72 while undergoing treatment for COVID-19, was a prolific lyricist who penned several evergreen hits in Malayalam cinema.

In a career that spanned over five decades, he wrote over a thousand songs for more than 350 films.

From PWD job to films

He was so busy in the late 1970s and 80s that he took leave from his job at the Public Works Department – he had a diploma in Engineering – to concentrate on his alternative career in cine-



Poovachal Khader

ma. Among his chart-toppers are *Naathaa nee varun kalocha* (*Chamaram*), *Shararanthal thiri thaanu* (*Kayulum Kayaram*), *Sindoor sandhyayakku mounam* (*Chooala*), and *Entejanman neeyeduthu* (*Itha Oru Dhikkari*).

Carnatic music loses doyenne Ponnammal

She was a Padma Shri award-winner

R.K. ROSHNI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Doyenne of Carnatic music and Padma Shri award-winner Parassala B. Ponnammal died at her residence at Valiyasala here on Tuesday afternoon. She was 96.

Her death brings to an end a lifetime devoted to the pursuit of Carnatic music.

She was the first woman student of the first batch of the Sree Swathi Thirunal Music Academy, as the present Swathi Thirunal College of Music was known then, and completed the Ganabhooshnam course with first rank.

She became the first woman faculty member of the college and then its Princi-

pal, and of RLV College of Music and Fine Arts, Tripunithura. In 2006, she scripted history when she became the first woman to perform at the famed Navaratri Mandapam here, and went on to perform for 10 consecutive years.



Parassala B. Ponnammal

HC stays plan to shut down dairy farms in Lakshadweep

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

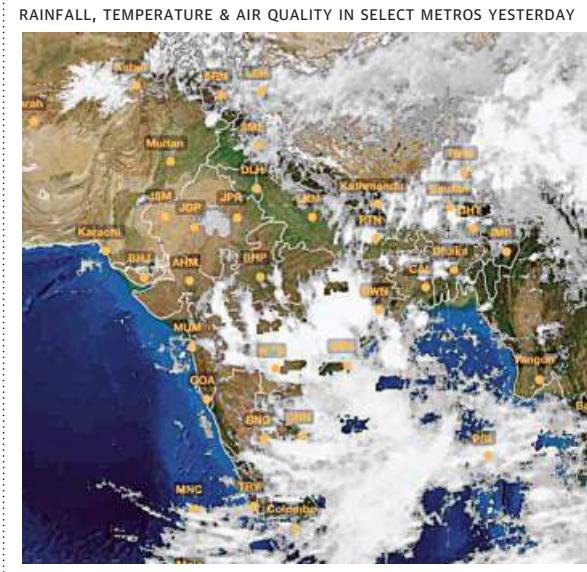
A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Tuesday stayed the Lakshadweep administration's decision to close down dairy farms run by the Animal Husbandry Department and remove meat from the menu of the midday meal scheme of schools.

The Bench led by Chief Justice S. Manikumar passed the stay order on a writ petition filed by Ajmal Ahmed of Kavaratti island challenging the Animal Husbandry Department's order and the decision of the district task force to drop non-vegetarian items from the menu of the midday meal scheme of schools.

The petitioner contend ed that the decision to close down the dairy farms was taken as part of the administration's efforts to implement the proposed Animal Preservation (Regulation), 2021 which bans slaughter of cow, calves, and bulls, etc., and also the sale and purchase of beef and beef products. The closure of dairy farms would curtail the source of milk products and compel islanders to purchase the same from Gujarat. The Administrator was adopting measures to destroy the well-maintained dairy farms and other infrastructure established on the islands for promoting them.

The petitioner said there was a proposal to entrust preparation of food for midday meal to a non-governmental organisation, Akshayapatra, based in Bengaluru. The petitioner termed the decisions of the Administrator illegal and unsustainable in law.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Jharkhand, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Rajasthan, Gangetic West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rayalseema, Karaikal and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1...	31...	26...	Kozhikode	1...	32...	24...
Ahmedabad	29.3...	33.0...	26.1	Kurnool	—	36.6...	27.4
Aizawl	0.5...	—	—	Lucknow	—	36.5...	27.5
Allahabad	—	35.8...	27.2	Madurai	2...	36.2...	25.8
Bengaluru	—	28.4...	21.0	Mangalore	24.5...	29.9...	22.8
Bhopal	1.6...	34.9...	24.6	Mumbai	4...	33.0...	26.0
Bhubaneswar	41.1...	31.2...	28.0	Mysuru	—	30.9...	20.4
Chandigarh	—	38.7...	26.9	New Delhi	—	39.8...	27.4
Chennai	0.5...	37.5...	26.0	Patna	12...	32.4...	25.0
Coimbatore	0.2...	33.0...	23.4	Port Blair	—	32.0...	26.4
Dehradun	—	34.7...	24.5	Puducherry	21.1...	32.3...	21.7
Gangtok	0.8...	22.4...	17.1	Pune	0.4...	31.5...	22.2
Goa	6...	31.8...	26.6	Raipur	33...	34.4...	26.4
Guwahati	0.1...	36.5...	26.2	Ranchi	3...	31.6...	23.5
Hubballi	—	29.0...	21.0	Shillong	0.2...	26.5...	17.0
Hyderabad	—	34.1...	25.3	Shimla	—	28.8...	19.9
Imphal	1...	29.9...	21.7	Srinagar	—	28.9...	13.4
Jaipur	—	39.3...	28.1	Thiruvananthapuram	—	32.0...	24.8
Kochi	—	30.4...	25.5	Tiruchi	—	37.3...	27.4
Kohima	12...	27.8...	18.8	Vijayawada	0.8...	38.4...	27.4
Kolkata	2...	32.2...	25.0	Visakhapatnam	—	34.4...	27.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.5	4.46	190	134
Bengaluru	11	—	52	77	76	...
Chennai	60	8.35	—	70	79	...
Delhi	.5	31.27	168	166
Hyderabad	32	27.17	—	85	138	...
Kolkata	.9	32.28	—	62	77	...
Lucknow	.5	48	73	—	103	...
Mumbai	.3	14.4	—	218	113	...
Pune	—	26	89	—	50	113
Visakhapatnam	.9	48	23	—	91	158

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 PM, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab recorded an overall AQI index (AQI) score of 206 indicating unhealthy level of pollution.

In contrast, Kohima, Nagaland recorded a healthy AQI score of 35.

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

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

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

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

WEST

BJP slams 2-day monsoon session

Oppn. boycotts BAC meeting; Maharashtra govt. cites COVID-19 for truncated sitting

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Tuesday said the monsoon session of the State legislature would be held for only two days from July 5 in Mumbai due to the pandemic. Opposition BJP has criticised the move, saying the government is running away from its responsibility.

The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) held its meeting on Tuesday to decide on details of the monsoon session. The BJP boycotted the meeting over the manner in which the decision to hold a truncated session was taken.

"Today, we (BJP leaders) met the ruling coalition to



Devendra Fadnavis

Protest: traffic diversion in Navi Mumbai

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

The Navi Mumbai Traffic Police have announced a diversion in vehicular movement on Thursday, anticipating a law and order situation caused by the protest planned by project affected people and BJP workers against the naming of the Navi Mumbai international airport. Even though the police are yet to give permission, organisers claim close to one lakh people will participate.

All heavy motor vehicles and light motor vehicles travelling from Mumbai towards Pune will be diverted from Airoli toll plaza via Mahape-Shilphata road to reach Kalamboli. Vehicles from Pune will be diverted from Purusharth petrol pump at Kalamboli to Airoli via Taloja MIDC.



A health worker administers COVID-19 vaccine to a beneficiary at Madhavbaug vaccination centre in Mumbai. Maharashtra on Tuesday administered a record 5.52 lakh doses, a senior official said. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

taking its infection tally to 7,21,099 and the toll to 15,315.

The Health Department said 2,16,861 people were tested for COVID-19 in the last 24 hours and added that so far, 3,98,86,554 tests had been conducted.

Mumbai city reported 568 new cases and 10 deaths, taking its infection tally to 1,23,340 active cases in the State, where the recovery rate is 95.9%, while the fatality rate is 1.98%.

There are now 1,23,340 active cases in the State, where the recovery rate is 95.9%, while the fatality rate is 1.98%.



A welcome spike

The threat of a third wave and new variants make speedy, complete inoculation a priority

India began the week with a record, by administering over 8.6 million doses of vaccine on a single day, an impressive feat even from a global perspective. For most of May, India struggled to deliver over 2 million doses a day and beginning June, managed to hike it to over 3 million doses daily. These are substantial numbers, but inadequate, given that the benefits of mass vaccination would be discernible – in terms of reducing hospitalisation and mortality – only after a large percentage of the population is inoculated. By that metric, India is a global laggard with only 17% of the population covered by at least one dose and less than 4% by two. The U.S., in comparison, has inoculated at least 53% and the U.K. 64% with a single dose. In that light, India on a single day being able to administer over twice the previous weeks' daily average makes plausible the Centre's aspiration to inoculate all of India's adult population by the year-end. So far, about 25% of them have been administered at least one dose and to reach the 944 million adult population, it requires above eight million jabs every day until the year-end.

While India has, as part of its polio vaccination programmes, administered vaccines to millions of children in a day, a one-day record is not evidence that the trend is sustainable. Most States substantially increased their daily count on June 21 but three stand out: Haryana, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. However M.P. records show, never peaked over five lakh a day until Monday when it nearly quadrupled this number. Haryana's historic high (and average) has hovered around 1.5 lakh but it more than tripled that on Monday and Karnataka, with a previous high of 2.6 lakh, multiplied that fivefold with 11 lakh jabs. To substantially increase vaccination, both the number of vaccination sessions and doses administered must increase. Some States had organised mass vaccination drives and the rules allowing spot-registration of those between 18-44 years unlike the previous requirement of pre-registration on CoWIN may have helped with the boost. India's vaccination programme primarily rests on the shoulders of Covishield and by August the numbers of Covaxin are expected to at least equal the monthly supplies of Covishield. Were that to happen, it would help with administering at least between five to six million doses a day and ought to prompt the Government to rethink its policy of a 12-16 week gap between Covishield doses to ensure that more people are fully vaccinated. The threat of a third wave and new forms of the delta variant make speedy, complete inoculation a priority, and this ought to be the driving force of India's vaccination programme.

Policy creep

Overregulation risks retarding growth and job creation in the e-commerce sector

Barely 11 months after the Government notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, the Department of Consumer Affairs has mooted a set of sweeping amendments, ostensibly "to protect the interests of consumers... and encourage free and fair competition in the market". Among them is a norm stipulating the appointment of a chief compliance officer, a nodal contact person for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies, and another requiring e-commerce entities offering imported goods or services to "incorporate a filter mechanism to identify goods based on country of origin and suggest alternatives to ensure a fair opportunity to domestic goods". A third mandates a fall-back liability on online marketplaces in the event of non-delivery of goods or services to the consumer. Registration has also been made mandatory for all e-commerce players; specific 'flash sales', including 'back-to-back' ones, are set to be banned; and all entities must provide information within 72 hours on any request made by an authorised government agency probing any breach of law including cybersecurity issues. While on the face of it none of these new rules appears exceptional, especially when e-commerce tops the National Consumer Helpline's complaints chart, there is still a distinctly discernible pattern to the changes. Following on the heels of the recent IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, the draft e-commerce amendments show the Government's increasing keenness to exercise greater oversight over all online platforms.

The Centre also appears to be signalling its intent to dig in its heels in an intensifying stand-off with Walmart's unit Flipkart, and Amazon, which are both now in court battling an attempt by the Competition Commission of India to reopen a probe into their business practices. The two large e-commerce players have had to contend with accusations that their pricing practices are skewed to favour select sellers on their platforms and that their discounting policies have hurt offline retailers. The fact that the latest changes expressly seek to ensure that none of an e-commerce entity's related parties and associated enterprises is enlisted as a seller for sale to consumers directly could also impact several platforms that retail products supplied by vendors with arm's length ties. The enforcement of many of these norms is bound to spur protracted legal fights. Asserting that the amendments were not aimed at conventional flash sales, the Government said it was only targeting certain entities engaged in limiting consumer choice by indulging in 'back-to-back' sales wherein a seller does not have the capability to meet an order. In trying to address shortcomings in its rules from last year, the Government appears to be harking back to an era of tight controls. Overregulation with scope for interpretative ambiguity risks retarding growth and job creation in the hitherto expanding e-commerce sector.

Countering a political act that has a legal garb

With sedition cases rising, often solely based on word usage, people need to have a political and legal defence



KALEESWARAM RAJ

Aisha Sultana, a film-maker from Lakshadweep, was recently booked for the alleged offences of sedition and statements prejudicial to national integrity. A crime was registered based on a complaint by a leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Ms. Sultana then moved the Kerala High Court for pre-arrest bail. The court allowed interim bail to her on June 17. Ms. Sultana thus got temporary relief from incarceration. The court will pass its final orders in the application shortly.

Ms. Sultana's case is only one among the numerous sedition cases recently registered in the country. In Lakshadweep, people have had sedition slapped against them for putting up placards or posters against the Prime Minister. Ms. Sultana's case also reveals the regime's political strategy to threaten dissidents.

Background and implications
Ms. Sultana is alleged to have used the word 'bioweapon' in a television discussion about the recent developments in Lakshadweep and its draft reforms. She said it while deliberating over the Lakshadweep Administrator's actions and omissions that allegedly contributed to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on the island, which was free from the virus in 2020. Ms. Sultana indicated in her petition before the court and to the media that she is apologetic about the word used. In an inter-

view she said that her "bioweapon remark" was a "mistake" and that she was "entrapped".

Hindutva forces have relied heavily on this subsequent posture which she publicly made, to strengthen their stand. They tried to create a false sense of moral victory and legitimacy to back their position, which they thoroughly lack.

Ms. Sultana is not a political activist. And it is probable that she may not be very articulate or even be able to present strong arguments on the affairs of the nation. It seemed like she was partly accusing herself or acknowledging the 'mistake' in some way. This self-accusation was, however, unwarranted. When the purpose of the sedition law is to curtail opposing ideas, her recission had the effect of legitimising the state's wrongful action.

