



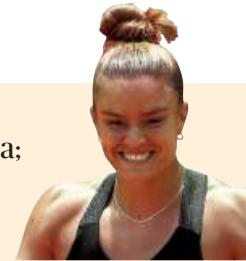
IMD announces onset of southwest monsoon in Maharashtra
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Hybrid hearings will continue, Supreme Court tells High Courts
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Sakkari dethrones Swiatek, meets Krejcikova; Nadal in last four
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NEARBY



Inoculation for 18-44 age group restarts in city
NEW DELHI
The Capital has received 1.25 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines for beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group, and the youth can now get vaccinated for free at government centres, AAP Leader Atishi said on Wednesday.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

11 held for duping 5 lakh investors of ₹150 crore

NEW DELHI
The Cyber Cell of Delhi Police has arrested 11 men, including two chartered accountants, for allegedly cheating more than 5 lakh people of over ₹150 crore in two months on the pretext of lucrative returns via apps. A total of ₹11 crore of the cheated money has been blocked in various bank accounts.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Ration out of stock, non-cardholders return

NEW DELHI
Several government centres distributing ration to non-cardholders kept their gates shut due to unavailability of foodgrains. People waiting outside some government schools said it had been four days since they were returning home empty-handed as the stocks had run out.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Centre announces hike in MSP for paddy, pulses, oilseeds

Farmer groups unhappy with the increase in paddy price

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government has hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for common paddy to ₹1,940 a quintal for the coming kharif season, less than 4% higher than last year's price of ₹1,868.

The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Wednesday.

In a bid to encourage crop diversification, there were slightly higher increases in the MSP for pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals. Both urad and urad dal saw the MSP rise by ₹300, a 5% increase to ₹6,300 a quintal, while the highest absolute increase was for sesamum, whose MSP rose 6.6% to ₹7,307. Groundnut and nigerseed saw an increase of ₹275 and ₹235 respectively. However, maize saw a minimal hike of just ₹20 to ₹1,870 a quintal.

The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers. This year, the MSP for bajra was set at 85% above the cost of production, while the MSP for urad and tur will ensure 60% returns. The MSPs for the remaining crops were mostly set around the stipu-

Better returns

The Minimum Support Prices for most Kharif crops have been increased for the 2021-22 season so that the returns over cost of production is at least 50%. The price list of select crops:

Crop	MSP 2021-22 (₹/quintal)	Absolute increase in MSP (₹/quintal)	Returns over cost (%)
Paddy (Common)	1,940	72	50
Bajra	2,250	100	85
Ragi	3,377	82	50
Maize	1,870	20	50
Tur (Arhar)	6,300	300	62
Moong	7,275	79	50
Urad	6,300	300	65
Groundnut	5,550	275	50
Sunflower seed	6,015	130	50

lated 50% above the cost of production.

The announcement comes at a time when farm unions have been protesting for more than six months on Delhi's outskirts, demanding legislation to guarantee MSP for all farmers for all crops, and a repeal of three contentious farm reform laws.

Terming the announcement a *ajumla* (false promise) as it did not account for the full cost of production, farmers' groups under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) noted that some increases, especially for maize, did not even keep pace with infla-

tion. "There is no mechanism that guarantees that every farmer can get at least the MSP as the floor price in the market. Therefore, this is a meaningless concept as far as farmers are concerned, and that is why this movement has been asking for a statutory entitlement for all farmers so that a remunerative MSP can be ensured for all farmers," said the SKM.

Briefing the press after the meeting, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar reiterated that the MSPs were here to stay.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Mamata to seek support of other CMs

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday met leaders of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, including Rakesh Tikait, at the State Secretariat in Kolkata and extended support to the farmers protesting against the three agriculture Bills passed by the Centre. She said she would write to Chief Ministers of the Opposition-ruled States, seeking their support for the farmers. ▶ PAGE 9

Hold fresh talks, Akali Dal urges Centre

Former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday asked Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar to hold fresh talks with the protesting farmers to understand why they were seeking repeal of the three laws. He urged the NDA government to be sensitive to the pain and anguish of the farmers. ▶ PAGE 9



Abdulla Shahid

safe until everyone is safe."

He was speaking to *The Hindu* from New York, a day after his historic election as PGA (President of the Gener-

al Assembly), with a decisive majority of 143 of 191 votes cast by member-countries.

Human rights would be a "central theme" at the UNGA, Mr. Shahid said, while he, as President, would refrain from "taking sides on contentious issues" such as Jammu and Kashmir and remain "impartial". India was one of the first countries who came out supporting me," he said, thanking the Indian leadership.

INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 9

Shun vaccine nationalism, says UNGA president-elect

It will destroy efforts to eradicate pandemic: Abdulla Shahid

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI/COLOMBO

Vaccine nationalism would destroy countries' efforts to eradicate the pandemic and must be avoided "at all costs", United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) president-elect and Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid said on Tuesday.

Terming the disparity in vaccination coverage in developed countries and the rest of the world "unacceptable", he said, "No one is



Jitin Prasada

cell in-charge Anil Baluni.

Mr. Prasada said he joined the BJP as he felt it was currently the only party that was an "institutionally national party" and all others were either personality

oriented or regional in nature. "I have been associated with the Congress for three generations and thought long and hard before leaving. I left because I felt that if one is unable to serve one's people or protect their interests being in a certain party, it's better to leave. Under the BJP and the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I feel that I will be better able to serve my people," he said at a press meet.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
CONG. REACTION ▶ PAGE 9

Former Minister Jitin Prasada leaves Congress, joins BJP

'Couldn't serve people's interests in Congress'

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister Jitin Prasada joined the BJP on Wednesday, leaving the Congress, where "he felt he was unable to serve the interests of his people and society".

His induction took place at the BJP's national headquarters here in the presence of Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and BJP media

Punjab gangsters killed in Kolkata encounter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Two alleged gangsters from Punjab were killed in an encounter with the Special Task Force of the West Bengal police in the New Town area of Kolkata on Wednesday afternoon.

An official of Uttar Pradesh cadre, however, said it was not that officers were not willing to go on Central deputation but the no-objection clearance was hard to come by.

The final clearance is given by the Chief Minister.

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Relatives of patients who died in Agra hospital seek probe

'Owner talked of mock drill in video'

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The relatives of patients who died at a hospital in Agra have demanded a high-level probe and the arrest of the owner after a video surfaced in which he is allegedly heard talking of conducting a "mock-drill" to check which patient would survive if oxygen support was cut off.

Among the victims was police head constable Ashok Kumar Singh's wife who died on April 26 at Shri Paras Hospital. She was admitted on April 25. Mr. Singh demanded a high-level probe. "This was a deliberate act. The doctor of the hospital should be arrested. We want justice," he said.

Mr. Singh said he received a call from the hospital around 5 a.m. on April 26. "The doctor said there was scarcity of oxygen, and asked to shift the patient elsewhere. But when I reached the hospital, they said they could manage for an hour or so. They also asked me to arrange our own cylinders," Mr. Singh said. He said he was not allowed to see his wife on the day of her death.

The matter came to light on Tuesday after the owner of Shri Paras Hospital, Arinjay Jain, was heard in a video allegedly claiming how the hospital shut off oxygen supply for five minutes on April 27 as part of a "mock drill" to see which patients would survive and which would not.

Hospital sealed

Twenty-two patients started turning blue while 74 others survived, he is heard saying in the video. Following a preliminary probe, Agra District Magistrate N. Prabhu ordered an FIR against Mr. Jain under the epidemics Act, while the hospital was sealed and the doctor's licence sus-

ended.

Mr. Prabhu, however, said there were no deaths due to lack of oxygen in the hospital on the said days, April 26 and 27. On April 26 and 27, seven patients had died at the hospital, the administration said.

Vishal Sharma, a journalist with a Hindi daily, lost his mother to COVID-19 at the hospital.

While there was an oxygen crisis at the hospital and in the district on April 26 and 27, he says he never doubted the integrity of the doctors. However, Mr. Jain's admission has ignited doubt in his mind and he thinks there had been some "misdoing". "The doctor is saying it all himself," he said.

Mr. Sharma claimed that on the day of his mother's death, they were not allowed to view the patients through the CCTV, as was the usual practice since they were not permitted inside the COVID-19 ward.

Mr. Sharma said the FIR lodged against the hospital was "an eyewash". "They should take such action that these things don't repeat."

The kin of patients also claimed that the number of people who died on the two days was much higher than the official figure of seven.

Mr. Sharma said the FIR lodged against the hospital was "an eyewash". "They should take such action that these things don't repeat."

The kin of patients also claimed that the number of people who died on the two days was much higher than the official figure of seven.

CM YK

Court rejects Sushil's plea for special food

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday rejected the plea of two-time Olympic medalist wrestler Sushil Kumar, arrested in connection with the murder of 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankar at Chhatrasal Stadium here, seeking special food and supplements while in custody.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Satvir Singh Lamba said, "All the basic needs and necessities of the accused/applicant [Mr. Sushil] are being taken care of as per the provisions of Delhi Prisons Rule, 2018."

The alleged special foods and supplements appears to be only the desires and wishes of the accused/applicant and are not in any manner the essential need or necessity for the accused/applicant," the judge said while rejecting the plea.

The Jail Superintendent strongly opposed the application. It said the desire of Mr. Sushil for special foods, supplements or extra protein "tantamount to discrimination among the prisoners." It is further contended that allowing such kind of application may invite flood of applications from many more prisoners, who can afford such type of diets at their own expenses," the jail authorities said.

Non-cardholders return with empty hands as ration runs out

Despite several trips to distribution centres, many were unable to get foodgrains

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

The plight of city's poor continued as several government centres distributing ration to non-cardholders kept their gates shut due to unavailability of ration.

People who had queued up outside some of the government schools said it had already been four days that they were returning home unsuccessfully as foodgrains had run out of stock at the centres.

Many said they were subjected to COVID-19 tests and given tokens and asked to return the next day, only to find the ration distribution centres closed.

Desperate attempts

Babli, a resident of Dakhshinpuri, who has been visiting a government school in Hauz Khas for the last four days said: "After hours of standing in a queue, I managed to enter the school on the second day but was told that I will not get the ration if I don't undergo a COVID-19 test. So I got tested after which I was given a token and asked to come the following day by which time the stock had run out."

"I am the sole earner in the family and have been out of work for all these months. Will the governments never



People ignoring social distancing norms while waiting to collect free ration at a government school in north-east Delhi's Vishwas Nagar. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

think about the poor? They win elections because of us and once elected, they forget about the poor," said Babli.

Zulekha Katun, a resident of Jagdamba Camp in south Delhi, said: "First they said that we have to get tests done, which we did. But even after that all we have right now is a piece of paper which is supposed to act as a token. We did whatever they asked us to do but now what? How am I supposed to keep my children? My youngest child is five years old now."

"I have been borrowing grains from others and feeding the family currently. But

how long can this arrangement continue? I can't even return to my village in Saifpur as we do not have enough money to buy tickets. There is not even enough to take an auto to the distribution centre. I walk for half an hour each side in this heat," said Katun.

Multiple trips

With not enough money for basic sustenance, for many, making multiple trips to the distribution centres each day was equally challenging.

Fifty-eight-year-old Abraha Katun said: "If the government does not want to give us ration they can clear-

ly state that. We are spending money each day and visiting the centre just to return empty handed. Last year during the lockdown, I at least got ration for a month but this time there has been nothing."

Priyanka Devi, a domestic helper who has been out of work since the lockdown began said: "We are desperate at this point. I have been coming to the centre since Sunday. Most days we spend hours in the heat with empty stomach as we feel that reaching early might improve our chances. But looks like there are no foodgrains available at this point."

Green economy and mobility key aspects of draft 2041 master plan

It also focuses on affordable housing, in-situ rehabilitation

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A dedicated Green Development Area (GDA) for incentivising large-scale implementation of green economies, transit-oriented development aligned with mass transit, multi-modal integration and facilitation of first and last mile connectivity are some of the key aspects of the draft Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) 2041, which was placed in the public domain while inviting suggestions and objections from stakeholders.

Addressing pollution and climate change by promoting clean economic activities and minimised vehicular pollution by creating multi-modal hubs and encouraging green mobility are some of the aspects of the MPD-2041 that the draft concentrates on. The draft states that polluting industries will not be permitted to operate within Delhi and the list of such industries will be periodically updated by the Delhi government and DDA.

The draft also highlights the enhancement of a "Green-Blue Infrastructure" by taking into account the Aravali ridge, the Yamuna, forests, wetlands, parks and other assets.

"The GDA policy has been proposed for green belt villages and it permits restricted development and pre-



An area-based improvement approach will be adopted for revitalising commercial and socio-cultural hubs. ■ FILE PHOTO

scribes substantial proportion of land to be maintained as wooded area and green cover," according to the draft MPD - 2041.

Affordable housing and in-situ rehabilitation of those living in slums and JJ clusters were other key aspects outlined by the MPD-2041 and the draft document said that in unauthorised colonies "settlement level improvements" are required to make all parts of the settlement accessible for emergency vehicles like ambulances and fire tenders.

Forms of workspaces

Apart from creation of strategic hubs of high investment, the draft MPD-2041 also lays out a plan for facilitating new forms of workspaces. "A finer network of decentralised workspaces in the form of small warehousing for e-commerce, co-working spaces

for start-up economy shall be facilitated. The plan provides adequate space norms and facilities for supporting informal economies," the document read.

According to the draft MPD-2041, an area-based improvement approach will be adopted for revitalising the commercial and socio-cultural hubs of the city, including areas like Connaught Place, Mandi House, Pragati Maidan and Shahjahanabad (Walled City).

Improved connectivity and transport infrastructure, shift from private to shared mobility and making the Capital "walkable and cyclable" are other key aspects mentioned in the MPD-2041.

"A Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) shall be prepared for Delhi to achieve systematic integration across all levels and modes of urban transport," the draft MPD-2041 stated.

At 31.4°C, city records highest minimum temperature

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded the highest minimum temperature of the year on Wednesday at 31.4 degrees Celsius, which is four degrees below normal and a maximum temperature of 42.2 degrees Celsius, which is three degrees above normal. The maximum temperature was equal to the highest recorded this season on April 28.

The meteorological department has forecast mainly clear sky with strong surface winds on June 10. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover around 41-42 degrees Celsius respectively. However, relief from the heat is expected over the weekend with light rain and strong winds being forecast. The city has not recorded any heat wave so far this summer.

Seeing is believing



Heat and dust: A mirage appears on Raisina Hill in the Capital on a hot Wednesday afternoon.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

60% of mothers return to work within six months of delivery, reveals study

'Govt. creches unequipped to admit children under 1 year'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A study on breastfeeding knowledge and practices of working mothers in the informal economy in New Delhi has shown that six months of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) was difficult as 38% of mothers returned to work under three months of delivery and 60% within six months of delivery, leading to early weaning.

The study conducted by researchers from the Indian Institute for Human Settlements interviewed 150 mothers, including domestic workers, vendors, home-based and "barter" working mothers, out of which 79% were breastfeeding.

Four sites covered

Of the 21 women, who had a child under six months, 14 reported exclusive breastfeeding. The study was conducted in four sites in Delhi where the predominant employment is in the informal economy.

The court while dismissing Ali's bail plea said the bail applications of persons from the riotous mob, who were found stationed on the rooftop of Mohan Nursing



The study interviewed 150 mothers who are predominantly employed in the informal economy. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

overall hesitation to carry a child under 12 months to work, fearing infection, need for mother's attention, and disruption at work.

The pathways for intervention suggested by the study include delayed return to work, increased spatial and temporal proximity of a mother with her child, effective knowledge and deeper understanding of the reasoning and implications behind the six-month exclusive breastfeeding recommendation and enabling the physical environment at home and workplace to the needs of a mother for managing child care.

Jammu and Kashmir
Office of the Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE (QC&PD)
Division, HMT, Srinagar
Phone: - 0194- 2496307, E-Mail: - xenmandp@gmail.com

Corrigendum-01

Subject:- Supply of Water Testing Chemicals, CRM and Equipment's for various Water Testing Laboratories of Kashmir PHE Jal Shakti Department
Ref: 1) This office e-N.I.T. No.-PHE/QC/PD/04/e-Tender Dated: 24-05-2021.
2) This office letter No.-PHE/QC&PD/635-37 Dated: -02-06-2021.
3) Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Division Chadoora/Nodal Officer JJM/NABL/WQ Letter No.: - PHE/CE/JJM/188-90 Dated: -04-06-2021.
4) Executive Engineer Jal Shakti PHE Division Chadoora/Nodal Officer JJM/NABL Srinagar Office letter No.: - PHE/CE/JJM/191+194 Dated: -05-06-2021.

S.No	Please Read	Instead Of		
S.No	Name Of Chemical	Qty	Name Of Chemical	Qty to be treated as
1	Ammonium Molybdate	500gmx50No	Ammonium Molybdate tetra hydrate	500gmx50No
2	Mercuric Iodide AR	500mgx50 No	Mercuric Iodide red AR	500gmx50No
3	Potassium Hydrogen Phthalate (Certified Reference Material)	80gm/Nox10 Nos	Potassium Hydrogen Phthalate (Certified Reference Material)	80gmx51 Nos
4	Sodium chloride (Certified Reference Material)	80gm/No x10 Nos	Sodium chloride (Certified Reference Material)	80gm x51Nos
5	Sodium Carbonate (Certified Reference Material)	80gm/Nox10 Nos	Sodium Carbonate (Certified Reference Material)	80gmx41 Nos
6	Potassium Dichromate (Certified Reference Material)	80gm/Nox10 Nos	Potassium Dichromate (Certified Reference Material)	80gmx51 Nos
7	Calcium Carbonate (Certified Reference Material)	50gm/Nox10 Nos	Calcium Carbonate (Certified Reference Material)	50gmx51 Nos
8	Di-Sodium Oxalate (Certified Reference Material)	60gm/Nox10 Nos	Di-Sodium Oxalate (Certified Reference Material)	60gmx51Nos
9	Buffer Solution (Citric Acid/Sodium Hydroxide/Hydrogen Chloride) (Certified Reference Material)	500ml/Nox10 Nos	Buffer Solution (Citric Acid/Sodium Hydroxide/Hydrogen Chloride) (Certified Reference Material)	500mlx51 Nos
10	Buffer Solution (D Sodium hydrogen phosphate/potassium di hydrogen phosphate) (Certified Reference Material)	500ml/Nox10 Nos	Buffer Solution (D) Sodium hydrogen phosphate/potassium di hydrogen phosphate) (Certified Reference Material)	500mlx51 Nos
11	Buffer Solution (Boric Acid/Potassium Chloride/Sodium hydroxide) (Certified Reference Material)	500ml/Nox10 Nos	Buffer Solution (Boric Acid/Potassium Chloride/Sodium hydroxide) (Certified Reference Material)	500mlx51 Nos
12	Conductivity Standard Solution 0.143 us/cm	500ml/Nox10 Nos	Conductivity Standard Solution/Potassium chloride solution (nominal 1.41ms/cm) (Certified Reference Material) for the measurement of electrolytic conductivity	500mlx51 Nos
13	Turbidity 100 ntu calibration standard (Certified Reference Material)	100ml/Nox10 Nos	Turbidity 100 ntu calibration standard (Certified Reference Material)	100mlx51 Nos
14	Iron Standard Solution traceable to SRM from NIST (Certified Reference Material)	100ml/Nox10 Nos	Iron Standard Solution traceable to SRM from NIST (Certified Reference Material)	100mlx51 Nos
15	Silicon Standard Solution traceable to SRM from NIST (Certified Reference Material)	100ml/Nox10 Nos	Silicon Standard Solution traceable to SRM from NIST (Certified Reference Material)	100mlx51 Nos
16	Hypochlorous Acid (Certified Reference Material)	750ml/Nox10 Nos	Hypochlorous Acid (Certified Reference Material)	750mlx51 Nos
17	Manganese Sulphate (Certified Reference Material)	500gm/Nox10 Nos	Manganese Sulphate (Certified Reference Material)	500gmx51 Nos
18	(Phenate Reagent by 1: Sodium Hydroxide by 2: Phenol (Certified Reference Material)	500gm/No and 500ml/No x10 Nos	(Phenate Reagent by 1: Sodium Hydroxide 2: AR	500gm x51 Nos
19	Anhydrous Ammonium Chloride (Certified Reference Material)	500gm/Nox10 Nos	Anhydrous Ammonium Chloride complying to ACS, Iso, European Pharmacopoeia or Certified Reference Material	500gmx51 Nos
20	Anhydrous Sodium Chloride (Certified Reference Material)	500gm/Nox10 Nos	Anhydrous Sodium Chloride complying to ACS, Iso, European Pharmacopoeia or Certified Reference Material	500gmx51 Nos
21	Potassium Chloride (Certified Reference Material)	500gm/Nox10 Nos	Potassium Chloride assay > = 99.5% with Br/Po4/SO4/Na2O/CaFe/MgNa% range specified or Certified Reference Material	500gmx51 Nos
22	Phenolphthalein Indicators (Certified Reference Material)	100gm/Nox10 Nos	Phenolphthalein indicator complying to ACS, Iso, European Pharmacopoeia or Certified Reference Material	100gmx51 Nos
23	Ammonium Buffer Solution (Certified Reference Material)	5litres/Nox10 Nos	Ammonium Buffer Solution	5litres/Nox51 Nos
24	Fluoride Ion Analyzer (including reagents) Specifications: (I) Range: 0.1 to 10.0 mg/litre. (ii) Lower Limit detection: 0.10 mg /litre. (iii) Power Supply: 100-115/230 V-AC.	10 Nos.	Fluoride Ion Analyzer including reagents for 250 tests. Specifications: (I) Range: 0.08 to 2.00 mg/litre. (ii) Lower Limit Detection: 0.08 mg /litre. (iii) Power Supply: 4 Batteries (AA)	10 Nos.

The estimated cost for the said e-NIT is to be treated as Rs.83.00 lacs instead of 41.93 Lacs.

Furthermore, the critical dates for said e-NIT is rescheduled here as under:-

S.No	Particular	Date	Time
1	Clarification end date	12-06-2021	02.00PM
2	Bid Submission end date	4-06-2021	02.00PM
3	Bid Opening date	5-06-2021	02.00PM

Rest all other terms and conditions are same as laid down in the said e-NIT.

No: PHE/QCPD/658-61
Dated:07-06-2021

DIPK-2615/21

<p

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, JUN. 10

RISE 05:23 SET 19:19

RISE 05:06 SET 19:23

FRIDAY, JUN. 11

RISE 05:23 SET 19:20

RISE 05:50 SET 20:16

SATURDAY, JUN. 12

RISE 05:23 SET 19:20

RISE 06:39 SET 21:08

Delhi Weather max min

Delhi City 42 31

Safdarjang 42 31

Palam 42 31

Delhi Palam Today

41°C Uneasy hot and dry

weather with moderate winds

and dust haze likely. Drop in

day temperature. Evening

would remain warm.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

41°C Light warm winds likely

to prevail during day with few

clouds. Day remain hot.

