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## NEARBY



### Speed limits in Delhi revised for uniformity

NEW DELHI  
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CITY ▶ PAGE 2

### Delhi reports 238 new COVID-19 cases

NEW DELHI  
Delhi reported 238 new COVID-19 cases and 24 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative cases to 14,30,671 and death toll to 24,772, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

### Assam Congress slams CM's 'population' remark

GUWAHATI  
The Assam Congress flayed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for asking a minority group to adopt population control measures. Party leader Bobbeeta Sharma said, "This is unbecoming of the CM who is expected to be well-versed in the demographic facts of a State he represents."

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

### Punjab police seize cache of foreign-made pistols

CHANDIGARH  
The Punjab police on Friday said they have seized a huge cache of foreign-made pistols and arrested a weapons smuggler, allegedly linked with Pakistan-based terrorist outfits and anti-India pro-Khalistani elements based in the U.S., Canada and the U.K.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

## SC rejects ex-Mumbai police chief's appeal

Case won't be shifted from Maharashtra

### KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Friday told former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh that "people who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others" while refusing to entertain his plea seeking the transfer of the inquiries/case against him outside Maharashtra to be investigated by an independent agency. He alleged that the State government is trying to "frame" him for levelling corruption charges against NCP leader Anil Deshmukh, who had to resign as Home Minister.

Along with Mr. Singh's petition, the Bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V. Ramasubramanian was also considering an application filed by Mumbai police inspector Bhimraj Rohidas Ghadge, who accused Mr. Singh, in turn, of corruption and vindictiveness. Mr. Ghadge, represented by senior advocate S.B. Talekar and advocate Vipin Nair, accused his former boss of having tried to "silence" him by framing fake cases against him.

"It is commonly said that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others," Justice Gupta told senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, appearing for Mr. Singh.

Mr. Jethmalani raised an objection to the comment, saying it was a "prejudicial statement" and amounted

## Centre unlikely to allow return of four Kerala women, who joined IS

They had surrendered after their husbands were killed in attacks

VIJAYA SINGH  
SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

The four Indian women lodged in an Afghanistan prison, who accompanied their husbands to join the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), are unlikely to be allowed to return to the country, a senior government official said.

The women, all from Kerala, travelled to Nangarhar in Afghanistan between 2016 and 2018. Their husbands were killed in different attacks in Afghanistan. The women were among

thousands of Islamic State fighters and affiliates who surrendered before the Afghanistan authorities in the months of November and December 2019.

### SPECIAL

On April 27, Ahmad Zia Saraj, the head of the National Directorate of Security, told reporters in Kabul that 408 members of the Islamic State from 13 countries are lodged in Afghanistan prisons. This included four Indians, 16 Chinese, 299 Pakistanis, two Bangladeshis, and

### Cross-border tale



• Sonia Sebastian, an engineering graduate, left for Afghanistan with her husband, Abdul Rashid Abdulla

• Merrin Jacob flew out with her husband, Bestin Vincent, who was later killed in Afghanistan

• Vincent's brother Bexon and his wife Nimisha too accompanied them

• Reffela left with her husband Ijas Kallukettia Purayil, a physician. He is said to be one of the IS terrorists who stormed a prison in Jalalabad in August 2020

two from the Maldives, among others.

Mr. Saraj also said the Afghanistan government had begun talks with the 13 coun-

tries to deport the prisoners.

While Afghan officials in Delhi declined to comment, senior officials in Kabul indicated that they awaited word

from India on what it proposes to do.

A source, however, said there was no consensus among various government agencies on the return of the four women and it was unlikely that they would be allowed to come back. The women, accompanied by their children, were interviewed by Indian security agencies in Kabul in December 2019, a month after their surrender.

In March 2020, Stratnewsglobal.com, a strategic affairs website, published a video of the interrogation of the three women. The four women who appeared in the video were identified as Sonia Sebastian, alias Ayisha;

Reffela; Merrin Jacob, alias Mariyam; and Nimisha, alias Fathima Isa. A senior official added that there were two other Indian women and a man who had surrendered to the authorities.

### 'Highly radicalised'

"One line of thought was to allow them to come back and become approvers in the cases here. However, their interview revealed that they are highly radicalised. The France model may be followed and the Afghanistan authorities can be requested to put them on trial there," said the official.

The Interpol has issued red notices against the women on India's request.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had filed a chargesheet in 2017 after a group of 21 men and women from Kerala, including Sebastian, left India in 2016 in batches to join the ISKP in Afghanistan. They crossed over to Afghanistan on foot from Iran.

The NIA said Sebastian, from Kasargod in Kerala, had left India on May 31, 2016, with her husband, Abdul Rashid Abdulla, from Mumbai airport.

The agency said, "The couple held secret classes in support of IS and jihad, as propagated by it, during last part of Ramadan."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Mukul Roy rejoins Trinamool

Welcomed by Mamata, he says she is the leader of the entire country

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

The repercussions of the BJP's comprehensive defeat in the West Bengal Assembly poll continued more than a month after the results were declared, with party vice-president Mukul Roy on Friday returning to the Trinamool Congress. One of the founding members of the party, Mr. Roy had switched to the BJP in November 2017.

Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee and party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee were at the party headquarters to welcome Mr. Roy, 67.

An effusive Mr. Roy described Ms. Banerjee as "a leader of the entire country". He said he was feeling relieved after quitting the BJP.

"I feel glad to meet all the old faces again... I feel that Bengal will return to its old



Back in the team: Mukul Roy with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Trinamool national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee in Kolkata on Friday. ■ PTI

position of prestige, and the person who will lead Bengal to that position, she is the leader of all of us, the leader of India, none other than Mamata Banerjee," he said.

In the present circumstances, no one can stay in the BJP in Bengal, he added.

Ms. Banerjee, in turn, described Mr. Roy as an "old family member" and added

that "old is always gold".

"Mukul is an old member of our family. I feel that upon coming back he has got some mental relief. I saw his health was deteriorating and he was perhaps unable to express that. It is not possible to work in the BJP. The BJP is such an authoritarian party; it is so cruel that they do not allow anybody to exist with dignity. Mukul's return proves just that," Ms. Banerjee said.

Pointing that she "never had any difference of opinion with Mukul" and "Mukul did not say anything against our party", the Chief Minister alleged that the former Railway Minister "was intimidated, threatened... agencies were brainwashed to harass him".

Ms. Banerjee added that many more leaders from the BJP may join Trinamool.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Modi meets Adityanath, Amit Shah to iron out issues

U.P. CM asked to 'take everyone along' in party and govt.

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday had meetings with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as well as Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda to sort out what are said to be, several internal issues within the party and the government, including a possible Cabinet reshuffle.

The state of play in the BJP's State unit and the party-run government seem to be more or less settled in favour of Mr. Adityanath. The meeting between Mr. Modi and Mr. Adityanath lasted for over an hour. After this, the Chief Minister met Mr. Nadda and called on President Ram Nath Kovind.

Sources close to Mr. Adityanath said his meetings



Key talks: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath in New Delhi on Friday. ■ PTI / @PMOINDIA

"The poorvanchal expressway is also going to be ready for inauguration by July 31 and an invitation for the ceremony was extended to the Prime Minister. The start of ground work of the proposed Jhevar airport was also discussed," said a source.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

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## Centre to engage with J&K parties

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Twenty months after the Union government ended Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional position, serious spadework is on, for

the first time, to rope in the mainstream political parties of the UT, especially Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, to engage with New Delhi and meet the BJP's top leadership in the coming

weeks. Top sources told *The Hindu* that "people mandated by the Centre are in touch with the top leaders of the regional parties of J&K for many weeks".

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 8

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Mathematics by Maneesh Singh Sir 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 (9:30 am to 12:30 pm)  
Sociology by Raj Kumar Rai Sir 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 (2:00 pm to 4:30 pm)

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Court seeks jail's reply to allegations by 'ISIS member'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday sought response from Tihar jail authorities on an application moved by an alleged ISIS member claiming he was beaten up by other inmates and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'.

The accused, Rashid Zafar, was arrested in 2018 on allegations of being part of a group planning suicide attacks and serial blasts.

Special Judge Parveen Singh issued notice to Tihar jail superintendent and sought a reply to Zafar's application by June 14, when the court will further hear the matter. The application said the incident was disclosed by the accused to his father telephonically from jail.

"The accused was beaten up and forced to chant religious slogans," advocate M.S. Khan, appearing for the accused, claimed.

## Close aide of Sushil sent to 4-day police custody

He will be taken to Jammu as part of probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday remanded an alleged close aide of Olympic wrestler Sushil Kumar to four-day police custody in connection with the murder of a 23-year-old former junior national wrestling champion at Chhatrasal Stadium.

Anirudh was arrested by Delhi Police's Crime Branch on Thursday. A total of 10 people, including Mr. Kumar, have now been arrested in connection with the incident.

The police produced Anirudh before Metropolitan Magistrate Divya Malhotra and sought his custody for seven days. The court, however, allowed his police interrogation for only four days.

Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava, representing the police, told the court that Anirudh's custody is required as he has to

be taken to Jammu. The court was also apprised that Anirudh has been spotted in the purported video of the brawl. Mr. Kumar and his associates allegedly assaulted wrestler Sagar Dhankar and two of his friends Sonu Mahal and Amit Kumar on the intervening night of May 4 and 5 over a property dispute. Mr. Dhankar, 23, succumbed to his injuries later.

### Sushil custody extended

The two-time Olympic medallist faces charges of murder, culpable homicide, kidnapping and criminal conspiracy. Police have called him the "main culprit and mastermind" behind the alleged murder and said there is electronic evidence in which he and his associates could be seen beating Mr. Dhankar with sticks.

Earlier on Friday, the district court extended his judicial custody till June 25 in connection with the case.

## Speed limits revised for greater uniformity

New rules apply to vehicles plying on National Highways passing through Delhi and the Ring Road

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

For safer roads		Road	Earlier	Revised
Barapullah	Elevated Road	70	60	All figures in kmph
Delhi-Meerut	Expressway	70	70	
Singhu Border-	Mukbara Chowk	70	60	
Ring Road	50/60	60		
Airport Road	50	60		

SOURCE: DELHI TRAFFIC POLICE

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

In view of the traffic scenario and safety of road users, the Delhi Traffic Police on Friday enforced revised speed limits for all categories of motor vehicles on National Highways, the Ring Road and other important stretches in the Capital.

### Passenger vehicles

The speed limit for M1 category vehicles is now 60-70 kmph for high speed/access-controlled roads, including stretches of National Highways passing through Delhi, Noida Toll Road, Saleemgarh Bypass Road, Barapullah Nallah, Northern Access Road, Central Spine Road, Ring Road, Outer Ring Road, Pusta Road and IGI Airport Road. Passenger vehicles comprising not more than eight seats in addition to driver's seat such as cars and cabs fall under the M1 category.

The speed limit for M1 category vehicles for all other

arterial roads in areas between Ring Road and Outer Ring Road, beyond Outer Ring Road, inside Ring Road and entire Trans Yamuna area, is 50 now kmph.

The speed limit for taxis and cabs is now at par with private cars on these roads, said the traffic police.

The last revision of speed limits on majority of roads and stretches was undertaken in 2011. Thereafter, in 2017 and 2019, the speed limit for a few roads was further revised, said the traffic police.

The maximum speed limit for two-wheelers on National Highways was 70

kmph, which has now been reduced to 60 kmph.

Speed limits for two-wheelers is separately notified as 50 kmph on roads where speed limit of cars is 50 kmph, and 60 kmph on roads where it is 60-70 kmph," a police officer said.

### Transport vehicles

"The speed limit for all types of transport vehicles, including Gramin Sewa, TSRS, Phat-Phat Sewa, Quadricycle, and N-category vehicles (goods vehicles), has been notified as 40 kmph," the officer added.

The speed limit in residential areas, markets, service lanes and minor roads is now 30 kmph. The speed limit for loops of flyovers is

now 40 kmph. According to a police statement, then Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik had constituted a Speed Review Committee under the chairmanship of Taj Hassan, Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic).

The committee included officers from the Delhi Traffic Police, expert members/officials from the Central Road Research Institute Delhi, and the Transport Department of the Delhi government to examine existing speed limits, through a notification dated April 6, 2018.

The revised speed limits have been notified in the Delhi Gazette based on the recommendations of the committee.

The Delhi Traffic Police has requested road-mainaining agencies to erect corresponding speed limit sign boards at all prominent locations, for guidance and convenience of all road users and the general public.

## Man stabbed to death over parking space

Three people have been arrested

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death by his neighbour following a quarrel over parking a two-wheeler in south-east Delhi's Badarpur, police said on Friday. Two others suffered injuries.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P.

Meena said the victim has been identified as Shiv Yadav, a resident of Budh Vihar. A call regarding a quarrel between two neighbours over parking a two-wheeler was received on Thursday night, the police said. It was revealed that the quarrel started when the victim parked his two-wheeler in front of the house of the accused.

During enquiry, we found that on Thursday morning, an argument had

taken place between Mr. Yadav and his neighbour Premvati over parking a scooter. She complained and asked him not to park his scooter on the street," Mr. Meena said.

Later in the evening, both parties tried to resolve the problem but Premvati's husband Prempal got angry and shared the incident with his two sons. The trio then stabbed Mr. Yadav, his brother Vikas, and cousin Ratan Lal.

Police said that Prempal has been arrested and the minor son has been apprehended.

## Five mowed down by speeding truck

Driver has been arrested; two of the victims were brothers aged 2 and 5

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Five people, including four members of a family, were mowed down by a speeding dumper truck early Friday in south-west Delhi's Najafgarh. The deceased have been identified as Ashok (30), his wife Kiran (27), his sons Ishant (5) and Dev (2), and one Jawahar Singh (93).

The driver, 35-year-old Rajesh, was arrested from the spot.

Ashok and his family were walking along the road to take a bus to visit a temple in Gurugram while Mr. Singh was out for his morning walk, the police said. After hitting the victims, the truck crashed into several parked vehicles.

CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media. In one video, the family of four is seen walking on the road near the parked cars. Ashok was carrying his younger son in his arms while his elder son was walking with his mother when the truck mowed them down.

"Information regarding the incident was received at 5.19 a.m. at Thana Road police station. Ashok, Kiran and Ishant were found dead at the spot. Dev and Mr. Singh were taken to Vikas Hospital," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said.

They later died during treatment at Safdarjung Hospital.

The bodies have been sent to the Rao Tula Ram Memorial Hospital for post



The offending truck at the Najafgarh police station; the heavy vehicle also hit several parked cars.  
■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

mortem.

Five vehicles parked at the spot were also damaged by the truck driver's rash and negligent driving, the police said.



Code has been registered at Najafgarh police station.

Mr. Singh's grandson Rakesh Yadav said his grandfather went for a morning walk every day.

"I was sleeping when the accident took place. The neighbours informed us about it. We reached the hospital and found him dead," Mr. Yadav said.

Ashok worked as a security guard at Vikas Hospital.

"An elderly man was lying on the road and was rushed to the hospital. Later, I came to know that the children who had been hit by the truck were from our family. Ashok and his family were going to Sheetla Devi Mata temple in Gurugram," said a member of Ashok's family.

## Afternoon siesta



A farmer takes a nap on sacks of paddy at the wholesale grain market in Najafgarh on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

## DUTA asks V-C to set up COVID care facility

It also proposes installing oxygen plant

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) has urged the university administration to take requisite measures and prepare for the next COVID-19 wave by setting up a COVID care facility.

A proposal for setting up an oxygen plant was discussed in a meeting with vice-chancellor P.C. Joshi on Thursday, said DUTA.

DUTA president Rajib Ray said, "We discussed a proposal to set up an oxygen plant through contribution of teachers and employees. The V-C assured they are exploring various ways of materialising it, including requesting funds from the government. It was agreed that DUTA will join the appeal call in case the university requires raising funds for the plant."

The teachers' body also demanded the inclusion of

## DSEU will enrol 6,000 students, says Sisodia

Admission to be based on aptitude test

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) officials will visit schools to encourage students to take admission in various skill and entrepreneurship programmes.

In the current year, DSEU will admit 6,000 children out of which 4,500 will pursue diploma courses and 1,500 children will study degree courses. DSEU will focus on building talents and skills of students," Mr. Sisodia said, adding that instead of vying for grades, the university will enrol students based on an aptitude test which will be held in December-January.

The aptitude test will focus on '360 degree assessment' and will be a "revolutionary move" in education as most universities continue with the old practice of

admitting students based on grade lists, said the government.

"Universities like Oxford admit children based on conditions for them to complete courses and projects, not on their grades in Board exams. Similarly, our children can be secure in the fact that they will be admitted into a university that will not stress on their grades but on their intent and their interest to study skills and become entrepreneurs," Mr. Sisodia said.

"Generic undergraduate courses do not encourage students to become entrepreneurs and be future-ready... the government will encourage students to pursue vocational and skill courses," he added.

DSEU will have 12 job-oriented bachelor programmes and will offer internships in industries 50% of the time, the government said.

## Hardayal Municipal Library reopens

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The historical Hardayal Municipal Library was thrown open to the public on Friday after undergoing extensive renovation over the past one year at a cost of ₹283.33 lakh.

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan, who inaugurated the renovated library, said it had played an important role in promoting the culture of book reading.

### 8,000 rare texts

"The 104-year-old heritage building contains approximately 1.25 lakh books, which include 8,000 rare texts and 350 handwritten manuscripts," said North Delhi Municipal Corporation Mayor Jai Prakash. Digitisation and conservation of rare books was done by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

## NGT pulls up DPCC over illegal godowns

'No permits for units in Shahdara'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has pulled up the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) over operation of godowns in Shahdara without requisite permissions, leading to noise and air pollution.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel observed that the DPCC had failed to address relevant issues in the report furnished by it. "DPCC has filed a report in a careless manner, unmindful of its statutory duties.

This calls for accountability of the chairman and the member secretary of the DPCC. Before taking action against the officers, we grant one more opportunity to take effective remedial action for enforcement of rule of law and environmental norms in coordination with other concerned authorities," it said.



In case of non-compliance, the erring officials would be held accountable and "dealt with sternly", the Bench added, while noting that the DPCC had taken action against only two godowns instead of all the units that were in violation of the master plan.

The directions came on a plea moved by petitioner Sunil Kumar against the operation of illegal garbage godowns in Soni Vihar. The plea had contended that the units were releasing dangerous oxides and leading to noise and air pollution.

## Man kills brother

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man allegedly killed his older brother with dumbbells in south-east Delhi's Kalkaji following a quarrel. The accused has been arrested, the police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P. Meena said the accused has been identified as Ajay Kumar Sahu and the victim has been identified as Vijay Kumar Sahu, 35. They lived together and worked at the same place.

The police received a call about the incident around 1 a.m. on Friday. A police team found Vijay's body in a pool of blood and Ajay sitting nearby with the dumbbells next to him. "Vijay's body was shifted to a mortuary for post mortem and a murder case was registered," Mr. Meena said. "They had frequent brawls over family issues," the officer said, adding: "This time Vijay retaliated and Ajay hit him in the head with the dumbbells."

Timings DELHI		
SATURDAY, JUN. 12		
RISE 05:23	SET 19:20	
RISE 06:39	SET 21:08	
SUNDAY, JUN. 13		
RISE 05:24	SET 19:20	
RISE 07:32	SET 21:57	
MONDAY, JUN. 14		
RISE 05:24	SET 19:21	
RISE 08:29	SET 22:41	

**Delhi Weather** max min  
Delhi City 39 20  
Safdarjung 39 20  
Palam 39 23

**Delhi Palam Today**  
37°C A hot and humid day with partly cloudy to cloudy sky. Short spell rain and thunderstorm with gusty winds may occur at few places.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
35°C Few spell of rain and thunderstorm with gusty winds likely at some places. Warm and humid day with cloudy sky.

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## IN BRIEF



'First greenhouse to be started at ITO nursery'

**NEW DELHI**  
Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said the Delhi government is all set to start its first greenhouse at ITO nursery to cultivate plants using modern techniques. "We have developed this greenhouse so that we can produce the maximum quantity of medicinal plants, in minimal time," said Mr. Rai.

**Excise licences of liquor shops, clubs extended**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Delhi government has decided to extend the excise licence of liquor shops, clubs, resto-bars and other establishments by three more months till September 30, an order issued by the excise department said.

# Out of 77,112 people tested in the Capital, 238 found positive

263 centres are operating at 100 locations to vaccinate those in 18- 44 age group

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 238 new COVID-19 cases and 24 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative cases to 14,30,671 and death toll to 24,772, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

Out of the total cases, 14,01,977 people have recovered and there are 3,922 active cases. A total of 77,112 tests were conducted while the test positivity rate was 0.31%.

This means less than one person out of 100 people taking COVID-19 tests are positive for the virus. The TPR was as high as 36% on April 22 and has been coming down since then.

Meanwhile, AAP leader Atishi said Delhi has vacci-



Passengers taking COVID-19 test before boarding the train at New Delhi Railway Station on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

nated 30% of its population and 13,94,000 people have received both doses of vac-

cine group is getting vaccinat-

ed," she said.

### Vaccine stock

"We have 25 days' stock of Covishield for those above 45. As far as the 18-44 years

age group is concerned, Del-

hi has received a total of

As far as the 18-44 years age group is concerned, Delhi has received a total of 10,34,910 doses of the vaccine

ATISHI  
AAP leader

10,34,910 doses of the vac-

cine, out of which we have 1,40,000 doses available," she added.

After Central government capped the price private hospitals can charge for a dose of Covishield at ₹780, Akash Healthcare on Friday said they have stopped their drive-through vaccination, where a dose of Covishield

was given at ₹1,600. "Owing to new vaccination pricing, running it has become non-viable," the hospital said in a statement.

## Centre must cooperate with State govts.: Sisodia

He terms BJP as 'Bharatiya Jhagda Party'

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia on Friday said that the BJP-led Central government should cooperate with State governments instead of acting as "obstructionists" and called the BJP "Bharatiya Jhagda Party".