Lessons from history

Ms. Sultana's case is a case study for those who are concerned about the country's liberal values. The offence of sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was inserted in the Code in 1870. In the great trial of 1922, Mahatma Gandhi, charged with sedition, described the provision as "perhaps the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen." Gandhiji, who himself was a lawyer, made two points in his statement given on March 18, 1922. One, he admitted the charge of preaching disaffection towards the then existing regime. Two, he justified his act and said that it was his duty to do so as it is "a sin to have affection for the system (under the British Raj)". He explained that "Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one



has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to violence. (<https://bit.ly/3vP9S2x>)

This statement is not only political but also legal. Curiously, this assertion that Gandhiji made in the court was indirectly laid down as the law by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India in *Kedar Nath Singh* (1962) which said that incitement to violence is the gist of the offence of sedition. This proposition was followed by the top court consistently, till *Vinod Dua* (2020), where the Court said that a journalist cannot be booked for sedition for expressing dissent.

The law was clear even when Gandhiji was convicted and sentenced. Evidently, the charge and the conviction were political, not legal. Even today, the very registration of crimes against political opponents under the draconian laws is essentially a political act, though it takes a legal form. According to the report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), between 2016 and 2019 there was a 160% increase in the registration of sedition cases whereas the conviction rate during this period fell from 33.3% to 3.3%. Thus, the process itself becomes the punishment.

Therefore, one needs to build

up a political defence as well as legal defence against such charges. Litigation is not merely a means for the redress of grievance. When the charges are under 'political sections', as Gandhiji eloquently described, they need to be countered by a political praxis as well. Only such a course would expose the egregious motive of the state in accusing its citizens of the offence of sedition without any legal or factual foundation whatsoever. Only such a resistance would be able to re-educate our judicial institutions constitutionally and historically, and to ensure dialogic democracy.

Unfortunately, Ms. Sultana's subsequent expression of regret does not pass this political test. She could have asserted that the word she used was correct and proper. It was possible for her to justify it as an imagery capable of exposing the regime's unprincipled approach in Lakshadweep.

It needs to be told that the British Raj used the draconian provision only when they alleged that a speech or a writing resulted in violence, or there was at least a remote connection between the overt act and social disturbance. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was tried in 1897 on an accusation that the articles in *Kesari*, a Marathi paper owned by him, incited violence that led to the killing of two British officers. Tilak was convicted and sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 18 months. In 1908, he was again tried and later sentenced for writing "seditious" articles and by connecting them with certain instances of 'social disorder'. Post-Independence, in *Kedar Nath Singh*, the accusation among others, was that Kedar Nath, a Forward Communist Party leader, had asserted his belief in a revolu-

tion "in the flames of which the capitalists, zamindars, and the Congress leaders of India...will be reduced to ashes...." The Court said that "comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence, would not be penal". In *Balwant Singh* (1995), slogans for an independent Sikh nation were found to be not seditious for want of the ingredient of incitement to violence. None of these prominent cases relied on the mere use of words to make out the offence.

A new judicial activism

But after 2014, cases of sedition are frequently and intentionally registered solely based on words spoken, written, or tweeted. This can have a chilling effect on people's movements. The clear political object behind the invocation of the law is to create an atmosphere of fear. This, in a way, is the price which the country had to pay for the retention of the law of sedition, among other draconian laws.

Therefore, the Supreme Court of India and the High Courts should take *suo motu* cognisance of the incidents where the state ostensibly uses draconian laws to suppress criticism and protest. This is difficult, but not impossible. Such *suo motu* proceedings would reflect the kind of judicial activism that our time demands. The organised Bar, especially at the State level, must perform its libertarian role by constantly demanding for a judiciary that values freedom and acts for it.

Kaleeswaram Raj is a lawyer in the Supreme Court of India

The picture is clear, it is top-down misinformation

A new report shows that many Indians know misinformation about the pandemic often comes from the top



RASMUS KLEIS NIELSEN

When asked what source of false or misleading information about the novel coronavirus they are most concerned about, many more Indians highlight domestic political actors than worry about activist groups, foreign governments, or journalists.

Source of prime concern

Nearly one in four (23%) in our recent survey say that the Government, politicians or political parties are the source they are most concerned about. That is more people than worry about misinformation from platforms such as Facebook (16%) or YouTube (14%). Among platforms, only messaging applications (e.g. WhatsApp) generate more widespread public concern among our respondents. They are named by 28%.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities often seem mostly interested in going after alleged misinformation from activists (only 9% of our Indian survey respondents identify activist groups as the most concerning source of false or misleading information about the coronavirus), select journalists and news organisations (named by 13%), or on Twitter (which just 4% identify as the platform they are most con-

cerned about).

Our survey (<https://bit.ly/3xECltc>) only covers English-speaking Internet users in India, so while it captures an important minority, the data are not representative of India's overall population. Still, it provides insight into how many Indians see the "infodemic" that has accompanied the pandemic, an immense wave of information that, unfortunately, also includes some false and misleading material, rumours, and attempts to exploit the crisis for propaganda or for profit.

The picture is clear – many Indians think that misinformation about the pandemic often comes from the top.

Are they right? Both academic research and independent journalism suggest that they might well be.

Network propaganda

Study after study around the world has found such "network propaganda" (<https://bit.ly/3zQ1djM>), where misinformation is spread by some top politicians, nakedly partisan news media who cheer them on, and well-organised communities of political supporters active on social media and messaging applications.

Top-down misinformation from politicians, celebrities, and other prominent public figures are a small part of the false and misleading claims one can come across online in terms of raw volume, but our research (<https://bit.ly/3zJKVst>) during the pandemic



shows it accounts for a large share of social media engagement.

Even when political actors are not busy drumming up outright propaganda in the media and on digital platforms, authorities also sometimes risk misleading the public in other ways.

In country after country, reporters have found that official COVID-19 death tolls are far lower than the actual excess deaths recorded during the pandemic – as *The Hindu* found in Tamil Nadu (<https://bit.ly/3gWGyBG>) by comparing Civil Registration System data with the officially reported figure.

Unproven claims

And politicians have sometimes promoted supposed coronavirus remedies with no scientific basis. Former President of the United States Donald Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro are prominent international examples. In India, some politicians have, for example, claimed that cow urine can protect people against COVID-19, even as the Indian Medical Association (IMA) pointed out there was absolutely no evidence for this, just as the Ministry of Health and Family Wel-

fare last year came under severe criticism from for recommending a range of unproven, alternative remedies to prevent or treat the disease.

Some misinformation circulates peer-to-peer on social media and on encrypted messaging services as people share supposed miracle cures and ineffective alternative health tips in good faith or carelessly. This can create problems. But arguably, far more problematic is when people in positions of authority and prominent public figures promote measures that have no scientific basis in the middle of a deadly pandemic.

Examples from India

One prominent example is the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Haryana State government announcing last month that it would hand out one lakh Coronil kits to COVID-19 patients for free.

The ayurvedic remedy was launched in June last year by Baba Ramdev's company, Patanjali Ayurved, and at a press conference the yoga guru claimed (<https://bit.ly/3gKUPCI>) the remedy guaranteed "100 per cent recovery from COVID-19 within seven days of consuming the medicine". Hours later, the central government asked Patanjali Ayurved to stop advertising the drug (<https://bit.ly/3gVPjfd>) and the Uttarakhand Ayurveda Department responsible for licensing the remedy pointed out the licence was for an immunity booster, not a cure.

In February this year, Ramdev's company falsely claimed Coronil

was certified by the World Health Organization (WHO) – a claim WHO immediately pointed out was untrue. And the yoga guru appeared at an event with Union Minister of Health Harsh Vardhan promoting alternative medicines for COVID-19 patients, leading the IMA to ask the Minister how ethical it is "to promote the product in unethical, wrong and false ways to the whole country?" (<https://bit.ly/3wMjjwk>)

The promotion and provision of what the IMA describes as an "unscientific medicine" marketed with "false and baseless" claims is an example of how misleading information from prominent public figures and people in positions of authority can lead to bigger problems than random falsehoods spread by ordinary people online and offline.

If authorities in India are serious about addressing misinformation, they might take a cue from the fact that much of the Indian public clearly recognise that misinformation often comes from the top, and spend less time worrying about activists, journalists, and Twitter, and more time thinking about how to ensure that citizens can trust that the health remedies promoted by their own governments and by prominent political figures are actually safe and effective.

Professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen is Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and co-author of the '2021 Reuters Institute Digital News Report'



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.

Advisory panel

With its constitution of an Economic Advisory Council to the Chief Minister, comprising global experts, including Nobel laureate Esther Duflo, the Tamil Nadu government may have given an indication that it is serious about streamlining the State's fiscal position (Page 1, "Nobel laureate in economic advisory panel", June 22). However, in the run-up to the recent Assembly election, the now ruling party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, made tall promises, many commitments recurring in nature, oblivious of the precarious financial situation, compounded by the onslaught of the pandemic. It may find the going tough now to fulfil the aspirations of the people with finite resources at its

disposal. One of the experts on the new panel, former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan, is not a votary of subsidies, whereas the Government cannot do away with freebies, which have only increased manifold in the last few decades. The eminent panellists may not play to the gallery. If the panel advocates austerity measures including a cap on freebies, the DMK government may have to make many compromises, and with political repercussions. If it intends to take advantage of the panel's findings to attract overseas investments, the Government cannot pick and choose the findings that suit its interests. Moreover, in India, the Centre wields a powerful

hold on finances leaving States often fighting for their due share. Instead of constituting the new panel, the Government should have taken forward the proposals of the C. Rangarajan Committee presented to the predecessor government. This would have saved time.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

recommendations but the implementation system that remains politically galvanised. Unbiased monitoring and an evaluation system on development programmes (based on the theory of change principles) are needed.

V. RENGARAJAN, Chennai

■

Though the development is a welcome approach, it is cause for some apprehension. First, the same experts have already provided enough policy advice on inclusive growth and poverty concerns such as MGNREGA and the right to food. Second, the cause of persistent poverty and inequality in India is not due to a poverty of experts'

concluding line, "The future is now a question mark, waiting for a new paradigm to emerge", he drives readers to guess who that future leader could be. Mr. Stalin's leadership could well be the new paradigm.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO, Chennai

Stand on ex gratia

The way the central government has handled the second wave of the pandemic has been an abysmal failure. It has now hit a new low by its stance on ex gratia. Innumerable families have lost their bread winners and ex gratia is the only way they can make both ends meet. The Government ought to fathom the situation from the perspective of an impoverished family.

AANYA SINGHAL, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Milkha Singh

In the passing of Milkha Singh, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has said that

The politics of an aerial snare

The investigation into the forced landing of a Ryanair aircraft in Belarus could be long-drawn-out



SUJAN R. CHINOY

On May 23, a Ryanair flight was forced to make an emergency landing in Minsk by a MiG-29 fighter jet of Belarus. The dissident Belarusian journalist, Roman Protasevich, who was travelling in the commercial, civilian aircraft, was subsequently arrested. The whole operation, it is alleged, was carried out on the orders of President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus for 27 years.

Global reaction

The incident received considerable global attention. The European Union (EU) and the U.S. denounced it and called for a thorough investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). EU-based carriers have since heeded the call to avoid overflight of Belarus. Belarusian flights have been barred from overflying EU airspace or landing at its airports. Air France, British Airways, Lufthansa, KLM and a host of other airlines have implemented their own suspensions.

At a special meeting convened on May 27, the ICAO Council expressed strong concern at the incident and launched a fact-finding investigation. Official requests for information were sent out to the countries involved in the event. Belarus and Poland have provided some preliminary details. Information is awaited from Greece, Ireland, Lithuania and Switzerland. An interim report is expected to be presented to the ICAO Council by the end of its current session, on or near June 23. The report is expected to be considered only at the next session, which begins on September 13.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called the incident an "attack on democracy", an "attack on freedom of expression", and an "attack on European sovereignty". The U.S., EU, and the U.K. have slapped further sanctions on Belarus. How justified was Belarus in taking such a decision? The answer lies at the junction of Belarus's domestic laws as a sovereign country and



File photo of Roman Protasevich at a court hearing in Minsk, Belarus. • REUTERS

international laws governing the action that states can legitimately take to deal with threats to security, real or perceived.

Not the first of its kind

The flight that the 26-year-old fugitive blogger boarded was operated by the Irish low-cost airline, Ryanair. It was on its way from Greece to Lithuania. While traversing the airspace of Belarus, an ostensible 'bomb scare' forced the aircraft to make an emergency landing in Minsk for standard checks. It turned out to be a false alarm. Mr. Protasevich, whose presence on board is suspected to be the real reason behind the action, was taken into custody soon after.

According to media reports, Mr. Protasevich, who had fled Belarus for Poland in 2019, had been in Greece to attend an economic conference with other Belarusian dissidents. There, the blogger also covered the visit of exiled Belarus Opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

If convicted, he could face a long prison term or worse. After all, Belarus is the only country in Europe that hands down the death penalty.

Mr. Protasevich's case is not the first of its kind. Abdolmalek Rigi, head of the Jundullah militant group, accused by Iran for fomenting attacks in the province of Sistan-Baluchestan, was similarly arrested in February 2010. According to Iranian media reports, Rigi's plane was forced to land in Bandar Abbas by Iranian aircraft while on a flight from Dubai to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. Rigi was subsequently tried and executed. Itak Air, a small Bishkek-based

airline, folded up in 2010 for unrelated reasons. There is no direct parallel between Mr. Protasevich and Rigi except that both men were wanted by the governments of their respective countries and their custody was secured through very unconventional means.

Pressure to divert passenger aircraft from preordained flight paths could be on grounds of a security threat or for political reasons. In 2013, during the manhunt by the U.S. for National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden, Bolivian President Evo Morales's plane was forced to land in Austria after several European countries refused the aircraft permission to enter their airspace, allegedly due to pressure from the U.S. According to reports, there was suspicion that Mr. Snowden might have boarded the President's plane in Moscow. As it turned out, Mr. Snowden, who later obtained asylum and stayed on in Moscow, was not in the aircraft. Following the incident, seven Latin American countries voiced their concerns to the then UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, who asserted that "A Head of State and his or her aircraft enjoy immunity and inviolability".

