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NEARBY



They are not gangsters: court on handcuffs plea

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court dismissed the plea by authorities to produce former JNU student Umar Khalid and Union Minister Khalid Saifi, arrested in connection with the north-east Delhi riots, in "fetters and handcuffs", saying they are not previous convicts or gangsters.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

'If pizza can be delivered at home, why not ration'

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow doorstep delivery of ration. "If pizza can be home-delivered then why should ration not be delivered to the houses of the poor," he asked.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

At 381, Delhi sees lowest virus cases since March 15

NEW DELHI

The city on Sunday recorded 381 fresh COVID-19 cases and 34 more deaths, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The number of new infections was the lowest since March 15 and the death toll the lowest in nearly two months.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 5

Punjab, T.N. and Kerala top education index ranking

Gujarat loses ground in grading of school education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have all scored higher than 90% in the Education Ministry's Performance Grading Index for 2019-20.

Gujarat dropped from second to eighth rank in the index, while Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are the only States which have seen actual regression in scores over this period.

The index monitors the progress that the States and Union Territories have made in school education with regard to learning outcomes, access and equity, infrastructure and facilities, and governance and management processes.

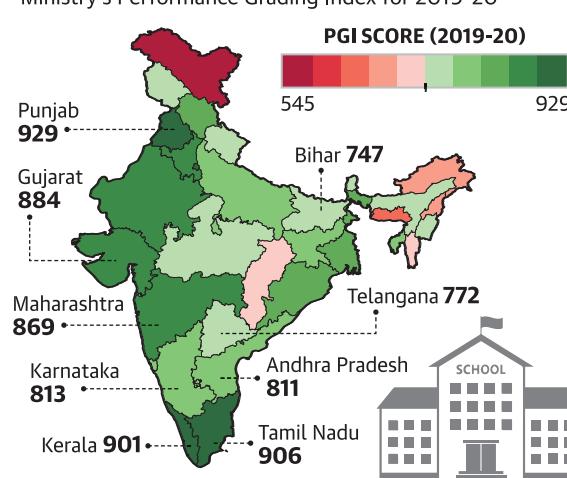
Huge jump

Punjab recorded the highest score of almost 929 out of a possible 1,000, showing a huge jump from 769 last year. The State topped the charts in terms of equity, infrastructure and governance, and shared the top spot in the domain of access with Kerala.

In fact, Punjab overtook the Union Territory of Chandigarh, which topped both previous editions of the index, but has now slid to se-

Grade sheet

Three States, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, attained a score of more than 900 out of 1,000 in the Education Ministry's Performance Grading Index for 2019-20.



cond place with a score of 912.

Tamil Nadu also overtook Kerala, with a score of 906, largely driven by improvements in the State's educational governance and management, as well as in terms of infrastructure and facilities.

Gujarat, which had the second highest score in the previous edition, dropped to eighth place. It regressed in the key domain of access, which measures enrolment of students in school and the ability to keep them from

dropping out as well as mainstreaming out-of-school students. Its progress in other areas also did not keep pace with other States.

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh saw a glaring drop in their scores, pushing both States to an overall performance that was worse than in the previous edition.

The new Union Territory of Ladakh was included separately for the first time in this edition, and had the lowest score of just 545.

For the study, 515 health care workers from 13 States

continued on ▶ PAGE 8

More anti-bodies produced by Covishield than Covaxin: study

It tracked 515 vaccinated people across 22 cities

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Two doses of Covishield vaccine produced more antibodies than Covaxin doses, but there were relatively fewer instances of 'breakthrough infections' after taking Covaxin.

The study is being peer-reviewed and has been submitted to a journal but appears as a preprint in MedrXiv, an online repository, and is among the few studies of the real-world effectiveness of vaccination in India.

The study shows that none of the participants, who were all doctors and got both doses of vaccines, were ill and only about 6% tested positive at different points of the vaccination schedule. While both vaccines were protective, there were differences in the protection accorded by a single dose of the vaccines.

Due to the shortage, it's easier for people to get a single dose – given that the recommended gap has been extended to as many as 12 weeks for Covishield.

For the study, 515 health care workers from 13 States

Tale of two vaccines |

A study of the real-world effectiveness of vaccination in India shows the differences in the protection accorded by Covishield and Covaxin:



- It was a pan-India exercise studying vaccine responses in doctors across 13 States and 22 cities
- Among the 515 healthcare workers (305 male and 210 female), 95% showed seropositivity after two doses of both vaccines
- Overall, anti-bodies towards the spike

- protein were higher in Covishield than Covaxin
- There were relatively fewer instances of 'breakthrough infections' after taking Covaxin
- Mild to moderate adverse events associated with both vaccines were similar, and none had severe or unsolicited side-effects

Maharashtra is in talks to get Sputnik doses'

With vaccination for the 18-44 age group proceeding extremely slowly in Maharashtra owing to a severe vaccine paucity, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said a large stock of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine will be available in the State from July. ▶ PAGE 10

and covering 22 cities were evaluated from January to May 2021. Their blood samples were also tested for the presence, quantity of antibodies produced and levels of the specific antibodies di-

India records highest daily deaths in world

India recorded 99,117 new COVID-19 cases and 2,401 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Sunday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,89,07,560 cases and 3,49,186 deaths. It also continued to record the highest daily deaths in the world. ▶ PAGE 10

Online group digs into virus leak theory

When it was proposed about a year ago, talk of an original lab-leaked virus was dismissed as a conspiracy theory. A year later, that theory is back in the reckoning, teased out of its conspiratorial hues and summoned into the limelight. ▶ PAGE 11

rowed the gap somewhat, with Covishield-triggered anti-bodies about six times that of Covaxin-stimulated ones, the study found.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Farmers' convoy from Haryana heads to protest site in Delhi

More people expected to regroup at national capital: SKM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A large number of farmers in a convoy of hundreds of vehicles from Haryana's Ambala on Sunday reached the Singhu border outside Delhi, which has been the site of protests by the farmers' unions. The unions said more farmers from Haryana were expected to join the protest sites in the next few days.

Led by Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) president Gurnam Singh Charuni, the

convoy, mostly comprising cars with black flags, set off from Ambala through Karnal and Panipat on the Delhi-Ambala highway.

BKU's spokesperson Rakesh Bains claimed that around 3,500 vehicles were part of the convoy. He added that another convoy from Haryana's Panipat would join the site on June 10.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), in a press statement, claimed that a large number of protesters conti-

nued to pour into various sites at the Singhu border, the Tikri border, Ghazipur and other locations.

"While the spin doctors of BJP continue to try to create an image of dwindling numbers at the protest sites, the government should know that quite the opposite is the case, and all protest sites are witnessing a huge surge of protesters joining the sites," said the press statement.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Since February pact, all quiet on Line of Control
'No infiltration bids for over 100 days'



Keeping watch: In this file photo, BSF jawans guard the snow-covered border near the LoC in Kashmir. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

There has been no exchange of fire nor infiltration attempts from across the Line of Control (LoC) for over 100 days since the commitment by India and Pakistan to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire, two defence officials on the ground said.

"There have been no infiltration attempts so far. No reported infiltration as well. However, the presence of terrorists at launch pads is reported. There has not been any reduction in the numbers," a senior officer on the ground said. "The border population is the biggest beneficiary. It is a huge

relief for the villagers as they are able to move freely as no firing is taking place."

As per data from the Army, last year there were over 4,600 ceasefire violations (CFVs) and 592 CFVs this year till the commitment came into effect on February 25. For comparison, till June 1, 2020, there were 1,531 CFVs.

However, smuggling continues as there are several villages ahead of the LoC fence, the officer said. In these 100 days, there have been major seizures of narcotics and improvised explosive device materials, grenades and pistols, he added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'New rules only to check misuse of social media'

Will benefit 100 cr. users, says Prasad

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

NEW DELHI

Amid Twitter and WhatsApp pushing back against the government's new rules for social media platforms, IT and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the rules only benefit the over 100 crore users of such platforms by giving them a means to address their grievances.

"...These are basically the rights of the users against misuse [of social media platforms]. Any robust democracy, which allows freedom of speech and expression, must

also allow a forum for redressal of complaints," Mr. Prasad said.

The Minister again stressed that these platforms will have to abide by the laws in India. "The way social media has empowered ordinary Indians is a matter of great assurance... But a private company sitting in America should refrain from lecturing us on democracy when you are denying your users the right to an effective redressal forum," he said.

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 9

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CM YK

50% of metro life back on track from today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The second phase of the "unlock" process will begin in the Capital on Monday morning with malls and markets, which have been shut since the lockdown was enforced on April 19, opening on an odd-even basis.

The Delhi Metro services

will restart with 50% capacity and trains will run at an interval of 5-15 minutes. Private offices will operate with 50% staff while those working in essential services can work at 100% capacity.

All neighbourhood shops have been allowed to function, including liquor vends. Shops selling essential goods,

REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 3

Forum IAS MAINS'21

Timings
DELHI
MONDAY, JUN. 07
RISE 05:24 SET 19:18
RISE 03:21 SET 16:38
TUESDAY, JUN. 08
RISE 05:24 SET 19:18
RISE 03:53 SET 17:33
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 09
RISE 05:23 SET 19:19
RISE 04:27 SET 18:27

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	24
Safdarjung	38	24
Palam	38	25

Delhi Palam Today
41°C A hot day will prevail. Short spell thunderstorm or light rain with gusty winds may occur at few places.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
42°C Another hot day and warm evening likely. Dry weather with moderate gusty winds during day.

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Caretaker kills elderly woman during robbery

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 75-year-old woman was strangled to death allegedly by her caretaker and his two accomplices during a robbery at her flat in Hari Nagar, the police said on Sunday.

The 22-year-old caretaker, Monu, hatched a conspiracy along with Vishal and Naveen to rob the woman as she was an "easy target", they said, adding that all of them were arrested from Burari.

The woman has been identified as Savitri Sharma, DCP (West) Urvija Goel said: "We received information on June 1 that Savitri was admitted to Orchid Hospital in an unconscious state. Prima facie, the matter seemed to be of attempt to murder as there were strangulation marks on her neck. She later succumbed to injuries."

During interrogation, suspicion grew on the caretaker as he kept changing his statements, the DCP said. With the help of technical surveillance, it was confirmed that on the day of incident, Monu had come to the spot with two unidentified people. When Monu was confronted, he confessed to the crime.

On May 31, Monu and Vishal went inside the flat while Naveen kept an eye on possible threats to them. After entering the flat, Monu and Vishal assaulted the woman and asked her where she kept cash and valuables. When she refused, both of them strangled her and fled the spot with cash and jewellery.

The police have recovered a pair of earrings, ₹2,000 cash and the motorcycle used in the offence from the accused.

If pizza can be home-delivered, why not ration, Kejriwal asks PM

CM urges Modi to give go-ahead to scheme promising doorstep delivery of ration

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow doorstep delivery of ration of the Delhi government. The scheme was scheduled to be rolled out from this week but did not receive the go-ahead from the Centre.

In a digital address, Mr. Kejriwal questioned Mr. Modi and the Central government on the reasons behind rejecting the scheme, which he said, was going to end the rule of "ration mafia" that had victimised the poor of the country.

He said the Central government has said the scheme is being stopped due to a case involving ration shopkeepers in the High Court, but neither has the court stayed the scheme nor has the Centre put forward any objection in the court. Mr. Kejriwal said the Delhi government had taken the approval of the Centre five times and in spite of no such legal obligations of the government to do so to start the scheme.

'Adhered to all demands'
"We adhered to all the demands of the Centre. You had objected that we cannot name this scheme after the Chief Minister, and we removed the name of the scheme. Our goal was not to make our name shine. We ac-



Differently abled people collect free ration distributed by various organisations at Surajmal Vihar in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

cepted all the objections you made. After all this, you say that we did not take your approval. How else to get approval, sir? Even after that, you rejected this scheme. Why sir?" Mr. Kejriwal asked Mr. Modi.

"If Pizza can be home-delivered, burgers can be home-delivered, smartphones and clothes can also be home-delivered, then why should ration not be delivered to the houses of the poor? The entire country wants to know why did you reject the scheme?" Mr. Kejriwal asked the Prime Minister.

He added that no government has dared to end the "ration mafia" and that the scheme would also help in the containment of the

spread of COVID-19. "For the first time, a government has come to Delhi which has shown this courage. If this house-to-house ration system was implemented, then the ration mafia would end. But look how powerful this ration mafia turned out to be. This plan was to be implemented in Delhi from next week and a week ago, they got it rejected," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Calling it a matter of national interest, Mr. Kejriwal asked why the Central government was fighting with States as they needed to come together to fight COVID-19.

"The Central government is fighting with Mamata Didi, Jharkhand government, Lakshadweep people, Maharashtra government, Delhi,

and with the farmers. People have started saying that the Centre is fighting the most," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Beneficiaries under the scheme would have received 4kg wheat flour (atta), 1kg rice and sugar per person at the convenience of their homes as against the current provision of 4 kg wheat, 1 kg rice and sugar from fair price shops.

The new scheme would have enabled a person to get wheat flour instead of wheat. All the ration would have been delivered to the door-step of the beneficiary in hygienically packaged form thereby cutting several trips for a common man to the ration shop and local miller, the government said.

BJP has no interest in preventing ration theft, alleges Deputy CM

Patra says Delhi govt. can't tweak or stop national programme

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Sunday alleged that the BJP has no interest in preventing the theft of ration or keeping a check on its black marketing but was only hurling "abuses" at Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

The BJP claimed that the Centre has forestalled a "big scam", which the Delhi government would have committed by "diverting" subsidised food grains.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Delhi government is free to run such a scheme by purchasing grains at a notified rate, but it has no right to tweak or stop a national programme of subsidised ration distribution under the Food Security Act to launch its own plan.

"We will never know to whom Kejriwal is giving ration to. He wanted to launch a ration diverting system. He wanted to start a big scam as the ration would not reach the right person and nobody knows where it might have gone..." The Centre has prevented a big scam from taking place," the BJP spokesperson said.

• We will never know to whom Kejriwal is giving ration to. He wanted to launch a ration diverting system...The Centre has prevented a big scam

SAMBIT PATRA
BJP spokesperson

Mr. Sisodia said the BJP leader (Mr. Patra) did not talk about ration theft in the country and has misplaced priorities in the times of crisis.

"Kejriwal has appealed to the PM for approval of doorstep delivery of ration in Delhi. We were hopeful that our appeals were being heard by the right people but instead, Mr. Patra in his press conference berated Mr. Kejriwal," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

'Ration is stolen'
He said the BJP claimed that 80 crore citizens in India receive ration but conveniently missed out on the crucial information on how much of this ration is stolen and sold on a large scale, and how many have to suffer because of this.

"The BJP has no interest in eliminating the black marketing of ration in the nation. They want that this shadow economy of ration should thrive and the poor in our country should keep on suffering. If someone tries to stop this illicit black marketing, they have to hear reprehensible statements from the mouth of BJP leaders," Mr. Sisodia added.

On the claims from the BJP that the Delhi government wants to earn an extra buck through ration distribution, Mr. Sisodia said the Centre has released an order wherein State governments can charge an additional ₹3 if they wish to provide ground-ed wheat to people.

Haryana government charges ₹3 and distributes flour [atta] instead of ration. Whereas the Delhi government charges only ₹2 for the same and also delivers ration to homes of people. All is well when the BJP-ruled States distribute ration for ₹3 but when the Delhi government decides to start doorstep delivery of ration to households of the poor, they have a huge problem," Mr. Sisodia said.

Delhi records lowest daily virus cases since March 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The city on Sunday recorded 381 fresh COVID-19 cases and 34 more deaths, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

The number of new infections recorded was the lowest since March 15 and the number of deaths was the lowest in nearly two months. The bulletin showed that 76,857 tests were conducted in 24 hours with a positivity rate of 0.50%.

The city now has 5,889 active cases, which is down from 6,731 a day before, the bulletin said. The number of people under home isolation dipped to 2,327 from 2,855 on Saturday. The total number of cases reported in the city so far stood at 14,29,244 with the total number of deaths at 24,591.

On Saturday, the city had recorded 60 fatalities and 414 new cases of COVID-19 with a positivity rate of 0.53%. The day before, Delhi had recorded 50 deaths and 448 cases was reported on May 3.

The bulletin also said 58,091 beneficiaries had been vaccinated in 24 hours, of which, 42,823 got the first dose.



A man undergoes a COVID test at GTK Road on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

positivity rate of 0.68%. Delhi had recorded 623 cases and 62 deaths on Tuesday, 576 cases and 103 fatalities on Wednesday, and 487 cases and 45 deaths on Thursday.

On April 20, Delhi had reported 28,395 cases, the highest in the city since the beginning of the pandemic. On April 22 the case positivity rate was 36.2%, the highest so far. The highest number of 448 deaths was reported on May 3.

The bulletin also said 58,091 beneficiaries had been vaccinated in 24 hours, of which, 42,823 got the first dose.

Police inform shopkeepers about new guidelines

Markets in city set to open partially from today with COVID regulations in place

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

As markets are set to open partially from Monday, Delhi Police briefed the shopkeepers and Market Welfare Association (MWA) representatives at various markets across the city on the latest DDMA guidelines.

According to the police, they have been asked to create markings outside their shops and in the market spaces to ensure social distancing, especially among customers.

They need to ensure that customers follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and stand in marked squares or circles outside respective shops. Also, volunteers have been deployed to ensure that shopkeepers and their staff follow the instructions and take necessary precautions.

DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh said: "We have briefed MWA about using staggered timings for staff and opening shops on an odd-even basis to ensure sufficient distancing among shoppers.

PARVINDER SINGH
DCP (Outer)



Workers sanitise the Cross River Mall in Shahdara on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

couraged them to put markings for social distancing."

