



Former Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Virbhadra Singh dies

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Farmers' protest against fuel price hikes evokes lukewarm response

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Pliskova shocks Sabalenka, takes on Party in the final

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NEARBY



Experts warn as govt. reduces number of beds

NEW DELHI
Health professionals have suggested that COVID Care Centres being run by the Delhi government should remain functional for a longer time as the infection spreads through periodic waves.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Assam Cabinet approves cattle protection Bill

GUWAHATI
The Assam Cabinet has cleared a Bill for protecting cattle. The Assam Cattle Preservation Bill, 2021, will be placed before the State Assembly in the upcoming session.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4



Cairn says it has got court nod to attach 20 Indian assets in Paris

Properties said to be worth \$23 million; Centre says it has not received any order

SUHASINI HAIDAR
VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The Cairn Energy dispute with India over the settlement of a \$1.2 billion award from The Hague took a dramatic turn on Thursday, with the company saying it had secured a French court order allowing it to freeze at least 20 Indian properties in central Paris.

The Government of India, however, denied all knowledge of the latest order. It said it had filed an appeal against the tribunal decision of the Permanent Court at The Hague delivered in December 2020.

Legal remedies

"Government is trying to ascertain the facts, and whenever such an order is received, appropriate legal remedies will be taken, in consultation with its coun-

Case diary

A brief look at the fresh developments in the retrospective case dispute after an international arbitration tribunal ruled in favour of British oil company Cairn Energy

FRENCH CROSS-CONNECTION

■ Paris court allows Cairn to freeze 20 assets to secure part of the \$1.2 bn dues
■ India's assets in Paris estimated to be valued at \$23 million



A file photo of a Cairn crude oil storage facility in Rajasthan.

WHAT NEXT

- Cairn has identified Indian assets worth \$70 bn across the world; action likely in 10 jurisdictions
- It has filed a plea in a U.S. court seeking to make Air India liable to pay up

sels, to protect the interests of India," a Union Finance Ministry statement said, stressing that no notice, order or communication had been received by the government from any French court. Earlier, a Cairn Energy

spokesperson told *The Hindu* that the ball was in India's court to stop the enforcement proceedings of assets.

Amicable settlement

"Our strong preference remains an agreed, amicable

settlement with the Government of India to draw this matter to a close, and to that end we have submitted a detailed series of proposals to them since February this year," the spokesperson said.

"However, in the absence of such a settlement, Cairn must take all necessary legal actions to protect the interests of its international shareholders," the spokesperson added in a statement.

According to sources, the award by the Tribunal judiciaire de Paris was the "necessary preparatory step" to taking ownership of the properties and ensuring all proceeds from the sale of the properties would be accrued to Cairn Energy PLC as part of its efforts to enforce the award from The Hague in favour of Cairn.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SC backs summons to FB by Delhi govt. riots panel

Social media can influence vast sections, says order

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the authority of Delhi Assembly's Peace and Harmony Committee to summon Facebook India's senior official Ajit Mohan in connection with the February 2020 communal violence, saying the Capital can ill-afford another riot, and the role of Facebook "must be looked into" in this context.

"It is difficult to accept the simplistic approach adopted by Facebook - that it is merely a platform posting third-party information and has no role in generating, controlling or modulating that information," a three-judge Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, observed.

The 188-page judgment referred to how Facebook itself claimed to be the most popular social media plat-

form in India, with 270 million registered users. Social media platforms such as Facebook have become "power centres" with the ability to influence vast sections of public opinions, the court noted. These platforms are by no means altruistic in character. They employ business models that can be highly privacy intrusive. It compared Facebook to a "mass circulation media" with no or little editorial responsibility.

"Facebook has acknowledged in their reply that

they removed 22.5 million pieces of hate speech content in the second quarter of 2020 itself," Justice Kaul, who authored the judgment, observed.

Facebook cannot claim any "exceptional privilege" to abstain from appearing before the Peace and Harmony Committee. The court termed Mr. Mohan's appeal "premature", saying no coercive action was taken or intended.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
RELATED REPORTS ▶ PAGES 3, 8

Will your officers follow law, HC asks Twitter

Centre free to take action in case of breach, says court

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday directed Twitter to submit in an affidavit that its "interim" resident grievance officer, chief compliance officer and nodal contact officer will be fully responsible for its conduct under the IT Rules, 2021.

Justice Rekha Palli also clarified that "no protection is granted to Twitter from any action from the government in case of any breach of the IT rules".



der the IT rules? Tomorrow, you may take the benefit of the word "interim", Justice Palli said.

Senior advocate Sajjan Poovayya, representing Twitter, said the officers were bound to comply with the rules. Mr. Poovayya sought two weeks to get notarised affidavits from the U.S. regarding their appointment. Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma highlighted Twitter's short note, where the microblogging site said it had engaged the services of the interim CCO as a contingent worker via a third party contractor.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

It must obey rules: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Newly sworn-in Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwani Vaishnav said all those who live and work in India will have to follow the rules of the country.

"Law of the land is supreme, Twitter must follow the rules," he said.

He took charge of the Ministry of Electronics and IT, the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Railways on Thursday.

'Get voice sample of Shekhawat'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

A magistrate's court here has issued directions for getting voice samples of Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and an alleged middleman, Sanjay Jain, in connection with the audio tapes leaked last year, which contained purported conversations about toppling the Rajasthan government through horse-trading.

The court gave the direction on Wednesday on an application moved by the Anti-Corruption Bureau.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 4

SC grants bail to 13 held in U.P. jail against norms

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday granted interim bail to 13 prisoners who have been languishing in Agra Central Jail for periods ranging from 14 to 22 years despite proving their juvenility at the time of commission of

their crime.

A Bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and V. Ramasubramanian allowed them bail after Uttar Pradesh did not raise any objection.

An accused can raise a claim of juvenility at any stage of a criminal trial or even any time after his conviction and sentence of a crime. If the claim is found

true, the court should maintain the conviction, but set aside the sentence and forward the case to the Juvenile Justice Board.

A juvenile can be punished only for a maximum period of three years.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Swanky station



New look: Finishing touches being given to the redeveloped Gandhinagar railway station in Gujarat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the swanky station, which has a five-star hotel on the premises, next week. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

'Get voice sample of Shekhawat'

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CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 4

Arunachal to allow entry only to vaccinated people

State also providing incentives to residents who are reluctant to take the jab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Arunachal Pradesh government has decided to allow only vaccinated people into the State.

The government has also gone for aggressive testing for COVID-19 and inoculation, with 68% of the people aged 18 and above having received their first dose of vaccine.

"We are ensuring that if anyone wishes to visit Arunachal Pradesh, he or she has to be vaccinated prior to entry," Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar told Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar

Bhalla during an online meeting on July 7.

Mr. Kumar said the State had adopted a three-pronged strategy to stop the spread of the coronavirus. These were extensive tracking and testing, enforcement of pandemic-appropriate behaviour and vaccination.

"Arunachal Pradesh needs an additional three lakh COVID-19 vaccines to achieve 100% coverage of beneficiaries in the 18-plus and 45-plus age groups," he said.

Vaccination as a condition for entry follows the State's bid to provide incentives to people who have been reluc-

tant to take the jab. Officials in the Yazali circle of the State's Lower Subansiri district were one of the first to offer 20 kg of rice free to the 45-plus for taking the jab.

Cash awards Some districts of Manipur and Meghalaya also offered cash awards to maximise vaccination coverage.

Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur linked business and salaries of employees to vaccination. While traders and commercial vehicle operators were asked to operate after vaccination or display their vaccination status for

customers and passengers to decide whether or not to use their services, some frontline workers were told that their vaccination status would be ascertained before payment of salary or wage.

In Meghalaya's capital Shillong, some NGOs and a local MLA were panned for leaving out the non-vaccinated people while distributing food items to people without ration cards on July 6. The organisers of a COVID-19 relief camp in the city's Happy Valley-Madanritting had announced that rice and other essentials would be given only to vaccinated people.

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AN-NDE

IN BRIEF



BPCL launches drive to clean streets in Capital

NEW DELHI
Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) in association with South Delhi Municipal Corporation has started an initiative of collecting reusable plastic waste at its outlet in Green Park under the Swachhata Pakhwada 2021. With an aim to make the Capital's roads and streets clean, BPCL appeals to its customers to throw the reusable plastic waste in their vehicles at the specially dedicated recycle bins placed at the BPCL outlets during their visit for fuelling.

North body releases ₹124 crore to pay April salary

NEW DELHI
The North Delhi Municipal Corporation has released ₹124 crore in lieu of the salary for the month of April due to teachers, A and B category employees and one month's pension for retired employees, former Mayor Jai Prakash said here on Thursday. "Efforts are being made to release the outstanding salary of all the employees and pension of retired employees in a phased manner," he added.

Corroded grenade found in Sagarpur

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**
A grenade was found in west Delhi's Sagarpur area on Thursday, police said, adding that National Security Guard have been demanded for further examination.

Police said that a PCR call was received at 11.55 a.m. stating that a sanitation worker has discovered a grenade while cleaning a drain under the walkway. The SHO rushed to the spot along with a team and saw an old corroded grenade, they said.

The district ballistic team safely placed it away from the crowded area to an open space. The area around it was buttressed using makeshift sandbags and local police guard is placed to ensure no one goes near. Demand for NSG has been made to ascertain the make and model of it," a senior police officer said.

Police said that the ballistic expert of district "could make out that it is 'HE 36' but rest of the details are not visible".

Third accused in Kitty murder case on the run

House help undergoing treatment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after police arrested two persons in connection with the murder of Kitty Kumaramangalam – lawyer and wife of former Union Minister P. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam – at her Vasant Vihar residence, the police said they are yet to arrest the third accused.

A senior officer said three teams are working round the clock to nab the third accused, Suraj from Rajasthan.

"Surveillance has been mounted and we are aware of his suspected hideouts. Raids are being conducted," the officer said.

Fled to Rajasthan'

Suraj is suspected to have fled to Rajasthan and is in possession of gold robbed from Kitty's house.

Two persons – the victim's washerman, Raju, and his friend Rakesh Raj – have been arrested for the



FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

murder.

The accused entered the house, overpowered the house help, Mithila, and smothered Kitty to death before decamping with valuables and cash.

The house help, who was hired a few days ago, is undergoing treatment at Safdarjung Hospital after she sustained injuries during the incident.

The victim's body was handed over to her son Rangarajan Mohan Kumaramangalam, a Congress leader.

The notice issued to Deputy Commissioner of Pol-

App booked for using pics of women without consent

DCW issues notice to police, seeks report on action taken

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Cyber Cell registered an FIR against the "Sulli Deals" app where photos of Muslim women were being displayed without their consent, a senior police officer said on Thursday.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) had issued a notice to the police regarding the same and sought a detailed action taken report.

Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswas, said: "Acting on a complaint received on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal regarding 'Sulli Deals' mobile application, a case under Section 354-A of the IPC has been registered on Wednesday and investigation taken up."

He said notices have been sent to "GitHub" app to share the relevant details.

The notice issued to Deputy Commissioner of Pol-



ice (Cyber Cell) had said: "The DCW has taken suo-moto cognisance on media report of uploading of pictures of many girls on the Internet using a platform namely 'GitHub'."

A derogatory term'

It has been reported that photos of hundreds of Muslim women and girls were uploaded by an unidentified group on an app using GitHub – by the name of "Sulli Deals" – on Sunday (July 4).

Reportedly, sulli is a derogatory term used to refer Muslim women.

According to media reports, the app came to notice when people started sharing their pictures with the term "sulli deal of the day" on Twitter, the panel had said. "Subsequently, many women had to leave social media platforms after their images got circulated.

This is a very serious matter and constitutes cyber-crime," the DCW had said.

Farmhouse owner among three held for Kapashera teen murder

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A day after a 17-year-old was allegedly beaten to death on suspicion of theft in south-west Delhi's Kapashera, the police have arrested three persons in connection with the case.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh said the accused have been identified as Prakrit (35), Binod Thakur (62) and his son Rohit (20).

The police said victim Sanjeev from Samalkha

Victim Sanjeev had entered a farmhouse with his two friends where security guards – Binod and Rohit – suspected that the three had entered with the intention to commit theft

had entered a farmhouse with his two friends where security guards – Binod and Rohit – suspected that the three had entered with

the intention to commit theft. Sanjeev was caught by the guards while his friends managed to flee.

Boy collapsed
The two guards along with owner of the farmhouse, Prakrit, beat up Sanjeev with sticks. After Sanjeev fled for a few meters, he collapsed. The police said there were marks of dog bites on his body.

A few hours later, his body was discovered by an e-rickshaw driver, who informed the police.

Police said victim Sanjeev from Samalkha

Vegetable vendor killed, another injured as speeding car hits them

Driver, who was allegedly drunk at the time, arrested

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 55-year-old vegetable vendor was killed and another severely injured when a speeding car hit them in the early hours of Thursday. The accused driver has been arrested, police said.

Police said that the deceased has been identified as Kallu, a resident of Seemapuri, and the injured is Kanjhi, a resident of Jahan-

girpuri. The accused has been identified as Sachin (25) from Mahendragarh.

Police said that a PCR call was received around 4 a.m. on Thursday regarding an accident in Daryaganj Sabzi Mandi. When the police reached the spot, they found the car and the driver. The injured had been shifted to hospital.

Subsequently, a call was received from Lok Nayak

Hospital stating that one Kallu had been brought dead and another person Kanjhi is undergoing treatment.

During further probe, the police were informed that the two were setting up their vegetable cart early morning when the driver, allegedly drunk, came speeding and hit them. Police said that a case has been registered and the accused has been arrested. Further probe is on.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

1. The Executive Engineer, HPPWD Division Kalpa on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh re-invites the percentage rate/item rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development for each of the following works from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag in NABARD RIDF-XXVII) Under NABARD RIDF-XXVII).

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 17-07-2021

3. Cost of Bid Form: Rs. 500 per package (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Kalpa Division, HPPWD, Kalpa.

4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in NABARD may obtain the same from the website: www.hptenders.gov.in. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

* Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

5. Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B(a) (ii) of ITB with Executive Engineer, Kalpa Division, HPPWD, Kalpa (address and details of office where to be submitted), on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid either by registered post or by hand.

6. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 26-07-2021 up to 17.30 Hours (time)

7. The site for the work is available.

8. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore, bids must be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 11.30 Hours (time) on 27-07-2021 (date) in the office of Executive Engineer, HPPWD Division Kalpa by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

9. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than **Seventy Five (75) days** after the deadline date for bid submission.

11. Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this and other contracts for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

(For Superintending Engineer, 11th Circle, HPPWD Rampur)

House help undergoing treatment

STAFF REPORTER
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This is a very serious matter and constitutes cyber-crime," the DCW had said.

Telephone exchange racket busted in city

Main accused absconding, identified

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

In a joint operation, Delhi police and telecom department busted a racket, which allegedly converted international calls into local ones, posing threat to national security, said a senior officer on Thursday.

"We have identified the people operating the exchange. They will soon be arrested. The illegal telephone exchange converted international calls into local calls, causing revenue loss to the government," said the officer.

C The illegal telephone exchange converted international calls into local calls, causing revenue loss to the government

POLICE OFFICER

A person – employed as caretaker of the premises – has been detained, the officer said, adding that the main culprits in the case are abscoding.

'Low cost calls'

The police said that illegal telephone exchange is used by smugglers and hawala operators to avoid surveillance by security agencies. The operators charge commission for the service, and they promote "low cost" international calls to reach out to customers.

They usually have a set of regular customers to avoid getting caught. Dal Chand Yadav seeking action against illegal factories that were operating in the Madipur village.

"Grievance in the application is against functioning of unauthorised and illegal factories and establishments engaged in manufacturing of shoes, footwear and boxes, screen printing, printing press, laser cutting machines, sale and storage of chemicals and adhesives, illegal eateries and illegal go-downs..." the bench noted while taking into account the allegations mentioned in the plea.

The petition contended that the establishments and factories were operating in violation of environmental norms and affected public health.

NGT seeks action report against illegal factories

5-member panel comprising CPCB, SDMC, DPCC officials given 2-months

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking action against the operation of unauthorised factories in west Delhi, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed a five-member committee comprising officials from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to visit the area and furnish a factual and action taken report within two months.



though the applicant has not impleaded the affected parties it is mentioned that fire incidents have taken place resulting in loss of five lives and injuries to others. Recent fire incident on June 4 is also mentioned, leading to 24 fire tenders being deployed the whole night."

Directing authorities to take action, the Bench said,

"In these circumstances, pending filing of further details by the applicant and giving specific information to the authorities concerned within one week, we direct a five member joint committee comprising of the CPCB, DPCC, SDMC, nominees of jurisdictional special Commissioner of Police and District Magistrate to visit the area and furnish a factual and action taken report within two months."

Timings

DELHI

FRIDAY, JUL. 9	
RISE 05:31	SET 19:23
RISE 04:34	SET 19:04
SATURDAY, JUL. 10	
RISE 05:32	SET 19:23
RISE 05:27	SET 19:54
SUNDAY, JUL. 11	
RISE 05:32	SET 19:22
RISE 06:23	SET 20:39

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	42	31
Safdarjung	42	31
Palam	42	31

Delhi Palam Today	
39°C Light rain & thunderstorm likely at some places with gusty winds. Drop in day temperature likely.	

Delhi Palam Tomorrow	
38°C One or two spells of rain and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky and gusty winds. A hot and humid day.	