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THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF

Delhi Police trace missing rapper in M.P.

NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old city-based rapper who had gone missing a week ago, after posting a note on social media suggesting that he was going to end his life, was traced by a Delhi Police team on Wednesday. The police said they received information that the rapper, Aditya Tiwari, was at his friend's house in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

HC to hear arrested RJD MP's plea

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday said it will hear a plea by RJD Rajya Sabha MP Amarendra Dhari Singh, arrested in a money laundering case related to an alleged fertiliser scam, challenging trial court's order granting his 10-day custody to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on June 11.

The High Court noted that since Mr. Singh's counsel circulated certain judgments to challenge the trial court order, the ED's counsel also wished to place some judgments in support of his arguments.

Money laundering case
Mr. Singh was arrested by Enforcement Directorate on June 2 under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

His plea said the special judge's order suffers from complete non-application of mind and has been passed mechanically without proper appreciation of peculiar facts of the case and material on record.

The case pertains to an alleged fertiliser scam linked to the IFFCO and India Potash Limited (IPL), in which the CBI had registered a corruption case last month.

Inoculation drive for 18-44 age group restarts at govt. centres

Booking resumes as city receives fresh stock of vaccines

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Capital has received 1.25 lakh doses of Covishield and 20,000 doses of Covaxin vaccines for 18-44 age group, and the youth can now get vaccinated for free at government centres, AAP leader Atishi said on Wednesday.

"Many people between 18-44 years had been administered the first dose but were unable to get the second dose. Now, Covaxin is available and people can get the second dose," the AAP leader said.

Ms. Atishi said that private hospitals were administering the vaccines at "exorbitant costs" and now vaccines are available at government centres free of cost.

The Delhi government spokesperson said that after the arrival of the Covishield vaccine doses, booking for the first dose of 18-44 age group will restart from Wednesday. "From today [Wednesday], booking for the first dose of Covishield for 18-44



A beneficiary gets a vaccine shot in Delhi on Wednesday.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

will restart on the CoWIN platform," the spokesperson said.

There was no stock of Covishield for 18-44 years in government facilities for the past many days and Covaxin was being given only for second dose. So, there was no free first dose for the age group.

Ms. Atishi said that the tally of vaccines administered in Delhi has reached over 57 lakh, and 13 lakh people have been administered both the doses.

She also said that the government has received Covaxin for people of 45 years of age and above.

"On Tuesday, we had said that the stock of Covaxin is over in Delhi and it was unavailable for the 45+ age group people at many centres. Yesterday, late in the evening, Delhi received 30,000 doses of Covaxin and they are being distributed to different centres. So, from Thursday, doses of Covaxin will be available for those above the age of 45 years," Ms. Atishi said.

Over 300 new cases

The Capital reported 337 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,30,128, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Also, 36 deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 24,704. A total of 73,241 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said.

Of the total cases, 14,00,913 people have recovered and there are 4,511 active cases. The test positivity rate was 0.46%.

11 held for duping 5L investors of ₹150 crore via mobile apps

They promised big returns on investments; Chinese nationals involved: police

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Cyber Cell has arrested 11 men, including two chartered accountants, for allegedly cheating more than 5 lakh people of over ₹150 crore in two months on the pretext of lucrative returns via apps, the police said on Wednesday.

A total of ₹11 crore of the cheated money has been blocked in various bank accounts and payment gateways, the police said.

The police took notice of various posts on social media by people across the country about two mobile applications – Power Bank and EZPlan. These apps offered lucrative returns on investment, a senior police officer said.

The Power Bank App projected itself as a Bengaluru-based start-up, but its server was found based in China.

The apps, in order to entice large number of people to invest more and more mo-



The police invested a token amount in the app and the money trail was followed. It was found that the accused had created a web of shell firms to route the money

ANYESH ROY

DCP (Cyber Cell)

ney, initially gave a small payout amounting to 5% to 10% of the invested money, the police said.

People, believing the scheme to be genuine, started investing more money as well as circulating and sharing the app among their friends and relatives.

Shell companies

"The police invested a token amount in the app and the money trail was followed. It was found that one of accused Sheikh Robin was in Ulubaria, West Bengal.

On June 2, raids were conducted at multiple locations. Robin was arrested. At the same time, nine others were arrested from Delhi-NCR, in-

cluding two CAs – Avik Kedia and Ronak Bansal, the DCP said.

The CAs created over 110 shell companies and sold these companies to Chinese nationals for ₹2-₹3 lakh each, the police said.

Robin, who was contacted by the Chinese national through Telegram, initially opened a bank account for these fraudsters, but later started acting as an operative, Mr. Roy said, adding that at the time of the arrest, he was operating around 29 bank accounts.

The main Chinese handlers behind this massive scam, used to randomly contact people over various apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram and hired those interested as partners.

Names of several Chinese nationals have been revealed so far. Investigation about their whereabouts, specific roles and their large fraud network is under way, the police said.

Replicate electoral machinery for vaccination: CM

Residents happy with Delhi govt. initiative, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the entire population of India could be vaccinated within two to three months if the country's electoral structure was utilised to reach out to residents for the purpose, just like the Delhi government was doing through the 'Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination' programme.

The Chief Minister made the observation during his visit to a vaccination centre at Rajkiya Sarvodaya Vidya-



Arvind Kejriwal during the Jahan Vote, Wahan Vaccination drive in Delhi.

• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Beaten up and forced to chant Jai Shri Ram in jail'

Alleged ISIS member files plea in court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

An alleged ISIS member, arrested for planning suicide attacks and serial blasts across the country, approached a Delhi court on Wednesday claiming that he was beaten up by other inmates in Tihar jail and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'.

The accused was beaten up and forced to chant religious slogans like 'Jai Shri Ram' by his inmates," the application said.

The plea, moved by advocate Qasoor Khan, requested that "appropriate directions may be passed to the jail superintendent to look into the matter".

The accused, Rashid Zafar, was arrested in 2018 on the allegations of being member of an ISIS-inspired group who were planning suicide attacks and serial blasts, targeting politicians as also government installations in Delhi and other parts of north India.

Advocate M.S. Khan claimed in the application, which is likely to come up for hearing on Thursday, that the incident was disclosed by the accused to his father telephonically from Tihar jail.

The searches and the arrests came a month before the Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

AAP accuses BJP leaders of corruption

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday alleged that South Delhi Municipal Corporation's BJP councillors and Mayor are involved in corruption.

AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged that the BJP-led municipal corporation is appointing members who have been involved in corruption as Mayor and Leader of the House.

"Within just two years, Indrajit Sehrawat (Leader of the House of SDMC) has doubled the cash and tripled the property. Mukesh Suryan [Mayor of SDMC] had tendered an unconditional apology in the Supreme Court for misbehaving and threatening the officials," Mr. Bharadwaj claimed, adding that the BJP is working persistently to loot as much as Delhi can be looted before the next elections.

The accused were arrested along with nine others in December 2018 after the NIA carried out searches, in coordination with Special cell of Delhi Police and Anti-Terrorism Squad of Uttar Pradesh Police, at six places in Jafrabad, Seelampur in Delhi, and 11 places in Uttar Pradesh – six in Amroha, two in Lucknow, two in Hapur, and two in Meerut.

After killing his wife, the accused Dilshad lied next to her body. He was later arrested by the police.

As a first step of the collaboration with the GHFP, a

Delhi govt's home isolation model flawed: BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday alleged that the Delhi government had "wrongly advised" self-isolation to residents suffering from COVID-19 to hide shortcomings in the government health infrastructure.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said 70% of the houses in Delhi measured less than 100 square yards with many occupants. "If they

had been admitted to hospitals in the initial stages of infection, the COVID death rate could have been much less," he said.

"It is a crime by the Delhi government to force people to go for home isolation...the death rate per 10 lakh is maximum in Delhi and could have been much less," Mr. Gupta alleged.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ram-

vir Singh Bidhuri said during the first wave, temporary COVID care centres were set up and later disbanded as the AAP government had no foresight to see another wave.

Oxygen plants

"Testing and vaccinations centres could have been started at mohalla clinics or these could have served as isolation centres if they were

in proper shape," he alleged.

BJP Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta said, in April, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced setting up of 44 oxygen plants before May 31, but only nine plants had been operational till then. "We cannot afford to lose more lives because we were caught unprepared. The Delhi government must ramp up healthcare infrastructure," he said.

Peak power demand soars to 6,185 MW

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Amid sultry weather and easing of lockdown curbs, Delhi's peak power demand soared to 6,185 MW on Wednesday – the highest so far this summer.

The peak demand stood at 5,559 MW on Monday, the first day of unlocking in the city. It was the first time that the power demand crossed the 5,000 MW mark this season, said discom officials. It soared to 5,906 MW on Tuesday.

having an illicit relationship with someone else, the police said.

The incident took place on early Tuesday morning. The couple engaged in a fight during which he allegedly strangled her to death.

One of the relatives who visited them on Tuesday morning got to know about the murder and soon informed the police.

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- WAZIPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-

Tea wage hike marks a month of Assam govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A drive against drug-trafficking and hike in the daily wage of tea plantation workers were among a slew of measures that marked a month of the Himanta Biswa Sarma Ministry in Assam, a government spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Dr. Sarma was sworn in as the 15th Chief Minister of the State on May 10, replacing Sarbananda Sonowal in the second successive BJP-led government.

'Best performance'

"Assam's performance on the COVID-19 front has been one of the best in India with more than 40 lakh people vaccinated, hospitals ramped up and oxygen supply assured. We have also initiated the process of providing ₹3,500 a month to children orphaned by the coronavirus," Water Resources Minister and government spokesperson Pijush Hazarika said.

Cong. hits out at Haryana govt. over new rules for tube-wells

Policy aimed at snatching the livelihood of the son of the soil, says Surjewala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH



Cong. leader R.S. Surjewala

The Haryana government's new policy for allotment of new tube-well connections for irrigating fields in the northern and southern parts of the State has come under severe criticism from the Opposition Congress.

Hitting out at the Bharatiya Janata Party-Jannayak Janta Party (BJP-JJP) government, Congress' national general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said that on May 1, 2021, a new policy for providing tube-well connections was issued by power companies in Haryana. "As per this policy aimed at snatching the livelihood of the son of the soil, if the farmer's land comes under the flow or lift command area of canal irrigation," said Mr. Surjewala, adding that the farmers of northern and southern Haryana would be most affected by the order.

Also, a condition included

in the policy says tube-well motors of over 30 BHP (brake horse power) would not be sanctioned in future. They are completely banned. In the whole of southern Haryana and in the whole of Ahirwal, especially in Bhiwani, Dadri, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Mewat and Gurgaon, the groundwater table is so low that most motors are of 40-50 BHP. "This order means that now onwards no farmer will be sanctioned a tube-well connection in southern Haryana," he added.

'Govt. should apologise'
Mr. Surjewala said the State government should immediately withdraw the policy and apologise to the farmers of the State for their anti-farmer stance.

Former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that the

government should plan to provide relief to farmers instead of experimenting with policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Farmers left clueless'

"It is being reported that connections will be given only to those farmers who get a 'no objection certificate' from the Irrigation Department. In such a situation, farmers who deposited the security amount many years ago are left clueless and wondering what to do next," he said.

"The government is changing the rules and standards time and again to thwart them [the farmers]. Sometimes the standards of electric motors are changed while at other times, rules on ground water level are changed. Farmers do not even have the freedom to take the motor of their choice," Mr. Hooda said.

Asif murder case: Karat condemns attempts to give communal twist

She leads a delegation to Nuh to meet the victim's kin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM



CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat meeting the family members of Asif in Nuh on Wednesday. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

murdered for his religious beliefs, but for opposing the criminal elements in the village. She said her party would raise the issue at all possible platforms.

Meeting with DC

The delegation also met the Deputy Commissioner demanding the arrest of all the accused in the case and protect the accused and venerate the atmosphere of the village and the area.

Ms. Karat said Asif was not

cial media platforms and caste panchayats held to create communal rift and protect the accused.

CPI State secretary D.S. Kashyap and CPI(M) zonal secretary Major S.L. Prajapati were part of the delegation.

Asif, a resident of Nuh's Khera Khalilpur, was returning home from a medical store on May 16 in a car when he was waylaid and kidnapped. He was later found dead at Nangli village in Sohna.

'Give incentives to counter jab hesitancy'

It could be extra ration or work: activists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Health activists attached to Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) here on Wednesday called for providing incentives to counter COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in the rural areas, while affirming that it would help accelerate the pace of vaccination among the villagers who were reluctant to get the jab because of lack of knowledge or out of suspicion.

The JSA, which functions as the Rajasthan chapter of the People's Health Movement, said the incentives could be in the form of additional ration from the public distribution system, extra days of MGNREGA work, such as 150 days of guaranteed wage employment instead of 100 days in a financial year and hot cooked meals or additional ration to pregnant and lactating women and fears.

The provision for incentivising the people could motivate those who were reluctant to reconsider the option of getting vaccinated and push them to make up their minds quickly, said Ms. Patnaik, adding that such an approach could help increase the vaccination rate and reduce the waste of vials. The JSA has shot off letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma.

administration to get vaccinated with the threat that they would not be given ration or MGNREGA wages if they did not get inoculated.

Violation of right to food

"This is not only exploitative but also amounts to sheer violation of people's right to food and employment," she said. The JSA felt that the government should instead focus on the measures which aimed at educating the people about vaccines and dispelling their myths and

BJP, JD(U) spar over blast at madrasa

Police suspect an IED might have caused the explosion



A police officer at the collapsed madrasa in Banka district of Bihar. •PTI

MLC Gulam Rasool Balyawi criticised the BJP MLA's comment. He said, "Those making such comments should be sent to mental asylum."

"During the election, the BJP men do not see mosques and madrasas but soon after winning they come to their real agenda," Mr. Balyawi said.

On Tuesday, a powerful explosion took place in a madrasa near a mosque in Chamreli Naukotia village under the Banka town police station limits. The madrasa building collapsed and the Imam, Abdul Sattar Mobin, was killed in the explosion. The adjacent mosque was

badly damaged. Due to the lockdown, the madrasa was non-functional and it is believed that the Imam was the sole resident.

However, after the explosion, residents of the village left the place, leaving behind women and the elderly.

The district police, probing the blast, suspected use of IED.

"We are collecting details and a FSL team too has reached the spot," Bhagalpur zone DIG Sujeev Kumar said.

District Superintendent of Police Arvind Kumar Gupta said, "It was a powerful blast."

Dihing Patkai is Assam's 7th National Park

It has 47 species each of reptiles and mammals, including tiger and Orang.

The 234.26-sq. km Dihing Patkai straddling eastern Assam's Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts is a major elephant habitat and 310 species of butterflies have been recorded there. The park has 47 species each of reptiles and mammals, including the tiger and clouded leopard.

The five older National Parks in the State are Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa. Kaziranga and Manas are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are also tiger reserves along with Nameri.

Illegal coal mining

Dihing Patkai, in focus a year ago for illegal coal mining in the vicinity, encompasses the erstwhile Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary, the Jeyapore Reserve Forest and the western block of the Upper Dihing Reserve Forest.

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one person namely Mohd. Anwar S/o Abdul, R/o H. No. 2644, Mohalla Nihariyan, Behind S.N. Marg, Ajmeri Gate, Delhi has been missing since 21.05.2021 Delhi. In this regard a case vide DD No. 71-A dated 21.05.2021 has been registered at PS. Kamla Market, Delhi. The description of missing person is as under:

Age : 55 yrs., **Built:** Medium, **Height :** 5'1", **Face :** Round, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Wearing :** Green colour lining shirt, green colour pant and slippers in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform to the following.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cib@cbi.gov.in
Fax : 011-24368639, 24368641
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/824/CD/2021

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8750870424

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PUBLIC NOTICE

In the Court of Sh. Ashok Kapoor, Principal Judge Family Court, Shahbad Bhagat Singh Nagar
CNR No.-2021-010-00102-2021
Date 10.05.2021
Amrit Kaur W/o Hardik Singh Chahal, Distr. SBS Nagar, presently residing at Italy, through attorney Joga Singh S/o Gurdial Singh, R/o Village Mander, Tehsil Phulwara, Dist. SBS Nagar, VS.
Hardik Singh Chahal S/o Subroto Singh Chahal, Distr. SBS Nagar, presently residing at MSSRL VIA D E L E R O B T 2 - 2 - VEROIANOVA/25028/ITALY
Petition No. 22/2021 dated 10.05.2021 for dissolution of marriage by decree of divorce.

Notice to: Hardik Singh Chahal S/o Subroto Singh Chahal, Distr. SBS Nagar, presently residing at MSSRL VIA D E L E R O B T 2 - 2 - VEROIANOVA/25028/ITALY
In above titled petition the respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that the respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 22.09.2021 at 10.00 A.M.
For detailed log on <http://www.thehinduads.com/trs-district-notice&district=sbsnagar>
(Ashok Kapoor)
Principal Judge Family Court
Shahbad Bhagat Singh Nagar

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE
I, Hawa Singh S/o Sh. Ramdhani R/o Flat No. 12, Type -4 N.S.I.T Campus , Sector - 3 , Dwarka New Delhi-110078, have discovered my son ATUL VASHIST from all my movable / immovable properties and if any person will deal with them, then I will not be responsible for their acts.

PUBLIC NOTICE
I, Shall Trikha, inform that my husband (Late) Brij Sheel Kumar Trikha, S/o Kundan Lal Trikha, R/o 1517, Park View Apartment Arun Vihar, Noida unfortunately passed away on 08/07/2017, in Greater Noida.

I request "SUPERTECH COMPANY LTD" to transfer this flat 1404, CB-1 CAPESTON at GH-01/A, Sector-74, Noida, Dist. GauthamBuddh Nagar (Noida), in the name of "Shaili Trikha" and 'Mr. Harun Trikha', S/o, (late) 'Brij Sheel Kumar Trikha' and 'Shaili Trikha'. If any body has objection, he/she may contact Mr. Vaibhav Mittal of SUPERTECH E-SQUARE, C-2, Sector-96, Noida, within 15 Days of this notice being published.

Shaili Trikha, W/o (Late) Brij Sheel Kumar Trikha.

Dinesh Sharma,-Advocate
Noida,(M)-9810257421

Advertisement

District Health & Family Welfare Society, District - Mahendergarh at Narnaul

District Health & Family Welfare Society, District- Mahendergarh at Narnaul invites application from the eligible candidates for filling up of the following post in the District Mahendergarh, Haryana contract basis or initially up to 31/03/2022 as per approval received in NHM Haryana ROP 2021-22, whichever is earlier.

Sl. No.	Name of Post	No. of Post	Date, Time and Place of Walk-In Interview
1	Paediatrician (SNCU)	1	Every Monday
2	Medical Officer (NRC)	1	Every Monday

The interested candidates are advised to visit website www.nhmharyana.gov.in for details of post and download the application form.

Last date for submitting of duly filled application form is every Monday upto 10:00 A.M. in the Office of Civil Surgeon, Narnaul.

Civil Surgeon,
Narnaul

PRDH 1058/11/60/2022/3236/199/7

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St.No.(1) E-Tender No. DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-22-21-22, Date 01.06.2021

Work : Supply of welding portion

and welding of rail joints, by alumino

thermic SKV process (Single shot

Crucible with Automatic Tapping

Thimble technology) including

supervision, tools and plants and

consumables etc. under the

jurisdiction of ADEN/CENTRAL/

BILASPUR. Tender value (In Rs.):

90,77,748/-, Completion Period

12 Months

Start date of Submission of Tender

From 11:00 hrs. on 14-06-2021. Last

IN BRIEF



Vigilance to investigate KSRTC money case

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has ordered a Vigilance probe into the alleged misappropriation of ₹100.75 crore from the accounts of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) during the 2010-13 period. The clearance for probe was given on Wednesday.

Tree felling: HC declines to stay proceedings

KOCHI The Kerala High Court on Wednesday refused to stay the proceedings pending before the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Sultan Bathery, in the cases registered in connection with the felling of centuries-old rosewood trees from private plantations at Muttill South village in Wayanad.

Naidu flays demolition of school in Vizag

VIJAYAWADA Telugu Desam Party national president N. Chandrababu Naidu has urged Chief Secretary Adityanath Das to come to the rescue of the differently-abled students of Hidden Sprouts School in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. In a letter to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Naidu said the government targeted the no-profit school for differently-abled students.

New plant species spotted in Wagamon

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM A new plant species belonging to the coffee family spotted in the scenic Wagamon hills in Kerala has been named *Argostemma quarantina* to commemorate the millions who have died in the pandemic. A herbaraceous species from the family Rubiaceae, *Argostemma quarantina* was found along the Idukki-Kottayam border.

Directive withdrawn in Lakshadweep

Controversial order required the deployment of government staff on fishing boats

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

In the face of criticism, the Director of Port, Shipping and Navigation in the Lakshadweep administration has quietly withdrawn the order for the deployment of government staff on fishing boats.

Director Sachin Sharma also reversed the May 28 order by which the security around ports, jetties, ships and other vessels was raised to level-2 "on the basis of recent intelligence inputs".

In an e-mail message to the Deputy Director (S&T), Kochi; Assistant Directors; port assistants on the island; the CSO of the Lakshadweep Development Corporation Limited (LDCL); and the Assistant Commandant of the Central Industrial Security



No takers: The Lakshadweep Government Employees' Union took exception to the order.

Force (CISF) in Kochi on June 7, Mr. Sharma cited the orders of May 28 and June 2 "regarding strengthening of security in ports/ships and jetties" and said "as per further inputs, all concerned

may revert back to standard protocol and SOPs [standard operating procedures]."

The Lakshadweep Government Employees' Union had recently taken exception to the order asking for go-

vernment employees to go on board fishing vessels for intelligence collection.

The order was also criticised by fishers' forums. Sources said maritime security agencies were also

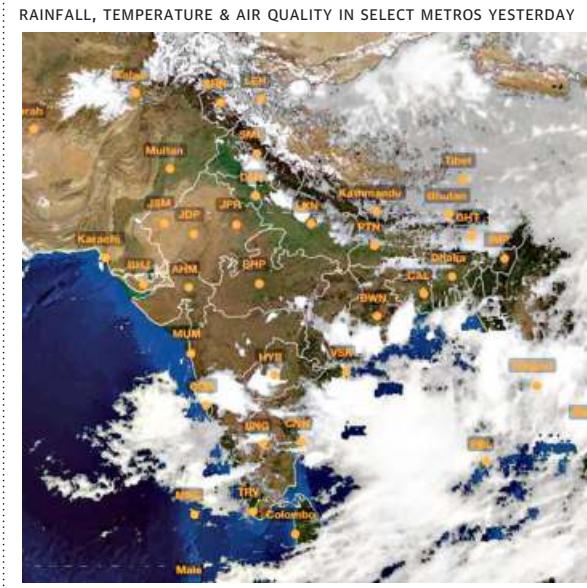
peeved with the order, which was interpreted as interfering with their jurisdictional powers.