"They will condemn the West Bengal government or the Jharkhand government or the Maharashtra government. It seems like the BJP-led Centre has no other work but to divert the focus of people and attack the State governments that are actually doing some work," the AAP leader said.

"The only common factor between oxygen management, vaccines, ration and COVID management is BJP's opposition and deliberate inaction. When the Chief Minister implored why ration

cannot be delivered to households while pizza can, several BJP leaders pounced on the CM and began calling him corrupt. What is wrong if the CM, who is an IIT graduate, promotes doorstep delivery of ration?" he said.

### 'Work as Team India'

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal reiterated that instead of abusing and fighting with State governments, the Centre should work with them. He tagged a media report according to which Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad blamed the Kejriwal government for allegedly failing to provide ration and oxygen to the people.

In response, Mr. Kejriwal said the country will progress when 130 crore people, all the State governments and the Centre work together as 'Team India'.

## AAP ignored HC direction on pandemic control: BJP

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday accused the Delhi government of having disregarded the directions of the High Court more than once in relation to multiple aspects of COVID management in the Capital during the pandemic.

The party alleged that the Delhi government did not curtail black marketing of medicines and other medical equipment, remedy the situation around oxygen supply, migration of labourers and low testing among other issues.

"The court has asked for compensation to dependents of those who died of oxygen shortage but no step has been taken yet," Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta alleged.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that the Delhi govt. created an atmosphere of "doubts and fear" during the first wave pushing migrant workers to leave the city.

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**THE HINDU**

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# Nod to cut trees for hospital pending with Minister for 30 months

Union Cabinet had cleared construction, but despite reminders Environment Minister has neither rejected nor approved it

**NIKHIL M BABU**

NEW DELHI

The permission to cut or transplant trees for the Union government's plan to construct a 100-bed hospital in Najafgarh has been pending with the Delhi Environment Minister's office for almost two-and-a-half years, according to a status report accessed by *The Hindu*.

The Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has written a letter to Lt. Governor Anil Baijal to speed up the process and the letter has also been submitted to the Minister's office through the Chief Secretary's office earlier this

Multiple reminders on this matter from the Central government have also been submitted to the Environment Minister's office, but there is no decision yet

A SENIOR DELHI GOVT. OFFICIAL

month, a senior Delhi government official said.

"Multiple reminders on this matter from the Central government have also been submitted to the Environment Minister's office through the Chief Secretary's office earlier this

ment Minister's office, but there is no decision yet," the official said.

### Catering to 13 lakh

In May 2018, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had cleared the construction of the hospital and said it will cater to 13.65 lakh people. The hospital was supposed to be operational by May 2020.

Later in 2018, the officials had recommended the cutting of trees and as per a status report of the Delhi government, the file for the project was submitted to the

Environment Minister on December 18, 2018. The Minister has neither rejected nor approved it.

On April 16, Union Health Minister in a letter to the Lt. Governor directed to "expedit the forest clearance pending before Govt. of NCT of Delhi" for construction of the hospital. Mr. Vardhan said he had written twice to the Chief Minister.

A total of 57 trees have to be cut or transplanted for the project, as per officials. In April, during the peak of COVID-19 infection, people were running from one hospital to

another to find hospital beds and on many days, the total vacant beds were only about 5-6%.

### Hurdles galore

As per rules, an applicant can go ahead and cut the trees if the government does not reply within 60 days. But officials said most government projects do not go ahead without a permission, so as to avoid problems in the future.

"The tree officer shall give his decision within sixty days from the date of receipt of the application. If the officer fails to communicate his permis-

sion on request within the period specified under sub-section (3), the permission referred to in section 8 shall be deemed to have been granted," the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, states about permission for cutting of trees.

The report showed that permission to cut trees for about 12 projects are pending before the Environment Minister's office and many of them are Central government projects.

When contacted, a Delhi government spokesperson refused to comment.

# Pregnant woman moves HC for jab inclusion

Court disposed of the plea after Centre's counsel said it will take a decision on it

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

A pregnant woman on Friday approached the Delhi High Court seeking direction to the Centre to include pregnant women in COVID-19 vaccination drive on priority basis.

The court was informed by the Central government's counsel that the government is seized of the issue and will take a decision on the same.

Noting the statement made by the Centre's counsel, Justice Amit Bansal said no further orders are re-



quired and disposed of the woman's petition.

Advocate Vasudha Zutshi, representing the woman, said the petitioner is in advanced stage of pregnan-

cy and desires to get vaccinated on priority basis. She sought direction to the government to issue a fresh notification to include pregnant women in the vaccination drive on priority basis.

**NTAGI recommendations**  
Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma and Central government standing counsel Anurag Ahluwalia said National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has issued a notification on May 28 in which various recommendations were made including that all

pregnant women visiting antenatal care may be informed about the risks and benefits associated with the COVID-19 vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, available in the country.

Based on the information provided a pregnant woman may be offered the available COVID-19 vaccine at the nearest centre and the vaccine can be given anytime during the pregnancy, the NTAGI recommendations said, adding that all lactating women are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines anytime after delivery.

Distribute rations for June manually'

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

Amid a tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government over doorstep ration delivery, the Delhi Food Department has directed fair price shops, barring those in Seemapuri, to distribute rations for the month of June among beneficiaries manually.

The distribution of rations began on Friday. In Seemapuri, it will be distributed only through e-PoS.



Help line No.0471-2525300  
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Concern over polluted water supply in canal

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

The Congress government in Rajasthan has taken up the issue of the release of polluted water in the Indira Gandhi Canal from Harike barrage in Punjab's Ferozepur district and alerted the neighbouring State's Chief Secretary about its impact in the northern districts. The polluted water has started coming after a 60-day closure of the canal.

The Indira Gandhi Canal was closed on March 28 for relining work. With the release of water starting last week, pollutants have arrived in the agricultural fields in Hanumangarh and Sriganganagar districts. The State has received reports that untreated water from industries in Punjab was being released in the canal.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said here that the situation was being monitored and the water samples had been sent for quality check.

## Assam Congress slams CM's 'population' remark

Fertility rate of women in the State declining, show data'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Assam unit of the Congress has slammed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for asking a minority community to adopt population control measures.

Marking the completion of a month of the BJP-led government on Thursday, he stated the population of the minorities needed to be in check to prevent encroachment and pressure on land resources.

Congress leader Bobbeeta Sharma said on Friday, "He said that if the population explosion continues, the Kamakhya Temple [Guwahati] land will one day be encroached upon. This is unbecoming of the Chief Minister who is expected to be well-versed in demographic facts of a State he represents".

The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee cited the latest National Family Health



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

Survey (NFHS) released in December 2020, which said the total fertility rate (TFR) declined across most Indian States in the last five years.

"The total fertility rate is defined as the average number of children that would be born to a woman by the time she ends childbearing. A TFR of 2.1 is known as the replacement rate. The fertility rate of less than 2.1 implies that the total population will be less than the existing population which is also called the negative growth rate," the party said.

"Now, the same survey said the fertility rate of women in Assam declined from 2.2 in 2015-16 to 1.9 in 2020-21, which means the future population of Assam will only be less than the current population. Hence there is no question of an increase in population, as the data of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare show," the party said.

**'Misleading remark'**

In the context of the NFHS survey, the Chief Minister's remark on "population explosion" in Assam was misinformed and misleading, Ms. Sharma said.

"But if he is referring to the population explosion that may happen in future due to immigration of people from Bangladesh and Pakistan because of the implementation of the CAA, then his concern is perhaps valid," she added.

## Punjab police seize huge cache of foreign-made pistols

Smuggler allegedly linked to Pak-based terror outfits arrested

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Friday said they have seized a huge cache of foreign-made pistols and arrested a weapons smuggler, allegedly linked with Pakistan-based terrorist outfits and anti-India pro-Khalistani elements based in the U.S., Canada and the U.K.

Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said the weapons were meant for carrying out terror activities in various parts of India.

He said Jagit Singh (25), a resident of Batala, was arrested from near Kathunangal in Amritsar on Thursday night by a team of Punjab Internal Security Wing.

"The team recovered from him two nylon bags containing 48 pistols of different foreign makes and bores, along with magazines and ammunition. The cache included 19 pistols of 9 mm [Zigana-Made in Turkey], 37 magazines and 45 rounds; 9 pistols of .30



Senior police officers inspect the cache of arms and ammunition in Amritsar on Friday. ■ PTI

bore (Made in China) and 22 magazines; 19 pistols of .30 bore (Star mark), 38 magazines and 148 rounds; and 1 pistol of 9 mm (Baretta-Italia) and two magazines."

"The team recovered from him two nylon bags containing 48 pistols of different foreign makes and bores, along with magazines and ammunition. The cache included 19 pistols of 9 mm [Zigana-Made in Turkey], 37 magazines and 45 rounds; 9 pistols of .30

the weapons' consignment. He had been in touch with Darmanjot, at present based in the U.S., during his stay in Dubai from 2017 to December 2020.

Darmanjot had reportedly tasked Jagit to wait for further instructions for the delivery of the pistols, said the DGP, adding that open-ended warrants for Darmanjot, a proclaimed offender in the State, had been obtained.

## Maoist leader shot dead in Odisha

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Security forces in Odisha shot down a top-rung Maoist leader carrying a reward of ₹5 lakh on his head on Friday.

"A Maoist cadre was killed following an encounter with Special Operation Group personnel at Jhanj Reserve Forest of Ganjamda area under Padampur sub-division of Bargarh early this morning. As an AK-47 rifle was recovered from the spot, it is believed that the deceased person is a high-ranking cadre," said Director General of Police Abhay.

Later, the deceased cadre was identified as Rabindra, a senior member of Bargarh-Balangir Maoist committee.

About 10-12 cadres of CPI (Maoist) had sneaked into Odisha from Chhattisgarh, said police sources. After the encounter, security forces intensified its combing operation to nab other cadres.

## Bru refugee rehabilitation in Tripura hits green panel hurdle

Response sought on complaint about resettlement in forest

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought replies from the Forest Department and a district administration in Tripura on a complaint that Bru refugees from adjoining Mizoram were being resettled in a forest.

On June 9, the Kolkata-based eastern zonal Bench of the NGT directed the Principal Secretary of Tripura's Forest Department, the District Magistrate of North Tripura district and other officials to submit a report on the rehabilitation plan by July 14.

The order was issued on the basis of a complaint by Dhanishwar Debnath who cited an e-tender floated by the Tripura government on November 4, 2020, seeking "cer-



A Bru refugee in Tripura. ■

Amit Sthalekar and Expert Member Saibal Dasgupta said, allowing the complainant to implead the State's Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Head of Forest Force.

More than 40,000 Brus – also called Reangs – have been living in the Tripura relief camps since 1997 after escaping ethnic violence in Mizoram. About 7,000 refugees returned to Mizoram after nine phases of repatriation till November 30, 2019.

The rest stayed put citing security reasons. The repatriation stalemate ended with the signing of the quadripartite agreement on in January 16, 2020, among representatives of Brus, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Tripura and Mizoram governments.

## Radhamohan passes away

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Professor Radhamohan, one of the great proponents of organic farming and Padma Shri awardee, passed away here on Friday.

He was 78 and is survived by three daughters.

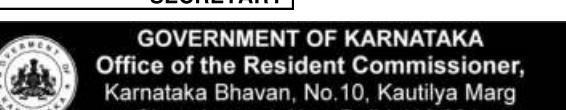
## Odisha turmeric farmers upbeat over new market

## STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

into marketing of spices, recently placed an order of 20 metric tonnes (mt) from turmeric producer groups promoted by the Odisha Rural Development And Marketing Society, a government agency, and a women self-help group. They successfully delivered the turmeric consignment," said Roshan Karthik, ORMAS Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Koraput.

He informed that the company was interested in procuring 500 mt of turmeric every year. Now, the exposure of turmeric farmers, mostly tribals, to new market has instilled a new confidence.



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### AUCTION OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES

Eight Vehicles, (one Two-Wheeler and seven Motor Cars) belonging to the Government, will be auctioned at Karnataka Bhavan, New Delhi.

For further details, interested Bidders / Buyers may visit our website: <http://karnatakabhavan.karnataka.gov.in> or contact : 011-26117666 & 26117624 (Extn. 22).

The last date for submission of proposals is 18-06-2021.

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6 Feet

With a heavy heart, we regret to announce the passing of

Shri A.N Raina

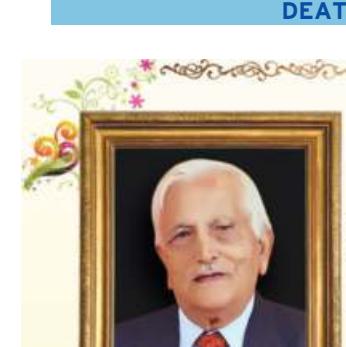
a great father, a loving grandfather and great grandfather who left for heavenly abode on 05.06.2021. He will be deeply missed by his family and loved ones.

Born on 12.10.1933.

S/0 Late Shri Nand Lal Raina originally from 42 Sathu Barbarshah, Kashmir presently at D69, Sector 27, Noida, UP.

### OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH



Rituals of 10th, 11th and 12th day will be performed from 13.06.2021 - 15.06.2021.

Rituals of 10th Day will be performed at Muradnagar and 11th and 12th day rituals at his residence in Noida.

In brief:

Indu Kaul (Daughter), Lokesh Kaul (Son in Law), Sanjay Raina & Anita Raina,

Vimal Raina & Kavita Raina (Son and Daughter in Laws) with all his grandchildren and great grandchildren, the entire Raina and Bagh (Rainawari) family.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

IN BRIEF



**Noted Kannada poet Siddalingaiah no more**

BENGALURU  
Noted Dalit poet Dr. Siddalingaiah, 67, passed away on Friday, losing his fight against COVID-19. He was in Manipal Hospitals for over a month. He was on ventilator support for several weeks. He is survived by wife, who also was afflicted by the infection but recovered, a son and a daughter.

**Rainfall likely to pick up over Kerala in a few days**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
After an uneven start, the southwest monsoon is expected to pick up over Kerala in the next few days, although a vigorous phase does not seem to be on the cards. A low-pressure area has formed over the northwest Bay of Bengal, but its influence on rainfall over Kerala may not be as strong as initially expected, according to the IMD.

# Italy has paid ₹10 crore, Centre tells SC

Court worried if kin will 'fritter away' money; it will pass orders on Tuesday

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Central government informed the Supreme Court on Friday that Italy had paid ₹10 crore compensation for disbursal among the families of fishermen shot dead/injured by two Italian marines detailed on *Enrica Lexie*, an Italian-flagged vessel in 2012, who mistook them for pirates off the coast of Kerala.

Earlier this year, the government approached the court for closure of the pending trial against marines Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre, following a United National tribunal decision that the duo would be tried in Italy. On April 9, the court said it would consider passing an order to quash the criminal proceedings only after Italy deposited ₹10 crore as compensation for the bereaved families of the fishermen.

"They [Italy] have deposit-  
ed ₹10 crore. This is compensation over and above the ex gratia amount paid earlier to the families. We have accepted the award of the tribunal as a nation. Kerala has filed an affidavit, saying ₹10 crore is acceptable to it. The affidavit has annexed letters of consent from the families also," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, submitted.

For Italy, advocate Suhail Dutt, submitted that India's jurisdiction over the marines had stopped as soon as Italy paid the compensation amount.

#### ₹4 cr. each to 2 families

The court, however, asked how the money would be apportioned among the families. The lawyer for the victims' side said the two families would get ₹4 crore each while the owner of the boat on which the fishermen were sailing would get ₹2



A file photo of Italian marines Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre in Kochi.

crore. Kerala government lawyer, senior advocate K.N. Balagopal, said compensation could be paid to the victims through the State government.

The court expressed concern about whether the money received as compensation would be "frittered away" once it reached the families. The Bench asked whether any orders should be passed to protect the capital, like putting it in a fixed deposit, for the time being.

"Four crore is not a small amount... It should not be frittered away. How do we protect their [families'] interests," Justice Shah asked.

The victims' lawyer said the legal heirs of the fishermen have attained the age of majority. Mr. Balagopal said the State had earlier conducted a preliminary verification of the legal heirs and found them responsible. The money the families had earlier received as ex gratia payments had been utilised well.

Justice Shah suggested that the Supreme Court dispose of the case by asking the Kerala High Court to disburse the amount. The Bench finally shifted the case to Tuesday for passing orders.

In April, the Supreme Court directed that the Republic of Italy transfer the compensation amount to an account number, which would be handed over to it by the Ministry of External Affairs. The Ministry would in turn deposit the money with the Supreme Court.

The international tribunal's finding that the marines had immunity came seven years after the Supreme Court ordered the Centre to "proceed with the investigation and trial of the marines" in a decision on January 18, 2013. The Supreme Court had ordered the Centre to set up a special court to try the case. Prior to the Supreme Court verdict, the Kerala High Court had also found that the marines enjoyed no immunity.

#### WEATHER WATCH



RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY

**Forecast for Saturday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Gangetic West Bengal, west Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Telangana and coastal Karnataka. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Sikkim, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, Marathwada and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 33.0...	26.2	16.1...	Kozhikode	... 16.1...	23.8	11.1...
Ahmedabad	... 40.0...	28.2	20.1...	Kurnool	... 36.0...	27.2	20.0...
Aizawl	47.0	21.9	15.0...	Lucknow	35.0	35.5...	25.6
Altahabab	... 35.4...	25.4	19.0...	Madurai	... 39.5...	29.2	21.0...
Bengaluru	... 28.2...	20.4	15.0...	Mangaluru	53.0	29.9...	21.9
Bhopal	... 36.9...	25.0	20.0...	Mumbai	107.4	30.9...	23.4
Bhubaneswar	... 32.7...	25.6	20.0...	Mysuru	... 33.0...	21.4	18.0...
Chandigarh	15.6...	24.2	19.0...	New Delhi	7.8...	39.0...	20.4
Chennai	1.0	28.2	25.6	Patna	... 34.6...	24.8	20.0...
Coimbatore	... 34.0...	23.3	18.0...	Port Blair	6.0	29.9...	26.4
Dehradun	... 33.2...	24.5	19.0...	Puducherry	... 35.5...	26.4	21.0...
Gangtok	0.1	23.2...	16.9	Pune	... 30.6...	21.6	18.0...
Goa	0.2	33.1...	27.4	Raipur	9.5	26.6...	23.3
Guwahati	5.0	32.0...	24.8	Ranchi	46.4	31.8...	22.1
Hubbali	... 27.0...	22.0	17.0...	Shillong	3.0	24.5...	17.3
Hyderabad	19.0	30.7...	22.0	Shimla	1.0	28.2...	19.0
Imphal	... 28.6...	22.5	17.0...	Srinagar	... 34.0...	19.8	13.0...
Jaipur	... 41.1...	30.8	25.0...	Thiruvananthapuram	5.0	32.3...	25.2
Kochi	1.0	32.8...	24.6	Tiruchi	... 38.1...	27.4	23.0...
Kohima	... 28.4...	18.2	12.0...	Vijayawada	35.0	31.0...	25.4
Kolkata	... 34.6...	26.3	20.0...	Visakhapatnam	... 33.6...	27.4	21.0...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

Yesterday					
CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>
Ahmedabad	3	45	68	31	46
Bengaluru	8	46	42	110	10
Chennai	37	20	151	44	49
Delhi	3	45	38	222	178
Hyderabad	3	67	12	20	34
Kolkata	5	17	18	55	55
Lucknow	60	53	92	101	10
Mumbai	5	33	66	26	65
Pune	5	14	86	102	66
Visakhapatnam	13	56	35	57	81

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 391, indicating a severely level of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 11

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

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** 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<sub>x</sub>:** 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<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** 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 people with heart or lung disease

They landed in T.N. on March 17 and were to go to Canada

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MANGALURU

The Mangaluru city police on Friday announced the arrest of 38 Sri Lankan nationals who were staying illegally in the city for about two months.

Police also arrested six people who allegedly arranged their stay here.

Police Commissioner N. Shashi Kumar told reporters that the arrests were made based on inputs from intelligence agencies as well as their Tamil Nadu counter-

parts. They were picked up from Hotel Sea Port on Azizuddin Road near Bunder, City Lodge at Rao and Rao Circle, and two houses at Bengre.

The foreigners and their handlers are said to have told the owners of the accommodations that they were workers in fishing boats. Cases under the Indian Penal Code, Foreigners Act and Rules, and Passport Act have been registered against them at Mangaluru South police station.

They had reportedly paid up to 10 lakh Sri Lankan rupees to agents for moving to Canada.

## ED searches offices of TRS MP's firm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HYDERABAD

Enforcement Directorate officials on Friday conducted searches at some of the offices of Madhucon Group belonging to TRS MP and its Lok Sabha floor leader Nama Nagessara Rao, sources said.

The searches are related to alleged fund diversion of Ranchi Expressway Limited, a Madhucon Group company, they said.

The searches were conducted at Madhucon offices in Jubilee Hills here and residences of some of the directors, sources said.

## HC upholds CCI order to probe Amazon, Flipkart

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

In a setback to e-commerce majors Amazon and Flipkart, the Karnataka High Court on Friday upheld the Competition Commission of India's January 2020 order to conduct an investigation through its Director General into whether the companies had entered into anti-competitive agreements in violation of the provisions of the Competition Act 2002.

The searches are related to alleged fund diversion of Ranchi Expressway Limited, a Madhucon Group company, they said.

Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar passed the order while dismissing the petitions filed by Amazon Seller Services Pvt. Ltd., and Flipkart Internet Pvt. Ltd. The e-com-

merce companies had questioned January 13 order of the CCI, which had ordered probe through its Director General.

"It is expected that an order directing investigation be supported by 'some reasoning', which the Commission has fulfilled. Therefore, it would be unwise to pre-judge the issues raised by the petitioners in these writ petitions at this stage and scuttle the investigation.

Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar passed the order while dismissing the petitions filed by Amazon Seller Services Pvt. Ltd., and Flipkart Internet Pvt. Ltd. The e-com-

## Bombay HC initiates inquiry into Malad building collapse

Court seeks filing of preliminary report on June 24

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday initiated judicial inquiry into the building collapse at Malwani in Malad, which killed 12 people. The court ordered that a preliminary report be filed on June 24.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulhari said the incident proved that there existed absolute lawlessness in the municipal wards. The Bench said it was pained by the incident, in which eight children lost their lives.