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Experts warn as govt. reduces number of beds

Hospitals, COVID Care Centres set up during the second wave will not be dismantled immediately this time, say authorities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As the number of active virus cases in the Capital dip below the 1,000 mark, the Delhi government has started to de-escalate the number of COVID-19 beds at private hospitals and at COVID Care Centres across the Capital.

Facilities at the Yamuna Sports Complex and Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Chhatarpur, that came up in April to tackle the second wave, have been reduced to 50 and 200 beds respectively. Four COVID Care Centres have also been closed.

The Delhi government said that with the cases declining, there are a large number of vacant beds that are required by patients suffering from non-COVID-19 ailments. Those private hospitals that were asked to reserve 80% of their bed capacity for COVID-19 patients have now been asked to reserve 30% of their total bed capacity.

However, it added that in case there is a rise in the

number of COVID cases, the number of beds shall be immediately augmented. "Present available beds are sufficient to handle the active cases and COVID Care Centres can be started very soon if there is a requirement," a government spokesman said.

The health bulletin released on Wednesday showed that out of 14,478 hospital beds available for COVID-19 patients, 13,989 were vacant and of the 3,871 beds available at COVID care centres, 10 were occupied.

More cautious approach
After the previous wave in November 2020, most of the temporary facilities set up to augment the number of beds to deal with the surge of COVID-19 cases were dismantled. This time, however, authorities are taking a more cautious approach as the threat of a third wave looms.

A source in the defence services said that hospitals set up during the second wave will not be dismantled



Risking again: Beds and other facilities being dismantled at Yamuna Sports Complex COVID Care Centre in New Delhi.

■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

and will be continued for so-

metre.

"We will hand over the hospitals set up by the DRDO to local authorities for keeping it safe without operation if the hospital is not required but we will not be dismantling them," said a defence source about the DRDO set-up hospital.

Several health professionals warn against completely dismantling augmented facilities and felt that the COVID Care Centres by the Delhi government should remain

functional for a longer time as the infection spreads through periodic waves.

H.K. Mahajan, chief of anaesthesia, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre said that there was a need to wait for some more time before dismantling facilities.

"There was a shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines during the second wave. It is the right time to review the past mistakes and prepare for the future. There is a need of plenty of medicines, oxygen and beds so that the

country can deal with a possible third wave successfully," Mr. Mahajan said.

Invest in infrastructure

Siddharth Rastogi, executive director, MVS Engineering Pvt. Ltd. that provides on-site oxygen generators says that the government was caught off guard in the second wave due to the rapid spread and inadequate infrastructure.

not be pursued in the imme-

diate term because the virus

has still not gone away. The

spectre of the third and a po-

tentially more damaging

wave still hovers over us. And

so, preparing for the worst,

hospitals must go ahead full

throttle with their plans of in-

stallation of on-site oxygen

generation plants.

'Still not serious'

A.K. Jhingan, diabetologist, Delhi Diabetes Research Centre, says that the second wave seems to be ebbing, we are seeing many hospitals once again putting their decision to instal an on-site generation system for oxygen on the backburner as their delivered oxygen supplies have normalised. However, hospitals should not let their guard down and continue with their plans on investing in the infrastructure for oxygen in-dependence immediately," Mr. Rastogi said.

"It will be advisable to mothball the infrastructure rather than dismantle it. Now, that the second wave

seems to be ebbing, we are

seeing many hospitals once

again putting their decision

to instal an on-site genera-

tion system for oxygen on

the backburner as their deliv-

ered oxygen supplies have

normalised. However, hospi-

tals should not let their guard

down and continue with their

plans on investing in the in-

frastructure for oxygen in-

dependence immediately,"

Mr. Rastogi said.

He added that the ongoing

closing of COVID centres in

Delhi and elsewhere must

93 fresh cases and three deaths in city

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 93 new COVID-19 cases, after testing 77,979 people, in the last 24 hours in addition to three deaths, says the daily health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The cumulative tally stands at 14,34,873 with 14,09,018 recoveries and 25,008 deaths since the pandemic began. There are 847 active cases in the city.

A total of 22,350 people were administered the vaccine on Wednesday, taking the total number of vaccinated people to 85,20,756, as per data provided by the Delhi government's vaccination bulletin.

According to it, 11,789 beneficiaries were administered first doses while 10,561 received the second dose. The bulletin also stated that the city currently has two days' stock of vaccine with 3,16,000 doses available for inoculation.

SC rues daily tussle between Centre, Delhi govt.

Lack of maturity responsible for inability to work in tandem, says apex court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A lack of maturity by both the Centre and the Delhi government has led to governance tussles on a daily basis between the two on every aspect, the Supreme Court said in a judgment on Thursday.

A Bench led by Justice S.K.

Kaul said the "unique" interrelationship between different political dispensations in the Centre and Delhi had worked well for years until recently.

The last few years have seen an unfortunate tussle on every aspect with the State government seeking to exercise powers as any other Assembly and the Central government unwilling to let them do so... it is almost a daily governance tussle," Justice Kaul noted.

The court addressed the Arvind Kejriwal government in Delhi directly in its judgment, saying "the Central government is required to work in tandem, albeit with a differ-

ence political dispensation". "Maturity is required from both sides and we have to reluctantly note the absence of such maturity in this important interrelationship," Justice Kaul wrote.

The court said the inability of the Centre and Delhi government to see eye-to-eye on governance issues in the Capital has been responsible for a spate of litigation. "Repeated judicial counsel to work in tandem has not been successful," the court noted.

Will fight for Kholi Basti residents till my last breath'

Ex-MP Udit Raj among those detained during protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Lok Sabha MP and Congress national spokesperson Udit Raj along with several others, mostly residents of Kholi Basti in Faridabad, were detained by the Delhi police on Thursday for allegedly trying to gherao the Prime Minister's office seeking repeal of the Supreme Court order for demolition of the 170-acre colony on forest land.

Those detained were let off later in the evening.

The Kholi Basti residents had earlier demonstrated at Jantar Mantar on June 29 and also marched towards the PMO's office two days ago.

Addressing the protesters, Dr. Raj said his "arrest was the beginning of the war against the dictator Modi government". He said that this was a war between the rich and the poor. "I will fight the battle of Kholi Basti till my last breath," said Dr. Raj, national chairman, All India Confederation of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes organisations.

Leaders yet to respond

Confederation's leader Sanjay Raj, who was also detained, said they had been seeking an appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi for several days, but there was no response. "Neither Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal nor Mr. Modi have heard the complaints of thousands of innocent

protesters during a demonstration against the SC-ordered demolition of the colony. ■ SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

villagers. The residents of Kholi Basti have been requesting the PM to cancel the order of the Supreme Court so that the lives of lakhs of people and their houses can be saved in these times of pandemic," said Mr. Raj.

Social activist Meenu Verma said it

was inhumane to render thousands of

children homeless when the danger of

a possible third COVID-19 wave of was

looming large. "If the houses of these

people are illegal then why were votes

taken from them by making false pro-

mises," said Ms. Verma.

Meanwhile, Faridabad district admin-

istration has offered free-of-cost trans-

portation service to the Kholi Basti re-

sidents ahead of a massive demolition

drive expected to be kicked off in the

next few days.

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7 DAYS OPEN

Assembly panel hails SC order on FB plea

Top court recognised privileges and power of Delhi Assembly's committees

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly's Peace and Harmony Committee chairman Raghav Chadha welcomed the judgment passed by the Supreme Court refusing to quash summons to Facebook India's vice-president Ajit Mohan.

The committee was formed after the Delhi riots last year.

Mr. Chadha said, "While dismissing the petition filed by the three petitioners – Ajit Mohan, VP and MD of

Facebook India, Facebook India itself and Facebook Inc. – the apex court recognised the privileges and power of the Delhi Legislative Assembly's Committees on par with parliamentary privileges and those of other Legislative Assemblies.

"Significantly, the court has also reaffirmed that as part of these privileges, the Committee of Peace and Harmony is entitled to summon 'non-members' to appear before itself in order to

BKU to start stir against U.P. govt. from August 1

'Why was Tomar spared in reshuffle?'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

As the countdown to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections has begun, the Bhartiya Kisan Union has decided to broaden the base of its ongoing stir against the Central farm laws at the Ghaziabad border to raise farmers' issues with the State government.

It asked the Centre why Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar was spared in the Cabinet reshuffle.

At a press conference on Thursday, BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tika said the organisation would start a comprehensive movement against the State government from August 1. "Apart from the farm laws, we will also sensitise farmers on the increasing electricity rates and the pending

sugarcane dues. In Haryana, the BJP government is selling electricity to farmers at ₹35 per horsepower, while in U.P. it is being sold at ₹75 per horsepower. Besides ₹8,500 crores in dues to the sugarcane farmers are still pending," said Mr. Tika.

He said at a time when the MSP of wheat was ₹1,975 per quintal, the government collection centres were paying only ₹1,400 to farmers. "Now the same thing will happen with the paddy crop. That's why we are demanding a law on MSP, but the deaf and dumb government is not responding," he said.

BKU general secretary Yudhvir Singh said that the organisation would lead the movement against the State government.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

"NOTICE INVITING TENDER CUM AUCTION"

The HPPWD intends to sale old unuseable "T&P Articles/Computer Hardware" as per detail given below on as is where basis, through Tender cum Auction from the eligible bidders. Sealed Tenders are therefore invited from the eligible Agencies having valid e-waste certificate/authorization for collection, recycling or disposal of e-waste from HP state pollution control board. Auction will be held in the office of Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 on 22-07-2021 at 11:00AM.

1st Lot

Sr. No	Description of Items	Quantity
1.	HCL Computer along with accessories	31 Nos
2.	Acer Computer along with accessories	4 Nos
3.	HP-P1505 Printer	4 Nos
4.	HP2600N Printer	1 No
5.	Numeric 5KVAnonline UPS along with battery of 65AH	3 Nos
6.	Battery 65AH	28 Nos
7.	INLOVA 1KVA	1 No
8.	5KVA UPS/14 Battery 100AH (Architect office U.S.Club)	1 No
9.	Battery 100 AH	14 Nos

2nd Lot

1.	HP Computer along with accessories	5 Nos
2.	DELL Computer along with accessories	9 Nos
3.	Acer Computer along with accessories	5 Nos
4.	Wipro Server	2 No
5.	HP Laser Jet-1160 Printer	4 Nos
6.	HP Laser Jet-1022 Printer	1 Nos
7.	Numeric 3KVAonline UPS/10 battery of 70AH	1 No
8.	Battery 70AH	10 Nos
9.	APC off line UPS (received back from consultant PMGSY Rural Road Project-II)	2 Nos
10.	Energetech 5 KVA UPS/32 Battery 28 AH	1 No
11.	Batter 28 AH	32 Nos
12.	Tritronics 2 KVA/8 Battery 26 AH	1 No
13.	Batter 26 AH	8 Nos
14.	Liber 3 KVA/16 Battery 26 AH	1 No
15.	Batter 26 AH	16 Nos
16.	PulseTech 3 KVA/14 Battery 15 AH	1 No
17.	Batter 14 AH	13 Nos
18.	UPS 800VA Enlova offline	2 Nos

Terms and Conditions of Sale:-

- The intending Tenderers/Bidders can inspect the material on any date on or before 20-07-2021 on any working day between 2:00PM to 4:00PM after obtaining permission from the Executive Engineer, (IT) HPPWD Nigam Vihar, Shimla-2, Custodian Officer.
- Articles will not be sold below the reserve price fixed for it and will be sold as a lot only.
- The intending Tenderers should submit their Tender in a sealed cover along with the EMD of Rs.5,000/- for each lot for which he is interested by way of DD drawn in favour of Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9* payable at Shimla. The sealed cover should be super scried by Tender for the purchase of un serviceable T&P Articles/Computer Hardware Lot I & II.
- Tenders with condition will not be accepted. Tenderers should quote their rate in the format as prescribed for Lot I & Lot II.
- Only those who submit the tender before the stipulated time and along with EMD will be allowed to participate in the Auction on 22-07-2021 at 11:00 AM.
- The sealed tender will be opened by the Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 or Authorized Officer.
- The un serviceable "T&P Articles/Computer Hardware" will be sold on AS IS WHERE IS CONDITION and the successful Bidder will have to meet all the expenses relating to dismantling, restoration, carrying, paying tolls/ taxes if any etc.
- To the best of the knowledge of the Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 or Authorized Officer, there are no encumbrances on the property. If there are any charges or encumbrances which is revealed later.
- The successful bidder will have to deposit sufficient amount to satisfy the above charges/encumbrances over and above the bid amount.
- The Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9 can be contacted during office hours on any working days. If the sale is postponed/adjourned for any reason, no fresh notice will be given. However the new date of sale will be notified on the Notice Board of its present location.
- The successful bidder shall have to deposit the bid amount on same day with the Executive Engineer Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9.
- The eligible bidder can send the bid through their own authorized representative, but further authorization in the name of other bidder/firm will not be allowed.

Place of Auction: O/O Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9.

Address of Offices at Which the Tenders are to be submitted: Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9.

Date of sale of auction form :- 20-7-2021 from 10.30AM to 5PM.

Last date and time for receipt of Tender: 11.00AM of 22-07-2021.

Date and time of Auction: 11.30AM of 22-07-2021.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,
Electrical Division No-I,
HPPWD Shimla-171009.

Haryana farmers take part in protest against fuel price hike

They came out in large numbers in around a dozen districts in the State

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Farmers, including women, came out in large numbers in around a dozen districts across Haryana to protest against hike in fuel prices, in response to a call by Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of hundreds of farmers' unions spearheading the agitation against the three farm laws.



AIDWA's Jagmati Sangwan (right) protesting in Rohtak.

Hisar, Jind, Kaithal, Rohtak, Panipat, Kurukshetra and Yamunanagar among others.

Farmers parked their vehicles in rows for two hours in front of administrative offices all over the State and also honked horns for eight minutes as a symbol of resentment against the drastic fuel hike which has impacted all

sections, said Mr. Singh.

He said that the prices had been unjustifiably increased more than 55 times since January this year though the prices of crude oil in the international market had remained low.

Jogender Nain, president, BKU (Ghasi Ram), Haryana, speaking to protesters at Rohtak said the diesel price hike had enhanced the cost of production and added to the woes of farmers. Suresh Kumar, Centre of Indian Trade Unions leader, led the workers in the protest at Landhari toll plaza in Hisar. He said that workers too were hard pressed and losing their livelihood and would join hands with farmers now.

Yogendra Yadav, founder,

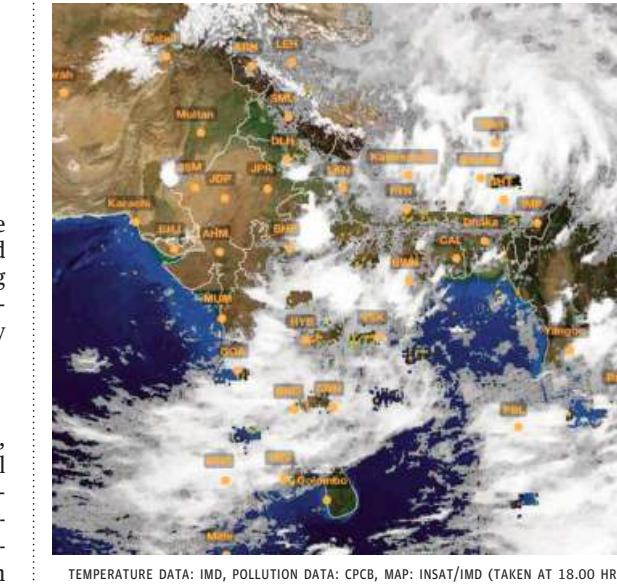
Jai Kisan Andolan, said the protests had demonstrated that the SKM was now taking a lead in articulating the demands of the entire society and not just the farmers.

'Women also affected'

Leading a protest in Rohtak, Jagmati Sangwan, national vice-president, All-India Democratic Women's Association, said that women were also impacted due to the rise in prices and had come out in large numbers to register their protest.

Addressing the farmers at Kirtana toll plaza protest site in Charkhi Dadri, farmer leader Raju Maan accused Prime Minister of formulating policies to benefit his industrialist friends.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSTAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry and Karaikal

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	5...	34.0...	25.8	Kozhikode	...	32.8...	25.6
Ahmedabad	...	38.1...	27.7	Kurnool	...	32.0...	23.6
Aizawl	8...	...	21.4	Lucknow	...	35.0...	28.5
Allahabad	...	36.1...	29.4	Madur...	...	38.5...	25.8
Bengaluru	...	30.1...	22.8	Mangaluru	54.1...	28.8...	22.4
Bhopal	1.6...	30.2...	26.4	Mumbai	...	31.4...	26.6
Bhubaneswar	...	32.0...	25.0	Mysuru	...	31...	21.4
Chandigarh	...	41.7...	30.4	New Delhi	...	41.8...	30.6
Chennai	...	36.2...	27.4	Patna	...	31.8...	28.0
Coimbatore	...	34.8...	24.2	Port Blair	17...	30.4...	24.4
Dehradun	25.3...	35.2...	25.9	Puducherry	...	37.4...	24.3
Gangtok	0.2...	21.7...	18.2	Pune	3...	31.2...	23.2
Goa	12.3...	29.9...	24.8	Raipur	...	29.6...	23.0
Guwahati	2...	34.4...	26.8	Ranchi	7...	27.8...	22.4
Hubballi	...	28.0...	22.0	Shillong	51...	25.4...	18.2
Hyderabad	57...	28.8...	21.2	Shimla	...	30.9...	22.0
Imphal	0.5...	30.4...	22.6	Srinagar	...	32.9...	17.8
Jaipur	...	40.8...	30.3	Thiruvananthapuram	...	33.0...	25.0
Kochi	3...	30.6...	26.0	Tiruchi	2...	37.3...	25.6
Kohima	45...	53...	41.6...	Vijayawada	33...	31.6...	25.2
Kolkata	93...	32.2...	25.4	Visakhapatnam	33...	30.6...	26.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	23	16	104	96	106	...
Bengaluru	1	.33	38	73	60	...
Chennai5	38	52	71	...
Delhi	9	86	73	205	212	...
Hyderabad	2	67	26	24	43	...
Kolkata	7	23	14	39	46	...
Lucknow39	70	134	145	...
Mumbai	46	10	...	101	109	...
Pune7	15	...	143	...
Visakhapatnam	12	69	53	64	116	...

