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India largest source of government info requests, says Twitter
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Sindhu hopes to give her best and win gold at Tokyo Olympics
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NEARBY



Sedition charges invoked against agitating farmers

CHANDIGARH

The Haryana police have invoked sedition charges against a group of protesting farmers who allegedly damaged the official vehicle of Deputy Speaker Ranbir Gangwa in Sirsa on July 11, during a demonstration against the farm laws. Sirsa's SSP Arpit Jain confirmed that sedition charges under Section 124A of the IPC had been invoked against them.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

June WPI inflation eases to 12.07%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index slowed marginally to 12.07% in June, from May's record 12.94%, official data showed.

The government said the "high rate of inflation" was primarily due to the low base effect – the WPI had seen a year-on-year deflation of 1.81% in June 2020 – and the rise in prices of fuels, including petrol and diesel, and manufactured products.

FULL REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 14

Govt. directs private centres to step up the pace of vaccination

States asked to monitor progress; Health Minister rubishes claims of shortage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

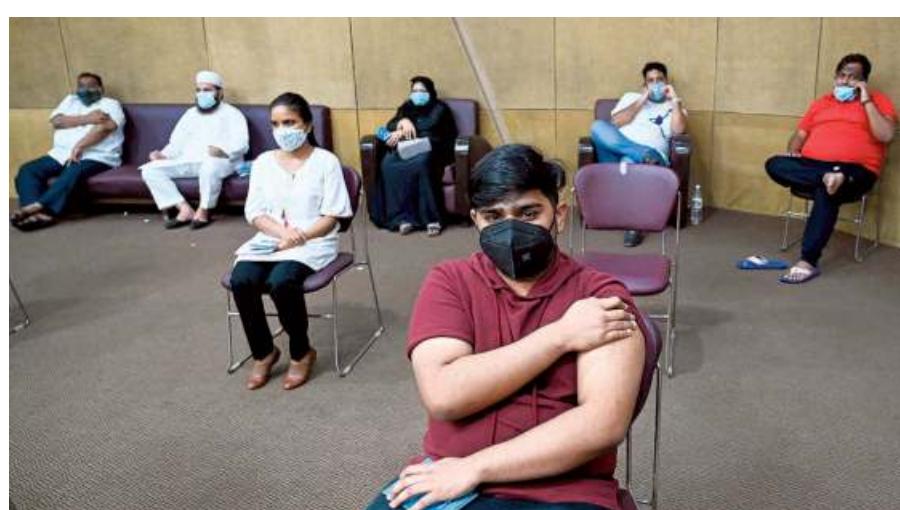
The slow pace of COVID-19 vaccination by private centres in some States is a "cause of serious worry", Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said on Wednesday.

Mr. Bhushan said he had directed the States to review the status and progress of vaccine procurement by these centres on a daily basis. Many private COVID-19 vaccination centres (PCVCs), he said, had not placed any indent for the earmarked quantum of vaccines.

Mr. Bhushan chaired a meeting with the Health Secretaries and senior immunisation officials of 15 States and Union Territories during which the areas of concern were highlighted, including delay in ordering and lifting of doses and payment.

He directed them to ensure that the indents for the earmarked quantum of vaccines were placed with the vaccine manufacturers at the earliest.

Senior health officials of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana participated in the videoconference. Nodal representatives from the vaccine manufacturers Bharat Biotech and Se-



Virus protection: People waiting in the observation area of a Delhi hospital after receiving the COVID-19 shot on Wednesday. ■ AFP

rum Institute of India (SII) were present. The State governments and the PCVCs were advised to ensure that the gap between the indent quantity and the payment towards their procurement was reduced to zero. Some States/PCVCs had not physically lifted the vaccines that had been paid for. They should ensure the lifting of the dispatched doses immediately, he said.

A release issued by the Union Health Ministry said that in some States, wherever vaccine doses had been lifted by the PCVCs, their actual administration was seen to be less than the quantity lifted. The States and the PCVCs

were advised to review this and ensure that the unutilised vaccine doses were quickly administered.

The Ministry said more than 39.59 crore doses had been provided to the States and the Union Territories so far, through all sources and a further 30,250 doses were in the pipeline.

'Unutilised vaccines'
"Of this, the total consumption, including wastage, is 38,07,68,770 doses (as per data available at 8 a.m. on Wednesday). More than 1.51 Cr (1,51,52,450) balance and unutilised COVID Vaccine doses are still available with the States/UTs and private

hospitals to be administered," it stated.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in a series of tweets, rubbished allegations by the State governments of vaccine shortage not ensuring adequate supplies. "1.46 cr. doses of vaccine were made available to States govt. in June so that vaccination can be done through government and private hospitals," he said. "This availability has been increased to 13.50 crores in the month of July."

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NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY,
SAYS MHA ▶ PAGE 10

Delhi Police fined ₹25K for 'farcical' probe

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A local court here imposed a cost of ₹25,000 on Delhi Police while questioning the fairness of the probe conducted into a case of a man who suffered a gunshot injury in his left eye during the riots last year. The court said the probe had "been done in a most callous and farcical manner".

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 2

SC notice to Centre, U.P. on Kanwar Yatra

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday took *suo motu* cognisance of a media report that the annual Kanwar Yatra is likely to be held from July 25, amid rising fears of a third COVID wave.

"We were a little disturbed given today's headline in *The Indian Express* of July 14 about the 'Kanwar Yatra', which is likely to be held from July 25. This court has taken *suo motu* cognisance of the report and thus issues notice to the Union of India and the States of U.P. and Uttarakhand to file their early response," a Bench, led by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Haryana 'excess deaths' seven times official toll

Huge undercount during second wave

Moderate excess

Haryana's excess deaths - 60,397 during the pandemic period, calculated by comparing baseline mortality with pre-pandemic years (2018 and 2019) were 7.3 times more than the official COVID-19 tally recorded in the State till May 31, 2021. This multiple was slightly more than that of T.N. and Karnataka and lower than that of A.P. and M.P.

¹Baseline mortality: Average of 2018 and 2019 figures | ²Based on State's official COVID19 tally | *Reconciled COVID-19 death toll released by State

State	Excess deaths ¹	COVID-19 tally ²	Multiple ³
A.P.	1,95,422	10,930	17.9
M.P.	1,92,004	8,068	23.8
Tamil Nadu ⁴	1,54,965	24,232	6.4
Karnataka	1,25,732	29,090	4.3
Haryana	60,397	8,303	7.3
Kerala*	4,178	9,954	0.4

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

CHENNAI

The number of "excess deaths" registered by the Civil Registration System (CRS) in Haryana ever since the COVID-19 pandemic hit (from April 2020 to May 2021) was 60,397, which is 7.3 times the official reported figure of 8,303 COVID-19 deaths for the same period.

This high number was largely due to the deaths registered in April 2021 (28,276) and May 2021 (46,108). In this period which coincided with the second wave, the excess deaths were around 46,283, compared with the registered COVID-19 tally of 5,148, leading to an undercount factor of 9. The overall tally in Haryana, as of July 12, is 9,556.

The excess deaths were calculated based on the

month-wise number of deaths registered in the online CRS from January 2018 to May 2021, which was accessed by *The Hindu*. Not all excess deaths would be related to COVID-19 but a bulk of them are, during the pandemic. The mortality figures registered online for 2018 and 2019 – 1,85,842 and 1,88,910 – were 96.1% and 97.3% of the deaths mentioned in the annual reports on "Vital Statistics in India based on CRS" 2018 and 2019 respectively.

The undercount factor (7.3) and the excess deaths for Haryana (60,397) were lower compared with those from Madhya Pradesh (23.8 and 1,92,044) in the same period and for which complete data have been made available so far.

FARIDABAD ON TOP ▶ PAGE 10

SC to examine plea challenging sedition

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will examine a petition filed by a retired Major-General who said a nearly 60-year-old judgment of the court that helped sedition survive in the Indian Penal Code was behind time

'Afghanistan's future can't be its past'

SUHASINI HAIDAR

TASHKENT

The world will not legitimise a Taliban regime that comes to power in Kabul by force, indicated External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday, amid rapid advances made by the militant group on towns and border checkpoints in various parts of Afghanistan.

Speaking at the "Contact Group" meeting of the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe, Mr. Jaishankar said the future of Afghanistan "cannot be its past", referring to the previous takeover of the country by the Taliban in 1996. The group also issued a joint statement decrying the violence.

"The world is against seizure of power by violence and force. It will not legitimise such actions," Mr. Jaishankar told the meeting, which included Ministers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Instead, Mr. Jaishankar said, peace negotiations would need to result in an "acceptable compromise" that reflected the Doha, Moscow and Istanbul-Heart of Asia processes, and produced an "end state" that ensured a democratic and neutral Afghanistan.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

LAC IMPASSE IMPACTING TIES,

WANG TOLD ▶ PAGE 9

NEXT IAS

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CM YK

Court fines Delhi Police ₹25K for 'farcical' probe into riots case

It says officials have 'miserably failed' in their statutory duties

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

A local court here has imposed a cost of ₹25,000 on the Delhi police while questioning the fairness of the probe conducted into a case of a man who suffered a gunshot injury in his left eye during the north-east Delhi riots in February last year.

Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav censured Delhi Police for resisting registration of an FIR based on the complaint of the victim, Mohammad Nasir, a resident of North Ghonda in Delhi.

"It is clearly evident that defence for the accused per-

sons named in the complaint of respondent [Mr. Nasir] has been sought to be created by the police," the judge remarked while dismissing Delhi police's appeal against an October 21, 2020, order of a trial court here directing registration of an FIR..

Bhajanpura SHO

"Seeing the matter from any angle, I have not been able to persuade myself about the efficacy and fairness of the investigation carried out in the matter," the judge remarked, adding that the investigation has "been done in a most casual, callous and farcical manner".

The judge further noted the police "did not bother to look into the grievance of the respondent that he was being constantly threatened by the accused persons".

The court directed the DCP (North-East) to deposit the fine with the Delhi Legal Services Authority within a week. It also said the fine amount should be recovered from the Station House Officer of Bhajanpura police station and his supervising officers, "who have miserably failed in their statutory duties in this case".

The incident in question took place on February 24 last year, when Mr. Nasir was bringing his sister home from Max Hospital in Shalimar Bagh. When their cab reached Khajuri Chowk, they saw chaos and fires all around. The police officials present there advised him to avoid the normal route. They took a detour, but were stopped by rioters near Rubber Factory Chowk. They were allowed to proceed af-



Policemen stand in front of vandalised shops following riots in north-east Delhi's Bhajanpura on February 24, 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO

ter Mr. Nasir told the rioters his name was Krishna.

The cab driver, however, insisted that he didn't want to go any further due to the situation, so, Mr. Nasir and his sister left the cab at Gokulpuri flyover. On reaching the street of his house, he noticed a mob of around 100-

150 people carrying rods, pistols, petrol bombs and swords etc, which was allegedly led by the owner of M/s Tyagi Store.

Mr. Nasir alleged that since he belonged to a different community, Naresh Tyagi fired at him as a result of which he suffered gunshot

injury in his left eye. He was taken to Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital where he was operated upon and subsequently discharged on March 12, 2020.

On March 19, 2020, he gave a written complaint to the Bhajanpura SHO in which he named Naresh Tyagi, Subhash Tyagi, Uttam Tyagi, Sushil, Naresh Gaur and their other accomplices as the assailants. However, no FIR was registered by the police. Mr. Nasir then approached the trial court on July 17, 2020.

In the meantime, an FIR was lodged at the Bhajanpura police station on the statement of an Assistant Police Sub Inspector with regard to the incident of rioting in the area on February 24, 2020. It was also recorded in the FIR that Mr. Nasir had suf-

fered gunshot injuries at the spot on the date and time of the incident.

It was further stated that besides him, six more persons: Ali Hasan, Altaf, Javed, Aman, Faizi and Adnan, had also suffered gunshot injuries. The court noted that all the injured persons were taken to hospitals by their family members and not by the police.

Police response

The police said all the accused persons named by Mr. Nasir had been thoroughly interrogated, "however, no evidence was found against them". Police said Naresh Tyagi and Uttam Tyagi were not present in Delhi at the time, as they had gone to their native place for attending family functions. Sushil was present in his office on duty and nothing was stated

about Naresh Gaur. "Perusal of the case diaries reveals a very shocking state-of-affairs," the court said. While the incident against Mr. Nasir happened at North Ghonda, the FIR was lodged in respect of Mohanpur, Maujpur.

"The fact of seven persons... having suffered gunshot injuries was in the due knowledge of the investigating agency, however, for reasons best known to it, Section 307 of Indian Penal Code (attempt to murder) and Section 25 of the Arms Act were not invoked initially at the time of FIR registration," the court noted.

The court also questioned why the police were unable to trace any eyewitnesses in the case despite the medicolegal case of Mr. Nasir clearly having his address.

Man arrested for passing on files to ISI

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 34-year-old man was arrested from Rajasthan for allegedly obtaining sensitive documents from an Indian Army official and providing it to Pakistani intelligence agency ISI, officials said on Wednesday.

The suspect, Habeeb Khan, who hails from Bikaner, was nabbed by the Delhi Police Crime Branch from Pokhran, where he had been working as a vegetable supplier on contract basis, they said.

Preliminary investigation has revealed that the suspect used to fish out sensitive documents from an Army official posted at the Pokhran army base camp and further provided them to ISI, a senior police officer said.

Notice to govt. after plea for DMC chief's removal

Zakir Khan abused his power: petition

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notice to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government on a petition seeking removal of Zakir Khan from the post of Chairman of the Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) for allegedly abusing his position.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh also issued notice to the DMC and Mr. Khan on the petition and listed it for further hearing on August 31. The petition was filed by one Abdul Amir Amiro, who complained that Mr. Khan after assuming office as the Chairman of DMC in August last year has been "continuously exercising the abuse of his position and power".

The plea contended that

City gets above average rain for the season

Partly cloudy sky with light rain forecast for today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rain continued to lash the city under the influence of the south-west monsoon on Wednesday with the maximum temperature settling at 35 degrees Celsius, which is normal for the season.

The Capital received 26.1 mm of rainfall between 8 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., and 28.5 mm of rainfall in the preceding 24 hours. The minimum temperature settled at 26 degrees Celsius, which was one degree below normal. The Met department has forecast partly cloudy sky with light rain or thundershowers on Thursday.

Isolated to scattered rainfall can be expected till July 16 and enhanced rainfall from July 17.



Heavy waterlogging during monsoon rain in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Despite the monsoon arriving over two weeks late, deficit rainfall has been covered and Delhi has now received more than the average rainfall for the season, IMD data show.

The rain was, however, not equally distributed across the city with Palam receiving 2.4 mm on Wednesday while the Ridge re-

corded 107.4 mm of rainfall.

Waterlogging plaints up

The Public Works Department (PWD) on Wednesday received 10 waterlogging complaints every hour, up from 7 complaints on Tuesday. Significant waterlogging was reported from more than a dozen arterial points located in north and east

Delhi, including ITO, with at least 70 calls logged till 5 p.m. the PWD said.

The complaints, according to the PWD, originated in relation to the Azadpur area and Azadpur Mandi, ITO to Bairon Marg, Jhilmil underpass, GTK bus depot, Nangia Park, Punjabi Bagh underpass, Shahdara and Zakhira among others.

Operationalise crowdfunding platform: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday cautioned the Centre that it would take action for "wilful non-compliance" if it failed to make operational a digital platform for crowdfunding of expensive medicines and treatment for rare diseases.

Justice Rekha Palli said despite specific directions on January 28 that the digital crowdfunding platform be made operational by March 31, it has not been done.

"This court would be constrained to take action for wilful non-compliance," Justice Palli said while directing the counsel representing the Centre to take instructions on the issue.

Extra 5.6 km on Rithala-Narela line on anvil

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a joint inspection of a proposed Rithala-Narela corridor, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said that a single alignment was not enough to serve the entire area.

An additional 5.6 kilometre corridor may be planned subject to government clearances, the Delhi Metro said.

"The DMRC has suggested that one single alignment cannot serve the entire area with just one corridor," said Anuj Dayal, DMRC spokesperson.

Mr. Dayal added, "Therefore, in addition to the original corridor already proposed between Rithala and Narela (22.9 km), a spur of 5.6 km length from Puth Khurd to Holambi Kalan may be planned."



Women waiting for a bus at Rail Bhavan bus stand on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

fic, at 8 p.m. because most of the buses didn't stop at ITO as they are all running at full capacity. My pocket doesn't allow me to hire an autorickshaw daily."

Shweta Gupta, a student, said while returning home after visiting a doctor, she and her mother didn't get a bus after two hours of waiting. "Buses are free for women but there is no space. Either buses don't stop at bus stops or marshal comes out and signals space for one passenger only," she said.

As a bus approaches the bus stop at Pragati Maidan, passengers keep an eye on

the bus marshal's signal to know how many seats are vacant. This starts a frenzy among those waiting to board. In the commotion, women and children are left behind as men push their way in to the vehicle.

"COVID appropriate behaviour applies only inside the bus but not at the bus stop or while boarding. I wouldn't dare to go near the bus as men fight for space and never think of the women waiting late night at a bus stop. Anti-social elements pass comments and last-mile connectivity is also an issue for women during late night,"

said Kusum Rana, a passenger waiting at ITO bus stop.

Increased patrolling

Chinmay Biswas, PRO of Delhi Police, said they have already increased patrolling in isolated stretches and they will raise the matter with authorities for more buses to the concerned.

A Delhi govt. official said the Graded Response Action Plan, which had standard operating procedures related to all activities, including public transport, had been prepared by all stakeholders to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.

'Vacant parking spaces to be offered to food trucks'

Noida Metro looks to augment revenue

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

area which shall be decided by the NMRC. The minimum tentative space proposed to be provided for installation of each food truck is 25 square meters and the maximum available space shall vary station wise," officials said.

According to the NMRC, a total of 15 stations were offered for food, recreational, utility truck facility under the designated space.

Vendors will be permitted to operate between 9 a.m. and 10.30 p.m. daily, according to the NMRC. Officials said that the NMRC has issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) to invite applications from interested stakeholders.

"The mobile food or food truck service vendor will pay NMRC a fixed licence fee or rental fee to avail the designated space at parking

area which shall be decided by the NMRC. The minimum tentative space proposed to be provided for installation of each food truck is 25 square meters and the maximum available space shall vary station wise," officials said.

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Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, JUL. 15
RISE 05:34 SET 19:21
RISE 10:22 SET 23:08
FRIDAY, JUL. 16
RISE 05:35 SET 19:21
RISE 11:23 SET 23:41
SATURDAY, JUL. 17
RISE 05:35 SET 19:21
RISE 12:24 SET 00:00

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	35	26
Safdarjung	35	26
Palam	34	27

Delhi Palam Today
34°C Light rain or thunder-storm likely at some places with cloudy sky and warm and humid day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Rise in day temperature likely. Thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky.

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THE HINDU
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Cong. calls for audit of DJB

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Wednesday called for an audit of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and alleged that the people of the Capital were dependent on the water tanker mafia for potable water due to the mismanagement of the agency.

It said that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal came to power promising 20,000 litres of free water per family. However, since Delhi was not receiving adequate water supply, those who were not getting regular water supply had to depend on the water mafia.

Leader of the Congress party in the South Corporation Abhishek Dutt alleged that people are getting dirty water with high ammonia. He demanded a plant be established on the Yamuna to filter the water.

Final phase of Khori Basti demolition begins

SC order to free land from encroachers by July 19 will be adhered to, says Faridabad Commissioner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
FARIDABAD

The Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF) on Wednesday kicked off the final phase of demolition at Khori Basti here with less than a week to go for the Supreme Court deadline to remove encroachment on 170-acre forest land. The drive was, however, called off for the day mid-way due to heavy rain.