On Saturday, police personnel deployed at Outer district also distributed free masks. Also, violators were

greeted with flowers at picket points to remind them to follow COVID guidelines.

In some areas, the police encouraged shopkeepers and individuals to take a COVID pledge to follow the precautions at all times.

South Delhi's Lajpat Nagar Central Market, which usually attracts a bigger crowd, will be operational from Tuesday.

"We have held meetings with MWA members. As per DDMA order, we along with MWA members will ensure that COVID-appropriate be-

haviour is followed. At least 20 policemen will be deployed at the Central Market in Lajpat Nagar. Besides this, RWAs volunteers will also be present at the site," an officer said.

Regular announcements and distribution of pamphlets will be done by the policemen and the MWA.

Another officer said: "Extra pickets are being set up. Also, patrolling will be intensified as the unlocking begins tomorrow [Monday]."

Near liquor shops

In case, the liquor shops witness heavy crowds, extra police teams will be deployed to ensure compliance of DDMA order, he added.

According to police data, a total of 1,22,010 challans were issued during lockdown from April 19 to June 5 of which, 1,02,645 people were prosecuted for mask violation, 17,646 for violating social distancing, 1,526 for holding large public gathering or congregation, 72 for spitting, 121 for consumption of liquor, pan or tobacco.

"It is becoming a serious issue as a lot of people in the 18-44 group are nearing their date for the second dose. We are also hearing reports that people are travelling 100-200 km to Meerut, Bulandshahr to get their shots because there are no vaccines in Delhi," Ms. Atishi said.

She added that when youth gets vaccinated in large numbers, the 45+ age group will also be encouraged to come out. "Seeing the youth getting vaccinated will also reduce their hesitancy to vaccinate," she said.

THE HINDU
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THE HINDU

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'Delhi needs to learn from other parts of country, vaccinate more'

For possible third wave, experts recommend overestimating cases, high-level inquiry on oxygen shortage, focus on mental health among other measures

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government should pay more attention to happenings in other parts of the country in order to prepare for the potential third COVID wave, experts said, adding that there is a need for better coordination with the Centre and conducting more vaccinations.

They said there should be better genome sequencing of the virus and sharing of its data. When the second wave hit the city, there was an extreme shortage of beds as people oscillated between hospitals. The city also faced a grave oxygen shortage and many people died in hospitals.

'Did not predict'
The Delhi government had termed the scale of the second wave as "unexpected" and said it did not predict it.

After a peak in November, the cases fell through December and January and the government slowly opened



A man gets vaccinated; a COVID-19 patient on oxygen support waits outside the Lok Nayak Hospital for admission in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTOS: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR



A COVID-19 patient on oxygen support waits outside the Lok Nayak Hospital for admission in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTOS: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

IN BRIEF



Kerala govt. to ensure internet access for all

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has convened a meeting of internet service providers on June 10 as part of the efforts to ensure connectivity for all students. Several students in the State, including in tribal areas, have been finding it difficult to attend online classes for want of internet access.

Maoist leader dies during COVID-19 treatment

HYDERABAD
Senior Maoist leader Gaddam Madhukar, who was arrested on June 1, died during COVID-19 treatment at a hospital here in Telangana on Sunday. He had been in hiding for over two decades and had come out of the Dandakaranya forests of Chhattisgarh for treatment when the police arrested him.

'If high command says, I will resign'

Both supporters, detractors back Yediyurappa

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU
Amid undying campaign for leadership change in the State, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday said he would resign "if the BJP high command asked him to do so," forcing the party to rally behind him.

While his supporters came out in open support, with senior Ministers criticising campaigns for leadership change amid the pandemic, his detractors, including those campaigning to replace him, were forced to announce he was their leader in the State. Multiple sources

SIT may question Kerala BJP chief's son

Police claim he was in contact over phone with the RSS worker carrying money in Kodakara case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Kodakara black money case may question Kerala BJP president K. Surendran's son.

The case pertains to the looting of ₹3.5 crore – allegedly meant for spending for the Assembly elections – by a gang near Kodakara in Thrissur after waylaying a car on April 3.

The police found that Harikrishnan, Mr. Surendran's son, had been in constant touch over phone with Dharmarajan, the RSS worker who was carrying the money. It is suspected that they met at Konni during the election campaign. Twenty-four-year-old Mr. Harikrishnan was active in the BJP's election campaign.

The SIT has already questioned Mr. Surendran's driver and secretary. Both told the team that they had con-



Clearing the air: Union Minister V. Muraleedharan, flanked by BJP leader Kummanam Rajasekharan and party chief K. Surendran, speaking in Kochi on Sunday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

tacted Mr. Dharmarajan over distribution of campaign material. The police may question Mr. Surendran soon.

The police now suspect that the black money involved in the case was around ₹10 crore. They suspect that Mr. Dharmarajan, who brought ₹10 crore, handed over ₹6.5 crore in Thrissur. The remaining ₹3.5 crore was stolen at Kodaka-

ra, as per the police.

Meanwhile in Kochi, leaders of the BJP alleged that the State government was out to malign the party and its leaders on the Kodakara issue.

'Bid to malign BJP'

Speaking to media persons before a core committee meeting of the party, senior leaders Kummanam Rajasekharan, Union Minister V.

Muraleedharan and Mr. Surendran said the police were targeting the complainant rather than tracking down the accused in the case.

The police were out to defame the party and to finish it off, which would be resisted. The party leaders would rally together to defend the organisation and oppose such attempts, they said.

The police were not investigating the connection some of the accused in the case had with the CPI(M) and the CPI. The role of a CPI legislator and some of the AIYF activists in the case had to be probed, they demanded.

On a question whether the party would ask for a probe by the Enforcement Directorate, Mr. Muraleedharan said there were certain legal formalities for the Central agency to take over the investigation.

Mr. Surendran said he was unnecessarily being targeted

by the police and implicated in cases.

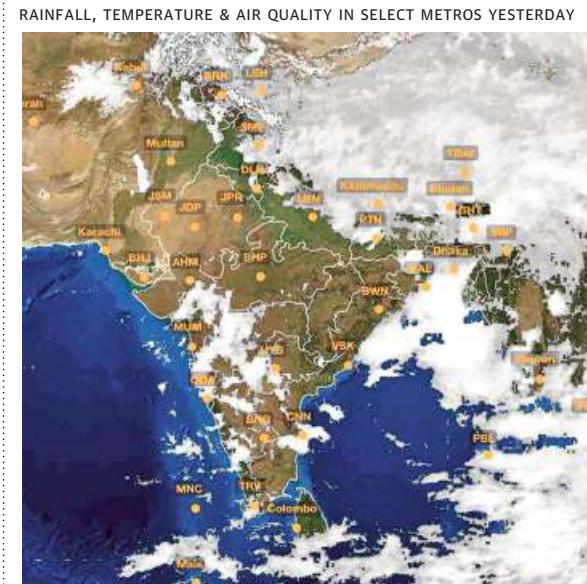
Meet venue changed

Incidentally, the BJP leaders had to change the venue of the meeting from a city hotel to its party office in Ernakulam after police intervention. The change of venue was warranted after the police served a notice to the hotel authorities asking them to follow the COVID-19 protocol in hosting the meet. By that time, several party leaders had arrived at the hotel.

The application of the party for organising the event at the hotel was also rejected by the authorities.

The meeting attained significance in the wake of the party facing unprecedented organisational crisis. Besides the humiliating electoral defeat, the party had found itself in a sticky wicket after the Kodakara hawala money transaction case.

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Assam, Gujarat, central Maharashtra, Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	70	28	23	Kozhikode	25	32.5	22.6
Ahmedabad	-	38.2	25	Kurnool	-	35.3	25.2
Aizawl	17.4	-	18.9	Lucknow	-	27.6	40
Allahabad	-	40.3	25	Madurai	0.5	35.4	24
Bengaluru	-	29.7	20.7	Mangaluru	-	31	22.3
Bhopal	-	34.7	26.1	Mumbai	-	32.6	23.5
Bhubaneswar	0.1	38.6	28	Mysuru	8	-	21.2
Chandigarh	3	37.3	24.4	New Delhi	0.3	38.2	23.8
Chennai	-	36.1	27	Patna	-	38	26
Coimbatore	-	34.7	27	Port Blair	23	32.8	25.8
Dehradun	-	36	23.2	Puducherry	-	33.5	25.2
Gangtok	108	19.8	16.4	Pune	60.5	31.5	21
Goa	7.4	32.2	24.4	Raipur	-	38	24.6
Guwahati	18	29.6	22.9	Ranchi	-	34.9	25.1
Hubballi	-	27	22	Shillong	18.1	25.6	17.1
Hyderabad	8.7	-	21.4	Shimla	-	29.2	19.6
Imphal	1	26.2	20.2	Srinagar	-	30.1	14.9
Jaipur	1	38.6	25.9	Thiruvananthapuram	7	31.6	24.6
Kochi	35	32	24.6	Tiruchi	28	36.6	24.2
Kohima	-	27.2	17.6	Vijayawada	-	-	-
Kolkata	0.8	38	27.1	Visakhapatnam	-	37.6	27.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	3	42	90	47	66	■■■■■
Bengaluru	-	37	51	15	21	■■■■■
Chennai	43	19	180	27	27	■■■■■
Delhi	9	54	17	103	181	■■■■■
Hyderabad	3	68	11	21	27	■■■■■
Kolkata	10	16	25	77	65	■■■■■
Lucknow	7	35	98	131	115	■■■■■
Mumbai	1	13	66	33	31	■■■■■
Pune	6	14	102	77	54	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	17	27	18	19	44	■■■■■

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.

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

THE HINDU

EDUCATION PLUS

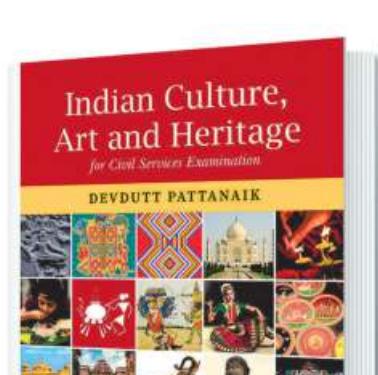
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■ MADHUMITHA SRINIVASAN

India in a nutshell

Author Devdutt Pattanaik on the Herculean task of condensing the vast spectrum of Indian culture and heritage into a book, specifically for civil service aspirants



From your experience of having given the UPSC exam, could you share some exam preparation tips?

I believe that practice is the best way. What I always tell people is to study for half an hour, and then take a break for 10 minutes or study for 20 minutes and then take a break for 10 minutes. I believe that the more breaks you take, the better you remember. And then practice questions, MCQs; verbalise the answers because the more you speak it out, the more your brain remembers.

There are two essential components for success at the UPSC exam: subject matter knowledge and aptitude.

While the former can be learnt, how can one develop the latter?

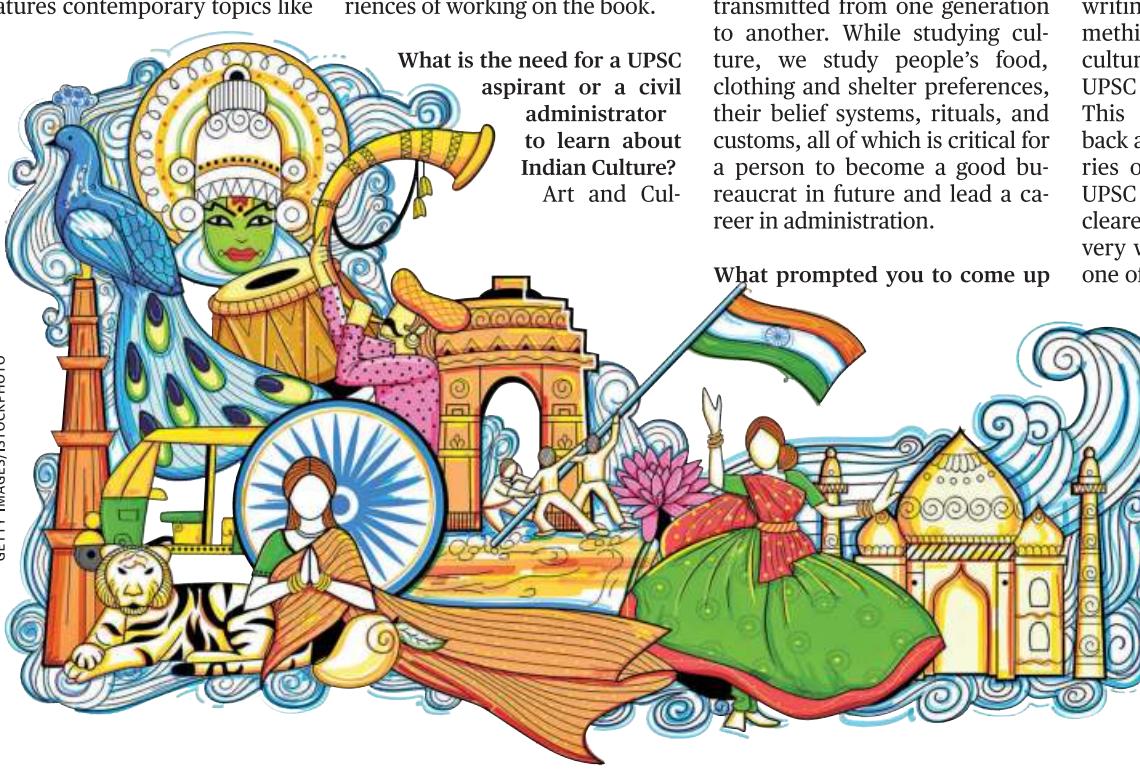
The easiest way to develop aptitude is self-realisation i.e., the understanding of where one stands with respect to the ecosystem. For example, in any situation, do we behave like a predator, rival or an ally?

One needs to see what happens around him/her all the time and keep studying it in order to understand what one's aptitude; do you have a helping aptitude or do you have a grabbing aptitude? Do you see yourself as someone who is being constantly threatened or do you see yourself in a position of power? It is the self-reflections that develops one's aptitude.

Aptitude only comes when you understand yourself and the world better.

Indian Culture, Art and Heritage for Civil Services Examination is published by Pearson. It is available in both English and Hindi. Price: ₹695

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



What is the need for a UPSC aspirant or a civil administrator to learn about Indian Culture? Art and Cul-

What prompted you to come up

Two webinars on June 11

Two webinars will be held this week as part of the series hosted by Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science (HITS) in association with The Hindu Group to provide expert career guidance to students from Classes 10, 11 and 12.

'A Career in Allied Health Sciences: Current Trends and Future Prospects' will be held on June 11 at 11.00 a.m. The speakers are Dr. R.W Alexander Jesudasan, Pro Vice-Chancellor, HITS; Dr. Jayaprakash Shetty, Vice-Dean Professor & HOD, Pathology, K.S. Hegde Medical Academy, NITTE University, Mangaluru; and Dr. B. Rajashankar, Founding Dean, Manipal College of Health Profession and Professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing. The session will be moderated by Ramya Kannan, Chief of Bureau-Tamil Nadu, *The Hindu*. To register, visit

<http://bit.ly/HITSTHE2>

'How a Liberal Arts education helps promote interdisciplinary learning'. The speakers are Dr. Salil Sahadevan, independent education researcher; Dr. Afrose Farid, Professor and Head Admissions, School of Liberal Arts and Applied Sciences, and HOD, Department of Fashion Design and Arts, HITS; and Dr. Joya John, Assistant Professor of Literature, Krea University. The session will be moderated by Yashasvini Rajeshwari, founder and CEO, AuxoHub.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/HITSTHE3>

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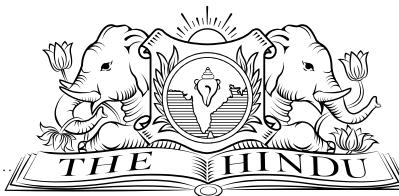
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Media and sedition

The Supreme Court's rulings on cases of sedition give hope the law will be re-examined

It has long been recognised that strident criticism of government will not amount to an attempt to excite disaffection and disloyalty towards government. Yet, the archaic and colonial view that an intemperate attack on an incumbent ruler should be met with fierce prosecution for sedition prevails among many in power even today. In a significant judgment, the Supreme Court has quashed a criminal case registered in Himachal Pradesh against journalist Vinod Dua by invoking the narrowed-down meaning of what constitutes an offence under Section 124A of the IPC, the provision for sedition, set out in *Kedar Nath Singh* (1962). Every journalist, the Court has ruled, is entitled to the protection of that judgment, which said "comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence, would not be penal". The law on sedition has come a long way from the formulation of British-era judges Comer Petheram and Arthur Strachey that "feelings of disaffection" towards the government connote "absence of affection... hatred, enmity, dislike, hostility... and every form of ill-will towards the government" to the more rational reading that only a pernicious tendency to create public disorder would be an offence. Yet, it appears that every generation needs a judicial iteration of this principle, and that is because of two reasons: that Section 124A remains on the statute book and that powerful political figures and their minions are unable to take criticism in their stride.

Enacted to put down journalistic criticism of the colonial administration from an increasingly vocal press, Section 124A is essentially a provision which seeks to protect the government's institutional vanity from disapprobation using the interests of public order and security of the state as a fig leaf. It has often been criticised for being vague and "overbroad". Its use of terms such as "bringing (government) into hatred or contempt" and "disloyalty and all feelings of enmity" continues to help the police to invoke it whenever there is either strong criticism or critical depiction of unresponsive or insensitive rulers. The explanation that disapproval of government actions or measures with a view to altering them by lawful means will not amount to an offence is not enough to restrain the authorities from prosecution. The mischief lies in the latitude given to the police by an insecure political leadership to come down on the government's adversaries. It is unfortunate that the Bench did not go into the aspect of political motivation behind the police registering FIRs without checking if the required ingredient of incitement to violence is present. The Court's verdict brightens the hope that the section's validity will be re-examined. For now, it is a blow for free speech and media freedom.