In observation made at 41 locations in India recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 24 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 14

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

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

NO₂: Nit

DELHI GOVERNMENT IS WITH THE FAMILIES OF THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LOVED ONES TO COVID

Chief Minister's COVID-19 Family Financial Assistance Scheme

Chief Minister's COVID-19 Family Financial Assistance Scheme has been launched by the Delhi Government for the families who lost their loved ones due to COVID-19.

Both the parts of the scheme are as mentioned below

- a) **Monthly Financial Assistance:** An assistance of ₹2,500/- per month will be given to families residing in Delhi where earning member died due to COVID-19.
- b) **One Time Ex-Gratia Assistance :** An assistance of ₹50,000/- will be given to every family living in Delhi on each death of any family member due to COVID-19, whether or not they were earning members.

For more information and to apply visit- edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in





New phase

Cabinet shuffle aims to improve governance while keeping in mind political considerations

The reconstitution of the Union Council of Ministers on Wednesday was guided by both political and administrative considerations. As many as 36 new faces were inducted and 12 dropped from the council, which now has 78 members, just three shy of the upper limit of 81. In 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began its rule advertising its 45-member Council of Ministers as an attempt at minimum government, but the restraint was quietly abandoned in the following years. The political aspirations of communities and regions are difficult to satiate in a country as vast and diverse as India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made an attempt to make his Council more diverse and representative, in a manner that fits his political priorities. The new composition of the Council is in step with the BJP's relentless efforts to rope in OBC groups, Dalits and tribes people under its Hindutva umbrella politics. This accommodation is crucial for the BJP to continue its dominance in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other Hindi-speaking regions, where caste tensions are simmering. New inductions and elevations also signal a continued effort by the BJP to expand its influence to new areas such as West Bengal and the northeastern States. Barring the continuing under-representation of Muslims, the council is impressively representative of Indian diversity.

Governance issues might have been a factor in the axing of some of the Ministers. Harsh Vardhan, Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar were among those who got the marching orders, apparently for mishandling the pandemic, relations with global IT giants and governmental communication, respectively. New inductees such as Ashwini Vaishnav and Jyotiraditya Scindia have administrative skills that could prove valuable in crucial ministries that they now head. Individual talent and accountability both can only be contextual, and in a highly centralised system they become immaterial. The Ministers must be empowered to plan and take decisions in their respective areas. The notion of collective responsibility of the cabinet must be infused with meaning. Discussions in the cabinet must be open. Proposals that come for the cabinet's consideration must go through rigorous technical vetting and wide political consultations. The recomposition was intended to enhance governance, rev up the economy and fuel the BJP's political march ahead of crucial State elections and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. All these would be possible only if all hands are on the deck. Assembling a team is indeed a crucial task of a captain; allowing them to flourish as individuals while playing as a team is equally critical.

A blip

This year's restrictions by States have inflicted less economic costs than the 2020 lockdown

Entering its fifth year, India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) system reported a blip in revenue collections for June, breaking an eight-month streak of over ₹1-lakh crore in tax receipts. GST revenues tanked to a tad less than ₹93,000 crore last month – the lowest in 10 months – after a record ₹1.41-lakh crore in April and a relatively tepid ₹1.02-lakh crore in May. Generally, the June revenue reflects transactions that occurred in May. With the second wave of the pandemic in full flourish and States enforcing rigorous restrictions on most activities in May, the numbers are not really surprising. However, as May GST compliance dates for smaller taxpayers were extended till early July, some of this revenue also reflects April's sales. Thus, the actual GST income attributable to May's economic activity would be lower than June's gross GST kitty. This is also reflected in the generation of e-way bills, which fell by a sharp 30% in May compared to April, while the sequential decline in revenues was not as steep. With caseloads declining over June and restrictions being pulled back gradually, revenues should pick up next month with 5.5 crore e-way bills generated in June from 3.99 crore in May. Despite the slowdown in May-June, GST collections in the Q1 of 2021-22 have been healthier than pre-pandemic levels, confirming that this year's restrictions driven by States have inflicted less economic costs than the national lockdown at a few hours' notice, in 2020.

While the second wave setbacks have shaken up business and consumer sentiment, average monthly revenues of over ₹1-lakh crore – which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has termed the 'new normal' for GST – could perhaps sustain through the year, if there is no dramatic resurgence of the pandemic and vaccinations are ramped up as promised. This should give some fiscal breathing room for the Centre and States, but neither can afford to sit back. Structural corrections in the GST regime and the inclusion of petroleum and electricity may take longer, but there is enough that needs immediate attention. Industry has sought temporary rate cuts on some sectors to spur demand. It is plausible that a volume pick-up could make up for resultant revenue losses, just as an uptick in petrol consumption creates room for a revenue-neutral duty cut on fuels. The GST Council must be reconvened soon to take up such ideas to prod the economy's rebound, apart from holding the promised special session to discuss all the brewing concerns related to States' compensation. Delaying this will not only foster greater misgivings between the Centre and the States but also make it tough for States to plan their borrowings for the rest of the year. Clarity is also needed urgently on when the ₹1.58-lakh crore of back-to-back borrowings for States in lieu of compensation dues will begin. If the Centre plans to raise ₹5,000 crore a week, like it did last year, it will take roughly 32 weeks to complete such borrowings; so, any delay beyond early August may not be viable.

Troubling prospects in Afghanistan

As the reality of the U.S. withdrawal takes hold, the future will depend on Taliban-Kabul dynamics and Pakistan's role



RAKESH SOOD

Last week, on Friday, the United States handed over the Bagram airbase to the Afghan authorities, marking a symbolic end to its military presence, as U.S. forces complete their withdrawal well ahead of the September 11 deadline, announced by American President Joe Biden on April 14. A familiar air of uncertainty surrounds Kabul as the Afghans ponder over the future of their land, ravaged by conflict for nearly 50 years. Afghanistan's immediate neighbours are now faced with a new challenge – how to persuade the Taliban against overplaying their military hand?

A costly misadventure

Could anyone have predicted when the U.S. commenced its military intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001 that it would get embroiled in an endless war for 20 years and to exit safely, it would have to negotiate with the Taliban, the same entity that it went in to pursue?

It has been a costly lesson. The war effort has cost \$980 billion, over 2,400 U.S. soldiers (plus 1,144 allied troops) and 388 private military contractors have lost their lives. It also spent \$143 billion on reconstruction; about \$90 billion went for the Afghan army, police and other security forces, \$36 billion for governance and economic development activities (the rest of the international community contributed an equivalent amount) and the balance on counter-narcotics and humanitarian relief works (<https://bit.ly/3ADTCp7>).

Yet, the real price has been paid by the Afghans. The 20-year war has claimed the lives of nearly 50,000 Afghan civilians and nearly 70,000 Afghan security forces (a majority during the last seven years); add to it another 60,000 Afghan Taliban, and the scale of the Afghan human loss becomes evident.

There have been gains too. In 2001, there were 9,00,000 boys in school. Today, eight million children attend school and a third are girls. Literacy is up from 12% in 2002 to 35%; life expectancy from 40 to 63 years. Urbanisation is 26% and 70% of the population watch TV. From 320 miles of paved roads in 2002, today, tarred roads cover 10,000 miles. Infant mortality rates are down from 20% by over half. With a median age of 18.5 years, a majority of Afghans have grown up in a post-Taliban era. Today, they bear the brunt of 130 daily Taliban/IS Khorasan (IS-K) attacks, the highest since the U.S. ended combat operations in end-2014. Tomorrow, even these limited gains are at risk.

Taliban gains legitimacy

For U.S. President Bush, the objective was "to build a stable, strong, effectively governed Afghanistan that won't degenerate into chaos". As the U.S. shifted from counter-terrorism to counter-insurgency, shades of Vietnam began to emerge. To Hamid Karzai's credit, he saw the writing on the wall when he protested about the night-raids and warned the Americans "to either take the fight to the safe havens and sanctuaries across the Durand Line or make peace with the Taliban" but it only soured his relations with the U.S.

Eventually, U.S. President Barack Obama diluted the objective to "preventing Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for global terrorism". He oversaw a success-



ful operation to eliminate Osama bin Laden in 2011, implemented an unsuccessful military surge concluding with an end to combat operations in end-2014 and Taliban opened the Doha office in 2013.

U.S. President Donald Trump saw himself as a deal-maker and in 2018, initiated direct negotiations with the Taliban. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad (U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation) began by setting out four elements – a ceasefire, cutting ties with al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, intra-Afghan peace talks, and, a withdrawal of all foreign military forces, declaring that "nothing is agreed till everything is agreed". Within months, the Taliban had whittled down the U.S. demands till it got what it wanted – a withdrawal timeline not linked to the other factors. In addition, the Taliban managed to get the U.S. to push the Kabul government to release over 5,000 Taliban cadres in custody. In short, the U.S. ended up legitimising the Taliban at the expense of the government in Kabul that they had worked to create and support.

U.S. President Joe Biden was no stranger to the Afghan dossier. He was convinced that the U.S. had to exit from its quagmire of "forever wars". The U.S. may have decided that it had no military options but the Taliban are still pushing ahead militarily.

From less than a fifth, today, over a third of Afghanistan's over 400 districts are under Taliban

control. The day after the exit from Bagram, 13 districts, in Badakhshan, Takhar, Paktia and Kandahar fell to the Taliban, adding to the 50 that have fallen since May. In many cases, the locals manning the security posts and checkpoints have just surrendered. From villages and towns, there is already a move towards the cities. Intra-Afghan talks in Doha have been in limbo for months.

Questions about the future

Gen. Austin S. Miller, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, indicated in a recent press conference, "Civil war is certainly a path that can be visualised if it continues on this trajectory." Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, warned on June 30, "The truth is, today the survival, security and unity of Afghanistan is in danger..."

Ironically, the most vocal critics of the U.S. overstaying in Afghanistan and hinting that the U.S. would never leave are the ones now blaming the U.S. for a hasty and irresponsible withdrawal.

In coming months, as uncertainties mount, there will be increasing Taliban presence in the countryside as the Kabul government concentrates on ensuring security in urban areas and of the road networks. The Taliban military strategy has been to target districts that enable them to surround provincial capitals. The clutch in the northeast including Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan enable them to control the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border and the Wakhan corridor that links to China. In the east, they exert control in Ghazni, Zabol and Paktia while the Haqqani network is active in Khost and Paktika, and the IS-K in Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman. Further south, the Taliban control large parts of Kandahar, Helmand and Farah (border-

ing Iran).

As the reality of the U.S. withdrawal takes hold, how events unfold by end-2021 depends on three factors. First, have the Taliban changed their ideological colours? The U.S. in recent years, and Pakistan for much longer, have been pushing this line but the Taliban leadership have given no clues about it. Related to this is the question of Taliban unity. Distances have grown between the Quetta shura, the Doha negotiators and the fighters who want to guard their individual preserves. This works as long as everyone is pursuing the military option, but when it comes to power sharing, who calls the shots? Or, does it lead to no power sharing?

Second, can the Kabul regime present a unified front? If the leaders in Kabul and the government continue sniping at each other, it will adversely impact the integrity of the chain of command of the Afghan security forces. If opportunistic leaders are tempted to strike their own deals with the Taliban, it will only hasten the collapse, and even western funding will dry up.

The Pakistan factor

Finally, is Pakistan still seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan or has it realised that a Taliban-dominated Kabul will be a magnet for its own home-grown extremists as well as those from the neighbourhood? Can it persuade the Taliban that its legitimacy will be at risk unless it shares power? Pakistan's influence will weaken once the Rehbari Shura decides to move back from Quetta to Afghanistan.

History tells us that in Afghanistan, there have only been winners and losers, seldom any lasting compromises.

Rakesh Sood is a former diplomat and presently, Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

In a passing, the larger picture of dispossession

Blaming 'the system' alone for Father Stan Swamy's death obscures how India's political economy is linked to deprival



CHITRANGADA CHOWDHURY

When an officer from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) came to interrogate Father Stan Swamy last monsoon, the Jesuit sociologist, then 83, in turn asked him about police integrity, and why a father-son duo (P. Jayaraj and Bennicks) should die of custodial torture in a Tamil Nadu police lock-up. It was quintessential Fr. Swamy: unafraid, outspoken, and questioning injustice.

Fr. Swamy was sent to Taloja jail in October 2020 in the Bhima Koregaon case, where some of his co-accused have now spent more than three years without bail or trial. All have been charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), a widely misused tool for governments to criminalise lawful dissent and hold ideological opponents in prolonged incarceration. For all the talk by authorities of a terrorist conspiracy, Fr. Swamy was never interrogated in nine months of custody.

His arrest in the middle of the pandemic, over two years after the first raid on his spartan one-room residence, seems like targeted viciousness.

All Indians have dignity, not just the wealthy and the privileged. This belief guided Fr. Swamy's life-long concern for justice, as I saw in my interactions with him over the years as a journalist.

Adivasis and loss

When he first came to West Singhbhum from his native Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu in the 1970s, living among the Adivasi communities profoundly shaped him. He had told me in an interview, "I underwent an awakening, looking at Adivasi values of equality, community, and decision-making by consensus." His work firmly rejected the prejudice of Adivasi 'backwardness', and tirelessly pointed out how violence and dispossession was pushed down their throats and called development: "Adivasis lived on lands full of minerals. Others took these out and enriched themselves, but Adivasis did not get anything."

In a decade-long tenure as Director of Bengaluru's Indian Social Institute, he trained countless grass-roots activists. He continued this work when he co-founded the Ranchi-based Bagaicha in 2006 – a centre for research, training and social action dedicated to working with Adivasi and other marginalised communities and legally empowering their struggles for justice and dignity. As long-time friends and colleagues testify, Fr. Swamy wanted it to be a place which the marginalised felt was

their own. A statue of Birsa Munda and a megalith with the names of those killed in anti-displacement protests marked Bagaicha's central ground. Its one room library contained reports, studies and files of newspaper cuttings on issues such as forced displacement, hunger deaths, extra-judicial killings and grassroots protests – a buried history of India's democracy.

Helping hand for undertrials

When I first met Fr. Swamy in 2013, his team was immersed in efforts for poor undertrials in prisons across Jharkhand against a raging armed conflict. After three years of painstaking research based on prison visits, meeting police officials and villagers, and Right to Information Act requests, his team released a report that included the case studies of over 100 UAPA undertrials. Overwhelmingly, they were Adivasis and Dalits, and in some cases they had languished in the criminal justice system for up to 10 years. About 59% of the households of undertrials,

the report found, earned under ₹3,000 per month and were forced to sell assets such as goats to meet bail conditions or legal expenses. Fr. Swamy also filed a public interest litigation on the basis of his team's findings, which is still being heard in the Jharkhand High Court. As he publicly stated before his arrest, he believed that such efforts to challenge an unjust status quo led the state to target him.

Fr. Swamy's demise has led to a public outpouring of sadness and anger at the cruelty of our criminal justice system. Ever self-effacing, he would have wanted this attention not on him but on the resource grabs that continue to inflict staggering violence against Adivasis and other marginalised groups, fill our prisons with people with little access to justice, and necessitate draconian laws such as the UAPA. To blame 'the system' or 'the government' for his death is to overlook how we are implicated in this political economy founded on dispossession, and the ever-expanding criminalisation of demands for social and environmental justice as conspiracies against the state.

Liberalisation, the oppressed

The human rights activist, K. Balagopal, had argued that an abiding legacy of liberalisation is the delegitimisation of concern for the oppressed. This is why a man who strove all his life for solidarity, fraternity and justice in real terms stands accused by our government of promoting enmity. And why his death, while foretold, transcends textual analyses of the UAPA, courtroom proceedings and prison reforms.

Fr. Swamy had one chance to appear in court, when a Bombay High Court Bench asked for him to be presented via video-conferencing from Taloja jail on the afternoon of May 21. Battling multiple ailments including Parkinson's disease, diminished hearing, and by then COVID-19 contracted in prison, he was visibly ailing, but as always full of self-respect.

He told the court that prison conditions were steadily destroying his abilities to read, write and walk, and that he be granted bail to return to Ranchi to be with his own. In rejecting the judges' suggestion that they send him to hospital for a few days, Fr. Swamy asserted his dignity and innocence, and registered a moral protest against being effectively made to serve a death sentence, as an indefinitely imprisoned undertrial.

As now well known, a dying man's final wish to return to Jharkhand, to the people he loved and with whose struggles he had become one for over five decades, went unheard. These struggles will keep Father Stan Swamy's quest for a more democratic India alive.