MCF Commissioner Garima Mittal said the target for the day was achieved before the drive was abandoned due to rain, adding that the Supreme Court order to free the land from encroachers till July 19 would be adhered to "in letter and spirit". She, however, evaded questions on the number of houses demolished, saying that she could not share the "operational details". She said the drive would continue in the days to come.

Temporary shelter
Ms. Mittal said a camp was being organised for those eligible for the rehabilitation policy of the Haryana govern-



Municipal Corporation of Faridabad kicked off demolition on Wednesday. The drive was, however, called off mid-way due to heavy rain. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ment and a temporary shelter was also set up through Red Cross for those in need of immediate shelter.

The Faridabad district administration had on Tuesday announced a policy to rehabilitate those having Haryana voter identity card, Parivar Pechar Patra or electricity bill, but the activists objected to it saying that the government should not resort to

"pick and choose" and extend rehabilitation policy to all. Social activist Meenu Verma said only 1,000-odd residents were eligible for the rehabilitation policy.

Earlier, the demolition squad of the municipal body comprising 17 excavators began the drive in the morning. More than 3,000 police personnel, including three Deputy Commissioners of Pol-

ice, 12 Assistant Commissioners of Police, and staffers from Traffic Police, Crime Branch and Rapid Action Force, were deployed for the demolition under the supervision of Nodal Officer Anshu Singla, Deputy Commissioner of Police, NIT.

The Supreme Court had on June 7 ordered demolition of the structures in Khori Basti on the forest land with-

in six weeks. The demolition was being carried out in bits and pieces since the SC order, and several FIRs were also registered.

Activists demand

The social activists and political leaders have been demanding that Khori Basti residents be rehabilitated before the demolition and compensated.

The colony has 5,158 houses, 80 shops, five educational institutes, 36 social, public utility and religious structures and two industrial units. Most of the residents are migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and other States. Most of them bought plots through local real estate agents to settle on the land in early 1990s.

Former Lok Sabha MP and Congress national spokesperson Udit Raj also held demonstrations in Delhi along with Khori Basti residents earlier this month seeking to revoke the court order and save the houses from demolition.

160 oxygen plants being set up in city

L-G holds review meeting with officials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal Wednesday reviewed the status and progress of work related to the installation of PSA oxygen plants in Delhi where he reiterated that the Capital should not face the same situation as that during the second wave of COVID-19 infection.



L-G Anil Baijal

According to sources present at the meeting, the Delhi Chief Secretary and other senior government officials were present where Mr. Baijal was informed that a total number of 160 PSA plants with a capacity of 148.11 MT were being installed in various government and private hospitals, a source said the L-G was informed.

Of these, Mr. Baijal was told, 36 at Delhi government hospitals had been commissioned while 27 were expected to be commissioned by August 31. In relation to the remaining three, where plants were expected to arrive by September 30, commissioning would be completed by October 15.

Rainwater harvesting discussed at MPD meet

Next webinar to be held on July 16

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In the third webinar conducted by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on the draft Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) 2041, senior officials discussed issues pertaining to physical infrastructure and spatial development framework.

"The major suggestions provided by stakeholders during the webinar were rainwater harvesting for parks and other open public places, fire safety compliance in commercial centres developed and maintained by agencies, management of existing dhalas by local bodies, physical infrastructure provisions in Green Development Area (GDA), deve-

lopment of decentralised wastewater treatment systems and sanitation system," officials said.

Other demands

The land-owning agency added that other suggestions put forth by stakeholders who attended the webinar pertained to the issue of water demand and wastewater treatment in future regeneration schemes, managing water demand and reducing wastage of water and focus on the use of treated water.

The next webinar is scheduled to be held on July 16 and will cover aspects like plan monitoring and evaluation and development control norms.

Govt. to begin single-window facility for e-vehicle chargers

Delhi will be first city to get this service, says DDC official

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi vice-chairperson Jasmine Shah on Wednesday said that Delhi will soon be the "first city" in India where anyone can get an electric vehicle (EV) charger installed by making a phone call or applying online.

The Delhi government has taken an important step towards empanelment of private charging infrastructure providers for EVs, he said. The empanelment will be accompanied by the rollout of a single-window facility for installation of EV chargers in residential spaces, institutional buildings such as hospitals and also malls and

theatres among other places.

The decision to implement a single-window facility and empanel vendors through discoms for smooth rollout of EV chargers in private and semi-public places was taken on Wednesday at the Charging Infrastructure Working Group meeting of Delhi government chaired by Mr. Shah.

"We have received requests from many apartment societies, RWAs, mall owners etc. that they wish to install EV chargers but don't know how to. This innovative process will enable quick and efficient installation of EV chargers," he said.

The roll-out plan also includes disbursal of a grant of 100% for the purchase of

charging equipment up to ₹6,000, per charging point for the first 30,000 charging points, as per the Delhi EV policy.

Join hands with Google

In a related development, the Delhi government announced it had joined hands with Google to integrate Delhi's public transit system onto the Google Maps platform today.

Once the project kicks off, the government stated, static and dynamic location data of Delhi buses will be available for passengers in real-time. A bus user will get information of all the routes and bus stops, all bus arrival and departure times in real-time and even by bus numbers.

'Vaccine stock to last for less than a day'

Capital reports 77 new COVID-19 cases

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Meanwhile, the city reported 77 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,35,281, according to another bulletin.

There was only one death reported and the total number of deaths stood at 25,021.

A total of 76,095 tests were done in a day and that test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.1%. Of the total cases, 14,09,572 people have recovered and there are only 688 active cases.

The Delhi government did not release the daily health bulletin on Tuesday and it was later released on Wednesday morning. As per the bulletin, there were 76 new cases and two deaths.

AAP collects 1 lakh signatures against policies of civic bodies

BJP hits back saying AAP leaders live in 'illusionary world'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday claimed that the party has collected 1 lakh signatures as part of its ongoing campaign against the BJP-governed municipal corporations' "harsh" new policies against traders and "increase" in taxes.

"A few days ago, we told you about the new policies introduced by the municipal bodies and the many taxes that have been increased through which thousands of rupees are being taken from the shopkeepers. Be it the commercial tax, trade licence fee or the money being taken from shopkeepers under the name of garbage removal or the annual sum

across the city to collect signatures of shopkeepers.

"Shopkeepers and doctors are openly saying that the kind of loot and plundering that is being done by the civic bodies clearly shows that the BJP knows that it is very difficult for it to win the next elections. Hence, they are trying to loot as much money as they can," Mr. Bharadwaj added.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said AAP leaders "live in their illusionary world" and want everyone to believe what they dream. "I am, myself an Old Delhi-based trader and have not heard of any campaign amongst traders here or any other prominent market," he said.

With flying colours



Budding artist: Raihan Rajiv Vadra, son of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and businessman Robert Vadra, displaying his work during his first solo photography exhibition 'Dark Perception: An Exposition of Light, Space and Time'. The exhibition is up at the Bikaner House in New Delhi. ■R.V MOORTHY

Denied ex gratia, families of two policemen move HC

They died of COVID-19; govt. letter states one officer was not on pandemic duty, hence not eligible

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

The families of two Delhi police officers, who died of COVID-19 last year, have approached the High Court after the Delhi government allegedly denied them ex gratia.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Shesh Mani Pandey was posted in Crime Branch's finger-print bureau and died of COVID-19 on May 30 last year. His family had applied for the ex gratia, which was an-

nounced by the government for the kin of those who died of COVID-19 while on duty.

In a letter dated October 7, it was stated that the case had been examined and "is not found covered under the Cabinet decision No. 2835 dated May 13, 2020, as the deceased was performing his routine duty assigned to him and was not deployed for COVID-19 duty, which is a mandatory condition to become eligible for grant of ex gratia of ₹1 crore".

Pandey's son Krishna Kumar Pandey said he finally decided to approach the court as he felt it was unjustified.

"My father did not have the option of work-from-home and had to go to work. He visited a murder spot in Central Delhi and that is most likely where he caught the virus," the son said, adding that he also lost his grandfather to COVID-19 in May this year, exactly a year after his father died. "We lost two members to the virus."

My mother now lives with me in Madhya Pradesh and my brother is studying in Delhi," he said.

On July 7, the HC ordered the lawyer representing the government to file a reply, on whether guidelines on who is to be paid the ex gratia were laid down, in four weeks and gave the next date of hearing in October.

Constable Amit Kumar Ra-

na's family approached the HC in June. He died on May 5 and was the first officer in the

force to succumb to COVID-19. His wife Pooja approached the court asking for ex gratia, which Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had tweeted about right after the officer's death.

The family of the constable said the next court hearing is later this month. Ms. Pooja had written to Mr. Kejriwal on the matter. "If a Chief Minister will not fulfil a promise he made, then I may never be able to trust anyone ever again," she wrote.

REGIONAL APPOINTMENT

Advt. No - 43/2021

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Public Enterprises Selection Board invites applications for the post of

DIRECTOR (OTHER UNITS)

IN

BHARAT ELECTRONICS LIMITED.

Last date of receipt of applications in PESB is by 15.00 hours on 02nd September, 2021.

For details login to website:
<http://www.pesb.gov.in>

IN BRIEF



Karnataka MP seeks task force for KRS safety

MYSURU
Sumalatha Ambareesh, Mandy MP, has reiterated her concern over the safety of Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir from the threat of illegal mining and called for the constitution of a task force to oversee its protection. She visited the dam built across the river Cauvery in Srirangapatna taluk on Wednesday and interacted with officials of the dam authorities and Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd.

Sister Lucy may have to vacate convent, says HC

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Wednesday orally suggested to Sister Lucy Kalappura, who was expelled from the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, that she may have to vacate from the convent in Wayanad in view of her security. Appearing in person, the nun argued that if evicted, she had no place to go. Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan said the order of police protection granted last year could not continue any longer if she intended to continue at the convent.

Bank security guard opens fire on employee

HYDERABAD
A bank security guard allegedly opened fire on an employee and injured him at a commercial hub here on Wednesday after the latter repeatedly teased him over a period of time, police said. He fired three rounds, of which one round hit the man and two, the wall, a senior police official said. The injured man, an outsourced employee, was rushed to a nearby hospital by some of the bank staff members, police said. The man is out of danger. The security guard has been taken into custody, police said. PTI

A.P. govt. moves SC against Telangana

Andhra people deprived of their legitimate share of Krishna water for drinking and irrigation: petition

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

River of discord: A.P. has accused Telangana of illegally drawing Krishna water for hydel projects. ■ G.RAMAKRISHNA

Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court accusing neighbour Telangana of depriving its people of their legitimate share of Krishna water for drinking and irrigation.

Andhra Pradesh, represented by advocate Mahfooz A. Nazki, in a petition drawn by advocate G. Umapathy and settled by senior advocate Dushyant Dave, said Telangana was refusing to follow decisions taken on river water management in the Apex Council constituted under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2014. It has also ignored the directions of the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB).

account of unconstitutional, illegal and unjust acts on part of Telangana and its officials, resulting in the citizens of Andhra Pradesh being deprived of their legitimate share of water for drinking

and irrigation purposes," the petition said.

The focus of the petition is a Telangana government order of June 28, 2021 notifying that "to tap more hydel generation in the State, the government has taken a decision to generate hydel power up to 100% installed capacity." The order directed the Telangana State Power Generation Corporation Limited (TSGenco) to hence "generate the hydel power up to 100% installed capacity in the State."

Andhra Pradesh said the notification was issued only days after the Ministry of Jal Shakti in its June 17 communication to the Director (Hydel), TSGenco, had urged the latter "to stop further re-

lease of water immediately through Srisailam Left Power House and follow the water release orders issued by the KRMB, except in case of extreme grid urgency."

"The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in this regard has written to the Prime Minister on July 1 and July 7, seeking his urgent intervention in view of serious threat to right of life of tens of millions of citizens of Andhra Pradesh," the petition noted.

The petition also blamed the Centre for not notifying the exact jurisdiction of the KRMB. "This is resulting in illegal acts on part of Telangana and its authorities, creating serious constitutional issues," the petition pointed out.

Say no to wedding if dowry is sought, Governor tells girls

Varieties will seek an undertaking from students



Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan ending his fast along with Gandhians in Thiruvananthapuram. ■ S. MAHISNA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Universities will be asked to seek an undertaking from students that they will not be party to the crime of giving or accepting dowry, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has said.

Students will be required to give the undertaking before accepting their degrees and diplomas, the Governor, who is also the Chancellor of universities, said while participating in a fast organised by Gandhian organisations here against the practice of dowry.

Mr. Khan said he would be writing to Vice-Chancellors seeking the introduc-

tion of this measure. The undertaking would also empower the university concerned to cancel the degree if it was found later that the student had become party to the crime of dowry, he said. "A degree from an educational institution is not meant to increase your price in the marriage market," he said.

His appeal comes days after a series of dowry deaths were reported in the State.

No new Zika virus cases reported in Kerala

But Health dept. braces for fresh cases

C. MAYA
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

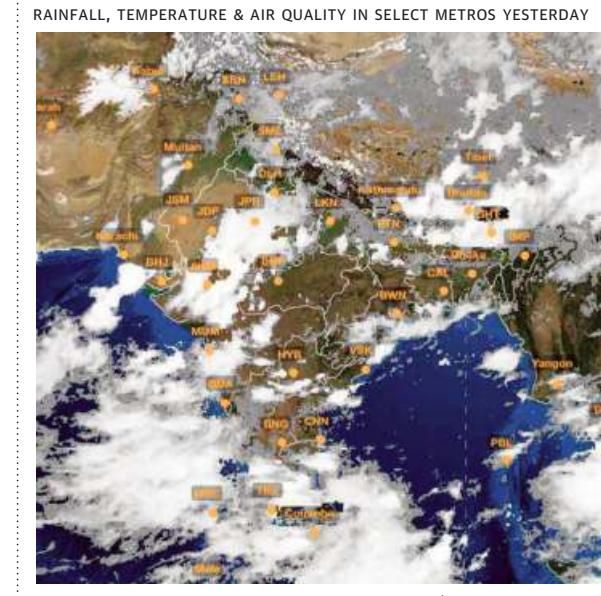
portions in many places. The reports from vector surveillance units in other districts were no different.

All health field staff have been fully engaged in COVID-related activities since the past one-and-a-half years to the exclusion of all other routine work, including vector control. The quiet arrival of Zika is just an example of how other diseases can silently take a foothold in the community when COVID-19 hogs all attention.

Now that clinicians are aware that cases with fever and rashes, which are negative for dengue and chikungunya (CHK), could be ZIKV, it is likely that more samples would reach the labs for testing in the coming days.

Health officials accompanying the Central team on field visits in the capital said Aedes (mosquito) density had reached explosive pro-

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: HEAVY/VERY HEAVY RAINFALL LIKELY AT A FEW/ISOLATED PLACES OVER GUJARAT, SAURASHTRA & KUTCH, SUB-HIMALAYAN WEST BENGAL, TELANGANA, CENTRAL MAHARASHTRA, KONKAN & GOA, COASTAL KARNATAKA, KERALA AND ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS. THUNDERSTORM WITH LIGHTNING LIKELY AT ISOLATED PLACES OVER RAJASTHAN, BIHAR, JHARKHAND, COASTAL ANDHRA PRADESH AND RAYALASEEMA

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-35.6...	27.0	23.8	Kozhikode	23...	31.0...	23.8
Ahmedabad	...-35.6...	26.9	24.0	Kurnool	3...	32.2...	28.2
Aizawl	62.8...	26.7...	19.5	Lucknow	37.5...	32.8...	28.2
Altahabad	...-38.2...	28.6	25.4	Madurai	36.2...	35.4...	25.4
Bangalore	9.2...	25.4...	20.5	Mangaluru	80...	27.8...	23.1
Bhopal	...-35.0...	25.4	23.6	Mumbai	90...	30.0...	23.6
Bhubaneswar	0.3...	26.5...	25.0	Mysuru	5...	26.0...	25.0
Chandigarh	0.6...	21.9	20.6	New Delhi	29...	34.2...	26.0
Chennai	3...	34.3...	27.2	Patna	...-36.0...	27.5	
Coimbatore	...-30.8...	22.8	21.6	Port Blair	...-31.3...	23.1	
Dehradun	22.5...	27.4...	22.8	Puducherry	32.6...	24.8	
Gangtok	58...	20.1...	17.8	Pune	29.6...	22.3	
Goa	109...	28.0...	23.2	Raipur	15...	31.5...	25.5
Guwahati	25...	31.1...	23.9	Ranchi	14...	29.6...	22.1
Hubballi	...-23.0...	22.0	21.2	Shillong	3...	24.2...	18.2
Hyderabad	30...	26.8...	21.6	Shimla	6...	23.0...	16.4
Imphal	18...	27.4...	21.0	Srinagar	1.3...	26.7...	18.9
Jaipur	7...	34.7...	27.9	Thiruvananthapuram	...-31.9...	24.2	
Kochi	16...	28.6...	23.6	Tiruchi	34.5...	26.2	
Kohima	6...	28.0...	17.4	Vijayawada	37...	30.8...	24.8
Kolkata	1...	33.9...	27.2	Visakhapatnam	9...	31.6...	25.2

(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	15	118	83	.91	■■■
Bengaluru	11	.92	92	27	.43	■■■
Chennai	8	43	64	32	.56	■■■
Delhi	7	21	48	63	.241	■■■
Hyderabad	...	60	14	10	.12	■■■
Kolkata	9	.18	17	23	.36	■■■
Lucknow	2	43	75	76	.96	■■■
Mumbai	.47	27	34	26	.29	■■■
Pune	105	.20	.54	69	.51	■■■
Visakhapatnam	13	.48	.46	41	.80	■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Yamaranagar, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 200 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Raichur, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 17

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.

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

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

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

NORTH & WEST

Maharashtra records 8,602 fresh COVID-19 cases

State reports 6,067 recoveries; spike of 619 infections in Mumbai; 1,185 new cases in Pune district

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Maharashtra reported 8,602 new COVID-19 cases as opposed to 6,067 recoveries as the active case tally, which had dipped in the past few days, rose to 1,06,764.

However, the number of samples tested in the past 24 hours was low – just 1.76 lakh as opposed to the daily average of 2.30 lakh. A total of 170 deaths pushed the State's total death toll to 1,26,390, with the case fatality rate standing at 2.04%.

The total cases have reached 61,81,247, while cumulative recoveries have risen to 59,44,801, with the recovery rate at 96.17%. "Of 4,46,09,276 laboratory samples tested thus far, 61,81,247 (with the average case positivity falling to 13.86%) have returned positive with over 2.26 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Pune reported 1,185 new cases, taking its total cases to



Inviting danger: A crowded market in Mumbai on Wednesday after the State government eased lockdown restrictions. ■ PTI

How many pilots used on Vande Bharat flights?

HC asks Centre to give count of those vaccinated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre how many pilots were deployed on Vande Bharat flights to rescue Indian stranded abroad at the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak and how many hours they had flown. It also asked how many had been vaccinated so far.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulhari was hearing a petition filed by the Federation of Indian Pilots seeking compensation of

₹10 crore for the kin of pilots who died of COVID-19 on duty. It demanded that pilots be vaccinated and provided insurance cover.

Senior advocate Prasad Dhakephalkar, appearing for the petitioners, said at least 13 pilots had died due to COVID-19. Since pilots were frontline workers working through the pandemic, they should get vaccination and compensation on priority.

The Bench said, "We want to know how many pilots are yet to be vaccinated, how many are vaccinated, how many pilots are deployed on Vande Bharat flights...what were their duty hours and so on". It directed the federation to file an affidavit.

Jaipur police's 'Nirbhaya Squad' would impart skills training opportunities for them.