Diminishing options

The RBI has little room to use interest rates for achieving policy outcomes

The RBI's latest policy statement underscores the diminishing options available to it to address the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The bank's Monetary Policy Committee left benchmark interest rates unchanged for a sixth straight meeting and reiterated that it would keep its policy stance accommodative 'as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis'. Since its May 2020 decision to cut interest rates by 40 basis points, taking the cumulative reduction in borrowing costs in the wake of the pandemic's onset to 115 basis points, the MPC has found itself in a bind. While the first lockdown constricted supply and demand for much of Q1 of the last fiscal, pushing the economy into a record 24.4% contraction during April-June and causing full-year GDP to shrink 7.3%, the second wave has crushed all-round demand and consumer confidence. The RBI's May round of the consumer confidence survey shows the Current Situation Index at a new all-time low, with 75% of households perceiving the economic and employment situations as having worsened further, and the future expectations index reflecting overall pessimism. It is hard to see the mere availability of low-cost credit helping revive the all-important consumption demand.

The MPC acknowledged the bleak outlook when it slashed its projection for Q1 growth by as much as 770 basis points to 18.5%, from the 26.2% it had forecast just on April 7. Banking more on optimism than hard data, the panel bumped up its growth estimates for the second half resulting in an overall cut of only one percentage point to its full-year growth forecast at 9.5%. For this, it has assumed rural demand will remain buoyant on the back of an expected normal monsoon, while noting that widespread infections in rural areas, which likely led to a sequential decline in tractor and two-wheeler sales in April, could undermine future demand. The other factor the RBI is banking on to provide a fillip to economic activity is an accelerated pace of vaccinations, over which it has virtually no control. To be fair, Governor Shaktikanta Das has used the bank's liquidity spigot as a tool to address some of the economic distress. A series of measures focus on bolstering credit flow to the hardest hit MSME and contact-intensive industrial and services sectors, respectively. Still, the MPC can ill-afford to drop the ball on its primary remit – ensuring inflation remains anchored. With international commodity prices, including crude oil, on an upward trajectory and no signs of domestic policy support to check skyrocketing petrol and diesel pump prices, inflation is sure to accelerate, posing a major conundrum to the RBI. Raising rates could risk hurting recovery, and not doing so could heighten inflation.

The red flags on the trail of the virus

China's actions and the Wuhan lab connection do require closer scrutiny even if the U.S. may not find the smoking gun



JAYANT PRASAD

The publication of science writer, editor, and author Nicholas Wade's well-researched article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, "The origin of COVID: Did people or nature open Pandora's box at Wuhan?" (<https://bit.ly/3uWUxMI>), has set alarm bells ringing about the collective cover up of the possible leak of the novel coronavirus from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). He has laid out a strong case for a fuller investigation into the event.

The U.S. link

China promoted the narrative that the virus spread from a wet market (seafood and animal market) in Wuhan to avoid any scrutiny of what was being done in the WIV. Senior health officials in the United States seemed to concur. It soon became public that the coronavirus-related research in the WIV was funded by American money. Most experts embraced the natural spread narrative since the alternative was unimaginable. The lab-leak proposition was discredited as a conspiracy theory simply because it was being espoused by then U.S. President Donald Trump and his Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

With advances in biotechnology, it is now possible to genetically engineer existing pathogens to make them more lethal and difficult to treat. Higher mortality and ethnic specificity could be the other features of such new, synthesised organisms or viruses. A possible antidote or vaccine would only be accessible to those conducting such research.

Dr. Peter Daszak of the Eco-

Health Alliance obtained grants from the U.S. National Institutes of Health and subcontracted research to a group headed by Dr. Shi Zhengli at the WIV. Dr. Daszak claimed in a 2019 interview that after six or years of research, over 100 new SARS-related coronaviruses, some of which were introduced into human cells in the lab, caused SARS disease in humanised mice and were untreatable. The research carried out involved the creation of novel, life-threatening and pandemic-creating viruses.

The WIV operates a Biosafety level-4 (BSL-4) facility. Its deficient safety had been flagged by U.S. inspectors, but there is no record of any remedial action. A 2018 inspection report stated that the facility did not have appropriately trained professionals to safely operate the BSL-4 laboratory (<https://wapo.st/3gbHkKJ>). A former Israeli intelligence official and visiting fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Dany Shoham, now with the Bar Ilan University, Israel, has linked the WIV to China's biological weapons programme (<https://bit.ly/3gb1XH3>).

Why were American funds made available to a Chinese laboratory to conduct sensitive research? No doubt because it was less expensive and dangerous to carry out the experiments in China. Besides, U.S. funding ensured it would have access to the experiments conducted at the WIV. In a recently released email (<https://bit.ly/3co8Xzb>), Dr. Daszak thanked the Director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, for publicly stating that scientific evidence supported a natural origin for the coronavirus and not a lab release.

China's reactions

Admittedly, it is difficult to distinguish between a naturally occurring event, an accidental release of



a genetically modified pathogen, or its deliberate use. Because of this and the lingering suspicions, it is the responsibility of the institution and the country where the first outbreak occurred to establish the facts.

China has done the opposite. It has covered up facts and impeded the investigation. A 34-year-old doctor in Wuhan, Li Wenliang, tried to alert others on a social media platform from his hospital bed in Wuhan about a possible outbreak of a SARS-type virus. Instead of treating the young doctor as a hero, Chinese security officials vilified him and charged him with making false claims, spreading rumours, and disturbing the social order. He died as a result of a coronavirus infection. While he was officially exonerated by an investigation into his death, the report has been criticised for only having recommended the reprimand be withdrawn. There are also other reports of the police making an apology to his family.

The WIV head of coronavirus research, Shi Zhengli's database on SARS-like viruses went offline just before the virus outbreak in Wuhan. Countries demanding greater transparency and accountability have been either denounced or 'punished' by China. China's vehement opposition to further investigations, actions to suppress facts from getting out, and reluctance to share data only

fuel the suspicion that China has something to hide.

The release of the findings of the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 30 – and revised on April 6 (<https://bit.ly/3fVDuGH>) – on the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (coronavirus) that dismissed the lab-leak as "extremely unlikely" actually energised the controversy instead of laying it to rest. Subsequently, the WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, called for further studies on the virus origins and said that all hypotheses remained on the table, dismissing the earlier findings as non-definitive.

The WHO findings were tainted because Dr. Daszak, a self-declared partisan of the natural occurrence theory and with a personal financial stake in the WIV experimentation, was included in the inquiry team (<https://nyti.ms/3uXFZN9>). Together with a group of fellow virologists, Dr. Daszak had already declared in February that they stood together to "strongly condemn conspiracy theories" suggesting that the virus did not have a natural, zoonotic origin (<https://bit.ly/3w9o07y>). Including him in the WHO investigation team was akin to having a suspect investigate the crime scene.

It is unlikely that U.S. President Joe Biden's call to the U.S. intelligence community (<https://bit.ly/3c1SoEd>) – to collect and analyse information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion, and to report back to me in 90 days – will result in a smoking gun being found. Unfortunately, the available evidence that is scant will compromise a credible forensic examination. Any determination of what went wrong will necessarily be circumstantial.

Present and future dangers

That the coronavirus escaped from the WIV is in fact increasingly plausible. Whether this was a negligent or wilful act can never

be proven, but it is evident that the research at the WIV – bioengineering more lethal coronavirus variants – crossed ethical boundaries.

The 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) – formerly known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction – has no systems to verify compliance with its prohibitions, nor any enforcement mechanisms to penalise infringement of its provisions. These shortcomings have been repeatedly highlighted in the five-yearly Review Conferences of the BWC, but the state parties to the BWC have been unable to agree on any measures to address them, thus compromising on biosecurity and wilful breaches of the Convention.

Smallpox and other viruses have escaped from secure laboratories before. Public knowledge is that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, and the Russian State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology, Koltsovo, are now the only two "official" repositories of smallpox spores, but there have been persistent fears that these have been disseminated, and certain countries are experimenting with genetically modifying them. Smallpox was deadly enough. Its 'improved' version might be devastating.

The coronavirus research conducted in the WIV for years is an example of science that has run amok, without ethical restraints or any code of conduct for the scientists, who appear to be bereft of any accountability. Such action threatens the very existence of humankind. This is why China's role requires closer scrutiny.

Jayant Prasad is a former diplomat and a former Director-General of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

BOOK EXTRACT

Embedded in Ambedkar's historiography

An ardent Indophile's poem on the life of Buddha stirred a rethink on conventional ideas of a philosophy



JAIRAM RAMESH

Published in London in July 1879, *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold, a poem on the life and teachings of the Buddha, contributed greatly to the international community's knowledge of Buddhism and also played an important role in India's cultural awakening and social transformation.

Jairam Ramesh highlights the influence it had on the subcontinent's leaders from Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. An excerpt from *The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha*, the biography of an epic poem written in blank verse:

Edwin Arnold was a quintessential Victorian in every way. A remarkable polyglot, he was conversant in Greek, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, French, German, Japanese, Hebrew, Persian, Sanskrit and Marathi. For about forty years he was a leader writer for London's newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*. He was a firm believer in the civilising mission of the British Empire, but he was also at the same time an ardent Indophile.

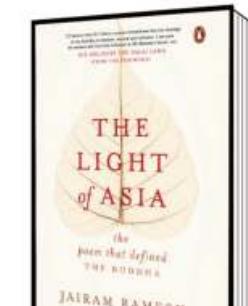
So, far, Arnold had written a two-volume study of Lord Dalhousie as Viceroy. He had published translations of two very well-

known Indian literary classics. In addition, he had brought out a number of original poems on Indian themes. But in 1879 he would hit the jackpot as it were and bring out the blockbuster that would reverberate across the world. The Buddha was very much in the air, what with Rhys Davids, Max Mueller himself and Madame Blavatsky having generated up great interest in him. It was natural for a man of Arnold's background and inclinations to be drawn into writing something on this theme.

The title page reads thus: *The Light of Asia or The Great Renunciation (Mahabhinishkramana) being the Life and Teaching of Gautama Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism (as told in verse by an Indian Buddhist)*.

So, from the beginning, it is clear that Arnold has adopted a novel technique: the life, character and philosophy of Prince Gautama of India, the founder of Buddhism, are being depicted 'by the medium of an imaginary Buddhist votary'. He does this because, as he says: to appreciate the spirit of Asiatic thoughts, they should be regarded from the Oriental point of view; and neither the miracles which consecrate this record nor the philosophy which it embodies, could have been otherwise so naturally produced.

Clearly, the two-year stint at Poona College had left an indelible imprint on Arnold. In his preface he says that he wants to elucidate on Nirvana, Dharma, Karma and other chief features of Buddhism



■ *The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined the Buddha*
Jairam Ramesh
Penguin/Viking
₹799

(like the doctrine of Transmigration), saying that it was his firm conviction that a 'third of mankind would never have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness as the issue and crown of Being'. He was taking the orthodox Christian critics head-on. *The Light of Asia* was in 'eight books of blank verse, with some five or six hundred lines in each'.

Impact on Ambedkar

The biggest political event of 1955 and indeed amongst the biggest ever in twentieth-century Indian history was the conversion of Dr Ambedkar to Buddhism, with lakhs of his followers, on 14 October of that year. Dr Ambedkar had had a long engagement with Buddha and Buddhism and the event

came as no surprise.

I tried to find out whether *The Light of Asia* had ever figured in his life. That Dr Ambedkar was very familiar with Arnold's work is evident from the fact that he had two copies of it in his personal library, now at Siddharth College in Mumbai.

But did *The Light of Asia* have any impact on Dr Ambedkar?

Here is what Akshay Singh Rathore, a noted scholar, had to say on this subject when I asked him whether the poem had meant anything to the key architect of the Indian Constitution. "As for direct influence it would be a stretch to say that it was in any way robust... But what is really the point of focus when thinking about Ambedkarite Buddhism are the points of rupture (with the Buddhas of his day) and the points of continuity with the classical literature, and primarily the Pali canon. So coming then to indirect influence. Arnold awoke Kosambi and Kosambi had a huge impact on Ambedkar; however, what influenced Ambedkar was not Kosambi's transmission of ideas from Kane/Arnold, but rather his break with them..."

What Rathore was referring to was the fact that by the 1940s Dharmarand Kosambi had put forward a very radical explanation for Siddhartha's renunciation. Arnold's poem and indeed all of Buddhist tradition believes that the Prince saw four sights in quick succession – an aged man, an ill man, a corpse and a tranquil monk.

Was Rathore referring to

the fact that by the 1940s Dharmarand Kosambi had put forward a very radical explanation for Siddhartha's renunciation. Arnold's poem and indeed all of Buddhist tradition believes that the Prince saw four sights in quick succession – an aged man, an ill man, a corpse and a tranquil monk.

It is clear that Kosambi's late-life rejection of the conventional wisdom on the motives for Prince Siddhartha's renunciation was fully shared by Dr Ambedkar. There is absolutely no doubt that Dr Ambedkar challenged the mainstream historiographies of Indic civilization through a revisionist account of the social and political role of Buddha and Buddhism in India's past. *The Light of Asia* was embedded in that historiography. This set him apart from others in India who were also great admirers of Buddha, like Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru.

Excerpted with permission from Penguin Random House India

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.

Court on sedition
While complimenting the Supreme Court of India for having quashed the sedition charges against a senior journalist, it should be said that the reasons given by the Court are good enough to strike down the section as arbitrary and in violation of the freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Despite the Kedar Nath Singh judgment, Section 124A has been abused in prosecuting among others, journalists, writers, civil rights activists and even students. The Court has done well in stating that criticising

acts of the Government is not seditious. More importantly, it has acknowledged that there has been a recent trend of governments using the section vindictively to stifle criticism. Honest criticism of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or the Union government's actions in Kashmir do not amount to sedition. Therefore, going by experience and the clear expression of the Supreme Court, there are good enough reasons for the Supreme Court to strike down this anachronistic law at the earliest so that

citizens are able to breathe freely. In the interregnum, the Court could have done well by suspending all the pending sedition cases with one stroke of the pen.
N.G.R. PRASAD,
Chennai

'No Malayalam' order
It is totally uncalled for and the height of linguistic chauvinism that the Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, one of the largest government-run hospitals of Delhi, banned its nursing staff from speaking in Malayalam in the hospital and even warned of serious

action; the ban has since been revoked. Considering that the nurses have been burning the midnight oil and risking their lives in the pandemic fight, it is inexcusable that they are not allowed to even relax by conversing between themselves in their mother tongue, especially when there are about 300-350 Malayali nurses in the hospital. Hindi and other North Indian languages are equally alien to most people of Kerala, but in keeping with the spirit of national integration, not even the migrant labour force from North India in

Kerala is barred from speaking their languages.
NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ This was nothing but intolerance in a country where people talk in different languages depending on the circumstances. If such things persist, there may be a day where there are orders objecting to people talking to each other in their mother tongue in public places.
V.N. SUBRAMANYAM,
Bengaluru

Safety and research
Increased incidences of new zoonotic transmission

emerging are of grave concern ('FAQ' page, June 6). Paucity in research funding into communicable diseases and diversion of funds for non-communicable diseases (much more lucrative for private funding agencies, and pharmaceutical companies in the developed countries) have been echoed by experts. With the Wuhan laboratory leak theory gaining greater credibility, health monitoring organisations must ensure safer microbial research.<br

Behavioural change can reduce transmission

There are many methods rooted in behavioural science that we can employ to improve mask wearing



UTTARA BHARATH KUMAR

Most of us in India will agree that there are two large parts to this pandemic: medical science and human behaviour. Universal vaccination will reduce infections, but with vaccine availability currently challenging, 'herd immunity' is still many months, if not years, away.

Lack of physical distancing and proper hand washing are among the reasons for daily new infections. But the biggest reason for the surge is that people are wearing masks inconsistently, incorrectly, or not at all. Data from a global survey of COVID-19 knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) produced by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs show that from July 2020 to March 2021, India saw a 5% drop in mask wearing. In the two-week period starting on March 15, 84% reportedly wore masks. However, the number varied sub-nationally and it was not measured whether the mask wearing was correct or consistent.

Nevertheless, this is discouraging. While there will always be a minority who do not believe in the virus, masks or vaccines, a great majority would like to do what it takes to put this pandemic behind us. Relying solely on medical science, especially treatment, takes the agency away from the average people to act.

Channels for communication

With behavioural data and strategic approaches, resources can be more efficiently used in reaching different audience segments with information through the channels they trust. Here are seven ways, rooted in behavioural science, that we can employ to improve mask wearing and other COVID-19 prevention measures.

First, we all need basic information on why masks are effective in preventing COVID-19 transmission. We also need to know who should wear them, when and where. We need clarity on what types of masks are most effective, how to wear a mask correctly, and when is it important to double mask. The COVID-19



KAP survey shows that scientists and health experts are the most trusted sources of information on COVID-19, followed by the World Health Organization, television, newspapers, radio, and local health workers. These trusted channels should be used together to share basic information. As new information becomes available that is different from, or that adds to, the baseline information that people have, it should be shared with everyone in a comprehensive and timely way. We should not discount or put down people's beliefs or misconceptions, but counter them with credible facts (Limaye, Sauer 2020). Addressing those barriers creatively through expert testimonials, infographics and statistics that explain how masks have prevented infection transmission is important.