Chitrangada Choudhury is a journalist and on the editorial board of Article 14

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.

Jumbo cabinet

Wednesday's massive expansion of the Union cabinet will be remembered more for those who were given the marching orders, some of them being the most visible and vocal faces of the Modi government. While quite a few of those shown the door were undoubtedly non-performers, performance alone does not seem to have been the criterion that influenced the Prime Minister's mind. Non-performing Ministers continue in the cabinet, the most noticeable being the Finance Minister. Also, can the Prime Minister take credit for success in managing the pandemic while sacking the Ministers concerned for their incompetence? The Prime Minister alone has to

answer this apparent contradiction. He has also deviated from his oft-repeated doctrine: minimum government-maximum governance, given the mega-sized cabinet.

S. CHOURHURY,
Bengaluru

■ The Prime Minister has targeted non-performance with the removal of key senior Ministers who probably basked in the glory of invincibility. India now has a more inclusive Council of Ministers. Hopefully the inexperience of the new Ministers will give direction to new ideas to realise Mr. Narendra Modi's vision.

KANAK RAJAN NAMBIAR,
Varam, Kannur, Kerala

■ A cabinet expansion in the middle of the Government's

second term has surprised many. That high-profile Ministers who have played a key role since the beginning of the NDA's rule, have now lost their jobs is intriguing. The Government has also tried to send the right signals in its representation to the educated, the young, women and the socially disadvantaged. But in the team where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the sole leader, the fact is there will hardly be any difference in functioning with the new formations.

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

■ In what can be termed a bold initiative and well-timed move, the reshuffle will augur well for the nation. It could have twin benefits: the senior guard would really have to be on its toes, and

this is an opportunity for freshers to work on a platform that has been set.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,
Secunderabad

■ single incident shows the greatness of Mr. Vajpayee as a leader and a human being. One shudders to imagine the situation had it occurred now.

BEANT SINGH BEDI,
Mohali, Punjab

Dilip Kumar

It is a matter of honour and pride for both Dilip Kumar and India that he is the only Indian actor

Should only elected legislators be eligible for chief ministership?

PARLEY

The option provided in the Constitution should be used with honesty, not just to tinker with politics

The sudden exit of Tirath Singh Rawat as Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, a development the Bharatiya Janata Party sought to explain in terms of a constitutional roadblock to being elected as a legislator within six months, has led to thickening speculation about the fate of West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee, another unelected Chief Minister. In a conversation moderated by Abdu Salam, M.R. Madhavan and S.Y. Quraishi thread through precedents and procedures as all eyes are firmly fixed on the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s next moves. Edited excerpts:

Should Chief Ministers be mandatorily picked from the pool of elected MLAs? Or at the very least, should a Member of Parliament resign immediately from the House if picked to lead a State?

M.R. Madhavan: Let's look at it from the first principles of how the Constitution is. We have a parliamentary democracy, which essentially means that whoever has the confidence of the majority of the members of the Lok Sabha, in the case of the Centre, will be the Prime Minister. It also requires that all Ministers should be a Member of Parliament (MP) or get elected within six months. Rather, it puts it in negative terms. Anybody who is a Minister and is not an MP for six months automatically stands to be disqualified from the administration. It visualises the Chief Minister as being elected by the members of the House of their own free will. And it assumes that the Chief Minister is a member. There are, of course, exceptional circumstances, especially for Ministers. Let me mention the fairly non-controversial case of Dr. Manmohan Singh in 1991 when there was a crisis, and Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao wanted him as the Finance Minister. Was that for the national public good? In hindsight, we would say yes. In the case of a Chief Minister, it becomes slightly dicey. There is a party high command, especially in the case of national parties, which decides who will become the Chief Minister. Effectively you have removed the

whole concept of the person being the popular choice of the elected people. So, the Chief Minister is an indirectly elected person by the directly elected members. But now the Chief Minister dictates how each of those persons will vote, because with the anti-defection law, we have weakened that accountability mechanism drastically. What is the way out? Not very clear.

The second part of your question is much clearer. If you look at various other parts of the Constitution, it's clear that the Constitution expects a person not to hold more than one constitutional position at a time. If you look at Article 101, it says that if a person is a member of both Houses of Parliament, he or she loses membership of one; if a person is an MP and gets elected as an MLA, or vice versa, he or she has about 14 days to resign from one.

When you are an MP and become the Chief Minister, you are the head of the executive of that State. So, what is your primary role? Is it to vote as a Member of Parliament? Or is it to be in the State and attend the State's legislature and be accountable to it? In that at least, we should definitely amend the Constitution to say that if you are going to be the Chief Minister or a Minister of a State, you should resign your membership of another House before taking up the role. That is, one should not occupy two constitutional offices concurrently.

S.Y. Quraishi: Whether it's a good thing or a bad thing is not the issue for us to decide, because the framers of the Constitution provided for this fresh air coming from outside, if need be, with the condition that within six months they need to get elected. It's a good provision and I feel we don't need to tinker with it because it does restrict options. Of course, this option should be used intelligently and with full honesty, and not just to tinker with politics. And it should be used sparingly.

So, you want the door to remain open for lateral entry. Coming specifically to Tirath Singh Rawat's case, was his election as MLA a constitutional impossibility?



SYQ: He could have easily contested the election. Didn't he anticipate that he would have to get elected in the thick of COVID-19? To say that in the time of COVID-19 it will not be advisable to conduct elections and therefore I'm resigning is a very flimsy excuse. It is some kind of a deeper political calculation. It's a build-up for something more serious, to create the precedent for West Bengal bypolls.

S.Y. QURAISHI

that is the only security risk of COVID-19. Nobody has any reason to complain because the rules apply to all parties.

Given the extraordinary circumstances of a pandemic raging since early 2020, should we as a polity be flexible on constitutional and legislative deadlines?

MRM: I would say that you cannot defer the elections; you'll have to pull them off in some manner. The U.S. did that. If you say that under extraordinary circumstances, the constitutional requirement of parliamentary elections in five years could be deferred, then you will find people figuring out ways to create extraordinary situations more and more often, and these situations will become ordinary.

The ECI has the choice, because if an election is not held, it leads to a constitutional crisis. And the ECI's job is to ensure that there is no constitutional crisis instead of creating one. Under Section 151 of the Representation of the People Act, it is provided that if only one year is left of a House, a by-election will not be held. But it is actually at the discretion of the ECI to make an exception. And it has been making an exception only for the Chief Minister.

Because in a House of 200-300, about three-four vacancies are always there. The government being allowed to fall because the ECI says it cannot hold an election... that would be the very unbecoming of the Commission. Now, in Section 151, a subsection provides that the ECI in consultation with the Central government certify that it is difficult to hold the by-election within the set period. I hope we don't read into that.

There's also the question of institutional resilience. What more can be done to insulate bodies such as the ECI from being seen as susceptible to external pressures?

MRM: There's a legitimacy of a government being formed in a free and fair election, and everybody subscribes to that. If that legitimacy is undermined, we are in deep crisis. What does the legitimacy rest on? It rests on public belief and public trust in the ECI holding free and

fair elections. The ECI has been a very trusted institution for a fairly long time now. Is that public trust getting bigger or not? That's a big question.

SYQ: The ECI has a constitution designed for it to be insulated from the government. Which is why once appointed, the Chief Election Commissioner cannot be removed except through impeachment. Now, there are two reforms that we have been shouting for. The Commission is appointed by the government of the day without consulting the Opposition. It is a different matter that all the Election Commissioners appointed through this route performed very well. And we hope that it will continue to happen. But hope is not a strategy, a system has to be in place. Nowhere in the world does such a situation exist. In some countries, there is scrutiny by Parliament. In some cases, the candidates are interviewed by Parliament. The systemic change we are pleading for is that appointments should be through a collegium. And promotions should be automatic, on the basis of seniority. Second, the removal procedure of the two Election Commissioners. They are not protected, so they feel they are on probation. They're always looking over their shoulder to see if the government is happy with them or not. That fear is absolutely dangerous and disastrous. So, that protection has to be provided. Government after government has not paid any heed to this extremely important and critical issue. And even the Supreme Court has not claimed the issue, despite its grave importance.

MRM: Today, the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] Director is appointed by a committee which includes the Chief Justice of India, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Is the ECI far more fundamental and important an institution than the head of the CBI? Obviously, yes. This would also provide greater authority to the Commission because appointments would be made after an agreement across political lines. The Central Information Commission is not a constitutional body, it is a statutory body, but appointments are through a collegium. The CBI is not even a constitutional or statutory body. Why do we have our priorities upside down?



M.R. Madhavan
is President and co-founder of PRS Legislative Research, a public policy research institution



S.Y. Quraishi
served as 17th Chief Election Commissioner of India from July 2010 to June 2012



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Tracking fugitives everywhere

In the absence of a coordinated database, criminals can go undetected

RUPIN SHARMA

Indian law on extradition is spread across the Indian Penal Code as well as various laws pertaining to narcotic drugs, Information Technology, hijacking, and so on. Procedural laws have the Code of Criminal Procedure as their backbone but there are other laws too, such as the Extradition Act, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Prevention of Money Laundering, and so on.

Investigation and prosecution
The bulk of the investigation and prosecution work happens at police stations in the States, while Central agencies take up the important cases. Central agencies have developed reasonable expertise because they are focussed only on investigation and prosecution work, whereas State police forces (except specialised wings) are engaged in law-and-order work as well as investigations. There is a tendency to close investigations once the accused have absconded, and an overwhelming tendency to bank on statements obtained from the accused or during interrogation before closing investigations. It would be interesting to know what proportion of arrest warrants obtained by investigation agencies of States pertain to persons who have absconded or are 'wanted', whether within India or abroad. Some police stations do initiate proceedings for attachment of property and declaration of the accused as proclaimed offenders, but the number of cases where coordinated efforts are made to pursue fugitives - domestically or internationally - are hardly documented. If the number of Red Corner Notices issued are of any indication, only about 750 such criminals are wanted by Indian agencies. The number of Blue Corner Notices issued is about 300.

Theoretically there exists a system of tracking criminals worldwide - through Interpol Notices and the sharing of immigration databases of different countries - but there is no coordinated system or database for tracking criminals or wanted persons domestically. In the absence of such a system, it is relatively easy for cri-

minals from one police station/jurisdiction to melt into the population in any other area, almost undetected.

Requirements

The creation of a nationwide database of wanted persons, which could be accessible for police agencies, the public and others (like passport and immigration authorities), is imperative. The Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems and the National Intelligence Grid are efforts in the right direction, but more integration is desirable. Perhaps a nationwide system of 'Wanted Persons Notices', similar to Interpol Notices, is required, to help track fugitives domestically. Countries like the U.S. have functional inter-State extradition and fugitive tracking systems; India needs to set up such dedicated 'fugitive tracking units'. There needs to be enhanced integration between immigration agencies, State police agencies, Interpol-New Delhi, the External Affairs Ministry and Home Ministry and central investigation agencies. Intelligence agencies also need to pool in.

What may also help India plug loopholes is sharing its 'wanted' database or providing access to it to foreign embassies on a reciprocal basis or through treaties or arrangements. All this will help detect possible plans of criminals to abscond abroad.

Signing of more bilateral and multilateral conventions on criminal matters would help plug legal infirmities. Signing bilateral agreements on cooperation in policing matters would also help. All relevant legal processes and requirements should be incorporated into one consolidated law on international cooperation.

The entire gamut of activities pertaining to fugitives, from investigation to extradition, needs to be incorporated into a specialised set-up with an Integrated International Cooperation Division (IICD) at the top. The IICD should have linkages with proposed fugitive tracking units at the State level. This would ensure that requisite expertise and forward-and-backward linkages are created. Making systems watertight would deter criminals from hoodwinking the law.

Rupin Sharma is an IPS officer

DATA POINT

How qualified are teachers in India?

In India, a significant share of teachers in the pre-primary, primary and upper primary levels neither possess an academic degree* from a college (a graduate or a post-graduate degree) nor a professional degree* (such as B.Ed. or a certificate in basic teachers training). While the share of such underqualified teachers was lower in the secondary and higher secondary levels, in some States there were quite a few underqualified teachers at these levels. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh, 10% of upper primary and 8% of secondary level teachers were underqualified. The problem is more acute at the lower levels, especially across most north-eastern States. Most such teachers are concentrated in private unaided schools and institutions managed by the Department of Education. The data are sourced from the latest UDISE report for 2019-20. By Jasmin Nihalani and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

STATE-WISE | The table shows the % of teachers who are underqualified across States at various levels of education. For instance, about 16% of pre-primary, 8% of primary, 13% of upper primary, 3% of secondary and 1% of higher secondary teachers were underqualified in Bihar. In general, the share of such teachers decreases as the level of education increases

State	Pre primary	Primary	Upper primary	Secondary	Higher secondary
Karnataka	1.66	0.06	0.03	0.02	0.14
Goa	10.28	0.57	0.03	0.02	0.09
Kerala	0.09	0.22	0.06	0.02	0.00
Gujarat	1.51	0.17	0.08	0.02	0.03
Maharashtra	2.84	0.46	0.22	0.08	0.09
Haryana	4.16	1.38	0.24	0.06	0.04
Himachal	2.87	0.78	0.25	0.15	0.06
Telangana	1.42	0.52	0.31	0.12	0.04
Tamil Nadu	1.96	0.54	0.50	0.24	0.13
W.B.	8.10	7.53	0.54	0.08	0.05
Uttarakhand	3.47	2.54	0.56	0.08	0.06
Rajasthan	7.22	3.25	0.66	0.13	0.08
Punjab	5.91	3.42	1.26	0.34	0.20
U.P.	2.63	2.93	1.49	0.54	0.32
Odisha	2.86	3.46	1.61	0.45	0.34
Tripara	19.8	51.65	1.66	0.19	0.14
Chattisgarh	12.69	6.11	3.29	0.48	0.29
Sikkim	37.53	22.55	3.43	0.79	0
Manipur	16.02	11.66	3.58	0.4	0.05
Mizoram	17.1	7.05	3.6	0.67	0.05
Arunachal	17.07	11.51	4.06	0.28	0.07
J&K	15.35	14.18	6.63	0.57	0.11
M.P.	8.60	2.89	7.55	0.31	0.21
Jharkhand	12.03	9.20	7.67	0.56	0.33
A.P.	-	8.39	10	3.32	2.28
Assam	17.39	19.49	12.61	2.96	0.47
Bihar	16.16	8.47	12.95	2.76	1.32
Meghalaya	33.17	33.91	15.03	2	0.2
Nagaland	20.77	30	15.5	1.84	0.17
India	7.69	4.56	3.27	0.75	0.22

ACROSS LEVELS | The table lists the % of teachers who are underqualified across education levels. For instance, of all the underqualified teachers at the higher secondary level, about 60% are in private unaided (recognised) schools while 24% are in schools run by the Deptt of Education.

Type of school	Pre primary	Primary	Upper primary	Secondary	Higher secondary
Private unaided	50.81	41.33	55.38	51.94	60.57
Department of education	36.66	35.78	17.25	20.04	23.69
Government aided	0.93	1.79	5.34	6.21	9.87
Madarsa recognised	0.34	2.35	1.79	0.89	1.23
Navodaya vidyalaya	0	0	0.01	0.13	0.73
Unrecognised	6.65	12.67	16.9	2.76	0.59
Kendriya vidyalaya	0.01	0.92	0.1	0.92	0.55
Local body	3.38	3.46	2.22	14.06	0.23
Tribal welfare dept.	0.06	1.69	0.42	1.79	0.23
Madarsa unrecognised	1.08	0.74	0.37	0.46	0.23

FROM PAGE ONE

Cairn says it has court nod to attach assets

While the Paris properties are estimated to yield about \$23 million, Cairn sources had told *The Hindu* that they have identified assets worth about \$70 billion in several jurisdictions that they could potentially attach through court orders.

Cairn lawyers have registered The Hague award in courts in at least 10 jurisdictions including the U.S., the U.K., Netherlands, Canada, France, Singapore, Japan, the UAE and even the Cayman Islands.

In New York court
In June, Cairn lawyers approached the court in the Southern District of New York, making the plea that Air India should be made liable for the outstanding settlement, and stating that other state-owned corporations could be targeted as well.

Last month, some foreign investors in Devas Multimedia filed a similar plea in the same court, seeking to declare Air India as the Indian government's "alter ego" and recover a \$160 million compensation awarded to

the firm after an international arbitration over its scrapped deal with ISRO's commercial arm, Antrix Corporation.

The government has until next week to file its challenge to the Cairn Energy plea in the New York court. Even as the tax dispute has snowballed into a tussle in international courts, both the Indian government and Cairn Energy said they were open to continuing talks over the issue.

"Government has already filed an application on March 22, 2021 to set aside the December 2020 international arbitral award in The Hague Court of Appeal. Government of India will vigorously defend its case in Set Aside proceedings at The Hague," the Finance Ministry asserted on Thursday.

In December, the three-member tribunal in the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague ruled unanimously against the retrospective tax levied by India on Cairn in 2015. It ruled that the tax fell foul of the bilateral investment pact between India and the U.K.

SC backs summons to FB from Delhi riots panel

The Committee merely wanted him to depose as a witness.

The court rejected Facebook's argument that the Committee had no jurisdiction over law and order in Delhi, and it was encroaching into the Centre's turf.