The court took note of four incidents of building collapse from May 15 to June 10 this year, which resulted in the death of 24 people. The court said, "What is happening? How many lives will be lost? What type of buildings are these? Were they identified as dangerous or illegal, but not demolished, or were they not identified? You [the municipal corporation] can't play with the lives of people. We have to hold those in charge

of the ward concerned responsible. Eight innocent children died on the first day of the rains." The court said, "This is nothing but lawlessness. You can realise the pain we are facing due to the death of people, including [of] innocent children. This pain should also be felt by the corporators. We are shocked. This is a man-made disaster. Every monsoon it has to happen. Why can't it be prevented?"

The court also told the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to ask Mayor Kishori Pednekar whether she had said that the civic body was not able to demolish buildings because of HC orders.

The court said, "We are not going to tolerate politics over building collapses. We have said that if a building is dangerous or dilapidated, then the concerned authority should approach the court for demolition. We are surprised that despite giving liberty to the corporations to approach the courts, the corporations are shifting the blame on us."

## Extremely heavy showers expected in Mumbai region tomorrow: IMD

Red alert issued for coastal districts of Ratnagiri, Raigad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Mumbai and neighbouring areas are "very likely" to receive extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places on Sunday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday.

It also issued a red alert for



## Counting the dead

Measuring excess deaths is the best possible way to estimate the count of COVID-19 deaths

The real time mortality impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is an important statistical measure to guide policy responses. But measuring the actual count is not an easy task. WHO, in January 2021, had estimated, based on excess deaths data in Europe and the American continents, that actual deaths were at least 1.6 times over the official count. The problem of under-counting, even in mature public health systems across the developed world, is largely because patients who die due to cardiovascular issues among others even after apparent recovery from COVID-19 are sometimes not tracked and registered as COVID-19-related deaths. This is why even in Kerala – with 100% registration of deaths and a relatively low case fatality rate – following criticisms about the methodology to evaluate whether a death was related to COVID-19, the health administration in the districts, rather than a State-level audit committee, will now audit deaths. But there is another class of under-counting across States, where health bulletins mislead by reporting a lower number of cases and deaths. This is the case with Bihar where the reported toll was suddenly increased by 72% following a Health Department review after the Patna High Court found discrepancies in figures cited by different agencies in Buxar district. Bihar is among the States in India with the lowest civil registration of deaths, with barely 34.1% of the dead being registered, according to the Civil Registration System (CRS) report of 2018. Estimations of the actual count of the dead are difficult to obtain in other States such as Uttar Pradesh as well, where public health systems are poor and neither the infections nor deaths have been effectively tracked, especially in rural areas, where many have died outside of hospitals.

One method to assess the actual number of deaths due to COVID-19 is by calculating the excess deaths during the given period when the pandemic has raged, compared to the baseline mortality occurring in similar time frames before the pandemic. This exercise also works best if death registrations are relatively high, which should be possible in most districts as registration of deaths has improved to 76% according to CRS 2018. Excess deaths analyses in Gujarat, Chennai and Kolkata based on collations of preliminary registration data by news organisations suggest that they were nearly 10, five and seven times higher, respectively, than reported fatalities during the second wave. If the CRS datasets, maintained by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India besides State registrars and municipal officials with a good quality of registration, are made available, it would enable better estimation of the actual mortality figures. In the meantime, only honest reporting of the deaths will help provide better mitigation strategies.

## Monsoon malady

Mumbai must urgently replace decrepit buildings to prevent houses collapsing in rain

The monsoon over the greater Mumbai region has come to be characterised by the unsettling annual spectacle of collapsing buildings, and this year is proving to be no different. An unsafe multi-storeyed building in a core area of the city has collapsed on to another, leaving at least 11 people dead and exposing once again, the decrepit base of dwellings in India's much-romanticised economic powerhouse. The disaster has brought in its wake the familiar litany of accusations, of people occupying unsafe and illegal buildings, and civic authorities failing to act in time. Mumbai's Mayor Kishori Pednekar has responded to criticism with a helpless exhortation to the city administration to remove dangerous structures. Going beyond these predictable impulses, the overburdened city needs a time-bound and accountable system of ensuring the safety of its housing stock. Coinciding with this year's monsoon, the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority identified 21 structures in Mumbai as being extremely dangerous, with an advisory to over 700 occupants to move to transit accommodation, while reconstruction is undertaken. Understandably, the occupants are reluctant, since the alternative housing is far away from their education and work locations. This is a conundrum that Maharashtra will have to address, treating it as a crisis that will only be aggravated by changes to monsoon rainfall intensity over time.

Coastal Maharashtra sits in the pathway of extreme monsoon weather events, which are forecast to increase in frequency due to ongoing warming of the Arabian Sea. Scientists including those of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology have proposed, in the context of the deluge a few years ago, that accurate monsoon forecasting over central India, incorporating changes to sea surface temperature, would help governments prepare better to save lives and agriculture. For Mumbai, what this means is to accelerate its repair and rehabilitation programme for weak structures and replace those that cannot be salvaged. The city desperately needs channels for huge volumes of water to flow out, and a plan to create new urban wetlands where feasible to store the precipitation. A rejuvenated Mithi river – its planned clean-up has been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis – could offer some relief, but more water bodies are needed. And it will take a mass housing programme to make life safer for the thousands in hovels. A far-sighted plan to shift people from squalid buildings to modern ones is also a health imperative; such a start must be made with the most dangerous structures. It is also unseemly for political parties to use a disaster such as the one in Malad as a cudgel against the government, considering that Mumbai's civic base lies neglected over the decades regardless of who ruled.

# Refocused vaccination campaigns are possible

Local planning will need to go hand-in-hand with equitable plans at the national and global levels



SUPRIYA KUMAR &  
N.S. PRASHANTH



GETTY IMAGES

death – between marginalised groups and the rest of the country. It would require prioritising the poor, religious minorities, socially disadvantaged castes, Adivasi communities, those living in remote areas, and women.

### In Chhattisgarh

One example of an equity-focused vaccination plan came from the Chhattisgarh government. The plan prioritised ration card holders, specifically because they are poor, and often live in multi-generation, larger households, putting them at higher risk of infection. They also often lack access to mobile phones and the Internet, which are necessary to register for vaccination. Though the High Court asked that the plan be modified to provide vaccines to the general public alongside ration card holders, we would propose prioritisation of the marginalised when vaccine supply is limited in order to minimise the risk of severe outcomes due to COVID-19. WHO's strategic advisory group of experts on immunisation recommend prioritising sociodemographic groups at significantly higher risk of severe disease or death (for vaccination) in the context of limited supply (<https://bit.ly/3pGy99C>). We should ensure that we remove barriers to vaccination for the most vulnerable in India to minimise preventable disease and deaths.

India depended, and continues to depend on the AstraZeneca vaccine because it was stable in a refrigerator for longer periods than mRNA vaccines (<https://bit.ly/3gvO2Ny>). Presumably, this was so that vaccines could be made available where freezers do not exist. But it also enables the vaccine to be transported in vaccine carriers, and taken to the people where they are. In Indian villages, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Auxiliary Nurse-Midwives (ANMs) have vast experience and expertise with campaign-style pulse polio vaccination and newborn vaccination; their expertise should be harnessed to take vaccines to villagers.

Local governments and municipalities should also prioritise vaccines for the historically marginalised by focusing through the lens of equity and justice. What does it mean to focus through a lens of equity and justice? It would mean ensuring that the vaccine roll-out does not result in avoidable differences in vaccine uptake – and hence preventable disease and

Urban slums and neighbourhoods, where socially disadvantaged caste and community groups, and migrants from Adivasi communities often reside, have poor access to and low levels of trust in the health-care system. Vaccines should be provided in camps or door-to-door in such areas. Appropriately, local governments are considering providing vaccines to older adults in door-to-door campaigns. A similar approach – vaccination camps where people live and work – could also greatly enhance vaccine uptake among essential workers and the poor. We need to ensure that those who work for daily wages are able to get the vaccine without having to forego work or pay.

Adivasi communities also reside in remote and forested areas that are also being ravaged by waves of death, presumably due to COVID-19; vaccine distribution should be prioritised to districts where they live. In India today, perhaps the most marginalised are religious minorities, and, specifically, poor Muslim communities. Vaccine distribution should also be prioritised to Muslim-dominated tier-3 towns across the country. An explicit focus on justice would prioritise the engagement of trusted spokespeople to engage in effective risk communication with vulnerable and marginalised communities, and to build trust in the vaccine.

**Women-only vaccine days**  
We need women-only vaccine days to ensure that women know that they are being prioritised. During the 1918 influenza pandemic, India was one of few locations where mortality was higher in women than in men (<https://bit.ly/3gfc4VH>), and we barely un-

derstand the drivers of this observation. In the current pandemic, it is very possible that if women are not explicitly prioritised, economic pressures to protect the (often male) breadwinner in families, and the historically marginalised stature of women in society, will end up resulting in gender inequities in vaccine uptake – early signs of exactly this have been recently reported.

Unfortunately, our data during the pandemic do not allow us to examine whether gender, caste, religious, and indigenous identities have impacted the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection or death. Despite global calls for better surveillance (<https://bit.ly/2TjQxZU>), including among vulnerable groups, India does not regularly report even gender-disaggregated data. Despite crowd-sourced efforts to collect and make data available, reporting of geographic and other meta-data for tests conducted and sequenced samples is variable across laboratories and States. Better leadership to standardise and enforce meta-data collection and timely reporting is essential to inform data-driven interventions and prioritised resource mobilisation.

### Equity and justice

Local planning will need to go hand-in-hand with a refocus on equity and justice at the national and global levels as well. Nationally, people have recognised that digital apps for registration are a recipe for inequity along age, gender, and economic dimensions, and reports have highlighted the plight of those on the wrong side of the digital divide. CoWIN data that are available to date (<https://bit.ly/2RJWQFw>) show that vaccination rates have been inequitable between tribal and non-tribal areas (<https://bit.ly/2TY9qBU>), for example. Going forward, let us focus on first doing no harm – get people vaccinated to save the lives most at risk. At the national level, the recent decision to procure vaccines centrally and make COVID-19 vaccines available free of cost through the public system goes a long way towards ensuring equity

Supriya Kumar is a public health researcher focused on health equity in South Asia. N.S. Prashanth is on the faculty at the Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru

## The signal from the Iran presidential election is clear

The non-transparent process of candidate selection has carefully rejected reformists and focused on hardliners



TALMIZ AHMAD

On May 25, the Guardian Council in Iran announced a slate of seven candidates who would compete in the presidential election on June 18. The council, in a non-transparent process, selected these seven candidates from among 592 applicants, including 40 women. The list does not include a woman candidate.

Iran has a dichotomous political order whose two parts are constantly at odds with each other. It has the institutions of a normal democratic system – a directly elected President, an elected national assembly, and a government responsible to the assembly. The other part of the political order is devoted to safeguarding the ideology and principles of the Islamic Revolution; this has provided the country with institutions that are unique to Iran and do much to dilute, if not undermine, the country's democratic credentials.

Placed above the popularly elected President is the Supreme Leader, who wields supreme authority in all matters of national governance – security, defence, foreign relations, the judiciary. One of the bodies under the Supreme Leader is the 12-member Guardian Council.

The council has now carefully rejected reformist candidates and retained two who seem to be cen-

trist, so that the slate has five so-called "hardliners". But many of them are relatively light-weight: prominent personalities such as Assembly Speaker Ali Larijani, have also been excluded. Clearly, the Guardian Council has decided to ensure the election of one specific candidate, Ebrahim Raisi.

### Raisi at the helm

Raisi has been a high-profile legal luminary in Iran since the days of the Revolution. He is now head of the judiciary and deputy chief of the Assembly of Experts which selects the Supreme Leader. Raisi had stood against Hassan Rouhani for the presidency in 2017, but was soundly defeated. Raisi has been in campaign mode for the last two years and has made "fighting corruption" and "caring for the down-trodden and the under-privileged" the centre-piece of his platform.

The list announced by the council has evoked sharp criticisms across the political spectrum. President Rouhani has expressed concern about the "minimal participation" in the elections that could now occur. Ali Larijani's brother has called the list "indefensible". Surprisingly, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei himself has said that in the vetting process "some candidates were wronged", but, so far, the Guardian Council has not revised the candidates' list (<https://bit.ly/3cBIXR7>).

Khamenei appears to have backed the narrow selection of candidates to ensure that Iran's politics will now shift from Rouhani's moderate reform to the hard ideological posture of Ebrahim

Raisi, who is his long-term political associate. As Iran is now once again engaged in dialogue on the nuclear issue with the United States and other interlocutors in Vienna, Khamenei would like the credit for the lifting of sanctions to go to the hardliners.

But Khamenei has taken this gamble despite considerable public hostility to the overt manipulation of the election. Recent polls suggest a low voter turnout of about a third of the electorate which could dilute the credibility of the new President and condemn the country to domestic turmoil.

### Economic despair

There could be longer term political implications as well. The economist Djavad Salehi-Isfahani has pointed out ("Iran's middle class and the nuclear deal"; brookings.edu) that the educated middle class plays a central role in determining the direction of Iran's elections: earlier, in the absence of harsh sanctions, Iran's economy had grown exponentially and expanded the size of the middle class.

In 2013, with the prospect of the

end of sanctions, Rouhani won the

presidential election, when the middle class was nearly 60% of the population. The lifting of sanctions after the nuclear agreement saw him through during the 2017 elections as well.

However, the re-introduction of sanctions by the Donald Trump administration cost the economy about \$200 billion: the middle class has been reduced by eight million, while those living in extreme poverty have increased five-fold to 20 million. Poor medical facilities have caused pandemic-related deaths of around 80,000 people.

U.S. sanctions have also changed political attitudes: support for the nuclear agreement has gone from 80% in 2015 to just 50% today, while reformist politicians have been discredited due to their failure to obtain the easing of sanctions.

### Domestic, regional outlook

The principal concern of the new President will be economic: Iran's inflation rate has gone from 10% in 2017 to 50% today, the national currency has depreciated four times in value, while unemployment is over 12%. The easing of sanctions after an agreement on nuclear issues in Vienna will remove restrictions on Iran's oil and financial sectors and help bring much-needed relief to the beleaguered population.

However, it does not seem that much else will change. Iran's politics is likely to remain fractious, with the clerics seeking to ensure that effective authority remains with them, while the reformists will try to nibble away at the ideo-

logical edifice, usually with limited success.

In the regional arena, Iran is likely to continue its present approach of combining pragmatic peace moves with confrontation: quiet dialogue with Saudi Arabia on the Yemen conflict could make progress, though Syria will take longer to settle as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its ally, Hezbollah, are deeply invested in that theatre.

Again, there will be no let-up in Iran's confrontation with the U.S. and Israel. The Carnegie scholar, Karim Sadjadpour, has reported Khamenei's observation that "the revolution needs enmity with America" (<https://bit.ly/3ve-SaoW>). However, hostility to Iran and its Revolution is also deeply ingrained in the U.S. psyche, which has meant that earlier peace overtures from the Islamic republic have repeatedly been rebuffed by Washington.

Thus, the "Cold War" between the two will continue, along with occasional skirmishes with Israel, not just in Syria, but also in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Iran will seek strategic comfort in closer ties with Russia and China.

Donald Trump's policy of "maximum pressure" that, with its crippling sanctions, was meant to achieve regime change in Iran, has had the ironical effect of tilting Iran's political balance sharply in favour of the hardliners. They will now control the levers of power in Iran for the foreseeable future.

Talmiz Ahmad is a former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates



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of the lawyers who are practising before them, which is not the case for Supreme Court lawyers. The only advantage that such lawyers have would be close proximity to Supreme Court judges, who may recommend them for appointment and it would not be easy for the High Court collegium to demur from such imposition coming as it would from the Supreme Court collegium. Hitherto, only lawyers from the respective High Courts or from the lower judiciary have been appointed. This is not based on the sons of the soil theory but on sound principles of effective administration of justice. Apart from knowledge of the local language, which is a very important criterion, they will also have familiarity with the local laws and the local conditions which are crucial.

The claim of the SCBA seems to be based on the lawyers' ambition to move further in life. This is unmindful of the fact that High Courts are constituted for the benefit of the people. There is definitely no talent lacking in the High Courts.

N.G.R. PRASAD,  
Chennai

## 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.

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### Shocker from Bihar

The whopping 72% increase in the number of COVID-19 deaths in Bihar is a sign of irresponsibility by the State administration there (Page 1, June 11). The hiding of actual figures of morbidity and mortality can only fuel a worsening of the pandemic. What has happened is a disservice to the families of the deceased. All other States should order a recount of

the toll during the second wave.

Dr. D.V.G. SANKARAO,  
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

**Elevation of lawyers**  
The Chief Justice of India has, unfortunately, agreed to consider a request made by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) to elevate Supreme Court lawyers as High Court judges. Under the scheme of the Constitution, the

High Courts form a separate chapter and appointments to the High Court find a place in that chapter. This is only consistent with the federal principle that the various States will have their own High Court, and lawyers practising in those High Courts will be elevated. This has been the convention. That apart, the collegium of the respective High Courts will have a fair knowledge

of the lawyers who are practising before them, which is not the case for Supreme Court lawyers. The only advantage that such lawyers have would be close proximity to Supreme Court judges, who may recommend them for appointment and it would not be easy for the High Court collegium to demur from such imposition coming as it would from the Supreme Court collegium.

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# Persecuted in Pakistan, ignored in India

Hundreds of Pakistani Hindus have migrated to India in search of security and citizenship but are caught in a maze of rules and regulations that have left them stateless for years. **Mohammed Iqbal** reports on their plight and the politics around citizenship

**F**or two decades, Jogdas Maharaj waited in vain for Indian citizenship. Last month, the 82-year-old man, highly respected in the Kali Beri settlement of Pakistani Hindu migrants near Jodhpur, Rajasthan, died stateless.

Maharaj crossed the border into India with nine family members in August 2000. He decided to stay in the country, in Jodhpur, to escape the economic hardship and discrimination he was facing in Rahimyar Khan district in the Punjab Province of Pakistan. "Our father passed away waiting for citizenship. Our family has 19 members and we have nowhere to go," says Harjiram Bheel, Maharaj's son.

Bheel says the family has been wandering from one citizenship camp to another over the years. These camps were organised by the Union Home Ministry from time to time to receive new applications for citizenship and dispose of or clear old ones. But the camps have not been successful because of red-tapism. Bheel's family is one among many whose Pakistani passports and Indian visas have expired.

Karamshi Koli, 43, who migrated to India in 2015, lives as an asylum-seeker in the Anganwa hutment. Koli says he has not even succeeded in getting a long-term visa which would enable him to find a private job or take up self-employment to sustain his family.

The weary residents of the mud houses in Anganwa, adjacent to a water filtration plant, have no access to electricity, water, toilets and sanitation facilities. Women and children fetch water from a well in the Shri Khetanand temple situated 2 km away, while solar lights – some donated by philanthropists and some purchased by some of the migrants – are used at night.

The number of Pakistani Hindu migrants staying in 21 settlements in Jodhpur district is estimated to be about 30,000. The land where they have built their ramshackle dwellings belongs either to the Municipal Corporation or the village panchayats and Forest Department. These migrants came to India expectantly, but their eagerness has turned into disillusionment over time. They are unhappy with the way they are being treated in a country which they had hoped would accept them wholeheartedly and they could call home.

## No sense of belonging

Young Laxman Singh, who hails from Sindh's Mirpur Khas district, says unhappily that migrants like him seem to belong nowhere. "We faced persecution on the ground of our religious identity in Pakistan. In India, we are being ostracised for being Pakistanis," he says. Most men like him, who were landless farmers or daily labourers in Pakistan, have failed to find any gainful employment in or around Jodhpur. The pandemic-related lockdowns have only made matters worse.

Hemji Koli, who is a shelter manager on a contractual basis with the Municipal Corporation, runs a 'Chetana' study centre on behalf of a non-governmental organisation, Universal Just Action Society, in the Anganwa settlement. The centre provides basic literacy to children up to five years of age and tuition to those going to nearby government schools. About 350 children who were attending school before the COVID-19 outbreak have been confined at home for over a year due to the pandemic.

"No person in this locality has been given citizenship so far. This is a relatively new settlement. The only saving grace is that we have not been driven out of this land," Hemji says. Some migrants in the other settlements have got citizenship after completing the mandatory 11 years of stay for eligibility under the Citizenship Act of 1955, but even they struggle daily to get food, water, healthcare and education.

Since 2014, most Hindu migrants have been entering India, into western Rajasthan and northern Gujarat, on a pilgrim visa. They often leave their family members in Pakistan in the hope that they can travel later when they find employment in India. However, they are invariably disappointed when they are left to fend for themselves.

The migrants are mostly Dalits from the Meghwali, Koli, Bhil, Jatav, Kumawat and Mali communities. They are considered underprivileged on both sides of the international border, though some caste Hindus, belonging to the Rajput, Maheshwari and Brahmin communities, have also crossed into India.

They all say that they were segregated and persecuted in Pakistan on religious grounds. They say young girls are sometimes abducted and forcibly converted to Islam in the interior areas of Sindh. Their children faced discrimination in government schools. Their shops and commercial establishments were attacked by robbers. And Hindu residents were not allowed to buy property.

Hindu Singh Sodha, president of the Seemant Lok Sangathan, an organisation working for the welfare of migrants, points out that there have been



Pakistani Hindu migrants show their Pakistani passports at the Kali Beri settlement in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan (Below): Pakistani Hindu migrant children return after fetching water from a well located more than 1.5 km away from their Anganwa settlement in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan. ■ R.V. MOORTHY



three waves of migration of Hindus to India from Pakistan. The first was during and after Partition. During the 1971 war, about 90,000 persons migrated to India when Indian troops strategically occupied important areas 50 km deep inside Pakistan. The third wave, which started as a result of a backlash against Hindus during the Ram temple movement and after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, has been a prolonged one. Migrants still continue to come to India. Also, in 1996, the Taliban captured power in Afghanistan. This led to a change in atmosphere in Pakistan, with the minority communities in the Balochistan and Sindh Provinces increasingly being targeted.