Second, not everyone has the same information needs. Some don't believe that masks prevent COVID-19 infection whereas some know and agree that masks do prevent infection but don't wear them consistently or correctly for various reasons. Communication to each group of people should be tailored accordingly. Generic messages saying 'wear your mask' can only serve as reminders at best; they will not help someone who, say, only wears a mask when she decides that she is in a risky situation. For that person, the message should convince her that any situation outside the home can pose a COVID-19 risk and that masking up any time you leave your house is critical.

Third, we need to communicate the benefits of mask wearing. We need highlight stories that show how COVID-19 infections are low among communities where mask wearing is high. Sharing testimonials

from people who wear masks regularly and explaining how they have managed to avoid getting infected could help. Making masks a symbol of being cool (for the image-conscious), a sign of being considerate and respectful (for people who have elders and vulnerable people at home), and a badge of being smart (for those who want to protect themselves) could all be ways of reaching out to different kinds of people.

Positive social norm

Fourth, we need to create a positive social norm around mask wearing. People are more likely to practise a behaviour if they believe that everyone else is also doing it too. Each audience segment has its own influencers, whether in their community or in the media. Those influencers should be routinely seen wearing a mask or heard talking about it. Advertisements, messages and visuals all positively reinforce mask wearing.

Fifth, we need to enforce correct and consistent mask wearing. Many people do not follow proper masking behaviour because there is no consequence for their inaction. We rely only on the police to enforce mask wearing. While that is needed, we should all take collective responsibility. We need language that shows us how to politely tell an unmasked or poorly masked community member to wear a mask. If each of us can influence the people around us, the positive multiplier effect of wearing masks will be significant in curbing infections.

Sixth, we need compassionate leadership. Leaders, at every level, can play a positive or negative role in influencing our behaviour. From the head of a family to the head of a

country, leaders have to lead with empathy, and build and hold the trust of the people they lead. Religion, politics and profit have no role when we are in such a dire situation. These leaders should themselves consistently convey and enact positive behaviours like mask wearing and vaccinations.

The role of media

Seventh, we need responsible media. If fear of the threat (COVID-19 in this case) is stronger than our perception that we can do something about it, we will ignore the threat rather than trying to address it (EPPM, Witte et al. 1992). We look to the media for brave and honest reporting and there have been some great examples of that during the pandemic. However, when many channels sow more panic than positivity, the audience grows numb. People feel that there may be no point in them doing anything if it is all doom and gloom anyway. In their helplessness, people indiscriminately share information, misinformation and disinformation on social media. We need sections of the media to hold themselves to a high standard and report on much more than just burning pyres, struggling hospitals, the oxygen crisis and vaccine and drug shortages. When we see uplifting and inspiring stories of prevention efforts, ideas and innovations to promote masking, distancing and vaccination, we will feel inspired to do our bit for prevention.

If we want to finish this year being able to celebrate festivals, hug our loved ones and enjoy a real holiday, we need to invest in a comprehensive, behavioural approach to address COVID-19 behaviour. While no expense is being spared in engaging the best scientific experts from around the world to address questions and explain the pandemic, the human behavioural aspect has only been addressed in an ad hoc manner.

Understanding, predicting and shaping human behaviour is a science too. Indeed, it is the less expensive way of digging ourselves out of the hole we are currently in.

Uttara Bharath Kumar is a Senior Technical Advisor for Social and Behaviour Change at the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs which is part of the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

The question of nuance

While reporters inform the public, editorials help readers make sense of myriad developments



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

would find that she never was comfortable, though the real reasons were never known. Instead of trying to understand the problem, as not all individuals are made equal, other Grand Slam tournament authorities also joined French Open authorities in warning an already vulnerable individual."

I agree with Mr. Vasudevan. Editorials should exemplify perspicacity and in this context, Osaka's subsequent statement makes the editorial seem churlish. She spoke of experiencing "huge waves of anxiety" before speaking to the media and said that she has "suffered long bouts of depression". This needs empathetic listening. But having expressed my reservation about the editorial and flagging the concerns of readers, I must acknowledge that the opinion pages made quick amends.

A moment's lapse of empathy

Preethi Ramamoorthy, who has covered Grand Slam tournaments, wrote a reflective article, "Asking the right questions" (June 3). She wrote: "There exists a larger question of what we expect from our sporting icons. Are we satisfied with them just doing their job – playing, winning – or do we want to get to know the person, the tactical genius, behind the champion? It takes a particular brand of mental fortitude to thrive in a punishing and lonely sport such as tennis. It is this trait that journalists most often want to probe and showcase." She rightly pointed out that the ideal way to do this is through "long-winded, private chats".

On the same day, the President of the Public Health Foundation of India, K. Srinath Reddy, wrote an article stressing on the need to look at the delicate subject of mental health more closely. He also documented the hypocrisy of sporting bodies. He wrote: "The French Tennis Federation did not cover itself in glory when it displayed an utter lack of empathy towards a vulnerable young woman who rose to the top of the game because of her immense talent and not because of her speaking abilities... To add irony and insult to injury, Gilles Moretton, the president of the French Tennis Federation, made a statement to the press about Osaka's withdrawal and left without fielding questions. The incident lays bare deep hypocrisy."

As an ombudsman, my special respect for sports journalism stems from the fact that it effortlessly straddles the two worlds of public interest and what the public is interested in. Even a moment's lapse of empathy will derail this fine balance.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

Recognising sex work as work

Adults who earn by providing sexual services should be granted basic labour rights

THAMIZHACHI THANGAPANDIAN

The pandemic has hit millions of people and caused a great deal of suffering across communities. But there is one community that is especially hard hit and that is sex workers. Owing to the non-recognition of sex work as "legitimate work", sex workers have mostly been kept at arm's length from the government's relief programmes. COVID-19 has thus provided more reason to consider a long-pending demand of sex workers in India – decriminalisation of sex work and a guaranteed set of labour rights.

An archaic, regressive view

The legislation governing sex work in India is the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Children Act was enacted in 1956. Subsequent amendments were made to the law and the name of the Act was changed to Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act. The legislation penalises acts such as keeping a brothel, soliciting in a public place, living off the earnings of sex work and living with or habitually being in the company of a sex worker.

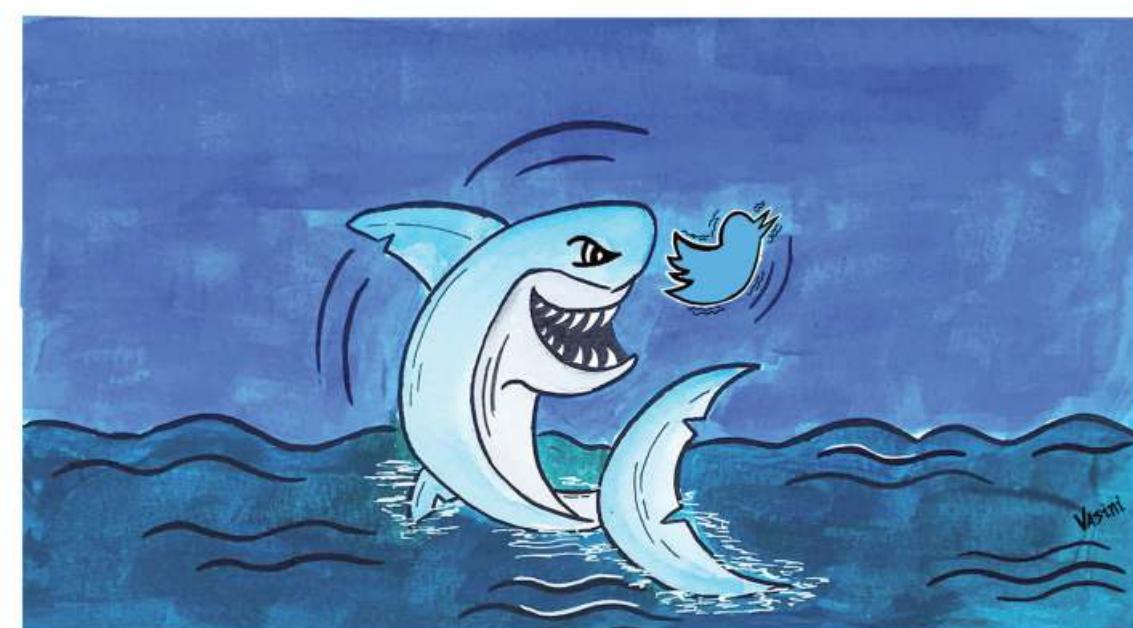


The Justice Verma Commission had also acknowledged that there is a distinction between women who are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and adult, consenting women who are in sex work of their own volition.

We must recognise sex work as work and stop ourselves from assigning morality to their work. Adult men, women and transgender persons in sex work have the right to earn by providing sexual services; live with dignity; and remain free from violence, exploitation, stigma and discrimination. It is time we rethink sex work from a labour perspective, where we recognise their work and guarantee them basic labour rights.

The judiciary is moving in the direction of recognising sex workers' right to livelihood. The Supreme Court, in *Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal* (2011), opined that sex workers have a right to dignity. Parliament must also take a relook at the existing legislation and do away with the 'victim-rescue-rehabilitation' narrative. During these times of crisis especially, this is all the more important.

T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian is MP, South Chennai parliamentary constituency

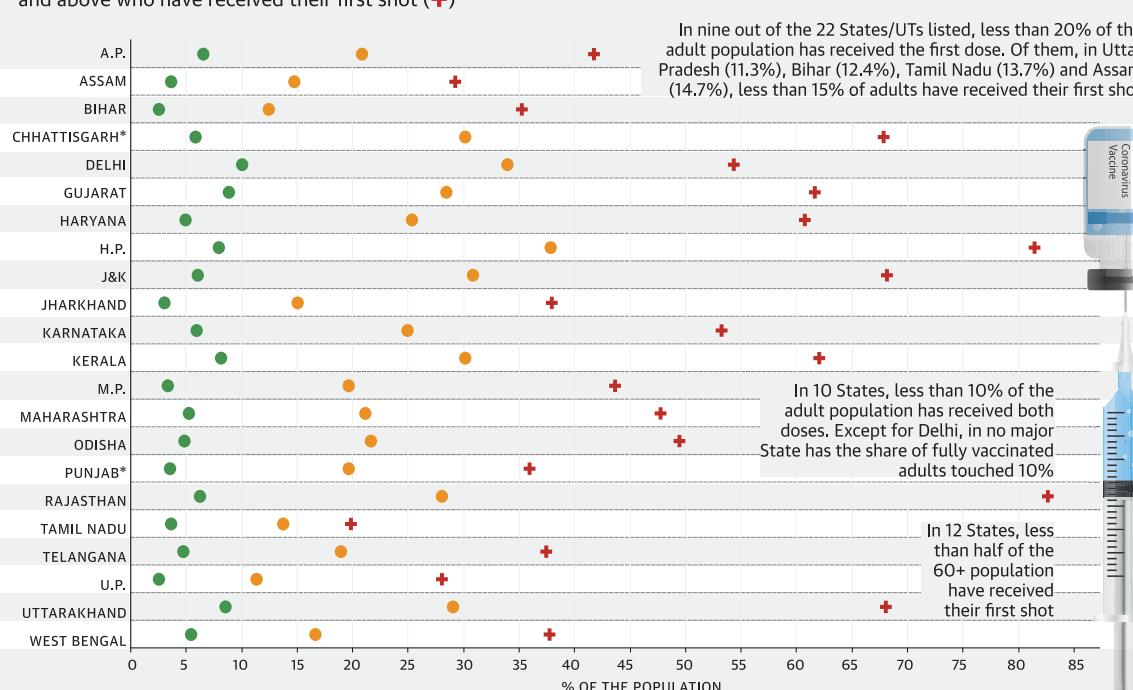


DATA POINT

Miles to go

Only around 44% of India's population over the age of 60 has received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. In Tamil Nadu (19.8%), Uttar Pradesh (28%) and Assam (29.2%), less than 30% of senior citizens have received the first dose. Overall, only 19% of the country's adult population has received at least the first dose. Barely 4% of them in all the major States taken together have received both doses. While the overall vaccination rates have increased in the country over the past couple of weeks, they need to be ramped up further to cover a significant share of the population. **By The Hindu Data Team**

HOW TO READ THE CHART | The chart shows the % of the adult population that has received at least one dose of a vaccine (●) and the share that has received both doses (●) in major States/UTs. It also shows the share of people aged 60 and above who have received their first shot (+)



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 7, 1971

Housing the Homeless

(From an Editorial)

The Tamil Nadu Governor, Mr. K.K. Shah, who was formerly Union Minister for Housing, has put the shortage of housing at over 90 million residential units for the whole country and some 6 to 7.5 million units for Tamil Nadu alone. Other estimates have put the funds required for building so many housing units at Rs. 33,000 crores for the whole country and by the same criterion, it should cost over Rs. 2,500 crores for Tamil Nadu. These are staggering figures and the raising of resources on such a colossal scale is not within the means of either the Centre or the State Governments. But rather than be frightened away by the very magnitude of the task, Governments should consider it a challenge, and at least quicken the pace of attack on the problem, even if there can be no hope of a complete answer to the growing shortage in the foreseeable future. It is Mr. Shah who initiated, as Minister for Housing, the pragmatic Rs. 200-crore revolving fund plan to make housing somewhat self-financing with the help of this initial nucleus. There have been several other Central aid schemes in operation since the beginning of planning in the early fifties.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 7, 1921

The Interviews and After

The citizens of Jubbulpore assembled in public meeting on Sunday, 5th June resolved that they have full confidence in Congress Leaders. They then proceeded to pass the undermentioned Resolutions: That considering the present situation created in consequence of Simla Interviews and speeches, it is high time that Mahatma Gandhi, Lalalapatra, Pandit Malwiya and the Ali Brothers, who are all concerned, should soon disclose the whole affair in detail to the public. The assembly declared that not disclosing affairs concerning them will be very injurious. The assembly, of right, demanded that Mr. Vijayaraghavachariar, as the President of All India Congress Committee ought to state how Congressmen should stand and act to-day; That in view of the indecent taunts whether rightly or wrongly flung at the leaders, by Lord Reading at Simla, it has become incumbent on the leaders to clear the mist and to keep the public confidence in Mahatma, Ali Brothers and other leaders unshaken; That Hakim Ajmal Khan, and Dr. Ansari are requested not to have interviews with the Vice-roy until the Ali Brothers' case is fully appreciated by the public.

FROM PAGE ONE

More antibodies are produced by Covishield

"Contrarily, Covishield showed a good seropositivity rate and a 4-fold rise in median antibody titre even after a single dose," the authors note.

Overall, 97.8% of those who never had COVID and had two complete doses of Covishield had detectable levels of antibodies, or tested seropositive, compared to 79.3% with Covaxin. It is important to note that of the 515, only 90 got Covaxin. Covishield constitutes the overwhelming majority of vaccines administered in the country with nearly nine persons getting it for every one of Covaxin.

Key target

Though the spike protein remains the key target of most vaccines, ICMR and Bharat Biotech, the makers of Covaxin, have previously said that being a vaccine made out of an inactivated virus, it elicited a 'broader immune' response, meaning antibodies aimed at different parts of the coronavirus to neutralise it. T-cell immunity,

that is reported to elicit a longer lasting protection wasn't measured in the study. While real world efficacy data of Covaxin and India-centric data on Covishield isn't public yet, recent studies have shown that most vaccines – including Covaxin and Covishield – have reduced response to some coronavirus variants such as B.1.617.2 or the Delta variant.

Of the 30 HCWs who tested positive for the virus, three tested positive after the first dose and 27 after the second. Breakthrough infections – testing positive for the coronavirus two weeks after the second dose – were noted in 5.5% (22/399) cohorts in Covishield and 2.2% (2/93) of Covaxin recipients.

Dr. A.K. Singh, of the GD Hospital and Diabetes Institute, Kolkata, and among the authors of the paper, said the greater number of infections after the second wave was probably due to the increased number of cases after April.

Punjab, T.N., Kerala top education index ranking

This is the third edition of the index and uses 70 indicators to measure progress. Of these, the 16 indicators related to learning outcomes remain unchanged through all three editions, as they are based on data from the 2017 National Achievement Survey, which tested students in Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10.

The next NAS was scheduled to be held in 2020, but was postponed because of the pandemic.

The remaining 54 parameters use Central databases, collating information from the school and district level, and have been updated for 2019-20.

Farmers' convoy heads to protest site in Delhi

Amid continued stalemate over withdrawal of cases against farmer leaders and their release in Haryana's Fatehabad, the SKM has now given a call for four-hour sit-in agitation outside police stations across the State on June 7 (Monday).

The farmers were arrested during a protest against Jannayak Janata Party MLA Devender Babli last week.

Talks break down

Swaraj India national president Yogendra Yadav, in a tweet, said the government's "intransigence" and "arrogance" had led to the failure of talks in Fatehabad's Tohana.

"SKM calls for 4 hour dharna outside all police stations in Haryana tomorrow. Farmers from 4 districts to converge in Tohana," said the tweet.

Led by several SKM leaders, including Mr. Yadav, Gurnam Singh Charuni, Rakesh Tikait and Yudhvir

Singh, hundreds of farmers have been camping at Sardar Police Station in Tohana since Saturday demanding the withdrawal of cases against farmer leaders and release of Ravi Azad and Vikas Sisar.

The agitating farmers, including women, have pitched tents outside the police station and the SKM leaders have announced that they would not budge from the station until the two arrested farmer leaders are released and cases are withdrawn.

Several meetings have been held with the local administration, but there is no breakthrough.

Mr. Yadav claimed that they held six hours of talks with the district administration since Saturday, but it remained inconclusive.

Deputy Commissioner, Fatehabad, Narhari Bangar, said talks were still on with the farmers and the authorities were hopeful of an amicable solution soon.

Since Feb., it's all quiet on the Line of Control

"The guns are quiet, but we have not lowered our guard," he said.