"The concept of peace and harmony goes much beyond law and order and police... The unfortunate communal riots led to the death of 53 persons, caused significant damage... The complexity of communal tensions and their wide-ranging ramifications is a matter affecting citizens of Delhi. It cannot be said that the Government of Delhi cannot look into the causal factors in order to formulate appropriate remedial measures," Justice Kaul reasoned.

The judgment said an "in-

formed deliberation" by the Assembly's elected representatives on the best measures to combat online mass hate and violence in their geographical jurisdiction was very much within the Committee's competence.

However, the court said the Facebook representative appearing before the Committee need not answer any query from the Committee directly regarding law, order and the police.

The court dismissed Facebook's argument that the Assembly ought to confine itself to making laws rather than enquire into the circumstances of the riots. "This would be unreasonably restricting the role of an elected body... It is not only their concern but their duty to ensure that 'peace and harmony' prevails," the court underscored.

Will your officers follow the law, HC asks Twitter

"We want final accountability which is of great certitude. It can't be left in a halfway house via third party," Mr. Sharma said.

Interim CCO posted
Twitter, in its short note, submitted that it had appointed an interim CCO effective July 6, 2021.

Twitter said it had posted publicly a job announcement for a CCO, a resident grievance officer and a nodal contact person as a direct employee and was accepting applications at this time.

In the meantime, Twitter said it was in the process of making an offer of appointment to a resident grievance officer and a nodal contact person as a direct employee and was accepting applications at this time.

"Twitter intends to engage the services of the internal RGO as a contingent worker via a third party con-

tractor," it said, adding that the duties of the resident grievance officer were being performed by the grievance officer, who would continue to do so until the appointment.

No permanent address
The court also questioned why Twitter did not have a permanent physical address in India as its short note said that its interim physical contact address in India was located in Bengaluru.

Earlier the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) had stated that despite being granted three months to all significant social media intermediaries to comply with the new IT rules, Twitter had failed to do so. The Ministry said Twitter failed to comply with India's law regulating tech companies rendering their services as "intermediaries".

Interim bail to 13 persons held in jail against norms

According to the petition, there were "clear and unchallenged rulings" from the Juvenile Justice Board declaring the 13 prisoners as juveniles at the time of commission of their crime.

"Yet no steps have been taken to release them forthwith. The miseries are further compounded by the fact that these petitioners who are languishing in Agra

Central Jail have already undergone judicial incarceration for periods ranging from 14 to 22 years," the petition said.

Mr. Malhotra said they had spent years in "hardcore jails" among "hardcore criminals". "This completely negates the purpose and objects of the Juvenile Justice Act," the petition said.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur laid a wreath on the mortal remains of the former CM.

Mass transfers before Gangwar's exit

Just before quitting as Labour Minister, he oversaw shifting of nearly 120 senior officers in the EPFO

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

The day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi reorganized the Union Council of Ministers, there was another major reshuffle under the administrative watch of the outgoing Minister Santosh Gangwar – in a statutory body tasked with managing lakhs of crores of rupees.

Nearly 120 top officials in the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which oversees the retirement savings of India's formal workforce, were transferred in an unprecedented *en masse* mid-year transfer on July 6 through two separate orders.

Moreover, before the oath-taking ceremony of the new ministerial council at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on



Making ends meet: Subscribers at an EPFO office in Hyderabad during the pandemic. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

Wednesday evening, these officers in the rank of Additional Central PF Commissioner and Regional PF Commissioner - 1 (RPCF-1), were also relieved of their duties so they could take charge of their new assignments.

As many as 12 Additional Central PF Commissioners

were transferred, while 105 RPCF-1 rank officers (almost half of the sanctioned cadre strength) were shifted to new postings as per the transfer orders reviewed by *The Hindu*.

"The officers shall be relieved with immediate effect and shall join their new place

of posting within three days without awaiting joining time," the order said, sparking concerns among several officers about making such a swift move amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sources said the process for effecting the transfer orders was hurried through so as to complete it before Mr. Gangwar demitted office, and a new Minister assumed charge.

Mr. Gangwar resigned as Minister of State with Independent Charge of the Labour and Employment Ministry on Wednesday and his successor Bhupendra Yadav assumed charge on Thursday afternoon.

"There are several officers who have been transferred out prior to completion of their term and some officers

have been transferred to far off places against the options exercised by them," the EPFO Officers' Association pointed out in a missive to CPFC Sulabh Barthwal on Thursday.

Detailed queries on the transfer orders issued with the approval of the competent authority sent to the Union Labour and Employment Secretary Apurva Chandra and CPFC Sunil Barthwal didn't elicit a response. The new Minister Mr. Yadav did not respond to queries on whether he will review the orders. Veteran EPFO officers said the latest transfer orders are not compliant with the policy laid down in 2016 for EPFO, after a Supreme Court judgment in 2013 directed the government to improve transparency in postings and transfers.

ED questions Khadse for nine hours

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Eknath Khadse, who joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) last year, was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for over nine hours on Thursday. The probe comes a day after his son-in-law was arrested by the agency in the alleged money laundering case related to a land deal in Pune.

Mr. Khadse said the investigation by the ED is nothing but politically motivated witch-hunting as he had dared to quit the BJP. His lawyer said that Mr. Khadse was ready to co-operate with the agency even in future and would appear if he was needed again.

Govt. trying to control digital media: N. Ram

New IT rules are vague, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Under the guise of regulating social media intermediaries, the Narendra Modi government is trying to control the digital media, which has been more defiant than the mainstream media, N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, said in an interview to Stephen Sackur for the BBC's HARDTalk segment.

Speaking on "Is freedom of expression under threat in the world's biggest democracy?", he said the new Information Technology (IT) rules were problematic.

Former Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar and former IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, while announcing the new Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021,

had said they were "soft-touch oversight" mechanisms to deal with issues such as persistent spread of fake news.

He said the government was exaggerating the narrative of "fake news". "India has not been bombarded by fake news," he noted. There may be instances of disinformation, but there were already laws to tackle that, he pointed out.

The new IT rules, he said, were vague on what constituted "digital media". Most of the newspapers had digital presence, where a lot of the print material was replicated. So the question was would there be two sets of rules for the same content.

Mr. Ram concurred with



N. Ram

Mr. Sackur's assessment that many of the media houses appeared more than willing to toe the government line. "I couldn't agree more. This is a familiar criticism," he said.

COVID-19 coverage

Asked about Indian media's coverage of COVID-19, he said the pandemic had exposed the limits of Indian journalism.

He appreciated *The New York Times* for its piece on the under-reporting of the death toll by the government. "We haven't done a good enough job."

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who Mr. Sackur pointed out enjoyed the popular mandate, he said, "There are many examples of elected leaders turning autocratic and authoritarian around the world." This was not the first time that India had had an autocratic leader, he said, pointing at the Emergency imposed by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. But the nature of this autocracy was very different. All agencies available at the government's disposal were utilised to silence dissent, he said.

6 militants, 2 jawans killed in Kashmir

One of the encounters took place close to the Line of Control in Rajouri

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Six militants and two soldiers were killed in three separate gunfights, including one close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri in Jammu & Kashmir, on Thursday.

"A search party of the Army established an engagement with the terrorists in the Dadal forest area in Sunderban Sector on Thursday and challenged them. The terrorists opened fire and lobbed hand grenades, leading to a fierce encounter.

Two foreign terrorists from Pakistan were killed and two AK-47 rifles and ammunition were recovered from them.



Army jawans returning from the encounter site at Zadar in Kulgam district on Thursday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

In the operation, Naib Subedar Sreejith M. and Sepoy Maruprolu Jaswanth Reddy also died," a Jammu-based

Army spokesperson said. Earlier in the day, the police said four Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants had been

killed in two anti-militancy operations in south Kashmir's Pulwama and Kulgam.

"All the four militants killed in two separate operations in Kulgam and Pulwama districts were locals. Two militants killed in Kulgam were planning a big strike on the National Highway. In fact, the encounter took place in an area close to the highway," Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar said.

The Jammu district administration on Thursday declared the Raj Bhawan and the Civil Secretariat to be 'No fly zones', and also banned the use of drone cameras during the Lieutenant-Governor's event in the district.

Mr. Vijay Kumar said,

Former Himachal CM Virbhadra Singh dead

A towering figure in the hill State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Himachal Pradesh chief minister and veteran Congress leader Virbhadra Singh passed away after a prolonged illness on Thursday. He was 87.

The six-time Chief Minister, who had twice recovered from COVID-19 in the past three months and remained under observation at the Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC), was placed on ventilator support after he suffered cardiac arrest earlier this week.

Dr. Janak Raj, Senior Medical Superintendent, IGMC, said Mr. Singh passed away following multi-organ failure early on Thursday.

Three-day mourning
The State government declared three days' mourning from July 8 to 10. He will be cremated at Rampur, his native place, on July 10.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur laid a wreath on the mortal remains of the former CM.



Virbhadra Singh

Mr. Singh, a nine-time MLA, was elected to the Assembly first in October 1983. He was a present MLA from the Arki Assembly constituency in Solan district.

Mr. Singh was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1962 and in all, he was a five-time MP. He served as Minister of State for Industries in 1982-83; Union Minister of Steel from 2009 to 2011; and Union Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises from 2011 to 2012. He was the Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee president in 1977, 1979, 1980 and 2012.

"I would say for the last 40 years, we had a very stable relation with China... China emerged as the second largest trade partner..." Mr. Virbhadra Singh said in response to a question on China-India relations at the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow.

"But for the last one year, there has been a lot of concern about the relationship because China has not observed agreements that it had signed up to when it came to our border," said Mr. Virbhadra Singh, who is here on a three-day visit.

Our Ambassador conveyed the need to correct some of the misperceptions about India

■ ARINDAM BAGCHI
MEA spokesperson

through biased and one-sided resolutions," Mr. Bagchi said, confirming that the meeting was requested by the OIC Secretary General.

Mr. Bagchi later clarified that he had referred to Pakistan through the use of the term "vested interests". The discussion between the two sides comes in the context of the reported back channel talks between India and Pakistan that are being assisted by the UAE.

The OIC had stated that the meeting between Dr. Sayeed and Dr. Al-Othaimeen "reviewed a number of issues concerning the situation of Muslims in India, along with the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, and relevant UN and OIC resolutions opposing any unilateral actions on the issue".

■ ARINDAM BAGCHI
MEA spokesperson

India on Thursday trashed as "baseless propaganda" Pakistan's claim that it was behind a bomb blast near the house of Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed in Lahore last month, and asked Islamabad to take "credible and verifiable" action against terrorism emanating from its soil instead.

At a media briefing, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi asked Pakistan to focus on setting its own house in order in containing terror networks.

Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moed Yousuf had alleged that the mastermind of the attack "is an Indian citizen" associated with RAW (Research and Analysis Wing). "The international community is well aware of Pakistan's credentials when it comes to terrorism," Mr. Bagchi said, adding that Pakistan continued to "glorify terrorists like Osama bin Laden as martyrs".

■ ARINDAM BAGCHI
MEA spokesperson

Panel report on data Bill hangs fire

Five members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee have now been made Ministers

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Wednesday's Cabinet expansion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi saw five members of the Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill, including its Chairperson Meenakshi Lekhi, being inducted into the Council of Ministers, raising questions over the long-pending report of the panel.

The inductees include the new Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and Minister of State Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) helms the Bill. The Bill seeks to provide protection of personal data of individuals and was introduced in December 2019 in the Lok Sabha. It was referred to the joint parliamentary panel, headed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, in



New role: Officials greeting Rajeev Chandrasekhar, left, in New Delhi on Thursday as he takes charge as MoS. • PTI

February last year. It is yet to submit its report.

Ms. Lekhi is now the MoS for External Affairs and Culture. The other committee members now in the Cabinet are Bhupender Yadav, now Union Environment Minister, also handling the Ministry of Labour, and Ajay Bhatt, who is the new MoS

for Defence and Tourism.

Ten of the 30 members of the committee had moved amendments against a provision (Clause 35) in the legislation giving power to the Central government to exempt

any agency of government from application of the Act. The members have said that this clause makes the entire

amendment infructuous.

The 10 members are Mr. Chandrasekhar, Congress MPs Jairam Ramesh, Manish Tewari, and Gaurav Gogoi, Trinamool Congress MPs Derek O'Brien and Mahua Moitra along with Biju Janta Dal MPs Bharatnath Mahtab and Amar Patnaik, BSP's Ritesh Pandey, and Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Eknath Shinde. *The Hindu* has accessed a copy of the amendments moved by the members.

Invoking "sovereignty and integrity of India", "public order", "friendly relations with foreign states" and "security of the state", the legislation gives powers to the Central government to suspend all or any of the provisions of this Act for government agencies.

In his amendment, Mr. Chandrasekhar had sought further tightening of the existing clause, adding "health emergencies", "public safety

emergencies" as the other scenarios allowing the Centre to step in to provide exemptions. He and other members also demanded that the Bill revise the definition of a 'child'. Presently as per the Act, anyone below 18 years of age has been described as a 'child'.

"For six months, I have been requesting a draft report of the Joint Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill be circulated to its members. Now the Chairperson has become a Minister along with 3 members. What happens now to the Committee & draft report? The new Ministers had much to say on the Bill," Committee member Jairam Ramesh tweeted.

The Select Committee so far has held 66 meetings and its last sitting was on December 29 last year. The members were told that a draft report was ready and would soon be circulated.

JD(U) leaders red-faced over climbdown

Party sought 4 berths, but settled for 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There is stunned silence in the JD(U) on the party's climbdown from its 2019 position of refusing to join Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Council of Ministers over mere "symbolic representation", to settling for a single berth in the latest expansion.

Rajya Sabha member and party chief R.C.P. Singh was sworn in as Minister for Steel on Wednesday.

Party leaders are at pains to explain the reason for the embarrassing capitulation as also the choice of Mr. Singh over other more experienced lieutenants of Mr. Kumar.

In 2019, the JD(U) was offered two berths – a Cabinet position and a Minister of State. At that time Bihar Chief Minister and then party national president Nitish Kumar said, "They [the BJP] said they want to give one Cabinet rank to every ally. Then we said that we will discuss it with party members and then only we can say anything over this symbolic representation. I spoke to my party leaders and the unanimous view was that we should stay out of the Ministry. Everybody felt there should be proportional representation in an alliance government."

The party had then argued that it should get "proportional representation" having won 16 out of the 17 Lok Sabha seats it contested



R.C.P. Singh
in Bihar against 17 won by the BJP and six by the LJP as part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Bihar has 40 Lok Sabha seats. As per their deductions, the BJP has five Ministers from Bihar, so the JD (U) proportionally should get four. This time round, too, the party demanded four positions.

'We are shocked'
However, two days before the Cabinet expansion on Monday, Mr. Kumar changed his stance saying that he is not aware of any such formula. He said the party's newly appointed national president R.C.P. Singh was in Delhi and had been authorised to finalise everything with the BJP.

"We are now reduced to the level of Apna Dal or LJP. They too have one member each. What can I possibly say, we are shocked ourselves. This is daylight robbery and probably an insider's job," a senior JD(U) leader said. None of the leaders that *The Hindu* reached out to wanted to speak on record.



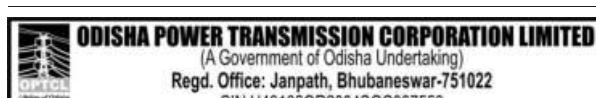
BIRRD (TRUST) HOSPITAL, TIRUPATI.

NOTIFICATION FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR, BIRRD (TRUST) HOSPITAL ON DEPUTATION / LOAN OF SERVICE

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates to fill up the post of DIRECTOR, Sri Balaji Institute of Surgery, Research and Rehabilitation for the Disabled (BIRRD Trust Hospital) (An Orthopaedic Broad Speciality Hospital and Research Centre being run by Trust floated by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) on Deputation / Loan of Service. The eligible candidates are requested to log on to the website of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams at <https://www.tirumala.org>, <https://www.tirumala.org/SABIRRD.aspx> and can download the details. The candidates shall forward their applications through the competent Authority of their Institutions where they are working now. The period of deputation is 03 years initially and further extendable on the basis of performance under the applicable rules / proceedings issued by TTD Management and Government of India or State Government for the purpose. TTD reserves all the rights including the right to cancel the recruitment process at any time. Also the TTD management reserves all rights to repatriate the candidate prematurely on being found his / her service unsatisfactory.

The applications shall reach the below mentioned address by 07-08-2021, CS-RMO BIRRD Trust Hospital, O/o the Executive Officer, SVIMS Campus, Tirupati - 517 501. Email: officebirrd@gmail.com. Ph.No.0877-2264229.

RoC.No.PRA/13932/Adv.No.80/PRO/2021/Dated:08-07-2021 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



TENDER ALERT

01)E-Notice Inviting Tender No.CPC-13/2021-22: Supply of 09 nos of 20MVA, 132/33 kV Power Transformers.
02) E-Tender Notice No.CPC-12/2021-22: Supply of hot dip Galvanized steel structure materials (HT&MS), HDG Nut & bolts and accessories for Transmission Line towers and substation equipment structures as per OPTCL design.
03) E-Tender Notice No.CPC-11/2021-22: Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of shifting of 132 KV Nimapara-Samgara-Puri LILO line (Approx. Line Length-1.2KM) from Sri Jagannath Medical College campus by using UG cable.

For details please visit: www.optcl.co.in & www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL.