The June 2 communication was about a security review meeting chaired by an Advisor to the Union Territory Administrator. It said decisions had been taken to deploy government staff on fishing craft, strengthen security measures to monitor local fishing boats, and intensify checking of motorised and passenger vessels.

It had also ordered measures for the installation of CCTV cameras at berthing ports and the heli-base, and the baggage and passenger checking facility at the Mangalore and Beypore ports.

The LDCL had been asked to "inform ship masters to remain vigilant and alert".

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Thursday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Nagaland, Manipur, Marathwada, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	14...	34.1...	25.8...	Kozhikode	1...	33.6...	25.2...
Ahmedabad	39.0...	28.4...	24.8...	Kurnool	...	35.2...	26.1...
Aizawl	29.0...	17.8...	12.8...	Lucknow	3...	35.0...	29.7...
Aligarh	34.7...	29.0...	25.2...	Madurai	...	37.7...	25.1...
Bengaluru	29.5...	30.5...	22.2...	Mangaluru	3.6...	30.0...	22.2...
Bhopal	36.2...	36.0...	21.5...	Mumbai	60...	26.4...	25.4...
Bhubaneswar	32.8...	24.8...	20.8...	Mysuru	...	33.0...	20.2...
Chandigarh	42.5...	32.8...	24.8...	New Delhi	4...	42.2...	31.4...
Chennai	38.6...	27.7...	22.7...	Patna	40.4...	32.4...	21.4...
Coimbatore	33.7...	23.4...	20.8...	Port Blair	89...	27.9...	23.2...
Dehradun	36.7...	25.2...	20.8...	Puducherry	4...	37.9...	25.2...
Gangtok	114...	21.1...	16.4...	Pune	0.1...	26.8...	23.2...
Goa	34...	27.5...	23.4...	Raipur	2.6...	41.0...	25.2...
Guwahati	33.5...	25.9...	22.6...	Ranchi	...	32.6...	22.6...
Hubballi	27.0...	22.0...	18.1...	Shillong	...	25.0...	18.1...
Hyderabad	31.0...	25.5...	24.5...	Shimla	...	31.0...	24.5...
Imphal	32.2...	20.7...	19.8...	Srinagar	...	37.7...	19.8...
Jaipur	41.6...	30.4...	24.6...	Thiruvananthapuram	1...	32.5...	24.6...
Kochi	31.0...	24.4...	20.8...	Tiruchi	1...	38.3...	26.6...
Kohima	27.5...	18.2...	15.2...	Vijayawada	...	38.2...	26.6...
Kolkata	0.6...	33.8...	26.4...	Visakhapatnam	...	39.2...	29.2...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.3	.47	134	47	.65	■
Bengaluru	.3	.33	39	.28	.25	■
Chennai	.7	.5	46	.69	.69	■
Delhi	.9	.24	30	.330	.358	■
Hyderabad	.1	.67	.55	.23	.38	■
Kolkata	.10	.16	30	.23	.58	■
Lucknow	.10	.43	68	.184	.161	■
Mumbai	.48	.15	20	.30	.30	■
Pune	.5	.1	70	.148	.97	■
Visakhapatnam	16	.48	25	.52	.98	■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Fatehabad, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 315, indicating high level of pollution.

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

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

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

BJP leaders call on Kerala Governor

Party appears to rally behind State chief Surendran



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The BJP on Wednesday appeared to spring to the defence of K. Surendran, the party's embattled Kerala president.

A delegation of BJP leaders led by Kummanam Rajasekharan and O. Rajagopal met Governor Arif Mohammad Khan to spotlight "gross abuse of police machinery by the Left Democratic Front [LDF] government to tarnish the BJP and to harass its leaders".

A senior leader said the high-profile visit to Raj Bhawan was a clear signal that the BJP had rallied behind Mr. Surendran. The party would politically and legally battle out the attempts to

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

BJP Kerala president K. Surendran's presence in New Delhi on Wednesday triggered speculation about an impending leadership change in the party's

drain and his family to punish him for campaigning against the LDF on various sensitive issues, including the Sabarimala and the gold smuggling case.

The police had slapped a case against Mr. Surendran in Majeswaram, falsely accusing him of bribing a political rival to withdraw his candidacy for the Assembly constituency.

The leaders alleged that the police had prevented the BJP from holding its core committee meeting in Kochi on June 6 citing COVID-19 protocol.

The BJP leaders requested Mr. Khan to "take note of the oppressive, anti-democratic and illegal actions of the State government and to take appropriate remedial measures".

Mucormycosis patients lack hospital beds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The dearth of treatment facilities and the supply of medicines in many cases is forcing mucormycosis patients across districts in Karnataka to seek medical help in Bengaluru.

However, when they arrive at the State's capital, most are unable to find a bed as they are unaware that District Health Officers (DHOs) have to be alerted so that beds can be organised. Moreover, the procedure where the DHO writes to his counterpart in Bengaluru is proving to be a hurdle. DHOs are hesitant to write referral letters as they will be held accountable for not being able to treat patients in their districts, sources said.

WEST

Maharashtra's active cases dip to 1.61 lakh

State reports 10,989 fresh cases; death toll reaches 1,01,833

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the State and Union governments what steps they had taken to inform citizens about the Centre's standard operating procedure (SOP) for vaccinating people without the seven prescribed identity cards.

A Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a bunch of public interest litigation petitions (PILs) on improving access to the Co-WIN web portal for booking vaccination slots.

It asked the Union government to inform the court what steps were taken to cover the mentally ill and those who could not give a consent without a legal guardian, under its vaccination drive.

The court was informed that seven identity cards, including Aadhaar and PAN, could be used to register for vaccination on the CoWIN portal.

Fight COVID like a surgical strike: HC

Court asks Maharashtra govt. about door-to-door vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Kerala had been conducting vaccination for bedridden people and the Vasai Virar Municipal Corporation had started door-to-door vaccination.

The court asked the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) how a senior political member got vaccinated at the beginning of the drive.

BMC's counsel Anil Sakhe said he would inform tomorrow.

The court said, "We want to know today. We are hearing the matter today. We are talking about your model to the entire country and are appreciating your efforts. Did Kerala wait for the nod from the Central government? Either the defence can be that you have given

him [politician] a different vaccine, or you have nothing to do with it then we will ask the State".

The Bench told Additional Solicitor General of India Anil Singh, "You have taken a decision for near to door vaccination. You have agreed that COVID-19 is the common enemy. You must consider the battle as a surgical strike! We know the areas and the people who may be carrying the virus. We should go to the borders and fight! We see that decisions are being taken by the Centre, but they are delayed. So many States are doing this. Then why not make it uniform for all States?"

The State would reply on June 11.

Man detained under MPDA Act in Raigad

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

For the first time in Raigad district, a man has been detained under the Maharashtra Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act for his involvement in criminal activities.

The move was proposed by the Raigad police which was approved by Collector Nidhi Choudhari and sanctioned by the State government.

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH



At home

Governments must protect the interests of children orphaned by COVID-19

Disasters may bring out the innate generosity of people, but sometimes even well-intentioned initiatives may go wrong. Many believe that children orphaned by calamities are free for adoption and that growing with well-off adoptive parents will give them a shot at a better life than they can get from impoverished surviving relatives. However, adoption can be an option only when the children's safety and welfare can be ensured. By ordering that no adoption of children orphaned since last year should be permitted contrary to the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, the Supreme Court has made one more benign intervention to mitigate the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. It had earlier passed various orders on the economic and health aspects of the pandemic, including those aimed at the protection of migrant workers, prisoners and jail staff and the people at large. When its attention was drawn to advertisements and messages inviting people to adopt children who have lost one or both parents to COVID-19, the court warned that no such adoption could be permitted without the involvement of the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA). It is important that the order is adhered to, as past experience shows that the danger of children falling victim to traffickers under the guise of adoption is ever-present. Even when they reach the hands of genuine adoptive parents, there is a possibility that they will be uprooted out of their social and cultural milieu through inter-country adoptions without the option of growing up with a relative or adoptive parents closer home being explored.

Many may recall that following the December 2004 tsunami, there were ill-advised campaigns calling upon the people to adopt children rendered orphans in several Asian countries. It took a while for some affected countries to wake up to the reality that lax enforcement of adoption rules may have led to child trafficking in some cases. In the present situation, it appears that the Union government and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights are quite alive to the problem. The NCPHR is collecting details of children affected by the pandemic from all State governments and the administration of Union Territories. It has drawn the Supreme Court's attention to public announcements by some unscrupulous agencies inviting interested people to adopt the children and also disclosing the children's identities. The court's order asking all authorities to prevent illegal adoptions and fund-collection in the names of the affected children came in response to this. The court has also passed orders for the continuance of the children's education and other steps to coordinate the implementation of schemes in their favour. These orders are a necessary reminder to the authorities that they have a special responsibility to protect the interests and welfare of children in times like this.

Encouraging accord

The political will shown by G7 to ensure fairness in revenue sharing is a good augury

The Finance Ministers of the G7 nations appear to have heeded the advice to 'never let a good crisis go to waste' when they agreed last week to set a global minimum tax of at least 15%. With the COVID-19 pandemic having caused the world economy to shrink by an estimated 3.5% in 2020 and forced most countries to dip into their coffers to mitigate the fallout, the seven richest nations opted to use the opportune moment to plug a key loophole in the international tax regime. In a communique, the G7 Ministers stressed that as part of efforts to secure a 'Safe and Prosperous Future for All' they would strongly back the broader efforts under way through the G20/OECD to address tax challenges arising from globalisation and digitalisation of the economy. The rapid and relentless march of technological advancement, especially in the domain of global communications and connectivity, has resulted in a world economy where the digital sphere, estimated in 2016 at \$1.5 trillion or over one-sixth of global GDP, is exponentially outpacing overall economic growth. The increasing digitalisation has, however, exacerbated the challenges to taxing multinational corporations, which have sought to minimise their total tax outgo by recognising a bulk of their revenue in low-tax jurisdictions.

The OECD, which is with the G20 spearheading the 'Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting' initiative aimed at ending tax avoidance, estimates that countries are collectively deprived of as much as \$240 billion in tax revenue annually due to avoidance by MNCs. As the OECD's Secretary-General noted in a statement welcoming the G7 deal, such distortions "can only be effectively addressed through a multilaterally agreed solution". The G7 also agreed on "an equitable allocation of taxing rights, with market countries awarded taxing rights on at least 20% of profit exceeding a 10% margin for the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises". For India, estimated to be losing more than \$10 billion in revenue each year to "global tax abuse" by MNCs according to the Tax Justice Network and one of the more than 90 countries that have joined the BEPS framework, a wider agreement at next month's meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and central bank Governors could have far-reaching implications. India could benefit from the levy of taxes on MNCs including technology and Internet economy giants, which have taken advantage of the loopholes in the global tax system. While there are still wrinkles to be ironed out, including the issue of local levies on digital transactions, the political will to ensure greater fairness and equity in revenue sharing is a positive augury.

Strong-arm tactics weaken democracy

The Central government's designs in West Bengal serve to undermine the structure of federalism



RONOJOY SEN

The results of the bitterly contested West Bengal elections were declared in early May. It has been more than a month since the Trinamool Congress won with a massive mandate, but the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Central government still seem unable to get over the BJP's loss in the State. The BJP has tried every tactic in the book to put the Mamata Banerjee government under pressure, including resurrecting corruption charges against four leaders (three from the Trinamool and one who was formerly with the party), and serving a show-cause notice to the now-retired Chief Secretary of West Bengal. The State Governor has played a partisan role both before and after the election. The Centre's actions could be seen at one level as cynical politicking at a time when all its energy should be focused on mitigating the impact of COVID-19. At another level, these designs serve to undermine the structure of federalism and democracy.

Let's look at the events – of the recent arrests and the show-cause notice, and the Governor's role. The latter is an issue with historical antecedents and is not unique to West Bengal or the current BJP government.

Arrests of Trinamool leaders
On May 17, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested three Trinamool leaders, including two State Ministers, in connection with

the Narada sting operation, carried out in 2014, showing top Trinamool leaders allegedly taking bribes. The footage had surfaced before the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections. In 2017, the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate launched investigations into the scam. It is the timing of the arrests now that has raised suspicion, as did the sanction for prosecution given by West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to the CBI just days after the election result. Moreover, the CBI's failure to proceed against former Trinamool leaders Suvendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy, both of whom are accused in the case but have defected to the BJP, has justifiably provoked allegations of political vendetta and bias on the CBI's part.

A bureaucrat in controversy
The second event that has caused friction between the Trinamool government and the Centre is the controversy over the former Chief Secretary of West Bengal, Alapan Bandyopadhyay. Mr. Bandyopadhyay was scheduled to retire on May 31 but had been given a three-month extension by the Centre on the State government's request. However, days before his original retirement date, he was unexpectedly asked to report to the Department of Personnel and Training in New Delhi on May 31. This order came hours after Ms. Banerjee skipped a review meeting on Cyclone Yaas with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Kalaikunda air base in West Bengal. While the rules allow the recall of IAS officers from States, the Centre usually does so with the concurrence of the State government. That was not the case here. The Trinamool government predictably refused to release him and asked for the or-



der to be rescinded. When that did not happen, Mr. Bandyopadhyay resigned from his post. He was immediately appointed Chief Adviser to Ms. Banerjee.

While Mr. Bandyopadhyay's resignation may have temporarily stymied the Centre, it promptly responded by serving him a show-cause notice for violation of Section 51(b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. According to Section 51(b), anyone refusing to comply with the directions of the Central or State government or the National Executive Committee or State Executive Committee or District Authority can be jailed or fined or both. The show-cause notice was issued because Mr. Bandyopadhyay did not stay back for the meeting on Cyclone Yaas with Mr. Modi and left with Ms. Banerjee to oversee relief work. Mr. Bandyopadhyay responded to the notice saying he was merely following the orders given to him by the West Bengal Chief Minister. While several lawyers and bureaucrats believe that the Centre's position is untenable in a court of law, its actions once again highlight its intention to target an Opposition government at all costs.

Governor's role
While the recent controversies do not bode well for federalism or indeed democracy, it is the West

Bengal Governor's actions that have had the most corrosive impact. Ever since his appointment, Mr. Dhankhar has needled the State government in every possible manner. However, since the election result, he has, in the words of a political analyst, taken the place of the "political Opposition" in the State. While there is no denying that there has been post-poll violence in parts of Bengal, Mr. Dhankhar went overboard in describing the situation as "total lawlessness and anarchy". In a breach of protocol, he even visited violence-affected areas along with the BJP's elected representatives.

Though Mr. Dhankhar's actions might be in keeping – in intent though not in degree – with many contemporary and past governors, they once again raise questions about the role of a governor. During the long period of Congress dominance, the governor's position had largely been reduced to furthering the Centre's interest in the States. While the Congress did occasionally appoint eminent personalities and technocrats as governors, such as Gopalkrishna Gandhi in West Bengal, the position by and large was reserved for superannuated politicians and party loyalists. The latter practice has continued under the Modi government.

There was a heated debate in the Constituent Assembly in 1949 on the role of the governor. Members such as H.V. Kamath, K.T. Shah, Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri and Bishwanath Das were critical of the powers of the governor. They viewed the position as a relic of the colonial era, one that was "capable of creating mischief". Das, a Prime Minister of Orissa Province in colonial India and later Governor of Uttar Pradesh, was

one of the most vocal critics of the position. He had presciently noted that since the governor was appointed by the Centre, it was quite likely that he or she might not be acceptable in an Opposition-ruled State, especially if the "power to give administrative pin-pricks is vested in the governor".

B.R. Ambedkar attempted to address these misgivings by making a distinction between the "functions" and "duties" of a governor. He concluded that the governor was not a representative of a "party" but of the "people" of the State. There was arguably enough ambiguity in this formulation for a governor to be an activist and partisan, if he or she so desired. Ambedkar's faith in the Centre and governors seems misplaced since most governors, especially in recent times, have proved to be representatives of the party that appointed them and not impartial constitutional authorities. The very fact that governors are expected to resign when there is change of government at the Centre is proof of that. Indeed, the West Bengal Governor's actions illustrate the fears of the critics in the Constituent Assembly.

If the Centre continues with its methods of using Central agencies and the Governor to keep up the pressure on the West Bengal government, it might score political points in the short term. However, in the long run, this will weaken India's federalism and democracy. It also paradoxically hurts the BJP's prospects in a State where it needs to politically mobilise against a party with a big mandate and not resort to strong-arm tactics.

Ronojoy Sen is Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, National University of Singapore

The promise and perils of digital justice delivery

Phase 3 of the e-Courts project can harness technology for service delivery without increasing surveillance risks



TANMAY SINGH & KRISHNESH BAPAT

In popular perception, Indian courts are not associated first with the delivery of justice, but with long delays and difficulties for ordinary litigants. According to data released by the Supreme Court in the June 2020 newsletter of the e-Committee, 3.27 crore cases are pending before Indian courts, of which 85,000 have been pending for over 30 years. Can technology be used to revolutionise India's courts? Yes, but only when it operates within the constitutional framework of the fundamental rights of citizens. If not, technology will only further exclusion, inequity and surveillance.

The e-Courts project
The e-Committee of the Supreme Court of India recently released its draft vision document for Phase III of the e-Courts project. Phases I and II had dealt with digitisation of the judiciary, i.e., e-filing, tracking cases online, uploading judgments online, etc. Even though the job is not complete, particularly at the lower levels of the judiciary, the project can so far be termed a success. This has been particularly so during the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical courts were forced

to shut down. Despite some hiccups, the Supreme Court and High Courts have been able to function online. This was made possible by the e-Courts project, monitored by the e-Committee.

Phase III of the e-Courts project, however, has reached the stage in a trilogy where the franchise starts trying to do too much and goes off the tram line. On the surface, the objectives remain noble. There is commitment to the digitisation of court processes, and plans to upgrade the electronic infrastructure of the judiciary and enable access to lawyers and litigants.

However, the document goes on to propose an "ecosystem approach" to justice delivery. It suggests a "seamless exchange of information" between various branches of the State, such as between the judiciary, the police and the prison systems through the Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS). It has been pointed out by organisations such as the Criminal Justice and Police Accountability Project that the ICJS will likely exacerbate existing class and caste inequalities that characterise the police and prison system. This is because the exercise of data creation happens at local police stations, which have historically contributed to the criminalisation of entire communities through colonial-era laws such as the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, by labelling such communities as "habitual offenders". This is of particular concern since the data collected,



shared and collated through the e-Courts project will be housed within the Home Ministry under the ICJS.

A cause for concern

Several individuals and organisations have warned against the zeal of the data collection exercises contemplated by the draft proposal. The "seamless exchange of information" relies on large-scale gathering and sharing of data. Data collection is by itself not an evil process. In fact, data can be a useful tool for solving complex problems. For example, to address the problem of cases pending simply for service of summons, Phase II of the e-Courts project saw the development of the National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes, a software that enabled e-service of summons. It is only when data collection is combined with extensive data sharing and data storage that it becomes a cause for concern.

The Supreme Court must take care not to violate the privacy standards that it set in *Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017), especially since India does not yet have a data protection regime.

Data can be useful when it provides anonymous, aggregated, and statistical information about issues without identifying the individuals. This could be made possible in Phase III by encouraging uniformity and standardisation of entry fields. Unfortunately, there has been a dangerous trend towards creating a 360-degree profile of each person by integrating all of their interactions with government agencies into a unified database. This approach has been perfected by social media platforms and technology companies, and the government is now trying to do the same. The difference is that when technology companies do this, we get targeted advertising, but if the government does it, we get targeted surveillance.

This 360-degree approach is the main objective of Phase III. Once any government department moves online, their pen-and-paper registers will become excel sheets, shareable with a single click. Localised data will become centralised. Holdovers from the analog age ought not to have an issue with this process, since it can lead to great advancements in problem-solving. However, it is the next stage which is a cause for concern even for the most vocal proponents of the digital age, which is integration with other agencies.

When integrating data from all the lower courts, the intersection lies at the higher judiciary, because those are the appellate authorities connecting all the lower courts. When integrating data of

the courts and police stations, the intersection lies with the individual citizen, since it is the citizen's interaction with these branches of the state that is being monitored. While it is understandable why the courts could reasonably benefit from access to police and prison records, courts deal with a variety of matters, some of which may be purely civil, commercial or personal in nature. No clear explanation has been offered for why the Home Ministry needs access to court data that may have absolutely no relation to criminal law. This process serves no purpose other than profiling and surveillance.

Role of technology
Since the Phase III vision document is a draft, there is still an opportunity to abandon the ecosystem approach. The objectives were to streamline judicial processes, reduce pendency, and help the litigants. To continue to do that within the framework of our fundamental rights, the e-Courts must move towards localisation of data, instead of centralisation. The e-Committee must prevent the "seamless exchange" of data between the branches of the state that ought to remain separate. Technology plays an important role in the project, but it cannot be an end in itself.

Tanmay Singh is an Associate Litigation Counsel and Krishnesh Bapat is a Centre for Communication Governance Digital Rights Fellow hosted at the Internet Freedom Foundation

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.

Speed up vaccination

The Prime Minister's decision to revert to centralised procurement of vaccines is a step in the right direction ("A necessary reversion", June 9). With experts warning us of a third COVID-19 wave, it is of paramount importance that we are more prepared and learn from the mistakes that led to the devastation caused by the second wave. More studies and research need to be done to understand the efficacy of various vaccines against the different variants. The rapid surge in mucormycosis cases and the acute shortage of the antifungal drug, Liposomal Amphotericin B, needs to

be dealt with on a war footing. To err on the side of caution should be the mantra to win over COVID-19.

BUJU C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

The government's decision to cap the price of vaccines in private hospitals is welcome, but should be taken with a pinch of salt. Despite the government capping the prices of medicines to treat COVID-19 earlier, private hospitals indulged in profiteering to the extent that several families have gone broke. When demand for medicines outstrips supply, people are ready to shell out any price demanded by

hospitals to save their loved ones. The key to a successful inoculation drive lies not only in letter but in spirit. The government must roll out punitive measures against those who violate the rules.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Noida

Former U.S. President Donald Trump may not have taken COVID-19 seriously but by securing enough vaccines for the U.S. in time, he showed that he was an astute businessman. He knew that vaccine supplies would never be able to keep up with the rapidly rising demand. In India, the long delay in ordering vaccines

was most unfortunate, especially since we pride ourselves on being the pharmacy of the world. At least now the vaccination pace should pick up across the country. Only by vaccinating the entire population can we beat the virus ("Centre places fresh orders for 44 cr. COVID-19 vaccine doses", June 9).