In a conversation between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) over the established hotline on February 22, both sides agreed on "strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease fire along the LoC and all other sectors" with effect from the midnight of February 24/25, a joint statement said.

With summers setting in the high altitude areas, the next few months have to be carefully watched, said two officials. "This is just the start of the summer. So we have to take it day by day," said one officer. "We will have to watch through the season. This season will be important to see if Pakistan walks the talk," he added.

Last week, Army Chief

General Manoj Naravane was in Jammu and Kashmir to review the security situation on the ground.

However, the Kashmir Valley has not seen such steep reduction in violence, noted several officials. The local recruitment in the Valley has seen only partial reduction with respect to last year. As per data, the local recruitment in 2019 was 119 and in 2020 it was 166. Till May 1 this year it stood at 38 compared to a corresponding figure of 49 last year.

There are also regional developments which can impact the ground situation and are being closely watched, officials say. Later this month, at the plenary from June 21-25, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) will take a decision on its grey listing of Pakistan for terror financing and money laundering.

BJP continues U.P. 'stocktaking'

Radha Mohan Singh's meeting with Governor triggers speculation on changes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

Amid reports of stocktaking within the BJP ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election next year, the party's State in-charge, Radha Mohan Singh, called upon Governor Anandiben Patel here at her official residence on Sunday.

While Mr. Singh described the visit as a courtesy call, the political significance of his trip to the U.P. capital was not lost on anyone amid speculation of changes coming up in the government and party.

"It is a mere formality," he said on the sudden visit.

Mr. Singh said he had called upon Ms. Patel as he had been unable to meet her on past occasions.

When asked by presspersons outside the Raj Bhavan if any reshuffle of the State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was



Formal meet: BJP leader Radha Mohan Singh with U.P. Governor Anandiben Patel in Lucknow on Sunday. ■PTI

on the agenda, Mr. Singh said there was no such matter.

'Most popular govt.'

"The government in U.P. and the organisation are working with a lot of strength. The strongest organisation and the most popular government in the country are operating in Uttar Pradesh," Mr. Singh said.

Mr. Singh's praise for the Yogi Adityanath-led government comes after party general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh visited Lucknow and met party leaders and Ministers here as part of a stocktaking exercise and lauded the Chief Minister for

managing the COVID-19 pandemic "quite effectively".

Mr. Singh also called upon the Speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, Hriday Narayan Dixit. The State unit of the party also seemed to back the Chief Minister.

'Regular meetings'

Asked by presspersons about Mr. Singh's visit, BJP U.P. president Swatantra Dev Singh said the BJP was a "karyakarta-based [worker] party" and the leaders had regular tours and meetings.

"Because this is not a party of a dynasty or a family... Here, karyakartas are screened and developed as someone who can provide leadership in the future and direction to the society and country," he said.

Mr. Singh also praised CM Adityanath as "hardworking". "He is [working] seven days a week, 24 hours daily," he said.

Will train one lakh health volunteers, says BJP

Party discusses post-poll violence in W.B.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

At the conclusion of a two-day brainstorming session called by BJP president J.P. Nadda with general secretaries over the weekend, the party declared on Sunday that it would train one lakh health volunteers to operate certain medical equipment and perform other services that did not require a medical degree. With this, it hopes that the criticism of the party and the governments headed by it during the second wave of the pandemic could be blunted to a certain degree.

The leaders also deliberated on the post-poll violence in West Bengal, and said all possible support would be given to the party workers there.

After the meeting, Mr. Nadda, party general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh and the other general secretaries met Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg. They also discussed the brainstorming session.

According to sources present there, Mr. Modi said despite the loss in West Bengal, the party had gained more support in the State. "He also stated that in Kerala, the party should work to gain support across communities," the source added.

The earlier meeting was held at Mr. Nadda's residence and was attended by all the eight general secretaries, Mr. Santhosh and the presidents of its youth, farmers, women, Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and



J.P. Nadda

minority wings.

Giving details of the meeting, general secretary Bhupender Yadav said a report was presented to Mr. Nadda on the relief work carried out by the party amid the pandemic. "It was decided that the party will train one lakh health volunteers across the country, including imparting technical knowledge to operate ventilators and other essential medical devices," he said.

The ST wing was asked to focus on promoting the Centre's Van Dhan Yojana for tribals.

Similarly, the kisan morcha would facilitate the training of farmers at the Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) and the women's wing would promote 'Poshan Abhiyan' among women, which aims to achieve a malnutrition-free India, Mr. Yadav said.

Talking about the performance in the recent Assembly polls, Mr. Yadav said the party had strengthened its position in West Bengal and also got four seats in Tamil Nadu.

On the post-poll violence in West Bengal, he said reports had been coming from the State on a regular basis and underlined that the party was firmly standing with the people of Bengal.

Govt. keen on implementing labour codes

It will result in reduction in take-home pay, higher provident fund liability of firms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The four labour codes are likely to see the light of day in a couple of months as the Centre is now keen on going ahead with the implementation of these laws, which, among others, will result in a reduction in the take-home pay of employees and a higher provident fund liability for the companies.

Once the wages code comes into force, there will be significant changes in the way basic pay and the provident fund of employees are calculated.

The Labour Ministry had envisaged implementing the four codes on industrial relations, wages, social security and occupational health safety and working conditions from April 1, 2021.

These four labour codes will rationalise 44 Central labour laws.

The Ministry had even finalised the rules under the four codes. But these could not be implemented because many States were not in a position to notify rules under these codes in their jurisdiction.

Labour is on the Concur-

rent List of the Constitution and, therefore, both the Centre and the States have to notify rules under these four codes to make them the laws of the land in their respective jurisdictions.

Many major States have not finalised the rules under the four codes... The Central government cannot wait forever for the States to firm up the rules under these codes. Therefore, it is planning to implement these codes in a couple of months as some time would have to be given to establishments or firms to align with the

new laws," a source said.

According to the source, some States had already circulated the draft rules.

Under the new wages code, allowances are capped at 50%. This means half of the gross pay of an employee would be basic wages. Provident fund contribution is calculated as a percentage of the basic wage.

After the implementation of the new codes, the take-home pay of employees would reduce, while the provident fund liability of employers would increase in many cases.

Experts underline key role of tech in modern agriculture

SRMIST, The Hindu Group webinar highlights growing links

MADHUVANTI S. KRISHNAN

As part of the Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021, the SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), in association with The Hindu Group, hosted a webinar on the 'Role of Technology in Agriculture Courses'.

The webinar was moderated by Deepa H. Ramakrishnan, Senior Assistant, Editor-Reporting.

Dr. M. Chinnadurai, Dean, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, SRMIST, spoke of the evolution in agriculture, with output-increasing technologies leading to improvements in the field.

The yield of rice in 1960 was less than one tonne per hectare, as opposed to the current three tonnes. This is due to high-yielding variety rice and management tech-

niques. Over the years, region-specific varieties have also evolved, as have fast-production technologies," he explained.

Dr. M. Sanjeevagandhi, Assistant Professor, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences, SRMIST, described different technologies used in agriculture like sensors to identify soil moisture, smart water systems and precision farming using geospatial technology.

"Tech in agriculture is the need of the hour to secure food for a rapidly growing population, balance climate change issues, reduce workers' workload, boost pro-

duction quality and efficiency of farming products, optimise level of input application, storage, transport, and maximise profits," he said.

Dr. Subrat Panda, Chief Technology Officer, AgNext Technologies, explained how Artificial Intelligence (AI), sensors and IoT impact Agtech in a big way. "Today, we need cross-domain technology and research collaboration in agriculture. This can be done by introducing concepts of horizontal technologies such as AI, IoT, nano-tech and material sciences to agriculture students. Internship in agritech companies and research collaboration will also help them gain perspective," he said.

The session, along with the Q&A session, can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/SRMTHYT2>.

HC grants bail to three in north-east Delhi riots case

'No material available with prosecution'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

around 10.30 p.m., which indulged in pelting stones, causing injuries to one Nitin Kumar and the death of his father, Vinod Kumar.

"The subsequent forming of an unlawful assembly at a different place, i.e., gali no.1 Akhadevali gali, will not implicate the petitioners as members of an unlawful assembly for causing the offences at gali no. 1 Brahmputri gali," it said.

"There is no *prima facie* material available with the prosecution from the statements of the eyewitnesses or the video clips of the mobile phones to show that the petitioners were part of the mob which caused unlawful activity at gali no. 1, Brahmputri, resulting in injuries to Nitin Kumar and the death of his father," Justice Gupta said.

The Mir house at Opura, a locality in Budgam, became the centre of attention around 10.30 p.m., which indulged in pelting stones, causing injuries to one Nitin Kumar and the death of his father, Vinod Kumar.

A few minutes later, Adda's heart-wrenching shrieks pierced the silent evening of June 3. The next day, her body parts were recovered from an adjacent nursery-turned-forest.

The Mir house at Opura, a locality in Budgam, became the centre of attention around 10.30 p.m., which indulged in pelting stones, causing injuries to one Nitin Kumar and the death of his father, Vinod Kumar.

as mourners swarmed the residence to express their condolences to Adda's family.

5-year-old killed by leopard on the outskirts of Srinagar

It was the evening of the birthday party for her brother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar



Final journey: People carrying the coffin of the 5-year-old at Budgam district, J&K, on Friday. ■NISSAR AHMAD

acre nursery adjacent to it, which is maintained by the Social Forestry Department.

"We have repeatedly raised the

INTERVIEW | RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

'New IT rules only to tackle misuse of social media, offer redressal forum'

Ordinary users of WhatsApp have nothing to fear on the issue of tracing the originator of messages, says the Union IT and Law Minister

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

With Twitter and WhatsApp up in arms against the government's new guidelines for social media platforms, Information Technology and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said these guidelines are to deal with the issue of misuse of such platforms. He stressed that these rules only give a redressal mechanism to users, with complaints to be handled between the users and the social media intermediary. The government, he said, is not involved. On the issue of tracing the originator of WhatsApp messages, the Minister said ordinary users of the platform have nothing to fear. "I am giving my word," he said. Edited excerpts:

Some social media firms have raised concerns over the clause related to employees being jailed under the new Rules.

■ As per Rule 4(A), social media platforms need to appoint a chief compliance officer who shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and the rules thereunder and shall be liable in any proceeding relating to third-party information where he/she fails to make sure that due diligence was followed by the intermediary.

The failure to observe due diligence is a precondition for starting an action. The Rules add that no liability will be imposed upon the significant social media intermediary without being



granted an opportunity to be heard. So, all safeguards are there. If intermediaries are already assuming that they will not follow due diligence, that is their fault. If they have the intention not to pursue due diligence, there will be consequences.

Similarly, removal of content is also preceded by pre-condition. Intermediaries shall remove or disable access within 24 hours of receipt of complaints of contents that expose private areas of individuals, show such individuals in full or partial nudity or in sexual acts or is in the nature of impersonation including morphed images, etc. Such a complaint can be filed either by the individual or by any other person on his/her behalf... What is in this? For re-

The Rules came into effect on May 26. What action will be taken for non-compliance?

■ What action I will take or the department will take is not to be debated in a public interview. Leave it to us. We will decide within the full confines of the governance process. Let me reiterate:

All safeguards are there. If intermediaries are already assuming that they will not follow due diligence, that is their fault

they are supposed to follow the rules. These rules are for the good of their users only ... if any helpless victim is having an issue with misuse, they should go to America. When a distraught mother approaches me saying that her daughter's ex-boyfriend is circulating intimate photographs of the girl, what should I do? Ask her to complain to America, as Twitter says? These laws have not come suddenly. These were work in progress for three or

four years. There were two court orders, command of Parliament and demand of the civil society, followed by large-scale consultation.

Will this issue impact India's image, particularly in terms of doing business?

■ No. Many companies have complied with the rules. This is not a question of the image of a country, these are the rights of the users against misuse. Any robust democracy which allows freedom of speech and expression must also allow a forum for redressal of complaints...

The Rules are very clear. They have to appoint India-based employees — a grievance redressal officer, compliance officer and a nodal officer to coordinate with the government. Are we asking for the moon? Do they need a UPSC-type exam to make these appointments? As an interim measure, they can relocate one of their employees here. When Indian IT companies go to do business in America, do they follow the laws or not? Indian pharma companies go for manufacturing in America, do they follow the American laws or not? There will be no

compromise on the digital sovereignty of India.

The government and WhatsApp have been at loggerheads over the issue of originator of messages for over two years, and now they have gone to the court, citing privacy concerns.

■ Ordinary users of WhatsApp have nothing to fear. I am giving my word. Messages between friends, doctor-patient, lawyer-clients, media-source, girlfriend-boyfriend ... private messages will continue unhindered in the encrypted format. What we are seeking is when a message that is already in circulation has gone viral, is causing riots, mob lynching, terrorism, impinging upon security and safety of India, and showing a woman being raped or in nudity or child abuse ... only in these defined cases, security agencies can ask "please explain who started this" ... The content is already in the public domain.

I want to touch upon what privacy is. The Supreme Court has said privacy principles have certain exemptions ... terrorists, a criminal or a corrupt person cannot

have a right of privacy, otherwise no investigation can be done ... In my very considered view, privacy means the core of your existence ... your sexual preferences, your matrimonial relationship, relationship among family members, your private correspondence, your medical records, your property if you're not a public servant. The right of a minor ... These are the recognised nuances of privacy.

And the problems of technology can be solved by technology. It is their [WhatsApp's] responsibility... When during the Cambridge Analytica issue, the data of over 5 lakh Indians were leaked by them [Facebook], where was privacy? In their latest privacy policy, they are saying that users' data will be shared with business associates. Where is the privacy there? Therefore, if the details are being sought which are in reasonable classification and in public interest, why are you debating about it? Are they not giving it in many foreign countries?

WhatsApp has said they will wait till the personal data protection Bill comes with regards to their new privacy

policy. What is the progress on that?

■ The select committee has given their report ... COVID-19 permitting, in the next session I will like to push it. India has a great potential to become a data economy ... Let me proudly assert that our data protection law very clearly enjoins that no data can be taken from anyone without his consent voluntarily. The processor of data must use it only to the extent consented.

Google has sought protection against the IT rules saying it is a search engine and not an intermediary.

■ Let us not take shelter under technicalities. Is it not the moral obligation of the platform by whatever name it goes to respect the dignity of women whose naked, morphed images are circulated? Should there not be a mechanism [which will ensure] that we will not pick up any such content unless we are shown that there is an element of consent for public consent. It is a moral as well as social obligation of these social media firms.

NPR slips valid for long-term visas: MHA

Six minority groups from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh can use them as proof of duration of stay

VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI

Migrants belonging to six non-Muslim minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, while applying for long-term visas (LTVs), can also produce National Population Register (NPR) enrolment slips as proof of the duration of their stay in India, according to a Union Home Ministry manual.

The NPR number is part of an illustrative list of more than 10 documents that could be provided to apply for an LTV, which is a precursor to acquiring Indian citizenship either by naturalisation or registration under Section 5 and 6 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, for the six communities — Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Chris-



Heavy data: The NPR was first compiled in 2010 along with the Census exercise, and later updated in 2015. ■ FILE PHOTO

tians and Buddhists — from the three countries. The special provision of LTVs for Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Afghanistan was first made in 2011.

The NPR was first compiled in 2010 simultaneously with the decadal Census exercise and later updated in 2015. It already has a data-

base of 119 crore residents. The NPR is a register of usual residents linked with location particulars down to the village level and is updated periodically "to incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration".

The next phase of the NPR, expected to include contentious questions on

"clearly showing the religion of the applicant like school certificate etc. to establish that the applicant is from a minority community", the guidelines said.

As reported, the Home Ministry has been sensitising the States about the relevant provisions under the Citizenship Act, 1955, which could help the six communities who entered India on legal documents before 2014 and are here on LTVs, expedite their citizenship applications.

According to detailed guidelines issued by the Home Ministry on documents that can be produced to prove the date of entry of the minority community migrants currently in India, the "slip issued by the Census enumerators" during the survey for the preparation of the NPR prior to December 31, 2014, can be provided. Migrants who can apply for LTVs will have to produce any document issued by the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan

BJP MP calls protest rally on June 16 for Maratha quota

People have shown restraint for too long: Sambhajiraje



Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati

the occasion of the 348th coronation anniversary of Shivaji.

Earlier, Mr. Raje performed rituals and paid tributes to the Maratha warrior king. While lakhs of *Shivahakts* (admirers of Shivaji) usually congregate at the fort for the occasion, the pandemic curbs meant only a handful were present.

The BJP MP also said the Maratha community had, for too long, become a political plaything, which was being toyed with by the ruling and Opposition leaders.

His announcement was greeted with approval from Maratha outfits such as the Sakal Maratha Samaj and the Chhava Sanghatana.

W.B. Governor summons Chief Secretary

Dhankhar seeks briefing on post-poll riots; Trinamool accuses him of nepotism

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday took to social media and through a series of posts on Twitter said that "rampant post-poll retributive violence is continuing in the State". The Governor also summoned the Chief Secretary (CS) to brief him on the situation on Monday.

"Extremely alarming law & order scenario @MamataOfficial. Security environment is seriously compromised. In such a grim situation called upon Chief Secretary to brief me on the law-and-order situation on Monday 7th June and indicate all steps taken to contain post poll violence," the Governor said on social media on Sunday morning.



Taking stock: Jagdeep Dhankhar during his visit to Nandigram in May to meet the victims of the post-poll violence. ■ PTI

Later in the evening, Mr. Dhankhar appealed to "all sane minds in West Bengal to rise to the occasion and contribute towards restoring law and order".