An issue with many dimensions
The issue of the use of military aircraft to neutralise potential threats posed by civilian aircraft acquired a different kind of urgency in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in the U.S. on September 11, 2001. Generally speaking, international law grants sovereignty to nations over their airspace as it does in territorial waters. The Convention on International Ci-

vil Aviation, better known as the Chicago Convention of 1944, to which Belarus is a signatory state, prohibits any unlawful intervention against a civilian aircraft. At the same time, it has various provisions under Article 9 which permit a sovereign state the right to impose restrictions, including enforced landings at a designated airport in its territory, in "exceptional circumstances or during a period of emergency, or in the interest of public safety". Once a flight has landed, Article 16 provides the host country the right to board/search the aircraft. This is probably the clause that provided cover for the local authorities to board Mr. Morales's aircraft in Austria in 2013. But the Chicago Convention applies only to civilian aircraft of the contracting parties. In this case, the national carrier, Belavia Belarusian Airlines, is not involved though it is part of the targeted sanctions by the EU.

International law might also have to be examined in light of the International Air Services Transit Agreement (IASSTA), also concluded in Chicago in 1944. According to this agreement, contracting states grant to one another the freedom of air transit in respect of scheduled international air services, that is, the privilege to fly across territories without landing. Belarus is not a signatory of IASTA. For that matter, neither is Russia, which is the main supporter of Mr. Lukashenko.

Given the multiple interpretations possible under the Chicago Convention and related agreements, the investigation could be a long-drawn-out affair. The International Court of Justice does consider ICAO-related cases, but it cannot enforce its decisions. The United Nations Security Council is a divided house and, in any case, does not consider unlisted agenda unless the case constitutes a major threat to international peace and security. This is not a matter that easily lends itself to technical consideration, given that it goes beyond the issue of a forced landing of a civilian airliner to encompass broader geopolitical issues. A meaningful outcome from the ICAO investigation may therefore prove elusive.

Sujan R. Chinoy, a former Ambassador, is the Director General of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi; views are personal

Chores and conversations: how to keep children engaged

Parents face many challenges but there are ways to cope



NANDINI RAMAN

The pandemic-related lockdowns have not been easy for anyone, but they have been particularly difficult for children, parents, teachers and the elderly.

Learning from home

Children have been mostly indoors for over a year. Toddlers may not remember this period later, but for older children, there is little at home to stimulate their curious, active minds.

With schools remaining shut, children have been attending online classes. Many parents have reported that their children, especially in the 4-6 age group, have been finding it hard to focus during online classes. Mothers have said during counselling sessions that their children have shown disinterest and lack of motivation. Some don't participate during class; they keep themselves busy on their parents' phones and other gaming sites, or by chatting with their friends. To make matters worse, children are inclined to unwind after a long day of virtual learning by again being on their gadgets.

Parents deal with this problem in various ways: they grab and hide the devices, turn the WiFi off, and beg and plead with their children to fall in line. But these requests often fall on deaf ears and finally the parents give in.

Once the pandemic ends, a great challenge is going to be to cure children of their screen addiction. Studies have found that limiting the use of online time can lead to significant reductions in loneliness and depression.

Since this is a new system for schools too, teachers are unable to constantly keep track of what the children are up to. Online tests and assessments cannot always be monitored. Some parents have said that they have caught their children cheating during tests. Teachers too are heading towards a burnout. They have had to learn new ways of making virtual classes engaging and fun and prepare content accordingly. While in the classroom, teachers give special attention to children with learning difficulties, this hasn't been possible during the pandemic. Children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc. have it especially hard at a time like this. It has become almost entirely the parents' responsibility to help the child, when they themselves are overburdened. With no day-care centres, after-

school care centres, play dates, sleepovers, birthday parties and so on, it has become the task of the parents to help in their children's education, look after them, and entertain them, all while doing their own work.

Higher school students have reported different issues. There have been challenges in learning in the absence of laboratories and field visits. Many are set to graduate from school without having met their friends for over a year. While this may not be a problem for all students and some enjoy being at home, others may find it more challenging to re-enter social life and should do so slowly. Entrance exams have been postponed for college admissions and so, students feel demotivated to prepare.

Further, the pandemic has exacerbated the divide between the rich and poor. The lesser privileged children who have had little or no access to smartphones, computers and Internet have reported feeling dejected. School dropouts are becoming a problem.

How can parents help?

While the situation can improve only when the pandemic abates and schools reopen, parents and teachers can do a few things to keep the children happy and engaged. If parents are proactive and positive, this could have a big impact on their children. Children pick up quickly on parents' fears and so it is important for parents to remain calm and patient and meet their children's concerns in an age-appropriate manner. If parents show that they are resilient, children too will learn to be that way. To keep the children engaged at home, parents can assign them tasks and chores. They can train their children to cook, clean, and focus on basic hygiene. All this will help the children throughout their adult life. Parents should also look out for signs that indicate that the child is having trouble coping. If children are unable to follow a routine, sleep poorly, and constantly complain of anxiety, fear, etc., parents should take note. All these emotions could have a long-term impact on the children. Parents can also set an example by doing a digital detox. Spending time with young children and listening to their stories is important as they require a lot of attention. If parents are unavailable, children will seek out others online, which could be dangerous. Pursuing hobbies, exercising, and hitting the outdoors while following COVID-19 protocols will all help keep the body and mind active and refreshed. Each child is unique and needs to be dealt with differently.

Nandini Raman is a Chennai-based counsellor

Tackling the Hindutva bugbear

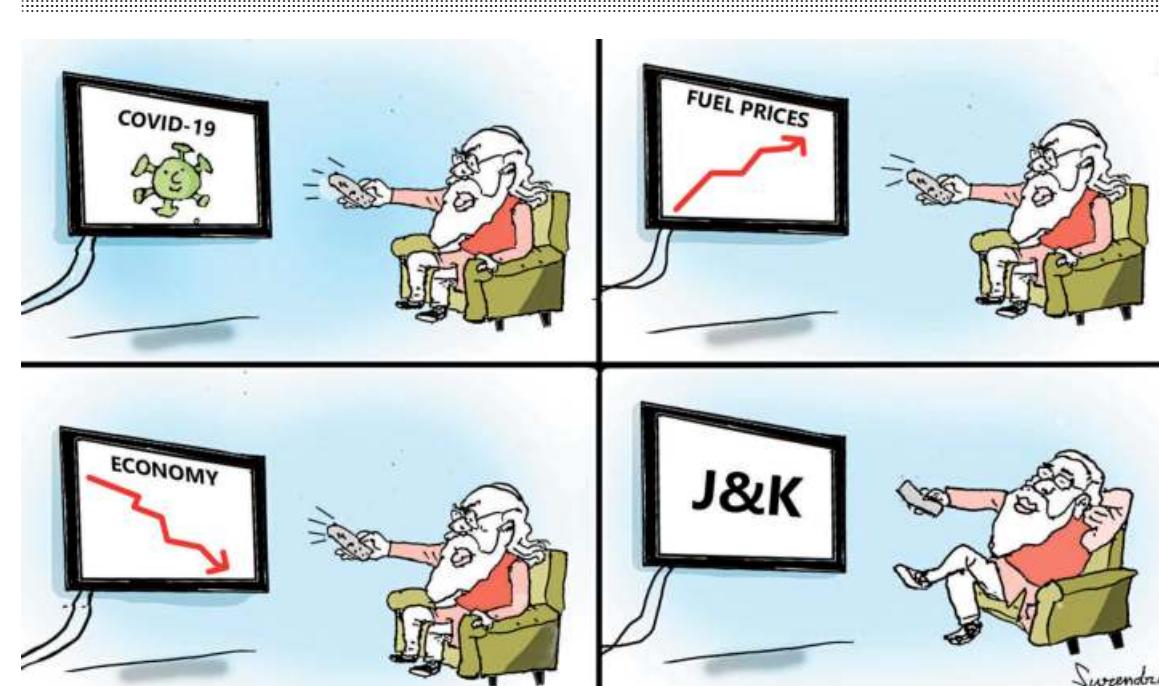
Dalit-Muslim alliances are not enough to restore secularism; upper caste Hindus are needed too

SHAIKH MUJIBUR REHMAN

Ever since the Sachar Committee Report of 2006 demonstrated that the socio-economic conditions of Muslims have worsened compared to Dalits, some have argued that Muslims have become India's new Dalits. It is further proposed that the two communities should forge an alliance to fight the Hindu Right to restore secularism because together they constitute a significant number: Muslims constitute 14.2% of the population and Dalits, 16.63% (Census 2011).

Differences
There are some basic differences between the two communities. Muslims are historically a multi-class community, whereas Dalits are evolving into one, boosted by reservation policies. There are further nuanced differences. Consider rhetorical questions such as: who is the Shah Rukh Khan or Sania Mirza or Bismillah Khan of Dalits? In the psychological domain, discrepancies are equally apparent. A working class Muslim can embrace the Red Fort or the Taj Mahal as a proud legacy of his ancestors, but Dalits have no such iconic symbols. Thousands of years of subjugation of Dalits by upper caste Hindus have gravitated towards the Hindu Right causing the breakdown of the secular project for at least two reasons. First, upper caste Hindus have been persuaded by the Hindu Right's campaign that Indian secularism is a Muslim project. In every election, the BJP deploys incendiary concepts such as 'appeasement' and 'vote bank politics' with greater intensity to deepen the politics of polarisation. This triggers asymmetric counter-polarisation among Muslims. Second, policies of the Western states in the post-9/11 era contributed to Islamophobia's rise. This swayed the Indian diaspora, drawn mainly from upper caste Hindus. They fail to register the distinct multicultural profile of Indian Muslims. While a good fraction of upper caste Hindus is now wedded to the Hindu Right's majoritarian project, plenty embrace it for circumstantial reasons and remain indifferent to Muslim suffering.

Dalits continue to suffer from organised violence unleashed by upper caste Hindus. The flogging of a Dalit family in Una in 2016 is a case in point. Some Dalits, research suggests, have occasionally participated in violence against Muslims in riots (in Gujarat in 2002, for instance). In modern India, Muslims have not participated in organised violence against Dalits, nor have they systematically raised their voice against it because Muslims are quite lost as a political community. This explains their failure to organise a worthwhile resistance against lynching. Whatever protest occurred was spearheaded by secular forces with artists and intellectuals at the forefront. Muslims



DATA POINT

Deepening distress

When lockdowns were imposed during the second wave of COVID-19, 92% of workers did not receive any money from their employer, according to a recent report by the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN). The results are based on data gathered from 1,396 worker groups, adding up to 8,023 people, including 4,836 women and children who made distress calls to the organisation in May 2021. The calls were made because of unavailability of work, pending wage payments and depleting savings.

By The Hindu Data Team

NO EMPLOYMENT | Ninety-one per cent of the people said that their work had stopped due to local lockdowns imposed during the second wave. The number of days since work had stopped increased in the second half of May. The second chart shows the seven-day rolling average of days since work stopped as reported by workers

% of people (worker groups/families) affected by the closure of work

Company might reopen Irregularly affected

Affected Not affected Don't know

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Days since work stopped

20 30 40

May 2 May 28

20 3

FROM PAGE ONE

Cong. goes into damage control over Punjab

AICC general secretary in charge of Punjab Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Agarwal were the other members of the panel who attended the meeting with Captain Amarinder.

The panel is said to have taken note of the comments made by Mr Sidhu in the media, especially at a time when the high command was working towards resolving the differences between different factions in Punjab.

Sources said that the AICC panel is said to have indicated that there would soon be changes in the Punjab unit and the Chief Minister needs to make himself accessible to all sections of the party.

Separately, Mr Gandhi met over a dozen leaders from Punjab in the past two days including Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief

Sunil Jakhar, Rajya Sabha member Partap Singh Bajwa and Punjab legislator Pargat Singh and Lok Sabha member Ravneet Singh Bittu.

"Rahul Gandhi ji met more than 4 leaders yesterday and would be meeting more than nine today. Everyone is putting across their views before him and the main issue is how do we approach the 2022 Assembly elections. Everyone is talking about what kind of reforms that we need to do before election and every party does this six months before the elections," Mr. Bittu told reporters after meeting Mr. Gandhi.

While there is no clarity if or when Mr. Sidhu will be politically rehabilitated, sources say that the Punjab Chief Minister is under pressure from his MLAs to deliver.

BRO 'renaming' town sparks anger in Arunachal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has rubbed various organisations in Arunachal Pradesh the wrong way by "renaming" a town in the State and showing it as part of Assam during a programme attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on June 17. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union and local organisations in Kilmuin in Papum Pare district, situated 75 km from State capital Itanagar, have demanded an apology from the BRO for the "howler" which, they said, was made deliberately to let a "certain country" know the Defence Minister visited Assam and not the State it claimed.

The theatrisation process is going on well. It is making satisfactory progress. Amongst the three services, we have been able to resolve most of the issues," Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Bipin Rawat said on Tuesday. He chaired a meeting with the Vice Chiefs of the three services, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff and representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Home and Finance to iron out

Minister says the country's territory must not be used by terrorist groups to attack any other country

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

Talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban have not resulted in any reduction in violence, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar pointing out that reports from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) showed a major increase in violence despite the talks and a U.S.-Taliban agreement last year. However, he said India is "supportive" of the Intra-Afghan negotiations, and called for the United Nations to play a "leading role" in the reconciliation process.

"Violence has only increased, especially after May 1," Mr. Jaishankar told the UN Security Council at a special meeting on Tuesday, as he referred to the May deadline that had originally been agreed to as a date for the U.S. troops pull-out from Afghanistan. "The country has



India's stand: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar taking part in the meet via video conferencing from New Delhi. ■PTI

been witnessing targeted attacks on religious and ethnic minorities, girl students, Afghan security forces, Ulemas [clerics], women occupying positions of responsibility, journalists, civil rights activists and youth," he said, calling for a "permanent and comprehensive ceasefire".

According to the UNAMA report that was detailed by U.N. Secretary General's Special Representative Deborah Lyons, civilian casualties

have increased by 29% in the first quarter of 2021, compared to last year, and women casualties increased by 37% and child casualties by 23%. Ms. Lyons said not only has the Taliban captured more territory in the last few weeks but also seems poised to take over key cities once the foreign troops pull out.