## A maze of rules and regulations

While a growing sense of insecurity in Pakistan has led to the migration of thousands of Hindus over the past two decades, they cannot expect to get the status of refugees because India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, nor its 1967 Protocol. The Pakistani immigrants do not receive the protection or benefits which they would have been entitled to on getting official refugee status if India had been a signatory.

All foreign nationals, including asylum-seekers, are governed by the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946; the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; and the Citizenship Act, 1955, as well as the rules and orders framed under these laws. The Union government possesses the power to detain and deport foreigners and restrict their movements, but it has no international obligation to enact a legislation for refugees.

For accessing legal entitlements and services, Indian citizenship is the only viable option for the migrants. But the migrants face major challenges in obtaining citizenship status, ranging from the condition of having stayed in India for a certain number of years to keeping the registration permit from the Foreigners Regional Registration Office up-to-date and paying a hefty fee for frequent renewal of their long-term visas.

Having all the Indian documents is not enough. The migrant must also hold an unexpired Pakistani passport, which can only be obtained at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi. Bhagchand Bhil, who left his medical practice in Karachi and crossed the border in 2014, says that most of the migrants are illiterate and unable to decipher and navigate this maze of rules and regulations, which makes them vulnerable to

deceit and exploitation by government officials.

Even when they do get citizenship, their problems don't end. Obtaining documents such as ration cards and caste certificates is no easy task and they find it difficult to avail themselves of the benefits of the government's healthcare, education and employment schemes. Sodha, who had himself migrated as a young boy from Tharparkar district's Chachro town in 1971, rues that there is no provision for the rehabilitation of people from Pakistan.

The Seemant Lok Sangathan has raised these issues repeatedly with the Union Home Ministry over the past few years. While affirming that the government needs to be migrant-friendly, Sodha has sought the grant of citizenship through special camps, which will benefit the migrants who still have their family members in Pakistan. "During the last 30 years, I have not found a single family which says it has no member over there. The families are divided," he says.

## Improving the lives of migrants

Sodha feels that the Pakistan High Commission should be persuaded to withdraw the increased fee that the migrants are charged for renunciation of their Pakistani citizenship, which is mandatory for them to do before getting their Indian citizenship, and provide easy facilities for renewal of passports and identity cards. Besides, he says, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should be approached for incorporating the minority migrants in its regular programmes for refugees.

Moreover, the gaps in livelihood development and rehabilitation status should be identified at the State level and a robust policy for rehabilitation introduced at the Central level for migrant families, he says. Stateless persons belonging to higher castes, who comprise 20% of the migrant population, manage the hardship better because of their socioeconomic condition. They are generally engaged in business or private employment.

The children of these migrants are the worst affected. Schools reluctantly give them admission and do not provide them emotional support and counseling. The children struggle as their medium of instruction was Urdu and Sindhi in Pakistan and Hindi in India. They are often singled out by the teachers and

other students because of their Pakistani origin. Government schools, which earlier demanded their identity proof, started giving them admission only a couple of years ago.

Despite this, some migrant children have excelled in their studies. Chandra Prakash, son of a migrant teacher, Manjhiana Rana, topped Class 12 at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad School, run by the Marwar Muslim Educational and Welfare Society, in 2019. Chandra Prakash is now studying MBBS at the Sardar Patel Government Medical College in Bikaner.

The Marwar Muslim Educational and Welfare Society's CEO, Mohammed Atiq, says plans are afoot to open a primary school this year exclusively for the children of migrants at a plot of land situated near the Maulana Azad University in Bujhawala village. The school will be gradually upgraded to include higher education after the intake of 60 children in the first year.

As an indication of the State government's consideration for the rehabilitation of the migrants, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot inaugurated the Vinoba Bhave Nagar housing scheme for them, comprising 1,700 plots at the land measuring 300 bighas, in Chokha village near Jodhpur earlier this month. The residential scheme, announced in the 2021-22 State Budget, will be executed by the Jodhpur Development Authority.

## Hope and despair

On the one hand, the government is making efforts to improve their quality of life, but on the other, the migrants have also had to face the problem of exploitation by government officials.

In May 2018, a racket involving extortion of money from the migrants for extension of long-term visa, visa transfer, and grant of citizenship came to light after the arrest of a Home Ministry official by the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau. The official visited Jodhpur regularly to attend hearings on writ petitions moved by the migrants in the Rajasthan High Court. The official had three agents who identified themselves as Pakistani migrants with Indian citizenship. The case indicated that a larger nexus was at work to exploit the migrants for money. The Anti-Corruption Bureau's probe revealed that the official had demanded and accepted bribes from about 3,000 migrants in 2017 alone.



The inordinate delay in the grant of citizenship has led to a host of problems for the migrants. In November last year, a migrant woman, Janta Mali, was re-united with her family in western Rajasthan after being stranded in Pakistan for 10 months during the lockdown. Since her No Objection to Return to India (NO RI) visa had expired, she was not allowed to travel back. Mali's husband and children, who are Indian citizens, travelled back to India in July 2020 after visiting her ailing mother in Pakistan's Mirpur Khas. The Seemant Lok Sangathan took up the issue with the Rajasthan government and the Centre and succeeded in bringing her back after six months by getting her visa extended.

Though the migrants have been staying in cities in western Rajasthan such as Barmer, Jaisalmer and Bikaner for several years, Jodhpur emerged as the preferred destination after the Thar Express train linking Karachi with Bhagat Ki Koti railway station started in 2006.

The train was stopped in August 2019 when tensions escalated between India and Pakistan following India's revocation of special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The Munabao-Khokhrapar rail route was restored after a gap of 41 years following the 1965 war to reduce the distance and journey of time for people from central and southern Indian States travelling to Pakistan. It gained popularity among the Pakistani Hindus who wanted to migrate to India. The train was also used by migrants frustrated by the delay in the grant of long-term visa or citizenship to return to Pakistan.

## Bone of contention

On May 28, the Union Home Ministry issued a notification inviting non-Muslim migrants residing in 13 districts of five States to apply for Indian citizenship. It also empowered the Collectors of these districts to grant citizenship certificates.

This has become the latest bone of contention between civil rights activists and asylum-seekers. The notification is applicable to migrants belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

While the Collectors of Jodhpur, Jaipur and Jaisalmer districts were empowered to grant citizenship in 2016, the new notification has now delegated the same powers to the Collectors of Jalore, Udaipur, Pali, Barmer and Sirohi districts. Sodha says these powers should be conferred on the Collectors of all districts in the State to speed up the process of application, security check, and inquiry for grant of citizenship.

The Home Ministry says that the latest notification is not related to the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) of 2019, which has not come into effect and seeks to benefit the undocumented or illegal migrants from the six "persecuted communities" who entered India before December 31, 2014.

The CAA will reduce the requirement of 11 years of aggregate stay in India to five years for citizenship, which would help fast-track the applications of migrants.

The president of the People's Union for Civil Liberties in Rajasthan, Kavita

Srivastava, disagrees. She says that the notification amounts to implementation of the CAA "by stealth" even as the law has been challenged in the Supreme Court. "The delegation of powers to the Collectors is only with respect to the communities covered by the CAA and not those otherwise eligible for citizenship by registration and naturalisation," she says. While demanding immediate withdrawal of the notification as well as nullification of the CAA, Srivastava says the notification's intention is to rush through citizenship without waiting for the court's verdict. She says it is also in complete disregard to the massive protests against the law in late 2019 and early 2020. "It is the first salvo towards implementing the 2019 Act, as its intention is to keep Muslims out of the purview of the citizenship law," she says.

Civil rights groups have called for taking measures to smoothen and hasten the process for grant of citizenship to migrants irrespective of their religious identity. Popular Front of India's State president Mohammed Asif says the organisation will stage protests against the May 28 notification in a democratic manner once the COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted, as it bears resemblance to the CAA which discriminates on the ground of religion.

**COVID-19-related problems**  
A new issue that the migrants are now facing is inaccessibility to vaccines. This remains unresolved despite the intervention of the Rajasthan High Court. The State government has refused to inoculate those who do not possess Aadhaar cards or other prescribed documents. About 15 migrants, including those who tested positive for COVID-19 and those suspected to have the virus or are symptomatic, have died in Jodhpur during the second wave of infections.

A Division Bench of the High Court, which earlier ruled that the Centre's standard operating procedure on vaccination did not exclude the migrants from Pakistan, has hauled up the State government for seeking clarification from the Union government, and sought an explanation from the Chief Secretary. The migrants settled in Barmer have started getting vaccinated on the basis of their Pakistani passports.

Hearing the additional submissions made on behalf of the migrants in a suo moto case, the court also directed the State government to supply ration material and food packets to them through the Food and Civil Supplies Departments, local bodies and non-governmental organisations. It was submitted to the court that only the migrants residing in Jodhpur were getting the food packets, while those in Jaisalmer, Barmer and Jaipur districts were deprived of food supply during the pandemic.

Hoping against hope that their basic needs will be met, the Pakistani Hindu migrants are caught in a vicious circle of poverty and vulnerability. They face an unresponsive government and uncertain legislation. Out of their homeland and across the border, the migrants wait endlessly for the day when they can call India their true home.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## India unlikely to allow 4 Kerala women to return

Sebastian is an engineering graduate.

Merrin Jacob alias Marim was married to Bestin Vincent, a resident of Palakkad. Both escaped to Afghanistan in 2016 to live in the IS controlled territory. The couple converted to Islam after their marriage and Vincent assumed the identity of Yahya.

Vincent was later killed in Afghanistan.

Vincent's brother Bexon and his wife, Nimisha alias Fathima, who also converted to Islam had also escaped to Afghanistan with them.

Reefea was married to Ijas Mallukettiya Purayil, 37, a physician from Kasargod, who was likely one of the IS terrorists who stormed a prison in Eastern Afghanistan's Jalalabad in August 2020. Around 30 persons were killed in the attack.

A June 1, United Nations Security Council report said the ISKP "remains diminished from its zenith, following successive military set-

backs that began in Jowzjan in summer 2018."

"However, since June 2020, it has had an ambitious new leader, Shahab al-Muhajir and it remains active and dangerous" adding that the territorial losses have affected the group's ability to recruit and generate new funding but it is assessed to retain a core group of approximately 1,500 to 2,200 fighters in small areas of Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces.

## 77 attacks

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 77 attacks claimed by ISKP during the first four months of 2021. Mainly comprising defectors from Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), the Wilayat Khorasan of Islamic State in Afghanistan came into existence in 2015.

Senior government officials however maintain that ISKP is run by Pakistan's Inter State Intelligence.

## Mukul Roy rejoins Trinamool Congress

However, she clarified that "those who have criticised the party and have betrayed it before the elections, will not be considered".

With Mr. Roy, the BJP MLA from Krishnanagar Uttar, rejoining the TMC, the cycle of defections that has dominated the State politics for the past few years has come full circle.

Mr. Mukul Roy was one of the first to defect from the TMC to the BJP almost three years and seven months ago. He is also the first BJP leader to return to the TMC. Several BJP leaders have started warming up to the TMC after the saffron party's poll defeat.

Mr. Roy played a crucial role in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls when the BJP won 18 out of the 42 seats.

## Modi meets Adityanath, Shah to iron out issues

The proposed Cabinet reshuffle in U.P., and a bid to repair the party's current downward slide is also linked with a possible Cabinet reshuffle at the Centre. On Thursday, Pravin Nishad, MP from the Nishad Party and an ally of the BJP, met Mr. Shah. He was accompanied by his father, Sanjay Nishad. Apna Dal's Anupriya Patel, also an ally of the BJP and an MP from the State, did the same.

The sources said these parties would be adjusted either in the State Council of Ministers or at the Centre. Ms. Patel's husband, Ashish, an MLC, could become a minister in the State, did the same.

**Stocktaking exercise**

Besides the almost daily meetings last week between Mr. Modi and Mr. Nadda, the former has had meetings with groups of three or four Union ministers in a

stocktaking exercise. It is not sure if it will culminate in a Cabinet reshuffle, but certain political IOUs are yet to be fulfilled, including a ministerial berth for former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who joined the BJP last year from the Congress, bringing with him enough MLAs from Madhya Pradesh to topple the Kamal Nath-led government.

The monsoon session of Parliament, COVID-19 cases permitting, has been tentatively scheduled to start by August third week, and provides a window period for a Cabinet expansion or a reshuffle.

The second wave of the pandemic has placed governance and organisational challenges before the government and the BJP, and the last week activities point to Mr. Modi making a determined effort for a course correction.

## SC rejects ex-Mumbai police chief's appeal

"If a person in the rank of DGP can be pressurised, then there is nobody left... Please do not make these make-believe stories," Justice Gupta told Mr. Jethmalani.

The court said it cannot possibly intervene and stay the registration of FIR against Mr. Singh.

"Mr. Jethmalani, you are an experienced criminal lawyer. How can there be a blanket stay by a court on the power of the police to register an FIR against any person" Justice Gupta asked.

CMYK

## Centre takes steps to engage with J&amp;K parties

If all goes well, regional leaders may travel to Delhi for talks, say sources

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Twenty months after the Union government ended Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional position, serious spadework is on, for the first time, to rope in the mainstream political parties of the Union Territory (UT), especially the Kashmir-based grouping, the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), to engage with New Delhi and meet the BJP's top leadership in the coming weeks.

The situation in Kashmir has not changed since the August 5, 2019 action by the Centre to abrogate all special provisions of Article 370.

A bid to dislodge and discredit the traditional leaders and create a new crop of leadership in Kashmir has not yielded any desired results till date, which was evident during the District Development Council polls conducted last year.



Valley allies: Mehbooba Mufti and Farooq Abdullah at a recent meeting of the Gupkar alliance in Srinagar. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

The sources said that if all went well, J&K leaders were likely to travel to New Delhi and hold a meeting with top BJP leadership.

The talks were likely to revolve around the return of Statehood status to the Jammu and Kashmir and early

Gupkar alliance partners met at the official residence of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti in Srinagar on June 9. "We have not closed any doors [for talks]. If invited, we may look into it," he told reporters.

The sources said all the five parties associated with the Gupkar alliance, including the PDP, did discuss the offer of engagement from New Delhi.

## Delimitation process

Dr. Abdullah had softened his position on delimitation and was likely to engage in the process, set off to create more constituencies ahead of Assembly elections for now.

J&K

remains under the Centre's rule since 2018, after the BJP pulled out of the alliance with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Dr. Abdullah had dropped broad hints and showed his readiness to engage after the

the sources said.

Ms. Mufti, whose uncle and PDP general secretary Sartaj Madani, close aide Naeem Akhtar and party's youth wing president Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra remain behind the bars, has also shared her viewpoint on the subject and stressed the need "to prove the intention" ahead of any grand optics.

If the outreach by the Centre manages to get the regional parties onboard for a meeting, it is also likely to ease the pressure off from Prime Minister Narendra Modi from international and neighbouring countries on Kashmir.

Any move to allow local parties to express their politics again will be seen as a confidence building measure both in Srinagar as well as Islamabad.

## IN BRIEF



Centres of excellence in road safety inaugurated

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday inaugurated two centres of excellence established by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at Seema Sadak Bhawan in New Delhi. At the event, Mr. Singh also flagged off the first-ever solo women motorcycle

expedition to Kanchan Ugursandi to Umling La Pass, Ladakh and back. "These centres have been established to achieve excellence in road safety as well as foster growth in construction of roads, bridges, air fields and tunnels," a Defence Ministry statement said.

## NSG, Rashtriya Raksha University sign a pact

NEW DELHI

The National Security Guard (NSG) and the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation and collaboration aimed at strengthening the core competencies of the NSG, which are counter-terrorism, counter-IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device), and anti-hijacking. The agreement seeks to promote development and production of niche equipment by incubating Indian start-ups.

## Tributes paid to freedom fighter Ram Prasad Bismil

NEW DELHI

Union Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel on Friday said it was important to inform future generations of the legacy of freedom fighter Ram Prasad Bismil, who was martyred in 1927 for his role in the Kakori conspiracy to protest against British rule. Mr. Patel participated in a ceremony to mark the birth anniversary of Bismil at his birthplace in Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh on Friday and called for a programme to be designed to mark his 125th birth anniversary next year. Mr. Patel said the programme would be a part of the celebrations of the 75th year of Independence.

## Prashant Kishor's meeting with Sharad Pawar raises eyebrows

NCP leaders remain tight-lipped on what was discussed

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI



Sharad Pawar

The speculation of Mr. Mukul Roy's return to the TMC gained momentum last week after Mr. Banerjee visited a city hospital to inquire about the health of his wife. Prime Minister Narendra Modi too called up Mr. Roy.

**Miffed during polls**

The veteran politician was reportedly upset for not being given much importance during the 2021 Assembly polls, where Nandigram MLA Suvendu Adhikari emerged as the important face of the BJP.

When asked about the meeting, Mr. Kishor replied saying it was "a private lunch". He did not elaborate further.

The meeting took place a day after Mr. Pawar addressed party workers on the party's astounding win in the West Bengal elections day. The NCP chief had said that he did not care about the discussions on the stability of this government. "Nobody had thought that we

can work together with Shiv Sena. But we gave the option and it was accepted by the people. Leaders of all three parties are moving in the right direction keeping the commitment to the government," he said.

Mr. Kishor, who helped the Trinamool Congress in the party's astounding win in the West Bengal elections last month, has already declared that he will not be working as a political strategist any more. Speculations are rife that he may enter

politics. His meeting with Mr. Pawar in the context of the ongoing developments in national politics is said to be with an eye on the 2024 elections.

NCP sources were tight-lipped about the meeting between two. The meeting was reportedly attended by NCP MP Supriya Sule and party MLA Rohit Pawar. But when asked, Ms. Sule denied being an attendee at the meeting. Mr. Pawar did not respond to a phone call.

A senior NCP Minister from the State government said that Mr. Pawar had held the meeting to ask about Mr. Kishor's experience in West Bengal.

"There was discussion on national politics. Everyone knows that Mr. Kishor is no longer in the good books of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and is most likely to be in the Opposition camp," the Minister said.

## Pak. passes Bill to let Jadhav appeal

It follows ICJ order on India's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's National Assembly passed a Bill to provide the right of appeal to death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav amidst a ruckus and boycott by the Opposition.

The Lower House of Parliament passed the ICJ (Review and Re-consideration) Bill, 2020 on Thursday. The Bill is aimed at allowing Jadhav to have consular access in line with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) verdict.

Jadhav, a 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence. The Hague-based ICJ had ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review

and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

The Bill was among 21 laws passed by the National Assembly on Thursday evening, ignoring protests by Opposition MPs who wanted a proper reading of the Bills.

However, the government suspended rules of business to bulldoze 21 laws in a single sitting.

Speaking after the passage of the Bill, Law Minister Farogh Nasim said had they not passed the Bill, India would have gone to the UN Security Council and could have moved contempt proceedings against Pakistan in the ICJ.

Mr. Nasim said the Bill was being passed in the light of the verdict of the ICJ which had asked Pakistan to provide a credible review opportunity to Jadhav.

## Slowing of projects worries Railways

Changing deadlines causing embarrassment during review meetings, says Board

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

The lack of progress in key railway projects across the country was resulting in an "embarrassing" situation for the Ministry of Railways during review meetings convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to the Railway Board.

In an advisory issued on Thursday to general managers of all Zonal Railways, Rail Vikas Niagam Ltd., IRCON International Ltd., Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation Ltd., and other major construction organisations, the Railway Board said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was monitoring several railway projects through the Proactive Governance And Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) portal.

Besides assessing data



Safety check: In addition to special projects, the Railways maintains thousands of kilometres of tracks. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

management and analysis, geo-spatial applications and video-conference inputs, Mr. Modi was also viewing videos captured by drones of the project sites to review the progress. "It is seen that regular monitoring and follow-up is not being done for these projects and issues

discussed before Prime Minister and this results in an embarrassing situation for Ministry of Railways. Targets given by Zonal Railways/PSUs during meetings are frequently changed and this gets adversely commented upon during meetings," the advisory said. The Railway

Board was referring to 90 projects across India, the progress of which were discussed in 36 meetings (from March 25, 2015 to February 24, 2021).

The listed projects included the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (1,856 km), Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla (272 km), Mumbai Urban Transport Project (Phase-II), Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Project (508 km), Madurai-Thoothukudi via Aruppukottai (144 km), Angamali-Sabarimala Line (111 km) and others.

The note said officers working on these projects may be sensitised to avoid procedural delays and follow up with other statutory authorities and State governments for early completion of the projects.

## Experts point to widening scope for allied health sciences

The range of services open to trained professionals is growing in the country

MADHUMITHA SRINIVASAN  
CHENNAI

As part of the online Career Counselling 2021 series presented by Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science (HITS) along with The Hindu Education Plus, two webinars were hosted on Thursday.

The first on "A Career in Allied Health Sciences: Current Trends & Future Prospects", presented a holistic picture of the sector in India. According to Dr. Raja Shekhar, Founding/Former Dean, Advisor for AHS Programmes, Manipal College of Health Professions, India is still 50 years behind the rest

The session, moderated by Ramya Kannan, Chief of Bureau - Tamil Nadu, The Hindu, can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/HITSTHYT2>

The second session focused on "How a Liberal Arts education helps promote interdisciplinary learning".

## Liberal arts

"Liberal arts education addresses what jobs and organisations which is critical thinking and writing, creative collaboration, art aesthetic visualisation... while an interdisciplinary education offers a broad knowledge of multiple disciplines, improving contextual learning capacity, problem-solving, and critical thinking," explained Dr. Afroze Farid, Professor and

Head-Admissions, School of Liberal Arts and Applied Sciences, and HOD, Department of Fashion Design and Arts, HITS.

Dr. Salil Sahadevan, an independent education researcher, explained that the relevance of interdisciplinary education arose from the obsolescence of the linear path from education to career.