R. NARAYANA,
Navi Mumbai

Saying 'no' to Coronil
In stopping the distribution of Coronil kits, Nepal referred to the statements on Coronil made by the Indian Medical Association ("Nepal stops distribution of Patanjali's Coronil kits", June 9). In February, the

IMA had questioned the Union Health Minister for being present at Coronil's launch. It has repeatedly criticised Ramdev and posed questions to the government. Yet, the government has not denounced Patanjali. On the contrary, Coronil received the AYUSH Ministry's certification as 'supporting measure' for COVID-19 treatment. Our leaders must take a cue from our neighbours and put a stop to the menace of companies marketing such untested concoctions.

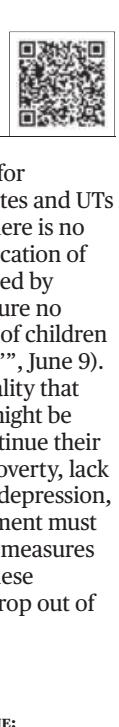
M.P. MURALIDHARAN,
Bengaluru

Orphaned by COVID-19
The Supreme Court

deserves praise for directing the States and UTs to ensure that there is no break in the education of children orphaned by COVID-19 ("Ensure no break in studies of children hit by pandemic", June 9). It is a painful reality that these children might be forced to discontinue their studies due to poverty, lack of familial care, depression, etc. The government must take all possible measures to ensure that these children don't drop out of school.

P.K. VARADARAJAN,
Chennai

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The murky space of 'social audio'

While apps like Clubhouse give a push to innovation, privacy and data rights remain out of focus



KAIF SIDDIQUI & SHIFA QURESHI

Clubhouse, a new social networking app based around audio rooms, surpassed 2 million Android downloads across the world last month. The key feature of the app is the unique medium – audio – through which its users interact. This distinguishes it from well-established social media and messaging platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube, which employ text, images, video, or a combination of three. In Clubhouse, the concept of old-school text chat rooms is replaced with the immediacy of the human voice. The app neither has any separate texting features, nor the option to create elaborate online profiles, thus keeping the focus purely on audio-based interaction.

Besides choosing their interests, users can also join various 'clubs', which are groups of members that share a common interest. After joining, users may get alerts for rooms hosted by such clubs. Clubs can also be used to interact with other people with whom they might share similar interests. A person can even start a club of their own, or 'drop-in' into any room mentioned on the Home or Explore page, as a listener or a speaker during a discussion.

Regulation challenges

The very nature of the app raises a number of questions on privacy and security. Audio rooms are likely to throw up new challenges for data regulators, who are yet to find effective ways to regulate traditional social media platforms. Audio-based interactions are faster and in real time, mirroring real-life far closely than text-based interactions. Hence, traditional methods of content moderation may not work here. Further, on an app like Clubhouse, cyberbullying and trolling, driven by sexism, racism and communalism, can be even more damaging.

The app allows a person to join any room that their friends are a part of, which may allow anyone to 'stalk' a person as they move from room to



FILE PHOTO

room; the app even sends notifications to their followers. The experience on Clubhouse, therefore, involves constant hyper-awareness about how every action is being broadcast to followers. This is in contrast to popular platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and others, which, for all their flaws, allow browsing in relative invisibility. This awareness, along with a fear of being judged, might limit people from exploring the app's content.

Concerns have been raised over how Clubhouse temporarily records the audio in a room while the room is live, "for purposes of investigating the incident", and deletes it when the room ends. However, with the lack of end-to-end encryption, the data is still potentially accessible. Furthermore, this recording is done without the consent of the user.

According to privacy expert Alexander Hanff, the platform's practices are violative of numerous provisions of Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), including rules on security, proportionality and necessity principles and confidentiality of communications (Article 5), rules related to consent for processing of personal data (Article 6), and provisions on data protection by design and by default (Article 25).

According to a report by the Stanford Internet Observatory, the back-end infrastructure of Clubhouse is supplied by a Chinese start-up called Agora. The report also mentions a possibility of the Chinese government accessing raw audio, as well as other security flaws.

It is important to note that India still lacks a stringent data protection law, and thus, its users are far more susceptible to data breaches and privacy violations. Currently, the

central government and WhatsApp are locked in a legal battle over the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which require breaching encrypted channels to trace the originator of messages. The lack of end-to-end encryption in Clubhouse could thus make it an easy tool for government surveillance.

Clubhouse also seeks permission to access users' contacts, which is a significant privacy concern, as it gives the app information about people who might never even join it in the first place. If a user chooses not to share their contact list, they are not allowed to send invites to others. In turn, the contact list is shared not only with app developers but also with people in a user's contact list. There is no mechanism to control who can follow whom, which further affects privacy and contributes to the 'harassment' culture.

App permissions on smartphones have always raised questions of privacy. Even apps that are meant for limited purposes, such as sharing or managing files, or playing music or videos, often require permissions to access the phone's camera, contacts, or call history.

The big picture

The rise of Clubhouse cannot be studied in isolation. It is one of the several apps that have grown popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, as millions of people stuck in their homes look for new methods to communicate with each other. But its flaws aside, Clubhouse, with its promise of revolutionising social media and communication through audio rooms, represents an attempt to innovate and provide an alternative to traditional platforms.

In competition law terms, one way through which powerful firms like Facebook and Twitter can be challenged is by exploiting opportunities in spaces that are adjacent to the market where these firms reign supreme. This is what upstarts like Clubhouse are trying to do, as 'social audio' is one such adjacent market that has opened up only recently.

However, as has been observed over time, the Big Tech will strive to protect their dominant positions in one of two ways – either by simply acquiring the potential competitor, known as a 'killer acquisition', or by copying the unique features of their competitor apps and adding them to their own platforms.

The Big Tech giants already enjoy, thanks to their massive user base, access to more data and network effects (a phenomenon whereby a product or a service gains additional value as more people use it). Thus, they have often made clones or added features of newly popular apps to their already bloated platforms.

When Snapchat introduced stories, mainstream platforms also came up with the feature a few years later. Similar trends were noticed when Zoom shot to fame and Google introduced Google Meet, or when TikTok became popular and Instagram launched 'reels'. With Clubhouse's growing popularity now, Twitter has introduced 'Spaces', and Facebook is working on a similar feature as well. But this time, LinkedIn, Discord, Reddit and Spotify have also joined the bandwagon. One wonders what this means for innovation in the world of tech. However, it remains to be seen whether such moves will affect Clubhouse, which was valued at \$4 billion as of April 2021.

For the average user, Clubhouse might seem like a great, lightweight app with an innovative premise. But it does not offer much in terms of privacy and data protection, and in that sense, it is not very different from traditional platforms. Apps like Signal are an exception in this regard. While the market of 'social audio' is likely to soon become a battleground, the medium won't truly progress until innovation is balanced with respect for privacy, security and data rights.

The authors are law students at the Faculty of Law, Aligarh Muslim University

South Asia's healthcare burden

Despite the debilitating pandemic, state investment in the health sector remains deeply inadequate



SYED MUNIR KHASRU

On May 18 this year, India recorded 4,529 deaths from COVID-19, the highest daily death toll recorded in the world after the United States in January saw 4,468 deaths. As India combats the pandemic, its neighbours are experiencing spillover from the menacing second wave. The virus has swept through Nepal, while Sri Lanka added as many as 78,218 cases in May. Pakistan crossed over 200 daily deaths in April, its highest since the pandemic started. The situation in Bangladesh is precarious, given the recent detection of the highly contagious Delta variant. Bhutan is the only exception, with only one death and 1,724 cases so far. The country's success stems from a well-funded and prepared public health system with stringent measures, responsible citizenship, and an accountable government.

As bodies piled up at overcrowded crematoriums in India in the last few months, several things were to blame – "super spreader" events, a fragile health infrastructure neglected for decades, citizens not following health protocols, and logistical mismanagement. What has exacerbated the situation is a subpar public healthcare system running on a meagre contribution of a little over 1% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While the private medical sector is booming, the public healthcare sector has been operating at a pitiful 0.08 doctors per 1,000 people, falling miserably below the World Health Organization's (WHO) prescribed standard of 1:1000. India has only half a bed available for every 1,000 people, which is a deficient figure even for normal days.

Bangladesh and Pakistan fare no better, with a bed to patient ratio of 0.8 and 0.6, respectively, and a doctor availability of less than one for every 1,000 people. While ideally, out-of-pocket expenditure should not surpass 15% to 20% of the total health expenditure, for India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, this figure stands at an appalling 62.67%, 73.87% and 56.24%, respectively.

The situation in rural India, where people largely rely on threadbare healthcare facilities, is disconcerting. Numerous distressing reports have emerged in the media, from patients being treated on the hospital floor for lack of beds, to some walking hundreds of miles just to get to a hospital, let alone one with oxygen or drug supplies, and many be-

ing left to resort to homemade concoctions and local quacks. Further, the fact that hundreds of healthcare workers have succumbed to COVID-19, unable to seek a bed in the very hospitals they serve, is telling.

While India has the world's third-largest military expenditure, its health budget is the fourth-lowest. In Pakistan, even amidst the pandemic, the defence budget was increased by 12% in the fiscal year 2020-21, to \$7.85 billion, while the spending on health remained around \$151 million. Not too far behind is Bangladesh, with decades of underfunding culminating in a crumbling public healthcare system, pushing people to opt for private medical care even if it means exorbitant health payments. Major public sector investments by the 'big three' of South Asia, i.e., India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are towards infrastructure and defence, with health taking a backseat. A quick look at pre-pandemic sectoral allocations explains the chronically low status of human development indicators in the three countries.

Learning from Southeast Asia

South Asia can take lessons in pragmatic healthcare policy from Southeast Asia, which has prioritised investments in healthcare systems while broadening equitable access through universal health coverage schemes. From Vietnam's preventive measures focused on investments in disease surveillance and emergency response mechanisms, to even countries like Laos and Cambodia making a constant effort towards improving the healthcare ecosystem, all have done much better than their South Asian peers.

It took a debilitating global pandemic to push South Asian policymakers to direct special attention and resources towards strengthening the health systems. But is it too late? Though the Indian government in this year's budget highlighted an increase of 137% in "health and well-being" expenditure, a closer look reveals a mismatch between facts and figures. Learning from the devastation unleashed by the pandemic, South Asian countries must step up investment in their public healthcare sectors to make them sustainable, up to date and pro-poor; most importantly, the system should not turn its back on citizens. Given the high chances of another wave or even the impending crisis of climate change, stopgap measures ought to be replaced by a well-thought-out vision and political commitment for long-term healing.

The author is Chairman of The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), an international think tank with presence in Dhaka, Delhi, Melbourne, Vienna and Dubai. Email: munir.khasru@ipag.org

A hospital's misplaced priorities

The notice by GB Pant Hospital to its staff against the use of Malayalam was in poor taste

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

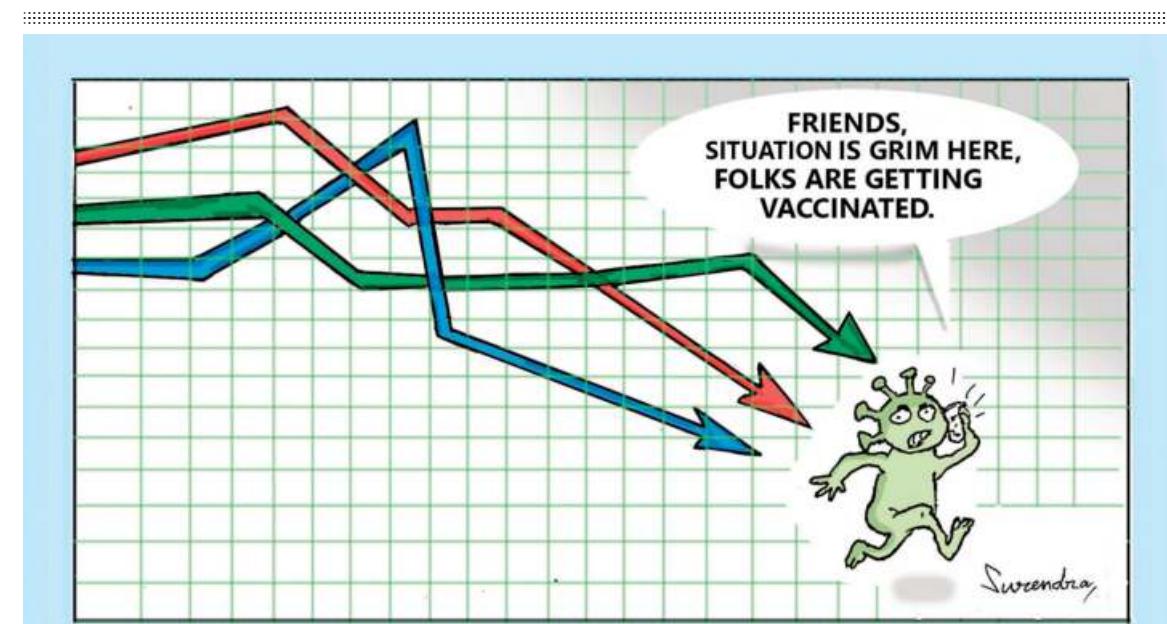
revoked after it received a nationwide backlash. It is mind-boggling that language should be the Delhi government's first concern during a raging pandemic. The entire country watched, with sympathy, how Delhi struggled without the most basic health infrastructure during the violent second wave of infections. It could neither provide adequate oxygen supplies nor prevent the black-marketing of essential drugs. Instead of supporting frontline workers, which includes doctors, nurses and support staff, it chose to shower a section of them with cultural intolerance.

There is a saying in Malayalam that translates to: "Turning on your mother after losing in the bazaar." Its relevance in this context is direct. On March 31, Kerala, the home of the nurses of GB Pant Hospital, had a COVID-19 case fatality rate that was only a little more than a third of Delhi's, and a death rate that was less than one fourth by comparison (deaths per population). Perhaps the political leadership of the capital has something to learn.

Far from being non-compulsory, bedside manner is a necessary qualification for medical workers. It is not negotiable that they should treat their patients with empathy, and language is a part of this human exchange. But it is odd that Malayali-speaking nurses are somehow found deficient in this area in Delhi alone when they have been prized members of the health system in West Asia, Europe and North America for decades now.

Ultimately, it is a failure that Delhi finds itself at odds with a section of its health workers. It can surely learn from the treatment of migrant workers complex for them in Palakkad is called "Apna Ghar" (our home). There is something hypocritical in accepting a person's labour but hating their language.

Pulapre Balakrishnan teaches economics at Ashoka University, Sonipat, Haryana



DATA POINT

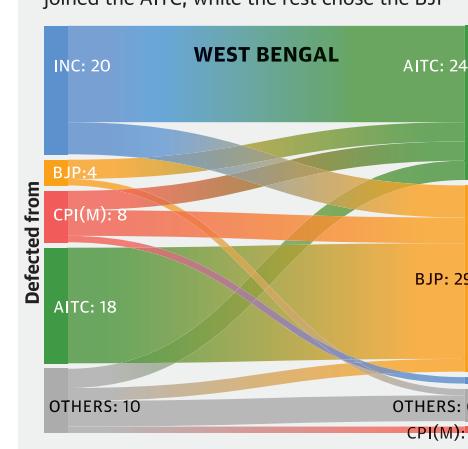
Switching sides

As many as 111 candidates who contested polls again in the 2021 Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry, had defected from other parties, according to data from ADR*. West Bengal recorded most such defectors. The Congress lost the most candidates to defections, while BJP gained the most

STATE-WISE SPLIT | Of the 111 re-contesting candidates who defected, 51 were ex-MLAs, while the rest had lost the previous election

State	Re-contesting MLAs	Re-contesting candidates
W.B.	35	25
T.N.	8	13
Puducherry	4	2
Assam	2	13
Kerala	2	7
Total	51	60

WEST BENGAL | Out of the 60 re-contesting candidates/MLAs who defected, 29 and 24 joined the BJP and Trinamool Congress (TMC), respectively. The Congress lost 20 candidates/MLAs, the most in the State. Among them, 15 joined the TMC, while the rest chose the BJP



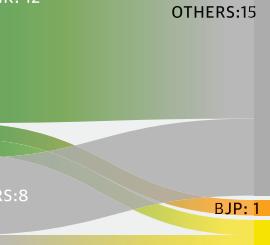
TAMIL NADU | In Tamil Nadu, AIADC lost 12 re-contesting MLAs/candidates to defections, the highest among all parties. While one each joined the DMK and BJP from the AIADC, 10 others went to other parties

PUDUCHERRY | Out of six re-contesting candidates/MLAs in Puducherry, five defected from the Congress. Among them, three joined the AIADC, while two jumped to the BJP. AIADC also lost a candidate to defection

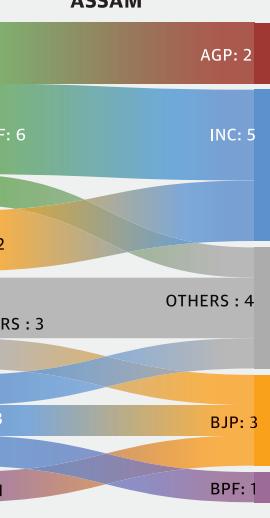
ASSAM | The State saw 15 defections, with AIUDF topping the list with six. The Congress gained five, while the BJP and the Asom Gana Parishad received three and two candidates/MLAs, respectively

*Association for Democratic Reforms

TAMIL NADU



ASSAM



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 10, 1971

A global, not a library, language (From an editorial)

While nine Vice-Chancellors of universities in the four southern States, meeting at Dharwar, have agreed that higher education should be given through the media of the regional languages and English, a group of members of Parliament are carrying on a campaign for the use of Hindi in all publications of the Government of India. The parliamentarians have suggested that the Central Information Bureau should supply information in Hindi about defence, science and technology, agriculture, education and industry.

The Central Government is, of course, anxious to introduce Hindi wherever possible and the new Defence Production Board, which is to control the ordnance factories, has been called the "Raksha Utpadan Board" ... The article we published yesterday on "Why the World learns English" shows that even in Europe, where local languages are highly advanced, English is the favoured foreign language. But the Government of India wants English to be treated as a "library language" for higher education despite the fact historical circumstance has made it familiar in the world of business and industry as well as in schools and colleges.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 10, 1921

Gandhi's response to Viceroy

[Bombay, June 9] Referring to H.E. the Viceroy's speech at the Chelmsford Club, Mr. Gandhi writing in "Young India" says:— His Excellency's speech has an air of unreality about it without intending to clothe it with any such air; on the contrary, there are in it evident traces, of his having laboured to deliver a true message to an expectant India, but the speech has failed in my humble opinion in doing so, because of many limitations that the office of the Viceroy carries with it. He could not for instance override the tradition of claiming infallibility for British rule. He laid it down as a proposition beyond the possibility of doubt, that here in India there can be no trace and must be no trace of racial inequality. There is no more unreal proposition to the ear of an Indian than this, because his experience belies it. Superiority of race as a passion has become almost a religion with the average Englishman, nor does he strive to conceal it from view. It obtrudes upon you in India as it does in the colonies.

-Associated Press of India

FROM PAGE ONE

Paddy MSP hiked less than 4% from last year

The hike in rates was proof of the Centre's commitment, the Agriculture Minister said.

On the protests, he said the Centre was always ready to hold talks, but the unions had not accepted the options presented to them for suspending the three laws.

"If they want to talk about any other option other than a repeal of these laws, we are ready to discuss and arrive at a solution," he told journalists earlier.

'Deliberate policy move'
The Centre said the higher rate of returns being promised for urad, tur and oilseeds was a deliberate poli-

cy move. "The differential remuneration is aimed at encouraging crop diversification," an official statement said.

Concerted efforts were made over the last few years to realign the MSPs in favour of oilseeds, pulses and coarse cereals to encourage farmers shift to larger area under these crops and adopt best technologies and farm practices, to correct demand-supply imbalance.

The added focus on nutri-rich nutri-cereals is to incentivise its production in the areas where rice-wheat cannot be grown without long term adverse implications for groundwater table," it added.

Jitin Prasada leaves Congress to join BJP

Mr. Goyal specially mentioned Mr. Prasada's father, the late senior Congress leader Jitendra Prasada, as one who had rendered great service to the people of Uttar Pradesh. "The community also punches above its weight in terms of societal influence," said a source in the BJP.

Mr. Prasada, who had formed a Brahmin Chetna Manch, with a patchy record of influence, is being seen as a part of the BJP national leadership's move to press the reset button on the Brahmin-Rajput equations, and settle the consolidation of upper caste votes in favour of the party.

It is also significant that the induction comes at a time when BJP and RSS leaders have been engaged in stocktaking exercises in Lucknow and the report submitted to party president J.P. Nadda on that exercise mentioned the resentment of Brahmin leaders in the party against Mr. Adityanath.

Mr. Prasada's entry into the party may unsettle some equations in the BJP, not just in the Adityanath camp but also those Brahmin leaders in the party who were jockeying for position as purveyors of the interests of the community.

Central deputation of officers very low: DoPT

"Many officers from Uttar Pradesh have applied but they are not getting a clearance," said the official.

As per norms, States have to depute All India Services (AIS) officers, including Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, to Central government offices and at any point it cannot be more than 40% of the total cadre strength.

In a letter to States on June 4, the DoPT has said "the number of nominations received so far has been very minimal and as such the representation of officers from various cadres/services, especially at the deputy secretary/director level, is extremely low."

The DoPT had sent a similar communication in December 2020 but in the past two years it has not been able to fill vacancies at the director and joint secretary level in various Central ministries. Around 40% or 390 CSS posts are at the joint secretary level (more than 19 years experience) and 60% or 540 such posts are at the rank of deputy secretary (nine years) or director rank (14 years of service).

".... every cadre is allowed a deputation reserve to ensure that officers have the opportunity to work on deputation including that under the Central Staffing Scheme (CSS), which adds to their experience. The utilisation of this reserve is low and this underutilisation, particularly at the deputy secretary/director level, causes serious gaps in cadre management. This aspect will also be kept in view by the DoPT while considering cadre review proposals, to

Rajasthan objects to Asaram's plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Rajasthan government has objected to a bail plea in the Supreme Court filed by self-styled godman and convict Asaram Bapu, saying he is trying to change the venue of his custody under the guise of medical treatment.