HIPR-09/2021-22
DIPR-C/6569

CAD-81

CM YK

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THE HINDU DELHI

THE H

IN BRIEF

**Sonia Gandhi offers condolences to Saira Banu**

NEW DELHI
Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday wrote to Saira Banu condoling the death of her husband and legendary actor Dilip Kumar. Ms. Gandhi said, "The golden age of Indian cinema has come to an end with his passing away." Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also wrote to Ms. Banu.

Oman bars flights from India, 23 other countries

DUBAI
Oman on Thursday indefinitely suspended passengers flights from 24 countries, including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as part of the Gulf nation's efforts to arrest the spread of the coronavirus. PTI

Opposition slams Assam CM on police violence

GUWAHATI
Opposition parties in Assam have slammed Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for allegedly "encouraging and normalising" shooting by police to control crime. Rajo Dal president Akhil Gogoi said that it was a gross violation of human rights. Congress leader Debabrata Saikia was also critical of the "trigger-happy" police.

Sanofi, GSK get nod for phase 3 efficacy trial

Vaccine candidate to be tested for ability to fight variants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Sanofi and GSK said they have received approval for their phase 3 clinical study in India, to assess the safety, efficacy and immunogenicity of their COVID-19 vaccine candidate.

The global, randomised, double-blind phase 3 study will include more than 35,000 volunteers aged 18 and older across sites in the U.S., Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

As part of the study design, all participants, including the control group, will be offered the study vaccine as soon as it is determined to be safe and effective, Sanofi said.

"India is participating in Sanofi Pasteur's pivotal phase 3 study, and subject to subsequent approvals, we should soon begin enrolment of study participants in the country," said Annapurna Das, country head, Sanofi Pasteur India.

"As the virus continues to evolve, we are anticipating what will be needed in the coming months and years, and accordingly, have adapted our vaccine development



The jab's ability to generate a strong booster response will be studied.

programme," she said. "We believe our adjuvanted, recombinant vaccine can make a significant contribution to the ongoing fight against COVID-19 and are committed to initiating our clinical program in India, at the earliest" she added.

Recent scientific evidence shows that antibodies created against the Beta variant may provide broad cross-protection against other more transmissible variants.

The design of the phase 3 study also allows evaluation of the efficacy of the candidate against a variety of circulating variants, it said.

Sanofi and GSK will also run clinical studies to assess the ability of the vaccine candidate to generate a strong booster response regardless of the type of vac-

cine initially received.

"The phase 3 study initiation follows the global interim phase 2 results which showed that the adjuvanted recombinant COVID-19 vaccine candidate achieved high rates of neutralising antibody responses in all adult age groups, with 95 to 100% seroconversion rates," the company said.

In this partnership, Sanofi provides its recombinant antigen and GSK contributes the adjuvant, both established vaccine platforms that have proven successful against influenza.

The recombinant technology combined with GSK's adjuvant is designed to offer the advantages of stability at temperatures used for routine vaccines, making it easily implementable and easier to distribute at a global scale through existing infrastructures where vaccines are stored at normal refrigeration temperatures, the company said.

It is also designed to offer the potential to generate high and sustained immune responses, and the potential to prevent virus transmission, it added.

PM stresses local language education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised on the importance of providing engineering education in local languages, during a virtual meeting with the heads of 106 Centrally funded technical institutions and newly appointed Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday. According to one of the attendees, Mr. Modi said even research papers and journals in English should be translated.

"PM added that we need to develop an ecosystem of technological education in Indian languages and translate global journals into regional languages," said a Ministry statement.

This has been a key recommendation of the National Education Policy and the Education Ministry had set up a panel headed by Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare to explore ways to begin offering technical education in Indian languages at the highest level. According to the statement, the Prime Minister said "there is a need to adapt higher education and technical education to keep in tune with the changing environment".

Delimitation should be as per the constitutional framework based on the basic tenets of delimitation, population, geography, topography, area, various physical features, contiguity, convenience of administrative units and facilities of easy communication and approachability of public convenience," the memorandum reads.

Jammu and echoed the BJP demands in framing a new criterion to delimit constituencies.

Delimitation should be as per the constitutional framework based on the basic tenets of delimitation, population, geography, topography, area, various physical features, contiguity, convenience of administrative units and facilities of easy communication and approachability of public convenience," the memorandum reads.

Farmers' stir draws smaller crowds

Strategic decision to spread protest in many locations, says union leader

**No fuel:** Farmers with empty cooking gas cylinders during a protest at the Ghazipur border on Thursday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

At some locations in Punjab, tractors lined the sides of the road. In most States, protesters carried empty gas cylinders and banners.

Though this is an issue af-

flecting common citizens as well as farmers, the number of people at each protest was relatively small, nowhere near the thousands who joined rallies during the

heady winter days when the agitation was at its peak.

"This is a strategic decision. Rather than giving one location for a mass rally, we asked people to gather at any location on a State or National Highway, so though the numbers at each location may have been smaller, there were many more locations of protest," said Abhimanyu Kohar, an SKM leader and spokesperson for the Rashtriya Kisan Maha Sangh.

Mr. Kohar also pointed out that with the ongoing paddy cultivation, which is labour intensive, many farmers are not able to join the protest sites daily.

Muslim, Yadav combine will not work in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The M-Y combination – a reference to coming together of Muslim and Yadav voters for a common party – will not work in Uttar Pradesh, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi told pressersons on Thursday.

Mr. Owaisi's reference to the M-Y combination is seen as a message to the Samajwadi Party, which relies heavily on the two communities for votes in the State. "Keep this in mind, M-Y combination won't work in Uttar Pradesh," Mr. Owaisi said.

Cabinet decision, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said this was proof that "APMC will not end". The Central government was committed to making APMC more powerful and useful for farmers, he said.

Thousands of protesting farmers have been calling for a repeal of three farm reform laws passed by Parliament last year.

Cabinet extends Agri Infra Fund loans to APMCs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided to allow state-run market yards to access financing facilities through its Agricultural Infrastructure Fund to calm the fears of protesting farmers that such market yards are being weakened.

On Friday, at its first meeting after the reshuffle, the Union Cabinet decided to extend the Central Sector

Scheme of financing facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to State agencies and Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), as well as federations of cooperative organisations, Farmers Producers Organizations and self help groups, according to an official statement.

They will now be eligible for interest subvention for loans up to ₹2 crore, with APMCs allowed to access separate loans for different kinds of infrastructure projects to build cold storage, silos, sorting, grading and assaying units in their market yards.

Multiplier effect

The period of the financial facility has been extended by two additional years up to 2025-26, while the overall period of the scheme has

been extended to 2032-33. "The modifications in the Scheme will help to achieve a multiplier effect in generating investments while ensuring that the benefits reach small and marginal farmers. The APMC markets are set up to provide market linkages and create an ecosystem of post-harvest public infrastructure open to all farmers," said the statement.

Briefing journalists on the

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13294

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Self-dependent virtues

Janaka's court was always alive with Vedantic discussions and debates by the most well-versed scholars and sages of those times. This righteous ruler was also an excellent disciple to the preceptors from whom he imbibed sastra knowledge. He was quick to perceive the young Ashtavakra's wisdom and wished to learn further precepts from him. The sage's instruction is known as Ashtavakra Gita.

In a discourse, Sri R. Rajagopal Salma drew attention to the guru-sishya equation in this case which is unique, for Janaka though ripe in age and jnana becomes a humble seeker and the preceptor though young is extraordinarily wise and astute. Janaka asks the sage to explain how one can attain jnana and get liberated. There is no other option in this pursuit, except to give up the longing for sense objects, is the very first instruction which is also very difficult to follow. For, in creation, the senses are poised to look outwards and there is constant exposure to the objects, places and people of the world. Naturally, the senses are drawn to them. This situation has to be broken and the senses are to be turned to look at the atma within.

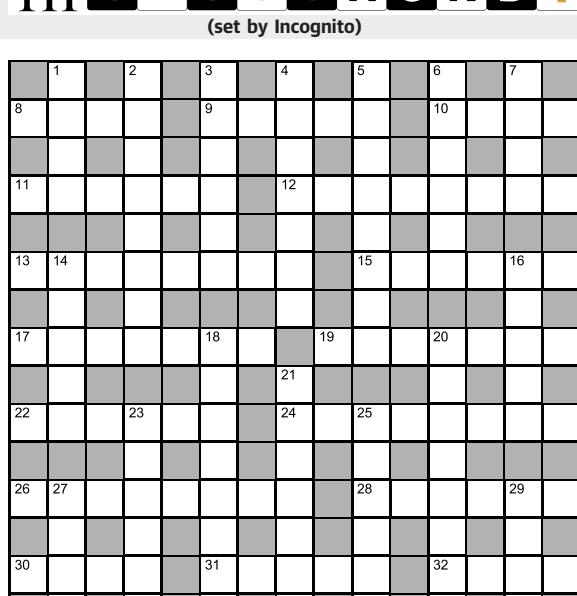
To help us in this endeavour, it is advised that we learn to consider sense objects as poison and shun them totally. We have to understand how sense objects poison the mind. The moment there is an emotional reaction in the mind to any sense object, a strong desire to possess it arises. Then one goes to any extent to possess it. He only brings forth on himself more attachments and worries in the process. The wise instead consciously control the mind and direct it to seek the valuable nectar derived by the practice of moral virtues such as forgiveness, kindness and contentment. These make one self-dependent rather than sense-dependent.

TH CROSSWORD

13295

(set by Incognito)

Never go off the grid.
We are digital now. Come solve online.
@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

**ACROSS**

- 8 North European stick (4)
- 9 Agree and let in (5)
- 10 Questions idiot about king (4)
- 11 Bring in brat with ring, right? (6)
- 12 Where your den chair might have been manufactured? (3,5)
- 13 Listeners pass away before noon in Australian church (8)
- 15 Asinine typist's number of mistakes? (6)

- 17 Part of lathe is turned for non-believer (7)
- 19 Excitedly stare at Venus in Greece (7)
- 22 Operate motor car in front of learner? Nonsense! (6)
- 24 Emphasises, "Special locks" (8)
- 26 Stand and arrange pet deals (8)
- 28 Watch part is very small... give... (6)
- 30 Detest headgear with Earl (4)
- 31 Chief alien confiscates model's musical composition (5)
- 32 See 28 (4)
- DOWN
- 1 Versifier's grand verse (4)
- 2 Note: Get up and learn by heart (8)
- 3 Box wagon has thousand kilograms (6)
- 4 Retired settler's horrible greed came into the open (7)
- 5 Pupils' ward adopted by bosses (8)
- 6 Irishman with Chinese and Afghan national (6)
- 7 Hide bit of tusk I nicked (4)
- 14 Say, "Total" (5)
- 16 Bird with the French name (5)
- 18 Answer, "Solvent dissolved in solute" (8)
- 20 Foolishly bathes in alcoholic drink (8)
- 21 Separate after one's very delayed (7)
- 23 Saw animal in first 3/5ths of video (6)
- 25 Meteor crashing? Unlikely! (6)
- 27 Test previous partner by morning (4)
- 29 Cask with one fish (4)

Fourth Rajapaksa brother joins Cabinet

Basil Rajapaksa sworn in as Finance Minister

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Basil Rajapaksa, brother of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, was on Thursday sworn in as Sri Lanka's Minister of Finance, becoming the fourth Rajapaksa brother and fifth member of the family to enter the Cabinet. The eldest of the brothers, Chamal Rajapaksa, is a Cabinet Minister, as is Nimal Rajapaksa, son of PM Mahinda Rajapaksa. Mr. Chamal Rajapaksa's son Shashendra Rajapaksa is a non-Cabinet minister.

Mr. Basil Rajapaksa's appointment, enabled by the resignation of a government MP and Sri Lanka's national



Taking charge: Basil Rajapaksa, right, being sworn in as Finance Minister in Colombo on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

list system, through which political parties get extra seats to Parliament based on their vote share, comes at a crucial time for the Rajapaksa administration, which is facing an unprecedented economic challenge that is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. His entry was also made possible by the government removing a constitutional provision barring dual citizens – Mr. Basil

Rajapaksa is also an American citizen – from entering Parliament.

New portfolio

Mr. Basil Rajapaksa took charge of the Finance Ministry, helmed until now by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was on Thursday allocated the newly-created portfolio of Economic Policies and Planning. Mr. Basil Rajapaksa, who served as a Presiden-

tial Adviser and Minister for Economic Development in the former Mahinda Rajapaksa administrations, was arrested in 2015 following allegations of corruption, but was later released on bail. In November 2020, he was acquitted in the case.

Mr. Basil Rajapaksa is credited with building the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP or People's Front), the new political vehicle for the Rajapaksa's return to power in 2019. As chief strategist, it was Mr. Basil Rajapaksa who crafted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's campaign in the presidential poll of 2019 and ensured the party's landslide victory in the August 2020 general elections.

For observers in Sri Lanka, Mr. Basil Rajapaksa's entry into government is no surprise. "This was expect-

ed, it was only a matter of time," said political scientist Jayadeva Uyangoda. "He was anyway one of the major powers behind the scenes for the last two years."

The government has a "triple crisis" to manage, he said, pointing to the "economic, public health and governance crises". "If you look at the drama and media hype created around his entry, Mr. Basil Rajapaksa is projected as a saviour, a sort of miracle man. Just like they did when they put forward Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa as the presidential candidate," Prof. Uyangoda said. In his view, although Mr. Basil Rajapaksa has a reputation of being an "economic and political dealmaker", the current crisis defies those skills. "This crisis is so profound that it is beyond the capacity of a skilful dealmaker."

S. Africa's ex-President Zuma jailed after landmark ruling

He was charged with contempt of Court on June 29

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JOHANNESBURG

Jacob Zuma on Thursday began a 15-month sentence for contempt of court, becoming post-apartheid South Africa's first President to be jailed after a drama that campaigners said ended in a victory for the rule of law.

Zuma, 79, reported to prison early on Thursday after mounting last-ditch legal bid and stoking defiance among radical supporters who had rallied at his rural home.

South Africa's top court



on June 29 slapped Zuma with a 15-month term for refusing an order to appear before a probe into the corruption that entangled his nine years in power. As police warned that he faced arrest from midnight Wednesday, Zuma handed himself in to a jail in the rural town of Estcourt in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Many South Africans hailed his incarceration as a watershed moment.

Former corruption buster and ex-ombudsman Thuli Madonsela hailed it as a "glorious day, in that it says that the rule of law prevails". If he had not gone to prison, "it would have sent shock waves to the system", she said.

Investigators say that under Zuma, billions of dollars in state assets were siphoned off by cronies.

Zuma had been given a deadline of Sunday night for turning himself in. Failing his surrender, police were given three days, until midnight Wednesday, to arrest him.

Key Malaysia party pulls support for PM

REUTERS
KUALA LUMPUR

The United Malays National Organisation, Malaysia's biggest political party and key ally in the ruling coalition, withdrew support for Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Wednesday and called on him to resign for failing to manage the country's COVID-19 crisis.

But the country's Attorney-General said the move will not affect the position of Mr. Muhyiddin or his Cabinet, as the question of his House majority can only be determined by Parliament, not by pronouncements by party leaders.

Kabul sends in commandos as Taliban surround Afghan city



Mounting crisis: Smoke plumes rising from houses on Wednesday amid the ongoing fighting in Qala-i-Naw. ■ AFP

Videos obtained by AFP showed thick smoke billowing over Qala-i-Naw on Thursday, soundtracked by gunfire.

Baqish health official Abdul Latif Rostaee said at least 10 civilians had been taken

to hospital since the fighting erupted. Provincial council member Zia Gul Habibi said the Taliban suffered casualties, but also surrounded the city. "All districts are under their control ... People are really in fear," she said.

Fighting rages in Qala-i-Naw for the second day

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HERAT

Plumes of smoke billowed over an Afghan provincial capital Thursday as fighting raged between the Taliban and government forces for a second straight day.

The government flew hundreds of commandos into Qala-i-Naw, in northwestern Badghis province, the first regional capital to face an all-out assault by the Taliban since the U.S. stepped up its troop withdrawal.

Authorities said the explosion caused no casualties and they were investigating the cause. The authorities also reported a "leakage" from the ship. The blast shook buildings in several neighbourhoods across Dubai. AP

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur
Tatibandh, G.E. Road, Raipur, C.G.- 492099
No.26/06/2021/AIIMS Raipur (Academics)/1406 Date: 06.07.2021
Admission Notice- PDCC Course- July 2021

AIIMS, Raipur invites on-line applications for Entrance Examinations for admissions to Post Doctoral Certificate Course (PDCC) July, 2021 session in the Department of Anaesthesiology: Cardiac Anaesthesia (2 seats), Critical Care (4 seats), Neurological Anaesthesia (2 seats), Pain and Palliative Care (2 seats), Obstetric Anaesthesia (1 seat); **Cardiology:** Cardiac Critical Care Medicine (2 seats); General Surgery (2 seats); **Obstetrics and Gynaecology:** High-Risk Pregnancy (2 seats), Gynaecological Endoscopy (2 seats); **Paediatrics:** Neonatology (4 seats), Paediatric Cardiac Critical Care (2 seats); and **Radiodiagnosis:** Cardiothoracic and Vascular Imaging and Interventional Radiology (2 seats). Starting Date of Online Application Form: 10.07.2021 Last Date for Submission of Online Form and Application Fee: 26.07.2021 Written Examination: 10.08.2021 (02:00 PM to 04:00 PM) For detailed information, please visit the website www.aiimsraipur.edu.in. All applicants are requested to visit the website regularly since all subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum/Updates will be uploaded on the website only. -Dean (Academics)

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), BHUBANESWAR
(A Statutory body under aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Sijua, Post-Oumuduma, Bhubaneswar (Odisha)-751019
Ref No :AIIMS/BSR/CON/Guest Faculty/30 Date : 7th July 2021
ENGAGEMENT OF GUEST FACULTY
Online interview on temporary basis will be conducted at 11 AM on 19th, 20th & 22nd July 2021 through online mode at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar to select the candidates for the post of one (01) Guest Faculty of each of the subjects Psychology, Odia, English, Computer, Sociology and Statistics of B.Sc.(Hons.) Nursing and M.Sc. Nursing. Applicants are advised to read the terms and conditions and download the application forms from website www.aiimshubaneswar.nic.in and do the needful.