"Digital skills training is the need of the hour for women, who should be encouraged to take up productive work and join the community efforts in the fields of healthcare, sanitation and hygiene," Ms. Meena said.

New avenues
The CSR educational programmes should enable the women entrepreneurs to find new avenues through networking and diversification of work, she said.

The bike-borne Nirbhaya Squad was formed in 2019 with women constables trained in martial arts, who are deployed at schools, colleges, malls and bus stops to extend protection to women. The Squad took out flag marches during the pandemic and distributed sanitary pads free of cost in the containment zones in Jaipur.

The maximum work under the CSR had covered the domains of education, skill development, poverty alleviation and health care, he said.

The police joined other experts at a virtual event here to recommend adopting new strategies to integrate skills and values with the career decision making process for women. Udaipur-based Narayan Seva Sansathan's



Ramping up supply

Spikes, dips in vaccination rates are normal, but India needs to guard against slackening

Less than a month after the Centre revised its vaccination policy and took over the responsibility of vaccine procurement from the States, old worries of a supply constraint appear to have resurfaced. The Centre's CoWIN database shows that the weekly pace of vaccination has declined to nearly 60% of what was seen in the week after June 21, causing several States, particularly in South India, to complain of a shortage. On June 21, the first day of the new policy, 91 lakh doses were administered and until June 27, it was about 4 crore. The period July 5-11 saw only 2.3 crore vaccine doses dispensed. The Centre's move to take over vaccine administration followed a chaotic April-May when the second wave roiled India with unprecedented ferocity. This was also the time that saw a surge in vaccine demand and the country being unable to deliver because of an underestimation of the need and demand. The heady week of June 21-27 saw 60 lakh vaccines a day becoming the norm. However, the last time India crossed that daily figure was July 3. At least 86 lakh doses have to be administered every day if all Indian adults are to be fully vaccinated by the year end. Beginning this week, the daily doses have again slipped to 30-40 lakh though this is better than in May when India struggled to provide even 20 lakh doses a day.

There are two major concerns with the slackening pace. One, India still has managed to inoculate only 33% of its adult population with at least one dose; just about 8% have been fully vaccinated. At this rate, it is impossible for the Centre to deliver on its stated goal of inoculating all Indian adults by the year end. Second, the signs are apparent everywhere of an uptick in cases. The U.S. – the only country with more cases than India – after a month of reporting less than 15,000 cases a day is now, like India, seeing over 40,000 cases a day. There has also been a rise there in daily deaths. A similar acceleration is also visible in the U.K. and both these countries have vaccinated a large fraction of their adults. India, while better off than in May, still averages about 800-1,000 deaths a day. So, it is far from being out of the woods even as economic activity appears to have near-normalised in many parts. The Centre continues to put the onus on States for planning but does not address a concern of inadequate Covaxin supplies. It has ordered at least eight crore doses since January but only 4.7 crore have been administered. The concerns over a third wave have been voiced but meaningful preparedness entails having enough vaccines. While daily vaccination rates will see spikes and dips, aggressive publicity measures and campaigns are necessary to boost vaccination, as was seen in end June. The Centre and States must work towards sprucing this up.

Showing the way out

Nepal has a new Prime Minister after the Supreme Court overrules Mr. Oli again

In what must be a *déjà vu* moment for outgoing Prime Minister K.P. Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari, the Supreme Court of Nepal set aside their dissolution, in May, of the House of Representatives. The apex court had in February overruled Mr. Oli's decision to dissolve the House in December 2020 as well. But this time, the ruling was more than just a rap on his knuckles. The judgment also paved the way for Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress to be appointed as Prime Minister after recognising his claim based on signatures of 149 lawmakers across different parties affirming their support. The five-member Constitutional Bench also provided the way out of the unending political deadlock in the House by allowing individual lawmakers to ignore their party whips during a trust vote that is a must win for Mr. Deuba. The inability of Mr. Oli and Mr. Deuba to win trust votes, prior to the dissolution decision by Ms. Bhandari, was because the support for them in the 275-member House divided both the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (UML) and the Opposition Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) as rebel lawmakers risked suspension. The court's decision earlier in the year to de-recognise the merged Nepal Communist Party was another factor too. Mr. Oli had minority support within the merged NCP, but his faction retained the endorsement of the bulk of the legislators in the de-merged UML. The rebels, led by Madhav Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal, were limited to a smaller faction. The other component of the NCP, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre), meanwhile endorsed Mr. Deuba's candidacy, while the JSP was split vertically, with the Mahantha Thakur-Rajendra Mahat-led faction supporting Mr. Oli as opposed to the Baburam Bhattarai-Upendra Yadav-led faction.

It remains to be seen whether the lawmakers will now vote based on their individual agency with the fear of suspension gone. There is no guarantee that Mr. Deuba will win a trust vote as he must secure the support of the rebel factions within the UML and the JSP. The Madhav Nepal-led faction, which has not endorsed Mr. Oli and welcomed the judgment, has also been a mercurial force undecided on joining hands with the Opposition in this new situation. Nevertheless, this is a blow to Mr. Oli whose brinkmanship and authoritarian tendencies have come at a difficult time for Nepalis reeling from the COVID-19 outbreak. It is also a stinging rebuke to Ms. Bhandari whose actions as President rubber stamping her former party colleague Mr. Oli's decisions have called into question her role as a constitutional functionary. Mr. Deuba has his task cut out, but a firm message of unity and consultative governance can bring about political stability, something that has long eluded Nepal during both its constitutional monarchy and its republican periods.

Making welfare conditional is a stamp of coercion

A simple reading of U.P.'s draft population control law is that it will grossly impinge on the right to reproductive freedom



SUHRITH PARTHASARATHY

On Sunday, the government of Uttar Pradesh released a "Population Policy" in which it stated its intention to bring the gross fertility rate in the State down from the existing 2.7 to 2.1 by 2026. To achieve this, the government says it will consider the enactment of a new piece of legislation. One such law that might be on the anvil is an ominous proposal released just days earlier by the State's Law Commission (<https://bit.ly/3xGH2TF>).

Incentives and disincentives

This draft law, titled the Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill, 2021, seeks to provide not only a series of incentives to families that adhere to a two-child norm, but also intends on disentitling families that breach the norm from benefits and subsidies. These recommendations are rooted in a culture of coercion. They are also steeped in myth. Experiences from across the world demonstrate that laws of this kind simply do not work. They invariably instil an attitude of discrimination, with a burden imposed disproportionately on the most vulnerable groups in society.

The draft Bill echoes the U.P. government's new policy in claiming that the State's ecological and economic resources are limited. According to it, unless population growth is regulated, the State will be unable to guarantee the provision of basic rights to all citizens. It also invokes some of the now-usual buzzwords: sustainable development, it says, cannot be

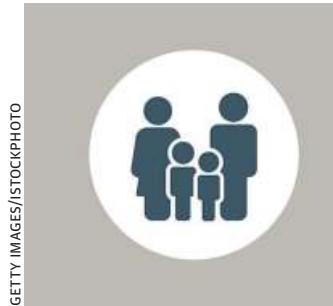
achieved without government-imposed birth control.

To these ends, the draft postulates an array of measures. It promises public servants who undergo sterilisation and adopt a two-child norm several benefits. These include two increments during their service, subsidy towards the purchase of a house, maternity, or paternity leave, with full salary and allowances, as the case may be, for up to 12 months, and free health care and insurance coverage for the spouse.

This is as far as the "incentives" go. The draft Bill also contains a list of punishments. It terms these euphemistically as "disincentives". A person who breaches the two-child norm will be debarred from securing the benefit of any government-sponsored welfare scheme and will be disqualified from applying to any State government job. Existing government employees who infringe the rule will be denied the benefit of promotion. And last, transgressing individuals will be prohibited from contesting elections to local authorities and bodies.

It is worth pondering over whether regulation of population is necessary at all. But assuming such regulation is a legitimate governmental aim, the first question we must ask of the new proposal is: why. After all, experiences from other States in India show us that there are more efficacious and alternative measures available to control the growth of population, including processes aimed at improving public health and access to education.

Indeed, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare conceded as much before the Supreme Court late last year. Through an affidavit filed in court, the central government argued that "international experience shows that any coercion to have a



certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions". The Government further confirmed that India was committed to its obligations under international law, including the principles contained in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, 1994.

Pledge on right

Foremost in those principles was a pledge from nations that they would look beyond demographic targets and focus instead on guaranteeing a right to reproductive freedom. Since then, in India, the Supreme Court of India has recognised this right as an inalienable promise. In *Suchita Srivastava & Anr vs Chandigarh Administration* (2009), the Court found that a woman's freedom to make reproductive decisions is an integral facet of the right to personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21. "It is important," the Court wrote, "to recognise that reproductive choices can be exercised to procreate as well as to abstain from procreating".

This ruling was endorsed by the Supreme Court's nine-judge Bench verdict in *K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India* (2017). A reading of the plurality of opinions there shows us that the Constitution sees a person's autonomy over her body as an extension of the right to privacy. In his judgment, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud held that privacy partakes different connotations. These include decisional autonomy, which comprehends, among other things, liberty over "intimate personal choices such as those governing reproduction". Justice S.K. Kaul similarly declared in his separate judgment that the right to procreation was an important constituent of "the privacy of the home".

Like all other fundamental rights, the right to privacy is not boundless. But, as *Puttaswamy* clarifies, any restriction placed on the right must conform to a doctrine of proportionality. This requires first, that the limitation be rooted in statute; second, that the state show us that the objective of its law is founded on a legitimate governmental aim; third that there are no alternative and less intrusive measures available to achieve the same objective; and fourth, that there exists a rational connection between the limitation imposed and the aims of the statute. The logic here is simple: in pursuing public interest, it is essential that governments ensure that individual liberties are encroached upon to the lowest degree possible. A simple reading of U.P.'s draft law will show us that, if enacted, it will grossly impinge on the right to reproductive freedom. The government will likely argue that there is no violation of privacy here because any decision on sterilisation would be voluntary. But, as we ought to by now know, making welfare conditional is a hallmark of coercion. If we want the idea of India as a welfare state to mean something, the right to access basic goods cannot be made provisional on a person sacrificing her bodily autonomy.

By all accounts, therefore, the proposed law will fall foul of a proportionality analysis. If nothing else, the Union government's concession in the Supreme Court demonstrates that there are several

alternative, less-intrusive means available to regulate population.

Negative consequences

But the new proposal is also worrying because it is likely to bring with it a host of other deleterious consequences.

For instance, an already skewed sex ratio may be compounded by families aborting a daughter in the hope of having a son with a view to conforming to the two-child norm. The law could also lead to a proliferation in sterilisation camps, a practice that the Supreme Court has previously deprecated. In *Devika Biswas vs Union of India* (2016), the Court pointed to how these camps invariably have a disparate impact on minorities and other vulnerable groups.

As is so often the case with bad laws in India, though, this draft Bill may find support from some past judgments of the Supreme Court. In this case, the Government may point to the judgment in *Javed & Ors vs State of Haryana & Ors* (2003), where the Court upheld a law that disqualified persons with more than two children from contesting in local body elections. But not only is the present proposal far more disproportionate – in that it virtually sanctions civil death for those that violate the norms it fixes – the judgment in *Javed* can no longer be seen as good law.

For one thing, its reasoning flies in the face of *Puttaswamy*. But as rousing as the nine-judge Bench verdict is, its legacy depends on how its findings are applied. For the judgment to have tangible value and meaning, any law of this kind, which invades upon our most personal and ethical choices, must be seen as repugnant to the Constitution.

Suhirth Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

Five years later, Brexit continues to divide

The Brexiteers who forecast a clean break with the European Union underestimated many key issues



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN &
JULIUS FEIN

The British referendum five years ago was supposed to settle the United Kingdom's historical love-hate relationship with Europe, but while the full consequences of Brexit will not be analysed for decades, the U.K. remains as divided as ever, and the way people voted in 2016 forms a large part of their identity. The referendum dominates British politics as the most significant event since the Second World War, resulting in two general elections, ousting two premiers and threatening the political geography of the U.K.

Loose ends

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson needed a rapid departure from the European Union (EU), and the Withdrawal and Trade and Cooperation Agreements of December 2020 were rushed through. Problems were soon apparent. The U.K. imports 70%

of the fish it consumes; the industry only contributes 0.12% of GDP and employs 0.1% of the workforce (<https://bit.ly/3i7emWg>), but has political traction. In May, after 60 French fishing boats massed to blockade Jersey over fishing rights, naval units from both Britain and France deployed off Jersey, a farcical reminder of the loose ends of Britain's exit from the EU.

Case of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland, part of the U.K. but in the EU's single market, and therefore obliged to follow EU rules, is another case in point. The EU's external border would be in the Irish Sea between Britain and Northern Ireland, and goods for Northern Ireland would need to be inspected there, which is politically untenable for the U.K. The alternative would be that the EU would itself impose inspections to protect its single market and structure a border either on the island of Ireland or between Ireland and the EU, which are both equally unfeasible.

Tensions predictably arose between Britain and the EU over the import of chilled meat products from Britain to Northern Ireland, with Britain seeking an extension of the transition arrangements from June 30 by three months. No

one believes that this can be a lasting solution. It seems Britain is questioning Brexit agreements rather than following them, while boasting about its COVID-19 immunisation compared to the EU and the success of the City of London in maintaining its status against hostile EU legislation and incentives for banks to move to European capitals. To supporters of Brexit, it looked as if the EU wanted to punish Britain for leaving, if only to discourage its other members from doing the same. Thus, after membership of the EU for almost 50 years, mutual trust is lacking, and two versions of a rules-based order are colliding. This was apparent during the G-7 summit, when bilateral meetings between Mr. Johnson and EU leaders lacked warmth. The EU conceded the Northern Ireland postponement and persuaded its member States, especially France and Germany that are losing patience with Britain, to avoid a trade war over British sausages. Such recriminations may become a permanent feature of U.K.-EU relations as a small nation plays a poor hand against the world's largest trading bloc while seeking trade deals with distant countries, which even official forecasts suggest will produce negligible benefits.

Scotland's calculations

In Scotland, the National Party, which seeks an exit from the U.K., has grown in popularity since the Brexit vote. Scots voted in the referendum by 62% against 38% to remain in the EU, but were dragged out by the overall result. For many Scots, leaving the U.K. is the clearest path back to the EU, and anticipate that among other benefits, the EU will grant Scotland least developed status and subventions on the scale enjoyed by the Irish Republic. This is as much an anti-Westminster stance as an effort to join the EU since the chances of an independent Scotland jumping the queue of EU applicants and of all member States approving Scottish membership are not great. Nevertheless, the prospect of a break-up of the United Kingdom is of grave concern to London. Meanwhile, a vote on reunification in Ireland seems more probable

now than at any time since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 which brought an uneasy peace to fractious factions in the North.

In perspective

The International Monetary Fund warned that the British economy faced a 10% GDP decline in 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3raZXUs>). In first quarter 2021, food and drink exports to the EU declined by nearly 50% (<https://bit.ly/3yUvj41>) and export of services also shrank. At least 500 British companies have relocated to Europe (<https://bit.ly/3eG746>). The Brexiteers who forecast a clean break with the EU either underestimated or ignored the practical inconveniences of leaving, including the vast paperwork involved in exporting and importing with the EU, but the success of British COVID-19 vaccination compared with the EU's bungled efforts has enabled Brexiteers to claw back some ground.

In sum, most people have accepted Brexit though few are satisfied with the divorce settlement. No version of Brexit will satisfy everyone, and it has left the United Kingdom less united.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary. Julius Fein is a British historian

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.

No stocks

The report that vaccination has declined substantially as States say that they have no doses is disturbing (Page 1, July 14). The only way to battle the novel coronavirus is through complete vaccination. With lockdowns being lifted, and the threat of a third wave looming large in the backdrop of new variants, is India really prepared? If lessons have not been learnt from the tragic aftermath of the second wave, then it is clear that we, as a nation, have not learnt anything. In the months ahead, which will be marked by a series of festive events, all-out efforts are required to ensure that the situation does not get out of hand.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,
Secunderabad

governments should do their bit in ensuring that COVID-19 appropriate behaviour is the norm. The penalties for violations can help to change the situation to some extent. The State of Uttarakhand has done well to cancel the Kanwar Yatra, which would have been another super spreader event. All types of gatherings should be curtailed by the authorities for at least six months. It is a collective responsibility to combat the pandemic especially when vaccine stocks are running low.

Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellimarla, Andhra Pradesh

has taken charge. If we need to curb the third wave, only mass vaccination can prevent an upsurge.

Dr. JAYASEKHAR V.P.,
Payanur, Kannur, Kerala

■ It is not only a shortage of vaccines but also vaccine hesitancy, especially among marginalised sections, that needs immediate attention. The Governor of Telangana has done her bit by getting herself vaccinated at a tribal settlement. The ball has been set rolling and government officials must keep the momentum going. Film stars and local leaders should also take the lead.

P. SATYAKSHMI,
Secunderabad

Back to school
The writers of the article, "Prioritising school reopening on the road to recovery" (Editorial page, July 13), have marshalled solid facts on the need to reopen schools especially as in the context of many parts

of India, the prolonged shutdown has impacted the nutritional needs of children. But a via-media solution is needed. First, the Union government can expedite its approval for vaccination of the age group 12-15. The Government can explore the possibility of giving options to parents for online learning or in-person schooling. Parents, particularly in the rural areas, may prefer in-person schooling as many of them have to go out to work. The Government could also introduce a shift system. For example, if there are six sections in a class, three sections may be operated on a rotational basis. Online learning for an indefinite period is clearly no substitute for in-person schooling. Constant exposure to electronic devices can affect the child's health while "in-house incarceration" may end up causing obesity and other serious health issues. It also deprives children of social

skills. 'Back to school' should be the norm after observing COVID-19 appropriate protocols.

V.N. GOPAL,
Chennai

EV policy

With Maharashtra unveiling its new Electric Vehicle (EV) policy in an attempt to go green, one can observe the similarities with the Norwegian government's EV road map. Norway's plug-in car segment has been at the top of its game mainly because of policy incentives, tax redemptions and the role of dedicated EV NGOs. Although Maharashtra has drawn fine inspiration from the same, it is crucial to note the vast differences in the population, area and market share between India and Norway. Hence, we must tread the EV path carefully and apply policies that are suitable to the Indian geopolitical scenario.

RUJUTA ASHTEKAR,
Thane, Maharashtra

Yashpal Sharma

In the passing of Yashpal Sharma, India has lost a doughty cricketer ('Sport' page, July 14). It was his performances in the 1983 World Cup that stood out. I remember his innings in the semi-final against England and being stunned by his outrageously imperious and dismissive flick for six off the bowling of Bob Willis. More than anything else, perhaps that shot epitomised the self-belief and confidence that this young team had in itself. I also recollect that just before the semi-final, one of the English commentators said, "India is going to meet England in the semi-final and that's a bit of luck for England." That shot of Sharma's was a fitting reply to the rather parochial observation of the commentator.

V.V. KOUSHIK,
Chennai

People's voice and Kashmir's future

The all-party conference failed because it completely ignored Kashmiri sentiments



A.G. NOORANI

The all-party conference on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) revealed the failure of the strategy crafted by the Government of India. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has long urged the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. But the constitutional coup went miles beyond that. It abrogated Article 35A as well, broke up the State of J&K by lopping off Ladakh, and reduced the rest to a Union Territory. It is unthinkable that any other State would have received the treatment meted out to J&K whose 'special status' was an eyesore.

But the elephant in the room was the law on delimitation of the constituencies. It trumpeted the real object of the coup loud and clear, which was to wipe out the political set-up in J&K and establish a new political order. To accomplish this, virtually the entire political class of Kashmir had to be put out of action, the press muzzled, assemblies banned, tourists given marching orders, schools and colleges shut, and electronic communications suspended.