Asaram is serving life sentence in a sexual assault case.

He has approached the Supreme Court for bail on health grounds.

"The accused, with ulterior motive, has been attempting to change the venue of his custody under the guise of medical treatment. Such change is an abuse of the process of law," Rajasthan argued in its counter-affidavit.

Asaram was deliberately trying to delay a pending trial for rape in Gandhi Nagar and that "he is stable and fit", it stated.

In fact, the doctor's certificate, in one instance, was found to be even false, the Rajasthan government stated.

least 12% of the vote in the State. "The community also punches above its weight in terms of societal influence," said a source in the BJP.

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Anup Chandra Pandey takes charge as EC

He has served as U.P. Chief Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Retired IAS officer Anup Chandra Pandey on Wednesday took charge as Election Commissioner, the Election Commission of India (ECI) said in a statement.

Mr. Pandey, a 1984 batch IAS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, joins Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sushil Chandra and Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar to complete the three-member commission. He retired as Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh in 2019.

"Under his administrative leadership as Chief Secretary, the State successfully organised the Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj and Paravasi Bhartiya at Varnasi Diwas in 2019," the statement read.

Interest in writing
Mr. Pandey had served in the Defence and Labour and Employment Ministries.

"Mr. Pandey has a keen in-

Telangana High Court to get 18 more judges

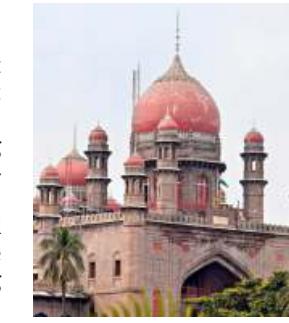
CJI has taken up with PM, Law Minister the pending request

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Telangana High Court will see one of the biggest hikes in judicial strength across the country in a long time after Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana took up with the Prime Minister and the Union Law Minister the High Court's two-year-long pending request for more judges to tackle an alarming increase in its case backlog.

The High Court will witness a 75% increase in its sanctioned Bench strength with immediate effect. This would take the number of judges in the High Court from 24 to 42. The High Court's request for more judges had been lying with the Centre since February 2019 even as its case backlog climbed to 2,37 lakh.

The proposal for a hike in the sanctioned Bench strength was first sent to the Union Law Minister by the then Chief Justice of the High



Court in 2019. Though the request was endorsed by the Chief Minister and the Governor, the Centre chose to keep it "in abeyance".

Assurance given

The issue had remained dormant until CJI Ramana, along with other concerns of the judiciary, took it up with the Prime Minister and the Law Minister soon after assuming office as top judge in April. They had both, in turn, agreed to "get the matters examined expeditiously".

However, this assurance

did not stop the CJI from writing to the Law Minister on May 27 about the High Court's still unresolved request. Chief Justice Ramana observed that the High Court's request was reasonable and fully endorsed by the Telangana Chief Minister.

The High Court desperately needed more judges for faster delivery of justice. The request has been pending for over two years. The CJI also affirmed that the necessary infrastructure was already in place to accommodate 42 judges.

The Law Ministry responded this time by swinging into action, concurring with the CJI to enhance the sanctioned Bench strength in the High Court.

The Ministry conveyed its decision to the CJI on June 7. The CJI has given his requisite final approval to the proposed hike on June 8. The path is clear for the Ministry to notify the hike.



The messages asked officials to update their vaccination status. • GETTY IMAGES

Govt. officials targeted in phishing attempt

They received malicious web links

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Several government offices, including Defence Ministry officials, were on Wednesday targeted by a malicious web link sent on WhatsApp and SMS, asking them to update their vaccination status.

The message asked officials to click on www.covid19india.in to generate a digital certificate of COVID-19 inoculation.

The SMS, signed with an abbreviation "MoHFW", that expands to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said, "as per directives of MoHFW, Confirm your COVID status on https://covid19india.in and generate your vaccination certificate".

An official said that when he clicked on the link, it directed to a page "@gov.in" that resembled the government website mygov.in, and asked to key in the official e-mail and password.

An e-mail received by a Defence Ministry official said that as part of an aware-

ness drive regarding "post vaccination measures to be followed by armed forces" a questionnaire was required to be filled and a Google drive link was shared. Some officials even received phone calls where the caller said he was calling from an Army Hospital and the official need to update the vaccination status on a link being sent on WhatsApp.

The officials were sensitised to not click on the link as it appeared to be a phishing attempt to access their official e-mails and correspondence. A considerable part of government offices are still working from home owing to COVID-19 restrictions.

Choksi's plea adjourned

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Dominica High Court has adjourned the hearing on Mehul Choksi's bail application to June 11, local media has reported.

The fugitive businessman's bail plea was earlier rejected by the magistrate concerned, following which he approached the High Court there.

My marriage is invalid: MP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress MP Nusrat Jahan on Wednesday issued a statement describing her marriage with Kolkata-based businessman Nikhil Jain as "invalid" while Mr. Jain said it was a "subjudice matter".

She said the wedding was conducted in Turkey and had not been validated under the Special Marriage Act in India.



A policeman suffered bullet injuries in the operation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Two alleged gangsters from Punjab were killed in an encounter with the Special Task Force (STF) of the West Bengal police in the New Town area of Kolkata on Wednesday afternoon.

Officials of the STF said a policeman suffered bullet injuries in the operation and had been hospitalised.

"Jaypal (Bhullar) and Jaspreet (Singh) had killed two ASIs [Assistant Sub-Inspectors] in Ludhiana, Punjab, on May 15. There was a cash reward on them," Additional Director-General of Police, STF, Vineet Kumar Goyal, told presspersons.

The police said the two gangsters had been hiding in the city for the past few days.

The encounter took place in a posh housing complex in New Town in the north-

eastern fringes of the city around 3.30 pm, creating panic among the residents. Several rounds were fired during the encounter.

Police officers said that when they knocked the doors of flat no. 201 on the second floor of Tower B of the residential complex,

they were fired at from inside.

Five sophisticated pistols, 89 rounds of live ammunition and ₹7 lakh in cash were recovered from the flat, Mr. Goyal said.

Mr. Goyal said a team of the Punjab Police had reached Kolkata.

Realty firm, promoter booked for cheating

They cheated Yes Bank of ₹466.51 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked Avantha Realty Limited, its promoter Gautam Thapar, and others for allegedly cheating Yes Bank of ₹466.51 crore in 2017-19. "Searches were conducted at 14 locations in and around Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad and Kolkata," said a CBI official.

Last year, the agency had registered a case against the bank's former managing director, Rana Kapoor, and his family members for allegedly receiving ₹307 crore in bribe to extend favours to Avantha Group entities.

Those named as accused in the latest case are Avantha Realty, Mr. Thapar, Oyster Buildwell Private Limited and

ed, Raghbir Kumar Sharma, Rajendra Kumar Mangal and Tapsi Mahajan. It is alleged that one of the companies had taken term loan facilities of about ₹515 crore from the bank in December 2017. The amount was declared NPA in October 2019.

Ladakh jobs reservation decision unclear: CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

no clarity in the latest order whether those applying for jobs will have to submit permanent residence certificates or domicile certificates," Mr. Tarigami said.

He said unlike Ladakh, the recruitment rules framed for J&K last year allowed all domiciles, even those living in J&K for more than seven years or studying in the UT up to class 12, as eligible to apply for jobs.

Heavy rain affects life in Mumbai

Met Department announces onset of southwest monsoon in Maharashtra

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI



Monsoon woes: People wading through a flooded road in Sion, Mumbai, on Wednesday.

EMMANUEL YOGINI

received 137.82 mm rainfall while western and eastern suburbs received 190.78 mm and 214.44 mm rainfall respectively.

A total of six instances of wall collapse were recorded but no injuries were reported.

Central Railway suspended its suburban local train

traffic on the main line of CSTM to Thane at 9.55 a.m.

on Wednesday due to inundation in Kurla and other areas. Similarly, train traffic was suspended on the CSTM-Mankhurd harbour line after the water level rose above four inches due to high rainfall and high tide.

The rainfall intensity reduced after 6 p.m., but the IMD has said that heavy to very heavy rainfall is predicted in the next five days.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray visited the disaster control room of the BMC on Wednesday, to check on the flood mitigation efforts.

The Railway said that it was working in coordination with BMC to control the situation. "High tide at 11.43 a.m. combined with high rainfall had led to flooding in the city and on railway tracks. All railway pumps at Chunabhatti, Sion and Kurla are working to pump out the water from tracks," said the statement from Central Railway.

It also had to reschedule several long journey trains due to flooding of tracks.

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Webinar to explore medical education trends

It will include a Q&A session with speakers

STAFF REPORTER
CHENNAI

A webinar on the 'Impact of the Pandemic on Medical Education' will be held on June 12 at 11 a.m. as part of the SRM Virtual Conclave for Career Guidance 2021 webinar series.

The series, organised by

INTERVIEW | ABDULLA SHAHID

'Human rights should be the central theme when it comes to people'

The newly elected president of the UN General Assembly says the world body and community should come together against any form of intolerance

SUHASINI HAIDAR
MEERA SRINIVASAN

Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was elected president of the 76th United Nations General Assembly for 2021-22 with a striking majority of votes cast by members (143 out of 191). Mr. Shahid spoke from New York in a virtual interview, a day after his historic win that marked the Maldives' first time at the helm of the world body, putting the Indian Ocean archipelago at the global centre stage.

What are your plans for what you called a "Presidency of Hope" at the General Assembly, and ensuring vaccine equity in particular?

■ On vaccine equity, it is the first ray of hope that I want to build my presidency of hope on. It is clear that no one is safe until everyone is safe. We should avoid vaccine nationalism at all costs, because that is going to be so destructive to our efforts of making sure that we do away with this pandemic that has

devastated our countries, both socially and economically. When we look at the developed countries, one in every five persons has been vaccinated, and when we look at the rest of the world, it is one in every 500 people. This is unacceptable.

India has had to stop all vaccine export since April. Do you still hope that it will be able to give more vaccines in the future?

■ The situation in India, I understand, is very difficult

now. But it is our hope that as soon as things get better, that we will be able to benefit from Indian vaccine. I am constantly in touch with the Indian leadership on this, our conversations are ongoing.

How much was India a part of your victory at the UNGA?

■ India was one of the first countries that came out supporting me. I thank Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar for their outstanding support for the Maldives's candidature. India has always been one of our closest friends, the best friend, that has always come to the assistance of the Maldives.



■ India has always been one of our closest friends, the best friend, that has always come to the assistance of the Maldives

Assembly President focused quite a lot on human rights and in particular had made comments on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine. Will human rights

issues be a big part of your agenda?

■ Human rights issues should be the central theme when it comes to people, and the United Nations is about people. So we should, and we must have, human rights issues at the centre of our debate.

In particular, will an issue like J&K, which caused tensions between the outgoing President and India, be on your agenda?

■ It will be not in line with the code of conduct of the President of the General Assembly to take sides on contentious issues, because the post, like Parliament Speaker, has to be impartial.

Where are investigations into the recent attack on

Speaker Mohamed Nasheed, and the renewed focus within the Maldives on tackling Islamist radicalism?

■ The attack is being investigated by the police, it is an ongoing investigation. We have received assistance from international partners, including Australia, the United Kingdom, the U.S., and they are all involved in it. Extremism in whatever form is an issue that the government will address very seriously.

You spoke about religious extremism, but globally there is also the rise of Islamophobia. In your new role, how do you plan to tackle both?

■ Any form of intolerance is not to be tolerated. And I think the United Nations and the world community should

come together against such intolerance. Extremism, in whatever form, should not be condoned. And I think that is the clear message that the United Nations continues to send.

You plan to wear both hats, as Maldivian Foreign Minister and as the UNGA President. Is this unprecedented?

■ There have been many precedents, the most recent being, three years ago, the Slovenian Foreign Minister was elected. When we look at the 75 years of the United Nations, a large number of PGAs have been sitting Foreign Ministers.

Were you surprised by Afghanistan's candidature and disappointed that it did not allow this to be a

unanimous win for the Maldives, even in South Asia?

■ Afghanistan had been the President of the General Assembly in 1966. And this is the first time that the Maldives has contested this election. When you look at the history of the United Nations in the last 75 years, there is a generally accepted principle of rotation, when it comes to the PGA, with only three exceptions. When I spoke to my brother [Afghanistan Foreign Minister] Mohammed Atmar, I tried to convey to him the Maldives' desire to have a clean slate. But on hindsight, I must thank Dr. [Zalmal] Rassoul, for being there, and having conducted a very dignified, disciplined campaign. Having a contender gave me an opportunity to put in a lot more effort.

BJP received ₹786 crore in donations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received ₹785.77 crore in donations from companies and individuals in 2019-20, over five times as much as the contributions to the Congress, according to the party's annual contribution report submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The party's contribution report for 2019-20, though filed on February 12, was published by the ECI on Tuesday night. The report includes all contributions of ₹20,000 or more made via cheque and bank transfer.

Out of the total ₹785.77 crore in contributions declared by the party, ₹217.75 crore came from the Prudent Electoral Trust, which in turn received funds from DLF Ltd., Bharti Airtel Ltd., GMR Airport Developers, and other major corporate houses.

The BJP also received ₹45.95 crore from the Janakalyan Electoral Trust, which received funds from companies of the JSW Group, including JSW Cement, JSW Energy and JSW Energy. Samaj Electoral Trust and AB General Electoral Trust, which was funded by Hindalco Industries Ltd., gave the party ₹3.75 crore and ₹9 crore respectively.

Tomar must resign for his comments, says Congress

Minister said govt. is ready for talks on demands other than repeal of farm laws



Agitation continues: Farmers during their protest against the farm laws at the Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

though 600 persons have lost their lives in this agitation.

The farmers, she said, are not sitting on protest on a whim, they are forced to protest because of the anti-farmer laws. "The Narendra Modi government is not willing to give up their love for the industrialists and want to hand them over ₹25 lakh crore worth agri industry," she said.

She reminded the BJP that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had claimed that he is just a phone call away and now his Minister is saying that they are not ready to talk about repeal of the laws.

Hold fresh talks with farmers, says Akali Dal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday asked Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar to hold fresh talks with farmers agitating against the three new farm laws.

He said the government should speak to farmers to understand why they are seeking repeal of the laws.

Urging the government to be sensitive to the pain and anguish of farmers, Mr. Badal said, "It is shocking that the NDA government is effectively telling farmers that there is no space for discussion in a democracy." He said it was more shocking that besides ruling out any talks on taking back the three black laws, Mr. Tomar had asserted that the agricultural laws were in the interest of farmers.

Modi has to be removed from power: Mamata

W.B. Chief Minister meets farm leaders



Mamata Banerjee

protesting farmers from the start. We also passed a resolution in the Assembly against the Bills".

Farm leaders requested her to visit Delhi after the COVID-19 situation improves.

The Chief Minister said she would take the initiative so that she could have a meeting with the Chief Ministers of the non-BJP-ruled States on the issue. Why the Centre was not holding talks with the protesting farmers for the past seven months, she asked.

The Chief Minister also took on the Centre on GST on COVID-19 vaccines. "Imposing GST on vaccines is like playing with the life and death of people," she said. Why vaccines were not routed through States, she asked.

It was a "dirty drive against the State government", she alleged.

Twitter: efforts on to comply with new rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Following the government's "one last notice" to comply with the new IT Rules, Twitter Inc has said it is making every effort to comply with the new guidelines and will provide the details of its Chief Compliance Officer within a week.

"We understand the importance of these regulations and have endeavoured in good faith to comply with the guidelines, including with respect to hiring personnel in India," the U.S.-headquartered firm has said in its reply.

While most significant social media intermediaries, platforms with more than 50 lakh users, have submitted details of their Chief Compliance Officer – a key requirement under the new law – Twitter is yet to do so.

Last week, the Indian government had warned the platform of losing exemption from liability under the IT Act.

"...we are in advanced stages of finalising the appointment to the role of Chief Compliance Officer and we plan to provide additional details to you in the next several days, and at the latest within a week," the microblogging platform has said in the letter.

Jitin playing politics of convenience: Cong.

Politicians need the will to serve people'

Pilot training for 2 women Army officers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

For the first time in the Army Aviation Corps, two women officers have been selected to undergo helicopter pilot training, the Army said on Wednesday.

They would be trained at the Army aviation training school, Nashik.

"Selected women on successful completion of training at Nashik will join flying duties by July 2022," it stated.

Till now, women officers were assigned only ground duties in the Army Aviation Corps.

Fifteen women officers volunteered to join the Army aviation, but only the two qualified through a stringent selection process that included the Pilot Attitude Battery Test (PABT) and medicals, the Army stated.

Jitin Prasada was given Congress ticket to fight from the Shahjahanpur Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh at a very young age, Ms. Shrinate recalled. He was a permanent invitee to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), which is the highest decision-making body of the party.

Ahead of the West Bengal election, Mr. Prasada was appointed State in-charge. The Congress drew a blank in the election.



da, fought and lost against Congress president Sonia Gandhi for the president's post. And despite that, he was appointed vice-president of the party and was given key posts till his untimely demise," Ms. Shrinate said.

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Head of the West Bengal election, Mr. Prasada was appointed State in-charge. The Congress drew a blank in the election.

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SHORT E-TENDER NOTICE

No.: BS3/18680/2021 Dated: 09.06.2021

Short E-Tender No.: TNCSC/21-22/ET- 07

Online electronic tender for "PURCHASE OF 2,00,00,000 NUMBERS

OF FORTIFIED RBD PALMOLEIN OIL 1 LITRE POUCHES (910 gms)."

Complete e-tender document can be viewed and downloaded through

<https://www.msteccommerce.com/eprochome/tncsc> and also available in

The bidders have to participate in online bidding only with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III.

For Registration and further details contact MSTM LIMITED. Phone :

25222842/25251910/25261005 e-Mail : mstcsro@mstcindia.co.in

Last Date and Time for Online Submission : up to 11.00 AM on

16.06.2021

DIPR/1724/Tender/2021

MANAGING DIRECTOR

CHENNAI METRO RAIL LIMITED

(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Tamilnadu)

Admin Building, CMRL Depot, Poonamallee High Road, Koyambedu, Chennai - 600 107, India

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Contract Name Tender for Licensing of Commercial space at Ekkattuthangal (Adjacent to Ashok Nagar bridge)

Contract No. CMRL/PUD/Ekkattuthangal/2021/501/01

Documents downloaded from 10.06.2021 to 24.07.2021 (on all working days between 10.00 -15.00 hrs.)

Pre Bid Meeting Date 22.06.2021 on 11.00 hrs at CMRL Office - Koyambedu Admin Building

Due Date of Bid Submission 24/07/2021 upto 17.00 hours (IST)

Date of Bid Opening 26/07/2021 at 11.00 hours (IST)

Cost of Document : INR 8,000/- (Rupees Eight Thousand only) if downloaded from www.eprocure.gov.in, non-refundable fee in the form of NEFT/RTGS in favour of "Chennai Metro Rail Limited"

Authority and place for purchase of tender document : Chief General Manager (P&BD), Chennai Metro Rail Limited, Admin Building, CMRL Depot, Poonamallee High Road, Koyambedu, Chennai - 600 107.

Phone : 044-2379 2000 or Download from www.chennaimetrorail.org

Chief General Manager (P&BD)

DIPR/1720/Tender/2021

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU

HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT

NABARD AND RURAL ROADS CIRCLE, SALEM-1

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No. 01/2021-2022/DDO/Dated:09.06.2021

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamilnadu percentage tender through online only will be received upto 28.06.2021 - 11.00 hours (as per Server System Clock) by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Salem Circle Package No.49 and 50 in Coimbatore Division under Upgradation of Panchayat Union Roads / Panchayat Roads to Other District Roads pertaining (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Concerned Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from the Government web site <http://Intenders.gov.in>. If any changes / Corrections etc in the tender, it will be published on the above website(s) only.

Delhi hospital official tenders apology

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The nursing superintendent of the Delhi government-run Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (GIPMER), in a letter to the medical superintendent of the hospital, apologised for an order he had issued, banning the nursing staff from talking in Malayalam.

The official said he had "no intention to disrespect any Indian language, region, or religion".

"I have issued said circular in a positive sense purely for the comfort of the patients and attendants. There was no malafide intentions to it... Even then, if any staff's feelings were hurt, I regret/apology for the same and assure you I will be more careful and vigilant in future," the letter read.

The government spokesperson did not comment.

Tamil Nadu now leads in cases, followed by Kerala, Maharashtra

India recorded 91,720 new COVID-19 infections and 6,113 deaths on Wednesday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 91,720 new COVID-19 cases and 6,113 deaths till 9.30 p.m. on Wednesday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,91,79,962 cases and 3,59,670 deaths.

Tamil Nadu reported 17,321 infections, followed by Kerala (16,204) and Maharashtra (10,989). Bihar recorded 3,971 deaths followed by Maharashtra (661) and Tamil Nadu (405).

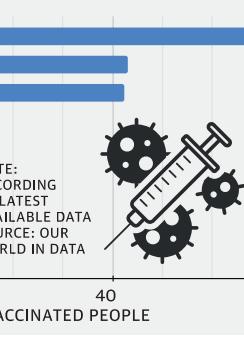
As many as 3,951 backlog fatalities were added to Bihar's tally on Wednesday. Maharashtra's fatalities also include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. The data are

sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

Around 19.85 lakh samples were tested in the country on Tuesday (the results for which were made available on Wednesday).

About 27.76 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours



ending 7 a.m. on Wednesday, which is nearly 5.88 lakh doses less than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 3.78 lakh more doses than what was recorded during the same period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the

country continues to increase. It stood at 28.33 lakh on June 8, which is more than the 24.42 lakh recorded a week before (June 1).

3.4% fully vaccinated

About 20.6% of adults in India, 41.1% of those aged above 45 and 45.1% of people aged above 60, have been administered with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine till 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday. While 14.2% of the country's population has received at least one dose, only 3.4% are fully vaccinated. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

Among countries with comparable economies to that of India, the share of people who are fully vaccinated in Brazil, Russia and South Africa is 11.05%, 9.26% and 0.81% respectively.

Revive free ration scheme for migrants, activists urge Centre

They call for SC order to be implemented at the earliest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre must operationalise the Supreme Court's recent orders to ensure migrant workers' welfare by reviving and expanding last year's Atma Nirbhari scheme to provide free rations to such workers and other needy people who do not have ration cards, according to three activists who are intervenors in the case in the top court.

They have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and all Chief Ministers to push for urgent implementation of the Supreme Court orders on May 13 and 24, directing that all migrant and stranded workers be provided dry rations and cooked food.