American envoy to the U.N. Linda Thomas Greenfield defended the U.S. move to pull out troops as a care-

fully considered decision, but warned the Taliban that taking the "military path" would not bring the group legitimacy.

Without making any direct references to Pakistan or any particular terror group, Mr. Jaishankar called for an end to "terrorist safe havens" and "terrorist supply chains" as well as cross-border terror, and said the international community must ensure that transit trade from Afghanistan to the "high seas" is allowed.

"It is equally important to ensure that the territory of Afghanistan is not used by terrorist groups to threaten or attack any other country."

Afghanistan Foreign Minister Hanif Atmar, who attended the UNSC meeting, was more candid accusing the Taliban of keeping its links with the al-Qaeda and Pakistan-based terror groups including the Lashkar-e-Toi-

ba and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan.

He said as the withdrawal of the U.S.-NATO troops is completed, the international community would see that the Taliban has not kept any of its promises, including the promise to cut ties with international terrorism, to reduce violence and work towards a ceasefire and to reach a political settlement with the government of Afghanistan.

"These explosives are believed to be transported from Mizoram to Myanmar for use by the Chin national Army against the Myanmar Army," an Assam Rifles official said on condition of anonymity. The recoveries included 3,000 special detonators in six cartons, 925 electric detonators in 37 packets, 2,000 metres of fuse in four boxes and 63 sacks of explosives substance, each sack containing 10 packets each of 2.08 kg of Class II Category - ZZ explosive powder weighing a total of 1.3 tonnes, a statement said.

Arms bound for Myanmar seized, 2 held

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

In one of the major arms recoveries in recent times in Mizoram, the Assam Rifles on Tuesday seized a large haul of war-like stores being smuggled to Myanmar and apprehended two individuals.

"These explosives are believed to be transported from Mizoram to Myanmar for use by the Chin national Army against the Myanmar Army," an Assam Rifles official said on condition of anonymity. The recoveries included 3,000 special detonators in six cartons, 925 electric detonators in 37 packets, 2,000 metres of fuse in four boxes and 63 sacks of explosives substance, each sack containing 10 packets each of 2.08 kg of Class II Category - ZZ explosive powder weighing a total of 1.3 tonnes, a statement said.

4 theatre commands likely this year

Narendra Modi is expected to make the announcement of their launch soon

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI



Bipin Rawat

differences.

"There is a better understanding that if the three services integrate, bring about jointness and carry out transformation, then I think, we will ensure better efficiency and utilisation of our existing services. I think we'll be better prepared for combat," Gen. Rawat said.

An air defence command, maritime theatre command,

integrated eastern theatre command and integrated western theatre command are on the anvil. "A maritime theatre commander will not be appointed right away. The command will be first raised and commander appointed later," a source said.

Several officials had said the IAF has major reservations over the creation of the commands.

There have also been questions on the naming of the commands. The IAF was for all commands to be rotational and so wanted the naming to be domain specific, one of the sources said. "It has been broadly agreed but initially they would be with respective service commander till the command stabilises," the source said.

The need was integrated joint planning and not coordinated or syncing of opera-

tions as was done now. Single service operations were not efficient or made the best use of the resources, the official said.

The proposed change was at the highest level, instead of one Service making a single plan that was then routed through the headquarters and the Integrated Defence Command (IDS), in the new plan, it would be held by a three-star commander and integrated with other two domains, the source explained.

"These plans will be presented to Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC) as opposed to a single plan being presented to a Chief," the official said.

"The operational functions will shift to theatre commands, which will involve the creation of joint structures in headquarters IDS."

Akhil Gogoi cleared of UAPA charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has cleared Sibsagar MLA Akhil Gogoi in one of two cases he was slapped with under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, for allegedly inciting violence during the December 2019 protests in Assam against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The MLA, then an activist associated with pressure group Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, has been in jail since his arrest in these two and several other cases.

On Tuesday, NIA Special Judge Pranjal Das did not frame charges against Mr. Gogoi in connection with the UAPA case registered in Chabua police station.

Arnab Goswami named in TRP scam chargesheet

Three more named as accused



Arnab Goswami

ing delivery of property), 406 (punishment for criminal breach of trust), 465 (punishment for forgery), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender), 204 (destruction of document or electronic record to prevent its production), and 212 of the IPC.

2 held in Shaurya Chakra awardee murder case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two alleged Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) accomplices in connection with the killing of Comrade Balwinder Singh Sandhu, a Shaurya Chakra awardee.

Both the accused were produced before the NIA Special Court, Mohali, on Tuesday and have been taken into NIA custody for four days," the agency said.

The case was initially registered at the Bhikhiwind police station in Tarn Taran after Comrade Balwinder Singh was killed at his residence-cum-school on October 16, 2020.

Police told to probe charge against Raut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the Mumbai Police Commissioner to inquire into allegations made by a woman of harassment by some men at the behest of Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut.

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Madambar was hearing a plea filed by the 36-year-old woman alleging that some men are stalking and harassing her and her estranged husband at the behest of Mr. Raut, a member of the Rajya Sabha.

The petition stated that the woman had lodged three complaints but no action had been taken against those involved.

In the order, the court said, "We direct the Commissioner of Police to look into the grievances raised in the petition. The Commissioner of Police shall respond to us and submit a report on June 24."

Move against ex-Chief Secretary is vengeful: TMC

'Centre's actions are weakening federal structure'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

rupting administration in West Bengal by upsetting the officers so they cannot function independently," said senior party leader and Lok Sabha MP Sougata Roy.

The Centre's June 16 memorandum said, "Sri Alapan Bandopadhyay, IAS (Retd) (WB 1987) is hereby informed that the Central Government proposes to hold Major Penalty Proceedings against him under Rule 8 of the All-India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969 (herein referred to as Discipline Rules), read with Rule 6 of the All-India

Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958..." Mr. Bandopadhyay retired from services on May 31, 2021 and was appointed Chief Adviser to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Registering protest

At a press conference, the Trinamool leaders said while Mr. Bandopadhyay will take his own decision on the notification, the party is registering protest.

"The former Chief Secretary is not a member of our party. What steps he will take are his own decision.

But we are registering our protest," said Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy.

Mr. Roy said such "departmental enquiry" cannot be undertaken against a retired IAS officer, unless it is related to financial irregularities.

The Union government on May 28 issued an order asking Mr. Bandopadhyay to report to Delhi on grounds that he skipped a post-cyclone review meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Kalakunda in West Bengal. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has said she along with Mr. Bandopadhyay

met the Prime Minister and sought his leave before leaving the meeting.

The Chief Minister refused to release Mr. Bandopadhyay and appealed to the Centre to withdraw the order. However, an unmoved Centre sent another letter on May 31 directing him to report at North Block by 10 a.m. on June 1. The Chief Secretary opted to retire though he was already granted an extension for three months. The matter, however, has not ended despite Mr. Bandopadhyay opting to retire.

World's first GM rubber sapling planted in Assam

Institute says it is tailored for the climate of the northeast



Rubber Board Chairman K.N. Raghavan planting the GM rubber sapling in Guwahati on Tuesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Raghavan said the RRII had earlier developed two high-yielding hybrid clones of rubber adapted to the climatic conditions of the Northeast.

"This is the first time any GM crop has been developed exclusively for this region after years of painstaking research in RRII's biotechnology laboratory,"

he said. Natural rubber is a native of warm humid Amazon forests and is not naturally suited for the colder conditions in the Northeast, which is one of the largest producers of rubber in India. Laboratory studies conducted at the RRII showed the GM rubber plants over-expressed the MnSOD gene as expected.

Plea for 100% procurement by Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An application has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the Central government's policy to allow 25% of the domestically manufactured COVID-19 vaccines to be procured by private hospitals.

The plea filed by John Brittas, CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP, and Professor R. Ramakumar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, said that the new policy will cause a reservation for the rich and urban people. The application has urged the top court to direct the Centre to take over 100% procurement

The plea has cited statistics from the past vaccination drives, including tuberculosis, DPT3 and polio, where contribution of the private sector was negligible. Already, the application argues, there is a massive under-utilisation of vaccines by the private hospitals.

Focus on people-centric agenda in post-COVID development transitions

MOHAMMED IQBAL

JAIPUR

The post-COVID-19 development transitions should be managed through people-centric agendas, robust civic engagements and vibrant public-private partnerships, as such an approach will help make progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to be achieved by 2030, according to the findings of a research conducted by a development studies institution.

The upcoming challenges could be met through the government's partnership with private institutions and industry as co-drivers of growth for greater public good, stated the research. Overcoming the digital divide and capacity building of weaker sections were identified as other important elements of the strategy to bring the economy back on rails.

The School of Development Studies (SDS) at the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR) here took up the research to identify the areas of intervention for ensuring people's welfare during the pandemic and equipping them to face the third wave of the infection, which is likely to hit the rural areas later this year.

At a virtual national conclave for holding deliberations on challenges and opportunities in the post-COVID scenario, IIHMR president P.R. Sodani said though the outcomes were meant for the betterment of the community at large, the Union and State governments would play an important role in rehabilitation of the affected people.

Goutam Sadhu, professor at SDS, laid emphasis on the role of professionals in the development, healthcare and livelihood sectors.

IN BRIEF



File reply to Bharadwaj's bail plea, HC tells NIA

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday told the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Maharashtra government not to seek any more adjournments and posted the bail plea filed by activist Sudha Bharadwaj, an accused in the Bhima Koregaon violence case, for July 3. The court directed the NIA and the State to file its reply on or before July 2.

U.K. liaison officer joins Navy's information centre

NEW DELHI</div

IN BRIEF



U.P. govt. hiding actual COVID death toll: SP

LUCKNOW
Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday accused the Uttar Pradesh government of hiding the actual number of deaths due to COVID-19. Through this, he said, the BJP government was actually hiding its face. Mr. Yadav's remarks came a day after a report claimed that the death toll due to COVID-19 in 24 districts of U.P. from July 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, was up to 43 times higher than the official figures. PTI

Haryana's COVID-19 campaign begins today

CHANDIGARH
Haryana BJP president Omprakash Dhankhar on Tuesday said that to create awareness and motivate people to get vaccinated, the party cadre would start a special campaign across the State from June 23. "The party cadre of the BJP will work with the State government as an ally to defeat corona. Workers will run a campaign to ensure 100% vaccination," said Mr. Dhankhar.

SC judge recuses from hearing Mamata plea

NEW DELHI
Supreme Court judge Aniruddha Bose on Tuesday recused himself from hearing appeals filed by West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Law Minister Moloy Ghatak and the State government against the Calcutta High Court's refusal to immediately consider their affidavits countering allegations about their role on the day of arrest of four TMC leaders by the CBI in the Narada case. The Bench headed by Justice Hemant Gupta ordered the petitions to be placed before another Bench.

4 dead in U.P. after inhaling toxic gas

MORADABAD (U.P.)
Three members of a family were among four men found dead in the basement of a cement store in Rajpur Kesaria village, police said on Tuesday. Senior Superintendent of Police, Moradabab, said *prima facie* it seems that the deceased died of suffocation due to inhaling toxic gas released by the half-dry dung cakes stored in the basement. PTI

Indian students unable to reach Australia due to travel restrictions

Very few of them were granted visas

SUHASINI HAIDAR
PRISCILLA JEBAJAJ
NEW DELHI

When 19-year old Pranavi Jamwal got admission last year into one of the world's top 10 political science programmes at Australia's top university which has produced Nobel Laureates and Prime Ministers, she was thrilled.

The only problem? Rather than mingling with fellow students at The Australian National University's prestigious Canberra campus, she is stuck at home in New Delhi, waking up for 4 a.m. online classes.

"COVID has disrupted my plans, and the Australian government is unable to give any clear timeline when I will be allowed to enter the country, and it now looks that at least half my course will be online," she said.

Faced with closed borders, the number of Indian students heading to Australia has been sinking since the pandemic began.

According to IDP Education, which cited Australian government data, Indian students granted an Australian visa dropped from 21,433 in 2019-20 to 11,200 in 2020-21.

Pilot programme

Last week, two Australian States announced plans to start a pilot programme to

Accepted talks offer as it is unconditional: J&K leaders

Wish it is not a trap but a genuine change in thinking and approach, they say

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The move by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to drop pre-conditions and agenda set the meeting ground for the June 24 talks between the Central government and the Jammu and Kashmir parties, according to Valley-based leaders.

"It was only after the Centre showed willingness not to put any redlines for talks ... it prepared the ground for the engagement," a senior National Conference (NC) leader and former Minister told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity.

The talks would be open-ended. "Neither delimitation nor early elections nor Statehood will be the agenda of talks. It then limits the scope of dialogue and engagement," he stated.

The PMO's shift came after the NC showed its willingness to be a part of the delimitation commission to delineate more Assembly and parliamentary seats, an



Way forward: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti speaking to mediapersons in Srinagar on Tuesday. •AP

exercise that was boycotted and questioned by it even in the Supreme Court.

Special status
Earlier top Union Ministers, including Home Minister Amit Shah, had asked the regional parties to limit their demands to Statehood and

stop seeking any special status, after the Centre ended J&K's special constitutional position on August 5, 2019.

"We will continue to demand the restoration of August 4, 2019 position of J&K. We will also seek to address the genuine aspirations of people. There has to be de-

velopment with dignity," NC leader and Member of Parliament Hasnain Masoodi said ahead of a meeting in Srinagar.

The PMO's move is a significant scaling down of the BJP's position on the issue of special status for J&K. It remains to be seen if Prime Minister Narendra Modi would listen and respond to the position of the Gupkar alliance, an amalgam of five political parties seeking pre-August 5 position.

A senior Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader, however, said there were fears within the party that the BJP intended to limit the engagement to optics. "We have our fingers crossed and wish it's not a trap but a genuine change in thinking and approach. It is a welcome step if the Prime Minister agrees to listen to the political positions of regional parties. Only the events and gestures after the June 24 meeting will set the momentum for the talks," the leader added.

Congress to attend tomorrow's meet

There should be specific agenda: Mir

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress has decided to attend the all-party meeting on Jammu and Kashmir convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 24.

The decision was taken on Tuesday after party president Sonia Gandhi held a virtual meeting with top leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Union Ministers Ghulam Nabi Azad, P. Chidambaram and veteran leader Karan Singh.