Abrogation of Article 370

Article 370 cannot be abrogated even by Parliament, let alone by the President. Even the letter of Article 370 bars that. But there is a profound reason which fundamentally bars such a result. To cite an example, insurgency erupted in Mizoram on February 28, 1966. The Mizo National Front (MNF) led by Laldenga began an armed insurgency and declared independence the next day. On June 30, 1986, the Mizoram Accord was signed. It said: "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of (a) Religion or social practices of the Mizos, (b) Mizo customary law or procedure, (c) Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, (iv) Ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides."

On February 20, 1987, the 53rd Constitution Amendment came



into force inserting Article 371G which reads thus: "Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of (i) Religious or social practices of the Mizos, (ii) Mizo customary law and procedure, (iii) Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, (iv) Ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides."

The two are identically worded because Article 371G gives legal force to an accord between the Union and the MNF. Parliament cannot repeal it or even amend it unilaterally.

Article 370 stands on a higher footing. It gives legal force to an accord between the Union and a State of the Union and the parleys were held by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his deputy, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. They began at Patel's residence on May 15, 1949 and ended in mid-October with an agreed text. But it was moved in an altered form in the Constituent Assembly on October 17, 1949 by N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar in the absence of Sheikh Abdullah who happened to be in the lobby. He rushed to the House.

Article 370 made Kashmir's Constituent Assembly the sole authority to accord consent to any addition to the Centre's power and to further extension to Kashmir of India's Constitution. The Assembly first met on October 31, 1951 and was formally dissolved on November 17, 1956. Article 370 enabled the State government to accord its concurrence only subject to J&K's Constituent Assembly's concurrence. This was abused to make the State government and even the Governor alone to be the consenting authority.

The result? Ninety-four of the 97 entries in the Central List were ap-

plied to Kashmir leaving a balance of three. So much for the 'special status'. The Constitution is studded with 'special' provisions for Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Goa (Article 371A-I). Kashmir had an elected Sadr-E-Riyasat. The Centre replaced him with a Governor it nominated.

We have high legal authority for challenging the 'laws' of August 5, 2019. After the First World War, countries of the British Empire were restive about their independence. In 1926, the Earl of Balfour devised a formula which pleased all. The autonomy of those countries was recognised simultaneously with their loyalty to the British Crown. This was incorporated in the Statute of Westminster passed in 1931 by the British Parliament. It said that no law it passed would extend to the Dominions unless they had so wished (Section 4). In 1935, the Privy Council ruled that "the Imperial Parliament could, as a matter of abstract law, repeal or disregard Section 4 of the Statute. But that is theory and has no relation to realities. In truth, Canada is in enjoyment of the full scope of self-government" (*British Coal Corporation v. The King*).

Areas of 'special status'
Areas of 'special status' abound the world over. Scotland joined England in 1707 to form Great Britain. It held a referendum on its independence without its being called 'treason'. Quebec held two referenda on secession in 1980 and 1995. All three failed.

For historic reasons, the German-majority South Tyrol is partly Italy. Its autonomy is guaranteed by an Austro-Italian accord. The Swedish-majority Åland Islands are Finnish territory under an accord of 1921.

The autonomy of both territories (Åland Islands and South Tyrol) is internationally guaranteed.

Indonesia quelled militancy in Aceh by an accord on August 15, 2005 based on "special autonomy". Newfoundland signed the Terms of Union with Canada on December 11, 1948 after a referendum. Denmark conferred home rule on Greenland in 1979. On June 12, 2009, Denmark enacted an Act on Greenland Self-Government to confer greater power than that of our States.

Fifty years ago, Sheikh Abdullah told former Foreign Secretary Y.D. Gundevia, "Only that person who enjoys the confidence of the Government of India can be Chief Minister of Kashmir". A 'special status' worse than, say, Kerala or Tamil Nadu, which can have Chief Ministers that the Centre does not approve of.

The Supreme Court's record on Kashmir is uninspiring. The matter is too politicised. The petitions must be withdrawn in favour of a political, peaceful, constitutional approach. The Gupkar Declaration of August 4, 2019 must be amplified in a Convention.

On July 9, 1953 Maulana Azad offered to Sheikh Abdullah that the Government of India "is willing to declare that the special position given to Kashmir will be made permanent without any conditions". Abdullah replied on July 16, "If such a declaration had been earlier, it would have strengthened my hands". Now, "if I fail to gain the confidence of my people here, I will not be able to render my service to my friends." The people matter more than they did in 1953. Statesmanship lies in crafting a solution acceptable to them.

Time is running out. The Delimitation Commission visited Kashmir to fulfil the vision of the BJP's Vision Document – more seats for Jammu.

A lot depends on the statesmanship of Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti and Mirwaiz Mohammad Umar Farooq. Their objectives should be two-fold: to work for the restoration of Kashmir's identity and pride and help to complete the four-point formula which former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf had built four-fifth. The all-party conference failed because it ignored Kashmiri sentiments.

A.G. Noorani is a constitutional expert

No pseudoscience, please

Astrology exploits the vulnerability of the human mind and should not be taught as a mainstream course by universities



HAMID DABHOLKAR

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) is India's premier national institute for improving access to education. Recently, IGNOU launched a degree course in astrology.

This obsession with astrology is not a new phenomenon in a country which recently sent a spacecraft in orbit around Mars. A similar decision was taken by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 2001, which was withdrawn after widespread opposition. In this context, all the citizens of this country who are concerned about the status of education and the role of scientific temperament in education need to take a stance about this decision.



Content of syllabus

Let us start by examining what is covered by the IGNOU syllabus.

Even a casual look at the syllabus gives us an understanding of the unscientific nature of the course. The syllabus includes the study of horoscopes, which are determined by the state of different planets at the time of our birth and which apparently impact all the things that we do throughout our life. It also includes how to decide on an auspicious time for initiating a specific task. It claims to train its students in how to nullify the ill effects occurring due to specific problems in their horoscope. The range of problems for which astrology can offer solutions has no limit. It provides solutions on when one needs to apply for a job to ensure a good result to even determining the time a nation has to take a decision to start a war!

Let us try and evaluate the three basic assumptions of astrology on which this syllabus is based. The first assumption is that the planets around us in the universe have a continuous effect on human life. The second assumption is that the result depends on the time of birth of the person and the third assumption is that the future of a person depends on all this and can be changed by solutions offered by an astrologer.

Let us now look at the main objections by astronomy (the science of the universe) to these assumptions. As per astrology, nine *Navagrahas* affect our lives. All of us know that four of these *Navagrahas* are not even *grahas* (planets). The sun is not a planet but a star. The moon is the natural satellite of the

earth. Rahu and Ketu, which are claimed to be the most dangerous planets in astrology, are not even planets but points of intersection of the paths of the sun and the moon. The Milky Way, in which the sun and solar system are included, has countless stars other than the sun. It is not very difficult to appreciate how unscientific and potentially dangerous it will be to allow something like astrology as a mainstream course.

Next, let us look at the time of birth. The nature of a horoscope is dependent on the time of one's birth. And the time of birth used for this purpose by astrology is the time when the baby takes the first breath outside the mother's womb. Modern science tells us that the baby is actually born when the sperm and ovum come together to form the embryo, and it grows for the next nine months through different stages. How do all these *Navagrahas* not have any impact on the baby when it is inside the mother's womb and start affecting it only when it comes out? Astrologers have no answer. It is a simple observation that thousands of children are born in the world every second and their futures are not the same. What will be in their horoscope when a human being gives birth to a baby, say, on the moon or Mars tomorrow? The most serious effect of depending on astrology is that it takes human agency out of our lives.

Science and pseudoscience

While we are on the path to astrology, Elon Musk, an American businessman, has started a project to humanise Mars under the SpaceX mission. The robotic rovers sent by NASA to Mars are collecting information and sending it back to earth. Stephen Hawking stated that the search for a habitable planet like earth in the universe should be the priority of astronomical research. Against this background, one needs to learn to differentiate between astrology, which is a pseudoscience, and astrophysics, which is a robust scientific discipline. Astrology exploits the vulnerability of the human mind while people face uncertainty. On the other hand, astrophysics depends on the core scientific principles of precise observations, hypothesis, experimentation and results based on all these. In an era where pseudoscience has started becoming the new normal, it's our responsibility as citizens to oppose such decisions and demand the withdrawal of such a course.

Hamid Dabholkar is a psychiatrist and member of the nationalist movement, Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti

Awards cannot be doled out

Care needs to be taken to ensure that only those deserving of awards receive them

M.P. NATHANIEL

The Delhi Chief Minister recently wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to consider awarding an "Indian Doctor" the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour. "By an 'Indian doctor', I mean the entire medical community – all doctors, nurses and paramedics should be given the award, collectively," he wrote. He requested the Prime Minister to change the rules if the current rules do not permit conferring on any group as such.

While this is a great gesture, changing the rules would open a Pandora's box and erase the sanctity attached to this prestigious award. There is no doubt that doctors need to be honoured for their relentless and dedicated service during the pandemic. But there were many who also fleeced patients and the kin of the deceased by exploiting their helplessness and desperation. Many private hospitals charged exorbitant amounts for treatment. Should these plunderers also be grouped with those who worked selflessly and be part of the honour?

Paying compensation

Rather than eulogising their services, the Chief Minister could have at least ensured that the doctors and nurses were paid their salaries on time. Several doctors and nurses went on strike because they were not paid. According to the Indian Medical Association, 798 doctors died in the second wave. With Delhi recording the highest number of such fatalities (128 doctors), the Chief Minister should have paid an ex gratia amount of ₹1 crore to each of them. The Delhi government had, in April 2020, announced ₹1 crore in ex gratia for families of front-line workers who die of the infection while on duty. But most of the families of the doctors have not been paid. Nor have the kin of policemen who died of the infection while on duty. The wife of a deceased constable knocked on the doors of Delhi High Court claiming the promised amount. The hearing is scheduled for July 28.

While doctors and paramedics rendered yeoman service during the

pandemic, other front-line workers, including the police, too contributed at grave risk to their lives.

Meanwhile, while the local courts in New Delhi have reprimanded the Delhi Police for their handling of the riots and fined them ₹25,000 for mis-handling of cases related to the riots, 25 personnel of the Delhi Police have staked their claim for the President's Police Medal for Gallantry, citing their role in the Delhi riots last year. Among them is the then Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ved Prakash Surya, who was seen standing next to BJP leader Kapil Mishra when Mr. Mishra was delivering a controversial speech a day before the riots broke out. Even the Joint Commissioner of Police has entered the fray.

Choosing the awardees
Every individual will exaggerate his role in the riots to stake his claim. Much would depend on the projection of the individual's role in a manner that would be convincing enough to consider the case for award of a medal. In such rigmarole, the possibility of the wrong persons getting awarded cannot be ruled out. The deserving ones who are left out get demoralised and shy away from exposing themselves to risk.

According to a senior official of Delhi Police, a high-powered committee of senior officials goes through every case thoroughly. Depending on the degree of bravery displayed by each, a few are recommended for the gallantry medals while others are recommended for the Police Commissioner's Commendation Disc.

There is always a proclivity for officers to garner gallantry medals as these carry monthly allowances and other perks such as free travel by train with a companion and even a rent-free landline telephone. Officers cannot operate in isolation and they are accompanied by their subordinates. Utmost care needs to be taken to ensure that the deserving among the lower ranks are not left out when they have displayed bravery in dealing with unruly elements at grave risk to their own lives.

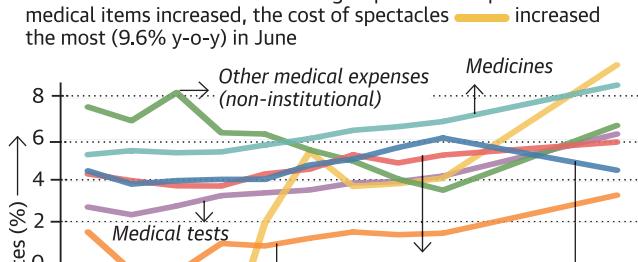
M.P. Nathaniel is Inspector General of Police (Retd.), CRPF

DATA POINT

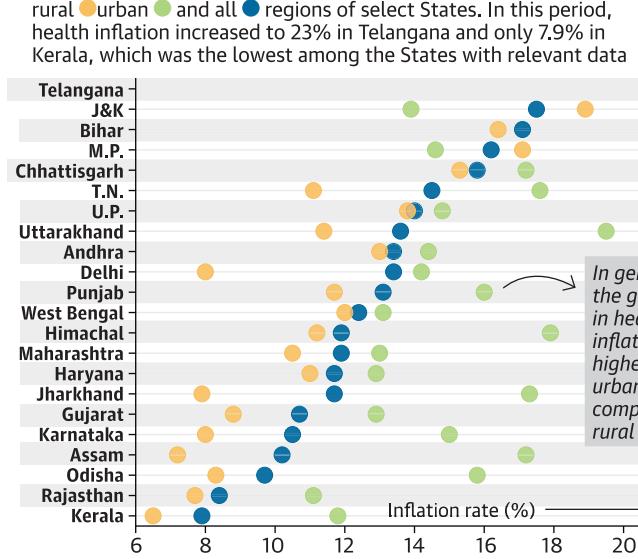
A bill of health

The retail inflation rate remained high at 6.26% in June 2021, above the RBI's upper limit for the second consecutive month. A sharp surge in the cost of edible oils (34.7% y-o-y increase in June) followed by significant increases in the prices of egg, fuel and light, fruits, and transportation contributed to the high inflation in June. In parallel, health costs expanded too, especially during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health inflation increased to 8.4% and 7.7% in May and June 2021, respectively, from 3.8% in December 2019. A closer look at the health sub-group points to a consistent increase in the prices of medicines (8.6% y-o-y increase in June), medical tests (6.2%), hospital charges (5.9%), and consultation fees (4.5%). Health expenditure increased the most in Telangana and least in Kerala. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumanth Sen and Jasmin Nihalani

2. HEALTH COSTS | The chart plots the inflation rates for all the items listed under the health sub-group. While the prices of most medical items increased, the cost of spectacles increased the most (9.6% y-o-y) in June



3. STATE-WISE DATA | The graph shows the % growth in the health inflation index in June 2021 compared to June 2019 across rural (orange), urban (green), and all (blue) regions of select States. In this period, health inflation increased to 23% in Telangana and only 7.9% in Kerala, which was the lowest among the States with relevant data



FROM PAGE ONE

Private centres asked to step up vaccination pace

The Minister said the States knew when and in what quantity they would get the doses. The Union government had done this so that they could chalk out the vaccination work up to the district-level by planning properly and people did not face any problem.

SC to examine plea challenging sedition

"The doctrine of 'chilling effect' on speech considers the probability of a legal provision causing psychological barriers in the free exercise of the right... This doctrine had not sufficiently developed in 1962. Even in the U.S., the doctrine was established only as late as 1967... The most concrete pronouncement on a statutory provision causing a chilling effect on speech is as recent as 2015 in *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*," he submitted.

In the judgment, the court had reasoned that without Section 124A, the state would be in jeopardy if the government was subverted. It, however, said that Section 124A would apply only to expressions that either intended to or had the tendency to cause violence

"Regarding the availability of the vaccine, I have come to know from the statements and letters of various State governments and leaders. This situation can be better understood by an actual analysis of the facts. Useless statements are being made to create panic."

Three Lashkar-e-Taiba militants killed in Pulwama

One of them is a Lashkar-e-Taiba commander from Pakistan, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR

Three Lashkar-e-Taiba militants were killed during an anti-militancy operation in Pulwama of south Kashmir on Wednesday, the police said.

"The bodies of three LeT terrorists were retrieved from the site of encounter. They were identified as LeT commander Ajiaz, alias Abu Huraira, a resident of Pakistan, Javeed Ahmad Rather from Tahab in Pulwama and Shahnaz Nazir Ganie from Samboora in Awantipora," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said.

The operation started around midnight after specific information was generated by the Srinagar police about the presence of terrorists on New Colony Hospital Road.

"The operation was suspended due to darkness while the cordon remained intact. Taking advantage of the darkness, the terrorists



Standing guard: CRPF personnel seen near the site of a gunfight between security forces and militants in Pulwama district of south Kashmir on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

tried to escape but couldn't. In the early hours, repeated announcements were again made to the hiding terrorists to surrender. However, the terrorists opened fire, which was retaliated," the police said.

They said the security forces recovered incriminating material, arms and ammunition, including 2 AK rifles and a pistol, from the site of encounter.

Houses damaged
Local people said two multi-storey residential houses were damaged in the operation.

A curfew was imposed in Pulwama town and the Internet was snatched "as a precautionary measure". Eye-witnesses said local protesters clashed with the security forces after the operation was called off.

However, there were no reports of any casualties.

Permanent Commission for 147 women officers

Army grants it to 424 women since 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Army said on Wednesday that 147 additional women officers had been granted Permanent Commission (PC) taking the total number of women officers granted it to 424 out of the 615 officers considered since the landmark judgment by the Supreme Court last year.

Following the judgment on grant of PC to women officers in the Army, a special selection board was constituted and 277 women short service commission officers received it after medical scrutiny.

Further, in March 2021, the Supreme Court directed reconsideration of some cases of women officers who were not granted PC by laying down revised parameters, a statement from the Army said. "The women officers were reconsidered as per directions of the Su-



The SC had ordered that some cases of denial of Permanent Commission to women be reconsidered.

preme Court and fresh results have now been declassified. Consequently, 147 more women officers are being granted PC, taking the total PC granted to 424 out of the 615 officers considered," the statement said. Results of a few have been withheld for administrative reasons and awaiting outcome of a clarification petition by the government in the Supreme Court, it said.



Trinamool to meet ECI on bypolls to seven seats

KOLKATA A six-member delegation of the Trinamool Congress is likely to meet Election Commission of India (ECI) officials in Delhi on Thursday, urging the commission to hold bypolls to seven Assembly seats in West Bengal. Senior party leader and MP Saugata Roy confirmed this.

Cabinet approves 11th extension for OBC panel

NEW DELHI The Cabinet on Wednesday approved another six-month extension for the commission appointed in 2017 to examine sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Central list, making it the 11th such extension. A government statement said the Cabinet approved extension of the tenure till January 31, 2022.

No plan to contest for President's post: Pawar

MUMBAI Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday dismissed reports that he was a candidate for the President's post. "Reports about me planning to contest for President's post are absolutely false. No discussion on this was held in my two meetings with Prashant Kishore. The result of President's election is clear, knowing the strength of the Bharatiya Janata Party," Mr. Pawar said in his interaction with reporters on Wednesday.

Assam CM defends police shooting at criminals

GUWAHATI Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the police will continue to take "extreme action" within the law against criminals as long as he is in-charge of Assam. He holds the Home portfolio too. "Those who defend drug dealers should train them not to escape from custody, snatch arms or attack the police," he said after Opposition legislators attacked the government for alleged fake encounters.

SC strikes down some provisions in Finance Act

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down provisions, introduced in the Finance Act of 2017 through an Ordinance, which affected the tenure and service conditions of Chairpersons and Members of Tribunals. The Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance of 2021 had amended Section 184 of the Finance Act of 2017 to fix their tenures at four years. A three-judge Bench reversed that law and confirmed that Tribunal Chairpersons and Members would have a full five-year tenure.

Central DA, dearness relief hiked to 28%

DA hike was frozen due to pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the effective increase of dearness allowance to the Central government employees and dearness relief to pensioners from 17% of basic pay/pension to 28% with effect from July 1.

Announcing the decision taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said it was a major decision for the benefit of 48.34 lakh Central employees and 65.26 lakh pensioners.

The dearness allowance hike was frozen with effect from January 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he pointed out.

"In view of the unprecedented situation which arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic, three additional instalments of DA to Central government employees and dearness relief to pensioners, which were due from 01.01.2020, 01.07.2020 and 01.01.2021, had been frozen," a government statement said.