"With newer patterns of work emerging thanks to technologies like AI and Machine Learning, there is a lack of certainty. Thus, it is sensible to have a broad-based plan so that we may remain pivoted and agile in an evolving job market... by continuing to pursue a wider range of topics that fascinate you," he said.

Offering a counter-argument, Dr. Joya John, Assistant Professor of Literature,

# How will food reach migrants without ration cards, asks SC

Court pulls up Centre for delaying database to identify and register workers

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Centre how it intended to take food to crores of migrant labourers who have no ration cards.

"How will food reach migrant labourers without ration cards?" a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah addressed Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, for the Centre.

The court said the schemes rolled out so far seemed to cover only ration card holders.

Ms. Bhati explained that the Centre had kept its best foot forward with the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which covers 80 crore poor identified as beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act. The scheme provides 5 kg of free food grains to every person for May and June. It intends to help the poor tide over the economic disruptions caused by the pandemic. Eight lakh metric tonnes of food grains have already been given, she added.



Desperate situation: Migrant workers from Bihar at the New Delhi railway station. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

"No doubt you [the Centre] are providing food... No doubt some migrant labourers have ration cards... But we are only bothered about those who do not have them. We want to know about your mechanism to identify and provide food for people who do not have ration cards..." Justice Bhushan addressed the government side.

#### States' role

Ms. Bhati said the Centre was only in charge of making available or procuring food grains. The States had to distribute the food within their territories. The law officer

said the Centre was ready to give the States whatever they wanted.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, who appeared for some activists along with advocate Prashant Bhushan, said the "Centre was leaving them [the poor without ration cards] to the mercy of the States". "Those without ration cards cannot be allowed to die... The economic situation is far more dire now," Mr. Dave said.

Mr. Mehta strongly objected to Mr. Dave's submissions, saying he was "dramatising" the issue.

In the previous hearing, Mr. Bhushan had submitted

that the Centre had last year recorded 8 crore migrant workers without ration cards. The States had identified 2.8 crore of them.

At this point, the court pulled up the government for delaying the completion of a national database to identify and register migrant workers.

The government said the delay had something to do with the "software". The database would have helped the Centre work in tandem with the States to identify migrant labourers and provide them timely welfare during the pandemic. The government side said the database would be ready in the next three or four months.

"Why do you need three or four months? You are only preparing a database portal," Justice Bhushan asked.

Ms. Bhati explained that the portal would be an "end-to-end" one, which would not only function as a database but also help in tracking and monitoring benefits meant for migrant labourers.

"It will be a self-sustaining, self-managing portal," Mr. Mehta assured.

## Execute ration card scheme, SC tells Bengal

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday insisted that West Bengal government must implement the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme for the benefit of migrant workers.

The scheme gives migrants access to food grains in any fair price shop anywhere in the country, no matter where their ration card is registered.

"You must implement the One Nation One Ration Card scheme," Justice M.R. Shah, accompanying Justice Ashok Bhushan on a Special Bench, told West Bengal, represented by advocate Liz Mathew.

Ms. Mathew said the State would definitely implement the scheme, but was facing issues regarding the Aadhaar card seeding.

"You cannot cite one problem or other. This is for migrant workers, so they can avail welfare benefits under various government schemes," Justice Shah said.

The exchange happened during a *suo motu* hearing on welfare measures for migrant labourers.

The court reserved the case for judgment.

# Delhi govt. under control of ration mafia, says BJP

Home delivery proposal will promote scam, says Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday accused the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government of being "under the control" of a "ration mafia". It also alleged that the AAP's proposal of home delivery of subsidised rations was to promote a "scam".

At a press conference, BJP leader and Union Law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said fair price shops were at the core of supplies of subsidised food grains to the poor, as they were covered under legal provisions and thus accountable for any lapse.

"If grains are home delivered, people will not get to know how much of it is going where," he said.

Mr. Prasad attacked the Delhi government for not implementing the One Nation One Ration Card scheme and not connecting its ration shops with the electronic point of sale machine to "evoke" accountability.

"Grains at doorstep is very much a *jumla* [rhetoric]. The Delhi government is under the control of ration mafia," he alleged. "You want to break the law. You want to throw dust into the eyes of the people of Delhi. The Central government procures and spends money on the scheme and you have to follow the law," he said.



If grains are home delivered, people will not get to know how much of it is going where

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD  
Union Minister

ry much a *jumla* [rhetoric]. The Delhi government is under the control of ration mafia," he alleged. "You want to break the law. You want to throw dust into the eyes of the people of Delhi. The Central government procures and spends money on the scheme and you have to follow the law," he said.

To help the migrant population receive their quota of ration at their place of work, the Centre launched the One Nation One Ration Card scheme, but Delhi was among the three States that had not implemented it. The government had stopped e-authentication of ration shops within four months of its launch in 2018 after lakhs of fake ration cards were spotted. It also had no data on Dalit and tribal beneficiaries of the scheme, he added.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had been saying that the Centre was refusing to approve his government's scheme of home delivery of rations to the poor.

#### INTERVIEW | JITIN PRASADA

## 'BJP stands for India First'

Distance between people and Cong. is growing, says leader

SOBHANA K. NAIR

After switching from the Congress to the BJP, **Jitin Prasada** speaks about the 180 degree change in his ideology, Brahmin politics and the internal dissensions in the Congress:



BJP and PM Modi are taking us to a point where India will scale new heights

placed in the hands of our leader Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP. With changing times and changing scenarios, people much bigger than me have moved parties. Lot of socialists and communists moved to the Congress at one point of time, a lot of Congressmen of the likes of Subash Chandra Bose moved out of the Congress.

You were one of the 23 signatories who demanded reforms in the Congress. Had those suggestions been implemented, would you have stayed back?

It is not about would I or would I not. I have pondered over this decision before taking the plunge. I have tried to do what I could in the Congress; I put forth my views but ultimately I had to take the stand.

The U.P. elections are nine months away and there is a lot of resentment against the government over the handling of the pandemic. What prospects do you see for the BJP under the leadership of Adityanath in the polls.

I can tell you that I will work as a dedicated worker. I have seen the popularity of Narendra Modi. There is no easy or difficult victory. We strive and reach out to the people and I can see the sentiment on the ground. The BJP will return with a better result.

In a recent interview to *The Hindu*, you had stated that

## Pilot dismisses reports of talks with BJP leaders

AICC member Ajay Maken says expansion of Rajasthan Cabinet soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

While former Rajasthan Congress chief Sachin Pilot on Friday dismissed reports of BJP leaders being in touch with him, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge for Rajasthan Ajay Maken asserted that there would soon be a Cabinet expansion of the Ashok Gehlot-led government.

The AICC general secretary also played down reports of Mr. Pilot being "angry" with party.

"When I am here, how is it possible that views of the MLAs are not heard? We are

taking future steps after talking to everyone and ascertaining their views. The vacant posts that are there, be they in the Cabinet or the Boards of Commissions, appointments will happen very soon," Mr. Maken said on the sidelines of a symbolic protest against the continuous fuel price hike.

On his part, Mr. Pilot took part in a protest against fuel hike in Jaipur and categorically rejected the claims that Congress-turned-BJP leader Rita Bahuguna Joshi had spoken to him.

"I also heard that Rita Bahuguna Joshi had spoken to



Sachin Pilot

Sachin. Maybe she spoke to Sachin Tendulkar. She doesn't have the courage to speak to me," Mr. Pilot quipped to reporters at the protest venue.

Amid speculation that the former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister could be the next to exit from the Con-

gress after Jitin Prasada, Mr. Maken said he is in regular touch with Mr. Pilot.

"I speak to him regularly [Mr. Pilot]. If he was angry, then would he have spoken to me," Mr. Maken said.

However, a source close to Mr. Pilot told *The Hindu* that the Pilot camp is not happy that the Congress High Command has not been able to "deliver" on the promises made to him and his supporters even after 10 months.

After his unsuccessful revolt against Mr. Gehlot, the Congress had removed Mr. Pilot both from the post of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief as well as the Deputy Chief Minister. The MLAs and the Ministers, who support him, were also

stripped of all official positions.

Last August, the AICC had formed a three-member committee with Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal, Mr. Maken and Ahmed Patel, to look into the grievances of Mr. Pilot. However the panel made little progress due to Mr. Patel's prolonged hospitalisation due to COVID-19 and his subsequent death.

While the pro-Gehlot MLAs are resisting the return of Mr. Pilot's supporters in the government, the AICC is said to be working on a formula that will ensure an important party position for Mr. Pilot and a few portfolios for his supporters in the government.

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Latter No.- GDMD/Adv/2021/182 Dated : 10.06.2021

### WALK IN INTERVIEW

Walk-in interview will be held on 24-06-2021 at 10:00 am onwards in Govt. Doon Medical College Campus, Patel Nagar, Dehradun for various faculty positions (Broad & Super Specialties) of Government Doon Medical College, Dehradun. The appointments will be made on contractual basis for three years only or till regular appointments are made, whichever is earlier. The detail about the vacancies in various departments are uploaded in the website of Govt. Doon Medical College [www.gdmuk.com](http://www.gdmuk.com), [www.doonmedical.org](http://www.doonmedical.org).

Principal,  
Govt. Doon Medical College,  
Dehradun

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY

CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION

### E-TENDER

NOTICE NO.18-CECNMS-2021-E-145764 DATED 04-06-2021  
NOTICE NO.19-CECNMS-2021-E-142235 DATED 04-06-2021  
NOTICE NO.20-CECNMS-2021-E-142675 DATED 04-06-2021  
NOTICE NO.21-CECNMS-2021-E-151529 DATED 04-06-2021

The Chief Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008 invites e-tender for the following work(s) as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in our portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The Tenderer(s)/Contractor(s) intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of the tender form and the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) should be made through online payment gateway available in the website by the way of multiple bank's net banking, debit card and credit card.

(1) Name of the Work : Proposed new BG line between Chinnaalem and Kallakurichi - Proposed Construction of Limited Use Subways including road approaches. (TWO PACKET SYSTEM)

Approximate Cash Value (Rupees) : 14405068.95

Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees) : 0.0 Period of Completion in Months : 12 Closing Date @ 15.30 hrs : 28.06.2021

(2) Name of the Work : Ponnai Malai Workshop : Proposed construction of New POH facilities for maintenance of LHB coaches. Pink book item No.1087-c-UW1 of 2018-2019.

Approximate Cash Value (Rupees) : 97963077.91

Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees) : 0.0 Period of Completion in Months : 9 Closing Date @ 15.30 hrs : 28.06.2021

(3) Name of the Work : Gauge Conversion work in Madurai & Bodinayakanur Section : (I) Construction of Passenger Platform at Bodinayakanur & Goods Platform at TENI (II) Construction of one High Level Reservoir for coach watering (III) Earthwork in Widening, Raising of existing Formation of BG standard at the approaches of LUS N-79 (Ch:84700) to 81 (Ch:88700) in between TENI (excl) and BODINAYAKKANUR (excl) Stations. (TWO PACKET SYSTEM)

Approximate Cash Value (Rupees) : 151478124.66

Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees) : 0.0 Period of Completion in Months : 6 Closing Date @ 15.30 hrs : 28.06.2021

(4) Name of the Work : Gauge conversion work between Tirurapundi-Agastiyampalli Section : Construction of Retaining wall, Supplying, filling and compaction of gravelly soil between KXX-AGX, formation of road, finishing work for the station building such as VDY, TOY & AGX Stations in Reach-II between Ch:24000 to Ch:37397.

Approximate Cash Value (Rupees) : 84936106.25

Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees) : 0.0 Period of Completion in Months : 6 Closing Date @ 15.30 hrs : 28.06.2021

For further details, please refer to website portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) or contact Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Construction, E.V.R. High Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

Chief Engineer (Construction), Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

Follow us on :  [twitter.com/GMSRailway](http://twitter.com/GMSRailway)

## Roll back fuel price hike: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Congress leaders held protests outside fuel pumps across the country against the rising prices of petrol and diesel and demanded a complete rollback of the price hikes.

Party general secretaries K.C. Venugopal and Shakti Singh Ghosh reached a petrol pump next to the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium on a horse cart. Arguing that the tax on petrol and diesel stood at ₹9.20 during the UPA government, Mr. Venugopal said it was now ₹32. "The government should stop im-

posing excise duty on petrol and diesel. It should come under the purview of Goods and Services Tax. We demand a complete rollback of fuel price hike," he said.

Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Srinivas B.V. accused the government of spending the tax collected on diesel and petrol on "extravagant projects".

&lt;p

## IN BRIEF



'Will provide security to Poonawalla if he wants'

MUMBAI  
The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that it would provide security to the CEO of the Serum Institute of India, Adar Poonawalla, if he asked for it. The court was hearing a petition seeking 'Z plus' security to Mr. Poonawalla, as he is allegedly being threatened by people to supply vaccines.

## SC postpones AIIMS' PG entrance examination

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court ordered the postponement of the AIIMS' Post Graduate Entrance Test-INI CET exams, scheduled for June 16, by a month, after taking into consideration the fatigue in the medical community after the second wave of COVID-19.

## Allahabad HC grants anticipatory bail to scribe

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW  
The Allahabad High Court granted anticipatory bail to Shiv Pratap, a journalist, and another person booked for allegedly trying to destroy a ballot box and resorting to firing during voting for the panchayat polls in April. Mr. Pratap said he was targeted for reporting about alleged irregularities at the booth. Shiv Pratap, a reporter of Hindi newspaper *Pratap Kiran*, was on April 19 covering the gram panchayat election at a booth in Utrash village in Pratapgarh district.

## 'USFDA move won't affect India'

V.K. Paul responds to rejection of U.S. nod for Covaxin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The rejection by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) of the emergency use application of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has no impact on policies in India, Dr. V.K. Paul, NITI Aayog member (Health), said at a Union Health Ministry press conference on Friday.

"Every country has its parameter for approval of vaccinations for its population despite the world sharing a common scientific framework for approval. India also follows its own regulatory process for approval that is tailor-made for our population. It's their decision, it should be respected. Our regulator has endorsed this vaccine and there is no im-



Reaching out: A worker holding Covaxin vials at a vaccination camp in Chennai for differently abled people. ■ FILE PHOTO

pact on use of Covaxin in our national programme," he stated, noting that Covaxin phase-3 clinical trial data would be published in the next seven to eight days.

"We expect that the Covaxin manufacturers will be able to comply with the regulators' requirement. Our regulator has approved this vaccine. We have enough data on safety and efficacy," he said.

Dr. Paul said the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was preparing for a

national survey. "The ICMR will begin work for next sero survey this month. But if we want to protect our geographies, we won't have to depend on national sero survey alone, we'll have to encourage States for sero surveys too," he said.

Suggestions to reduce the gap between the two doses of Covishield and non-requirement of vaccination for those who have recovered from COVID-19 "are welcome", he said, adding that revisions can be made "as

per data analysis and consultations".

In a release on Friday, the Health Ministry said the expectation that vaccine wastage should be 1% or less is not at all unreasonable. The vaccines being used now did not have an 'open vial policy', i.e., they have to be used within a stipulated time once a vial was opened. The vaccinators were advised to mark the date and time of opening each vial and all opened vials should be used or discarded within four hours of opening.

"Several States have organised COVID-19 vaccination in such a way that not only is there no wastage but they are able to extract more doses from the vial and thus show a negative wastage. Hence, the expectation that vaccine wastage should be 1% or less is not at all unreasonable. It is reasonable, desirable and achievable," said the release.

## Two doses of COVID-19 vaccines cut risk: study

They offer 77% protection against hospitalisation

R. PRASAD  
CHENNAI



The study analysed effects in healthcare workers.

A study carried out at CMC Vellore has found that two doses of COVID-19 vaccine offer high protection against infection and hospitalisation, even among healthcare workers, who have a high risk of being infected. While the study found vaccination to be protective, it did not investigate the proportion of cases caused by the Beta (B.1.1.7) and Delta (B.1.617.2) variants. The results of the study have been published in the journal *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

"We were not able to individually study the efficacy of Covishield and Covaxin as only a few received Covaxin," said Dr. Joy J. Mammen, Professor at the Department of Transfusion Medicine, CMC Vellore, and the corresponding author of the paper.

Though over 93% received Covishield, the study shows that vaccinated individuals are better protected compared with unvaccinated individuals.

In total, 8,991 (84.8%) healthcare workers were vaccinated between January 21 and April 30, 2021. A majority of them (nearly 8,400) received Covishield.

While not a single death was reported among the 8,958 vaccinated individuals, there was one death among the 1,609 unvaccinated healthcare workers.

The study found that among the 7,080 healthcare workers who received two doses, the vaccine offered 65% protection against infection, 77% protection against hospitalisation, 92% protection against the need for oxygen and 94% protection from ICU admission.

"Vaccines are working well! Good against infection in healthcare settings where there is a high risk of transmission, great against severe disease," Professor of Microbiology at CMC Vellore Dr. Gagandeep Kang said on Twitter. She is not involved in the study.

Among the 1,609 healthcare workers who were not vaccinated, 438 (27.2%) got infected, while 64 (4%) needed hospitalisation. Eleven (0.7%) individuals who did not get any vaccine needed oxygen support and eight (0.5%) needed ICU care.

## India records 82,533 new infections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

India recorded 82,533 new COVID-19 cases and 3,976 new deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Friday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,93,56,505 cases and 3,67,086 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 15,759 new infections, followed by Kerala (14,233) and Maharashtra (11,766). Maharashtra recorded 2,619 new deaths followed by Tamil Nadu (378) and Kerala (173). Maharashtra's fatalities include 2,213 backlog deaths, which were missed in the previous reports and added to Friday's tally. 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 32.75 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Friday, which is nearly 1.05 lakh doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. However, it is almost 4 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 stood at 30.27 lakh on June 10. The last time the figure had crossed the 30-lakh mark was nearly two months back, on April 17. Only 3.4% of the country's population has received both doses, while 14.6% population has received at least the first shot of vaccine. About 21.3% of adults – 41.7% of those aged above 45 years and 45.6% of people above 60 years – had received at least one dose of a vaccine until 9.45 p.m. on Friday.

## Online module to map out-of-school kids

Centre takes note of disruptions due to COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



A good step: Through the module, children will be connected to mainstream education by training centres. ■ FILE PHOTO

With COVID-19-related disruptions to education leading to higher levels of dropouts, the Centre has set up a module to map out-of-school children and connect them to mainstream education through special training centres.

In a letter to State governments on Friday, Education Ministry Joint Secretary, Maneesh Garg, directed them to upload data about all out-of-school children at the block level for monitoring purposes. "In order to facilitate age-appropriate admission of

out-of-school children in the age group of 6-14 years in regular schools, financial provisions are made in the [Samagra Shiksha] scheme for arranging special training to bridge their learning gaps and mainstreaming them in schools," said the letter.

The online module, it

said, would allow for the mapping of the children with the nearest Special Training Centres to provide bridge courses.

"For out-of-school children in the 16-18 years of age group and belonging to Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Group, financial

assistance has been made available for the first time from the year 2021-22 to continue their education through Open/Distance Learning mode," it added.

In January, the Education Ministry had directed States to conduct comprehensive door-to-door surveys to identify children who were out of school and migrant students affected by CO-VID-19 disruptions.

They were told to prepare an action plan to prevent increased dropouts, lower enrolments, loss of learning and deterioration in the gains made in providing universal access, quality and equity in recent years.

Schools were also asked to relax detention norms in order to prevent dropouts.

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## + Vets remove part of iron chain from elephant's foot in Bengal

The injured tusker was spotted two months ago



Huge relief: The elephant walking after the iron chain (left) was removed. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA  
Officials of the West Bengal Forest Department and a team of six veterinarians successfully operated upon an elephant and removed parts of an iron chain that had got stuck in its foot. The chain was stuck deep in the right front foot.

"We tranquillised the injured elephant at Bankura, and the remaining iron chain embedded in the skin was successfully removed by a team of six veterinarians,"

Mr. Yadav said the injured elephant was spotted two months ago in Jhargram. Last month, an operation was conducted at Sonamukhi, where a part of the chain was removed. S. Kulandai-

said V. K. Yadav, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Central Circle, said the elephant had come to West Bengal from Jharkhand and the chain indicated that there could have been attempts to trap it. He was produced before the Special Court for cases under the Tamil Nadu Protection of Interests of Depositors (TNPID) Act and remanded to judicial

custody for 15 days. He has been lodged in the Saidapet sub-jail.

Last January, the Economic Offences Wing of the State Police arrested Ramchand Karunakaran, former managing director, and Hari Sankaran, former vice-chairman and director of ITNL, who were also cited as accused in this case. He has been arrested by us following the Madras High Court recently rejecting the anticipatory bail petition."

Additional Director-General of Police, Economic Offences Wing, Abhash Kumar,

told *The Hindu*, "The case was registered by us last year against 21 accused, including the firms ITNL and IL&FS, for the alleged offences of cheating and criminal breach of trust in the repayment of deposit amount of ₹200 crore invested in debentures by the complainant M/s 63 Moons Technologies Private Limited, Anna Salai, Thousand Lights, Chennai. Ravi Parthasarathy has been cited as the seventh accused in this case. He has been arrested by us following the Madras High Court recently rejecting the anticipatory bail petition."

**Inflated balance sheets**

ITNL, Mumbai, is one of the major subsidiaries of IL&FS. Its directors and key managerial personnel were responsible for the formulation of strategies and implemen-

tation on behalf of ITNL.

The complainant, 63 Moons Technologies, said in 2014 and 2015 that ITNL notified the public domain about the issuance of 1,000 and 2,000 non-convertible debentures having a face value of ₹10 lakh each aggregating to ₹100 crore and ₹250 crore, respectively, on private placement basis. The information memorandum was also supported with credit ratings by reputed credit rating agencies and highly inflated balance sheets by its statutory auditors, who falsely showed that ITNL and IL&FS were highly profitable.

Further, in order to induce innocent investors, the ITNL falsely assured guaranteed annual return of up to 11.80% per annum, payable on a semi-annual basis until redemption, to its investors

against their deposits with ITNL. The complainant company relied on the representations and assurances made by ITNL and key managerial personnel, and invested ₹200 crore in debentures. In 2018, IL&FS defaulted on their financial obligations, and subsequently, ITNL also defaulted on the payment of interest on the debentures.