"During this time of crisis, it is unconscionable to not provide basic food and social security to the economi-



Last year, migrant and stranded workers were given dry rations by the Centre.

cally vulnerable workers of the country," said the letter to the Prime Minister, written by Anjali Bhardwaj, Harsh Mander and Jagdeep Chhokar.

"At a time when the government has record high stock of foodgrains – 100 million tonnes as per the FCI website – and there is acute distress among the working poor, this stock must be

used to provide rations to all those in need. Food security net must not only be restricted to ration cardholders," they said.

The activists also urged the PM to ensure that the Supreme Court's directions regarding the registration of migrants, unorganised sector and construction workers were also followed. "Many of the actions by the States entail first actions by the Union government," they said.

In the letter to Chief Ministers of all States, the activists called for cooked food to be provided to migrants through community kitchens as the court had directed, apart from the distribution of dry rations. They also urged that cash transfers be given as compensation for the loss of livelihoods due to lockdowns imposed by States.

Hybrid hearings to continue in courts

Chandrachud writes to High Court CJs

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court e-Committee Chairperson Justice D.Y. Chandrachud has written to the Chief Justices (CJs) of the High Courts that hybrid hearings will have to continue considering the pandemic situation, dispelling notions that courts may revert to the physical hearing mode soon.

The onset of the pandemic in March 2020 witnessed a quick transition within the judiciary from physical hearings to videoconferencing.

Justice Chandrachud noted that 96,74,257 cases were examined through videoconferencing across the country during the pandemic.

Robust solution
"Until the e-Committee can eventually provide one video conferencing solution for all High Courts, certain steps can be taken to facilitate judicial work, on the re-opening of courts after the summer recess... We must ensure that a robust, efficient and user-friendly videoconferencing solution is available to users for effective hearing of court proceedings and we may have to rely upon a hybrid model of hearing for some time. We need to plan effectively to be able to deal with all exigencies," he wrote to the CJs.

Uniform mechanism
Justice Chandrachud, who has spearheaded the transition of the courts from physical to virtual mode, said the committee was working on a uniform videoconferencing mechanism for courts



The Supreme Court said it may not be possible to conduct only physical hearings for some time.

across the country.

However, until then, the letter requested the CJs to "opt for a suitable videoconferencing solution from any of the available options".

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Pakke Tiger Reserve's contingency workers go on strike

There were no officers to handle their wages due to the COVID-19-induced emergency situation'

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

More than 200 contingency workers of the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh went on an indefinite strike from Wednesday over non-payment of wages since December 2020.

Reserve unguarded
The 862 sq.km. tiger reserve in Pakke-Kessang district has been left unguarded as all the 202 workers, along with their eight elephants, converged at the tiger reserve's administrative office to demand wages pending for the last six months.

"Our strike was scheduled from May 2 but was withdrawn after the Environment and Forest Minis-



Fight for rights: Workers at Pakke Tiger Reserve in Assam on strike over non-payment of wages. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ter [Mama Natung] promised that wages would be released. We can manage somehow, but all of us have families to maintain with our meagre wages," Pakke Tiger Reserve Workers' Union general secretary Niumab Namam said.

Other than payment of wages of the staff under Project Tiger, the union has demanded regularisation of the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF), an increase of wage last revised in 2018 to ₹11,000 per month and monthly payout instead of

periodic disbursement.
The Pakke contingency workers were given their wages from April-November 2020 after the National Tiger Conservation Authority sanctioned ₹6.05 crore for 2020-2021 fiscal and released a part of it.

Second instalment

"The second instalment of ₹1.32 crore was released in January but the money is lying in the State exchequer instead of being transferred to the Divisional Forest Officer of our tiger reserve for disbursement of wages," Mr. Namam said, adding that the workers have been borrowing or surviving on meagre donations.

Mr. Natung said the workers should have waited two

three days.
"There were no officers to handle their wages due to the COVID-19-induced emergency situation. But the process has been started and they should get their wages in a few days," the Minister told *The Hindu* from State capital Itanagar.

Green activists recalled a similar situation two years ago that led to the discontinuation of services of 53 frontline staff in the 1,895 sq. km Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh.

"We know protecting the tiger habitats is crucial for the conservation of the striped cat in India, but it is difficult to focus on empty stomachs," a member of the Pakke workers' union said.

With jabs and SOPs, Kashmir gears up to welcome tourists

Tourism Dept. proposes special vaccination drives

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

From vaccinating 80% stakeholders to elaborate guidelines for hotels, the Tourism Department in Kashmir has chalked out a meticulous plan to receive tourists again, as the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic dips significantly.

"We are working on two fronts for safe and secure means of reviving tourism, as the pandemic level is likely to dip further. First, spe-

cial vaccination drives for all stakeholders involved with the tourism industry. Two, capacity building on protocols to handle tourists and ensure their safety during the stay in Kashmir," Ahsanul-Haq Chisti, Deputy Director in the Tourism Department, told *The Hindu*.

According to the department, around 75% tourism stakeholders, including shikarawallas, houseboat owners and hotel staff around the Dal lake, have been vaccinated.

Similar vaccination drives were also conducted in tourist hotspots of Pahalgam and Gulmarg.

We are speeding up the vaccination drive to ensure that all get double doses in time," Mr. Chisti said.

The Tourism Department, along with the Health Department and expert academics from Kashmir, is working on capacity building among the hotel staff to train them on how to deal with tourist flow.

"We are working on new Standard Operating Procedures [SOPs] for hotels, like ensuring well ventilated and airy spaces, and new guidelines for the staff and restaurants," Mr. Chisti said.

The Gondola in Gulmarg, Asia's highest cable car project, has also been directed to reduce the number of tourists ferried in a cabin.

He said only vaccinated tourists should book their tickets. "All vehicles associated with the tourism industry should not fill more than 40% of seats," he added. Mr. Shah said contact-less check-ins and barcode access to menus need to be introduced.

Summer shine: Houseboat owners and hotel staff living around Dal lake have been vaccinated. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

- ACROSS**
- Make it wet, study current passing through (6)
 - In the tunnel cats bounce, going over the barrier (8)
 - Tries out, not good to squeeze bottom (9)
 - Trust us Sir, it all evens out for some of them in Africa (5)
 - Tile set wrongly second time (7)
 - Drums tied on top, I'm carrying water in Rajasthan (7)
- DOWN**
- A level finder drops credit (8)
 - Wine in the making, bishopric worth watching (4-3)
 - A number of regular steps after meal (9)
 - Butchery that he set in motion, should we forget and forgive? (4,3,7)
 - From Rome to Turin, going towards North Pole (5)
 - Nab everyone, not hard to say boo (7)
 - Rant about Chinese leader growing, maybe it's the drink (6)
 - Regret troll post (14)
 - Ship carrying ex-PM over Thames, perhaps (9)
 - Business lease revised to include carbon in mix (8)
 - Bet one's embarrassed to support conduct (7)
 - Englishwomen tailored gowns? It will surely be below the knee (7)
 - Resin adds mass to timber (6)
 - Keen to see the Queen over time (5)

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"Rapid Antigen Tests at

Faith

The ultimate destination

The Vishnu Sahasranama is Bhishma's response to the very pertinent questions that Yudhishtira poses. Who is the one Supreme Deity? Who is the sole and supreme goal for all? By chanting whose names, by praising and by worshipping which person can mankind attain good? Which is the dharma that is considered best by you? By reciting what hymn is mankind freed of all troubles and from the cycle of birth?

Yudhishtira exemplifies the troubled soul caught in samsara struggling to follow the path of dharma against the powerful forces of evil and adharma, pointed out Sri Sriramana Sarma in a discourse. Bhishma draws attention to the Supreme Brahman to whom the entire universe with all its beings owes its existence. He alone is to be propitiated. How can His nature be described? The Supreme Lord is the essence of all effulgence, of the highest penance, of the highest Brahman, and He is also the ultimate destination for all beings in this creation. He is the abode of all auspiciousness and His power is unlimited. He is the embodiment of all penance and His word is the law which He enforces by the sheer power of His yoga.

The Upnishads state that the sun, moon, stars and the other planets in the galaxy dare not transgress the law He has put in force. Moreover, they owe their effulgence, heat and light to His grace alone. Bhishma asserts that every troubled soul is sure to find solace by praising the Lord with His divine names. This hymn, which is venerated by all, carries the promise to fulfil desires, ward off evil influences, free one from diseases, fear, disasters, etc., and above all from the bondage of samsara. No matter whatever be our state of life and existence on earth, we all have to seek, search and try to reach Him who is the ultimate destination for all.

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SUDOKU

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7								5
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The Indian in the army of Stamford Bridge

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Vinay Menon had never really watched a football match – live or on television – till he found himself at the Stamford Bridge stadium in 2009, watching Chelsea play.

He did not need tickets: because this 46-year-old from India is the football team's wellness consultant. Now, during season, he spends his days training with the team, and watching their multiple matches.

"Cherai to Chelsea" is how he likes to describe his story.

Incidentally, that is also the name of the biography his wife, Flomny Menon, wrote, which was published last year. "Cherai is a small village near Kochi in Kerala. Whenever I go back, I sit by the door, drink *chai* and look at the backwaters. That feeling of being home is wonderful," says Vinay over a call from London.



Among Chelsea's UEFA Champions League-winning squad is Vinay Menon, the team's wellness coach from Cherai in Kerala

rah Group, when he received an offer to join Roman Abramovich, owner of the Chelsea football team, as his personal coach in London. Eventually, Vinay took on his new role with the team, also known as The Blues.

The journey to Chelsea

Though Vinay wanted to be a police officer, when he completed his Bachelor's, he did not find an opening in the police force. So, he went on to pursue a Master's in Philosophy in Physical Education at the Pondicherry University.

I also began training street children in physical education for free," he adds.

Following that he did a course in Yoga Science from Kaivalydhyan Yoga Institute in Pune, before working as a senior wellness practitioner at Ananda in the Himalayas. There, not only did he discover the world of luxury wellness, he also met the most important person in his life: his wife.

They moved to Dubai next. "I started something called full moon yoga."

Cup of joy Captain of the Chelsea team Cesar Azpilicueta with Vinay Menon • CHELSEA FC VIA GETTY IMAGES

ga. I often felt like Madonna. I would be dressed in a white *kurta*, standing on a stage at the five star resort and instructing my clients," he laughs.

His current lifestyle in London is not something Vinay had ever planned or imagined. "My cousins worked in Mumbai or abroad and when they visited Cherai they spoke in English. I only spoke in Malayalam," he says. But he always wanted to do something that brought recognition to his village, his State. "I always tried to walk a different path."

In his current role, Vinay is often a sounding board for Chelsea players. As he is "not a fan", he can detach and critically evaluate the footballers, no matter how big a star they are. But back in Kerala, he is plain old Vinu (as he is fondly called), who walks around in *chappals*. "It is important to detach, especially for mental wellbeing," says Vinay. This is his advice for the team. "If you want to perform at the peak, you have to have equilibrium."

It would then be fair to credit him for playing his part in Chelsea's recent win at UEFA Champions League, where he admits he was overwhelmed. "I created ARFA. It stands for Awareness. Recovery. Focus. Achievement. I use this process to train players," he says.

He adds that fun is important to achieve best results. "If you are not enjoying something, you cannot be an elite performer."

DJ Martin Garrix shares the euphoria that surrounds the EURO 2020 anthem

SB VIJAYA MARY

'We Are The People', the official song of UEFA EURO 2020 is set to kick off on June 11 in Rome. When the football anthem was launched on DJ Martin Garrix's 25th birthday on May 4, 2021, by Sony Music Netherlands, the collaboration with U2 greats, Bono and The Edge, was one of the big surprises for fans.

In an email interview, Garrix reveals that as the tournament was pushed back due to the pandemic, they had to keep the secret for nearly two years. "Just being in the studio with them has been a surreal experience. Bono has such an iconic voice; I had goosebumps during the whole session. I love that they were so open-minded and involved in the creative process of the song," he says.

The EDM virtuoso rose to fame with the electronic theme titled 'Animals' in 2013, at the age of 17. Garrix has collaborated with Usher, Dua Lipa, Bebe Rexha, Troye Sivan and Khaled. Still, composing for an event like the EURO Championship

is a special honour, he says. "My first response when UEFA reached out was disbelief, then when things were confirmed, it turned into being very nervous, but also excited and grateful that they put their trust in me."

The past year has been creatively challenging. "It was weird for me to make festival music without live shows. Normally this is the music I test at festivals, get the response, go straight back to the studio with the adrenaline and excitement from the show, polish it, and test it again."

"When we get back, the first shows will be absolutely insane. I think they're going to be such an explosion of adrenaline, excitement, love, euphoria. It's going to be really, really beautiful."

To his count DJ Martin Garrix • SWETA AKUNDI



At the top of his game



My grandson, my teacher Sorintha Haorei in class with the village elders; (left) at a children's camp • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Back to school at 70



SWETA AKUNDI

"My name is Hangmila Jamang and I am 70... I am 79 years old," narrates Hangmila Jamang with the cadence of a kindergartener, as she looks up from her sketchpad. It is Art class today at Oasis Academy in Chatrik Khullen in Manipur.

Leading this project is Sorintha Haorei, founder of Gemson Haorei, an organisation named after his father. In February this year, the 28-year-old founded Oasis Academy for children up to Class VII, and in May, opened it up to 15 adult learners as well.

His grandmother, Shoknola Hungyo (70), is one of his students. They are learning numericals from one to

1,000, alphabets, and how to write their own names. For many of the elders, the upcoming exam will be the first of their lives.

"Most of the elders here did not receive basic education when they were young. The highest one of them had studied up to be Class IV," says Sorintha. But education was not the only reason this school was set up: "They (the elders) are involved in agricultural activities and most live away from their families. So another reason we took this up was to provide a platform for socialisation, to keep their mental health up in times like these," he adds.

In October 2020 that Sorintha shifted base to his native village from Delhi where he got his Masters in Public Administration at IGNOU. "We returned due to the pandemic. On speaking

to other people here, we realised that so many other children too had returned and were unable to go back to towns and cities to study. Which is why my mother and I came up with the idea of starting a school in the vil-

Sorintha Haorei founded Oasis Academy for children and later opened it up to adults

lage itself," he says.

He turned his parents' ancestral home into a school for children, and set their curriculum according to the Board of Secondary Education, Manipur. In 2019, he organised the first district-level literary meet in Kanjeng,



Dorje spills the tea

Our new project to deliver Darjeeling's all its quirks and flavours, to your doorstep through the year

SHONALI MUTHALALY

Despite the thunder, lightning and patchy phone connection, Sparsh Agarwal is undeterred. He bounces around his home at the Selim Hill tea estate in Darjeeling, recently renamed 'Second Chance' by his mother, in search of better phone signal each time this interview is stalled by the storm.

It is this cheery resilience that could give Darjeeling's celebrated, but now struggling, tea estates a second chance to shine. But first, an experiment, which begins with an annual subscription plan that launches tomorrow, needs to go according to plan.

"When Darjeeling tea is the pride of India, why are most of the 87 estates barely breaking even, some on the brink of collapse?" asks Sparsh, adding that the romance of this "champagne of teas" has drawn buyers from across the world, for two centuries.

Over the past decade, however, a declining export market, climate change and now the pandemic are threatening the survival of many of the estates, which in turn threatens all that is special about Darjeeling.

"The Selim Hill tea garden has been under my family's stewardship for four generations, since 1871. Half of it is under forest cover, home to everything from hornbills to elephants," says Sparsh. "We do not want to sell because we need to protect this ecology. But we needed to find a way to support the estate."

After a year of field re-

search, Sparsh, who was working with the Centre for Policy Research, and his business partner Ishan Kanoria, an investment banker, decided to quit their jobs and launch Dorje Tea, an innovative and sustainable model that re-introduces Darjeeling tea embracing all its quirks, to an Indian audience, instead of exporting it piecemeal.

Their mentor is the legendary Rajah Banerjee, whose family ran Makai-bari tea estate for four generations before he recently moved on. A trailblazer, he created an organic oasis at Makai-bari, inspiring other estates to follow suit, Rajah is a powerful influence in Darjeeling, and an ambassador for its tea.

Seasonal moods

Grown with a Chinese cultivar, Darjeeling tea captivated international buyers with its potent



From the hills (Above) Sparsh Agarwal and Ishan Kanoria at work • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

aroma and unique muscatel flavour, a pleasing sweetness with musky, spiced undertones.

"However it never focused on the domestic market and is seen as unaffordable," says Sparsh, explaining why: "There are four seasonal flushes. While the first and second, which are spring and summer, are sold at premium, there isn't a market for monsoon and autumn flush teas – though each has a unique taste, aroma and liquorizing, which is additionally influenced by terroir."

Popular in Europe, America and Britain particularly, the spring and summer flush get exported at heady prices, while the monsoon and autumn flush are undervalued. Since the best tea is exported, and profits ride on sales of just the spring and summer flushes, often estates barely break

even, says Sparsh. "The flush system is unique to Darjeeling and adds to the romance of our teas. Customers should be having all four. The biggest mistake is thinking there is a hierarchy."

There is another catch. "International clients want the whole leaf grade, so the tea is machine sorted. For one kilo of tea, only 30% is whole leaf, which means that the rest sells at a loss," says Sparsh. "But, in the inconsistencies lie the charm of the product."

Stating that he is fundamentally against the export market, which buys relatively small quantities, and "destroys the harvest for rest of the year," Sparsh says Dorje will be reaching out to Indian buyers with a subscription plan.

"For an annual subscription of ₹2,100 per kg, we will send tea from each flush to customers through the year."

Since all flushes will be equally celebrated, without being wastefully broken up and graded, pricing is competitive, enabling customers to drink this champagne of teas everyday.

Sparsh and his family are launching the Selim Hill Collective, helmed by Rajah Banerjee, to focus on the non-commercial rejuvenation of the tea garden, starting with a reforestation campaign.

"Even as we work on getting the commercial part right, we want to focus on community welfare and wild life conservation," says Sparsh, adding, "Within this crisis, there is opportunity."

To order log on to dorjea.com

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13416

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■ Across	■ Down
5 Unsympathetic treatment (5,6)	1 Irish county – stopper (4)
7 Kick on the shins (4)	2 High level of respect (7)
8 In shreds (8)	3 Loincloth worn by Indians (5)
9 Arrogant and presumptuous person (7)	4 Type of humorous verse (8)
11 Flinch with pain (5)	13 Young horse (5)
12 Patient's resting place (7)	14 Disloyal (11)
16 Headlong rush (8)	10 Meet Karl (anag) – skiing turn (8)
17 Bad-mannered person (4)	12 Drunk (3-4)
18 Today's name for the Hellespont (11)	15 Exclude – bread (anag) (5)
	17 Great size (4)



To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, visit [Guardian Cryptic crossword](http://www.guardian.co.uk/crosswords), Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

The solution will appear on June 17, 2021.

Solution No. 13415

CUT THE CACKLE	BUDGET
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In Manipur's Chatrik village that overlooks the India-Myanmar border, a new school sees many elders learning the alphabet for the first time

SWETA AKUNDI

holds, lockdown has meant a return to physical schools after decades.

Leading this project is Sorintha Haorei, founder of Gemson Haorei, an organisation named after his father. In February this year, the 28-year-old founded Oasis Academy for children up to Class VII, and in May, opened it up to 15 adult learners as well.

His grandmother, Shoknola Hungyo (70), is one of his students. They are learning numericals from one to

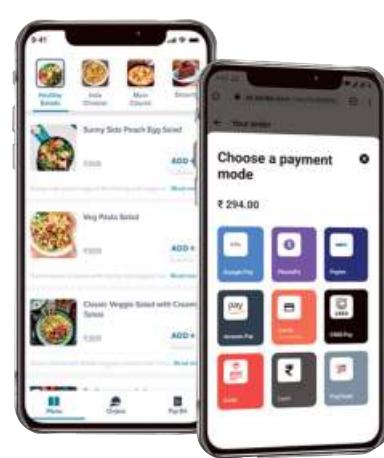
1,000, alphabets, and how to write their own names. For many of the elders, the upcoming exam will be the first of their lives.

"Most of the elders here did not receive basic education when they were young. The highest one of them had studied up to be Class IV," says Sorintha. But education was not the only reason this school was set up: "They (the elders) are involved in agricultural activities and most live away from their families. So another reason we took this up was to provide a platform for socialisation, to keep their mental health up in times like these," he adds.

In October 2020 that Sorintha shifted base to his native village from Delhi where he got his Masters in Public Administration at IGNOU. "We returned due to the pandemic. On speaking

to other people here, we realised that so many other children too had returned and were unable to go back to towns and cities to study. Which is why my mother and I came up with the idea of starting a school in the vil-

Much ado about your lunch
(Clockwise from below) DotPe on phone screens; a Mumbai dabbawala at an Impressario restaurant; pizza to go; a dabbawala on the road • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



The (delivery) road not taken

The food delivery space is India's latest battleground. As new options like Thrive and DotPe go head to head with giants, customers get more spoilt for choice

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR, SHILPA NAIR ANAND AND PRABALIKA M BORAH

"It is around 20% plus GST, which comes up to 21.5% or 22% of the bill amount. When you factor in the overheads, which include raw material cost and salaries, a restaurant owner is not left with much to run the business. Sometimes the bill amount [on a particular order] may not justify the commission. We needed to do something about it in order to continue in the business," says Asees Moosa, Ernakulam district president of KHRRA.

While NRAI announced plans to launch its own delivery platform back in 2020, it was in May 2021 that Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association (KHRRA) launched a food delivery app, Rezoy, as a response against the commission charged by larger food aggregators.

Platforms like DotPe and Thrive, in contrast, charge anywhere between 1%

to 3% commission per order, and have capped it at that. Thrive has been another popular option for individual restaurants in metro cities. Launched in October 2020 with one restaurant partner in Mumbai, Thrive built its base to 1,500 restaurants by February 2021.

"That is when we launched our 2.0 version, which has helped double our count in the last two months alone. We now have over 3,000 restaurants on board," says co-founder Dhruv Dewan.

Dhruv does not see Thrive as an alternative to Swiggy or Zomato. "I think in

the near future, direct-to-customer platforms and aggregators will coexist," he says, "But for anyone building a business from scratch, a direct-to-customer option makes more sense than an aggregator."

A key reason why certain restaurants choose Thrive over Zomato or Swiggy, is access to consumer data. As Gauri Deviayal of The Table, Mumbai puts it, "It is very difficult to run a business online if you don't know who your consumer is, which dish they prefer and why, what problems they had with a particular order."

Thrive gives its restaurant partner ownership over such data. "The data is hosted on our servers, because it isn't feasible to have a separate server

for each restaurant. But the data rests contractually with each restaurant, and they have full access to it. According to the terms and conditions, we [Thrive] can't give a restaurant's consumption data to anyone else. We can only use it to improve our operations, like keeping track of payment hiccup," says Dhruv.