The increase of 11% reflected the three additional instalments arising on January 1, 2020, July 1, 2020 and January 1, 2021, it said, adding that the actual rate for January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 would remain 17%.

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Piyush Goyal appointed RS leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Commerce and Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal has been appointed the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha. Former Union Minister Thawarchand Gehlot, who had held that position, has been appointed the Governor of Karnataka.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday congratulated Mr. Goyal.

"Congratulations to @PiyushGoyal ji on being appointed the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha. He has been entrusted by PM @narendramodi ji with key responsibility. Wishing him continued vigour in the service to the nation," tweeted Mr. Joshi.

Leg-up for Goyal

Mr. Goyal had been Deputy Leader of the Rajya Sabha under Mr. Gehlot.

This is being seen as a leg-up for Mr. Goyal in terms of political responsibility, as the BJP and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) are not in majority in the House and frequently require support from parties such as the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) to clear important legislation there.

It is also a signal from Prime Minister Narendra Modi that despite divesting Mr. Goyal of Railways (the Ministry with a large outlay), he has been entrusted with the job of shepherding the Union government's Bills through Parliament, especially in a House where it does not enjoy a majority.

The monsoon session of Parliament commences on July 19 and is expected to end on August 13.

Kharge to lead Cong. coordination efforts

The move comes amid speculation about the party replacing LS leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

In a significant departure, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has deputed Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, instead of the party's Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, to lead the coordination with other Opposition parties.

At a meeting of the Congress's parliamentary strategy group on Wednesday evening, sources said Ms. Gandhi expressed dissatisfaction with the party's coordination with other like-minded parties during the Parliament session.

"She has assigned the responsibility to Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge. Usually this charge remains with the floor leader in the



Plan of action: Congress workers staging a protest against fuel prices in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

Lok Sabha," a senior party functionary said.

Chowdhury to stay

The move comes amid intense speculation about the Congress replacing Mr. Chowdhury, with many claiming that former Con-

gress president Rahul Gandhi himself would be stepping into the role. Sources said Mr. Chowdhury would continue to stay on for now.

"There was no indication about replacing Mr. Chowdhury for now. As the Lok Sabha leader of the party, he

shared his views on various issues," one of the Congress leaders who attended the meeting said.

Better synergy

Giving the primary responsibility to coordinate with the allies to Mr. Kharge instead of Mr. Chowdhury is seen as an attempt by the Congress to have a better synergy with the Trinamool Congress. Mr. Chowdhury, who is also the chief of the West Bengal unit,

had led the Congress campaign in the State. Though

the Congress, which fought the election in alliance with the Left parties, drew a blank, the central leadership effusively praised Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her victory against the BJP in the State.

Wednesday's meeting, which lasted more than 90

minutes, also shortlisted the issues that the party would be taking up in the monsoon session. They included the alleged mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Modi government, repeated hikes in fuel prices, farmers' agitation and the India-China border situation. The party would also raise the alleged scam in the purchase of Rafale aircraft. The French investigating agency has already launched a probe on it.

The meeting was attended by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and senior leaders A.K. Antony, Mallikarjun Kharge, Manish Tewari, Anand Sharma, Jairam Ramesh, K.C. Venugopal, Kodukkunnil Suresh and Manickam Tagore.

tice Rohinton F. Nariman on March 24, 2015.

Through an advisory, the Ministry asked the authorities in the States and the Union Territories to withdraw immediately the cases registered under the repealed Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, days after the Supreme Court expressed shock that it was being invoked even six years after it struck down the provision.

"If any case has been booked in your State under Section 66A of the IT Act, 2000, it should immediately be withdrawn," the advisory said.

The Electronics and Information Technology Ministry, through a letter in January 2019, and the Home Ministry, in two letters in January and April 2019, asked them to sensitise the police departments and the local police authorities for strict compliance with the court directive.

'China impasse must be discussed'

Many issues need attention, Rahul says at Standing Committee on Defence meet

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi pressed the Standing Committee on Defence to discuss the India-China stand-off at a meeting held on Wednesday, even as the committee has called off a tour of Pangong lake in Ladakh, which is the flashpoint of the Indo-China conflict.

The committee had met on the agenda of "Review of Working of Cantonment Boards". This was its third meeting on the subject.

The committee is headed by BJP leader Jual Oram. Instead of touring the Pangong lake, the committee has now proposed a tour of Army cantonments in Bhubanesh-



Rahul Gandhi
war and Sikandra for the members.

Security threat

According to sources, at the fag end of the meeting, Mr. Gandhi said while the issue of Cantonment Boards, committee chairperson Mr. Oram said, was selected unanimously during the meeting on subject

needed the attention of the committee.

"The situation in Ladakh, Mr. Gandhi had pointed out, had not improved in more than a year now. The U.S. Army's exit and Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan also posed a serious security threat for the country. He added that the committee should discuss the security preparedness of the country," one of the members said.

The BJP MPs did not protest at Mr. Gandhi's suggestion. The subject "Review of Working of Cantonment Boards," committee chairperson Mr. Oram said, declined to hold such a meeting.

selection for the year.

A way out

At this, sources said the Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) Lok Sabha MP Kunwar Danish Ali suggested a way out. "He said that maybe a sub-committee can be formed, which can have an in-depth investigation on the subject, giving ample time to the committee to discuss issues like the Indo-China conflict," another member said.

A few committee members also suggested that the committee meet again on Thursday specifically to discuss the Chinese incursions in Ladakh. Mr. Oram though, sources said, declined to hold such a meeting.

Is Kishor joining Congress?

Poll strategist had a meeting with Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Prashant Kishor

worked with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) victory in Tamil Nadu, where I-Pac, the political consultancy firm that he is associated with, was handling the campaign. Mr. Kishor, in a series of television interviews, had claimed that he was "quitting this space".

"I do not want to continue what I am doing. I have done enough. It is time for me to take a break... I want to quit this space," he had told NDTV.

He has had a stint as vice-president in the Janata Dal (U). He was expelled from the party for his stand on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

'LAC impasse is affecting bilateral ties'

Jaishankar says India had hopes China will 'follow through' in resolving issues

SUHASINI HAIDAR
ANANTH KRISHNAN

The impasse between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is "visibly impacting" bilateral ties "negatively", External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi as they met in Dushanbe on the sidelines of the SCO meeting on Wednesday. Highlighting the lack of movement in the disengagement process apart from the initial withdrawal of troops around the Pangong lake area earlier this year, Mr. Jaishankar said India had hoped China would "follow through" in resolving issues at the LAC, as had been agreed in a five-point agreement with Mr. Wang when the two Ministers had last met in Moscow last September.

While Indian and Chinese troops completed the first round of disengagement in February 2021, withdrawing from areas and posts around the Pangong lake, officials said China continues to stall talks on withdrawing from the other areas where PLA troops have amassed since April 2020, including at Depsang, Gogra and Hot Springs areas in Ladakh.

"[Mr. Jaishankar] pointed out to State Councillor [Mr. Wang] that the successful disengagement in the Pangong Lake Area earlier this year had created conditions for resolving the remaining issues. It was expected that the Chinese side would work with us towards this objec-



Strained ties: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Dushanbe. • PTI

tive. EAM noted, however, that the situation in remaining areas is still unresolved," a statement by the External Affairs Ministry said.

Ahead of the Foreign Ministers' meeting, however, both New Delhi and Beijing denied reports of fresh tensions along the LAC. The Army also insisted that the agreements with China have not "collapsed" as claimed in an article published on Wednesday.

"Ever since the disengagement agreement in February this year, there has been no

attempt by either side to occupy the areas from where the disengagement had been undertaken. There have been no clashes in Galwan or any other area," the Army statement said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said he was not "aware of the situation mentioned" in the report as well.

Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Wang "agreed to remain in touch", as India hoped that "all remaining issues" would be discussed at the next round of Senior Military Commanders talks as decided by the WMCC group on June 25.

In contrast to their last meeting in Moscow, there was no joint statement issued by the two sides after the Jaishankar-Wang meeting. According to the Ministry's statement, Mr. Jaishankar also made it clear that other bilateral relations on other issues could not proceed successfully unless the present LAC situation is resolved.

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IN BRIEF



Maharashtra unveils adventure tourism policy

MUMBAI The Maharashtra cabinet on Wednesday cleared a policy to promote adventure tourism in the State. Adventure tourism activities on land, air and water will be developed to attract tourists, according to an official release. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. The organisers will have to obtain a temporary registration certificate, and the final certificate will be issued after all safety measures are put in place, the release said.

Immunity boosters for those under 18 in Ladakh

LEH The Ladakh administration on Wednesday decided to give immunity boosters and supplements to those below 18 years to reduce the risk of COVID-19 during a possible third wave of the pandemic. The decision was taken during a review by Lt. Governor, Ladakh, Radha Krishna Mathur, on Wednesday. A drive would also be undertaken to encourage more pregnant women to get vaccinated.

West Bengal extends restrictions till July 30

KOLKATA The West Bengal government on Wednesday extended the curbs put in place during the pandemic but allowed certain relaxations such as the operation of metro services in Kolkata with 50% capacity. "Metro railway services shall operate five days a week with 50% seating capacity and shall remain suspended on Saturdays and Sundays," a notification issued by the government said. However, local train services will remain suspended. The new guidelines will be in force till July 30, the notification said.

Faridabad tops in Haryana excess deaths

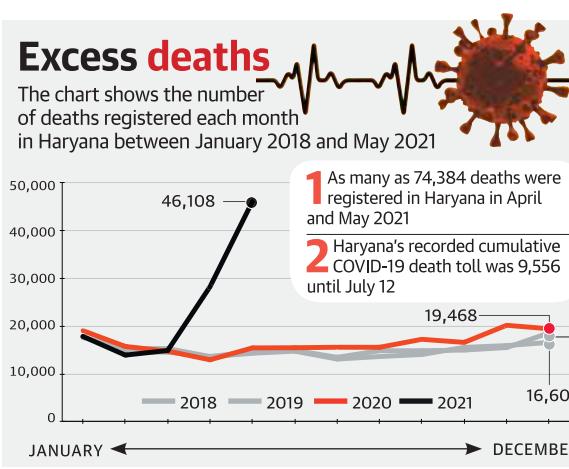
The State's undercount figures were slightly higher than those for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu

SRINIVASAN RAMANI
CHENNAI

The excess deaths calculated in Haryana were based on the mortality figures registered online. According to the Civil Registration System report for 2019, Haryana registered 100% of all deaths in the State, much of it online. Excess deaths might go up as late registrations are tallied in the State.

Not all "excess deaths" would be related to COVID-19 but a bulk of them are, during the pandemic. A look at deaths and causal factors in the CRS available only for the State of Tamil Nadu showed a steep increase in deaths related to causes such as pneumonia during the pandemic period, indicating that COVID-19 related deaths could have been re-classified as such deaths.

Excess deaths calculations (and therefore, undercount factors) depend on the method to calculate them: either based on the years for which averages are considered or if a projection based on linear growth of deaths year on year is used. For Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra



Pradesh, excess deaths were calculated based on registrations available only for two pre-pandemic years, 2018 and 2019. Haryana's undercount figures were slightly higher than those for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Karnataka and Kerala's figures fall if the linear growth estimation method is used, indicating that better registration in later years has lowered "excess deaths". Tamil Nadu's undercount factors do not change much.

If the excess deaths for just the six States for whom analysis for the pandemic

period between April 2020 and May 2021 based on full data has been done are added up, the total comes to 73,698, nearly eight times the official tally recorded in these States (90,577). India's overall official COVID-19 death toll itself was 4,10,997 as of 8 p.m. on July 13.

Among districts in Haryana, Faridabad (6,467), Gurugram (5,908), Hisar (4,859) and Sonipat (3,806) had the highest excess deaths, but the undercount factor for Panchkula, Sonipat, Palwal and Jhajjar were the highest – 17, 16.1, 15.6 and 15.3 respectively.

pectively. All numbers correspond to the April 2020 to May 2021 period.

Ongoing process

Dhruba Chaudhary, Haryana's nodal officer for COVID-19 and head of the pulmonary and critical care medicine department at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (PGIMS), Rohtak, told *The Hindu* that audit of all deaths is an ongoing process and is being done across the State. "The discrepancy in deaths is a matter of debate. We have nothing to hide, and all deaths are being reported. The death audit mechanism is a constant process, and we are doing it. Every single death is accountable in Haryana."

Mr. Chaudhary said that as far as the higher number of COVID-19 deaths officially recorded was concerned "there can't be a guess work, but I am sure it's not going to be very high. In Haryana, the data is online. If the number of total deaths has gone up, the proportionate deaths have also gone up."

"I want to make it clear that the State's Health Department led by Additional Chief Secretary Rajeev Arora did a commendable work to curb COVID-19. During the second wave it was Delhi, which put a huge pressure on Haryana. At that time 60-70% patients in Gurugram and neighbouring areas were from Delhi. The blast was in Delhi and its tsunami impact was felt and heard in Haryana," said Mr. Chaudhary.

A look at the gender break-up of the deaths in the State from 2018 to 2021 shows that the proportion of deaths among women went up marginally from 36.5 during the pre-pandemic years to 37.1% and 39.7% in 2020 and 2021. This was unlike in Tamil Nadu (the only other State for which *The Hindu* had data available for the pandemic years), where the proportion of women among those dead was close to 40% consistently from 2015 to 2021.

(Based on data compiled and aggregated by Pratap Vardhan, with graphics support by Sumant Sen and inputs from Vikas Vasudeva)

SC to study courts' role in policy during crises

Collective effort is required, it says

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would examine how far courts could intervene in State policy during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic "when collective effort" was required to overcome odds.



nursing home/ hospital that has more than 30 beds compulsorily have an oxygen production plant; and medical colleges in Prayagraj, Agra, Meerut, Kanpur and Gorakhpur provided enhanced facilities like the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute did within four months.

Ambulance service

The High Court ordered the State to provide within a month at least 20 ambulances in small towns and have at least two ambulances with ICU facilities in every village.

Justice Maheshwari said these were times for a "collective effort". "There are certain norms based on which every institution should function," he noted.

The top court was hearing a plea by the Uttar Pradesh government against a May 17 Allahabad High Court order which described the medical system in smaller cities and villages of the State during the pandemic as "Ram Bharose". It stayed the High Court order on May 21.

The High Court had issued a slew of directions to the government, which included ensuring that nursing homes in the State had oxygen facility for every bed; ensuring availability of ventilators, high-flow nasal cannula facility and beds with bipap machines in every nursing home/hospital and making sure that every

next hearing on August 12.

No room for complacency, says MHA

It asks States to make officials concerned responsible for laxity in enforcing norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

hill stations, it noted.

Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, in letters to the States and Union Territories, said massive crowds were thronging market places, violating the norms of social distancing. Consequently, the increase in the "reproduction factor" (an indicator of spread of COVID-19) in some States was a matter of concern.

The authorities concerned needed to be made

responsible for ensuring COVID-19 appropriate behaviour in all crowded places, besides the hotspots of virus transmission, he said.

Careful monitoring
There was no room for complacency as the second wave was not yet over. If the norms were not maintained at any establishment, premises and markets, restrictions should be reimposed to contain the virus spread and

the defaulters should be held liable for action under the relevant laws, he stated. "You would appreciate that we must guard ourselves against complacency and laxity, which creep in as positivity declines. Instead, during the periods of low positivity, efforts must be stepped up to prevent any probable future surge," he observed. Testing, tracking, treating and vaccination was also stressed upon.

Cabinet nod to continue Ayush Mission

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of the National Ayush Mission as a 'Centrally-sponsored scheme' for another five years till 2026. A release noted that the scheme would continue from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2026, with a financial implication of ₹4,607.30 crore to be spent during the period.

₹9,800 crore support for livestock development

Centre also invites more investment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government will spend ₹9,800 crore on livestock development over the next five years in a bid to leverage almost ₹55,000 crore of outside investment into the sector, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) decided on Wednesday. It would do this by merging a slew of schemes into three main programmes, focused on indigenous cows and dairy development, livestock health, and infrastructure development, an official statement said.

The CCEA approved the implementation of the spe-

cial livestock sector package by revising and realigning the various components of the existing schemes in order to boost growth and make animal husbandry more remunerative for the 10 crore farmers engaged in it, said the statement.

The commitment of ₹9,800 crore over the next five years is expected to leverage an investment of ₹54,618 crore, including spending by State governments and cooperatives, financial institutions and external funding agencies. All schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying will be merged into three broad categories.

Stroke caused 7.4% of total deaths in 2019, says study

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Neurological disorders can also affect the mobility of patients.

which was 7.4% of the total deaths in the country, it stated.

The burden of non-communicable neurological disorders was increasing in the country, mainly due to the ageing of the population, the paper noted. "Stroke, headache disorders, and epilepsy are the leading contributors to neurological disorders burden in India."

High blood pressure, air pollution, dietary risks, high fasting plasma glucose and high body-mass index were found to be the leading contributors among the known risk factors for the neurological disorders' burden.

The disorders include non-communicable ones (stroke, headache disorders, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, brain and central nervous system cancer, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, motor neuron diseases and other neurological disorders), communicable ones (encephalitis, meningitis and tetanus), and injury-related disorders (traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries).

The paper found that the burden of many disorders

varied substantially across the States. Dr. Lalit Dandona, director of the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative and senior author of this paper, stated that the study, based on collaboration with leading neurology experts in the country, provided policy-relevant insights into the trends of the disorders across the States.

"While the burden of infectious neurological disorders has fallen in India, this burden is higher in less developed States. On the other hand, the burden of the disorders related to injury is higher in more developed States. Among non-communicable disorders, stroke is the third leading cause of death, and dementias are the fastest growing disorders," he said.

Subsidy scheme for shipping firms approved

It is applicable for import of govt. cargo

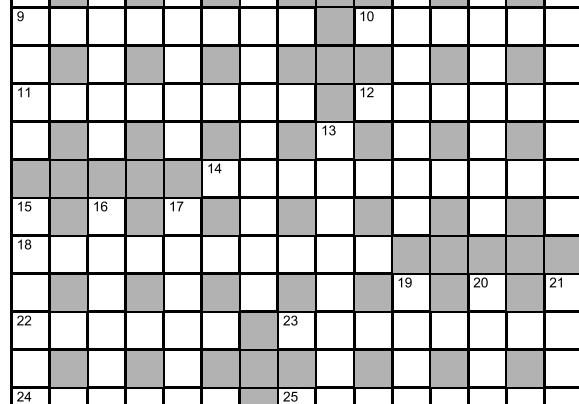
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a subsidy scheme for shipping companies during global tenders for import of government cargo.

scheme, according to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

The provisions of this scheme will not be available if the lowest bidder is an Indian flagged vessel.

A strong and diverse indigenous shipping fleet will not only lead to foreign exchange savings on account of freight bill payments made to foreign shipping companies but would also reduce excessive dependence on foreign ships for transporting India's critical cargoes," a press statement said. The scheme is likely to lead to increase in training opportunities and employment for Indian seafarers.