It also comes after the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration – an umbrella of mainstream parties in Jammu and Kashmir – decided to participate in the meeting.

Fourteen leaders from Jammu and Kashmir have been invited to the meeting to be chaired by the Prime Minister to discuss the future course of action for the Union Territory.

"We believe that undoing it [taking away the status of full statehood] is a direct attack on democracy and constitutional principles," Mr. Surjewala had said on Sunday.



Sonia Gandhi

should attend. But the meeting should have a specific agenda," Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Ghulam Ahmad Mir said.

Full statehood'

For the last couple of days, senior Congress leaders, including Mr. Chidambaram and Randeep Surjewala, have been demanding restoration of full statehood and holding of elections.

"The Congress has always favoured the process of dialogue and if Mr. Modi has made a beginning, we

W.B. panel to manage third COVID-19 wave

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

While the number of new COVID-19 infections has dropped considerably in West Bengal, the State government on Tuesday set up an expert committee to supervise and monitor the evolving situation for effective management of the impending third wave.

"There is an immediate need to undertake all precautionary steps to prepare our health system to handle any potential situation specially pertaining to paediatric Covid cases," a notification issued by the State Health Department said.

The panel comprises 10 doctors from State-run hospitals, including the principal of B.C. Roy Children Hospital and will work effectively in consultation with State's Director Health Services and Director Medical Education. "The matter has been discussed and it has been felt imperative to constitute an expert committee to supervise and monitor the evolving situation," the notification said.

Insistence on Class 12 physical exams 'irrational', observes SC

It stands by Centre's stand that 'every student's life is precious'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Union of India's question "who is to blame if a student dies" saw the Supreme Court toss out insistent pleas by some parents claiming that the COVID-19 graph is in free fall and the internal assessment schemes for Class 12 CBSE and ICSE students should be backed in favour of physical exams.

A Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari on Tuesday stood by the Union's principle that "every student's life is precious".

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, for the Union, said, "Suppose a number of students who attend written exams get the infection, suppose a student dies... Who is to blame? It is neither safe

nor prudent to have written exams".

The court asked Andhra Pradesh, which intends to conduct the State Board exams but has deferred a final decision to July, to make its position clear in an affidavit by Wednesday. "If there is even a single fatality, we will make the State responsible," it warned. Kerala had filed an affidavit opting for exams for Class 11. The court said it would pass orders on the State's choice.

The court found the insistence on physical exams "irrational". Justice Maheshwari said students cannot be left in uncertainty about their health and future.

The CBSE and the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), which conducts the ICSE exams,

shared the Union's apprehensions about putting children in harm's way, especially with medical experts warning about a looming third wave. "Children are most vulnerable, that too, without vaccination," advocate J.K. Das, for the CISCE, said. The court said the CBSE and CISCE assessment schemes were "fair and reasonable" and caused no prejudice to the students.

The Attorney General quelled apprehensions that different dates for declaration of results would lead to students of one Board stealing a march over the others. "The UGC would wait for all the boards to declare their results before announcing the dates for admissions to colleges and institutions," he assured.

House panel for study on malnutrition

Data needed to assess the impact of COVID-19 on stunting and wasting levels'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel on Tuesday asked the Ministry of Women and Child Development to conduct a survey on the impact of the pandemic on anganwadi services and malnutrition levels among children.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports chaired by Rajya Sabha MP Vinay Sahasrabuddhe is learnt to have grilled the officials of the Ministry on the need for data to understand how anganwadi services were delivered on the ground during the pandemic, and to assess the impact of COVID-19 on stunting and wasting levels," according to a member.

While the government has launched an app called Poshan Tracker to monitor delivery of services at 14 lakh anganwadis, the officials told the panel that the data is beginning to be uploaded only from June 1.

"The Ministry has not been able to satisfy the committee. It said they have collected feedback from States,



Some relief: Children waiting to collect food provided under the mid-day meal scheme in Visakhapatnam. •K.R. DEEPAK

but there is no sanction for a survey", another member told *The Hindu*.

The Ministry also made a presentation on children orphaned during COVID-19

and apprised the panel of various measures being taken to help them, including funds for family and institutional care, revising norms for child care institutions as well as maintaining monthly reports on foster care for such children.

The panel is learnt to have expressed its disbelief on the NCPHR submission before the Supreme Court that there were 3,500 children orphaned during the pandemic. "This number is not justified when we know that lakhs of people have died due to COVID-19. The figure is too low."

Though the government has announced a corpus of ₹10 lakh from PM CARES for such children, "there has been no spending from PM CARES yet, and the responses from the Ministry were very ambiguous" the member said.

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BRBNMPL invites bids from eligible bidders for following tenders:
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2. Tender No. 025/MYS/MAINT(U)/2021-22 - Operation and Maintenance of MSDS at BRBNMPL, Mysuru.

For downloading tender documents, last date of submission of above tenders and other details, kindly visit our website www.brbnmpl.co.in. Further corrigendum/ amendment to above tenders, if issued in future, will be notified on the Company website only.

General Manager

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Projects Division, Yelahanka Zone, Byatarayanapura, Bengaluru-560 092.

No: BBMP/YNK/EE(Project)/Tend/02/2021-22 Date: 21.06.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT) SHORT TERM TENDER (Two Cover System)
(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, (Project Division), Yelahanka Zone, BBMP, invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike/KPWD/CPWD/Railways/MES/National Highway or any State Govt. Organisation for the Construction of the works detailed in the table below. (Standard Tender Document- KW 4)

Name of the Project	Amount Put to Tender (₹. in Lakhs)
Conceptualization, Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation and Commissioning, 5 years Run, Operate & maintenance of " Providing Musical Fountain and Improvements to Yelahanka Lake in Yelahanka Division.	979.33
As per Govt. order No: FD-675, Fin-12/2020, Bengaluru Dated 22-12-2020. EMD Declaration to be submitted.	

Calendar of Events: (1) Last date and time for Queries (only through online) 16.07.2021 upto 3:00 pm. (2) Date and time of Pre-Bid meeting is on 16.07.2021 at 4:00 pm. (3) Last date and time for receipt of Tenders is 19.07.2021 upto 4:00 pm. (4) Opening of Technical Bid is on 20.07.2021 at 4:30 pm. (5) Opening of Financial Bid is on 22.07.2021 at 4:00 pm (If Possible). Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours on working days or from website: [https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in](http://eproc.karnataka.gov.in)

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NIT No & Dated	05CE/HMD / 2021 - 22 D.1488	Date: 22.06.2021
Name of work	Resurfacing the bituminous surface and rectifying undulations in paved block area at additional berth inside Green Gate at VOC Port Trust	
Estimate cost put to tender	Rs. 2,63,93,837/-	
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 5,27,880/-	
Downloading of Tender from VOCPT online e-tendering website.	23.06.2021 to 06.07.2021 Upto 15:00 Hrs.	
Last Date and Time for submission of Tenders online	06.07.2021 Upto 15:00 Hrs.	
Online Technical bid opening date and time	07.07.2021 at 1	

Over 50 lakh jabs given in a single day again

Daily vaccine average continues to improve steadily

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

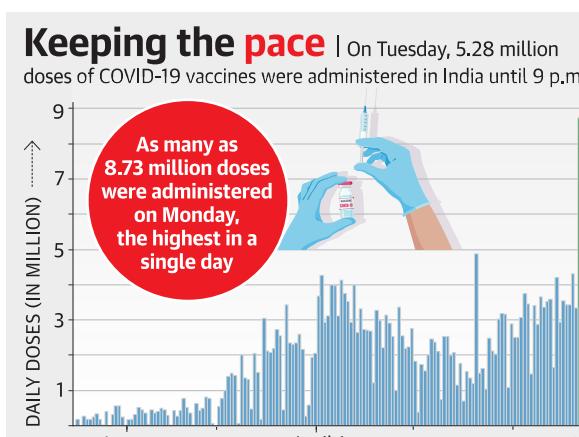
CHENNAI
Until 9 p.m. on Tuesday, over 52.8 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered in India which is only the second instance when the number of doses in a single day crossed the 50 lakh mark. A day before, 87.3 lakh doses were administered, the highest-ever in a single day since the inoculation drive began.

Between June 1 and 21, 34.6 million doses were administered daily in India on an average. At the current rate, a total of 96 crore doses can be administered by December 31, 2021, which is just over half the doses required to fully vaccinate all adults (188 crore doses).

Lofty target

To fully inoculate all adults by the end of this year, 82 lakh doses need to be given daily on average in the country.

The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to increase. It stood at 42.5 lakh on June 21, which is more than the 32.6 lakh recorded a week before (June 14). It was also significantly higher than the average daily doses recorded a month before (May 21) which was 18.5 lakh. About 25.5% of adults in



India, 45.1% of those aged above 45 and 48.1% of people aged above 60, were administered with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, until 8 p.m. on Tuesday. While 17.5% of the country's population has received at least one dose, only 3.8% are fully vaccinated.

The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

In comparison, 11.4% and 10.54% of people in Brazil and Russia are fully vaccinated, respectively. The figure for the U.K. and the U.S. stood at 46.33% and 44.86%, respectively.

With 49,130 new cases recorded till 9.30 p.m. on Tuesday, India's cumulative case load crossed the 3 crore mark and stood at

3,00,26,196. As many as 1,312 new deaths were also registered taking the tally to 3,90,644.

New infections

Kerala reported 12,617 new infections, followed by Maharashtra (8,470) and Tamil Nadu (6,895). Maharashtra recorded 482 new fatalities, followed by Tamil Nadu (194) and Kerala (144). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Day after record, M.P.'s vaccine numbers fall

From 16.9 lakh doses on Monday, the State recorded less than 5,000 doses on Tuesday

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

After administering a record-breaking 16.9 lakh vaccine doses on single day on Monday – the highest among all States – Madhya Pradesh plummeted to a record low of only 4,563 shots on Tuesday, according to data on the CoWin portal.

India posted an all-time high of 89 lakh doses on Monday, the first day of the new liberalised policy with the Centre procuring vaccines on behalf of the States. While many States had substantially increased the number of vaccines administered, M.P., Haryana and Karnataka had posted the



Good turnout: At the mega vaccination drive held in Bhopal on Monday. • A.M. FARUQUI

most significant increases when compared to the average daily doses per month.

Until its feat on Monday, M.P. had at most adminis-

tered five lakh doses per day in June.

While vaccination in most States dips around the weekend, it had plummeted to

only 692 doses in the State on Sunday, a day before the drive. However, the daily doses in M.P. have remained above 5,000 in June.

Unless there is a revision to the data, Tuesday's figures would be an all-time low in Madhya Pradesh barring the Sunday anomaly. There were 3,100 vaccination sessions in the State on Monday, which and that fell to 264 on Tuesday with capital Bhopal only recording 453 inoculations on Tuesday from 150,000 on Monday.

Media reports said that on Monday, which the Centre celebrates as International Yoga Day, Madhya Pradesh had a concerted vaccination

drive with Chief Minister, Shivraj Chouhan, personally visiting sites and monitoring progress.

Karnataka too posted a decline from the Monday's high with only 3.8 lakh shots on Tuesday evening compared to 11 lakh on Monday. However, the State has consistently administered over 3 lakh shots since June 5 and so the Tuesday's numbers aren't an aberration.

Haryana, which administered 5 lakh doses on Monday fell to about 74,000 on Tuesday which again isn't too far outside its normal range. The peaks it has attained in June are a little over 1 lakh doses a day.

Jabs key to boost economy, says V.K. Paul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Quick vaccination is key to opening the economy and going back to normal, said Member (Health) of NITI Aayog Dr. V.K. Paul, speaking to DD News, according to a release issued by the Health Ministry on Tues-

day.

Dr. Paul said a third wave could be stopped if safe behaviour was followed and a majority of the people got vaccinated.

Delta plus is a variant of concern: govt.

Health Ministry significantly upgrades the threat perception of the strain AY.1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday termed the emerging delta-plus variant a 'variant of concern' just hours after Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Chairman, National Empowered Group on Vaccination V.K. Paul said it was only a 'variant of interest' (VoI).

A variant of concern (VoC) carries the highest threat perception of a coronavirus variant, which is

characterised by increased infectivity, transmissibility or resistance to vaccines and treatment. A VoI is a degree lower.

The World Health Organisation, as of June 14, had classified the variant 'delta' (B.1.617.2) as well as off-shoots – AY.1 and AY.2 – as VoC.

Delta plus, as the variant is sometimes referred to, is an informal name.

So far there are only four international VoC (alpha, be-

ta, gamma and delta) with the off-shoots, AY.1 and AY.2 classified as off-shoots of Delta.

"Delta variant is a Variant of Concern and has been found in 80 countries. Delta plus is in 9 countries and as of now is in the category of variant of interest and is not yet in the variant of concern category," said Bhushan at the weekly press briefing on Tuesday.

However in a press statement, the Ministry first re-

ferred to it as a 'variant of concern' then issued a correction calling it a 'variant of interest' and then again reverted to calling it a 'variant of concern'.

A scientist connected with the consortium, INSA-COG, (Indian SarsCov2 Genomic Consortium) told *The Hindu* on condition of anonymity that AY.1 was "always" a variant of concern but was wrongly classified as off-shoots of Delta.

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Right to life should take priority: NHRC

Create compensation fund: Rahul

Congress leader releases White Paper on Centre's handling of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

National Human Rights Commission Chairperson Justice Arun Kumar Mishra on Tuesday said that the "right to life should prevail over the rights of patent-holders" so that life-saving medicines and vaccines for COVID-19 would be available to the poor.

Justice Mishra was addressing an online discussion on the topic of the "State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic" as a part of the 47th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. He said the world was experiencing huge losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking about issues that were affecting human rights, he said online commerce had concentrated wealth in fewer hands. He added that education had suffered, healthcare infrastructure fell short and families were left destitute and children orphaned.

"We cherish freedom of cyberspace, not to be misused to subvert the constitutional values," he said.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed at a press meet that 90% of the deaths during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic were "needless" as lives could have been saved if oxygen and medicines were available.

Releasing a White Paper on the Union government's handling of the pandemic, he said it should now prepare for a third wave by ramping up health infrastructure and vaccinating citizens on a war footing so that the virus did not get a chance to mutate.