Asees explains how hotels are encouraged by aggregators to have different prices – for online and offline orders. "Prices [on the online menu] and portion sizes are 'adjusted' in a way that justifies the commission they pay to the aggregators, some make extra too. So who gets the raw deal in the end?

Our aim [with Rezoy]

is that all stakeholders benefit, not just us," he adds.

The menu uploaded by the restaurant on Rezoy has to be the one displayed at the hotel.

If there is malpractice then action is taken against the hotel – they are removed if they

refuse to comply. "This is a reason why a few hotels are not keen on being on the app as they are used to the extra profit," says Anurag.

Last-mile delivery is another factor where today's giants appear to have an advantage; a restaurant needs a dependable delivery fleet, one that knows its city's lanes and bylanes, shortcuts and detours.

DotPe and Thrive address this with a hybrid model. As Anurag points out, "The last-mile delivery problem has already been solved by others – by Shadowfax, Rapido and Dunzo. We have tied up with them; restaurants have the option of using their own staff for delivery, these third-party teams, or a mix of the two." Thrive's model is similar.

Riyaaz Amlani's Impressario Handmade restaurants – the firm behind Social – recently snagged a headline-grabbing tie-up: Mumbai's dabbawalas now deliver his restaurants orders to homes across the metropolis.

Learning curve
Innovating is one thing, getting smaller and newer restaurants to understand the nitty-gritties of online operations in the midst of a pandemic is another.

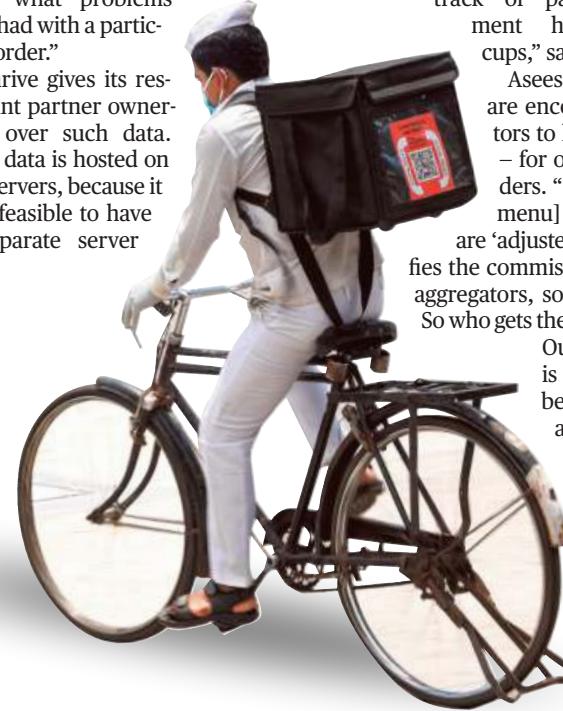
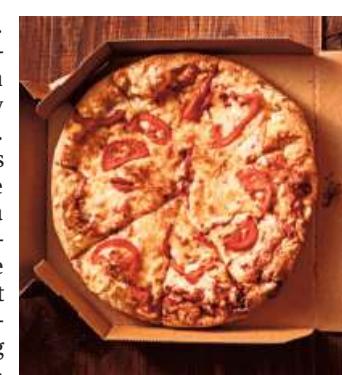
NRAI has been conducting bootcamps to familiarise restaurants with DotPe's system in multiple cities.

In Mumbai, the gastronome London Taxi co-founded by Dhaval Udeshi and NRAI member Pawan Shahri, has doubled up as an incubator programme.

Dhaval says, "This is the first time that a restaurant is opening up its kitchen to become an incubator for home delivery. There is no doubt about the adverse effect of the pandemic on India's F&B segment, especially small business owners. Newer companies who want to start their own brand in the food business need SEO (search engine optimisation) to acquire direct customers. To make a business survive on its own it takes a good couple of months."

Dhaval says that partnering with known brands is one definite way forward, keeping in mind the importance of SEO in reaching end-customers online. "We have redone our entire marketing strategy towards online delivery, and have partnered with DotPe for the same," he says.

It appears to be a case of multiple Davids banding against a few Goliaths, in a tussle that promises to be fascinating, and ultimately rewarding for customers.



Getting real with Chinmayi

The singer talks about her recent, impromptu concerts on Twitter Spaces and how that has altered people's perception of her as a full-time activist

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

"People who have not met me think that I am an angry woman," says Chinmayi, in a telephonic interview, "Twitter Spaces changed that perception and it was therapeutic for me personally; it reset what I felt about myself. Spaces also helped put some focus on my art because I thought: Have people forgotten that I am a singer?"

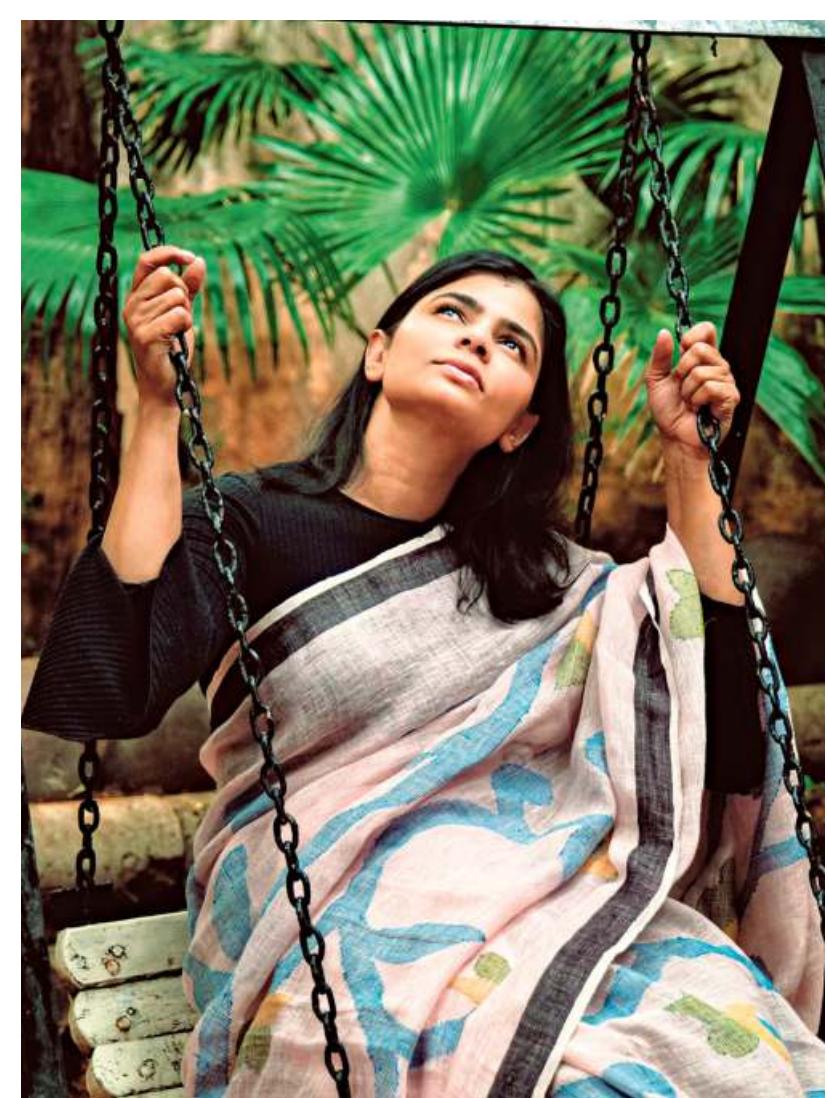
If you drop by Chinmayi's residence in Chennai, you will probably see her playing with her dogs and humming a tune. It might be a raga or *alaap*, or a tune from one of her superhits.

It is this side of the singer that fans have lately been introduced to in her recent packed, Twitter Spaces outings, one of which spilled over to the wee hours of the following day. However, the ones that won the most hearts were her concert with composer Govind Vasantha and her rendition of '80s hits, a tribute to Ilaiyaraaja who turned 78 recently.

In some of her Spaces, Chinmayi showcased her vocal prowess, thus leading to comments among Twitterati, many of whom said the music "healed them in tough times". She also takes on impromptu requests, to the delight of her fans. "I had a great time performing," she says.

"That was absolutely touching, but how much of this will have a change in ground reality is to be seen," says the singer, who mentions that Govind Vasantha and Nivas Prasanna are among her closest friends in the music industry.

Chinmayi, however, is not much of a music listener herself. "I don't listen to music for relaxation or fun. For me, music is an all-consuming exercise; I cannot relax when it plays in the background. That's why when I drive, I do not have music playing," says the musician, whose playback singing career kickstarted with the hit 'Oru Deivam' song in Mani Ratnam's *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002). Since then, she has sung over 1,000 songs in various languages.



Changing tracks Singer Chinmayi • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Muthamittal (2002). Since then, she has sung over 1,000 songs in various languages.

She states that her film offers have dried up since her involvement with the #MeToo movement, which began in 2018, but there are still a few tracks on the cards.

"I sang a solo Malayalam song for AR Rahman for the Prithviraj project (*Aadujeevitham*) four years ago. I am not sure of its status now. I have sung a few upcoming tracks in Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam but nothing in Tamil."

So, what's next? At the moment, Chinmayi is making sure she is heard on social media. She has been a part of two Clubhouse events discussing cinema. Also on the cards is a Twitter Space dedicated exclusively to *ghazals*, which she is planning to schedule in the next few days.

"I speak about issues that need to be flagged, but people think I am into full-time activism," she says, discussing the surge of support from listeners on Twitter Spaces. She adds, "These recent conversations helped changed that notion."



Fighting the good fight

Japanese filmmaker Kazuo Hara discusses his 15-year project, *Minamata Mandala*, and how it is reflective of the times we live in

SRIVATSAN S

An isolated elderly patient with the Minamata disease lying on a hospital bed with ventilator support, is the opening scene of *Minamata Mandala* (2020). A sprawling six-hour-long documentary by acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Kazuo Hara, it is both a humane story and a deeply political film, that exposes the Japanese government's incompetence in handling the epidemic and painstakingly captures the decades-long legal and medical battle of the residents of Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture in Japan.

Having filmed the documentary across a span of 15 years, Hara says the idea originated in his mind sometime during the early '90s when the momentum around Minamata died down.

The epidemic had forced an exodus among residents of Minamata to other cities in search of jobs. He came across one such: a fisherman, who moved to Osaka where they were discussing the impact the disease had on his life. There was an



ger among people and agitations led by Civil Action Groups, one of the representatives being a university professor, also an acquaintance of Hara.

He suggested that the filmmaker make a documentary on Minamata; Hara says he postponed agreeing to it for a year, for he felt the subject was not his territory.

Connecting over a video call from his residence at Shinjuku, Japan, Hara, joined by a translator, says, "Norioaki Tsuchimoto's documentary had a profound impact on

me and he was already following up on the case. I even tried meeting him, but they wouldn't let me because he was in a hospital. I never had a chance to ask him, but in a way, I inherited what he started."

The filming for the documentary began in 2001 and roughly ended in 2015-16. Split into three parts with two intervals, Hara takes a matter-of-fact approach to the 372-minute documentary, bringing out a series of first-person interviews with patients, medical researchers and academics who were involved in the study, and the plaintiffs.

Though its runtime may seem laboriously endless, the larger point of the documentary was to give the audience a taste of the long road it takes for justice and hence, the film's runtime, though justifiable, seemed like it was intended to honour the memories of the people featured. Hara has not just invested a stupendous amount of time, but has also sacrificed 15 years of his life to realise this documentary.

While admitting that he has changed as a person over the years, Hara says it has been a journey of self-discovery going as far back as the time he made *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (1987), one of his most famous works, to draw a parallel to his older self. The protagonist of that film was a determined individual who took on the government single-handedly.

"I realise now it is not about an individual but about the fighting spirit of the everyday people."

Minamata Mandala was screened at the recently-concluded International Film Festival Rotterdam 2021.

For me, music is an all-consuming exercise. I cannot relax when it plays

CM YK

U.S. Senate passes huge innovation Bill

It seeks to pump more than \$170 bn into tech research to counter growing economic threat from China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Senate passed a sweeping industrial policy Bill on Tuesday aimed at countering the surging economic threat from rival China, overcoming partisan divisions to support pumping more than \$170 billion into research and development.

With both American political parties increasingly worried about competition from Asia's largest power, the measure cleared the chamber on a 68-32 vote, one of the most significant bipartisan achievements in Congress since Joe Biden's presidency began in January.

It also represents the largest investment in scientific research and technological innovation "in generations", according to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

The Bill now heads to the House of Representatives, which earlier passed a different version. The two will



Tough competition: An employee making microchips at a factory in Nantong, China. ■ AFP

have to be reconciled into a single Bill before it is sent to the White House for the President's signature.

Biden encouraged

Mr. Biden said he was "encouraged" by the Senate's passage of the United States Innovation and Competition Act. "We are in a competition to win the 21st century,

and the starting gun has gone off," Mr. Biden said.

"As other countries continue to invest in their own research and development, we cannot risk falling behind. America must maintain its position as the most innovative and productive nation on Earth."

The package, a key provision of which addresses a

shortage of semiconductors that has slowed U.S. auto production this year, will help U.S. industry bolster its capacity and improve technology. It is seen as crucial for U.S. efforts to avoid being out-maneuvred by Beijing as the adversaries compete in the race to technological innovation.

"Today, the Senate took a critical bipartisan step forward to make the investments we need to continue America's legacy as a global leader in innovation," U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a statement praising the passage of the Bill. "This funding isn't just about addressing the current semiconductor chip shortage, it is about long-term investments," she said.

Mr. Schumer called the measure "one of the most important things this chamber has done in a very long time, a statement of faith in America's ability to seize the

opportunities of the 21st century".

Key areas

The proposal aims to address a number of technological areas in which the U.S. has fallen behind China. The Bill allocates \$52 billion in funding for a previously approved plan to increase domestic manufacturing of semiconductors. It also authorises \$120 billion over five years for activities at the National Science Foundation to advance priorities, including research and development in key areas such as artificial intelligence and quantum science. And it facilitates tie-ups between private firms and research universities.

"This is an opportunity for the United States to strike a blow on behalf of answering the unfair competition that we are seeing from communist China," said Republican Senator Roger Wicker, one of the main co-sponsors.

No decision yet on Indian consulate in Addu Atoll: Solih

Sections in Maldives oppose Indian 'heavy-handedness'

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

The Maldives has made no decision on opening an Indian consulate in its southern Addu Atoll, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said on Tuesday, a fortnight after the Indian Cabinet cleared a proposal for it.

The President remarked on the proposed Indian consulate, during a press conference on the COVID-19 situation in the country, spokesman Mabrook Azeem told *The Hindu* from capital Male. "He [Mr. Solih] pointed out that having multiple sites offering consular services in one country is quite common," Mr. Azeem said.

President Solih's comments appeared to keep the option open, amid an ongoing "#SaveAddu" social media campaign by a section of Maldivians sceptical of another Indian mission presence, in addition to the Embassy in Male.

Legislators from Addu and local body representatives – from the ruling coalition widely perceived as India-friendly – have pledged support to the initiative. Speaker Mohamed Nasheed, who is currently in Berlin, recovering from injuries sustained in an assassination attempt last month, said in a recent tweet that Addu's thinking has always been one that is open to the world. "Both Addu and Maldives will benefit from the creation of an Indian consulate in Addu," he said in a Dhivehi language tweet on June 5. Opposition voices, which earlier led an '#Indiaout' campaign against enhanced military cooperation



Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

between the neighbours, have opposed the proposed consulate.

Apart from its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Addu is the second largest city in the archipelago, home to over 30,000 people. Indian government sources familiar with the proposal said the rationale for the consulate was to help Addu residents with speedy visa services.

All the same, the frequent visa requirements of locals is yet to convince Maldivians who see a new consulate with suspicion, especially on the heels of a \$33-million Maldivian police training facility that India is helping build in Addu. On June 3, local publication *Times of Addu* ran an editorial titled "Indian consulate in Addu City: A possible 'safe house' for Indian spies?"

Local sensitivities

Further, the fact that the announcement appeared in the Indian media last month, before either government made an announcement, has prompted criticism of Indian "heavy handedness". According to the Maldives's former Ambassador to India Ahmed Mohamed, who served

former President Abdulla Yameen's administration, New Delhi must be more aware of the "sensitivities" within the Maldives.

"We saw similar apprehensions among our people when India [in 2018] was reluctant to take back the helicopters sent here, even after our [former President Yameen] government requested them. It was seen as boots on the ground, a challenge on our independence and a violation of our sovereignty," he told *The Hindu*. The decision to open a consulate in Addu invokes similar suspicion, in his view. "The fact that the decision was first reported in the Indian media also shows that sort of heavy handedness."

U.K.-based Maldivian academic Hassan Ugail, who hails from Addu, underscored the need for a data-driven approach to establish a consulate. "In principle, I am supportive of consulates of countries, including India, to be established in Addu. However, I am not supportive of the present set-up being proposed," he said.

Pointing to the "economic growth prospects" argument made by some in favour of opening a consulate, he said there are no signs yet of "such economic growth, investments or mass tourism from India to Addu city".

"We must first demonstrate the case with facts, figures and numbers, and demonstrate signs that such activities are actually taking place. The argument of 'let us establish a consulate and let us wait for economic growth to take place' makes little sense," Prof. Ugail said.

UN rights rapporteur warns of starvation deaths in Myanmar

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The UN's special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar has warned of "mass deaths" from starvation and disease in the wake of fighting between rebel groups and junta forces in the east of the country.

Myanmar has been in chaos and its economy paralysed since a February putsch and a brutal military crackdown on dissent that has killed over 800, according to a local monitoring

group. Fighting has flared in several communities – especially in townships that have seen a high death toll at the hands of the police – and some locals have formed "defence forces". Clashes have escalated in Kayah State near the Thai border in recent weeks. The UN estimates around 1,00,000 people have been displaced.

"The junta's brutal, indiscriminate attacks are threatening the lives of many thousands of men, women and children in Kayah," Tom Andrews said in a statement on Twitter on Tuesday.

"Let me be blunt. Mass deaths from starvation, disease, and exposure, on a scale we have not yet seen... could occur in Kayah State absent immediate action."

Diplomatic efforts to halt the bloodshed have been led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – of which Myanmar is a member – but the bloc is riven with infighting and has managed to put little pressure on the junta.

Erdogan to visit Karabakh region won by Azerbaijan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ANKARA

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday he will visit Azerbaijan to celebrate its victory over Armenia in a brief war last year, touring a region recaptured in disputed Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan seized back swathes of territory in the separatist ethnic Armenia region with the help of Turkish combat drones and other weaponry from Ankara. The conflict claimed 6,000 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered truce in November that saw ethnic Armenians pushed out of large parts of the land they had won during a brutal post-Soviet war in the 1990s.

Mr. Erdogan said he will fly to Azerbaijan from next week's NATO summit in Brussels and watch Turkey play Wales in the Euro 2020 football championship on Wednesday. He said he and his "brother", Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, will then visit Shusha, which fell to Azerbaijani forces during the war.

Quad vaccine partnership goal still on track: U.S. official

U.S. intends to hold a 'very ambitious' Quad meeting

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON DC

A top Biden administration official has said the Quad group of countries – India, Australia, the U.S. and Japan – are on track to meet their goal of producing at least 1 billion vaccines for the Asia region by the end of 2022, despite the massive COVID-19 wave that has hit India in recent weeks. The Quad vaccine partnership was announced at a summit level meeting in March, before the pandemic situation in India deteriorated significantly.

"Our discussions with both our partners in the private sector and also in government suggest that we are, knock-on-wood, still on track for 2022, but... the most intense efforts right now really are in the short term," Kurt Campbell, the Biden administration's top official for Indo-Pacific policy, said on Tuesday. He was speaking at an event organised by the Center for New American Security, a think tank in Washington DC.

Mr. Campbell said the U.S. had been in close consultations with its partners and with India. He acknowledged that this has been an "extremely difficult period" for India and that the U.S. has tried to "stand with Delhi" and has tried to bring private and public sector support for India.

"But our goal is to hold an in-person Quad meeting... very ambitious meeting here in Washington in the fall

tively confident as we head into 2022, but we recognise that what we are facing right now across Asia, in fact, across the world, are new strains that spread more rapidly. So even countries that did extremely well through social distancing and masking... are now facing outbreaks," he said, adding the only way to counter this situation was through "vaccine diplomacy" and that the U.S. was trying to step that up.

The second wave of the pandemic in India revealed the country's COVID-109 vaccine shortages. The U.S. has initiated a programme to give 80 million of its excess vaccines to countries in need of them, by the end of June.

In-person meeting

Mr. Campbell said the U.S. intends to hold a "very ambitious" Quad leaders meeting in Washington.

"I think we're feeling rela-

would carry out a "criteria-based decision framework and rigorous, evidence-based analysis to address the risks" from Internet applications controlled by foreign entities.

Mr. Biden's order seeks to identify any "connected software applications that may pose an unacceptable risk to U.S. national security and the American people".

with all leaders in attendance. We will ensure that we've taken the necessary steps on the vaccine deliverability – we intend to build on that," he said.

He also suggested there would be some infrastructure related outcomes from this Quad meeting. Mr. Campbell had suggested this at the end of May as well, at an event in Stanford.

A White House official declined to confirm that Washington would be the location of the autumn Quad meeting, when approached by *The Hindu* on Tuesday following Mr. Campbell's comments. "We want to do something constructive with respect to infrastructure and I think we're going to take some other steps to build out the Quad to ensure that as an unofficial gathering, it still is the defining feature of modern diplomacy linking these key maritime democracies in a way that is deeply consequential for the 21st century," Mr. Campbell said on Tuesday.

In response to a question on whether the Quad would expand at some point or focus on deepening cooperation between the existing four members, Mr. Campbell suggested the current focus was for now to "deepen" and "broaden" familiarity within existing partners but did not rule out other countries eventually participating in Quad initiatives.

Biden drops plan to ban TikTok

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden on Wednesday revoked executive orders from his predecessor Donald Trump seeking to ban Chinese-owned mobile apps TikTok and WeChat over national security concerns, the White House said.

A White House statement said that instead of banning the apps, the administration

including "applications that are owned, controlled, or managed by persons that support foreign adversary military or intelligence activities, or are involved in malicious cyber activities, or involve applications that collect sensitive personal data".