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CIN No. U2423M12007SCC021619
No. KMSCL/EP/9652/2021 Date : 08.07.2021
e-TENDER NOTICE (Running Contract)
As per Covid-19 Third Wave pandemic surge planning online bids are invited for the supply and installation of the following equipment for various Government healthcare institutions across Kerala.
Sl. No. Tender No. Description Online Pre-Bid Meeting Last date of Online submission
1. T412/2021 High frequency oscillating ventilator, Ventilator ICU, Ventilator Neonatal and Adult Model B, Bubble CPAP, Non Invasive BiPAP Ventilator, Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) 13.07.2021 23.07.2021 11.00 a.m. 05.00 p.m.
2. T413/2021 Portable Echo Cardiography Type C, Blood Gas Analyzer Various types, CRRT Machine, Electrolyte Analyzer, Electrolyte Analyzer Point of care, OT Table Electro Hydraulic, Mobile Spot Light LED Model B, Water Purifier 14.07.2021 23.07.2021 11.00 a.m. 05.00 p.m.
State Public Sector undertakings and MSMEs registered in the State or registered outside the state satisfying the policy of Government of India are exempted from remittance of tender document cost and EMD subject to the submission of valid documents, provided all the offered products are manufactured by them. Tender documents and all other information related to tender and bidding process can be downloaded from the website www.tenders.kerala.gov.in. Sd/- Managing Director (Tender Inviting Authority)

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PRINCIPAL CHIEF MATERIALS

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	52,569	-0.92
US Dollar	74.71	-0.12
Gold	47,966	2.26
Brent oil	73.48	0.47

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	711.70	-8.40
Asian Paints	3028.30	-11.80
Axis Bank	754.40	-8.50
Bajaj Auto	4077.30	-110.95
Bajaj Finance	12333.90	-40.25
Bharti Airtel	525.30	-4.30
BPCL	458.20	-2.30
Britannia Ind.	3491.40	-29.95
Cipla	950.65	-14.55
Coal India	146.25	-1.30
Divis Lab	4510.50	-42.05
Dr Reddy's Lab	5466.75	-95.35
Eicher Motors	2729.30	18.45
Grasim Ind	1475.45	-18.40
HCL Tech	976.80	1.45
HDFC	2512.05	-17.15
HDFC Bank	1520.45	-19.05
HDFC Life	681.30	-3.90
Hero MotoCorp	2900.40	-12.95
Hindalco	383.10	-10.55
Hind Unilever	2447.55	-34.10
ICICI Bank	641.90	-12.10
IndusInd Bank	1045.45	0.55
Infosys	1560.75	-3.85
Indian Oil Corp	107.55	-0.40
ITC	202.00	-1.75
JSW Steel	668.25	-22.15
Kotak Bank	1732.30	-29.50
L&T	1500.70	-15.75
M&M	776.25	-2.65
Maruti Suzuki	7401.20	-48.20
Nestle India Ltd.	17618.90	-98.05
NTPC	117.45	0.00
ONGC	117.05	-2.85
PowerGrid Corp	231.15	0.20
Reliance Ind	2092.60	-17.45
SBI Life	1021.60	7.20
State Bank	424.45	-8.40
Shree Cement	27581.80	34.80
Sun Pharma	666.90	-13.20
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	763.30	0.25
Tata Motors	306.35	-10.75
Tata Steel	189.75	-28.90
TCS	3258.50	-16.45
Tech Mahindra	1060.15	14.25
Titan	1726.35	-0.00
UltraTech Cement	6901.90	-23.20
UPL	814.10	-2.80
Wipro	531.00	-1.15

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.51	74.83
Euro	88.24	88.62
British Pound	102.62	103.06
Japanese Yen (100)	67.84	68.14
Chinese Yuan	11.48	11.53
Swiss Franc	81.23	81.57
Singapore Dollar	55.08	55.33
Canadian Dollar	59.41	59.67
Malaysian Ringgit	17.81	17.89

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



U.S. jobless claims unexpectedly rise

WASHINGTON The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits rose unexpectedly last week, an indication that the labour market recovery from the pandemic continues to be choppy. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 2,000 to a seasonally-adjusted 3.73 lakh for the week ended July 3, the Labor Department said. REUTERS.

Sowtex, Tukatech sign 3D textile-solution pact

MUMBAI Sowtex Network Pvt. Ltd., a fashion and textile platform, has signed a pact with U.S.-based Tukatech Inc., a fashion technology firm, to provide 3D technology-based solutions for textile buyers, designers, manufacturers and suppliers in Asia. "We aim to reduce the sampling turnaround time for manufacturers from 3 weeks to 3 hours," said Sonil Jain, founder and CEO, Sowtex.

E-com firm DealShare raises \$144 million

BENGALURU DealShare, a social e-commerce start-up engaged in community group buying (CGB), has raised \$144 million in its latest funding round. The round was led by Tiger Global and co-led by WestBridge Capital and Alpha Wave Incubation. With the current round, the total funding raised by DealShare, in a span of 7 months, stood at \$183 million, the company said.

Union Bank to issue ₹1,150-cr. Basel bonds

NEW DELHI Union Bank of India said it has accepted bids to raise up to ₹1,150 crore by issuing Basel III-compliant bonds. The bank is issuing Basel III-compliant debt instruments in the nature of debentures eligible for inclusion in tier 2 capital of ₹500 crore with green shoe option of up to ₹650 crore on a private placement basis. Union Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. PTI

TCS Q1 net climbs 28.5% on growth in North America, U.K.

India business hit by COVID second wave; company adds 20,409 to headcount

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (TCS) on Thursday said first-quarter consolidated net profit jumped 28.5% from a year earlier to ₹9,008 crore, helped by 'robust' growth in its core markets of North America and the U.K. Revenue in the three months ended June 30 rose 18.5% to ₹45,411 crore.

The board declared a dividend of ₹7 per share.

Significantly, the India business contracted 25.3%, impacted by the second wave of COVID-19, with TCS iON, the public sector Passport Seva business and business from the private sector all



On a roll: Business in North America, BFSI and retail all showed appreciable growth, says Gopinathan. ■PAUL NORONHA

getting affected severely.

"Our business in North America, BFSI and retail all showed an appreciable growth which underlines the resilience of our operating model," CEO and MD Rajesh

Gopinathan said in a statement. In a media briefing, he pointed out that the adverse impact on the India operations had led to a revenue loss of ₹350 crore in the quarter. He added that the

Sensex slides 0.92% on profit booking

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices lost almost 1% on Thursday in the backdrop of global cues and profit booking.

The S&P BSE Sensex dropped 486 points, or 0.92%, to close at 52,569 as metal, banking and pharma stocks lost ground. The top losers in the Sensex pack included Tata Steel and Dr. Reddy's.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty 50 index shed 152 points, or 0.96%, to settle at 15,728. The top losers included Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Hindalco and ONGC.

"The demand scenario and management commentary will be crucial factors to watch out for in Q1FY22 results," said Ajit Mishra, VP, research, Religare Broking Ltd.

DBS unit net profit, NPAs surge post LVB merger

Confident of long-term prospects: MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

DBS Bank India, the wholly-owned subsidiary of Singapore's DBS Bank, witnessed a surge in FY21 net profit to ₹312 crore following its merger with the erstwhile Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) but reported a huge spike in bad loans as a result of the amalgamation.

DBS Bank India, which bailed out LVB, had reported a post tax net profit of ₹11 crore in FY20.

Gross non-performing assets of the combined entity shot up to 12.9%, with a bulk of the strain coming from the erstwhile LVB's portfolio. The net NPAs stood at 2.83% with a provision coverage ratio of 84%.

The bank's MD and CEO Surojit Shome acknowledged the pain on the asset quality front and the operating losses and called it as being on 'expected lines.'

"We are confident of realising the long-term prospects of the combined franchise," Mr. Shome said.

There had been 'considerable progress' with the integration of LVB even with the dislocations due to the second wave of the pandemic, he added.



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There had been 'considerable progress' with the integration of LVB even with the dislocations due to the second wave of the pandemic, he added.

FinMin releases ₹9,871-cr. grant to 17 States

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Thursday said it had released the fourth monthly instalment of post-devolution revenue deficit (PDRD) grant of ₹9,871 crore to 17 States.

With the release of this instalment, a total amount of ₹39,484 crore has been released to eligible States in the current financial year.

The post devolution revenue deficit grant is provided to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution.

The grants are released as per the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission in monthly instalments to meet the gap in revenue accounts of the States post devolution.

Low base helps hoist June retail vehicle sales by 22.6%

FADA says pent-up demand spurs deliveries to 12 lakh units

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Fuelled by pent-up demand and aided by a low base, total retail sales of vehicles rose 22.6% from a year earlier to more than 12.1 lakh units in June 2021, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said. However, registrations were still about 28% lower when compared with the pre-pandemic June 2019 figure of more than 16.98 lakh units.

On a year-on-year basis, all vehicle categories saw growth in sales last month led by commercial vehicles (CVs), which more than tripled to 35,700 units. The non-availability of BS-6 vehicles, combined with the pan-



demic impact, had to extremely low deliveries in June 2020. Passenger vehicle (PV) sales jumped 43.5% to about 1.84 lakh units, three-wheelers increased almost 22% to 14,732 units, two-wheeler registrations rose almost 17% to 9.3 lakh units and tractor deliveries were 14.3% higher at 52,261.

"The month of June witnessed reopening for most of the States except the ones in the South... the industry witnessed a high pent-up demand," said FADA President Vinakesh Gulati. "Two-wheelers, though in green, have witnessed a softer recovery as rural market is taking time to get back from post-COVID stress," he added.

The industry was, however, still not out of the woods with tractors the only category that had posted growth over June 2019, he noted.

The auto dealers' body said it expects positive momentum to continue in July and demand to further pick up, especially as markets in southern India open up.

'Tractor sales volumes to grow 3-6%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Despite the impact of COVID-19 second wave, tractor sales volume is expected to grow in 2021-22 in low mid-single digits of 3-6%, mainly on a higher base following the 27% growth seen in FY21, India Ratings and Research (Ind-RA) said.

Tractor sales volume is likely to pick up from the second quarter of the ongoing fiscal as localised lockdowns and restrictions have been relaxed, the rating agency said in a statement.

"SIP AUM at an all-time high and now forming almost 15% of the industry AUMs and the number of SIP accounts breaching 4-crore mark for the first time, is reflective of the continued retail investor confidence in the mutual fund asset class," said N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, AMFI.

"With net inflows in

March, April, May and now in June, clearly investors are gaining their conviction back on the equity markets," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research at Morningstar India.

Equity schemes saw a net inflow of ₹3,437 crore in April and ₹9,115 crore in March. Prior to this, equity schemes had consistently witnessed outflows for 8 months from July 2020 to February 2021.

Equity schemes saw a net inflow of ₹3,437 crore in April and ₹9,115 crore in March. Prior to this, equity schemes had consistently witnessed outflows for 8 months from July 2020 to February 2021.

"It is reflective of the continued retail investor confidence in the mutual fund asset class," said N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, AMFI.

"The macroeconomic tailwinds mostly remain intact for the rural economy, including the normal monsoon forecast, the expectation of a strong Kharif harvest, and improved rural income,"

Barty's craft and Pliskova's power light up semifinal day

Top-seeded Aussie ruthlessly ends Kerber's best Slam run since the 2018 edition while the Czech outguns Sabalenka in a battle of big servers

WIMBLEDON

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Ashleigh Barty is one victory away from realising her dream of winning the Wimbledon title on the 50th anniversary of fellow indigenous Australian Evonne Goolagong Cawley's first triumph.

The 25-year-old World No. 1 produced her best performance of the Championships so far to beat 2018 champion Angelique Kerber 6-3, 7-6(3). Barty will play former World No. 1 Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic in Saturday's final.

Eighth-seeded Pliskova reached her second Grand Slam final after rallying to beat No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka in three sets. In a match-up of two big servers playing in their first Wimbledon semififi-

nal, Pliskova won 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.

Sabalenka saved all eight break points she faced in the first set – including four at 5-5 – and then converted her first when Pliskova double-faulted on set point.

Taking control

But Pliskova finally broke for a 3-2 lead in the second set and again in the opening game of the third to take control.

Pliskova had not dropped a set in the tournament going into the match. She was the US Open runner-up in 2016.

Barty had never progressed further than the fourth round at Wimbledon despite being good on grass; she was the junior champion in 2011.

However, she took the first set with just the one break of serve and then showed real

The highlights

- 1 - Barty is the first women's top seed at a Grand Slam to reach the final since Halep (2018 French Open)
- 1 - The number of break-point opportunities Sabalenka earned on the Pliskova serve all match. It came at set point in the first set and the Czech double-faulted
- 2 - Second Major final for Pliskova after 2016 US Open
- 8 - Sabalenka saved all eight break points in the first set, but lost the only two in sets 2 and 3
- 32 - Number of combined aces Sabalenka (18) and Pliskova (14) served in their semifinal, which saw just three breaks of serve, one in each set
- 41 - Barty is the first Australian woman in 41 years to reach the Wimbledon singles final, after Evonne Goolagong Cawley won it in 1980

determination to turn around a 1-4 deficit and force the tie-break where she had six match points.

Kerber saved three, but it was only delaying the inevitable and soon it was Barty who raised her arms in cele-

bration and placed her racket over her head as the moment sank in.

"It's incredible, it was as close to as good a tennis match that I have ever played," said Barty, who came up with 38 winners, in-

Men's semifinals (6 p.m. IST start)

- 7-Berrettini vs 14-Hurkacz followed by
- 1-Djokovic vs 10-Shapovalov

cluding eight aces. "It was a hell of a match from the first ball. I am really proud of myself and my team. It's been an incredible journey, full of ups and downs."

Kerber, despite the loss, can be pleased with her run, for it was her first Grand Slam semifinal appearance since winning Wimbledon in 2018.

THE RESULTS

Semifinals: Women: 1-Barty (Aus) bt 25-Kerber (Ger) 6-3, 7-6(3); 8-Pliskova (Cze) bt 2-Sabalenka (Blr) 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.



Packing a punch: Pliskova had the final say in a close contest with Sabalenka. ■ GETTY IMAGES

England shatters Danish dreams, reaches first major final after 1966

Damsgaard's superbly taken free-kick not enough for the visitors as an own goal and Kane's strike do the trick for the Three Lions

EURO 2020

REUTERS
LONDON

England finally has the chance to add another trophy to the 1966 World Cup after it overcame Denmark 2-1 in extra-time on Wednesday to reach the European Championship final for the first time.

Harry Kane's goal, following up after his penalty had been saved, finally saw off a battling Denmark to set up a Sunday showdown against Italy.

England fell behind to Mikkel Damsgaard's superb free kick, equalised with an own goal, dominated the game and then won it via its captain, albeit somewhat convincingly, in the 104th minute.

It was a tough way for Denmark to end its emotional ride from the fear and dis-



Second chance: Harry Kane celebrates after bundling in the rebound while Kasper Schmeichel – who had saved the initial spot kick – looks back in agony. ■ REUTERS

tress of Christian Eriksen's opening game collapse.

The quality in the Danish ranks was amply illustrated after 30 minutes when

Damsgaard fired a powerful, dipping 25-yard free-kick over the wall and beyond the diving Jordan Pickford.

England's answer was

calm and patient, as it passed its way back into ascendancy. Raheem Sterling was denied at point-blank range by Kasper Schmeichel

before the 39th-minute equaliser, when Bukayo Saka hit the byline and fizzed over a low cross that Simon Kjaer bundled over his own line in his attempt to stop the ball reaching Sterling.

Turning the screw
Schmeichel was on hand again with an excellent diving save to palm away a Harry Maguire header and England began to turn the screw.

The ever-dangerous Sterling continued to drive into the box though and was eventually brought down by Joakim Maehle for the VAR-reviewed penalty that Kane struck poorly and Schmeichel blocked, only for the captain to tuck home the rebound.

The result: Semifinal: England 2 (Kjaer 39-og, Kane 104) bt Denmark 1 (Damsgaard 30) (aet, 1-1 after 90 minutes).



By The Numbers

10 Kane is now England's joint-highest goalscorer in major tournaments, putting level with Gary Lineker

15 Sterling had 15 touches in the rival box, thrice as many as the entire Denmark team in England's box

9 Sterling's completed dribbles against Denmark, the most by any player in a single match in this edition

54 England's sequence of consecutive passes in extra-time, the most in a sequence of play by a team in this tournament

691 Denmark's goal was the first scored against England since March, ending a run of 691 minutes without conceding

721 Pickford set a new record for most minutes without letting in a goal, overtaking Gordon Banks' 720 (May-July 1966)

*since such data has been recorded

England faces laser pen probe

REUTERS
LONDON

European football's governing body UEFA opened disciplinary proceedings against England on Thursday over a laser pen shone at Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel during the deciding moment of their semifinal.