Detailed investigations by agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office exposed the alleged role of key management personnel in mismanaging the lending business.

Lending was carried out to the entities without any due diligence. The complainant company alleged that it had lost ₹200 crore due to fraudulent representations of the accused.

Case pertains to ₹200 crore fraud via subsidiary

R. SIVARAMAN  
CHENNAI

The Economic Offences Wing of the Tamil Nadu police arrested Ravi Parthasarathy, 69, former chairman of the IL&FS Group, in connection with the alleged cheating of a Chennai-based private limited company to the tune of ₹200 crore through its subsidiary IL&FS Transportation Networks India Limited (ITNL), Mumbai.

Mr. Parthasarathy was arrested by the police in Mumbai and brought to the city on Thursday. He was produced before the Special Court for cases under the Tamil Nadu Protection of Interests of Depositors (TNPID) Act and remanded to judicial

custody for 15 days. He has been lodged in the Saidapet sub-jail.

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Lending was carried out to the entities without any due diligence. The complainant company alleged that it had lost ₹200 crore due to

fraudulent representations of the accused.

Kshatrabandu was known for his penchant to kill people and eat them. Once Narada came in his way and when he wanted to kill Narada, the sage explained that he is on the wrong path and incurring harmful doshas. Narada taught him Govinda Nama and miraculously, this confirmed sinner turned a new leaf. He began meditating on Govinda Nama and was eventually liberated. If this instance shows that even sin need not be a hurdle to moksha if one gets the acharya association, the story of Pundarika exemplifies the truth that without an acharya's grace, good deeds by themselves cannot lead to salvation. Pundarika was noted for his righteous conduct, was very devoted to God and followed religious practices as ordained in the sastras. All this only led him to samsara and did not lead him to moksha. But owing to his good fortune, he got Narada as his acharya who imparted the Dwadasakshara mantra. He meditated on this and gained moksha. So, sadly when the jivatma is compelled into further births owing to both punya and papa, and continues in the state of ajnana, contact with an acharya can help him out of this tricky situation. The acharya can direct him to think of God and moksha and the way to seek Him.

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## Instapick

**NYC opens up:** New hotels, restaurants and the subway returning to 24-hour service – New York City is coming back to life. In fact there is a Central Park mega-concert planned for August, a celebration of the city and its residents after surviving the pandemic. It's slated to have 'eight iconic' stars perform a three-hour show for 60,000 attendees and a worldwide television audience.



## Talking point

**French Open 2021:** As this issue went to press, fans were awaiting a cracking semi-final with Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal. The winner will play against Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas or German player Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final. In women's singles, Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek became the first women's singles player from her country to enter the semi-final of a Grand Slam event.



YARN IT!

# Who's in your head?

Making sense of wide foreheads, squeaking lizards and lengths of skirts

JANE DE SUZA

You should never listen to what they say. At least, that's what they say. To clarify, if you were to listen to what they say, then you'd not be listening to what they say. Clear now?

You've heard them say, for example, that wide foreheads signify great memories. Keep your hair on!

They also say wide foreheads signify balding genes. Not to split hairs, but they say that great memories are not worth losing hair over because the next generations will just Google, and let their great memories go redundant. And to bring it all to a head, they even say appearances are deceptive. Which means that those who appear to have wide fo-

reheads may not really have wide foreheads. Clearer now?

After a lifetime of listening to what they say, you will discover there are bunches of They who say deliberately contradictory things. As soon as you're following one, the others say something diametrically opposite. They are all convinced they are right and they are wrong. That leaves us, as they say, with no options at all. You definitely should not be listening to whether they say that lizard squeaks herald weddings or deaths, whether to turn (or vote) left or right; whether lengths of skirts are in the eyes of the beholder or not. You should really be listening only to yourself.

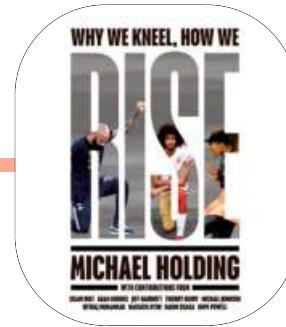
Now here is where it turns hairy. I say categorically that you shouldn't care a toss about what they say. But since for you, I am one of They, if you listen to me, you could say that you shouldn't listen to me. Then I'd say that you're part of the They I'm advising against being listened to, in the first place. So you should really not be listening to you either.

And you don't. This is the final truth. They are so much in your head that you now listen to what they say because you think it is what you think. What you say is exactly what they say, after all. And what I say is exactly what they say, as well. It's just that your They and my They are different. And they say you and I should be, too. Are we really?

Where Jane De Suza, the author of *Happily Never After*, talks about the week's quirks, quacks and hacks

## Pick of the week

**Virtual tours, workshops and other events you just can't miss**



### Virtual benefit

After the success of the first edition last year, carpet manufacturer Obeetee has launched its second edition, **Social Fabric 2.0 - Weaves of Solidarity** auction. It is aimed at assisting 25,000 carpet weavers in Mirzapur. obeetee.org. Watch Acapella group Penn Masala, and other artistes participate in a virtual benefit organised by non-profit, **Room to Read**, to support their Education Resilience Fund. June 25. give.roomtoread.org

### Comic hour

Taking on the role of 'The Expert' who knows everything about nothing is comedian **Sorabh Pant**. From politics to pop culture, the comic has a new episode launching every week. June 12, 8.30 pm on Zoom. ₹200. Tickets for both shows are available on in.bookmyshow.com

### Wears well

Falguni Shane Peacock have joined several other designer labels on the **Nykaa Fashion Luxe Store**; nykaafashion.com. The National Centre for the Performing Arts is conducting a two-day workshop on **Reimagining dance costumes with Sandhya Raman** highlighting the role and importance of costumes in various dance forms. On 18 and 25 June '6 pm over Zoom call; ₹500; Call 8879114939 or 9819002515 for registration.

### Booked weekends

Releasing next week: **Michael Holding's Why We Kneel, How We Rise**. The book by the former West Indies cricketer features conversations on racism with sporting legends Usain Bolt, Naomi Osaka, and others. ₹699. simonandschuster.co.in. Author **Ruskin Bond** has put his 70-year experience as an author into 28 lessons for a course on writing. Learn about his journey, how to build characters, book publishing, and more. Till June 30. ₹999. bookmyshow.com

### A trip to the Louvre

Visit the **Louvre Museum** with this licensed guide-led webinar. The 60-minute virtual session covers a tour by an expert in Louvre art and history, photos, and videos. June 12, 8.30pm. ₹1,314. **Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo** is also organising online tours for viewers who want an intimate look at their animals. Each journey will give you insights into a specific animal group via one of four formats: meet-and-greet, cognition and care, enrichment, or feeding. ₹1,200. Both on eventbrite.com

### Rolls-Royce on time

Luxury watchmaker **Bovet 1822** and **Rolls-Royce** have collaborated to create two tourbillon timepieces. The new offerings can transform from a wristwatch to a pocket/pendant watch, desk clock, and even a dashboard clock. Price TBA. bovet.com Bengaluru-based **The Summer House**'s latest collection, Loom to Loop, features lounge pants, boxy jackets, and dresses crafted with fabrics recycled from production scrap. ₹3,900 onwards. thesummerhouse.in

### Pride 2021

onePULSE Foundation in the US has teamed up with singer **Ricky Martin** for an exclusive event to commemorate Pride Month. While Martin will share his tips for the perfect selfie, if you make a ₹3,575 donation to their OUTLOVE HATE campaign, your self-portrait will appear on permanent display at the National Pulse Memorial & Museum. June 18. eventbrite.com. Social platform **Lemonade Social** has a series of events, including a dance masterclass. @lemonade\_social

# Inside Clubhouse India

It is like a live radio show, and in India the social media platform has taken on an identity of its own — with *antakshari* rooms, regional discourses, and more

ARJUN MADAN

I first heard about Clubhouse back in January. A friend sent me an invite and I reluctantly opened an account, annoyed at being tasked with learning how to operate yet another social media platform. Then I ignored it. At least until the second wave hit and we were all back to being at home indefinitely. I logged on thinking it was going to be like last year's Houseparty fad; safe to say, I am now hooked and I have no concept of sleep any more. What is Clubhouse? Think of it like a podcast in real



commenting on the app, the audio-only format limits opportunities for trolling. Something that Twitter and Instagram still don't know how to deal with.

For me, it started out as some fun, frivolous conversations about dating and "shooting your shot" (basically the Clubhouse version of telling someone you find them attractive). But soon I was tuning into more "serious"

rooms. I am now listening in on conversations about the caste politics in India, the #MeToo movement, and cryptocurrency.

### Local connect

Clubhouse's trajectory in India has been slightly different. The American market had a head start, which means they are now monetising rooms — artists are hosting paid gigs, people are charging fees for exclusive closed rooms, and the like. Indian Clubhouse isn't there yet, but it is close. The main difference I've noticed is that in the West, there are many rooms with certain people talking and others

listening. The Indian audiences want to speak and contribute more. If I am hosting a room and the hand raising feature is off, I end up getting messages on my Instagram to invite people so they can

because they don't necessarily align with my political ideologies, and I am supposedly at risk of getting cornered.

**Making it your own**  
My favourite rooms have been where my extreme privilege has been checked, and I have learnt a lot. A popular club, 'The Dark Room', has hosted incredible rooms on topics ranging from fat-phobia to caste-based discrimination. Making these spaces inclusive has been one of the reasons I find Clubhouse to be more democratic than other social media platforms.

Some of the other rooms I enjoy attending are the music rooms, including ones dedicated to *antakshari*. There are also some great artistes that are now Clubhouse celebrities, such as Anirudh Deshmukh and Markand Soni.

Clubhouse has become a great forum for the LGBTQIA+ community. Queer people have found their own table, since a seat wasn't made available at the existing platforms for them. The conversations range from fun to educational, and the beauty of the app is that you get to shuttle between both.

Clubhouse is still very new in India. Questions like how to monetise it, what is the future of the app, are being asked. Nobody really has an answer, but what we know is that people are either on it or are trying to score an invite. DM me on Instagram (@arjunmadan), I may have a few spare invites.

Arjun Madan is a food, marketing and brand consultant.

foreheads may not really have wide foreheads. Clearer now?

After a lifetime of listening to what they say, you will discover there are bunches of They who say deliberately contradictory things. As soon as you're following one, the others say something diametrically opposite. They are all convinced they are right and they are wrong.

That leaves us, as they say, with no options at all. You definitely should not be listening to whether they say that lizard squeaks herald weddings or deaths, whether to turn (or vote) left or right; whether lengths of skirts are in the eyes of the beholder or not. You should really be listening only to yourself.

Now here is where it turns hairy. I say categorically that you shouldn't care a toss about what they say. But since for you, I am one of They, if you listen to me, you could say that you shouldn't listen to me. Then I'd say that you're part of the They I'm advising against being listened to, in the first place. So you should really not be listening to you either.

And you don't. This is the final truth. They are so much in your head that you now listen to what they say because you think it is what you think. What you say is exactly what they say, after all. And what I say is exactly what they say, as well. It's just that your They and my They are different. And they say you and I should be, too. Are we really?

Where Jane De Suza, the author of *Happily Never After*, talks about the week's quirks, quacks and hacks



Aakancha Kerketta (above, right) with teammate Basanti Barla, Tripta Behera (top right)

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**Naomi Osaka has started a conversation about the mental load on young women athletes who are constantly battling stressors on and off the field**

## Into the open: struggles of the female athlete

■ SUNALINI MATHEW

In 2019, Utkarsha Pawar, 22, from Pune, began journaling. On its last page, she wrote down her goal: to be selected in the cricket Women's Under-23 Challenger Trophy. Every day, as she filled her diary, it was a reminder that all her thoughts and actions were fine-tuned towards that. "I achieved it, and ticked it off," she says, adding that writing has helped in visualisation, an exercise by sportspersons to sharpen focus and better performance. It also helped her process her grandfather's death last year.

While the practice is beneficial for men and women athletes, Pawar finds that it's her women athlete friends who journal more. "I also have gym training as part of the journal, so it helps me keep track of how I perform and lift [weights] during my periods," she says.

### Added layers of pressure

There are two parts to building mental health in athletes: performance enhancement on field and well-being (tackling stress and disorders) off field, says Divya Jain, a sports psychologist from Fortis Healthcare. While journaling and visualisation are practised by both men and women, off field stressors may differ.

Sonia Dabir, Pawar's coach, singles out the word 'pressure' to describe a sportsperson's life: the need to perform better or at least at par with a previous time; the juggling of time between sport and study; the stress of endorsements. Women have added layers of pressure – the doubts about earning a living from sport, where women play for even shorter durations than men; the decision to have a child, etc.

### The nuances of women's sport

While we will never know the depth of

Naomi Osaka's mental health condition – she does not owe us a detailed explanation, much like she wouldn't her history of a physical injury – she has opened up a conversation around mental health in sport.

On Clubhouse discussions, players have talked about the responses to her decision to take a break, opening the field for more nuanced discussions. Take just the issue of what to wear at sporting events. Karan Singh, who runs the Indian Track Foundation, set up three years ago, has four female athletes (handpicked from across interiors of Jharkhand) in his elite team of 10 trainees.

Earlier this year, the girls got Adidas gear, which gave them access to sports

**That feeling of camaraderie has changed. I feel that the media has become extremely intrusive and of 12 questions asked, often, 11 are negative ones. That is why I insist on those coaching with me not meeting mediapersons before an event.**

PT USHA, SPRINT LEGEND



bras and shorts worn at the international level in track and field events. "These clothes are shorter and more snug than what Aakancha [Kerketta, 16] is comfortable wearing," he says of his ward. So he left it up to her, but she realised the difference it was making to her performance and decided to go with them.

Singh, who is aiming for the 2028 Olympic Games and beyond, normalises conversations with the help of his wife, who talks menstruation and body changes with the girls, made easier since they live together in one house in Ooty.

### About mental safety

Just like a physical injury, a mental one too needs more than just first aid. A sports psychologist at Jamshedpur, talks of a young woman who came to him two years after she had been raped in her early teens, by fellow senior male players. "She came with anxiety, and after three or four sessions on a phone consultation, she revealed she had been raped," he says.

But a girl doesn't have to be sexually abused to feel insecure. And it's not just about putting up a CCTV camera, says Gayatri Vartak Madkekar, a sports psychologist. "An athlete travelling alone must feel safe. There are over ideas of safety, but there is also the mental angle," says Madkekar, adding that having a woman mentor, someone who has gone through a particular experience, will help young players.

There is also the question of 'what if not sport?'. While women in cities may have career options and choices they are free to exercise, those in villages might not. Arundhati (name changed to protect identity), 22, who (since 2009) has trained with Yuwa, an organisation for girls' empowerment through football, says girls in rural Jharkhand gener-

ally get married by 15 or 16. Sports, therefore, also offers an escape route and she says she "feels free on the football field".

### Fighting the odds

Tripta Behera, 19, from New Delhi, talks about patriarchy and capitalism when it comes to earnings, even in seemingly egalitarian big-city settings. "I play for the Delhi Women's League. The men get prize money; we don't. Also, they get put up at five-star hotels, and we'll get a one-star hotel."

Arundhati remembers her first national camp. "In the evening, the coaches would ask us to sing or dance, and I am shy, so I wouldn't want to come to the front. They would force me to, and say, 'You girl from a backward community – learn to sing or dance.' On field too, she felt bullied. These challenges that go beyond just concentrating on the game chip away at their self-belief.

### Media matters

What appears in the press also has a bearing on the mind. Sprinter Dutee Chand says reporters will pit her against Hima Das in sensational headlines, and will take a quote out of context. Despite all the media coverage, a BBC survey last year, 50% of those surveyed in India (10,181 across 14 states) could not name even one sportswoman. Up to 42% felt that women's sports were not as 'entertaining' as men's.

Supporting women in sports will bolster their mental health, but this will need institutions, individuals, and society to come together. As Behera says, "I want to be known as a footballer; not a woman football player."

With inputs from Saraswathy Naga-  
rajan and Uthra Ganesan

MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBBER

In 1985, *Saagar* was in the news for many reasons. It was director Ramesh Sippy's first romance after *Shakti* (1982), *Shaan* (1980) and *Sholay* (1975). It was also Dimple Kapadia's comeback film, opposite her *Bobby* co-star, Rishi Kapoor. It also happened to be the movie with an allegedly inadvertent topless scene.

The story goes something like this. Rishi Kapoor's character, Ravi, sees Mona (Kapadia) for the first time as she comes out of the sea. Not quite covered in foam, Mona wraps a towel around herself, which slips for a second. 'The towel slipping was an accident', 'We didn't realise the cameras were rolling' – these were the reasons trotted out at the time, still not explaining how the frame made it beyond the cutting floor. Fast forward to 35 years later, post #metoo and with intimacy coordinators now on film sets, how would this have played out?

### Know your rights

"I probably would have done the exact same thing visually, but in a way that Dimple ma'am would have felt safe," says Aastha Khanna, India's first certified intimacy coordinator, who ventured into the space last lockdown. "An important part of intimacy is for performers to know their rights. If there was an accident on set which was shot, it should be deleted. However, if the director and actor feel the shot works aesthetically, they can take a decision to keep the scene," she explains.

Earlier this week, actor Michaela Coel (*I May Destroy You*) dedicating her BAFTA to intimacy coordinator, Ita O'Brien, shone a light on this new breed of on-set professionals. The second season of American drama *The*



Aastha Khanna, the country's first certified intimacy coordinator on creating a safe space for actors on set and why she's put together a collective for India

## Taking Sex seriously

*Deuce* was the first show to have an intimacy coordinator, Alicia Rodis. There also is Elizabeth Talbot for *Bridgerton* and Amanda Blumenthal (*Euphoria*).

### The deep dive

Khanna, 26, says she learnt about intimacy coordinators when she was researching a workshop on intimacy for a film that she was an AD on. When she could not find an intimacy coordinator in India she wrote to the Intimacy Professionals Association (IPA), a global agency founded by Blumenthal.

"When they said they had never trained anyone from the South Asian community, I thought I

could give it a shot," says Khanna who applied for the intensive, 20-week training programme that cost around ₹4 lakh.

"We were taught to look at intimacy coordination through different lenses as well as basics like how to navigate a film set, how to read a contract, the different protocols and processes," says the artiste, explaining that she also learnt about scenes that can be categorised as intimate, how to break them down, etc. The course

called for a deep dive into gender, sexuality and diversity, says Khanna. "There is training in inclusion, sexual harassment and conflict resolution. We were taught mental first aid for minors and adults, medical first aid, advocacy and how to

### Prop game

The tools of her trade feature barriers, like an L Guard, the cup used by cricketers to protect the crotch. "Since it is a hard-case silicone, any form of arousal non-concordance that happens on sets, can be prevented. It can be a Pilates ball like this," Khanna says, brandishing a nine-inch ball. "I inflate it a little bit and place it between the performers but it also gives enough flexibility to create a thrusting movement. There are other kinds of barriers like a silicone posterior, modesty garments and pasties for breasts. Pasties are available for different skin tones including green for post-production, if the actress is okay with side nudity but not full frontal."

Khanna tells me that no company in India specifically does intimacy or modesty garments. "Some things you can get at high end lingerie stores but the sizes and skin tone don't match. I take samples and get them made myself."

"Others like the L guard or pilates ball, I buy online."

have non-violent communication." While cannot talk about the shows she has worked on (as they are still in production), Khanna reveals that she's "worked with a few studios, with Netflix on a couple of shows and Dharmatic on a feature and a show. I am looking forward to working with Amazon Prime."

### Choreographing moves

Internationally, parallels are drawn between an intimacy coordinator and an action director.

"They do that because the pay is the same and so is the concept. An action director ensures the physical safety of the artist, while an intimacy coordinator looks out for the physical and mental safety." The money, however, is not great. "We are working on it. I have founded a collective of intimacy professionals in India. We are launching a website that is going to have guidelines and workshops," says Khanna, who likes to compare her role to that of a choreographer. "The choreographer executes the director's vision, doing a beat-by-beat breakdown of steps, expressions and emotions. A choreographer also liaises with different departments to ensure the right costume and make-up is used."

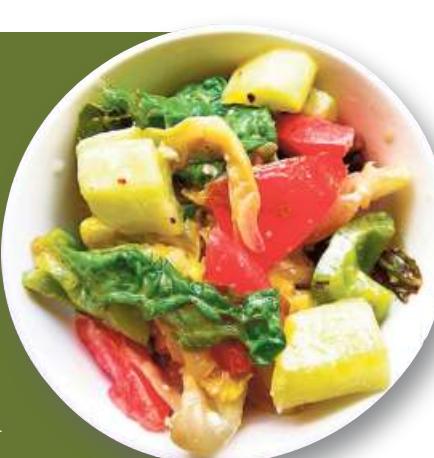
In a dance rehearsal, she says, the performer is not in costume, and similarly, no one is taking their clothes off in an intimacy rehearsal.

"It is a dry run to figure out positions. Just as a choreographer understands the strengths of the performer, an intimacy coordinator should know what the actors are comfortable with and design the scene around that," says Khanna.

Unlike a choreographer, however, an intimacy coordinator usually does not design an intimate scene. "If they want to show heterosexual oral sex, it would be written from the perspective of where the lens and camera are going to be. It will not be from the perspective of what my feet or hands are doing or how I am lying down. That is when I come in and have a conversation with the director to create a storyboard," says Khanna, adding, "I do not always choreograph the scene but I do need to know what the choreography will be so that I can liaise with the different departments to make sure that the safety gear and costumes are correct. Last minute changes on set become very difficult to handle."

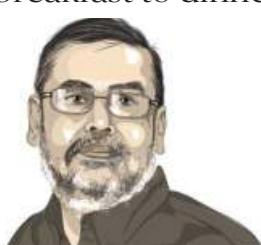
### FOOD SPOT

## Food on the plate, and on my mind



The Greek Salad from AMA's Kitchen ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

AMA's Kitchen works for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians and has a diverse menu that takes you from breakfast to dinner



RAHUL VERMA

It was our godchild's birthday, and she celebrated it by ordering in. Since it was a special day, she decided that she had to start with a gala breakfast. It came from a restaurant called AMA's Kitchen, known for its breakfast fare. She asked for a plate of fluffy pancakes. And the picture she sent us was so enticing that I put it on top my must-have list.