- 1 Embarrassed about mistake, failed (8)
- 5 Smart to buy nothing, keeping some earnings for best (6)
- 9 Audacity to find fault with cookware (8)
- 10 Well, to own a ship is a problem (6)
- 11 Cheapest accommodation in ship where teenagers party leaving function last (8)

CM YK

- 12 His leg broke in a vehicle (6)
- 14 Jack jumps from ledge, gets tense about safety (10)
- 18 No, staff's article has a point at times (3,3,4)
- 22 Head office at an American city earlier had work still (6)
- 23 One amongst us after sleep to help get bread (8)
- 24 After a sip of gin and rum, father in Chennai has brandy (6)
- 25 One changes places with another on road to take speed test (5,3)
- 26 Side for match? Essentially hopeless to begin with (6)
- 27 Commercial earnings? Try to change sides cleverly (8)
- DOWN
- 1 Formulating strategies to break gate and obstruct (6)
- 2 Narrow opening for romeo to jump over top (6)
- 3 Author's attempt at verse (6)
- 4 Perhaps a divorcee's great, composed, mature on the outside? To stretch the truth (10)
- 6 Nut & bolt for a wrestling hold (8)
- 7 To enliven, have one pint sir, dance (2,6)
- 8 The plane transports an animal (8)
- 13 Book that woman, low in honour in a place beyond reality (10)
- 15 Mix up in specialist's viewpoint (8)
- 16 A plan, bold for something not played at home (4,4)
- 17 One, two... disconnect (8)
- 19 An ice cream company at LA, centre of uptown (6)
- 20 Usual nonsense – copy-cat (6)
- 21 Small family at New York is underfed (6)

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13299

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Armed with barley grown in Himalayan belts, a maverick crop of distillers is achieving world rankings and sweeping international awards with proudly Indian single malts



When the Himalayas craft whisky

ANISHA MENEZES

It was only in April 2016 that one of India's oldest and largest distilleries, Uttar Pradesh-based Radico Khaitan, made its entry into single malt whiskies — launching Rampur Indian Single Malt in Las Vegas. Now, it is the latest among a fine crop of distillers to put Indian single malts in the global spotlight.

The brand's latest, Ram-pur Asava, won gold medals at the International Spirits Challenge 2021 and New York International Spirits Competition 2021 after a virtual launch at the Whiskey Show, London in October 2020.

What sets this whisky apart? Rampur Asava is the first single malt matured in American bourbon barrels and finished in Indian Cabernet Sauvignon casks. Sanjeev Banga, president of international business at Radico Khaitan, home to Rampur single malts, also credits Rampur's use of six-row North Indian barley. "Since we are located at the foothills of the Himalayas, the ground-water, soil and air shape the soul of all six Rampur expressions [products]. Our single malt is different yet pleasing, spicy but balanced. It is unabashedly Indian," he declares.

Rampur is not alone. Goa-based John Distilleries' Mithuna scored 97 points on Jim Murray's Whiskey Bible, giving it the distinction of the

world's third finest whiskey this year.

To most connoisseurs, single malts are synonymous with the Scottish Highlands. But a maverick mix of Indian distilleries is quietly changing that perception, with a range of sophisticated, locally brewed single malts.

The journey to a distinctly Indian single malt began in the Deccan Plateau, at the turn of the 21st Century. Rakshit Jagdale, managing director of Amrut Distilleries in Bengaluru, reminisces, "We have been in the liquor business since 1948, but our voyage started in 2004. I teamed up with my father, late Neelakanta Rao Jagdale to create Amrut Indian Single Malt: India's first single malt to be certified and exported, at a time when there was no reference point for us."

A sip of India
So what makes a single malt decidedly Indian? "The grain is a very important aspect of whisky making. Our barley is grown in the Punjab and Rajasthan belt, and we experiment with different varieties to access a bouquet of characteristics that can contribute to flavour through fermentability," says Rakshit. "From ideation to shelf, it takes around five to six years,

Angel's share

Whisky is stored and aged in oak barrels. The wood contributes a lot of flavour to whiskies, but these barrels are also the reason for a loss of around 2% of the whisky stored in them per year. This is called the Angel's Share, since it is made up of the whisky that evaporates through the pores in the wood. The figure increases with higher temperatures, sometimes up to 12%.

while the rare whiskies take seven to nine years to market," he adds.

While these drinks are prized as they grow older, the ageing of Indian single malts is complex. "Maturation depends on climatic conditions. In tropical distilleries, we cannot age our malts for too long as the losses due to evaporation are too high. So by a general rule of thumb in these conditions, whisky is aged between four to six years," explains Rakshit.

Sanjeev concurs: "Our [Rampur] malts are aged in harsh North Indian weather conditions where temperatures fluctuate between 40+ degrees Celsius in summer and around 2 degrees Celsius in winter. This makes the malt interact with the casks very aggressively. Even experts in Scotland agree that due to these variations, aging in India is at least four times faster. A malt aged for 10 years in North India would be equivalent to a 30-40 year old Scotch."

Mountains meet the sea
Yet another chapter in the Indian single malt script, has been written with flourish, by John Distilleries. Its operations have straddled eight manufacturing units spread over seven states since 1996, when Paul P John set up a distillery in Goa to primarily fo-

cus on single malts.

The formula is simple: six-row barley, harvested in summer at the foothills of the Himalayas, blended with Goan water assisted by locally sourced yeast. With Indian copper pot-stills, specially designed with long necks to create fruitier spirits, the malts are matured in American white oak barrels.

The warm Goan weather helps the malts mature faster. "It takes a minimum of three years to make our youngest single malts, and the oldest are seven years or above. As the liquid evolves, we work to give it the identity it deserves," says master distiller Michael DSouza.

Nirvana, a bestseller, has a whiff of caramel pudding, with a salt-edged barley and honey on the palate and a lingering finish of vanilla.

The Zodiac Series, with two launches so far, Kanya and Mithuna, looks to the skies for inspiration. Mithuna is named after Gemini, proferring a palate of mocha, tinged with orange peel and delicate spices, that ride on active tannins, gentle oils and dark cocoa tones.

Vikram Achanta, CEO, Tul-leho, which dabbles in beverage education and consultancy, sums it up: "Indian single malts offer a unique experience; the interplay of Indian temperatures and six-row barley offers more protein and less starch than two-row barley used in Scotland, and finally the inventiveness of our master distillers that makes up the magic."



Fine work (Clockwise) Paul John master distiller Michael D'Souza and its Goan distillery; an Old Fashioned made with Rampur Double Cask ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



RAMPUR INDIAN SINGLE MALT WHISKY DOUBLE CASK

NON-CHELL FILTERED

700 ml

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NON-CHELL FILTERED

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Enter the konnakol rap

Catch the wave of Carnatic hip hop, fuelled by the rise of virtual spaces, and set to the beat of the mridangam, ghatam and kanjira

SWETA AKUNDI

In the musical world, Scarborough conjures up images of Simon and Garfunkel. Across the Atlantic Ocean, its lesser known namesake, a Toronto neighbourhood known for its confluence of Asian cultures, inspires a serenade in Tamil music producer Yanchan's newly released EP, *Scarborough Beat Tape*.

With 10 instrumental tapes, Yanchan immerses hyperlocal details of his Canadian hometown in a decidedly Tamil flavour – through the soundscape of freestyle mridangam and ghatam.

"I grew up with a foundation in Car-

natic music. Until high school, that was all I listened to. When I was 13, I lived in Chennai for three months to learn the mridangam from my guru, Neyveli B Venkatesh," says Yanchan.

He grew up listening to Drake. "I would play hip hop in my car and analyse the rhythmic patterns and beats. I started noticing similarities between these beats and the ones I played on the mridangam. They sounded similar to grooves in Adi talam, Rupaka talam..." says the 21-year-old, who calls his sound a combination of Carnatic music, Tamil film music and hip hop.

Mridangam gets the spotlight
"The instrument never tells you what genre it belongs to," says Viveick Rajagopal, a mridangam exponent based in Mumbai. As the founder of the Ta Dhom project, Viveick collaborates with vernacular rappers from the city to create a sub genre of Indian hip hop – as seen in Gully Boy's 'India 91'.

Viveick wanted to pull the mridangam out of the layers of percussion it is hidden in, and make it the principal

sound, moving it from supporting role to lead. "I took those drum patterns heard in Western music and played them on the mridangam, which gave rise to the collective sound of the Ta Dhom project," he says.

Since 2015, he has been meeting young rappers and sharing the basics of *konnakol* and talam with them, to provide a foundation for the rhythmic poetry of urban rap. "I didn't want to come in with the traditional approach of Carnatic music (with its rituals)," says Viveick.

"What was interesting to me was that instead of aping the West, these guys were rapping in their mother tongue. I wanted to push (that Indian-ness) even more. For instance, a lot of rappers still have scatting and phrasing that's typically Western," he says.

Yanchan playing the kanjira; Ta Dhom project founded by Viveick Rajagopal; Yanchan and Shan Vincent De Paul touring with Mrithangam Raps ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Sightseeing from the sofa A screenshot of the VR game created by three students from Salem ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pedalling past the Taj

A team from Tamil Nadu has created a VR game that lets users cycle around monuments, from their homes

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Despite lockdown, Athik Mohamed M, Deepesh M and Anung Yangfo K from Tamil Nadu managed to cycle around the Taj Mahal in Agra. It only took 15 minutes.

This team of three final year students of Civil Engineering, from Thiagarajar Polytechnic College in Salem, has launched Heritage Race, a Virtual Reality mobile-only game that lets players explore Indian monuments and historic cities.

The game has been created as part of All India Council for Technical Education's (AICTE) Toyathon 2021, an initiative under the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, to propel innovative minds to conceptualise novel toys and games that are based on Bharatiya civilisation, history and culture'.

The idea came to Athik in December

2020, before he even heard of Toyathon. Lockdown made it impossible to go anywhere. "With the lack of outdoor activities, my physical fitness was wanting. I started indoor cycling but soon got bored of the four walls of my house. That's when the idea struck me," says Sathik, adding that VR cycling seemed an ideal way to beat boredom.

When his college announced the Toyathon competition a month later, Athik roped in two batchmates, and began to tweak the concept. They were mentored by Ponni M. The games needed an Indian connect and to highlight *samskaar*, he explains. "India ranks low in creation of physical and digital toys. Most of the games played, don't personify Indian culture and are mostly made abroad," he adds.

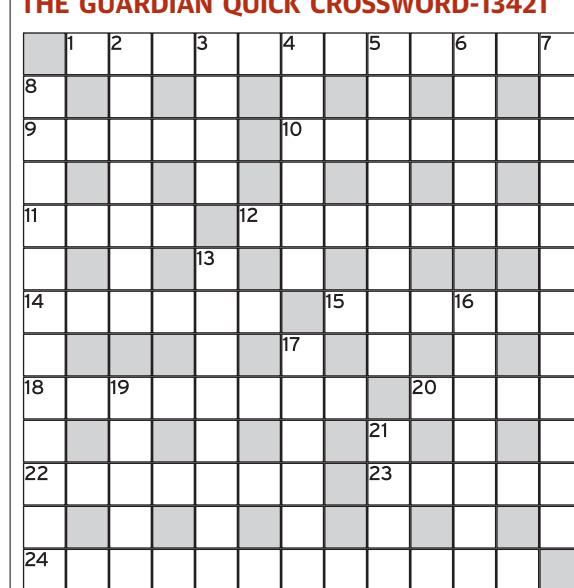
The first monument adapted by the

Salem trio, was the Taj Mahal. It gives a 360-degree experience of the environment, featuring gardens, bridges and Vedic music as background score. The speed of the cycle in the game is fixed at a relaxed pace of 13 kilometres per hour. As one gets close to the monuments, there are pop-ups, making the experience informative as well as entertaining.

The team is now modelling the Qutab Minar and India Gate for the upcoming games. As for ancient cities, they are focussing on Ayodhya and Varanasi. "We are searching for historical images to build 3D models and import them to the game engine," says Athik. Exploring the cities will take around 30 minutes.

Plans are on to release *Heritage Race* on the App Store and Play Store.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13421



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- Across
 - 1 Large island part of Canada's most easterly province (12)
 - 9 Large semi-aquatic pachyderm (abbr) (5)
 - 10 Breed of cat (7)
 - 11 Injure seriously, leaving permanent damage (4)
 - 12 Gigantic statue that once
- 14 Not amenable to discipline (6)
- 15 French female chorus line dance (6)
- 18 Tea flavoured with bergamot (4,4)
- 20 Provide with money (4)
- 22 Warren residents (7)
- 23 Relative by marriage (2-3)
- 24 Chips to stand (anag) – game played with coins (5-3-4)
- Down
 - 2 Containing less (7)
 - 3 Flat mass of floating ice (4)
 - 4 Outcome (6)
 - 5 Straight line on a slant (8)
 - 6 Spaces covered by twodimensional surfaces (5)
 - 7 Severe scolding (8-4)
 - 8 Agatha Christie play (3,9)
 - 13 Slow-moving (8)
 - 16 People with their partners (7)
 - 17 Bible passage read during a church service (6)
 - 19 Mechanical worker (5)
 - 21 Decree – Italian car (4)



To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated July 22, 2021.

Solution No. 13420

D	I	E	P	P	E	O	P	I	A	T	A
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Prepping an actor for a sports drama or action is not just about extreme transformations or maintaining a high level of fitness, but also making sure the actor is in the right frame of mind, he says.

"You have to deliver dialogue with the right amount of emotion, it is a mental task. And your brain operates on glucose and oxygen, so I can't manipulate your carbo-hydration intake to the point that it begins to affect your ability to say your lines well. It requires training your intellect and your anatomy together, in congruence."

Which of course meant spending a lot of time getting to know Farhan, inside



On body and mind A still from *Toofaan*; (top) Darrell Foster with Farhan Akhtar ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Freestyling, the classic way (Clockwise from left) Yanchan playing the kanjira; Ta Dhom project founded by Viveick Rajagopal; Yanchan and Shan Vincent De Paul touring with Mrithangam Raps ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

As a rapper, your flow and intonation is what makes you stand out. And according to Viveick, an understanding of *konnakol* gives you a better understanding of rhythmic structures and helps you write phrases in more interesting ways. "It's like this: for a layperson, a chair is a chair. But when a carpenter sees it, he sees its parts: its height when you're sitting, when you're standing."

Rappers Swadesi, MC Tod Fod, MC Mawali have been part of this project.

The project's second EP is set to be released and will feature MC Dehat rapping in Bhojpuri.

"If you can count the beats, count the gap, you can write with more intention," says Tamil rapper Kalaiavan Kannan, who goes by MC Kalai. "I don't learn the raag, just the taal and the *konnakol*, the time structures, meters, the gati (flow)." The added knowledge also makes it easier for him to collaborate with other independent bands.

The universality of it

Classical music has spilled over to other genres before. Pandit Ravi Shankar, and now his daughter, Anoushka, have brought Hindustani to raga rock. Hip hop songs by Missy Elliot and Kid Cudi use Indian classical undercurrents. Tamil film music regularly builds on Carnatic; as proven by icons from Ilaiyaraaja to AR Rahman.

"We want to show how versatile Carnatic music is," says Mahesh Raghvan, of Carnatic 2.0, the group that blends Carnatic music with "whatever is fresh, with anything to do with pop culture, electronic music, and hip hop." Their

experiments led them to writing 'Mylapore Rap' last year.

In the past year, however, the rise of virtual spaces brought on by the lockdowns has also increased the accessibility to Carnatic music, bringing it out of kutcheris and sabhas. "Learning Carnatic music for four to five years also gives you a good foundation for whatever genre you want to try next," says Mahesh.

In Washington DC, singer-songwriter Hrishi Balaji had a similar realisation in high school. In June, the 25-year-old rose to Internet fame with his Carnatic remixes of pop songs. Hrishi's freestyle swaras over BTS' 'Butter' and The Weeknd's 'Blinding Lights', among others have gone viral on TikTok and Instagram. "I want to create a sense of familiarity and a sense of shock for the Western ear, while being true to both sensibilities," says Hrishi.

It is hip hop's subversive nature that allows space for experimentation, believes Viveick. "The whole rap culture is raw and non-conformist, so there is no template on how you have to play, or how it should sound," he says. This subversion also has to reflect in its lyrics for a song to be true to hip hop's history of standing up to power. When Shan and Yanchan rap, they talk about their families who had to flee Jaffna during the Sri Lankan Civil War. MC Mawali and Swadesi, while rapping in the style of *konnakol*, are talking about overcoming systemic obstacles.

"Emotions are universal," says Yanchan. "With any song, your goal should be to speak your truth, speak from your experience, and hope that it connects to your audience."

Training DAY

Training DAY

Celebrity fitness expert Darrell Foster on how he helped Farhan Akhtar get in shape for his role as a National-level boxer in *Toofaan*



the ring. "It took time for me to understand whether it was simply a mood swing or whether it was his diet that was affecting his behaviour," he shares, about how he began to accurately assess if Farhan was "firing on all cylinders".

His fitness methodology includes what he calls Action Scene Analysis. "Say Farhan does an action scene outside the ring, where he has to run and jump over some tables and take off running down the beach. I will analyse sequence by sequence to understand what muscle groups will be involved and then set up an exercise programme to facilitate that," he says. The larger point being injury prevention.

To do this, he has to work closely with the director and cinematographer. "If I'm having him throw a lot of lateral punches or straight punches for a scene today, I won't have him doing weight training that involves shoulders. If he is sore from the upper body workout the day before, we will shoot from the waist below and get only the footwork. If we have a ring scene for which he needs to look great, and he has eliminated carbs and water for the day, I tell the director, let's keep it just physical and not shoot any dialogues."

Foster appreciates the amount of control the director let him have over the shooting.

"They were humble enough to step back and let you do what you do, and then ask, 'Can I get this shot done today?'. That's what made it such a wonderful project to be a part of."

It took time for me to understand whether it was simply a mood swing or whether it was his diet that was affecting his behaviour

On body and mind A still from *Toofaan*; (top) Darrell Foster with Farhan Akhtar ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Taliban seize border crossing with Pak.

Spin Boldak is the latest in a string of border crossings and dry ports taken by Taliban in recent weeks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KANDAHAR

The Taliban captured the strategic border crossing of Spin Boldak on the frontier with Pakistan on Wednesday, continuing sweeping gains made since foreign forces stepped up their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Interior Ministry denied the insurgents had taken the area even as social media was flooded with pictures of Taliban fighters relaxing in the frontier town.

Residents also told AFP it was in the Taliban's hands.

Spin Boldak is the latest in a string of border crossings and dry ports seized by the Taliban in recent weeks, with the insurgents looking to choke off much-needed revenue from the government in Kabul while also filling their own coffers.

Heavy fighting

The seizure of the border crossing follows days of heavy fighting across Kandahar province, where the government was forced to deploy commando fighters to prevent the fall of the provincial capital even as the insurgents inched closer to taking the frontier.

In a statement, insurgent spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid



Creating a commotion: People wave Taliban flags as they drive through the Pakistani border town of Chaman on Wednesday. • AFP

hid assured traders and residents there that their "security is guaranteed".

But Afghan officials insisted they were still in control. "The terrorist Taliban had some movements near the border area... The security forces have repelled the attack," Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said.

Strategic value

Residents disputed the government's claims, however.

The border crossing is one of the most strategically va-

luable for the Taliban. It provides direct access to Pakistan's Balochistan province – where the insurgents' top leadership has been based for decades – along with an unknown number of reserve fighters who regularly enter Afghanistan to help bolster their ranks.

Hours after the crossing was sealed, an AFP reporter on the Pakistani side saw around 150 Taliban fighters riding on motorcycles, waving insurgent flags, as they demanded

to be allowed to cross into Afghanistan. Balochistan is a favoured destination for fighters regularly heading for medical treatment and hosts many of their families.

A major highway leading from the border connects to Pakistan's commercial capital Karachi and its sprawling port on the Arabian Sea, which is considered a linchpin for Afghanistan's billion-dollar heroin trade that has provided a crucial source of revenue for the Taliban's war chest over the years.

Insurgents back to old ways in newly seized territory

Taliban issued orders to women not to step out without a male companion and men not to shave

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KUNDUZ

Days after the Taliban captured a remote district in Afghanistan's north, they issued their first orders in the form of a letter to the local imam. "It said women can't go to the bazaar without a male companion, and men should not shave their beards," said Sefatullah, 25, a resident of Kalafgan district.