Meanwhile, on the same day, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra came out with serious allegations against him. Ms. Moitra accused the

Governor of nepotism and shared a list of six persons appointed at the Raj Bhavan, alleging that they were acquaintances or extended members of his family.

"And Uncleji while you're at it- take the extended family you've settled in at WB Raj Bhavan with you," said Ms. Moitra, sharing the names of

those appointed at the Raj Bhavan in various capacities. The Trinamool Congress leader also added that West Bengal's "grim situation" will improve if Mr. Dhankhar were to "move to Delhi and find another job".

Governor targets police The Governor also said a 25-year-old was killed at Bhatpara Municipality in North 24 Parganas in a bomb attack. "While Bengal is on fire, I see no signs of efforts @WBPolice to douse it."

He also shared a strongly worded two-page message on social media. "State is in grip of unprecedented post-poll retributive at unimaginable scale with lakhs of people being displaced and property worth hundreds of crores vandalised," he said.

Tensions return to Assam-Mizoram border

Miscreants cross inter-State boundary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The police in Hailakandi district of southern Assam have increased vigil along the inter-State boundary after an alleged incursion by miscreants from Mizoram.

The incident on June 4 came a week after armed men fired at an Assam MLA on the border with Nagaland. Hailakandi's Superintendent of Police, Ramandeep Kaur, said the latest incursion was reported from two places. "They built

a house at one place and burnt down two abandoned huts at the other," she said, adding that the issue has been taken up at a higher level between the two States. "We have strengthened the BOPs [border outposts]."

In November 2020, alleged miscreants from Mizoram blew up two government schools in the Cachar district. On May 27, miscreants from Nagaland reportedly fired upon Congress legislator Rupijyoti Kurmi.

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
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SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (through e-procurement)

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited invites Tenders vide Enquiry No.: (1) BESCOM/BCP-1279/2021-22/HSR, (2) BESCOM/BCP-1280/2021-22/KMD_JND, (3) BESCOM/BCP-1281/2021-22/West, (4) BESCOM/BCP-1282/2021-22/North, (5) BESCOM/BCP-1283/2021-22/WFD, (6) BESCOM/BCP-1284/2021-22/IND_SND_VSD for creating infrastructure for arranging power supply to the applications registered under EoDB and the applications registered under DCW basis to fulfill the duty requirements of the licensee in the Electricity (Right of Consumers) Rule, 2020 in BMA North & South Zone jurisdiction of BESCOM for a period of two years on total turnkey, under percentage quoting on each item basis.

Bid Documents available from: 07.06.2021 onwards to 22.06.2021, 15:00 Hrs. **Last date for Bid Submission:** 22.06.2021, 15:00 Hrs. **Opening of Bid Document:** 23.06.2021, 15:15 Hrs.

All the payment details such as tender cost, etc. & other details shall be obtained through e-procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. Further, bidders can avail assistance with e-procurement help desk at 080-25501216 and 080-25501227.

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**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX (Kota) Project**
PO Anushakti, Rawatbhata, (Vid Kota),
Rajasthan - 323 303 Phone No. 0744 2770015/50
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (T.N.) NO. NFC/NFC-K/2020/IMS-02
Online item rate e-tender in SINGLE ENVELOPE SYSTEM are invited on behalf of the President of India by Project Director, NFC(K) Project from eligible contractors for the work "Annual Maintenance Contract for IT Systems at NFC-K "at Nuclear Fuel Complex (Kota) Project, PO Anushakti, Rawatbhata, (Vid Kota), Rajasthan - 323 303" for an estimated cost of Rs. 12,90,000/- . Notice Inviting Tender and Detailed NIT are available for free view on www.nfc.gov.in and all documents of tender for participation on website www.tenderwizard.com/DAE.
Dates for Tender Request from 06/06/2021 to 20/06/2021 to 21:00 hrs.; Last Date of submission of tender online along with necessary documents 05/07/2021 up-to 21:00hrs.
Last Date of submission of hard copy of the necessary documents at NFC-K Site 10/07/2021 up-to 14:00hrs.
Opening of Tenders 13/07/2021 @1430hrs. Completion time 24 (Twenty-four Months). Detailed NIT indicating eligibility criteria, fees payable and other details is available on website www.nfc.gov.in

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX (Kota) Project**
PO Anushakti, Rawatbhata, (Vid Kota),
Rajasthan - 323 303 Phone No. 0744 2770015/50
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (T.N.) NO. NFC/NFC-K/2020/IMS-03

Online item rate e-tenders in SINGLE ENVELOPE SYSTEM are invited on behalf of the President of India by Project Director, NFC(K) Project from eligible contractors for the work "Installation & Commissioning Power & Fiber Cable on the NFC-K Periphery"at Nuclear Fuel Complex (Kota) Project, PO Anushakti, Rawatbhata, (Vid Kota), Rajasthan - 323 303" for an estimated cost of Rs. 7,99,745/- . Notice Inviting Tender and Detailed NIT are available for free view on www.nfc.gov.in and all documents of tender for participation on website www.tenderwizard.com/DAE.
Dates for Tender Request from 06/06/2021 to 20/06/2021 to 21:00 hrs.; Last Date of submission of hard copy of the necessary documents at NFC-K Site 05/07/2021 up-to 21:00hrs.
Last Date of submission of hard copy of the necessary documents at NFC-K Site 10/07/2021 up-to 14:00hrs.
Opening of Tenders 13/07/2021 @1430hrs. Completion time 3Months (Three Months). Detailed NIT indicating eligibility criteria, fees payable and other details is available on website www.nfc.gov.in

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(A Government of India Enterprise)
Khanij Bhawan, 10-3-11/A, Castle Hills, Masab Tank, Hyderabad 500 028
CIN: L13100TG1958G0101674

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

NMDC Limited intends to replace existing mobile equipment (Stackers, Reclaimer and Wagon Loader) for NMDC's Project at BIOM, Baladala, Chhattisgarh and DIOM, Domlona, Jharkhand. NMDC Limited invites EoI from experienced and interested parties who are in the business of Design, Engineering, Manufacture, Supply and Erection & Commissioning of mobile equipment.

'Maharashtra in talks to get Sputnik jab'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

With vaccination for the 18-44 age group proceeding slowly in Maharashtra owing to a severe vaccine paucity, Health Minister Rajesh Tope said a large stock of the Russian Sputnik V vaccine will be available in the State from July.

He urged the Centre to formulate a clear policy on vaccine imports.

'Despite the best efforts of the State to procure more vaccines from the Centre, the stock is not adequate. Therefore, we are focusing more on importing vaccines. The State government has already held discussions with Sputnik V vaccine distributors in this regard and a large stock of the vaccine will be available from July-August onwards,' the Minister said.

Delhi hospital revokes ban on Malayalam

Order issued without our knowledge, says medical director

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An order banning the nursing staff of the Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (GIPMER), a Delhi government-run hospital, from speaking in Malayalam in the hospital has been revoked, said its medical director, Anil Agarwal, on Sunday.

On Saturday, GIPMER warned the nursing staff of "serious action" if they did not converse in English or Hindi, as per an order issued by the hospital.

"The circular which was issued by the Nursing Superintendent, G B Pant Hospital, without any instructions or knowledge of the hospital administration and the Delhi



The hospital had warned nurses of serious action.
■ REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

government stands withdrawn with immediate effect," a new order read.

"The order was issued without our knowledge and it has been revoked. The matter is being investigated and strict action will follow," Dr. Agarwal said.

Nurses at the hospital and unions had criticised the ban saying they always spoke to patients in Hindi.

"A complaint has been received regarding Malayalam language being used for communication in working places in GIPMER. Whereas maximum patients and colleagues do not know this language and feel helpless causing a lot of inconvenience. So it is directed all nursing personnel to use only Hindi and English for communication otherwise serious action will be taken," the initial order read.

The Action Committee, Delhi Malayali Nurses, in a statement, said they were withdrawing their agitation. The Twitter campaign was also withdrawn.

Disinfection drive



After the mayhem: Corporation workers sanitising the Sadar Bazaar area in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Why did govt. reduce oxygen, ICU beds, questions Priyanka

Experts, House panel had warned of second wave, she says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday questioned the Narendra Modi government's decision to reduce oxygen, ICU and ventilator beds between September last year and January this year despite experts predicting an "inevitable" second wave of COVID-19.

"From September 2020 to January 2021, the Modi government reduced: oxygen beds by 36%, ICU beds by



inevitable second wave #ZimmendarKaun?" Ms. Vadra said in a video post on Twitter.

In a separate tweet, former party president Rahul Gandhi questioned the government's priorities and said it was busy fighting for a blue tick – a reference to Twitter removing the verified sign from handles of some RSS leaders, only to later restore it – while citizens had to be *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) for COVID-19 vaccines.

46%, ventilator beds by 28%. Why? When every expert in the country, the Parliamentary Committee on Health and their own sero-surveys warned them that additional beds would be needed for an

Odisha's forest produce gatherers hit hard

Amid the pandemic, there aren't enough buyers and government procurement is delayed

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

For the second year running, forest dwellers across Odisha have been deprived of the right price for the non-timber forest produce (NTFP) gathered by them.

With the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting local economies across the country, the NTFP market in Odisha has also suffered due to the absence of adequate buyers this year. "Last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced, forest dwellers, especially tribals, could not get the price for their produce and even failed to dispose of



Tribal women carrying firewood and other forest produce to the weekly market in Malkangiri district. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

NTFP stocks. After a year, the crisis has deepened further and hit them again," said Chittaranjan Pani, an expert on the NTFP market.

Around this time, tribals collect *sal* leaves, *siali* leaves, *mohua* flowers, man-

go kernel, *karanja* seeds, *char* seeds and tamarind. The hard cash earned by forest dwellers and tribals in the summer helps them survive the critical four monsoon months and use the money in agricultural activities.

This year, the spread of COVID-19 infections was more profound in the rural and tribal hinterland. Unscrupulous traders took advantage of the fear prevailing in society and reduced the purchase price of NTFPs. Sources said NTFP gatherers sold their forest produce at lower prices, before govern-

ment agencies intervened.

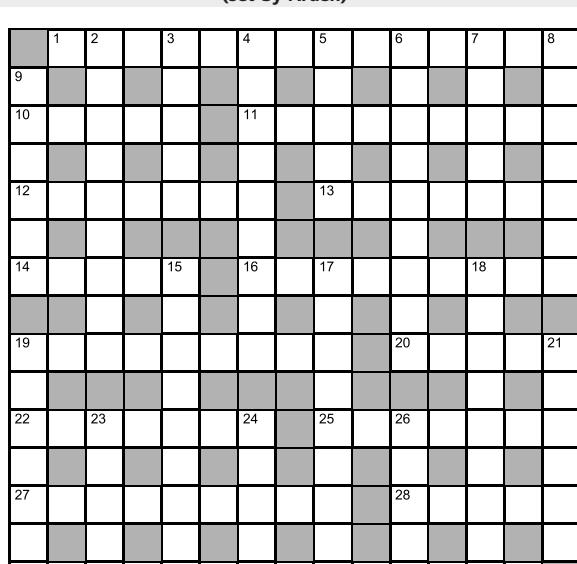
Tribal activists also expressed anguish over the alleged apathetic approach of government agencies in ensuring the right price for NTFPs. "Government agencies delayed procurement of NTFPs," Mr. Pani pointed out.

He alleged that the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) promoted Van Dhan Vikash Kendra, which was introduced to create a market for minor forest produce while ensuring minimum support price, but it could not perform to its potential.

TH CROSSWORD + 13267

(set by Arden)

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ACROSS

- 1 Party and drink, they infuriate one showing obstructionist attitude (3,2,3,6)
- 10 Unpacked chatter machine (5)
- 11 What the parliamentarians do when support is dead and gone (9)
- 12 Plant starts operating in America, taking a chance... (7)
- 13 ... oddly their people get open platform (7)
- 14 Fitted with small pipes over the opening (5)
- 15 On the other hand, the horse gets in a tangle (4,5)
- 16 She does show people their place (9)
- 17 Pirate ship? (7)
- 18 Boy carrying bananas, came up with another fruit (6)
- 19 Artful deception, need a subject (5)
- 20 Dispute? No way after party (5)
- 21 Dog with tail up in the centre of a gathering (5)

Opposition slams GIPMER directive

Leaders describe hospital order as 'discriminatory, racist and unconstitutional'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Sunday slammed the order of the Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (GIPMER), a Delhi government-run hospital, from speaking in Malayalam in the hospital has been revoked, said its medical director, Anil Agarwal, on Sunday.

"A complaint has been received regarding Malayalam language being used for communication in working places in GIPMER. Whereas maximum patients and colleagues do not know this language and feel helpless causing a lot of inconvenience. So it is directed all nursing personnel to use only Hindi and English for communication otherwise serious action will be taken," the initial order read.

"A small victory for decency and common sense over parochialism & bigotry!" tweeted Shashi Tharoor, Congress leader and Lok Sabha member from Thiruvananthapuram, after the order was revoked.

Earlier, top Congress lead-

ers, including former party chief Rahul Gandhi, took to Twitter to criticise the order by the Delhi government-run institution that directed nurses only to speak in En-

glish and Hindi. "Malayalam is as Indian as any other Indian language. Stop language discrimination!" tweeted Mr. Gandhi, who is a Lok Sabha member from Kerala.

Vadra said, "This order is a violation of basic values of our country. It is racist, discriminatory and utterly wrong to the millions of nurses and health workers who have risked their lives to save us during this time of COVID pandemic."

"It is also an insult. We owe them a debt, gratitude and respect. It should be withdrawn and an apology should be tendered."

A functionary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) shot off a letter to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, terming the order as "unconstitutional and atrocious".

"The ostensible excuse for this appalling order is that patients, the majority of whom do not know Malayalam, are inconvenienced by nurses conversing with each other in this language. This is a specious plea as Malayalam-speaking nurses communicate with non-Malayali patients in Hindi and English and not in Malayalam," wrote K.M. Tiwari of the Delhi State Committee of the CPI(M).

"So there are no grounds to say that patients are being inconvenienced. Conversing with each other in their mother tongue by Malayali nurses cannot be an excuse to penalise them," he added.

Test positivity rate drops below 5%

India records highest daily death toll globally, with an average of 2,970 fatalities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 99,117 new COVID-19 cases and 2,401 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Sunday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,89,07,560 cases and 3,49,186 deaths.

India continued to record the highest number of daily deaths in the world with 2,970 average daily fatalities on June 5. The two other countries with the highest daily death count after India were Brazil (1,639) and Mexico (758). Twenty-eight per cent of the world's average daily deaths were recorded in India on June 5.

Tamil Nadu reported 20,421 new infections, followed by Kerala (14,672) and Maharashtra (12,557). Maharashtra recorded 618 new casualties on the day, followed

by Tamil Nadu (434) and Karnataka (320). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

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

Around 20.36 lakh samples were tested on Saturday (the results for which were made available on Sunday). India's average daily test positivity rate continues to de-

cline. It was 4.2% on June 5 compared to 9.4% recorded a week before.

About 33.54 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Sunday, which is nearly 3 lakh doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. However, it is 3.18 lakh more doses than what was recorded during the same period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to increase. It stood at 26.43 lakh on June 5, which is more than the 23.39 lakh recorded a week before (May 29).

About 19.7% of adults in India, 40.2% of those aged above 45 and 44.5% of people aged above 60, have been administered with at least one dose of a vaccine, + until 8 p.m. on Sunday.

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13266

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Liberation from curse

Ahead of summit with Putin, Biden backs European allies

He vows to shore up 'democratic alliances' to face threats from Moscow, Beijing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. will stand with its European allies against Russia, President Joe Biden has promised ahead of the first face-to-face meeting with Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Biden will head to Europe on Wednesday, and is set to attend both the G-7 and NATO summits as well as holding a high-stakes meeting with the Russian leader in Geneva on June 16.

The summit comes amid the biggest crisis in ties between the two countries in years, with tensions high over a litany of issues including hacking allegations, human rights and claims of election meddling.

In an op-ed for the *Washington Post* published on Saturday, the U.S. President promised to shore up Wash-



Stern messaging: Joe Biden disembarks from Marine One at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, on Friday. ■ REUTERS

ington's "democratic alliances" in the face of multiple crises and mounting threats from Moscow and Beijing.

"We are standing united to address Russia's challenges to European security, starting with its aggression in Ukraine, and there will be no doubt about the resolve of the U.S. to defend our democratic values, which we

cannot separate from our interests," he wrote.

"President Putin knows that I will not hesitate to respond to future harmful activities," he said. "When we meet, I will again underscore the commitment of the United States, Europe and like-minded democracies to stand up for human rights and dignity."

"We want a stable and predictable relationship where we can work with Russia on issues like strategic stability and arms control," he wrote.

Since taking office in January, Mr. Biden has ramped up pressure on the Kremlin, and his comments likening Mr. Putin to a "killer" were met with fierce criticism in Moscow.

But both leaders have expressed hopes that relations can improve, with the Russian President saying on Friday he expected a "positive" result from the talks.

Mr. Biden in his weekend op-ed also stressed that Washington "does not seek conflict" – pointing to his recent extension of the New START arms reduction treaty as proof of his desire to reduce tensions.

"We want a stable and predictable relationship where we can work with Russia on issues like strategic stability and arms control," he wrote.

Nigeria attack toll rises to 88, say police

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KANO

Police in northwest Nigeria's Kebbi state said on Sunday that the death toll from an attack by a gang of cattle thieves on seven villages on Thursday had risen to 88.

The region has struggled with decades-long communal clashes over resources but more recently some groups have become more violent, looting, killing and kidnapping for ransom.

"Initially 66 bodies were recovered but 22 more have been found," Kebbi state police spokesman Nafiu Abubakar said, adding that the search for more bodies was ongoing.