Television footage showed Schmeichel was targeted by a spectator using a green laser as England captain Harry Kane stepped up for a penalty in extra-time.

UEFA said it was also investigating England over fans' lighting of fireworks and disrupting the national anthem.

Mahmudullah makes an unbeaten 150

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HARARE

Mahmudullah made a career-best 150 not out as Bangladesh scored 468 in its first innings on the second day of the one-off Test against Zimbabwe on Wednesday. In reply, Zimbabwe was 114 for one.

Mahmudullah, whose 278-ball innings contained 17 fours and a six, added 191 for the ninth wicket with Taskin Ahmed (75, 134b, 11x4).

The scores: Bangladesh 468 in 126 overs (Mominul Haque 70, Liton Das 95, Mahmudullah 150 n.o., Taskin Ahmed 75, Blessing Muzarabani 4/94) vs Zimbabwe 114/1 in 41 overs (Milton Shumba 41).

England eases past Pakistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CARDIFF

A new-look England hammered Pakistan by nine wickets in the first ODI here on Thursday to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Set 142 for victory, a completely altered England after a coronavirus outbreak within the originally selected squad, finished on 142 for one.

The scores: Pakistan 141 in 35.2 overs (Saqib Mahmood 4/42) lost to England 142/1 in 21.5 overs (Dawid Malan 68 n.o., Zak Crawley 58 n.o.).

England won by nine wickets.

India and England clash in T20Is

Pressure on Harmanpreet to engineer batting turnaround

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NORTHAMPTON

India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will be aiming to overcome her prolonged form slump and boost the struggling batting line-up in the opening T20 International against England here on Friday.

Stars on the sidelines

Barring Mithali Raj's remarkable consistency in ODIs, the Indian batting was a disappointment and it is something the team would want to correct in the three T20s.

India's top two performers



On a high: The Indian women's team is in the right frame of mind going into the T20Is. ■ REUTERS

H2H in T20Is

- Overall: Matches 19, India 4, England 15
- In England: Matches 5, India 1, England 4

series against South Africa.

Besides Deepti Sharma and Rani, India has a third all-rounder option in pacer Simran Dil Bahadur, who made her debut against South Africa.

The teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.) Smriti Mandhana, Deepi Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneh Rana, Tanvi Bhatia, Indranil Roy, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poornima Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav and Simran Dil Bahadur.

England: Heather Knight (Capt.), Tammy Beaumont, Katherine Brunt, Freya Davies, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Tash Farrant, Sarah Glenn, Amy Jones, Nat Sciver, Anya Shrubsole, Mady Villiers, Fran Wilson and Danni Wyatt.

Match starts 11 p.m. (IST).
The schedule: July 9: Northampton, 11 p.m.; July 11: Hove, 7 p.m.; July 14: Chelmsford, 11 p.m. (all times IST).

India has the momentum, says Harmanpreet

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Harmanpreet Kaur believes India has the momentum going into the Twenty 20 series against England, starting at Northampton on Friday.

Confident

The captain said the players were in a confident frame of mind after victory in the last One-Day International at

Worcester. However, that win came after India had conceded the series, having lost the first two matches.

"The way we bowled and fielded in the second ODI was outstanding," Harmanpreet said.

"Things are not easy when you are playing international cricket after a long gap."

"The win in the last

match is very important and we hope to carry forward the momentum," she said.

About her own poor form, Harmanpreet said lack of preparation and COVID-19 infection had impacted her batting.

"I am someone who likes to work every day," she said.

"In international cricket, you just cannot come in (after a break) and hope to get

things (right straightaway). After five innings (on this tour), I know the areas that I have to work on."

Pat for Sneh

About Sneh Rana, a revelation on the tour, she said the spinning all-rounder brought balance to the team.

"We need players like her who can contribute with both bat and ball," the skipper said.

AMOL KARHADKAR

Ever since India's semifinal exit from the 2019 World Cup, Yuzvendra Chahal appears to have lost his status as India's No. 1 spinner in ODIs.

Now the leggie is looking forward to putting up an impressive performance in the limited-overs series against Sri Lanka starting next week.

"I am playing an ODI series after a long time but the two practice matches have helped getting used to it. The early morning dew followed by the heat has been testing and it'll be a completely different experience as a T20 game which lasts only three

or three and a half hours," Chahal said from Colombo on Thursday in a virtual function to launch the T20I and the ODI series.

Chahal has featured in just five of the 18 ODIs India has played since the World Cup. But the crafty spinner oozed confidence about his abilities in a series in which he is set to be India's most experienced spinner.

"I am focusing on a couple of variations that I have rather than developing a new delivery. You'll see a more confident Yuzi in this series. I have been working on my angles," he said.

"I don't think my performance has had a dip or anything. You can't perform in every match. I'll try my level best since this series is very important for me. I want to perform here, then the IPL and the World Cup, so I am focused on it."

Fruitful conversation

The series will begin with the ODI series from July 13 and Chahal said he has had fruitful discussions with head coach Rahul Dravid.

"I have worked with Rahul sir during a couple of India-A series. He has always guided me, especially with my bowling. I always talk to him even about other stuff as well," he said. "He has told me you're here as a senior spinner and I want you to be more focused and guide youngsters."

Anand climbs to joint second

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Viswanathan Anand showed his class as he posted a significant victory over Anton Korobov of Ukraine in the fifth round of the Croatia Grand Chess Tour at Zagreb on Thursday.

Anand then drew with Russia's Alexander Grischuk in the sixth round to remain in the joint second position in the rapid section, along with Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and local lad Ivan Saric.

With three rounds re-

Tokyo Olympics: Sindhu and Praneeth get easy draws

TV PICKS

Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
Wimbledon 2021: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.; SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 p.m.
England Women vs India Women: 1st T20I, Sony Six (SD & HD), 11 p.m.
Copa America 2021: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Sergio Ramos joins PSG on two-year contract

Former Real Madrid stalwart Sergio Ramos has signed a two-year contract with Paris Saint-Germain, the French club said on Thursday. Ramos, 35, won the Champions League four times with Real and is a World Cup winner and a two-time European champion with Spain. "It's a big change in my life, a new challenge," Ramos said in a PSG statement. AFP

Riya Bhatia bows out

LISBON Riya Bhatia retired while trailing Katie Swan of Britain 2-6, 2-4 in the pre-quarterfinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here.

Other result: Doubles (quarterfinals): Ingrid Gamarra Martins (Bra) & Shuyue Ma (Chn) bt Anastasia Zakhrova (Rus) & Riya Bhatia, walkover.

Nihal Sarin claims another title

CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI Grandmaster Nihal Sarin warmed up for the upcoming World Cup with his second title in nine days when he topped the field in the Serbia Open in Belgrade on Thursday.

Fresh from winning the Silver Lake title, eighth seed Nihal scored 7.5 points from nine rounds to emerge as champion.

Rated 2620 as per latest ratings, Nihal has gained 35

Olympics to be held without spectators

Decision renders it a made-for-TV event



Sounds of silence: The sprawling National Stadium and other venues won't resonate with the cheering of fans during the Games. ■ AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO Fans have been banned from the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics which will open in two weeks, following the announcement of a state of emergency on Thursday, Olympic Minister Tamayo Marukawa told Japanese news agency Kyodo.

The ban was announced by the International Olympic Committee and Japanese organisers, reducing the games to a made-for-TV event. The no-fan atmosphere will include the opening ceremony at the \$1.4 billion National Stadium, which is

traditionally the most watched event during the Olympics. It's unclear how the Olympic Torch will enter the stadium for the opening ceremony.

Rude welcome

The emergency declaration made for a rude arrival in Japan for IOC president Thomas Bach, who landed in Tokyo on Thursday just hours before the new measures were announced. He was to spend three days in self-isolation at the hotel that lodges IOC members.

The Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said

the state of emergency would go into effect on Monday and last through Aug. 22. This means the Olympics, opening on July 23 and running through Aug. 8, will be held entirely under emergency measures. The Paralympics open on Aug. 24.

About 11,000 Olympians and 4,400 Paralympians are expected to enter Japan, with tens of thousands of officials, judges, administrators, sponsors, broadcasters, and media also entering. The IOC says more than 80% of the residents of the Olympic Village will be vaccinated.

Rijiju sees bright future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI Outgoing Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said on Thursday the journey to make India a great sporting nation will continue after Anurag Thakur replaced him with just a fortnight left for the Olympic Games. "We tried everything to make India a great sporting nation. The journey will continue, it is a change of responsibilities," he said at a farewell function.



Nihal Sarin. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Praggnanandhaa ready for World Cup

'I've played aggressively in recent times and I am happy with the results'

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI Chess prodigy R. Praggnanandhaa is keen to make an impression on his World Cup debut next week in Sochi, Russia.

In the Capital to collect his Schengen visa from the Swiss Embassy to play in events in Europe over the next few months, Praggnanandhaa reflected on his preparation on Thursday. "I have been preparing just the way I prepare for any other tournament. This is my first World Cup and I am excited about it. I have not set any specific goal. I am going to take a game at a time," he said.

Praggnanandhaa, a wild-



card entrant, opens his campaign against Paulo Bersamina (Philippines). A win will earn Praggnanandhaa a clash against the experienced Armenian Gabriel Sargissian.

Sharpening his game

Praggnanandhaa also mentioned how his recent performances in the Meltwaters Champions Chess Tour and the Challengers Tour has helped him sharpen his game.

"I've played pretty aggressively in recent times (in the online events) and I am happy with the results. Since I have played a lot online, it has helped my confidence," said Praggnanandhaa.

Looking ahead, Praggnanandhaa has three events lined up.

Talking about his impressive showing in the New in Chess Classic, where he beat Sergey Karjakin and drew with Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura and Alireza Firouzja, he said, "I am slowly learning to play the position and not get influenced by the reputation of my rivals."

"I received the invitation to play in the Masters section of the Biel International Chess Festival (July 26-August 4).

"I am scheduled to play in the Riga Technical University Open (August 9-15) and Group 'A' of the Ciutat de Barcelona (August 18-26)."

Nadal to make return at Washington

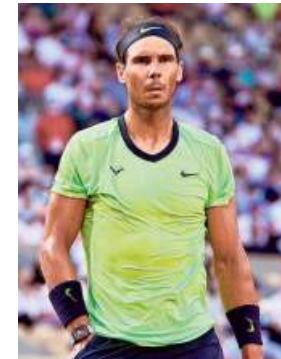
TENNIS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON Rafael Nadal will return to action at the Washington ATP event at the end of this month following his decision to skip Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics.

Nadal, 35, will play the tournament for the first time as he builds up to an assault on a fifth US Open title.

Excited "I am very excited to come to Washington for the first time," said World No. 3 Nadal. "I have never been there and it's one more place I wanted to come and play. I am looking forward to playing again and Washington shall be the best start for the US Summer Swing for me."



Nadal, a 20-time Grand Slam title winner, hasn't played since his French Open semifinal defeat at to Novak Djokovic last month. He then announced he would miss Wimbledon and the Olympics. The Washington ATP tournament runs from July 31 until August 8.

Aryan takes a five-for

Man-of-the-match Aryan Dalal picked up five wickets as Venkateshwar Cricket Academy beat Surinder Khanna Academy by five wickets in the 6th Harbeer memorial under-19 tournament.

The scores: SKA 196/9 in 40 overs (Tanish Sachdeva 34, Rajneesh 34, Aryan Dalal 5/36) lost to VCA 197/5 in 31.2 overs (Shreyansh Mahey 59, Yuvraj 40, Prashant 38, Vipin Kumar 3/31).

Easy for Sapience Club, Delhi Challengers Shivam Choudhary top-scored with 87 and Shivam Bansal added 67 as Market Sapience Cricket Club beat Youth XI by 52 runs to enter the semifinals of the R.K. Kapoor T20 tournament.

In another match, Shivam Sharma made an unbeaten 92 as Delhi Challengers beat

SS Sports Club by 31 runs. **The scores:** MSCC 265/7 in 20 overs (Shivam Choudhary 87, Shivam Bansal 67) bt Youth XI 213/8 in 20 overs (Sanat Sangwan 97); Delhi Challengers 203/4 in 20 overs (Shivam Sharma 92 n.o., Karan Sharma 58) bts SSSC 172/7 in 20 overs (Deepanshu Phore 5 n.o.).

Sporting Club triumphs

Vansh Gupta top-scored with 60 as Sporting Club beat Telefunken Club by two wickets to lift the 15th R.C. Sharma memorial tournament. Archit Malik was named best batsman, Tushar Bairwa best bowler and Sahil Wilson as best all-rounder of the tournament.

The scores: Telefunken Club 206/7 in 35 overs (Yash Dabas 57, Sourav Deswal 43) lost to Sporting Club 207/8 in 34.5 overs (Vansh Gupta 60, Yatharth Singh 3/42).

DELHI ROUND-UP

Aryan takes a five-for Man-of-the-match Aryan Dalal picked up five wickets as Venkateshwar Cricket Academy beat Surinder Khanna Academy by five wickets in the 6th Harbeer memorial under-19 tournament.

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Team is capable of beating the best: Edwards

Says the Manpreet-led squad has good chance of making it to the last four

HOCKEY

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

HYDERABAD

Former India goalkeeper Alloysius Edwards feels that the Manpreet Singh-led Indian hockey team in next month's Tokyo Olympics is the best and the fittest ever to compete in recent memory and has a very good chance of making it to the last-four stage.

"This Indian team has class and I am pretty confident that the first-time Olympians should all be excited to give their best," 52-year-old Edwards said in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"This team is capable of beating the best and fitness is the key, unlike in the past. Maintaining such high levels despite the pandemic is a tribute to their hard work and



Alloysius Edwards. ■ V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

the IHF was not keen. "But, I stood my ground and am glad that Sreejesh is the best goalkeeper now," Edwards said.

"Honestly, picking Sreejesh as the only goalkeeper in the squad might be too harsh on him. There will be pressure on him to play safe to avoid injuries. It will be interesting to see whether he can display his robust style of goalkeeping," he said.

"I also feel good to see midfielder Hardik Singh in the Olympics squad as I encouraged him also a lot as junior national selector," he said.

Reflecting on his Olympics experience, Edwards recalled that he was as junior national selector who insisted that goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh be given exposure in 2004 it self though the top brass in

1992 – before making the cut for the 1996 Atlanta Games.

High and low

"Oh! If the Atlanta Olympics was truly memorable being my first Games and basking in the aura, then the 2002 Sydney Games was the low in my career for no fault of mine," he said.

"I attended the one-month camp in Brisbane before the Sydney Games. I even went to the Games Village, got the kit, the jersey, the blazer and wanted to give my best. But, then came the shock of my life that I was replaced," Edwards said.

"I was told that I could stay back but I was shattered. I couldn't stay there and flew back," he concluded.

Grant Flower tests positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's batting coach Grant Flower tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, 48 hours after the squad's arrival from England and less than a week before the home series against India. He has been isolated.

Meanwhile,

Sri Lanka Cricket has formed a panel to probe the bio-bubble breach committed by Kusal Mendis, Niroshan Dickwella and Danushka Gunathilaka during England tour.

Ramesh Borde passes away

CRICKET

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Ramesh Borde, the former Maharashtra and West Zone all-rounder, passed away due to heart attack at his home in Pune on Thursday. Ramesh, the younger brother of former India captain Chandrakant (alias Chandu), was 69.

Ramesh, the Maharashtra Cricket Association (MCA) curator, worked at the MCA International Stadium at Gahunje where he produced belts for India's ODI series against England



Ramesh Borde. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in March, till late evening on Wednesday.

Early on Thursday, he suffered a heart attack at

home that turned out to be fatal.

Ever since making his debut against Vidarbha in 1973-74 under the captaincy of his elder brother, Ramesh featured in 42 First Class and two List-A games.

A middle-order batsman and a leg-break bowler, he was a regular in a star-studded West Zone line-up in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

He also represented West Zone against the touring West Indies in Kolhapur in 1983-84, dismissing Richie Richardson and Larry Gomes.

qualifier against Chile.

He was injured in Argentina's next match against Colombia and taken off when it was leading 2-0.

The game ended 2-2 and Martinez was thrown right back into the fray for the next game.

Since then he has impressed in what has been a problem position for coach Lionel Scaloni, conceding just three times in six games.

Martinez, who may not even have started at the Copa America had River Plate keeper Franco Armani not tested positive for COVID-19, said there was no stopping Argentina now.

"We've spent 40 days locked away, not seeing anyone outside our bubble," he said after Tuesday's victory.

Emotional moment: Emiliano Martinez gets a warm hug from Lionel Messi after ensuring Argentina's progress. ■ AFP

ATK Mohun Bagan signs Hugo Boumous

French midfielder signs five-year contract worth more than ₹2 crore

ISL

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

ATK Mohun Bagan came up with the second big foreign signing of the season by drafting in one of the most consistent attackers in the Indian Super League, Hugo Boumous, on Thursday.

The Frenchman, who played as an attacking midfielder with champion Mumbai City FC last season, joins Mumbai City in the heart of ATK MB's attack.

Boumous, who won the golden ball (best player) award in the 2019-20 ISL season while playing for FC

Goa, has signed a five-year contract with ATK MB.

Unprecedented

This is an unprecedented development involving a foreigner in ISL history.

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