AMA's Kitchen, she said, had come to her mind because we had, just a few days before that, ordered our lunch from there. We had seen this little cafe in Majnu-ka-Tilla some years ago when we had gone to this north Delhi food hub for a Korean meal. We thought of going to AMA's for dessert and coffee, but it had shut for the day, so that was a dream that remained unfulfilled. AMA's, I realise, is a great favourite of the young, who now know more about food than their grizzled parents. And the pizza and salad that we ordered from there explains just why it is so popular.

The cafe is in New Camp Majnu-ka-Tilla, or New Aruna Nagar, as it is now known. The menu is a foodie's delight, but it is especially known for its breakfast fare, including the old Malaika breakfast (₹200) which consists

of a potato patty, scrambled eggs with cheese, coriander-mint chutney, multigrain bread, and tea or coffee. The American breakfast has eggs, pancakes, bacon, chicken sausages, maple syrup, whipped cream, tea or coffee (₹240). But we were looking forward to a pizza-laden meal. So we asked for the RGB pizza (₹245) with sundried tomatoes, spinach and olive and the Ultimate Meat Lovers Pizza (₹315), with chicken, bacon, and pepperoni. Since I believe in a balanced meal, I ordered a Greek salad (₹180) as well. I started with the salad, which was delightful. I had chopped green peppers, tomatoes, cucumber, lettuce leaves and crumbled feta cheese, in a light dressing of olive oil. The veggies were crunchy and fresh, and set the mood for the pizza meal. Surprisingly, the pizzas weren't too heavy, possibly because the base was thin and crisp.

I liked the meaty pizza, with its juicy pepperoni and chicken, but the vegetarian pizza was so delicious that I went back for seconds. The bits of crispy spinach, olive and sundried tomatoes gave it a sharp and tangy taste that I thoroughly enjoyed.

AMA's is known for its desserts (apple pie with vanilla ice cream, ₹180; mud pie and fudge brownie, both with vanilla ice cream, ₹160, and if you are lucky, you can get some baoffee pie).

I have decided that my next meal from there will consist of Thamel's bacon pineapple sandwich (₹265) and pancakes with maple syrup, whipped cream and fruit. The pancake is fluffy and light, soufflé-like, I hear, and the cream and maple syrup add to the enjoyment. Then I shall exchange notes with the goddauga.

Nothing quite like planning ahead.

The writer is a seasoned food critic.



Aastha Khanna ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

(Above) A still from *Bridgerton*, and (inset) Aastha Khanna ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# G7 to pledge 1 bn vaccine shots for world

U.S. President Biden commits 500 mn doses while British PM Johnson commits another 100 mn

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CARBIS BAY

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson greeted world leaders at the Group of Seven (G7) summit on Friday, offering elbow bumps to dignitaries gathered for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The virus was set to dominate their discussions, with leaders of the wealthy democracies' club are set to commit to sharing at least 1 billion vaccine shots with struggling countries.

A commitment from U.S. President Joe Biden to share 500 million doses and one from Mr. Johnson for another 100 million shots set the stage for the G7 meeting in southwest England, where leaders will pivot Friday from their "family photo" by the seaside directly into a session on "Building Back Better From COVID-19."

"We're going to help lead



**Talks begin:** G7 leaders meeting at the Carbis Bay Hotel in Cornwall, England, on Friday. ■ AP

the world out of this pandemic working alongside our global partners," Mr. Biden said. The G7 also includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

The leaders hope the meeting in the resort of Carbis Bay will also energise the global economy. Despite the moody skies, the group walked away their photo as cheerful as children who had

just built a sand castle. Led by Mr. Johnson, French President Emmanuel Macron threw his arm around Mr. Biden's shoulder. Talks were animated, but inaudible.

**Global minimum tax**  
On Friday, they are set to formally embrace a global minimum tax of at least 15% on multinational corporations, following an agreement

reached a week ago by their Finance Ministers. The minimum is meant to stop companies from using tax havens to shift profits and to avoid taxes.

It represents a potential win for the Biden administration, which has proposed a global minimum tax as a way to pay for infrastructure projects, in addition to creating an alternative that could remove some European countries' digital services taxes that largely hit U.S. tech firms. But the endorsement from the G7 is just one step in the process; the hope is to get many more countries to sign on — a fraught proposal in nations whose economies are based on attracting business with low corporate taxes.

For Mr. Johnson, the first G7 summit in two years — last year's was scuttled by the pandemic — is a chance to set out his vision of a post-

Brexit "Global Britain" as a midsize country with an outsized role in international problem-solving.

It's also an opportunity to underscore the U.K.-U.S. bond, an alliance often called the "special relationship" — but that Mr. Johnson said he prefers to call the "indestructible relationship."

Climate change is also a top issue on the agenda, and hundreds of protesters gathered in Cornwall to urge the leaders to take action.

Demonstrators deployed a barge off the coast with two large inflatable figures depicting Mr. Biden and Mr. Johnson on board. At another protest, demonstrators carried flags that read "G7 drowning in promises" and "Action not words."

The official summit business kicked off on Friday, with the customary formal greeting and a socially distanced group photo.

# Myanmar violence escalating, creating rights catastrophe: UN

At least 860 civilians killed, says rights office, citing reports

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

The UN rights chief said on Friday that violence was escalating across Myanmar, warning that the country had plunged into a "human rights catastrophe" since the February 1 coup.



Michelle Bachelet

ly in townships that have seen a high death toll at the hands of police -- and some locals have formed "defence forces".

Ms. Bachelet pointed to intensifying violence in many parts of Myanmar, including Kayah State, Chin State and Kachin State.

**Human shields**

"State security forces have continued to use heavy weaponry, including air strikes, against armed groups and against civilians and civilian objects, including Christian churches," she said.

She pointed to "credible reports" that security forces have used civilians as human shields, shelled civilian homes and churches, and blocked humanitarian access, including by attacking aid workers.

# Johnson hails U.K.'s 'indestructible' ties with U.S.

He plays down Biden's concerns over British attempt to reverse the 'Northern Ireland Protocol'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the U.K.-U.S. relationship as "indestructible" after his first meeting with President Joe Biden ahead of the G7 leaders' summit on Friday.

"It's a relationship, you can call it the 'deep and meaningful relationship', whatever you want, the 'inde-

structible relationship,'" Mr. Johnson said.

Mr. Johnson played down the displeasure of Mr. Biden, who is proud of his Irish origins, over London's attempts to reverse the "Northern Ireland Protocol", which seeks to avoid the return of a border with EU member Ireland but which has disrupted trade between Britain and Northern Ireland.

tion in Northern Ireland, he said.

Mr. Johnson played down the displeasure of Mr. Biden, who is proud of his Irish origins, over London's attempts to reverse the "Northern Ireland Protocol", which seeks to avoid the return of a border with EU member Ireland but which has disrupted trade between Britain and Northern Ireland.

In his meeting with Mr. Biden, Mr. Johnson said he also raised the case of British teenager Harry Dunn, who was killed in a road accident caused by the wife of an

American diplomat. She fled the country, claiming diplomatic immunity.

Mr. Biden was "actively engaged in the case", Mr. Johnson said.

"As you know, he has his own personal reasons for feeling very deeply about the issue," he said, referring to Mr. Biden losing his first wife and one-year-old daughter in a car accident in 1972.

## UAE working on Guptas' extradition

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PRETORIA

South Africa said on Friday it was on the cusp of finalising an extradition treaty with the UAE, where three brothers accused of graft under former President Jacob Zuma are suspected to be living.

Justice Minister Ronald Lamola told an online news briefing that ratification of the deal will be finalised on July 10 and take effect a month after.

The Indian-born trio — Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta — were at the centre of a corruption scandal that stained Mr. Zuma's nine-year tenure.

They won lucrative contracts with state companies and were allegedly even allowed to choose Cabinet Ministers. They fled South Africa shortly thereafter.

Following a request from

## China-Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital opened

Built with a Chinese grant of \$60 mn, it specialises in kidney ailments

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Friday inaugurated the China-Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital in Polonnaruwa, built with a Chinese grant of \$60 million.

The hospital, located in Sri Lanka's North Central Province, will specialise in treating kidney ailments, a widely prevalent and recurring concern in the region, especially among farmers.

For years now, residents of this agriculture-intensive area have been frequently diagnosed with a kidney disorder that the country's medical experts have identified as Chronic Kidney Disease of Unknown Etiology (CKDu), a condition for which causal factors remain unknown.

The hospital, said to be one of the largest in South Asia for nephrology care, with a capacity of 200 beds, follows China's earlier grant



**Health diplomacy:** The China-Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital in Polonnaruwa. ■ CHINESE EMBASSY/TWITTER

projects in Sri Lanka, also built as large public spaces, such as the well-known Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo, that Beijing gifted in the 1970s, and the Nelum Pokuna Mahinda Rajapaksa Thirathra, that China funded during former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's time in office.

In addition to sanctioning loans and a currency swap facility worth more than \$2 billion since the pandemic struck last year, China also announced \$90 million grant to Sri Lanka in October last year, following a request from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, when a high-powered Chinese delegation visited the island nation.

Meanwhile, the Jaffna Cultural Centre, built with Indian assistance of \$11.5 million, whose construction was completed a year ago, awaits inauguration as authorities "iron out" issues over the administrative set up to the run the Centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking in February at an election rally in Chennai, ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, said he hoped to open the Centre in Jaffna "soon". India's grant assistance to Sri Lanka totals about \$570 million.

## Netanyahu lashes out at opponents

He accuses them of betraying voters



Benjamin Netanyahu

from taking office on Sunday. With his options running out, it has also provided a preview of Mr. Netanyahu as opposition leader.

We are witnesses to the greatest election fraud in the history of the country," he claimed at a Likud meeting this week. He has long dismissed the corruption trial as a "witch hunt" fuelled by "fake news".

They won lucrative contracts with state companies and were allegedly even allowed to choose Cabinet Ministers. They fled South Africa shortly thereafter.

Following a request from

former President Maithripala Sirisena during his time in

office — he is from and currently represents Polonnaruwa in Parliament — the Chinese government provided the grant. The facility was built within 30 months, a press release from the President's office said.

The hospital, said to be one of the largest in South Asia for nephrology care, with a capacity of 200 beds, follows China's earlier grant

projects in Sri Lanka, also built as large public spaces, such as the well-known Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo, that Beijing gifted in the 1970s, and the Nelum Pokuna Mahinda Rajapaksa Thirathra, that China funded during former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's time in office.

In addition to sanctioning

## No vaccine, no phone service in Pakistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LAHORE

A Pakistan province said on Friday it will block the mobile phones of people refusing to get COVID-19 jabs, in the latest move to penalise the unvaccinated in a country where only a fraction of the population have been inoculated.

It comes after Sindh province said civil servants who refuse to be vaccinated will not be paid from July.

A third wave of infections has begun to stabilise in Pakistan after weeks of tough restrictions, and in Punjab — the country's most populous province which includes the megacity of Lahore — demand for jabs has slowed.

"At first this was only a proposal, but people have been very hesitant in getting vaccinated so the decision was made," said Hamid Raza, spokesman for the Punjab Primary Health department. He said the state telecoms agency will decide how to implement the measure.



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212213001258 Procurement of Hydrogen Peroxide 50% 02.07.2021 Tender cum Auction

212213001259 Procurement of Sodium Hydrosulphite 26.06.2021 Tender cum Auction

Detailed terms and conditions, Specifications, Quantity, Tender fee, EMD etc., are available in the tender Document at websites : [www.tnpl.com](http://www.tnpl.com) / [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in).

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Online Bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) are invited from eligible bidders for supply, installation & commissioning of ECMO Machine as per the particulars mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Bid Reference No.	Item Name	Bid Document Cost inclusive of GST (Rs.)
1.	OSMCL/2021-22/EQP-ECMO/04	"Supply, Installation & Commissioning of ECMO machine at CTVS Department of SCBMCH-Cuttack"	5,600/-

Particulars Date and time

1. Date & time of release of bid 10.06.2021, 6 PM

2. Date & time of Pre-bid meeting 16.06.2021, 3 AM

Venue : Conference Hall, Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd., In front of Ram Mandir, Convent Square, Unit-III, Bhubaneswar

3. Date & time of Online bid submission Start Date & Time End Date & Time

17.06.2021, 11 AM 01.07.2021, 5 PM

4. Date & time of online Technical Bid Opening 02.07.2021, 11 AM

To be informed to the technically qualified bidders

The bid document with all information

## MARKET WATCH

	11-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,475	0.33
US Dollar	73.07	0.00
Gold	48,530	0.84
Brent oil	72.73	-0.47

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	839.75	-7.00
Asian Paints	2956.25	5.65
Axis Bank	738.45	-5.80
Bajaj Auto	4172.50	-7.40
Bajaj Finserv	11907.50	-85.60
Bajaj Finance	6120.00	33.60
Bharti Airtel	540.85	-4.30
BPCL	483.60	0.05
Britannia Ind	3557.90	-18.40
Cipla	967.85	-6.35
Coal India	162.65	6.15
Divis Lab	4334.50	-38.05
D Dr Reddy's Lab	5453.00	160.95
Eicher Motors	2746.40	41.35
Grasim Ind	1490.60	-1.90
HCL Tech	983.35	14.80
HDFC	2559.80	-2.10
HDFC Bank	1486.35	5.30
HDFC Life	682.60	-6.65
Hero MotoCorp	3004.35	-4.65
Hindalco	393.15	7.75
Hind Unilever	2366.50	-12.30
ICICI Bank	635.70	-4.70
IndusInd Bank	1015.10	-9.25
Infosys	1446.90	22.60
Indian Oil Corp	115.10	-0.85
ITC	207.90	-1.40
JSW Steel	731.20	25.40
Kotak Bank	1794.35	-5.20
L&T	1503.45	-16.25
M&M	809.00	2.05
Maruti Suzuki	7223.80	23.90
Nestle India Ltd.	17536.40	-19.70
NTPC	118.80	0.30
ONGC	123.55	-0.40
PowerGrid Corp	246.30	4.65
Reliance Ind	2213.15	30.15
SBI Life	988.10	-9.45
State Bank	429.60	-2.65
Shree Cement	28056.00	-169.80
Sun Pharma	681.30	5.25
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	715.40	7.70
Tata Motors	350.75	6.00
Tata Steel	1158.35	43.90
TCS	3273.80	57.00
Tech Mahindra	1073.00	8.10
Titan	1728.45	-10.20
UltraTech Cement	6662.85	-46.80
UPL	835.15	-3.55
Wipro	554.30	0.05

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.87	73.19
Euro	88.44	88.83
British Pound	103.15	103.60
Japanese Yen (100)	66.53	66.82
Chinese Yuan	11.40	11.45
Swiss Franc	81.24	81.61
Singapore Dollar	55.03	55.28
Canadian Dollar	60.18	60.45
Malaysian Ringgit	17.73	17.81

Source: Indian Bank

## Review GST sop's timing, urges industry

GST Council set to decide on rate cuts for crucial COVID-19 related vaccines, medicines, equipment

## VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

While the GST Council meets on Saturday to discuss tax cuts on critical COVID-19 related material including vaccines, medicines and equipment, industry donors are urging a rethink on the timing for the applicability of the Integrated GST (IGST) exemption announced on imported relief supplies after the council's last meeting.

At its May 28 meeting, the Council had decided to extend the IGST exemption granted on relief material received from abroad as donations to State-approved entities, effective since May 3, to those wanting to make such donations after purchasing the material overseas.

The May 31 notification on the grant of this waiver was,



For parity: Industry wants retrospective applicability of IGST waiver on material imported to donate. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

however, prospective and tax experts said a judicial intervention may be required to make it applicable on imports made earlier amid the surging second wave.

Several firms including MNCs had imported oxygen

equipment and other supplies urgently for donations to State governments, domestic charities and hospitals.

The date of applicability for the reduced rate will remain a subject matter of debate and judicial interven-

tion may be required," said Abhishek A Rastogi, partner at Khaitan & Co.

The Delhi High Court has taken up a petition challenging the Centre's exclusion of such imports from the 'ad hoc' GST exemption for COVID-19 relief material received from abroad.

Gujarat and Haryana had introduced schemes to reimburse the IGST paid by domestic entities importing material for free donation in their jurisdictions.

"Industry hopes for a clarification on spends on COVID material clarifying eligibility of GST input credit, where the material has been used for donations or CSR purposes or used for their employees," he added.

Mr. Jaising also called for a more dynamic approach to tax exemptions on COVID relief material as the requirements may keep changing.

The list of "relief material may therefore be updated real-time or kept open ended, to ensure better preparation during these challenging times," he suggested.

## Hasten vehicle scrapping, says FM Sitharaman

Departments told to front-load capex

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has called for expediting the implementation of the vehicle scrappage policy and improving data as well as road connectivity in hilly regions and aspirational districts of the country.

At a review meeting with the Departments of Telecom and Atomic Energy and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Ms. Sitharaman said that enhanced capital expenditure would play a critical role in revitalising the economy post-pandemic and encouraged them to front-load such spending.



Nirmala Sitharaman

While the Budget had a capital outlay of ₹5.54 lakh crore, the Minister said PSUs need to complement the capex efforts and ministries must tap innovative funding methods for new projects. Ms. Sitharaman also sought early clearance of pending dues to MSMEs.

## Finance Ministry tightens belt

Tells Ministries to cut 'controllable' expenditure by 20%

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has told ministries to slash 'controllable' spending by 20% and drop other wasteful expenditure, introducing fresh austerity steps amid concerns with breaching the fiscal deficit target for the year following the second COVID-19 wave.

Expenditure related to containment of COVID-19 is excluded from the scope of this order. A suggestive list of object heads of controllable expenditure has been shared, that includes advertising and publicity, foreign and domestic travel, office and administrative expenses and overtime allowance.

"The government has decided that all ministries take

steps to curb wasteful expenditure and aim for a 20% reduction in controllable expenditure," the Department of Expenditure wrote in a memo, approved by Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan, to all ministries.

## Base year

Urging departments to take steps to curtail all avoidable non-scheme expenditure, the memo has told them to take the expenditure incurred in 2019-20 as the base for this purpose.

The Expenditure Department has been directed to

review the progress in the matter. The other items where spending may be controlled are general grants-in-aid, royalty payments, publications, rents and taxes, ration costs, clothing and tentage, minor works and maintenance.

Separately, ministries have also been told to expedite appraisals and clearances for schemes in their domains that need to be extended beyond March this year. Ministries that are yet to seek the requisite expenditure clearances have been given till July to do so, in order to secure funds.

"No further extension to ongoing schemes and release of funds will be allowed," said the Expenditure Department.

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## IIP edged up 0.08% in April from same month in 2019

Output contracted from March's level

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's April industrial output edged up 0.08%, from the level recorded during the same month in 2019, index of industrial production (IIP) data released by the National Statistical Office on Friday showed.



be reasonable numbers forthcoming.

## PMI, e-way bills

"It would be better to track PMI, e-way bills and GST collections to get a fair assessment of activity in the industrial sectors," Mr. Sabnavis suggested.

Electricity output was 6.81% higher than the pre-COVID-19 levels of April 2019. Similarly, mining output was 0.2% higher than the same month in 2019.

Economists said the IIP data needed to be seen in perspective, given the impact of the second wave.

I CRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said that capital goods and consumer durables output trailed the April 2019 levels by 14.3% and 11.6%, respectively, which suggests that the widening State-wise restrictions that were imposed during the month impacted production amid a weakening outlook for investment activity and consumption.

Manufacturing moderated by 12.6% in April from the previous month, narrower than the slippage of 17.5% in the GST e-way bills generated over the same time period," Ms. Nayar said. "This suggests that inventories may have built up, with dispatches being limited by the second COVID surge that was underway in April," she pointed out.

"Last year, output had come to a standstill in most sectors," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings. "Therefore, the growth numbers for April... need to be ignored. A similar situation would arise in May too and it would be only from June that there could

come to a standstill in most sectors," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings. "Therefore, the growth numbers for April... need to be ignored. A similar situation would arise in May too and it would be only from June that there could

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# Tsitsipas ticks another box, in maiden final

Beats Zverev in a bruising five-setter to become the first Greek player to reach a Grand Slam summit clash

## ROLAND-GARROS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Stefanos Tsitsipas became the first Greek player to reach a Grand Slam final on Friday when he defeated Germany's Alexander Zverev in a bruising five-setter at Roland-Garros.

Tsitsipas got an early break in the opening set, aided by two double faults from Zverev, and remained solid against the German's heavy groundstrokes to hold onto his narrow advantage on a sun-bathed Philippe Chatrier court.

U.S. Open finalist Zverev built a 3-0 lead at the start of the second set but Tsitsipas showed exemplary athleticism and staunch defence to win the next six games, leaving Zverev staring at his coaching team bewildered.

The sixth-seeded German, however, regrouped and added more power to his shots with early breaks in the third and fourth sets enough for him to level the match at two sets apiece. Tsitsipas needed to change his game in the de-



**Pushing through:** Tsitsipas managed to find an extra gear in the final set to seal the contest on his fifth match point. • AFP

cider and the 22-year-old managed to find an extra gear to seal the contest on his fifth match point and booked a final outing.

Barbara Krejcikova will play Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in women's final after the Czech World No. 33 saved a match point to defeat Greek 17th seed Maria Sakkai-

ri 7-5, 4-6, 9-7 on Thursday. Krejcikova, 25, is the fourth unseeded women's finalist in five years at Roland Garros. She won the doubles title here in 2018 but her best previous result in singles was a run to the fourth round last year. It will be the sixth successive French Open to crown a first-time women's

major champion.

"I always wanted to play a match like this, when I was younger, playing juniors, I always wanted to play such a challenging match where we both had chances and were playing so well," said Krejcikova.