Dozens of assailants on motorcycles attacked seven neighbouring villages in Danko-Wasagu district on Thursday, Mr. Abubakar said.

Many people were still unaccounted for Sunday after fleeing the attacks.

"The search is still going on and more bodies could be found," he said.

ELSEWHERE



Harry, Meghan welcome their second child

SANTA BARBARA

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle announced on Sunday the birth of their daughter Lilibet Diana, who was born in California after a year of turmoil in Britain's royal family. "Lili is named after her great-grandmother, Her Majesty The Queen, whose family nickname is Lilibet. Her middle name, Diana, was chosen to honour her beloved late grandmother, The Princess of Wales," the couple announced in a statement. AP

2 drones shot down near U.S.-run air base in Iraq

BAGHDAD

Iraqi military said on Sunday that air defences at Iraq's Ain al-Asad air base that hosts U.S. Forces, intercepted and shot down two drones. The military said the drones were shot down at a round 12:30 a.m. local time. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Sunday's attack. REUTERS

Popular Nigerian pastor T.B. Joshua passes away

Lagos

A popular but controversial Nigerian evangelical preacher, T.B. Joshua, has died, his church said on Sunday. The 57-year-old founder of The Synagogue Church of All Nations was one of Africa's most influential preachers with millions of television and social media followers, but YouTube and Facebook took him to task over content deemed violent. AFP

Trump denounces Fauci, China

At GOP convention, he asks Beijing to cough up \$10 tn in reparations over virus

REUTERS

GREENVILLE

Former President Donald Trump on Saturday sharply attacked U.S. infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, demanded reparations from China and denounced an investigation into his finances in a speech in North Carolina.

Speaking in Greenville, North Carolina, at the state's Republican Party convention, Mr. Trump joined a chorus of Republican politicians who are criticising Mr. Fauci for asking Americans to wear masks to guard against the virus and who at times has been skeptical of a theory that the virus escaped from a laboratory in Wuhan, China.

Mr. Trump called Mr. Fauci "not a great doctor but a great promoter" for his frequent media appearances. "But he's been wrong on almost every issue and he was wrong on Wuhan and the lab also," Mr. Trump said.

The origin of the virus re-



Back to spotlight: Donald Trump gestures as he is applauded after speaking at the North Carolina convention. ■ REUTERS

mains hotly contested and remains under study by U.S. intelligence agencies.

Mr. Trump's own handling of the pandemic, in which nearly 6,00,000 people in the U.S. have died and he himself was infected, was a factor in his loss to Democratic President Joe Biden in the 2020 election.

Mr. Trump called on China to pay \$10 trillion in reparations to the United States and the world for its own handling of the virus, and he said nations should cancel their debt to Beijing.

Mr. Trump's appearance

had all the hallmarks of his signature campaign rallies complete with a musical playlist heavy on Elton John standards.

North Carolina Republican Party Chairman Michael Whatley introduced Mr. Trump as "our president", a nod to the former President's baseless claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

Mr. Trump said a criminal investigation launched by the New York Attorney General is "the ultimate fishing expedition," and said it was the latest attempt by Demo-

crats to bring him down after two impeachment sagas when he was President.

"It's been a five-year witch hunt, hoax after hoax," said Mr. Trump. "They'll never stop until November of 2024."

2024 elections

Mr. Trump vowed to help Republicans in 2022 congressional elections and endorsed U.S. Representative Ted Budd for a U.S. Senate seat in North Carolina after his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, said she would not run.

He appeared to dangle a possible run himself for President in 2024, saying he was looking forward to that year.

Advisers say Mr. Trump, who faces a potential indictment in New York over his business dealings, has been discussing the possibility of another presidential campaign.

Mr. Trump emerged from seclusion for the Saturday event, the first in a planned series of speaking engagements this summer.

Nepal Deputy PM stirs controversy with demand for 'multi-nation state'

Comments were misinterpreted, says Rajendra Mahato

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE

NEW DELHI

Newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal Rajendra Mahato has kicked up a controversy soon after taking over on Saturday, saying he is committed to building a 'multi-nation state'. Mr. Mahato is one of the three Deputy Prime Ministers (Raghuvir Mahaseth and Bishnu Prasad Paudel are the other two) appointed by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who reshuffled his Cabi-

net this weekend. "We remain committed to building an alternative power and will safeguard identity and rights of our people. As long as we are in power, we will pursue good governance. We will prepare for a nationwide movement to set up multi-nation state in Nepal," said Mr. Mahato. He is one of the pioneers of the Madhesi movement which has been demanding greater rights for the people of the plains.

11 killed as bomb hits Afghan bus

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HERAT

The comment drew quick criticism on social media, with many accusing Mr. Mahato of trying to play divisive politics. CPN-UML leader Yogen Bhattacharai urged Prime Minister Oli to advise his ministerial colleagues to exercise restraint while making public comments. A protest was organised on Saturday by the All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) that demanded Mr. Oli to step down over the comments.

The latest attack targeting passenger vehicles occurred on Saturday evening in Badghis, raising fears of fresh violence in the months ahead as the U.S. military continues to pull out its remaining troops.

Pained over Canada school deaths: Pope

He offers no apology over remains of 215 children found at Church-run institutions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis on Sunday expressed his pain over the discovery in Canada of the remains of 215 Indigenous students of church-run boarding schools and pressed religious and political authorities to shed light on "this sad affair." But he didn't offer the apology sought by the Canadian Prime Minister.

Pope Francis, in remarks to faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, also called on the authorities to foster healing but made no reference to PM Justin Trudeau's insistence, two days earlier, that the Vatican apologize and take responsibility.

From the 19th century un-



Pope Francis

til the 1970s, more than 1,50,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend state-funded Christian schools, the majority of them run by Roman Catholic missionary congregations, in a campaign to assimilate them into Canadian society.

The Canadian government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse was rampant in the schools, with students beaten for speaking their native languages.

Ground-penetrating radar was used to confirm the remains of the children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in Kamloops, British Columbia, last month.

The school was Canada's largest such facility and was

operated by the Catholic Church between 1890 and 1969.

"I am following with pain the news that arrives from Canada about the upsetting discovery of the remains of 215 children," Pope Francis said in his customary Sunday remarks to the public.

He noted that when he met with Pope Francis in 2017, he had asked him to "move forward on apologizing" and on making records available.

olic Church in Canada in expressing my closeness to the Canadian people traumatised by the shocking news," Francis said.

"This sad discovery adds to the awareness of the sorrows and sufferings of the past," he added.

Mr. Trudeau on Friday blasted the church for being "silent" and "not stepping up," and called on it to formally apologize and to make amends for its prominent role in his nation's former system of church-run Indigenous boarding schools.

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Sri Lanka recovers black box from ship

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COLOMBO

A black box from a container ship sinking off Sri Lanka was recovered but a dive on Sunday to check for oil leaks had to be aborted, the Navy said.

The Voyage Data Recorder, also known as a maritime "black box", was found intact and is expected to help investigators review procedures and instructions ahead of an accident.

The Navy said divers were deployed for a third time on Sunday to examine the fuel tanks of MV *X-Press Pearl*, but they were unable to carry out their mission due to poor visibility and choppy seas.

Sri Lankan authorities hope the black box will provide details of the ship's movements and its communications with the harbour in Colombo, where it had been docked.

Online group digs deeper into coronavirus leak theory

DRASTIC's work made the world re-evaluate COVID-19 origin

RAMYA KANNAN

CHENNAI

When it was proposed about a year ago, the theory of an original lab leaked virus was dismissed as a mere conspiracy theory. A year later, that theory is back in the reckoning, teased out of its conspiratorial hues, and summoned into the lime-light through a method at the same time, most unconventional in its approaches, and conventional in its due diligence.

Security personnel outside the Wuhan Institute of Virology. ■ REUTERS/FILE

body of evidence that would establish that there was enough there at least for a professional investigation into the origins of the virus that has held the world at ransom.

As for The Seeker, in an email interview, he says that he did not consciously go out to get the lab leak angle.

"I'd say, curiosity got the best of me. Like most people I once assumed it was a natural zoonosis, but reading some articles and papers last year (Yuri's Medium piece, Rossana's researchgate paper, Botta Xiao's paper, Metz's blog, Sirokin's blog, Khaled's Tabletmag article, and the project evidence github page) made me question my assumptions, and I started drifting towards researching the lab origin theory."

Probe further, and he reveals a "science background, with a mix of architectural, entrepreneurial, filmmaking and teaching experience." The others on the team are also apparently engineers and business people. 'Billy Bostickson' – yet another pseudonym – was reportedly responsible for steering conversations.

The anonymity some of them have harks back the focus on to the most important aspect of DRASTIC – its revelations.

For over a year, the team has been inspired to dive deep online to build a

possible collection of the virus sample from a mineshaft associated with an incident where miners died of a pneumonia like infection, back in 2012. This involved translating several scientific papers from China translated roughly on Google, and using DNA sequences to compare viruses.

"At the broad conceptual level, I see DRASTIC as a collaborative use of Twitter to complete a big jigsaw puzzle," The Seeker says. It seems all the information was brought together in a Twitter chatroom, and resolved, through chats, sharing, and arguments, finally crystallising into Twitter threads that began to grab the attention of scientists of renown. The amplification of that theory post that took its own form, and a year down the line, DRASTIC had teased the premise out again, this time bolstered with a bunch of documents that got the world thinking again.

"DRASTIC benefited immensely from the participation of scientists. They made a huge contribution to the discourse, and they conveyed the findings in a much better way than we could have otherwise.... it's heartening to see that our work is being increasingly taken seriously by science and the media."

An official origin probe will lead its own investigation into the theory of the leak of the virus from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the seekers of the truth at DRASTIC do not think their work is done. "Well, I am certainly hopeful that we'll get to the truth one day. But honestly, at this moment I'm not sure – a proper investigation hasn't even begun."

'Delta variant 40% more transmissible'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON

Britain's Health Secretary on Sunday said the delta variant, which is fast becoming the dominant coronavirus variant in the U.K., is 40% more transmissible compared to the country's exist-

ing strains.

Matt Hancock acknowledged on Sunday that the rise in delta variant cases may delay the government's plan to lift most remaining lockdown restrictions on June 21. He also said he wouldn't rule out continuing

Explore New Hor

ASK US

N. SREE KANTH

Q. I purchased 23 shares of Oriental Bank of Commerce on May 12, 2005 at ₹2,250 per share and 10 shares of United Bank of India on January 10, 2011 at ₹90 per share. These banks were merged with the Punjab National Bank on April 1, 2020. I was allotted 26 shares of PNB in lieu of my holding in Oriental Bank and 10 shares of PNB in lieu of my holding in United Bank of India. I want to sell shares of PNB. I would like to know what would be the date of purchase of the shares of PNB and at what price in order to calculate capital gains tax?

S.S. SAXENA

A. For the purpose of computing the respective capital gains, the period of holding and cost of acquisition will be as follows: the period of holding will be taken into consideration from the date of acquisition of original shares purchased of the merging entities.

The cost of acquisition will be the cost of the shares of the original shares purchased of the merging entities.

Q. I am 81 years old with about ₹17 lakh in annual interest income.

Under normal tax rules, as a resident senior citizen, my income tax is about ₹2.3 lakh. I am now claiming deductions u/s 80C, 80D and 80TTB.

This financial year, I redeemed three mutual fund schemes and got about ₹13 lakh in capital gains. With this LTCG, my taxable income level goes up to ₹30 lakh. This exceeds AMT liable level of ₹20 lakh. However, I am not claiming any deductions from Section-10AA, 35AD and Chapter VIA Part C. My doubt is whether I am liable for Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)?

A. PARAMASIVACHARI

A. Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) is applicable to only those non-corporate assesses who have availed benefits under Chapter VIA Part C, Section 35D and Section 10AA. As you have not availed any of these benefits, AMT will not be applicable in your case.

Q. I am currently studying. Since, I don't have a job, I don't have any income. But, I sold my property for a certain value. I need to invest the sum in a fixed deposit.

I was told if the interest per year was more than ₹40,000, then tax would be deducted. But my question is my only income is this ₹40,000 and I come under the ₹2.5-lakh slab. Why should I pay tax then? If I don't need to pay tax, what is the procedure?

ARUN SHANJAY

A. Banks are required to deduct tax at a prescribed rate if the interest paid/payable to a non-senior citizen exceeds ₹40,000 in an assessment year.

As stated by you, as your taxable income does not exceed the basic exemption limit, you may submit Form 15G to your respective bank whereby you declare that your taxable income is lesser than the basic exemption limit. Once the bank takes into record the submitted form, they shall not deduct the applicable TDS. You are required to submit this form every assessment year after estimating your taxable income.

Q. If during the financial year 2020-21 (June 2020) one has completed 60 years, is he eligible to claim higher exemptions for income tax purposes for that year?

RAMAN SWAMINATHAN

A. An assessee will be treated as a senior citizen once he completes the age of 60. You will be treated as a senior citizen for the first time in FY 20-21 (AY 21-22).

(N. Sree Kanth is partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)



Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneyside@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

When to look at passive MFs

Such funds help when we lack the time or skill needed to track performance; lower expense ratio is a bonus

BHAVANA ACHARYA

You know that investing in equity requires you to pick the right stocks at the right time. If that's difficult, you choose an equity mutual fund. But your effort doesn't end in picking a fund.

It's also essential that you review your funds every year. Why? Because funds can slip and fall behind their benchmark or peers – meaning you're earning less than you could be. The need to track fund performance and review portfolios has increased over the past few years as more funds struggle to stay steadily better than the market. This holds true whether you hold equity, debt, or hybrid funds.

Enter passive

For those who have the time and the ability, weeding out poor performers, picking quality funds and reviewing is not a hard task. It gets difficult if:

One, you do not have the guidance, time or knowledge to identify under performers or outperformers, whether in

portfolio review or making fresh investments. Two, even if you do, you always wonder if you should give the fund more time to perform or exit right away. Three, you don't know the impact of any change in fund strategies and how it can impact you.

The solution is passive mutual funds and/or ETFs. A passive fund mimics the returns of a specific index (equity index or debt). It does not seek to beat the index. You don't need to either worry about fund management or understand fund strategy. Also, passive funds have lower expense ratios than active funds. But a good portfolio needs balance, to broadband where returns are coming from and mitigate the risk from specific market segments. Here's how to go about it.

Equity options

The plain-vanilla Nifty 50, the Nifty 100 or the Sensex work very well to give your portfolio the fundamental large-cap exposure it needs. The Nifty 100 is

very similar to the Nifty 50 in returns and behaviour, so don't use both indices in the same portfolio.

To tap into higher returns – with higher risk – you have three options. The first is the Nifty Midcap 150, which represents the full mid-cap market segment; the index shows up well against even active mid-cap equity funds.

The available BSE mid-cap index funds do not compare well in returns against the Nifty Midcap 150.

The second is the Nifty Next 50;

while this comprises large-cap stocks, its behaviour is similar to that of a mid-cap and is a high-volatile, high-return index.

The third is the Nifty 500 or the BSE 500 – both indices represent the entire market and are good portfolio diversifiers. These indices provide enough of a re-

turn boost without the need to go for small-cap indices.

The Nifty 50 or the Sensex is a portfolio must-have and should form the primary allocation. Layer on the other return-booster indices based on the risk you're willing to take and your time frame. Longer time frames allow for higher allocations to the high-risk indices. Cap allocations to these indices at 30-35%. If your time frame is less than 5 years, stick to the Nifty 50 or Sensex. If you're looking for higher return, use the Nifty Next 50.

For the more sophisticated, these are factor indices – indices that take a main index such as the Nifty 100, apply factors such as alpha, volatility, value and so on to it, and create an index that exhibits defined characteristics.

You can use these indices to tap different strategies and diversify your portfolio. But be aware that you need to understand the

factors and the index performance and how the index fits in your portfolio. ETFs such as Nifty Low Vol 30 and Nifty Alpha Low Vol 30 are examples of factor indices.

Finally, you can hold the U.S. market through index funds built on the Nasdaq 100 and the S&P 500. In all these indices, avoid making them the primary part of your portfolio – that should still be the market-cap based indices mentioned earlier.

Debt, gold

Gold funds/ETFs that track domestic gold prices

are aplenty. If you want to add gold allocation, include up to 15% of your portfolio in gold as long as your time frame is longer than four years.

On the debt side, options are few, but this space too is evolving and more opportunities can come by. Currently, the easiest is Liquid ETFs. In the short-term space, you don't have other options. But once you cross into longer-term time frames, consider PSU bond ETFs/index funds such as the Bharat Bond indices, PSU Bond and State Development Loan ETFs/index funds and gilt ETFs. Go for them based on your holding time frame and the index's maturity profile.

Points to note

In choosing index funds or ETFs, it's important to check how well the fund/ETF mimics the actual index return (called tracking error). You still need to do asset-allocation between equity and debt, before then deciding on which index to use. And finally, in passive funds, let go of the need for 'best' returns. It's enough that you mimic market returns.

(The author is Co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

■ GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK
IMAGING: J.A. PREMKUMAR

THINK INVESTOR: COVID AND PERSONAL FINANCES

The saliency effect of COVID-19

The pandemic has had a positive and negative impact on our personal finances

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY



Geared up: It is important to have cash at home in order to meet emergency situations. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Previously, we have discussed how your risk attitude could be influenced by the recent stock market uptrend. We now discuss the saliency effect of COVID-19 on your personal finance. Saliency refers to our tendency to focus on information that catches our attention and ignore others that are less visible.

Positive saliency

Consider the positive saliency effect of COVID-19. It has made you more health conscious. This action impacts your personal finance; your healthcare costs in the future could be lower if you take continual steps to stay healthy. There is an associated positive impact. Watching friends and extended families spend sizeable amounts on medical expenses has made most individuals realise the importance of having adequate healthcare insurance cover for their families.