The White Paper suggests the creation of a COVID-19 compensation fund and a commission to find out "what went wrong" in the fight against the previous waves.

Dig at PM

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for getting emotional in one of his virtual addresses, Mr. Gandhi said, "The Prime Minister's tears cannot wipe the tears of those who lost their loved ones. The Prime Minister's tears did not save their lives but oxygen may have saved them. The Prime Minister didn't take this seriously. He was busy fighting elections in Bengal and his focus was in another direction".

The purpose of the White Paper was not to point fingers at the government, but to help it deal with the third wave by preparing a blueprint to react, he stressed.

In a subsequent tweet, he said the Government of India "must work on our constructive inputs in the interest of the country".

"This is a blueprint on how to react to the third wave, which is going to come. It is our intention to provide the government with information and insights on what went wrong. If the second wave was bad, the third wave would be worse



This is a blueprint on how to react to the third wave, which is going to come. It is our intention to provide the government with information and insights on what went wrong. If the second wave was bad, the third wave would be worse
RAHUL GANDHI Congress leader

sights on what went wrong," he said, adding, "If the second wave was bad, the third wave would be worse".

Discussions with experts

The White Paper, he observed, was the result of extensive discussions held with experts and within the Congress structure and had four main pillars.

The first pillar talked about what went wrong and the Congress's suggestions, including one to have a commission to probe the shortcomings; the second one focused on developing the critical infrastructure such as oxygen supply and hospital beds; the third one highlighted financial assistance to the poorest families and the final one was about crea-

tion of a COVID-19 fund to compensate the families that have lost the breadwinner.

The coronavirus was not just a biological phenomenon but also an economic and social phenomenon and that's why economic support must be given to the poorest people as well as small and medium businesses, Mr. Gandhi asserted.

"The Centre is making ₹4 lakh crore from taxes on diesel and petrol every year. It is taking money out of the pockets of people who have lost family members. So, I don't understand why it can't put some money back into their pockets," he said.

The White Paper release coincided with Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar hosting a section of Opposition leaders at his residence.

Asked to comment on the meeting, Mr. Gandhi said, "I am not going to distract you or myself by getting into what is going on in politics and what is going on here and there. There is a time and place to that discussion and I am happy to talk to you at that time".

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"Yesterday was a significant day when India became the first country in the world to administer 87 lakh vaccine doses in one day. People seemed excited and jubilant. There is a feeling that India is winning in its fight against coronavirus, just then Rahul Gandhi spoke of White Paper and tried to derail it," he stated.

"Whenever we are at a crossroads in our fight, Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party have tried to derail the efforts by playing politics. In fact, the Congress has really worked tirelessly to create hurdles and obstacles in our path," he alleged.

"Yesterday was a significant day when India became the first country in the world to administer 87 lakh vaccine doses in one day. People seemed excited and jubilant. There is a feeling that India is winning in its fight

Stop playing politics over pandemic, BJP tells Congress

Rahul making contradictory demands, alleges Sambit Patra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Hours after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi released a White Paper on the Union government's handling of COVID-19 crisis and termed it disastrous, the BJP accused him of playing politics over the pandemic and of the Congress-ruled States managing the pandemic badly.

BJP national spokesman Sambit Patra addressed a press conference at the party's headquarters in New Delhi to launch an attack on the Congress. "Since yesterday we have been fearing this. Whenever something good happens in our fight against coronavirus, the Congress and Rahul Gandhi specially do something to derail it," he said.

"Whenever we are at a crossroads in our fight, Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party have tried to derail the efforts by playing politics. In fact, the Congress has really worked tirelessly to create hurdles and obstacles in our path," he alleged.

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FAITH

He establishes dharma

Life is full of sorrows, and sastras explain that these are of the nature of Adi Bhoutika, caused by outside forces such as natural calamities, etc. Adi devata, when we are ruled by the supernatural and the divine, and Adyatmika, the afflictions affecting the body and self of an individual. They also state that the root cause of all sorrows is adharma and the hurdles for the salvation of the jivatma are the papa karmas in each one's account.

The nature of Kali Yuga is such that dharma is weak. As a result, when sins increase, it is a sad situation that even the fear of the effects of sin is eclipsed. So, each one has to make a sincere prayer to the Supreme Lord to intervene and help, pointed out Sri Srirama Sarma in a discourse.

As proclaimed in the Bhagavad Gita, when adharma gains upper hand, the Lord alone can overpower it and establish dharma. God is sarma antaryamita. It is our duty to seek His help and it is His duty to help. Even the most desperate situation is under the control of the Lord's Sankalpa. Rama is caught in deep sorrow when Sita is abducted by Ravana. But Providence provides a solution when Hanuman enters His life.

The Lord has the power to control even the most vicious of people. It is His swabhava to bring the necessary changes in people and circumstances. He can remove our sins to make us pure in thought, word and deed. Bishma asserts that the antidote to all kinds of distress is to meditate on His divine names and His auspicious qualities. These have the power to wash away the sins even as the sacred waters of the Ganga. By seeking the Lord, who is the abode of compassion, we will be rid of the tendency to commit sins and thereby abide by dharma.

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(set by Dr. X)

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SCAN TO PLAY

- 16 Girl cuddling rascal on ecstasy in university (7)
17 Shall he also pick up herbal plant regarded as panacea? (7)
19 Found duke leaving to get hold of new cloak (7)
21 Unpunctual son ignored reprimand (4)
22 Preparing dosa and sambar for envoy (10)
25 Anxiously argue about Republican lazily tackling onset of epidemic (9)
26 Ball covered by dew becoming wet (5)
27 Praise clothing salesmen liberally for uprightness (13)

Press must not subvert government: Lam

Hong Kong leader says prosecution of *Apple Daily* was not an attack on 'normal journalistic work'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Media outlets in Hong Kong must not "subvert" the government, the city's leader said on Tuesday, rejecting U.S. criticism of recent action against a pro-democracy newspaper under a powerful new security law.

Hong Kong has long hosted a vibrant international and local media scene but press freedoms have slipped dramatically in recent years.

Last week, authorities froze the assets of Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily*, using the national security law Beijing imposed on the city in 2020.

Two of the paper's executives were charged with "collusion", a national security crime, over what police said were articles calling for international sanctions against China and Hong



Defending the crackdown: Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam speaking at a press conference on Tuesday. • AFP

Kong's leaders.

"It's not a problem to criticise the Hong Kong government, but if there is an intent to organise activities to incite the subversion of the government then that is, of course, a different thing," Chief Executive Carrie Lam said when asked about *Apple Daily* and press freedom in the city.

Unlike mainland China, where the press is overwhelmingly state-owned and heavily censored, semi-autonomous Hong Kong has free speech protections baked into its

mini-Constitution.

But an ongoing campaign by China to root out dissent after pro-democracy protests in 2019 has deepened unease over the business hub's future.

The new security law has criminalised a host of political views and the action against *Apple Daily* has left the media wondering what opinions or reporting could trigger an investigation.

U.S. criticism rejected

Echoing other officials, Ms. Lam said the prosecution of *Apple Daily* was not an attack on "normal journalistic work" and that the paper was trying to undermine China's national security. The U.S. was among multiple Western nations that criticised the police operation against *Apple Daily*, saying it undermined press freedoms as well as Hong

Kong's reputation as a safe place to do business.

Ms. Lam rejected those suggestions.

"Don't try to accuse the Hong Kong authorities of using the national security law as a tool to suppress the media, or to stifle the freedom of expression," she said.

"All those accusations made by the U.S. government, I'm afraid, are wrong."

Apple Daily has long been a thorn in Beijing's side, with unapologetic support for the pro-democracy movement and scathing criticism of authoritarian leaders. The arrests and asset freeze last week have crippled its ability to continue operations.

In a Facebook update, the paper's union said it had been told Saturday would be the last edition if management decide to fold.

No military solution to Afghan situation, U.S. tells Taliban

The military path will not lead to legitimacy, says U.S. diplomat

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The United States' UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the Taliban that there is no "military solution" in Afghanistan, as American troops approach a September 11 deadline for complete withdrawal from the country after two decades there. Afghanistan has seen an increasing level of violence in recent months, as the Taliban makes territorial gains.

"To the Taliban, we reiterate that the military path will not lead to legitimacy. As many of us have stated, including my colleagues on this Council from Europe, Russia and China, there is no military solution in Afghanistan. The world would not recognise the establishment in Afghanistan of any government imposed by force, nor the restoration of the Islamic Emirate. There is only one way forward and negotiated and inclusive political settlement, through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process," Ms. Thomas-Greenfield said, adding that there was an "unacceptable" level of violence against women, girls and ethnic and religious minorities.



Increased tensions: Afghan commandos at a battlefield in Kunduz province on Tuesday. • REUTERS

Hanfei Atmar.

"...The parties to this conflict must press forward on a peaceful resolution in Afghanistan which protects the gains of the last two decades..." Ms. Thomas-Greenfield said, adding that there was an "unacceptable" level of violence against women, girls and ethnic and religious minorities.

"We will use our full diplomatic, economic and assistance toolkit to support the peaceful, stable future, the Afghan people want and deserve. And we will continue to support the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in securing their country," Ms. Thomas-Greenfield said.

The U.S. intelligence and defence establishments are still working out how they will

gather intelligence and conduct counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan after September 11 this year, the *New York Times* reported. Last week, NATO committed to training Afghan security forces after U.S. troops withdraw from the country.

"Everyone who can influence the parties involved, including Afghanistan's neighbours, should step up now to secure the region and promote peace and stability. Like us, Afghanistan's neighbours want to ensure terrorists can never use Afghanistan to threaten the security of any country. An Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours can link the economies of South and Central Asia, and provide safety and security for all," she said.

Taliban capture Afghanistan's main Tajikistan border crossing

Insurgents and security forces are fighting on outskirts of Kunduz

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

The Taliban captured Afghanistan's main border crossing with Tajikistan, officials said on Tuesday, with security forces abandoning their posts and some fleeing across the frontier.

The seizure of Shir Khan Bandar, in the far north of Afghanistan, about 50 km from Kunduz city, is the most significant gain for the Taliban since the United States began the final stage of its troop

withdrawal in May.

"Unfortunately this morning and after an hour of fighting, the Taliban captured Shir Khan port and the town and all the border check posts with Tajikistan," said Kunduz provincial council member Khalidin Hakmi.

Separately, an Army officer said: "We were forced to leave all check posts... and some of our soldiers crossed the border into Tajikistan."

"By morning, Taliban fighters were everywhere, hun-

dreds of them," he added, on condition of anonymity.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the insurgents had seized the crossing, across the Pyanj River.

"Our Mujahideen are in full control of Shir Khan Bandar and all the border crossings with Tajikistan in Kunduz," he said.

Insurgents and Afghan forces were engaged in fierce battles on Monday on the outskirts of Kunduz city itself.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER: RWSS DIVISION : BERHAMPUR	
Near Jarada Bunglow, Pin - 760004, Ph. 0680-2296344 erwss_bam@nic.in ; rwssbam@gmail.com	
Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice	
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING - Bid Identification No. EERWSSBAM - 07/2021-22	
The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Berhampur, Ganjam on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids in Single Cover & Double cover system according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for Supply, drawing, design, construction, testing and commissioning and maintenance of different PWS Schemes and electrification works in Ganjam District from the eligible contractors as per DTCN.	
1. Name of the Work	Execution of different works of different P.W.S. Scheme in Ganjam District.
2. No of Work (Tender)	20 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost (Approximate)	From Rs.9.78 Lakhs to Rs.522.91 Lakhs
4. Period of Completion	From 120 days to 365 days
5. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal.	From 25-06-2021 at 11.00 hrs to 15-07-2021 up to 17.00 hrs
6. Last date & time for seeking clarification	09.07.2021 up to 17.00 hrs.
7. Date of Opening of Bid	16.07.2021 at 11.00 hrs.
8. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the Portal	15.07.2021 up to 17.00 hrs.
9. Name & address of the Officer inviting tender	Executive Engineer, RWSS Division, Near Jarada Bunglow, Berhampur-760004, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersorissa.gov.in	
Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Berhampur OIPR-25035/11/0003/2122	

Six killed in Myanmar clashes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Four protesters and at least two officers were killed as Myanmar soldiers battled an anti-junta civilian militia with small arms and grenades in the country's second city Tuesday, authorities and military sources said.

Fighting has flared across Myanmar since the February coup as people form "defence forces" to battle a brutal military crackdown on dissent, but clashes have largely been restricted to rural areas.

Acting on a tip-off, security forces raided a house in Mandalay's Chan Mya Tharsi township on Tuesday morning, the junta's information team said in a statement, and were met with small arms fire and grenades.

Two officers were killed during the raid, military sources told AFP, and at least ten were wounded.

U.S. shares plan to allocate 55 mn vaccine doses globally

41 million shots will be shared through COVAX

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

The Biden administration, on Monday announced how it would allocate 55 million of the 80 million doses from its vaccine supply to other countries. It is unclear how many doses India will receive in this second allocation.

The administration already outlined its plans to share the first 25 million doses of its stockpile both bilaterally and via COVAX.



COVAX. Of this, approximately 14 million will go to Asian countries, including India, some 10 million for Africa (coordinated by the African Union) and approximately 16 million for Latin American countries. Another 14 million doses will be shared "with regional priorities and other recipients", the White House statement said. This includes African, Asian, East-

ern European and South American countries as well as three South Asian countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The specific number of vaccines will be determined and shared as the administration works through logistical and regulatory specifics for each region, the White House said.

At the G7 in the U.K. last week, President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. would purchase and donate 500 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to low and middle-income countries. The G7 also committed to provide a total of 1 billion vaccine doses from this summer onwards.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that the world needs 11 billion vaccines to respond to the pandemic.

U.S. criticism of polls is meddling: Iran

REUTERS
DUBAI

Iran accused the U.S. on Tuesday of interference for saying its election was neither free nor fair as political factions traded blame for the record low turnout and high number of invalid ballots.

Ebrahim Raisi, a hardline judge who is under U.S. sanctions, secured victory in elections on Saturday.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said on Monday the U.S. viewed the process that made Mr. Raisi Iran's President-elect as "pretty manufactured", reiterating the U.S. view that the poll was neither free nor fair.