*Women's final at 6.30 p.m. IST.*

■ Maiden Grand Slam singles final for Tsitsipas. He had lost all three of his previous semifinals (Aus Open 2019 & 2021, French Open 2020)

■ Tsitsipas' fifth win in nine five-set matches in his career

■ Tsitsipas' fourth win over a top-10 player at a Major in nine attempts. Three of those have come this year (Nadal at Aus Open, Medvedev and Zverev at French Open)

■ Only Zverev's second loss in his last 10 five-setters. Previous: to Thiem in the 2020 US Open final

■ Zverev has now lost all 10 of his matches against top-10 players at the Grand Slam level

## SEMIFINAL RESULTS

**Men:** 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt 6-Alexander Zverev (Ger) 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3.

**On Thursday: Women:** Barbara Krejcikova (Cze) bt 17-Maria Sakkari (Gre) 7-5, 4-6, 9-7.

■ Nadal was leading 5-3 in the first set at the time of going to the press

Pavlyuchenkova and Krejcikova will be eager to get it right in their maiden Slam final

■ Krejcikova will bid to become the first Czech women's singles champion at Roland-Garros since Hana Mandlikova in 1981

■ Krejcikova is also into the doubles final (with Siniakova). She can become the first woman to win both the singles and doubles titles in Paris since Mary Pierce (2000). The last one to come the closest was Czech compatriot Safarova in 2015. She won the doubles but lost the singles final to Serena

■ This is just the fifth Grand Slam main draw appearance for the 25-year-old (none at Wimbledon and US Open). Since 2000, only Andreeva has made it to a Slam final in fewer main draw appearances

■ Krejcikova is on a 11-match winning streak and has won 13 of her last 14 matches on clay. In Paris, she has beaten four seeded players and a former French Open finalist en route to the final

■ Pavlyuchenkova is looking to become the fourth Russian woman to lift the Coupe Suzanne Lenglen after Myskina (2004), Kuznetsova (2009) and Sharapova (2012 & 2014)

■ I think about it all the time...since I was a junior, since I was a little kid, since I started playing tennis. It's been there in my head forever  
**PAVLYUCHENKOVA** on winning a Major

■ The 29-year-old has 12 senior career titles to Krejcikova's one, and the last of those 12 came back in 2018 at Strasbourg on clay. Krejcikova's lone title also came at Strasbourg, last month

■ Pavlyuchenkova, No. 32, holds the record for most wins against top-10 players (37, including the victory over Sabalenka in the third round) among players yet to reach the top-10 themselves

■ A prodigy, Pavlyuchenkova was a former junior No.1 and a winner of three Grand Slam girls' titles. She was handed a Wimbledon main draw wild card as a 15-year-old back in 2007

■ It's going to be a lot of fun. I am just going to enjoy it. Because I was never expecting to be this far in the tournament. Enjoy and fight till the end  
**KREJCICOVA** looking ahead to the final

# Five newcomers who made it

Padikkal, Gowtham, Sakariya, Ruturaj and Rana get a chance

## CRICKET

ASHWIN ACHAL  
BENGALURU

With the big guns busy in England, there was room for fresh faces to be included in the Indian team for the limited-over tour of Sri Lanka.

The selectors thus handed maiden India call-ups to five players – Devdutt Padikkal, K. Gowtham, Chetan Sakariya, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Nitish Rana.

Stylish opening batsman Padikkal has enjoyed a fast rise to the top. In the lead up to the IPL earlier this year, Padikkal smashed four consecutive centuries in the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy for Karnataka. The 20-year-old carried this fine form to the IPL, scoring the fastest century for an uncapped player with an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls against Rajasthan Royals.

Padikkal's State teammate Gowtham has built a reputation for being a match-winner. His accurate, flat off-spin and big hitting prowess

have time and again rescued Karnataka in the domestic circuit. The 32-year-old struck gold in the 2021 IPL auction, when he was signed for a record sum of ₹9.25 crore by Chennai Super Kings (CSK). Gowtham, however, could not find a spot in the CSK playing eleven in the curtailed IPL season.

### Overcome tragedies

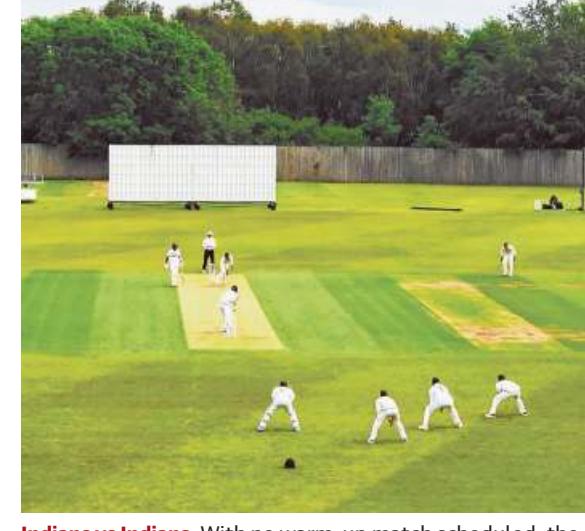
Left-arm pacer Sakariya has overcome tremendous personal tragedies in the past year to make a mark. A month before bagging a ₹1.2 crore IPL contract with Rajasthan Royals, his brother passed away. Sakariya then lost his father to COVID-19 complications. On the field, the 23-year old Saurashtra fast bowler picked up seven wickets in seven IPL games, including two three-wicket hauls. That Sakariya was chosen ahead of his Saurashtra senior Jaydev Unadkat – a left-arm speedster with a stellar record – has raised some eyebrows.

Ruturaj has witnessed a

steady rise through the ranks, under the guidance of former India captain Rahul Dravid in the India-A structure. In the IPL this year, he opened the batting for CSK, making two fifties (75 vs Sunrisers Hyderabad and 64 vs Kolkata Knight Riders). The compact Maharashtra batsman was the lone bright in a disappointing IPL 2020 for CSK, recording three fifties to finish with a tournament average of 51. His talent was obvious to CSK teammate and South African captain Faf du Plessis, who stated that Ruturaj reminded him of a young Virat Kohli.

Southpaw batsman Nitish Rana faced a stumbling block even before the IPL began, having tested positive for COVID-19. In his first match after recovering from the virus, Rana claimed the man-of-the-match with a 56-ball 80 against Sunrisers Hyderabad. A thinking player, Rana is adept at both keeping the scorers busy with singles and going for the big blows.

## Simulation time



**Indians vs Indians:** With no warm-up match scheduled, the players were engaged in an intra-squad match in Southampton on Friday. • TWITTER/BCCI

## Shakib throws an on-field tantrum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DHAKA

Star Bangladesh cricketer Shakib Al Hasan had a shocking on-field meltdown during a domestic T20 match here on Friday, kicking stumps and arguing with umpires in a display of appalling behaviour for which he later apologised calling it "human error".

Shakib's anger got the better of him during his

team Mohammedan Sporting's game against Abahani Limited. The Dhaka Premier League encounter was eventually won by Sporting via the Duckworth-Lewis method.

Shakib's apology notwithstanding, kicking the stumps is as good as a Level 3 offence and could lead to a one-match suspension for the former Bangladesh skipper.

# Having context for Test cricket is amazing, says Ashwin

S. DIPAK RAGAV

A head of the World Test Championship final, R. Ashwin spoke to *The Hindu* about his 10-year Test journey, his evolution as a spinner and the title clash against New Zealand. Excerpts:

It has been 10 years since your Test debut. You are India's fourth-highest wicket-taker (409) and not far off Harbhajan Singh's (417) and Kapil Dev's (434) tally. What has the journey been like?

I find myself in one of the happiest phases of my life. I am enjoying my cricket. I am not looking too far ahead. I wouldn't do it for a simple reason because if you want to enjoy the moment, you have to stay in the present and embrace it. The first and foremost goal is the WTC. To look beyond the next Test or tour is something I have gone past. But to be putting myself on a list as elite as this is a matter of pride. I never expected to get this far in my life.

What is your assessment of the WTC as a concept?

The idea of having some context to the whole Test arena is amazing. It was long pending and I'm so pleased the ICC have done it. There are areas that will be addressed. But considering the pandemic, they have done a phenomenal job. To keep



**Need of the hour:** Ashwin feels that it is important that the classical format stays healthy. • FILE PHOTO

Test cricket healthy going forward is healthy for the world cricketing arena. It will help other forms of the game as well.

Your thoughts on the final against New Zealand?

We have played good cricket to get to the WTC final and we are deservedly there. They are a fantastic team and have a lot of exciting cricketers coming through.

The fact that they would have played a couple of Test matches before the final will be good preparation for them. So we have to adapt, use our experience and be ready for it.

From being seen as a spinner with variations early in your career, in recent times it feels like you have succeeded with more subtle variations. Can you elaborate on your evolution?

I feel the way the game is explained is very basic. For a lot of cricketers, perception precedes them. When I came to play Test cricket, I was seen as someone who had a lot of variations.

But in my entire career, I would have bowled only 2-3% carrom balls. In 2012 against England, I picked 14 wickets but people dissected that I was trying too much and needed to go back to basics.

What was happening was, I was missing my length. It is a basic mistake and a crucial aspect of a spinner. In my career, I have had to leave some aspects behind to acquire something and take my game higher.

Things like a change of angle, seam position like cross-seam, is something I have started to do a lot more now, which I agree. But I have a lot of subtle variations and I have been doing these things for a long time. It is just that it is being noticed now.

# Conway and Young help Kiwis make strong reply

Lawrence, Wood take England to 303

## NZ IN ENGLAND

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BIRMINGHAM

Dan Lawrence and Mark Wood took England to 303 in its first innings before New Zealand reached 229 for three at close on the second day of the second Test at Edgbaston on Friday.

Lawrence was unbeaten on 81 while Wood (41) entertained a lively home crowd

## SCOREBOARD

**England – 1st innings:** Rory Burns c Latham b Boulton 81, Dom Sibley c Blundell b Henry 35, Zak Crawley c Mitchell b Wagner 0, Joe Root c Blundell b Henry 4, Ollie Pope c Blundell b Ajaz 19, Dan Lawrence (not out) 81, James Bracey c Mitchell b Boulton 0, Olly Stone lbw b Ajaz 20, Mark Wood b Henry 41, Stuart Broad c Blundell b Boulton 0, James Anderson lbw b Boulton 4; Extras (b-5, lb-10, nb-2, w-1); Total (in 101 overs): 303.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-15, 2-137, 3-229.

**England bowling:** Anderson 18-5-85-4, Henry 26-7-78-3, Wagner 21-6-68-1, Mitchell 11-2-30-0, Ajaz 14-4-34-2.

**New Zealand – 1st innings:** Tom Latham lbw b Broad 6, Devon Conway c Crawley b Broad 80, Will Young c Pope b Lawrence 82, Ross Taylor (batting) 46; Extras (b-4, lb-10, nb-1); Total (for three wkts in 76.3 overs): 229.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-15, 2-137, 3-229.

**England bowling:** Anderson 18-5-45-0, Broad 15-6-22-2, Wood 14-0-43-0, Stone 15-4-58-0, Root 13-3-39-0, Lawrence 1.3-0-8-1.

## Ngidi's five-for adds to West Indies' woes

South Africa calls the shots in first Test

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE GROS-ISLETT

Lungi Ngidi mowed through the lower half of the West Indies batting order on the way to a five-wicket haul as South Africa routed the home side for 97 on the opening day of the first Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground here on Thursday.

## SCOREBOARD

**West Indies – 1st innings:** Kraigg Brathwaite c Nortje 15, Shai Hope b Nortje 15, Nkrumah Bonner c de Kock b Rabada 10, Roston Chase c Markram b Ngidi 8, Kyle Mayers c van der Dussen b Nortje 1, Jermaine Blackwood c Petersen b Nortje 1, Jason Holder c Markram b Ngidi 20, Joshua da Silva c Mulder b Ngidi 0, Rahkeem Cornwall c Markram b Ngidi 13, Kemar Roach c de Kock b Ngidi 1, Jayden Seales (not out) 0; Extras (lb-4, nb-3, w-6); Total (in 40.5 overs): 97.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-0, 2-34, 3-113, 4-119, 5-162.

**West Indies bowling:** Roach 13-5-31-3, Holder 13-4-38-1, Seales 18-6-50-3, Myers 6-2-13-0, Cornwall 10-1-32-0, Chase 9-14-0.

**South Africa bowling:** Rabada 10-2-24-1, Ngidi 13.5-7-19-5.

## Will Belgium live up to its top ranking?

Russia will be keen to capitalise on home advantage and upset the World No. 1

## EURO 2020

ASSOCIATED PRESS ST. PETERSBURG

What's being billed by some as the last hurrah for Belgium's "golden generation" begins with two of the team's long-time stalwarts likely missing from its opening match of the European Championship.

It returns to the same venue three years later as the world's top-ranked team – it has been in that position since October 2018 – but with doubts about the availability of its two star attacking midfielders.

The experience of more than 1,300 international appearances in the squad should also stand Belgium in good stead when it comes to pressure situations in a ma-



**Final barrier:** Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois will look to pounce on anything that comes his way. • AP

team at the tournament after testing positive for the virus.

Dylan Levitt and his teammates, a group that includes Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey, will open their Euro 2020 campaign on Saturday against Switzerland in faraway Azerbaijan.

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## TV PICKS

**England vs New Zealand:**  
2nd Test: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.  
**Roland-Garros:** Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.  
**Euro 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

## IN BRIEF

**Bucks cling on, claw back into series against Nets**

LOS ANGELES

Milwaukee Bucks started strong and clung on late to beat Brooklyn Nets 86-83 on Thursday and claw its way back into the NBA Eastern Conference second-round playoff series. Khris Middleton scored 35 points and two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 as the Bucks – routed in two games in Brooklyn – trimmed the deficit in the best-of-seven series to 2-1.

**The results (semifinals): EC:** Milwaukee Bucks 86 bt Brooklyn Nets 83 (Nets lead the series 2-1).

**WC:** Utah Jazz 117 bt Los Angeles Clippers 111 (Jazz lead the series 2-0).

**Messi, Aguero, Di Maria headline Argentina squad**

BUENOS AIRES  
Lionel Messi, Sergio Aguero and Angel Di Maria are headlining the Argentina squad that will head to Brazil for the Copa America, seeking their national team's first major title since 1993.

**The squad: Goalkeepers:** Franco Armani, Emiliano Martinez, Agustin Marchesin and Juan Musso; **Defenders:** Gonzalo Montiel, Nicolas Otamendi, German Pezzella, Lucas Martinez Quarta, Nicolas Tagliafico, Lisandro Martinez, Marcos Acuna, Cristian Romero, Nahuel Molina Lucero; **Midfielders:** Leandro Paredes, Angel Di Maria, Guido Rodriguez, Giovani Lo Celso, Ezequiel Palacios, Nicolas Gonzalez, Rodrigo de Paul, Alejandro Gomez, Angel Correa, Nicolas Dominguez; **Forwards:** Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martinez, Joaquin Correa, Lucas Alario and Sergio Aguero. AP

# Indian squad gets vaccinated in Zagreb

Many of them take their second doses

## SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

The Indian shooting squad, training in Zagreb, Croatia, had a vaccination drive, to complete the second dose for 18 members including support staff, and the first dose for a few.

Deepak Kumar, Rahi Sarnobat and Saurabh Chaudhary had their first dose on Wednesday as they had to be given sufficient time on recovering from COVID-19. Their second dose is scheduled for July 9.

Vaccination was completed on Abhishek Verma, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Anjum Moudgil, Apurvi Chandela, Divyansh Singh



Deepak Kumar.

Panwar, Elavenil Valarivan, Manu Bhaker, Sanjeev Rajput, Tejaswini Sawant, and Yashaswini Deswal.

The skeet shooters training in Italy will have their vaccination done in Rome. Angad Vir Singh Bajwa had taken his first shot on April 1.

before he left for Europe, while Mairaj Ahmad Khan is yet to have his first dose.

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) and the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) are in touch with the Indian Embassy in Rome to get the vaccination administered for Angad and Mairaj.

The NRAI put on record its gratitude to both the Indian Embassy in Zagreb and the Ministry of Health of Croatia ‘for prompt and proactive assistance.’

The Indian team is set to compete in the World Cup in rifle, pistol and shotgun at Osijek, Croatia, from June 20. It had earlier taken part in the European championship at the same venue.

# Vinesh Phogat reaches 53kg final

## WRESTLING

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Vinesh Phogat. ■ FILE PHOTO

son, having won titles in Matteo Pellicone (March) and Asian Championship (April).

It was a tough start for Vinesh as she was up against fellow 2019 World bronze winner Ekaterina Poleshchuk in her opening bout before prevailing 6-2. Vinesh needed only 75 seconds to pin her American rival Amy Ann Fearnside in the next round.

**Chance for another gold**

The 26-year-old Vinesh can now win her third gold in as many tournaments this sea-

# SAI sacks Greco-Roman coach Kazarashvili

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With no Greco-Roman wrestler having made the cut for the Tokyo Olympics, the Sports Authority of India has relieved Georgian coach Temo Kazarashvili of his services with immediate effect.

Kazarashvili was appointed in February 2019 after months of deliberation with his contract originally till the end of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The postponement of the Games meant it was extended, like most foreign coaches, by a year.

The decision to terminate his services was taken following a recommendation from the Wrestling Federation of India, SAI said in a statement.

# Mrudul takes lead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Second seed Mrudul Dehankar upstaged top seed Savitha Shri in the sixth round and went on to lead with 6.5 points after seven rounds of National girls (under-18) rapid online chess championship on Friday.

In the open section, seven players shared the lead at six points.

**The standings (after seven rounds):**

**Open:** 1-7. V. Pranav, Sankalp Gupta, Vedant Panesar, Aronyay Ghosh, Koustav Chatterjee, M. Pranesh and Raja Rithvik (6 points each).

**Girls:** 1. Mrudul Dehankar (6.5 points), 2-4. Siri Chandana, V. Rindhiya, Bristy Mukherjee (6 each), 5-9. Riya Mishra, Savitha Shri, Dhanya Patel, G. Kheethi and S. Vijayashubhasri (5.5 points).

# Gukesh gets wild card for World Cup

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

D. Gukesh, the second youngest Grandmaster in chess history, has gained a wild card for the World Cup beginning in Sochi, Russia, on July 12.

Gukesh, 15, is the first among the four nominees of the FIDE president for the event.

Gukesh is worthy of be-

ing one of the wild cards following his splendid display to tie with fellow-teen Grandmaster P. Iniyan for the top spot in the Indian World Cup qualifier. Iniyan's victory over Gukesh proved the tie-breaker for the title.

“We, at the All India Chess Federation, are very happy that the FIDE president has accepted our re-

quest for a wild card,” said AICF secretary Bharat Singh Chauhan on Friday.

P. Harikrishna, Vidit Gujrathi, B. Adhiban, Aravindh Chithambaram, Iniyan and Gukesh will form the Indian challenge in the open section.

In the women's section, D. Harika, Padmini Rout, Bhakti Kulkarni and R. Vaishali will take part.

# Pragg, Nihal and Gukesh share fifth spot

RAKESH RAO  
NEW DELHI

Leon Mendonca was at 2.5 points.

**The results (involving Indians):**

**Fifth round:** Leon Mendonca drew with Nihal Sarin; R. Pragnanandhaa bt Carissa Yip (USA); Christopher Woojin Yoo (USA) bt D. Gukesh.

**Fourth round:** Gukesh drew with Dinara Sudakassova (Kaz); Nodirbek Abdusattarov (Uzb) bt Pragnanandhaa; Carissa Yip (USA) lost to Mendonca; Sarin bt Zhu Jiner Chin;

**Third round:** Nihal bt Vincent Keymer (Ger); Mendonca lost to Abdusattarov; Pragnanandhaa bt Volodar Murzin (Rus); Gunay Mammadzada (Aze) drew with Gukesh.

**Leading standings (including Indians, after five rounds):** 1. Awonder Liang (USA, 5 points), 2. Nodirbek Abdusattarov (Uzb, 4); 3-4. Gunay Mammadzada (Aze), Vincent Keymer (Ger) (3.5 each); 5-10. R. Pragnanandhaa, Nihal Sarin, D. Gukesh (3 each); 11. Leon Mendonca (2.5).

# Ankita & Wachaczyk in semifinals

**SPORTS BUREAU**  
NOTTINGHAM

Ankita Raina and Julia Wachaczyk of Germany got a walkover in the doubles quarterfinals from fourth seeds Kaitlyn Christian and Nao Hibino, in the Viking Open here.

In the men's Challenger in Nottingham, Ramkumar Ramanathan and Antoine Hoang of France lost 7-5, 6-3 to third seeds Matt Reid and Ken Skupski in the doubles semifinals.

**Other result:** \$88,520 Challenger, Lyon, France: Quarterfinals: Martin Cuevas & Pablo Cuevas (Uruguay) bt Francisco Cerundolo (Arg) & Sumit Nagal 6-3, 6-2.

# Olympian Surat Singh passes away

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

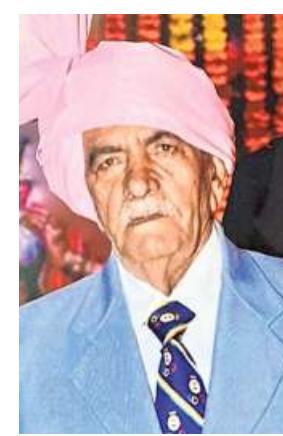
Olympian Surat Singh Mathur, the first from independent India to complete a marathon at the Olympics, passed away in Delhi on Friday.

He was 90.

Running with the legendary Emil Zatopek in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Mathur completed the marathon in the 52nd place in 2:58.92s.

## Bronze medallist

A bronze medallist at the first Asian Games in 1951, Mathur, who was born in Mohammadpur Majri vil-



Surat Singh Mathur.  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lage (Karala) in Delhi, was a two-time National champion.

**MARUTI SUZUKI**

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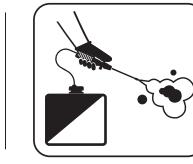
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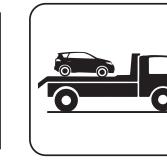
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