The insurgents also banned smoking, he added, and warned that anybody

violating the rules "will be seriously dealt with".

The Taliban are making huge advances across the country as they capitalise on the final withdrawal of foreign troops – capturing districts, seizing key border crossings, and encircling provincial capitals.

Harsh rule

In some areas they are again introducing the harsh interpretation of Islamic rule that earned them notoriety until

being overthrown by the US-led invasion that followed the September 11 attacks.

Last month they took Sher Khan Bandar, a northern customs post that connected the country to Tajikistan over a U.S.-funded bridge that spanned the Panj river.

"After Sher Khan Bandar fell, the Taliban ordered women not to step out of their homes," said Sajeda, who told AFP she worked in a local factory at the time. "There were many women

and young girls doing embroidery, tailoring and shoemaking... The Taliban's order has now terrified us."

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 according to an interpretation of the Koran little changed in centuries.

Banned from school

Women were ordered to stay indoors unless accompanied by a male relative, girls were banned from school, and those found guilty of crimes

Pullout is a mistake, says George Bush

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN

Former U.S. President George W. Bush criticised the Western withdrawal from Afghanistan in an interview with a German broadcaster released on Wednesday, saying he fears that Afghan women and girls will "suffer unspeakable harm."

Asked in an interview with Deutsche Welle whether the withdrawal is a mistake, Bush replied: "You know, I think it is, yeah, because I think the consequences are going to be unbelievably bad."

The war in Afghanistan began under Mr. Bush after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S.

The withdrawal of American and NATO troops is now nearing completion amid Taliban advances.

12 killed in Pakistan bus blast, including 9 Chinese

China blames bomb attack, Pak. says gas leak caused blast

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PESHAWAR

Beijing said nine Chinese workers were among 12 people killed on Wednesday by a bomb attack on a bus in northwestern Pakistan and called for severe punishment, but Islamabad blamed the explosion on a "gas leak".

The bus was carrying around 40 Chinese engineers, surveyors and mechanical staff to a hydropower dam construction site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Islamabad is Beijing's closest regional ally, but the security of Chinese workers has long been of concern in Pakistan. Large numbers of them are based in the country to supervise and build infrastructure projects.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry in a statement said the bus "plunged into a ravine after a mechanical failure, resulting in leakage of gas that caused a blast".

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian expressed his "shock and condemnation over the bombing".



Wreckage: People stand next to the remains of the bus, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday. • AFP

der "attack".

Both countries said nine Chinese workers and three Pakistanis had died in the disaster which happened at around 7 am.

Arif Khan Yousafzai, a senior government official in Kohistan district where the blast happened, said around 28 people were also injured.

They were all airlifted to hospital by the military, officials said.

Cuba restores internet access after protests

Access to social media still blocked

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ADDIS ABABA

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday vowed to repel attacks by Ethiopia's "enemies" after rebels in Tigray launched a fresh offensive to regain territory in the region.

Tigrayan forces this week claimed a series of battlefield gains in a renewed assault that comes two weeks after the federal government declared a unilateral ceasefire in the face of rebel advances.

The latest rebel push followed the stunning recapture of the regional capital Mekele last month from federal forces.

such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter remained blocked on 3G and 4G.

One person has died and over 100 were arrested, including independent journalists and opposition activists, since the anti-government protests over the worst economic crisis in decades broke out.



प्रधानमंत्री/राज्यपाल, वन, संचयन और पर्यावरण मंत्रालय/मिनिस्टरी ऑफ इंवेन्मेंट, फॉरेस्ट और क्लियरेंच चेंगेज़, इंटेरेग्रेटेड रिजोर्केशन, जापुर/Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Integrated Regional Office, Jaipur

कैम्प कार्यालय, कैम्प बन, पंचम तला, सेक्टर-एच, अलीगंज, लखनऊ-226024
Camp Office, Kendeniya Bhawan, 5th Floor, Sector-H, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024,
Email: rooz.lko-mef@gov.in, golmefroku@gmail.com

पत्र संख्या : ४३१/राज./०६/२९/२०१९/एफ.सी.१२२ दिनांक: १५.१०.२०२०

सेवा मंत्री, सासान सचिव (वन), सिविल सचिवालय, राजस्थान शासन, जयपुर, राजस्थान।

Online Proposal No : FP/R/Road/4665/2018

विषय: Diversions of 0.95 ha. of forest land in favour of Project Director, Nuclear Fuel Complex, Rawatbhata, District Chittorgarh for construction of approach road for NFC Kota Project, Site to State Highway-33, at village & Tehsil-Rawatbhata District - Chittorgarh, Rajasthan.

संदर्भ: शासन सचिव (वन), राजस्थान का पत्रक - प.1 (42) वन / 2019, जयपुर, दिनांक - 20.08.2020 महीने,

उपरोक्त विषयक शासन सचिव, वन विभाग, जयपुर के पत्रके प.1 (42) वन / 2019, दिनांक - 16.10.2020 का आशय ग्रहण करने का काट के विसर्जने के लिए विद्युतीय रूप से वाही गर्नी जाकरीर कर्तव्य के समर्पित संवर्तन पर द्वारा प्रेषित गी गयी है। प्रत्युत अनुपालन के परिणामान युद्धी आपको यह सुनिश्चित करना है कि केंद्र सरकार उपरोक्त विषयालयित परियोजना हेतु ०.९५ हेक्टेयर में विद्युतीय क्षेत्र के प्रदान कर्तव्य है।

1. Legal status of the forest land shall remain unchanged.

2. Compensatory afforestation shall be taken up by the Forest Department over 1.9 or 2.0 ha degraded forest land (Samlipattha forest block, Compartment No. 18, Range Chittorgarh, District-Chittorgarh) at the cost of the user agency for plantation of 1670 plants. As far as possible, a mixture of local indigenous species shall be planted and monoculture of any species may be avoided.

3. The cost of compensatory afforestation at the prevailing wage rates as per compensatory afforestation scheme and the cost of survey, demarcation and erection of permanent pillars if required on the CA land shall be deposited in advance with the Forest Department by the project authority. The CA will be maintained for 10 years. The scheme may include appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for works scheduled for subsequent years.

4. The State Government shall charge the Net Present Value (NPV) for the 0.95 ha. forest area to be diverted under the proposal from the user agency as per the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 30/10/2002, 01/08/2003, 29/03/2008, 24/04/2008 and 09/05/2008 in W.P.(C) No. 202/1995 and as per the guidelines issued by the Ministry vide letters No. 5-1/1998-FC (P.L.I) dated 18/09/2003, as well as letter No. 5-2/2006-FC dated 03/10/2006 and 5-3/2007-FC dated 05/02/2009 in this regard.

5. Additional amount of the NPV of the diverted forest land, if any becoming due after finalization of the same by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on receipt of the report from the Expert Committee, Shall be charged by the State Government from the User Agency. The User Agency shall furnish an undertaking to this effect.

6. User agency shall restrict the felling of trees of minimum number in the diverted forest land and the trees shall be felled under the strict supervision of the State Forest Department and the cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the state Forest Department.

7. The complete compliance of the FRA, 2006 shall be ensured by way of prescribed certificate from the concerned District Collector.

8. User Agency shall obtain Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if applicable.

9. The layout plan of the proposal shall not be changed without prior approval of Central Government.

10. No labour camp shall be established on the forestland.

11. Sufficient firewood, preferably the alternate fuel, shall be provided by the User Agency to the labourer after purchasing the same from the State Forest Department or the Forest Development Corporation or any other legal source of alternate fuel.

12. The boundary of the diverted forest land shall be suitably demarcated on ground at the project cost, as per the directions of the concerned Divisional Forest Officer.

13. No additional or new path will be constructed inside the forest area for transportation of construction materials for execution of the project work.

14. The period of diversion under this approval shall be co-terminus with the period of lease to be granted in favour of the user agency or the project life, whichever is less.

15. The forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the project proposal.

16. The forest land proposed to be diverted shall under no circumstances be transferred to any other agencies, department or person without prior approval of Govt. of India.

17. DFO should submit a certificate, certifying that no work has been executed in violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in the said proposal.

18. Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and action would be taken as per the MOEF&CC Guideline F.No. 14-2020-17-FCD-29/01/2018.

19. All the funds received from the user agency under the project shall be transferred/deposited to CAMPA fund only through e-portal (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).

20. The compliance report shall be uploaded on e-portal (<https://parivesh.nic.in/>).

21. Any other condition that the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate change may stipulate from time to time in the interest of conservation, protection and development of forests & wildlife.

After receipt of the compliance report from the State Government on fulfillment of the conditions mentioned above, final/state-II approval of the Central Government, in accordance with Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, will be accorded.

पर्वती, (पाठी गांगवार) उप वन नहानीरक एवं वन अधिकारी, जयपुर

Russia, U.S. have common interests on climate change

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin told United States climate envoy John Kerry that Moscow and Washington have a shared interest in battling climate change, the Kremlin said in a statement on Wednesday, in a rare area of common ground between the rivals.

"The climate problem is one of the areas where Russia and the United States have common interests and similar approaches," Mr. Putin said in a phone call with Mr. Kerry who is visiting Moscow, it said.

The former Secretary of state is in Russia this week to discuss climate change with officials and has called on the country to cooperate with the U.S. on the issue.

Mr. Putin said Moscow "attaches



Vladimir Putin

great importance" to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and "advocates de-politicising" dialogue on climate change.

The comments on a rare point of cooperation between the two countries come after Mr. Putin met U.S. President Joe Biden for talks in Geneva last month. Moscow has welcomed Mr. Biden's visit.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER & BASIN MANAGER,
SUBARNAREKHA & BUDHABALANGA BASIN, AT/PO-LAXMIPOS, DIST: MAYURBHANJ

Government of Odisha "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE

MARKET WATCH

	14-07-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,904	-0.25
US Dollar	74.59	-0.13
Gold	47,024	0.36
Brent oil	75.11	-0.45

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	697.25	-6.75
Asian Paints	3001.95	8.10
Axist Bank	770.00	-0.70
Bajaj Auto	3953.85	-12.25
Bajaj Finserv	12991.20	81.80
Bajaj Finance	6132.90	-20.40
Bharti Airtel	530.05	0.00
BPCL	448.70	-1.55
Britannia Ind	3485.75	0.25
Cipla	977.15	11.50
Coal India	148.15	0.05
Divis Lab	4623.20	17.15
Dr Reddys Lab	5390.85	-46.25
Eicher Motors	2700.00	-6.70
Grafix Ind	1567.80	-8.85
HCL Tech.	989.45	21.50
HDFC	2531.10	-13.80
HDFC Bank	1499.15	-2.70
HDFC Life	688.50	-4.90
Hero MotoCorp	2900.70	-3.40
Hindalco	391.65	-0.60
Hind Unilever	2414.85	-21.85
ICICI Bank	664.35	-0.60
IndusInd Bank	1052.60	-3.30
Infosys	1576.90	31.95
Indian Oil Corp	107.10	-0.70
ITC	204.10	2.25
JSW Steel	700.40	-1.00
Kotak Bank	1748.15	1.00
L&T	1544.70	31.10
M&M	786.15	5.00
Maruti Suzuki	7326.75	-103.60
Nestle India Ltd.	17539.70	-152.20
NTPC	120.75	0.85
ONGC	120.80	0.40
PowerGrid Corp	229.95	1.30
Reliance Ind	2086.00	-13.70
SBI Life	1052.40	-0.25
State Bank	431.05	1.95
Shree Cement	28414.70	344.30
Sun Pharma	685.95	2.95
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	768.20	-4.65
Tata Motors	309.55	-1.40
Tata Steel	1244.70	15.95
TCS	3214.55	27.00
Tech Mahindra	1078.50	28.35
Titan	1710.35	-13.90
UltraTech Cement	7118.05	-10.80
UPL	189.75	-12.20
Wipro	561.70	36.85

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.38	74.70
Euro	87.77	88.85
British Pound	103.14	103.59
Japanese Yen (100)	67.31	67.60
Chinese Yuan	11.50	11.55
Swiss Franc	80.91	81.26
Singapore Dollar	54.87	55.11
Canadian Dollar	59.50	59.76
Malaysian Ringgit	17.70	17.79

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Tata Motors unveils brand for fleet segment

Tata Motors unveiled 'XPRES', an exclusive brand for the fleet segment that is expected to gain traction in the coming months with a high growth potential. Under the brand, the firm will unveil offerings catering to fleet-specific needs. The first vehicle to be introduced as part of the brand will be an electric sedan, called the 'XPRES-T' EV (T for Tata Tigor), the company said.

TCS plans to invest \$300 mn in Arizona

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS) plans to expand its operations in Arizona, U.S. by investing more than \$300 million by 2026. The company said it would hire more than 220 employees by 2023 to meet the digital-transformation needs of its customers. The company's flagship Phoenix Business Center, one of its 30 facilities in the U.S., serves more than 50 customers across Arizona.

Zomato oversubscribed on first day of offering

Food delivery platform Zomato's initial offering was oversubscribed on Wednesday, the opening day, with retail investors bidding for 2.7 times the number of shares reserved for them. The offer received bids for 75.6 crore shares against an IPO size of 71.92 crore, data showed. Against 12.95 crore shares reserved for retail investors, 34.88 crore shares were bid for by 5 p.m. PTI

SAT restrains SEBI till Sept. 15 in Kochhar case

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has restrained SEBI's Adjudicating Officer from proceeding till September 15 in a matter related to ex-ICICI Bank chief Chanda Kochhar. It pertains to a show-cause notice issued by SEBI to Ms. Kochhar on the basis of an analysis of a report by retired Justice B. N. Srikrishna on allegations of quid pro quo transactions in ICICI Bank. PTI

Infosys lifts revenue outlook as net jumps 23% on 'digital' deals

It forecast FY22 revenue growth at 14-16%; to hire 35,000 freshers this year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Tech major Infosys raised its revenue growth guidance for FY22 to 14-16% from 12-14% forecast in April, and posted a jump in net profit as more clients signed digital transformation deals.

For the quarter ended June, Infosys registered a 22.7% rise in net profit to ₹5,195 crore. Revenue rose 18% to ₹27,896 crore.

Landmark quarter'
"It has been a landmark first quarter for us," said CEO and MD Salil Parekh. "We have seen the fastest growth in digital transformation. We grew at the fastest pace in Q1 in a decade in constant-cur-



On a crest: Infosys signed 22 large deals in the first quarter, of which nine were in the BFSI space, says COO Rao. ■ REUTERS

rency terms. This gives us confidence to increase our revenue growth guidance to 14-16%." The quarter brought contracts worth \$2.6 billion to the company's deal kitty compared with \$1.74 billion a year earlier. Digital revenue

grew 42.1% in constant currency. "We signed 22 large deals in the first quarter, of which 9 were in the BFSI vertical while the remaining came from retail, manufacturing and other segments," said COO Pravin Rao.

Unitholders' consent must for winding up mutual funds: SC

Court's ruling comes in Franklin Templeton plea hearing

KRISHNAJAD RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday held that trustees of a mutual fund scheme have to obtain the consent of the unitholders who have invested their money before deciding to wind up the scheme or prematurely redeeming the units.

Trustees cannot assume the air of "domain experts" and treat the unitholders as mere "laypersons" whose consent was not necessary before winding up, it said.

"The argument that the unitholders are laypersons and not well-versed with the market conditions is to be rejected," a Bench of justices



S. Abdul Nazeer and Sanjiv Khanna observed in a judgment. "Investments by the unitholders constitute the corpus of the scheme. To deny the unitholders a say, debilitates their role and right to participate," it added.

The Bench was hearing an appeal filed by Franklin Templeton Trustee Services Private Limited concerning

Dependence on H-1B visas slides: Premji

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) scheme for apparels, garments and made ups with the same rates notified by the Ministry of Textiles in March 2019.

According to an official statement, the scheme would continue till March 31, 2024.

Revised guidelines for continuation and implementation of the RoSCTL scheme shall be prepared by the Ministry of Textiles in consultation with the Department of Revenue with necessary flexibilities to fine-tune the operational details, implementation modalities and scheduling etc.," as per the statement.

Hatsun to raise ₹700 cr. for expansion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Dairy-product maker Hatsun Agro Product Ltd. plans to raise ₹700 crore via private placement of equity shares by way of qualified institutional placement for funding its expansion plans.

On Wednesday, the board also approved a proposal for increasing the company's borrowing limit to ₹1,800 crore from ₹1,500 crore, it said in a regulatory filing.

Hatsun reported an almost 4% growth in its net profit to ₹58.32 crore for the first quarter ended June. Revenue from operations rose 21% to ₹1,545 crore. The board declared an interim dividend of ₹6 per share for FY22.

Area under sugarcane cultivation rises a tad

Sugar output likely at 309 lakh tonne'



Another two lakh tonne is expected to be produced during the special season in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, taking the total production for the current sugar year to 309 lakh tonne. After accounting for a reduction in sugar production on account of diversion of cane juice and B-molasses to ethanol, ISMA estimates production in 2021-2022 season at about 310 lakh tonne.

WPI inflation remains 'high'

June's print for wholesale price gains at 12.07%, fuels costlier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Wholesale price index inched up 0.75% over May's level, with the fuel and power prices index rising 2.9% from the preceding month, the most among major groups in the index.

Wholesale inflation in fuel and power in June was also the highest among the WPI constituents on an annual basis at 32.8%, though it slowed from May's 37.6%.

Infosys said it would hire 35,000 fresh graduates globally in FY22. It has already recruited 10,000 freshers while the rest would be onboarded in the next couple of quarters, said Mr. Rao.

Voluntary attrition rose 300 basis points sequentially to 13.9%. "As the demand for digital talent explodes, rising attrition in the industry poses a near-term challenge. We plan to meet this demand by expanding our hiring programme of [freshers]," Mr. Rao added.

The Wholesale Price Index inched up 0.75% over

May's level, with the fuel and power prices index rising 2.9% from the preceding month, the most among major groups in the index.

"We urge the Government to consider bringing petroleum products in the ambit of GST to rationalise prices," Mr. Aggarwal said, stressing inflation was affecting Indian industry's competitiveness locally and globally.

'Core inflation to rise'

"While the core inflation hardened further to 10.4% in June, from 10% in May, the pace of the month-on-month uptick in this index eased to a four-month low of 0.5%," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, who expects core inflation to rise further in July, before commencing a gradual downturn from August.

The WPI trend could inject 'uneasiness' into the RBI's policy tone by way of spillover risks, she added.

RBI releases draft circular on UCBS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday imposed restrictions on Mastercard Asia / Pacific Pte. Ltd. from on-boarding new domestic customers (debit, credit or prepaid) onto its card network from July 22 for non-compliance with the changes mandated by certain amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

However, the auto industry has expressed concern over the sharp rise in fuel and commodity prices, chip shortage and a possible third wave that may adversely impact demand and production.

"The auto industry is facing headwinds such as a steep rise in commodity prices, chip shortage, and the fear of a third COVID wave," said Kenichi Ayukawa, president of industry body SIAM.

An RBI circular on Storage of Payment System Data dated April 6, 2018, directed all system providers to ensure, within six months, the entire data relating to payment systems operated by them was stored only in India. They were to report compliance and also submit an audit report. In April, RBI had barred American Express and Diners Club from on-boarding new users on similar grounds.

Enhance Your Olympics Quotient

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TREASURE IN YOUR HANDS

OLYMPICS SPECIAL ISSUE

Releasing on 23rd July 2021

OLYMPICS 2021

</div

I am stronger than I was at Rio: Sindhu

Hopes to go one step further than 2016 after working on her technique, fitness and mental skills

TOKYO OLYMPICS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

World champion P.V. Sindhu, who is gearing up for the Tokyo Games, feels she is an improved version of the player who claimed India's first badminton silver at the Olympics.