Tehran rejected the criticism. "We consider this statement as interference in our domestic affairs, contrary to international law and reject it," Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei was quoted by state media as saying.

Why is China targeting cryptocurrencies?

Beijing seeks to strengthen its monetary hold and project its new official digital currency

SRIRAM SRINIVASAN

The price of the world's most prominent cryptocurrency Bitcoin has more than halved in the last two months after hitting a peak in mid-April. The second-most valuable cryptocurrency, Ether, has seen a similar fall from its peak last month. China's crackdown against cryptocurrencies, which are those that aren't sanctioned by a centralised authority and are secured by cryptography, is said to have a lot to do with the crashing of the value of cryptocurrencies.

What has China done? In recent weeks, China has reportedly cracked down on crypto mining operations. The country has over the years accounted for a large percentage of the total crypto mining activity that takes place. In purpose, Bitcoin miners play a similar role to gold miners – they bring new Bitcoins into circulation. They get these as a re-

ward for validating transactions, which require the successful computation of a mathematical puzzle. And these computations have become ever-increasingly complex, and therefore energy-intensive in recent years. Huge mining operations are now inevitable if one is to mine Bitcoins.

Access to cheap electricity has made mining lucrative in China. According to the Cambridge Bitcoin Electricity Consumption Index, China accounted for nearly two-thirds of the total computational power last year. Xinjiang and Sichuan provinces accounted for nearly half of this. Now, provincial governments one by one have acted against these mining operations. The latest to do so is Sichuan, which was a hydroelectric-based crypto mining hub.

Actually, there is little change in the policy as far as China is concerned. It first imposed restrictions on cryptocurrencies way back in 2013. It then barred financial institutions from handling Bitcoin. Four years later, it barred what are called initial coin offerings, under which firms raise money by selling their own new cryptocurrencies. This is largely an unregulated market.

What China wants? An inter-ministerial committee report in India two years ago noted that in 2017, the government of China also banned trading between RMB (China's currency renminbi) and cryptocurrencies. It said, "Before the

RMB made up 90% of Bitcoin trades worldwide. In under a year, the trades between RMB and Bitcoin had fallen to under 1% of the world total." The report also noted that China had decided to prohibit mining within its jurisdiction. While the miners had stopped their activities for some time, the steep increase in the price of Bitcoin had brought many back into action.

EXPLAINER

The fact that cryptocurrencies bypass official institutions has been a reason for unease in many governments. Not just that. The anonymity that it offers aids in the flourishing of dark trades online. While many countries have opted to regulate the world of cryptocurrencies, China has taken the strictest of measures over the years. According to observers, the latest set of measures are to strengthen its monetary hold and also project its new official digital currency. An AFP report said, "China launched tests for a digital yuan in March. Its aim is to allow Beijing to conduct transactions in its own currency around the world, reducing dependency on the dollar which remains dominant internationally."

Offshore platforms

This time, its focus is on what has been a loophole all along – of offshore platforms enabling those in China to trade in cryptocurrencies. A Reuters report said the People's Bank of China asked banks and payment firms to "identify those involved in cryptocurrency transactions and promptly cut their payment channels." It said, "China Construction Bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Agricultural Bank of China (AgBank) and Postal Savings Bank of China attended the meeting, along with Alipay, the ubiquitous payment platform owned by fintech giant Ant Group."



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**NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS
For Transfer of Unpaid / Unclaimed dividend and Equity shares to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Account**

Notice is hereby given that as per Section 124(6) of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules, 2016 ("the Rules"), the Bank is required to transfer the shares, in respect of which the dividend remains unpaid or undaimed for a period of seven consecutive years to the IEPF Account established by the Central Government.

A list of such shareholders, who have not encashed their dividends for seven consecutive years and whose shares are therefore liable for transfer to the IEPF Account, is displayed on the website of the Bank <https://www.tmbi.in/about-us/Shareholders-Corner/Investor-Education-and-Protection-Fund>.

The Bank had also sent individual communication to the concerned shareholders whose unpaid / undaimed dividend and shares thereon are liable to be transferred to IEPF Account as per the said Rules for taking appropriate action and submitting requisite documents to claim the dividend and shares before it is transferred to IEPF Account. Shareholders are requested to forward the requisite documents as mentioned in the said communication to the Secretarial Section of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd, Head Office, Thoothukudi to claim the dividend and shares thereon. In case the Bank does not receive any communication from the concerned shareholder within 05.07.2021, the Bank would be transferring the said shares to IEPF Account without further notice in accordance with the requirement of said Rules.

The concerned shareholder(s) holding shares in physical form and whose shares are liable to be transferred to the IEPF Authority, may note that upon transfer of shares to IEPF Authority, the original share certificate(s) which are registered in their name will stand automatically cancelled and be deemed non-negotiable.

We request you to claim the dividends if any remaining undaimed / unpaid by you from the year 2013-14 onwards by making an application immediately to secretarial section of our Bank.

In case the concerned shareholders do not claim their unclaimed dividends by 05th July, 2021, the Bank shall with a view to comply with the said Act and Rules, transfer the dividend and the shares to the IEPF Authority without any further notice to the shareholders and no liability shall lie against the Bank in respect of the shares so transferred.

The shareholders may note that upon transfer of the shares to IEPF Authority, including all benefits accruing on such shares, if any, the same can be claimed only from the IEPF Authority by making a separate application to the IEPF Authority in Form IEPF-5 as prescribed under the Rules and the same is made available at IEPF website www.iepf.gov.in.

For any information / clarifications on this matter, concerned shareholders may contact Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd, Secretarial Section, Head Office, No.57, V.E.Road, Thoothukudi – 628002, Tel.No: 0461 2325136, 2321932 (Extn: 311), e-mail: shareholders@tmbbank

MARKET WATCH

	22-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,589	-0.03
US Dollar	74.37	-0.36
Gold	46213	-0.13
Brent oil	75.01	0.57

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	742.90	-11.85
Asian Paints	3010.80	-57.75
Axis Bank	739.35	-0.20
Bajaj Auto	4221.60	38.95
Bajaj Finserv	12131.65	-24.75
Bajaj Finance	6016.80	-99.20
Bharti Airtel	536.40	-3.20
BPCL	473.65	-1.40
Britannia Ind	3650.90	2.05
Cipla	955.85	-4.30
Coal India	148.70	1.20
Divis Lab	4288.75	59.65
Dr Reddy's Lab	5308.35	26.35
Eicher Motors	2718.20	19.75
Grafix Ind	1496.30	-0.35
HCL Tech	980.10	-1.90
HDFC	2522.90	6.50
HDFC Bank	1483.80	-4.90
HDFC Life	716.75	-2.00
Hero MotoCorp	2907.05	12.20
Hindalco	367.55	-0.05
Hind Unilever	2490.25	-24.10
ICICI Bank	630.85	-0.40
IndusInd Bank	1000.10	-7.45
Infosys	1511.85	11.55
Indian Oil Corp	113.85	1.20
ITC	205.10	0.65
JSW Steel	675.25	2.30
Kotak Bank	1757.10	-14.95
L&T	1499.20	32.15
M&M	775.20	-1.65
Maruti Suzuki	7265.40	365.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17436.55	-212.60
NTPC	118.30	0.30
ONGC	122.05	1.10
PowerGrid Corp	234.05	-0.80
Reliance Ind	2225.75	-11.50
SBI Life	1007.00	25.45
State Bank	418.65	-1.10
Shree Cement	29239.05	1013.70
Sun Pharma	666.80	-4.55
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	756.70	14.15
Tata Motors	337.90	3.60
Tata Steel	1112.30	6.15
TCS	3301.20	28.10
Tech Mahindra	1057.20	-5.70
Titan	1757.00	14.15
UltraTech Cement	6868.95	83.45
UPL	802.50	30.30
Wipro	556.55	14.40

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.17	74.49
Euro	88.19	88.57
British Pound	102.91	103.36
Japanese Yen (100)	67.16	67.46
Chinese Yuan	11.45	11.50
Swiss Franc	80.56	80.93
Singapore Dollar	55.07	55.33
Canadian Dollar	59.88	60.17
Malaysian Ringgit	17.81	17.91

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



DRL unveils drug in U.S. to lower triglyceride levels. Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has unveiled Icosapent Ethyl Capsules, 1 gm, in the U.S. market. The product has received the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval and is indicated as an adjunct to diet to reduce triglyceride levels, the drugmaker said.

Sun Pharma, Celgene to resolve drug-patent row

HYDERABAD Sun Pharmaceutical Industries has reached an agreement with innovator Celgene Corporation to resolve patent litigation pertaining to anti-cancer drug Revlimid (lenalidomide capsules) in the U.S. Under the pact, Celgene will grant Sun a licence to its patents, required to make and sell a limited quantity of generic lenalidomide capsules sometime after March 2022.

Kalrock-Jalan cleared to restart Jet

NCLT asks govt. to allot airport slots in 90 days; consortium to repay ₹1,200 crore in dues over 5 years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI / MUMBAI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, on Tuesday approved the resolution plan of Kalrock Capital and entrepreneur Murari Lal Jalan for the revival of Jet Airways two years after the airline shut down operations due to a cash crunch.

The NCLT, in an oral order, gave 90 days to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation for allotting airport slots to the airline.

Date can be extended'

The bench also said that if further extension of the effective date was required, the Jalan-Kalrock consortium could approach the tribunal again.

In an affidavit, the govern-



New horizons: A viable business case is now possible, subject to significant capitalisation, says CAPA's Kapil Kaul. ■PTI

KLP divests Adani stake on Myanmar army links

Nordic fund had put \$1 mn in port unit

REUTERS

OSLO

Norwegian pension fund KLP is divesting from Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. on the grounds the firm's links with the Myanmar military breach the fund's responsible investment policy, KLP said.

Adani Ports has been under scrutiny from international investors over its project to build a container terminal in Yangon on land leased from a Myanmar military-owned conglomerate.

A military coup in Myanmar on February 1 and an ensuing crackdown on mass protests in which hundreds have been killed has drawn international condemnation and sanctions on military fi-



gures and military-controlled entities.

"Adani's operations in Myanmar and its business partnership with that country's armed forces constitutes an unacceptable risk of contributing to the violation of KLP's guidelines for responsible investment," KLP said. The fund had an investment of \$1.05 million in Adani Ports at the time of its decision, it told Reuters

FM, Infosys review new I-T portal glitches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reviewed with Infosys officials the technical glitches that continue to mar the new income tax e-filing portal.

She, along with Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur, Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj and CBDT Chairman Jagannath Mohapatra went point by point on the issues facing the portal with officials of Infosys that developed the site.

While there was no official word on what transpired at the meeting, a statement issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India said "the glitches shall be addressed fast."

Total income more than doubled to ₹6,933 crore.

Iron-ore production rose 30% to 12.31 million tonnes.

Iron ore sales increased 29% to 11.09 MT. These are the best-ever production and sales figures for any quarter since inception, NMDC said.

Total income for FY21 increased 29% to ₹15,722 crore while net profit surged 76% to ₹6,277 crore. The company said net profit and total

rate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and all its competitors to put Jet Airways back in the skies," the Jalan-Kalrock consortium said in a press statement.

Committee of Creditors in October last year.

Claims total ₹15,432 cr'

As per the resolution plan, the Kalrock-Jalan consortium has proposed to repay financial creditors and employees about ₹1,200 crore over five years and intends to re-establish Jet Airways as a full-service airline with 30 aircraft. This contrasts with claims totalling ₹15,432 crore from financial and operational creditors which were admitted by the RP.

"Surprisingly, the NCLT order is a massive clean-up," said Kapil Kaul, CEO and director, CAPA Advisory.

"It will allow the new promoters to develop a viable business case subject to significant capitalisation," Mr. Kaul added.

NMDC net, revenue leap on robust ore demand

Mining rally to continue in FY22: Deb

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Mining major NMDC's said its consolidated net profit surged to ₹2,836 crore for the quarter ended March from ₹315 crore in the year-earlier period on the back of iron ore demand and realisation remaining robust.

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Total income for FY21 increased 29% to ₹15,722 crore while net profit surged 76% to ₹6,277 crore. The company said net profit and total

income for the quarter as well as the turnover for the fiscal were new records.

"All forecasts suggest the global rally in the sector will continue in FY22, giving us the confidence to achieve targets for the fiscal while pushing [forward] some exciting initiatives that will bring in lasting improvement to efficiency and performance," said CMD Sumit Deb. In FY21, it produced 34.15 MT and sold 33.25 MT iron ore, which were 8% and 6% higher respectively and "achieved in an undoubtedly challenging year."

'Tying reforms, incentives helped widen adoption'

PM cites States' extra FY21 borrowings



Narendra Modi

₹2.14 lakh crore.

"Each of the reforms was linked to improving the ease of living to the public and particularly the poor, the vulnerable, and the middle class. Secondly, they also promoted fiscal sustainability," Mr. Modi wrote.

Seventeen States that facilitated ration-card portability and installed electronic point-of-sale devices at fair price shops were granted additional borrowings amounting to ₹37,600 crore, the PM noted. Similarly, 20 States completed reforms to ease the red tape faced by businesses to avail borrowings of ₹39,521 crore.

"Officials who have been working on these reforms suggest that without this incentive of additional funds, enactment of these policies would have taken years. This was a pleasant departure from the past where the Centre & States came together to roll out public-friendly reforms in a short span of time amidst the pandemic," Mr. Modi wrote.

Four specified reforms'

In May 2020, under the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, the Centre had permitted States to borrow an additional 2% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), but half of it was contingent on implementation of four specified reforms. Twenty-three States availed of additional borrowings of ₹1.06 lakh crore out of a potential

'Retail interest in stocks to spur infra'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Rising retail participation in the stock market – if it is here to stay – could enable a larger resource pool for financing India's infrastructural requirements, Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India (SBI) said in a report.

"Lower rate in other saving avenues amidst the low interest rate regime has led to greater interest by individuals in the stock market," he said in the report by SBI's Economic Research Department.

"Another reason could be the significant increase in global liquidity," he added.