The other aspect is the importance of cash to meet emergency situations. You would have heard from individuals who had to arrange for hospitalisation of their friends or family members as to how various institutions involved in the process require cash payment for treating patients. True, we pay using debit and credit cards for most of our

transactions. But, we are far from being a cashless society. So, it is important that you have emergency cash at home. You could keep half of your month's living expenses or an ad hoc amount you think is reasonable to meet an emergency.

Negative saliency

Negative saliency effect of COVID-19 is the present bias – ie, our tendency to take actions that improve our present happiness even if such actions can have a negative effect on our future well-being. Take discretionary spending. Spending more today can increase your present happiness at the cost of saving less for the future.

The question is: have you increased your discretionary spending recently? It refers to non-essential spending that can increase your happiness, albeit temporarily. This pandemic has shown that life can be short. So, why not enjoy life while we can, the argument goes.

Typically, such an argument would lead to individuals spending more on experiences such as taking an exotic vacation.

With the current restriction on travel, the focus has shifted to acquiring material goods, especially electronics that provide for a comfortable living.

The other negative saliency effect is the behaviour caused by the remarkable recovery in the stock market after initial crash last March when the country went into its first pandemic-related lockdown. The sharp rise in investment value has encouraged many individuals to increase their discretionary spending. This phenomenon is referred to as the wealth effect.

Individuals typically do not

keep sizeable funds in savings accounts or have emergency cash at home because they do not want to lose the opportunity to earn higher returns. Yet, they hold loss-making investments for long not minding the associated opportunity cost.

Why? Losing an investment opportunity is more salient than holding on to unrealised losses.

Similarly, individuals buy extended warranty for air conditioners and laptops but are reluctant to buy healthcare insurance or term life insurance products. Why? Till now, most individuals did not face large healthcare costs. So, healthcare was not a salient factor. This behaviour could change because of COVID-19.

There is a caveat. The saliency effect may last till you fear the pandemic and its impact on lifestyle. Once the fear subsides, the saliency effect could fade.

You have to act quickly to capitalise on the positive saliency effect. So, arrange to have some emergency cash at home and get adequate health insurance protection for your family. To address discretionary spending, first set up systematic investments to meet your life goals. Then, spend the rest of your monthly income.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

TECH TRAIL: PRECIOUS METALS

Gold, silver on an uptrend

B. KRISHNAKUMAR

Building on the positive trend in April, precious metals closed on a healthy note in May. The weakness in the U.S. dollar and inflation concerns helped Comex gold close near a 5-month high on May 28.

Comex gold gained 7.8% in May to close at \$1,905.3 an ounce. Comex silver, too, closed on a positive note, clocking a gain of 8.3% to settle at \$28.02 an ounce.

Mirroring the global trend, MCX gold futures gained 4.9% to close at ₹49,349 per 10-gm. MCX silver futures gained 5.2% to settle at ₹71,898 per kg.

Comex gold price moved well past the target of \$1,865-1,880 mentioned last month.

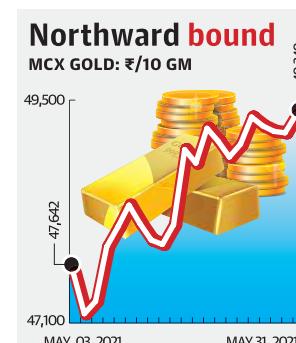
The price could be confined to a trading range as the recent rally has pushed the price into a short-term, overbought region. A move past \$1,925 would indicate that the move to \$1,950-1,960 is underway.

Until this happens, expect range-bound or subdued action in the near term.

Silver hits target

Comex silver, too, achieved the target of \$27.7-28.5 mentioned last month. Silver prices are also likely to remain subdued and confined to a range in the near term.

A move past \$29.1 would indicate that the white metal is headed to the next target of \$30.2-31. Until the breakout



happens, the price is likely to be subdued. MCX gold ruled firm in May and also moved to the then-mentioned target of ₹48,500-49,500. The short-term is positive and a rise to ₹51,500-52,000 appears likely. This view would be invalidated if the price closes below ₹47,200.

MCX silver reached the target at ₹71,500-72,000 indicated earlier. The short-term outlook is positive and MCX silver could head to the next target of ₹76,700-77,000. This view would be invalidated if the price falls below ₹69,100.

To summarise, the medium-term outlook for precious metals remains positive.

While there is a possibility of either a short-term consolidation or a minor cool-off, the medium-term uptrend is likely to reassert itself once the anticipated cool-off happens.

(The author is a Chennai-based analyst/trader. This is not meant to be trading or investment advice)

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES

Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	EMI (Rs) Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
HDFC Bank	10.50-21.00	10,747-13,527	2,149-2,705	Upto 2.5% (Max Rs 25,000)
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Upto 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	10.00-15.60	10,624-12,053	2,125-2,411	Rs 1,000-10,000
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,1	

Rybakina forces Serena to wait for her record-equalling title

Pavlyuchenkova beats Azarenka to enter the quarterfinals in Paris after 10 years; Medvedev powers through to set up last-eight meeting with Tsitsipas

ROLAND-GARROS

AGENCIES

American Serena Williams was knocked out in the fourth round at Roland Garros by Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina on Sunday, losing 6-3 7-5 to the 21st seed.

Serena, 39, was below her best as her wait for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title went on.

Rybakina held her nerve superbly to reach her first Grand Slam quarterfinal, sealing victory as Serena struck a backhand return out.

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova made the quarterfinals in Paris 10 years on, beating 2013 semifinalist Victoria Azarenka 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Former Wimbledon champion Marion Bartoli, who was doing the court-side interview, congratulated her.

"I've known you for a long time. We're friends off the court," Bartoli said.

"I can see the joy on your face." Indeed, it was hard for Pavlyuchenkova to stop smiling.

"It's just incredible, even that I'm still playing tennis such a long time after," she said.

"It's a surprise for me. I fought hard and I'm very happy to win." The 29-year-old Russian has reached the quarters at the Australian Open and Wimbledon, but has never reached the semifinals at any major.

The former top-ranked Azarenka saved two break points before clinching the first set on a sunny Court Philippe-Chatrier, where the crowd was subdued.

Tamara Zidansek, meanwhile, became the first Slovenian woman to reach the quarterfinals of a major.

She won 7-6(4), 6-1 against Romanian Sorana Cirstea after saving a set point in a tight first set between the unseeded players.

The 23-year-old dropped

to her knees and held her head in her hands after winning on her first match point.

Zidansek's run is even more impressive, considering the former snowboard enthusiast had never beaten a top 10-ranked player before this tournament.

No. 33 Paula Badosa of Spain joined her in the last eight for the first time at any major, beating No. 20 Marketa Vondrousova 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Daniil Medvedev's remarkable turnaround at Roland Garros has propelled him to the quarterfinals.

The second-seeded Russian beat Cristian Garin 6-2, 6-1, 7-5 on Sunday.

Medvedev received treatment on his right elbow during the third set against Garin but finished strong, hitting a succession of winners to take the final two games.

Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to the last eight for the second year running with a 6-3, 6-2, 7-5 victory over Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta.

THE RESULTS

Fourth round: Men: 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt 12-Pablo Carreno Busta (Esp) 6-3, 6-2, 7-5; 2-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt 22-Cristian Garin (Chi) 6-2, 6-1, 7-5. Women: 21-Elena Rybakina (Kaz) bt 7-Serena Williams (USA) 6-3, 7-5; 31-Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt 15-Victoria Azarenka (Blr) 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Tamara Zidansek (Slo) bt Sorana Cirstea (Rou) 7-6(4), 6-1; 33-Paula Badosa (Esp) bt 20-Marketa Vondrousova (Cze) 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Saturday's results:

Third round: Men: 9-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) bt Soonwoo Kwon (Kor) 7-6(6), 6-3, 6-4; 8-Roger Federer (Sui) bt Dominik Koepfer (Ger) 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 7-6(4), 7-5.

Fallen seeds

■ Men: 12-Carreno Busta, 22-Garin
■ Women: 7-Serena, 15-Azarenka, 20-Vondrousova

THE HIGHLIGHTS

1 Maiden Grand Slam quarterfinal for Rybakina in seven main draw appearances. Her previous best was round three at 2020 Aus Open

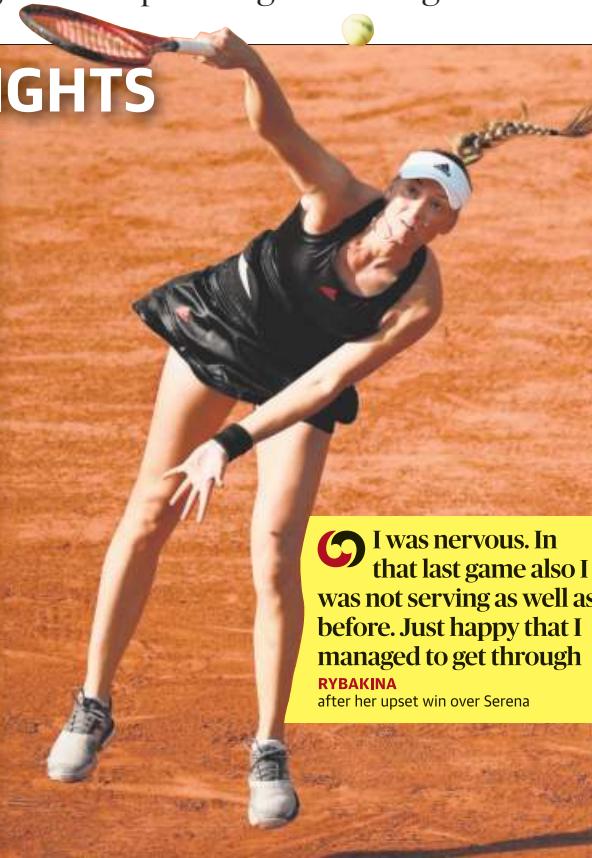
1 Serena has now gone four straight French Opens without making at least the quarterfinal. It is the first such run for her at any Major

1 World No. 85 Tamara Zidansek is the first woman representing Slovenia to make the quarterfinal at a Grand Slam

2 Second straight French Open quarterfinal for Tsitsipas

10 Pavlyuchenkova's last appearance in the quarterfinals at Roland Garros was 10 years ago in 2011

17 Badosa's 17th win on clay this season, including nine on the trot, from 19 matches overall



SUNDAY'S PICKS

MEN

1-Djokovic vs Musetti
3-Nadal vs 18-Sinner
10-Schwartzman vs Struff

DOUBLES: Bopanna & Skugor vs Andujar & Martinez

WOMEN

4-Kenin vs 17-Sakkari
24-Gauff vs 25-Jabeur
8-Swiatek vs Kostyuk (night session)

C My career has always been progressing slowly and slowly, like building a house. It was never like I was 16-year-old and I just did one result. I have to work for everything, that kind of made a solid ground for me

ZIDANSEK after entering the quarters

Swiatek, Mattek-Sands the great survivors

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Iga Swiatek kept her bid alive to become the first woman since Mary Pierce in 2000 to win the French Open singles and doubles titles in the same tournament, saving seven match points with partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands to reach the quarterfinals.

Swiatek and Mattek-

Sands staged an incredible recovery from 5-1 down in the final set against top seeds Hsieh Su-Wei and Elise Mertens, pulling off an improbable 5-7, 6-4, 7-5 victory after more than three hours on court.

Poland's Swiatek, the reigning singles champion, will continue the defence of her title on Monday against Marta Kostyuk in the last 16.

Want to thank you for all the love: Osaka to fans

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LOS ANGELES

Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka posted her first social media comments on Saturday since pulling out of the French Open after a dispute over attending press conferences.

Osaka, who also had revealed her ongoing battle with depression and anxiety, thanked her supporters in a brief message on Instagram.

"Just want to say thank you for all the love. Haven't been on my phone much but I wanted to hop on here and tell you all that I really appreciate it," she wrote.

French tennis officials fined Osaka \$15,000 and threatened to remove her from the tournament for not honouring mandatory media commitments, prompting the 23-year-old Japanese star to withdraw on her own.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Roger Federer said on Sunday he was withdrawing from the French Open despite having reached the fourth round, opting to focus on his primary objective of winning a ninth Wimbledon title.

"After discussions with my team, I've decided I will need to pull out of Roland Garros today," the 39-year-old said.

Knee surgeries

"After two knee surgeries and over a year of rehabilitation it's important that I listen to my body and make sure I don't push myself too quickly on my road to recovery."

"I am thrilled to have gotten three matches under my belt. There is no greater feeling than being back on court."

Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam title winner, who will be 40 in two months, battled over three-and-a-half hours until 12:45 a.m. on Sunday to reach the last 16 with a 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 7-6(4), 7-5 win over



Stretched to the limit: Roger Federer had to strain every sinew against Dominik Koepfer on Saturday, leaving him bone-wearied. ■ AFP

59th-ranked Dominik Koepfer.

He was due back on court on Monday to tackle Matteo Berrettini for a place in the quarterfinals. However, the Swiss star had admitted there were doubts over whether he'd make it.

Main goal

Federer is playing only his third tournament since last

year's Australian Open and has always said Wimbledon is his main goal. He is chasing a ninth title at Wimbledon which starts on June 28.

He is also scheduled to play the warm-up grass-court tournament in Halle beginning on June 14, the day after the French Open ends.

Federer, who made his Roland Garros debut in 1999 and was champion in 2009,

was playing a night session for the first time.

It is likely that this was Federer's final appearance at the tournament. His return this year was only his second participation since 2015.

"The Roland Garros tournament is really about the withdrawal of Roger Federer, who put up an incredible fight last night," said tournament director Guy Forget.

"We were all delighted to see Roger back in Paris, where he played three high-level matches. We wish him all the best for the rest of the season."

After winning his match, Federer said that he was pacing himself in his recovery. "All the matches I've played since the injury are information for the rest of the season," he said.

"It gives me great pleasure to be able to play 3hr 30min at a high level against a very good player. It shows that I'm on the right track."

Rave reviews

His performance won rave reviews from rivals following the match on television.

"I'm not bothered by the outcome of this match at all," tweeted Britain's Andy Murray, a former World No. 1 and three-time Major winner.

"Just seeing Federer at 39 off the back of 2 knee surgeries playing to an empty stadium at 12:30 a.m. getting fired up is inspirational to me. Do what you love."

Bopanna & Skugor enter quarterfinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

India's Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Franjo Skugor advanced to the quarterfinals at Roland Garros here on Sunday.

The pair got a walkover in its men's doubles clash against The Netherlands' Matwe Middelkoop and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador.

Bopanna and Skugor will now face Spain's Pablo Andujar and Pedro Martinez in the last-eight stage.

The unseeded Bopanna and Skugor had notched up a straight set win over USA's Frances Tiafo and Nicholas Monroe in the second round earlier this week.

The 41-year-old Bopanna, ranked 40 in the world, is not defending any points this year at the Roland Garros.

The Indian needs to earn points since this is his last chance to improve his ranking. The rankings on June 10 will be considered for entry into the Tokyo Olympics.

THE MIDFIELD GENERALS

Croatia and the Netherlands are two teams which will rely heavily on their midfield maestros Luka Modric and Frenkie de Jong to pull the strings in the competition

THE NETHERLANDS

GOALKEEPERS: Jasper Cillessen, Tim Krul, Maarten Stekelenburg

DEFENDERS: Nathan Ake, Daley Blind, Matthijs de Ligt, Stefan de Vrij, Denzel Dumfries, Jurrien Timber, Patrick van Aanholt, Joel Veltman, Owen Wijndal

MIDFIELDERS: Frenkie de Jong, Marten de Roon, Ryan Gravenberch, Davy Klaassen, Teun Koopmeiners, Donny de Beek, Georginio Wijnaldum

FORWARDS: Steven Berghuis, Luuk de Jong, Memphis Depay, Cody Gakpo, Donyell Malen, Quincy Promes, Wout Weghorst

COACH: Frank de Boer

USUAL FORMATION: 4-3-3

FORM GUIDE: W | W | L | W | W

FIRST MATCH: vs Ukraine, June 14 in Amsterdam, 12.30 a.m.

EURO APPEARANCES: 9

BEST PERFORMANCE: Winner (1988)

KEY PLAYER

Frenkie de Jong

With his exceptional ability to retain possession, create space, glide between the lines and build from the back, De Jong has become Oranje's midfield metronome

ONE TO WATCH

Memphis Depay

The Oranje have

plenty of squad depth but much of the attacking burden falls on the powerful Lyon forward, an indefatigable runner with a fearsome right foot

CROATIA

GOALKEEPERS: Dominik Livakovic, Lovre Kalinic, Simon Sluga

DEFENDERS: Sime Vrsaljko, Domagoj Vida, Josip Juranovic, Dejan Lovren, Duje Caleta-Car, Borna Barisic, Mile Skoric, Josko Gvardiol, Domagoj Bradaric

MIDFIELDERS: Luka Modric, Marcelo Brozovic, Milan Badelj, Mateo Kovacic, Nikola Vlasic, Mario Pasalic, Luka Ivanusec

FORWARDS: Bruno Petkovic, Ivan Perisic, Andrej Kramaric, Josip Brekalo, Ante Rebic, Mislav Orsic, Ante Budimir

COACH: Zlatko Dalic

FORM GUIDE: L | L | L | W | W

FIRST MATCH: vs England, June 13, in London, 6.30 p.m.

USUAL FORMATION: 4-2-3-1

EURO APPEARANCES: 5

BEST PERFORMANCE: Quarterfinals ('96, '08)

KEY PLAYER

Luka Modric

The 2018 Ballon d'Or winner is now in sight of