"I am mentally and physically much stronger compared to the 2016 Rio Olympics where I won a silver," she told *The Hindu*. "I have been working a lot on my physical fitness and the mental aspects, improving my skills and technique."

The 26-year-old also said she was more mature and experienced. "The first objective will be to cut down unforced errors, consistency is very important. You will be watching new weapons for sure," she said.

"Training at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium has definitely helped a lot. [Better to] learn here and understand the court and shuttle

control to be ready for the Olympics rather than take time to do the same in Tokyo in similar conditions," said Sindhu, explaining her move to the indoor stadium this February.

Asked about her coach Park Tae Sang, she said, "Every coach has a different mindset ... Park Tae Sang has been really good. He is supportive and motivating, we gel well."

Sindhu said the "biggest challenge in Tokyo" would be to stay "safe". "Getting tested every day, not meeting anyone is a different proposition altogether," she added.

Won't be easy

"Even though defending champion [Carolina] Marin is missing the Games because of an injury, that doesn't mean it is going to be easy. There are quite a few others who are equally good."

"I don't look at myself as the strongest contender for gold. Every player will be better prepared, with new tech-



Aiming higher: Sindhu says she has added weapons to her armoury. ■ FILE PHOTO

niques and strategies. We should be prepared for this," Sindhu said.

"This is the first time we spent a lot of time in training, improving strokes, which was not the case earlier because of a hectic tournament

schedule. Here, I must thank the Union Sports Ministry, Sports Authority of India, Badminton Association of India, the Telangana government and Suchiira Academy for ensuring I got all that I wanted," she said.

"Finally, I must say that I will miss the fans in Tokyo. But I hope they continue to support me and show their love. All I can say is that I will give my best and hope to be back with gold," Sindhu concluded.

'Tokyo Games will create new stars and legends'

Bach supports the strict measures

REUTERS
TOKYO

The postponed Tokyo Olympic Games will create new "stars and legends" despite a one-year delay, fragmented preparations and the absence of fans in the stadiums, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach said on Wednesday.

"These Games will have high sporting value under the circumstances," Bach told an online media round-table. "We have seen how the athletes persevered and adapted over more than one year..."

"This challenge was the same for all of them. There we will nevertheless see great sport and like in any Olympics new stars will be born there, and new legends will be created."

Bach, who had a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Tokyo 2020 president Hashimoto Seikoto to discuss



Bach with Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga. ■ REUTERS

preparations, said he supported the strict measures imposed on the Games and its participants as it was necessary to help persuade the Japanese population that the Games would not become a super-spreader event.

"We are trying to address the concerns," he said. "We always knew there was scepticism among the population and that there are very special circumstances about which the population is concerned and which transferred to the Olympic Games."

Herbalife to be a sponsor

ANI
NEW DELHI

Nine days ahead of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Wednesday roped in global nutrition company Herbalife as one of its sponsors.

"Herbalife has confirmed a sponsorship of ₹2.25 crore," said Rajeev Mehta, secretary-general, IOA.

Deal with MPL

This came a day after IOA entered into a sponsorship agreement with MPL Sports Foundation as the 'principal sponsor' covering the Tokyo Olympic Games, 2022 Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games.

MPL will pay a total of ₹8 crore to IOA in addition to the sports-kit for the 2022 Asian Games and Commonwealth Games Indian contingent. The IOA said Parth Jindal, CEO, JSW, has confirmed a sponsorship amount of one crore to the governing body.

SHORT TAKES

Sports Minister launches Cheer4India song

NEW DELHI
Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Wednesday launched the 'Cheer4India' song of the country's Olympic contingent and urged the public to wholeheartedly rally behind its athletes during the Tokyo Games. Grammy Award winner composer A.R. Rahman and young singer Ananya Birla collaborated to present the official song of the Indian contingent for the Tokyo Olympics, titled 'Cheer4India: Hindustani Way'. PTI

Opening ceremony: six to take oath this time

TOKYO
The number of oath-takers at the Olympics opening ceremony has been doubled from three to six for the Tokyo Games to ensure gender parity, the IOC said while announcing that the oath has also been reworked slightly to incorporate "inclusion and equality" in it. The Olympic oath is taken by an athlete from the host country, on behalf of all the competitors and the ceremony also includes one coach and a judge. This time, Japan will pick two — one male and one female — for taking oath. PTI



ARCHERY

Men: Tarun Deepak, Atanu Das, Pravin Jadhav

Women: Deepika Kumari

Events will be held from July 23 to 31



BADMINTON

Men's singles: B. Sai Praneeth

Women's singles: P.V. Sindhu

Men's doubles: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty

July 24 to August 2

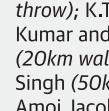


ATHLETICS

Men: Avinash Sable (3000m steeplechase), M.P. Jabin (400m hurdles), M. Sreeshan (long jump); Tajinderpal Singh Toor (shot put); Neeraj Chopra and Shivpal Singh (javelin throw); K.T. Irfan, Sandeep Kumar and Rahul Rohilla (20km walk); Gurpreet Singh (50km walk); Amoj Jacob, Arokia Rajiv, Muhammed Anas, Naganathan Pandi, Noah Nirmal Tom (4x400m relay); Sarthak Bhambhani, Alex Antony (4x400m mixed relay)

Women: Dutee Chand (100m and 200m); Kamalpreet Kaur and Seema Antil-Puri (discus throw); Annu Rani (javelin throw); Bhawna Jat and Priyanka Goswami (20km walk); V. Revathi, V. Subha and S. Dhanalakshmi (4x400m mixed relay)

July 29 to August 1, August 4 to 7



BOXING

Men: Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vilas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg), Satish Kumar (+91kg)

Women: Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjeet Kaur (60kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) | **July 24 to August 8**

EQUESTRIAN

Fouad Mirza | From July 24

FENCING

C.A. Bhavani Devi (sabre) | From July 24

GOLF

Men: Anirban Lahiri, Udayan Mane

Women: Aditi Ashok

July 29 to August 1, August 4 to 7

GYMNASTICS

Pranati Nayak | From July 24

India at the Tokyo Olympics

The list of sportspersons who will carry India's hopes at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics from July 23 to August 8



HOCKEY

MEN'S SQUAD

Goalkeeper: P.R. Sreejesh

Defenders:

Harmapreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Surender Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Birendra Lakra

Midfielders: Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit

Forwards: Shamsher Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjan Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh

July 24 to August 6

JUDO

WOMEN'S SQUAD

Goalkeeper: Savita

Defenders:

Deep Grace Ekka, Nikki Pradhan, Gurjit Kaur, Udit

Midfielders: Nisha Neha, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Monika, Navjot Kaur, Salima Tete

Forwards: Rani, Navneet Kaur, Lalremiama, Vandana Kataria, Sharmila Devi

July 23 to 30

ROWING

Arjun Jat and Arvind Singh (men's lightweight double sculls)

July 24 to August 2

SAILING

Vishnu Saravanan (Laser Standard), KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar (49er)

July 25 to August 4



SHOOTING

MEN

10m Air Rifle: Divyansh Singh Panwar, Deepak Kumar

10m Air Pistol: Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma

50m Rifle 3 Position: Sanjeev Rajput, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar

Skeet: Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, Mairaj Ahmad Khan

WOMEN

10m Air Rifle: Apurvi Chandela, Elavenil Varalaru

10m Air Pistol: Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal

25m Sports Pistol: Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker

50m Rifle 3 Position: Anjum Moudgil, Tejaswini Sawant

10m Air Rifle Mixed Team: Divyansh Singh Panwar and Elavenil Varalaru, Deepak Kumar and Anjum Moudgil

10m Air Pistol Mixed Team: Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Bhaker, Abhishek Verma and Yashaswini Singh Deswal

July 24 to August 2



TABLE TENNIS

Men's singles: Sharath Kamal, G. Sathiyan

Women's singles: Manika Batra, Sutirtha Mukherjee

Mixed doubles: Manika Batra and Sharath Kamal

July 24 to August 6



TENNIS

Women's doubles: Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina

July 24 to August 1



WEIGHTLIFTING

Mirabai Chanu (Women's 49kg)

July 24 to August 4



WRESTLING

Men: Ravi Kumar Dahiya (Freestyle, 57kg), Bajrang Punia (Freestyle, 65kg), Deepak Punia (Freestyle, 86kg)

Women: Seema Bisla (Freestyle, 50kg), Vinesh Phogat (Freestyle 53kg), Anshu Malik (Freestyle 57kg), Sonam Malik (Freestyle 62kg)

August 1 to 7

ICC confirms new points system

Dhawan's motto: keep the flock together

We have a lovely bunch of boys, great support staff, and have worked earlier too'



British Open set to tee off today

Packed galleries expected as U.S. Open champion Rahm starts favourite

GOLF

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SANDWICH

The British Open returns after a two-year hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic on Thursday with galleries of up to 32,000 fans allowed in to savor a sight of the world's best golfers at Royal St. George's.

Ireland's Shane Lowry will defend the Claret Jug in the 149th Open Championship, but despite the return of play and patrons, COVID-19 still casts a shadow over the final Major of the year.

Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama, two-time Major winner Bubba Watson and former British Open winner Zack Johnson have all withdrawn after either testing positive for COVID-19 or being deemed a Covid close contact.

Strict rules

Tournament organisers the R&A recently informed players that the championship will "operate under strict government oversight", with guidelines which prohibit players from going to bars, restaurants



Getting ready: Jon Rahm practising his chip shot on the eve of the British Open. • AFP

and supermarkets during tournament week.

Spain's Jon Rahm is the bookies' favourite thanks to his scintillating form that saw him claim his first Major at the U.S. Open last month and briefly move to World No. 1 before being deposed by Dustin Johnson.

Rahm admitted his surprise at the size of the galleries given Britain's series of strict lockdowns and restrictions on foreign travel.

"I did not expect this tournament to be the first one we're going to have full

crowds, just because of the lockdown and limitations and all," said Rahm. "I am very excited. We've missed it."

Home support

Tommy Fleetwood can count on home support as he aims to become the first English champion since Nick Faldo in 1992 and believes players are now used to dealing with the complexities of coronavirus protocols.

Rory McIlroy will be hoping there is more luck for

Northern Ireland in Sandwich, where Darren Clarke won his only Major when the Open was last played at Royal St George's 10 years ago.

The four-time Major champion has struggled since returning to links courses in recent weeks, finishing in a tie for 59th at the Irish Open and failing to make the cut at the Scottish Open.

It is seven years since the 32-year-old last won a Major but McIlroy has five top-10 finishes at the British Open.

TV PICKS

Golf: The Open Championship, Eurosport (SD & HD), 11 a.m. & 9.15 p.m.
Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 5 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Mushfiqur to miss rest of Zimbabwe tour
DHAKA
Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim will leave Bangladesh's tour of Zimbabwe on Wednesday for family reasons, the national board said. Mushfiqur will miss Bangladesh's three ODIs and as many T20Is. AFP

Morgan returns to lead England in T20I series
BIRMINGHAM
Eoin Morgan has been cleared to lead England in an upcoming T20I series against Pakistan it was announced on Wednesday after he missed the team's ODI clean sweep following a COVID-19 outbreak within the hosts' camp. The three matches of the T20I series will be held on July 16, 18 and 20.

Wasim Jaffer named Odisha chief coach
CUTTACK
Wasim Jaffer was on Wednesday named the chief coach of the Odisha senior side. "He (Jaffer) will be the head coach. He has been given a two-year contract," Subrata Behera, CEO, Odisha Cricket Association said. PTI

Trayvon Bromell bounces back to win 100m
ATHLETICS
AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
GATESHEAD (UK)

US sprinter Trayvon Bromell won the men's 100m at the British Grand Prix here on Tuesday as Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah took the honours in the women's 200m.

Bromell, the fastest man in the world this year, won in 9.98 seconds, with Britain's Chijindu Ujah second in 10.10 at the Diamond League event.

It was a welcome return to form for Bromell, 26, who

has a fastest time of 9.77 in 2021 but trailed home in fifth place at the Monaco Diamond League meeting on Friday.

Vince's century helps England sweep series

PAKISTAN IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
BIRMINGHAM

James Vince hit a maiden One-Day International century and Lewis Gregory made 77 as England defeated Pakistan by three wickets at Edgbaston on Tuesday to complete a 3-0 series sweep.

Set a challenging 332 to win, England, without most of its first-choice players, was faltering at 165 five.

Big partnership
But a partnership of 129 between Vince, who made 102, and Gregory turned the tide.

England won with two overs to spare when Brydon Carse, who had earlier taken five wickets, drove Shaeen Shah Afridi for a boundary.

The scores: Pakistan 331/9 in



James Vince. • GETTY IMAGES

50 overs lost to England 332/7 in 48 overs (James Vince 102, Lewis Gregory 77, Haris Rauf 4/65). England won by three wickets with 12 balls to spare, clinches three-match series 3-0.

Player-of-the-match: James Vince; **Player-of-the-series:** Saqib Mahmood.

Wimbledon: two matches being probed

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LONDON

Two matches at this year's Wimbledon are being investigated by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) over potential irregular betting patterns.

The ITIA, which is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of professional tennis worldwide, received two alerts from the betting industry during the grass-court Grand Slam.

The matches were reported by German newspaper *Die Welt* to be an early-round singles tie and a men's doubles contest.

Online Olympiad to begin next month

Seeded seventh, India ended up as joint champion last year

CHESS

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

After the resounding success of the first Online Olympiad, world chess governing body FIDE has announced the schedule of its second edition. It will be held from August 13 to September 15.

Last year, more than 1,500 players had competed, representing 163 countries. India and Russia were declared the joint champions, though in controversial circumstances.

India had lost the final, but it lodged an appeal to FIDE, pointing out that it was due to an internet outage that India lost two

games. FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich decided that the gold should be shared. Some of the Russian players were not happy with that decision and even went public with their displeasure.

Fine show
Nobody could have had any dispute about India's fine show in the tournament, though. A star-studded team featuring Viswanathan Anand, Vidit Gujrathi, P. Harikrishna, K. Humpy, D. Harika, R. Vaishali, Bhakti Kularki, Nihal Sarin, R. Praggnanandhaa, Aravindh Chithambaram, Bhakti Kularki, Divya Deshmukh and Vanitha Agrawal, had put up a great display right through after beginning its campaign as the seventh seed.

"I am looking forward to the second edition of the Online Olympiad," Humpy told *The Hindu* on Wednesday. "I hope we will be able to field all the strong players that we could last year."

She said the format – a team is required to field men, women and juniors – suited India well. "We have some of the world's best young players in Nihal, Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali, and they had made a big difference last year," said the World No. 3.

"It felt great to be the joint champion in such a strong event in which most of the world's best players took part. I think we should be able to do well in this year's tournament too."

"On taking COVID-19 PCR

bronze and 200m silver at the Rio Games, was fourth.

Jamaica's Thompson-Herah, who won gold in the 100m and 200m at the 2016 Olympics, triumphed in the 200m in 22.43, with British world champion Dina Asher-Smith absent due to a tight hamstring.

Dutch athlete Femke Bol won the women's 400m hurdles in 53.24.

Stars absent
The event was without a host of stars but dozens of British athletes were competing before flying to Tokyo.

Canadian Andre De Grasse, who won 100m

bronze and 200m silver at the Rio Games, was fourth.

West Indies spinner Fabian Allen on Wednesday moved into the top 10 of the ICC Men's T20I player rankings. The 26-year-old left-arm spinner has gained 16 spots to reach 10th position in the bowlers' list after grabbing three wickets in the first three matches, which have all been won by the West Indies.

In the ICC Men's ODI player rankings update, Babar Azam has consolidated his position at the top.

Bromell bounces back to win 100m

ATHLETICS

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
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Trayvon Bromell. • AFP

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Canadian Andre De Grasse, who won 100m

Ramkumar loses in doubles

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
NEWPORT (USA)

Ramkumar Ramanathan, in partnership with Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi of Pakistan, was beaten 1-6, 7-5, [10-7] in the doubles quarterfinals by the Japanese pair of Yoshihito Nishioka and Yasutaka Uchiyama in the \$535,535 ATP tennis tournament on grass here on Tuesday.

Other result: \$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Singles (first round): Bruno Pujol Navarro (Esp) bt Adil Karlyanpu 6-3, 4-6, 6-1.

Bolt returns on track as part of exhibition, clocks 2:40 in 800m

ANI
KINGSTON

Usain Bolt came out of retirement for one day on Tuesday here in Jamaica for a promotional race – trying his famously fast stride for the first time in the 800m.

The world record holder in the 100m and 200m and an eight-time Olympic gold medallist clocked an unofficial time of 2:40 in what was a relaxed, fun atmosphere.

Fans had high expectations going into the race, but they did not get the result they hoped for as Bolt maintained his easy gait for the entire race.

"Hats off to the 800m runners. But for me, I enjoy a challenge," Olympics.com quoted Bolt after the exhibition race.

I did a lot of cardio" to get ready, Bolt added. Asked if this was the start of a comeback, Bolt was quick to respond: "No, no, this is a one-time thing."



Bolt. • FILE PHOTO

Kuldeep Malik confident of another successful campaign in Tokyo

The Indian squad is a blend of youth and experience

WRESTLING

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

For the first time, more women wrestlers are going to represent the country in the Olympics than their male counterparts, and women's squad chief coach Kuldeep Malik is confident of another successful campaign in Tokyo.

Four women – Seema Bisla (50kg), Vinesh Phogat (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg) and Sonam Malak (62kg) – and three men qualified for the Rio Games. Sakshi Malik (65kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg) – have made it to the Tokyo this time after the suspension of Sumit Malik (125kg) due to a doping offence.

Encouraged by the increase in the number of quota places for women, Malik expects a better show from



Kuldeep Malik. • TWITTER

fence. Five years ago, four men – two each in freestyle (after the suspension of Narasingh Yadav due to doping) and Greco Roman – and three women had qualified for the Rio Games. Sakshi Malik had emerged as the first woman wrestler from the country to get an Olympic medal.

Malik, who recently returned from camps in Poland and Estonia, counted the benefits of the exposure.

"Wrestlers, including those who have qualified for the Olympics, from nearly 10 countries were there. Apart from sparring, we gathered a lot of ideas about our opponents."

Malik will now oversee a 12-day camp which began on

Wednesday at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre in Sonepat. Seema, Anshu and Sonam will take part in it. The wrestlers will leave for Tokyo on July 26. Vinesh, who has been training with her personal coach Woller Akos in Hungary, will join the squad directly.

Malik, who recently lifted Sakshi on his shoulders after she bagged a bronze medal in Rio, said he would do so again if anyone won a medal in Tokyo.

"Definitely. We should all pray for such success again. I do not lift a wrestler on my shoulders, it is the whole country which lifts her up... We are among the best of the best and our opponents now fear us," said Malik.

Help yourself to the medals!

OLYMPICS

REUTERS
TOKYO

Olympic champions at the Tokyo Games starting next week can forget about having their medals hung around their necks as they stand on the podium, shaking hands with dignitaries and soaking up their success.

Instead, the three medals will be presented on a tray to the athletes on the podium and they then have to hang them around their own neck in front of the empty stands. There will also be no handshakes or hugs.

"They will be presented to the athlete on a tray and the athlete will take the medal himself," he added.

The Olympics has lost much public support in Japan because of fears it will trigger a surge of infections even though no spectators will be allowed into sports venues and there are strict health measures in place for all participants.



Rewarding excellence: The medals that will be given out at the Tokyo Games • REUTERS

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The Olympics has lost much public support in Japan because of fears it will trigger a surge of infections even though no spectators will be allowed into sports venues and there are strict health measures in place for all participants.

The executive committee members also unanimously adjudged Fijian striker Roy Krishna as the best footballer of 2020-21, having guided ATK Mohun Bagan to the runner-up finish in the Indian Super League.