Scant supply, demand surge boost ginger prices

Spot prices touch ₹2,300 a 60-kg bag



Hassan and Shivamogga districts in Karnataka and a few pockets of Wayanad district in Kerala, Arun Anto, a ginger dealer, said.

Moreover, the farmers were holding stocks anticipating better prices in the coming months, he added.

As per trade circles in Wayanad, the momentum may persist considering low availability of ginger.

SPORT

A peep into the future as Gill, Shafali and 'DK' hint at greatness to come



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

Three relative newcomers from India impressed in England last week. In Southampton, opener Shubman Gill played his inaugural Test in England like a veteran of many innings there.

He was confident, untroubled, peaceful (a word not usually associated with sportsmen performing on the field).

Class

And he pulled the short rising delivery from the New Zealand

Shami and Ishant's incisive spells keep Kohli's men in the contest

The former's four-for and latter's three-for help India bowl out the Kiwis for 249; Williamson scores 49; India 64 for two in its second innings after losing Gill, Rohit

WTC FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SOUTHAMPTON

India was 64 for two in 30 overs in its second innings at stumps on the fifth day of the World Test Championship final against New Zealand here on Tuesday.

Rohit Sharma (30) and Shubman Gill (8) were the batsmen dismissed, both falling to Tim Southee. The Kiwi speedster trapped Gill in front while Rohit shouldered arms to a delivery that nipped in and was adjudged lbw.

At close, Cheteshwar Pujara (12) and skipper Virat Kohli (8) were at the crease.

Earlier, Mohammed Shami's artistry was on full display but New Zealand still managed to take a crucial 32-run lead after scoring 249.

More intent
New Zealand showed more intent in keeping the scoreboard ticking with Kyle Jamieson (21) and Tim Southee (30) throwing their bats around for useful runs which certainly put the pressure

back on India going into the final session of the day.

The tea break was called after the fall of the last New Zealand wicket.

Shami (4/76), after a mesmerising morning spell, got a couple of more wickets in the second session. He dismissed Colin de Grandhomme with a delivery angled in and Jamieson with a bouncer.

Ishant removes Williamson

During the final half-an-hour, India's senior-most player Ishant Sharma (3/48) denied a half-century to a dogged skipper Kane Williamson (49) with a classic Test match dismissal – delivery rearing up and shaping out which was edged to Kohli at third slip.

New Zealand scored 114 runs in the post-lunch session even as Shami and Ishant remained standout performers bowling their hearts out.

Jamieson and New Zealand's all-time third highest six-hitter Southee got some easy runs at the fag end which could prove to be use-



Breached: Mohammed Shami has B-J. Watling bowled, playing inside the line of an away nipper. ■ GETTY IMAGES

ful in the final context.

Ross Taylor (11) was dismissed as Shami reaped the rewards for finding the fuller length which enticed the batsman to go for a drive. Gill, at short cover, took a brilliant diving catch.

Ishant then had Henry Nicholls (7) when the lanky speedster pushed his length fuller by a yard and the edge at second slip was taken by Rohit Sharma. B-J. Watling (1), in his last Test, got a ball that would have put the best

in the business in trouble. Shami, who by then had started bossing the batsmen, bowled one that looked like shaping in but held its line after pitching, clipping the off-bail in the process. From 117 for 2, New Zealand was reel-

ing at 135/5 at lunch.

However, the disappointment for India was Jasprit Bumrah (0/57), who bowled short and wide.

The moment Virat Kohli replaced Bumrah with Shami, things changed drastical-

SCOREBOARD

INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

21.

NEW ZEALAND – 1ST INNINGS

Tom Latham c Kohli b Ashwin 30 (104b, 3x4), Devon Conway c Shami b Ishant 54 (153b, 6x4), Kane Williamson c Kohli b Ishant 49 (177b, 6x4), Ross Taylor c Gill b Shami 11 (37b, 2x4), Henry Nicholls c Rohit b Ishant 7 (23b, 1x4), B-J. Watling b Shami 1 (3b), Colin de Grandhomme lbv b Shami 13 (30b, 1x4), Kyle Jamieson c Bumrah b Shami 21 (16b, 1x6), Tim Southee b Jadeja 30 (46b, 1x4, 2x6), Neil Wagner c Rahane b Ashwin 0 (5b), Trent Boult (not out) 7 (8b, 1x4); Extras (b-4, lb-16, nb-6); 26; Total (in 99.2 overs): 249.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-24 (Gill, 10.4), 2-51 (Rohit, 26.5).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Southee 9-3-17-2, Boulton 8-1-20-0, Jamieson 10-4-15-0, Wagner 3-0-8-0.

162 (de Grandhomme, 82.1), 7-192 (Jamieson, 86.6), 8-221 (Williamson, 93.6), 9-234 (Wagner, 96.3).

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Ishant 25-9-48-3, Bumrah 26-9-57-0, Shami 26-8-76-4, Ashwin 15-5-28-2, Jadeja 7.2-20-1.

INDIA – 2ND INNINGS

Rohit Sharma lbw b Southee 30 (8b, 2x4), Shubman Gill lbw b Southee 8 (33b), Cheteshwar Pujara (batting) 12 (55b, 2x4), Virat Kohli (batting) 8 (12b); Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-1); 6; Total (for two wkts. in 30 overs): 64.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-24 (Gill, 10.4), 2-51 (Rohit, 26.5).

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Southee 9-3-17-2, Boulton 8-1-20-0, Jamieson 10-4-15-0, Wagner 3-0-8-0.

20th over of the day (69th for the day), a clip off Bumrah to the mid-wicket boundary.

What Shami and Ishant did was to hit the six-metre length (good length) which did the trick during both sessions.

Mount, Chilwell to extend self-isolation

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

England says players Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell will continue isolating until Monday next. The 10-day isolation comes after they came into contact with Scotland midfielder Billy Gilmour at Wembley Stadium after Friday's game. England says the decision to extend the isolation followed talks with health authorities. They will train alone.

Lahiri qualifies for Olympics



Anirban Lahiri. ■ FILE PHOTO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PARIS

Anirban Lahiri is the only Indian to find a place in the men's 60-player Final Olympic Golf Rankings, released on Tuesday.

Lahiri just about made the 'cut' after being the 60th player on the list, headed by World No. 1 Jon Rahm of Spain.

The women's list of 60 players will be finalised after this week's KPMG PGA Championship. The International Golf Federation (IGF) will confirm the final entry list on July 6.

half the story though as Denmark's fate was never in its own hands and it was still indebted to Belgium which beat Finland 2-0 in St. Petersburg.

Having lost its opening two games, Denmark went through as runner-up and will face Wales next.

Denmark finished top of Group B with a maximum nine points with Denmark, Finland and Russia all on three points but with the Danes ahead on goal difference.

Belgium's win leaves the Finns facing a nervous wait to see if they can sneak into the knockout stages.

A much-changed Belgium side dominated the game but only found a breakthrough in the 74th minute courtesy of an own goal from keeper Lukas Hradecky, who fumbled a Thomas Vermaelen header over the line after it had crashed off the woodwork.

A screamer

Russia threatened a comeback when Artem Dzyuba converted a 70th minute penalty but Andreas Christensen's screamer made it 3-1 before Joakim Maehle completed the rout. It was only

Striker Romelu Lukaku clinched victory in the 83rd minute by swivelling to thump home a Kevin de Bruyne pass and score his third goal of the tournament.

Belgium, the third after Italy and the Netherlands to win all three group games, will face one of the third-placed sides in Seville on June 27.

Breaking through: Damsgaard's superb strike set Denmark on its way to a remarkable win. ■ AFP

The results: Group B: Finland 0

lost to Belgium 2 (Hradecky 74-

og, Lukaku 81); Russia 1 (Dzyu-

ba 70+pen) lost to Denmark 4,

(Damsgaard 38, Poulsen 59,

Christensen 80, Maehle 82).

Portugal vs France 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Slovakia vs Spain 9.30 p.m. (Thursday)

GROUP F

Portugal vs France 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Germany vs Hungary 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD)

Off-colour Neeraj still manages gold

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

Asian Games champion Neeraj Chopra won the javelin gold at the Karlstad Grand Prix, a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze event, at Karlstad, Sweden, on Tuesday.

Neeraj, the top star at Karlstad with a personal best of 88.07m which came at Patiala in March, had a mediocre series. He clinched the title with a best of 80.96m, which came in his second throw. Neeraj opened with 79.07 and his series included three fouls (third, fourth and fifth). He appeared off-colour and his last throw was just 77.48.

This was Neeraj's second international meet this year. The 23-year-old had thrown 83.18m in his international season-opener in Lisbon a few days ago.

Deepika and Ankita get good ranks

SPORTS BUREAU

PARIS

Indian recurve women archers Deepika Kumari and Ankita Bhakat earned second and fifth ranks respectively in the qualification round of the World Cup Stage-3 here on Tuesday.

Their good ranking helped Deepika, who gathered 674 points to be behind Mexican Alejandra Valencia (680), and Ankita (664) get a bye in the first two rounds and make the third round of the elimination phase.

Komalika Bari (648, 19th) and Madhu Vedwan (632, 46th) have been drawn



Making progress: Deepika entered the third round of the elimination phase after a bye in the first two. ■ FILE PHOTO

against Elin Kattstrom of Sweden and Catalina Gnoriega of the USA respectively in

the first round.

The Indian women's team

collected 1986 points to

come second behind Mexico (2000). India, which got a first round bye, will start the elimination phase from the second round.

Atanu Das, who gathered 664 points to take the 23rd spot, was the best among the Indian men in the qualification round.

Pravin Jadhav (662, 27th), B. Dhiraj (655, 50th) and Tarundeep Rai (650, 60th) were the other Indians in fray.

Men's team eighth

The men's team (1981) was

placed eighth, while the

mixed team (1338) was fifth.

SFI nominates Srihari, Maana

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Srihari Nataraj and Maana Patel have been nominated by the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) for the Universality Places for the Tokyo Olympics.

Even as Srihari is chasing the 'A' qualification spot, which if achieved would get him a direct entry for the Games, the SFI had to make the nominations to meet the deadline of June 20.

"We are still very hopeful that at least two Indian swimmers will make the 'A' cut.

"The swimmers have im-

proved their timings in Bel-

grade and we are expecting

them to go faster in Rome,"

said SFI Executive Director Virendra Nanavati in a

release.

Srihari and Maana have the highest FINA points among Indians, in the men's and women's sections, based on their performances in Belgrade (June 19-20).

Ramkumar advances

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON

Ramkumar Ramanathan advanced to the second round of the Wimbledon Qualifiers but Prajesh Gunneswaran bowed out here on Tuesday.

Ramkumar beat Slovakia's 13th seed Jozef Koválik 6-3, 6-0 in exactly an hour in his first round.

Prajesh, ranked 148, lost 6-1, 7-6(5) to Britain's Arthur Farry, ranked 1038.

"I had tendinitis (left-wrist) which started three weeks ago. It's fine now. But I just started playing. I only hit for two days and for less than an hour each. So just not in the best shape," Prajesh told PTI. "If it wasn't Wimbledon. I wouldn't have played. Just didn't have enough time to get ready," he added.

Redfern to make history

SPORTS BUREAU



Sue Redfern. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Sue Redfern will become the first woman to officiate in an England men's home international match after being appointed as fourth umpire for Wednesday's first T20I against Sri Lanka in Cardiff.

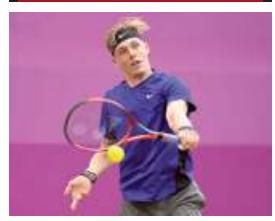
Alex Wharf had been due to fill the role, but Redfern was placed on standby in the event that the reserve day was activated in the World Test Championship final in Southampton. With persistent bad weather forcing the game into a sixth day, Redfern will now step in for the first of three T20Is between England and Sri Lanka.

<p

TV PICKS

NBA: Star Sports 1 & SS Select (SD & HD), 6 a.m.**WTC final 2021:** India vs New Zealand: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.**Euro 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)**Copa America 2021:** Sony Ten 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 2.30 a.m. (Thursday); Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. (Thursday)**NBA:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1, 6 a.m. (Thursday)

IN BRIEF

**Shapovalov pulls out of Tokyo Olympics****TORONTO**Canada's Denis Shapovalov has decided not to compete at the Tokyo Olympics due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The World No. 12 wrote on Twitter on Monday: "Representing Canada means the world to me, but due to the current situation my team and I have decided this is the best decision for everyone's safety." **REUTERS****Medvedev looking for confidence on grass****MADRID**World No. 2 Daniil Medvedev said on Monday he can play his best tennis on grass as the Russian warms up for Wimbledon in Mallorca this week. Medvedev has gone to at least the quarterfinals of every Grand Slam except Wimbledon. "I like to play on grass, I just need to get some confidence in my game on the surface, because we didn't play on it for two years," Medvedev told journalists in a press conference. **AFP**

Argentina saunters into quarterfinals

Messi's record 147th appearance for country; Uruguay's goal drought ends in stalemate with Chile

COPA AMERICA

REUTERS**BRASILIA**

Argentina ensured its place in the Copa America quarterfinals on Monday beating Paraguay 1-0 in a game notable for Lionel Messi's record-equalling 147th appearance for the national side.

The victory in Brasilia was Argentina's second 1-0 win in a row in this tournament and its 16th match without defeat since losing in the Copa America semifinal in 2019.

Argentina has seven points from three games and is top of Group A, two points ahead of Chile, four ahead of Paraguay and six ahead of Uruguay.

Bolivia is bottom with no points from two matches so with four of the five teams qualifying for the last eight, Argentina is sure of progressing.

Up against it

Paraguay has never beaten Argentina over 90 minutes in the Copa America, a run that

**Def finish:** Alejandro Gomez makes the most of a handy pass from Angel di Maria to put Argentina ahead. **GETTY IMAGES**

covers 25 matches, and it was up against it as early as the 10th minute when Argentina went ahead.

Alejandro Gomez took a delightful pass from Angel Di Maria and dinked the ball over

the diving keeper.

For Argentina, Sergio Aguero made his first international start since November 2019 but was anonymous up front and it was Di Maria and Lionel Messi who stood

out. On the night he equalled Javier Mascherano's record of 147 games in the blue and white shirt, Messi was a busy presence in the Paraguayan half.

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