APPPOINTMENT

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For details and online registration, visit <http://career.nirdpr.in/>

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MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
	09-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51,942	-0.64
US Dollar	72.97	-0.11
Gold	48,244	-1.45
Brent oil	72.48	1.27

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	852.60	-21.60
Asian Paints	2943.55	-17.30
Axis Bank	736.75	-9.60
Bajaj Auto	4224.50	-45.40
Bajaj Finserv	11558.85	-174.25
Bajaj Finance	5674.50	-80.90
Bharti Airtel	540.00	-6.80
BPCL	485.05	-2.40
Britannia Ind	3574.70	-27.05
Cipla	958.65	4.90
Coal India	156.40	0.40
Divis Lab	4267.45	-26.25
Dr Reddys Lab	5222.80	-51.95
Eicher Motors	2729.05	-34.75
Grasim Ind	1492.05	-11.10
HCL Tech.	971.30	4.10
HDFC	2544.75	-9.75
HDFC Bank	1480.30	-2.75
HDFC Life	684.90	-4.80
Hero MotoCorp	3023.50	-32.45
Hindalco	383.15	-4.60
Hind Unilever	2356.00	-3.00
ICICI Bank	636.10	-6.30
IndusInd Bank	1003.55	-16.60
Infosys	1415.30	2.35
Indian Oil Corp.	114.95	-1.75
ITC	212.50	-1.15
JSW Steel	697.85	-9.65
Kotak Bank	1782.90	-10.65
L&T	1519.30	-29.85
M&M	804.45	-3.40
Maruti Suzuki	7239.00	-97.75
Nestle India Ltd.	17557.15	74.55
NTPC	118.10	1.90
ONGC	124.05	-0.75
PowerGrid Corp	242.10	8.05
Reliance Ind	2175.00	-39.60
SBI Life	998.60	18.75
State Bank	421.45	-5.75
Shree Cement	28407.35	-548.00
Sun Pharma	672.85	-5.90
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	702.85	-7.60
Tata Motors	343.35	-9.40
Tata Steel	1101.00	-10.10
TCS	3200.25	0.10
Tech Mahindra	1052.25	-5.50
Titan	1730.75	18.25
UltraTech Cement	6724.75	-69.65
UPL	845.55	-8.00
Wipro	544.20	-6.40

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.78	73.10
Euro	88.72	89.11
British Pound	103.14	103.63
Japanese Yen (100)	66.49	66.78
Chinese Yuan	11.39	11.45
Swiss Franc	81.23	81.59
Singapore Dollar	54.98	55.22
Canadian Dollar	60.23	60.50
Malaysian Ringgit	17.67	17.75

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



LIC Chairman Kumar gets nine-month extension

The government has given a nine-month extension to LIC Chairman M.R. Kumar in view of the insurer's proposed initial public offer towards the end of the current fiscal. The government has approved the proposal of the Department of Financial Services for extending the term of Mr. Kumar from June 30 till March 13, 2022, when he completes three years, sources said. PTI

Uber to hire almost 250 engineers in India

Uber on Wednesday said it would hire almost 250 engineers to expand its technology and product teams based in Bengaluru and Hyderabad. With this, the ride-hailing firm would have 1,000 employees in India by end of this year. The new hiring is expected to strengthen rider and driver growth, delivery, eats, digital payments, risk and compliance, the firm said.

'PC emerges as most preferred gaming device'

BENGALURU Personal Computer (PC) gaming is now a mainstream activity in India – especially during the pandemic – with women, school students, 'Gen Z' youth from Tier 2 seriously considering it as a career option, as per Gaming Landscape Report 2021 released by HP India. Some 1,500 respondents took part in the survey conducted in 25 metros and Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities across India.

DGTR task force to cut compliance burden

NEW DELHI A task force for reducing the compliance burden for citizens and business has been constituted by the Commerce Department, as per the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR). The terms of reference include reviewing all existing rules, processes and procedures; ensuring that these are kept simple and ensuring that all processes are fully online. PTI

U.P. favours GST reduction on essentials for COVID-19 care

Govt. wants to minimise burden of the people coping with pandemic: Khanna

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh government is in favour of reducing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) levied on COVID-19 essentials to minimise costs borne by people to cope with the pandemic, State Finance Minister Sunil Khanna said.

The GST Council, that met on May 28, had formed a Ministerial group to review demands for slashing the tax rates or exempting COVID-19 supplies from GST. Mr. Khanna was part of the Group of Ministers (GoM) that submitted its report to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman this week.

"The U.P. Government is



First step: A group of Ministers has submitted a report to Ms. Sitharaman on exempting COVID supplies from GST. ■REUTERS

in favour of reducing taxes in order to reduce the COVID-19 treatment costs for patients," he said.

He was responding to a query on the possibility of levying a 0.1% GST on COVID-19 material ranging from

vaccines (currently taxed at 5%) and drugs, oxygen concentrators and cylinders that are taxed at 12% or 18%.

Ms. Sitharaman had given the GoM just ten days to firm up its views 'so that if there are any further reductions

that need to be done, (they) will be done'. However, no date has been set for the Council to study the report.

Mr. Khanna also asserted the State had not raised taxes on petroleum products despite the fiscal difficulties posed by the pandemic. On States' GST compensation dues, he said U.P. had no pending dues since last year.

While the Centre has announced a ₹1.58-lakh crore borrowing plan to meet States' GST compensation dues this year, rating agency ICRA has estimated that ₹9,700 crore of States' dues remain pending since last year and have to be paid this year, for which the funding options are unclear.

Govt. extends Jain's term at RBI by 2 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said the government has extended the tenure of Deputy Governor Mahesh Kumar Jain for two years.

"The Central Government has re-appointed Shri Mahesh Kumar Jain as Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India for a period of two years with effect from June 22, 2021, or until further orders, whichever is earlier, upon completion of his existing term on June 21, 2021," the central bank said in a statement.

Mr. Jain was appointed as deputy governor for three years in June 2018.

Before joining the Reserve Bank of India, he was managing director of IDBI Bank.

Aim to vaccinate 70 cr. by Sept., run sites 24/7: FinMin

'Herd immunity to boost recovery'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has made a strong pitch to vaccinate 70 crore people with at least the first dose by September to achieve herd immunity against COVID-19 and regain the momentum of economic recovery.

As this would require 93 lakh doses to be delivered every day from now, the ministry has suggested making vaccination a 24/7 activity, particularly in August and September when vaccine supplies may improve.

"As on date, 19.2 crore have got the first dose while 4.7 crore have been fully vaccinated. If 70 crore must be vaccinated by September, it is estimated about 113 crore doses are needed."

The ministry suggested aligning supplies with the September target and a system whereby 'people already having antibodies (are) vaccinated later while people who have not been exposed (are) given priority.'

"Use of technology to ease the administration of the vaccine, increased shifts at vaccination centres and integration of mass vaccination sites like shopping areas, drive-ins, with schools and primary health care centres will enhance faster coverage under vaccination," suggested the ministry in its monthly economic report for May issued by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).

"The peak daily vaccination rate attained till date is 42.65 lakh. This peak was achieved using one shift of 8-9 hours of vaccination," it pointed out, suggesting an

China factory price surge signals global pressures

Producer price index rises 9%

REUTERS
BEIJING

China's factory-gate prices rose at their fastest annual pace in over 12 years in May, driven by surging commodity prices, highlighting global inflation pressures at a time when policymakers are trying to revitalise COVID-19 hit growth.

Investors are increasingly worried that pandemic-driven stimulus measures could supercharge global inflation and force central banks to tighten policy, curbing the recovery.

China's producer price index (PPI) increased 9%, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said, as prices bounced back from last year's pandemic lows. The

Videocon rises 4.9% on NCLT nod for Vedanta firm's offer

Mining group's stake in Ravva oilfield to rise to 47.5%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Shares of Videocon Industries Ltd. (VIL) jumped by the maximum permissible 4.9% to ₹6.43 on the BSE on Wednesday, a day after the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved the ₹2,962 crore bid by Vedanta Group company Twin Star Technologies Ltd. to acquire bankrupt VIL and 12 other group entities.

Vedanta's Volcan Investments told the LSE the group's interest in the Ravva oilfield would rise to 47.5% post acquisition.

"The bid for the Videocon asset consists of an upfront

payment of almost \$40 million," Volcan said in the filing.

"The remaining deferred payments shall begin post completion of 2 years from the acquisition date."

According to previous submissions made before the NCLT, all the financial creditors of VIL and 12 group companies had lodged claims of ₹34,370.75 crore. Besides lenders for the group's oil and gas business had made claims of ₹23,120.90 crore with the Resolution Professional.

With the oil and gas vendors' claim amounting to about 40.2% of the total claims of the financial creditors of VIL, banks had a col-

lective exposure of ₹43,743.35 crore.

Sizeable haircut

Given the Vedanta group company's ₹2,962 crore offer banks have agreed to take a haircut well in excess of ₹40,000 crore.

Declining to comment on the VIL deal, J.N. Gupta, MD at Stakeholders Empowerment Services stressed there was a need for greater transparency in the resolution process. "They should declare the received bids without disclosing the names. Today, the Resolution Professional has the power to twist the deal in anyone's favour," he remarked.

Non-life insurers get health boost

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Non-life insurers have registered a 11.35% rise in gross direct premium underwritten for May, a growth boosted by the continued demand for health products.

Flash figures issued by insurance regulator IRDAI show the non-life segment comprising general, standalone health as well as two specialised PSU insurers' gross direct premium underwritten at ₹12,316.50 crore. In May 2020, it was ₹1,061 crore.

With this spectrum, the Railways will introduce Long-Term Evolution (LTE)-based Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC) on its routes. This will help prevent train accidents and reduce delays by enabling real-time interaction between the Loco Pilot, Station Master and the Control Centre. The project, targeted to be completed in five years, is estimated to cost ₹ 25,000 crore.

"LTE... will be used for modern signalling and train protection systems and ensure seamless communication between loco pilots and guards," an official statement said. This will also enable the Railways to take up Internet of Things (IoT)-based remote monitoring, particularly of coaches, wagons and locos, and monitor live feeds of CCTV cameras in the coaches.

Cabinet approves 5 MHz spectrum for Railways

Tech to help avoid accidents, delays

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the allotment of 5 MHz spectrum in the premium 700 MHz band to the Railways for captive use in areas of public safety and security services.

Training future leaders with 21

Sakkari stops 2020 champ Swiatek's streak

Krejčíková ends Gauff's campaign; Nadal stumbles before powering into the semifinals

ROLAND-GARROS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS

Maria Sakkari ended defending champion Iga Świątek's 11-match and 22-set winning streaks at Roland-Garros on Wednesday and reached the semifinals of a Major tournament for the first time.

The 17th-seeded Sakkari used strong and steady baseline play to eliminate Świątek 6-4, 6-4 at Court Philippe Chatrier in the quarterfinals and ensure that the clay-court tournament will end with a new Grand Slam champion.

All four women remaining in the field are making their Slam semifinal debuts. This is only the second time in the professional era that's been the case at any major tournament, according to the WTA; there also was a quartet of first-time semifinalists at the 1978 Australian Open.

On Thursday, Sakkari plays unseeded Barbora Krejčíková, and No. 31 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova faces unseeded Tamara Zidansek. Krejčíková advanced earlier on Wednesday by beating 17-year-old Coco Gauff 7-6(6), 6-3.

Sakkari, who is from Greece, and Krejčíková, who

Of course, we still have a long way to go, but we took a huge step today
SAKKARI after knocking out defending champion Świątek

THE HIGHLIGHTS

1 Sakkari is the first Greek woman to reach the semifinals of a Grand Slam



THURSDAY'S PICKS WOMEN'S SEMIFINALS

31-Pavlyuchenkova vs Zidansek
Krejčíková vs 17-Sakkari

She's 17 years old. When I was 17, I was playing ITFs. 15ks. She's amazing. Her time will come
KREJČÍKOVA on Gauff

This is the first time in the Open Era that there are four first-time semifinalists in women's singles at Roland Garros

5 The number of set points Gauff failed to convert in the first set against Krejčíková

36 Number of consecutive sets Nadal won in Paris before Schwartzman broke the streak. Previous best: 37 completed sets, a run also broken by Schwartzman (2018, quarterfinal)

105 Nadal's wins at Roland Garros, the most by a male player at a single Slam. Next best: Federer's 102 at Aus Open and 101 at Wimbledon

is from the Czech Republic, are both 25. Each has won only one Tour-level title. Neither had been past the fourth round at a Major until now.

In the day's first quarterfinal, Gauff led 3-0 at the outset, then 5-3, and held a total of five set points in the open-

er, but failed to convert any. Krejčíková grabbed that set by taking the last four points of the tiebreaker and reeled off 15 consecutive points during one stretch en route to a 5-0 edge in the second set.

Closing out the most important victory of her singles career was not easy, though.

Krejčíková needed six match points to do it, raising her arms overhead when she finally won when Gauff sent a forehand wide.

Krejčíková has won two Grand Slam doubles titles with Katerina Siniaková – and they're into the semifinals in Paris – but is playing

THE RESULTS

Quarterminals: Men: 3-Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt 10-Diego Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

Women: Barbora Krejčíková (Cze) bt 24-Coco Gauff (USA) 7-6(6), 6-3; 17-Maria Sakkari (Gre) bt 8-Iga Świątek (Pol) 6-4, 6-4.

On Tuesday:

Men: 6-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (Esp) 6-4, 6-1, 6-1; 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt 2-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) 6-3, 7-6(3), 7-5.

in only her fifth Major tournament in singles.

"Everybody, they just put a label on me like, 'Yeah, you play doubles. You are a doubles specialist.' But I never thought I just want to be a doubles specialist," Krejčíková said.

"So I was just working hard all the time. I just wanted to play singles," she said.

In the men's section, Rafael Nadal dropped a set for the first time this year at Roland-Garros but ultimately advanced to the semifinals for a record-extending 14th time. The 13-time champion faced a stiff challenge from gritty 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman before prevailing 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Medvedev exits with underarm serve and a dig at scheduling

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Daniil Medvedev's campaign at Roland-Garros came to an end on Tuesday with an ill-judged underarm serve on match point followed by an impassioned outburst over his eagerly-awaited showdown with Stefanos Tsitsipas being played inside an empty stadium.

The colourful World No. 2 was beaten 6-3, 7-6(3), 7-5 by the Greek fifth seed.

It was only Tsitsipas' second win over Medvedev in eight meetings and it ended in bizarre fashion.



Frustrating night: Medvedev found the going tough during his quarterfinal against Tsitsipas. ■ REUTERS

prised. But it didn't work out at all. I won't say it was a mistake. It was something that I dared to do and maybe next time I won't do it knowing that he's ready."

Tsitsipas had his own description for the ploy which backfired so badly for his opponent.

"A very millennial shot," said the Greek.

"I saw he kind of stopped. I felt like there was something coming up, so at that point I think I got prepared for it."

Medvedev had never won a match at Roland-Garros in four attempts before this year.

So winning four matches in one visit was progress even if he was dismayed that his match was selected for the penultimate evening session.

It was played inside an empty Court Philippe Chatrier as spectators were banned under a 9 p.m. COV-19 curfew.

This year's French Open is staging evening sessions for the first time under a broadcast agreement with streaming giant Amazon.

"It was without a doubt the match of the day but Roland-Garros preferred Amazon to people," said Medvedev.

Williamson out with elbow problem

NZ IN ENG

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BIRMINGHAM

New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the second and final Test against England at Edgbaston with a left elbow problem on Wednesday. Tom Latham will captain the side.



has been managing the injury since first missing matches in March.

"It's not an easy decision for Kane to have to miss a Test, but we think it's the right one," New Zealand coach Gary Stead said.

The teams:

England (likely XI): Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Zak Crawley, Joe Root (Capt.), Ollie Pope, Dan Lawrence, James Bracey (wk), Craig Overton, Jack Leach, Stuart Broad, and James Anderson.

New Zealand (from): Tom Latham (Capt.), Devon Conway, Will Young, Ross Taylor, Henry Nicholls, B-J. Watling (wk), Colin de Grandhomme, Matt Henry, Kyle Jamieson, Ajaz Patel, Rachin Ravindra and Trent Boult.

Soaking it in



In good spirits: Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and Cheteshwar Pujara enjoy the sunshine in Southampton. ■ TWITTER@IMVKOHLI

Emily Arlott receives maiden call-up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BRISTOL

17-member squad.

The squad:

Pacer Emily Arlott, who took a hat-trick in the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy, earned a maiden call-up to the England women's squad for the one-off Test against India starting here on June 16.

England has announced a

little late

"Had I got this advice earlier in life, I may have played much better cricket and scored more runs.

"Through Cricuru, you'll get many more such critical tips by veteran cricketers about how to make these minor adjustments."

Mastering the skills

Sehwag said along with Bangar and the 33 cricketers – men and women across the globe – that they have got on board for paid coaching modules and interactions with budding cricketers, the app may help players and coaches master the skills and mental aspects of succeeding on the field.

are away from the ball, then it matters whether you move your feet or not. They offered the best advice I received so far: to take guard on middle- and off-stump rather than leg-stump so that you can be closer to the ball even if you don't move your feet too much."

Defying copybook: Virender Sehwag simply relied on his remarkable hand-eye coordination. ■ FILE PHOTO

Little late

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TV PICKS

Roland-Garros: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

England vs New Zealand: 2nd Test: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Argentina blows lead against Colombia

SAN PAULO
Argentina drew 2-2 at Colombia after squandering a two-goal advantage in South American World Cup qualifying.

The results: Ecuador 1 (Plata 90+2) lost to Peru 2 (Cueva 62, Advinula 88); Venezuela 0 drew with Uruguay 0; Colombia 2 (Muriel 51-pen, Borja 90+4) drew with Argentina 2 (Romero 3, Paredes 8); Paraguay 0 lost to Brazil 2 (Neymar 4, Paquetá 90+3); Chile 1 (Pulgar 69) drew with Bolivia 1 (Martínez 82-pen). AP

UEFA suspends legal action against Super League rebels

PARIS
European football's governing body UEFA has suspended legal action against Real Madrid, Juventus and Barcelona over their role in attempting to launch a breakaway European Super League. AFP

Bengal cricketer Rabi Banerjee passes away

KOLKATA
Former Bengal cricketer Rabi Banerjee passed away on Wednesday following protracted illness, said a Cricket Association of Bengal statement. He was 70 and is survived by his wife and two sons. A medium pacer, Banerjee played 10 first class matches for Bengal from 1969-70 and 1974-75 and captured 11 wickets.

Mitchell dazzles as Jazz edge Clippers

SALT LAKE CITY
Donovan Mitchell scored 45 points as host Utah Jazz rallied to beat Los Angeles Clippers 112-109 in the opening game of their NBA playoff series on Tuesday. Joel Embiid scored a playoff career-high 40 points as Philadelphia 76ers topped Atlanta Hawks 118-102 to level their Eastern Conference series at one game each.

The results: EC: Philadelphia 76ers 118 bt Atlanta Hawks 102. Series tied 1-1; WC: Utah Jazz 112 bt LA Clippers 109. Jazz lead 1-0.



Nuggets star Nikola Jokic named NBA MVP

DENVER
Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic won the 2020-21 NBA Most Valuable Player award, becoming the first player in franchise history and the first second-round draft pick in league history to earn the honour. REUTERS

Japan may allow domestic spectators

Since COVID-19 vaccines have been rolled out and cases are coming down

TOKYO OLYMPICS

REUTERS

TOKYO



Hoping for the best: Organising Committee president Seiko Hashimoto, right, and CEO Toshiro Muto, will finalise plans for spectators soon. AP

sources.

This is in contrast with their position about a month ago when there was an at-

mosphere among Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's administration that the Games, starting on July 23, needed

to be held without spectators, the report said.

The Summer Games has seen strong opposition from the public and medical experts over concerns the event could lead to more infections and overload medical facilities, despite assurances from Suga's administration that the Games can be held safely.

Tokyo 2020 president Seiko Hashimoto on Tuesday said that overseas media will be closely monitored to ensure they do not leave pre-registered areas in an effort to ease public concerns.

GPS monitoring

Foreign media will be monitored via GPS and will not be

allowed to visit the houses of local friends or other unregistered areas, Hashimoto added, according to the *Asahi* and other local media.

Month end decision

Organisers will finalise plans for spectators before the end of this month after consulting with the Japanese government, as well as the Tokyo administration, media quoted Hashimoto as saying.

Athletes are also cautious about the pandemic outlook. Australia on Wednesday joined Taiwan in pulling out of the final baseball qualifying tournament for the Games due to "insurmountable" challenges amid the pandemic.

Sapporo not ready amid virus resurgence

REUTERS

TOKYO

When Olympics organisers shifted the marathon event from Tokyo to the northern city of Sapporo, they did so because of concerns about the intense summer heat in the Japanese capital.

Two years down the track, critics say organisers have effectively leapt from the frying pan into the fire.

Sapporo is currently under a COVID-19 state of emergency amid a resurgence in coronavirus infections.

Officials in the city say they still don't have key information, including the number of athletes to expect and details on health facilities, while opposition

from residents to hosting part of the world's biggest multi-sporting event has grown.

"There's no action yet," said Takashi Okugi, a Sapporo city official in charge of Olympic preparations. "We don't have enough time."

City officials and residents are nervous about the influx of athletes and support staff at a time when the city's medical system is already stretched.

Okugi said officials have made repeated requests to the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee seeking essential details.

"So far a lot of answers that we are hearing are like no decision yet or still under consideration," Okugi said.

Sharath to train with Manika in Pune

TABLE TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

In a turn of events brought about by the refusal of Manika Batra to attend the National table tennis camp for Olympic-bound players in Sonipat (Haryana) from June 20, India's top paddler Sharath Kamal has been forced to make changes in his travel schedule. Sharath and Manika will compete in the mixed doubles event at the Tokyo Olympics.

His hands tied, the nine-

time National champion will travel to Pune and train with Manika twice. "I will train with Manika in Pune for a week from June 15, and then go to the National camp. After around 15 days at the camp where I will focus on singles, I will return to Pune to practice with Manika for about 10 days. And then maybe return to Chennai. Let's see. Of course, it is tiring and a minor risk [to travel back and forth] in the pandemic, but do I have a choice," said Sharath to *The Hindu* here on Wednesday.

Contract with Chinese apparel sponsor snapped following criticism: Narinder Batra

WRESTLING

SPORTS BUREAU

WARSAW

Olympic-bound freestyle wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya gave a series of fine performances before winning the silver medal in the 61kg category in the Poland Open Ranking Series event here on Wednesday.

World championships bronze medallist Dahiya, who has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in 57kg, decided to compete here in

61kg as he did not want to go through the rigours of reducing his weight twice in about two months.

Dahiya defeated World junior champion Gulomjon Abdullaev of Uzbekistan 10-1, World under-23 silver medallist Adlan Askarov of Kazakhstan 13-8, American Nathan Tomasello 9-5 before rallying to beat Iranian star Reza Ahmedali Atrinagharchi 7-4 in the semifinals.

Dahiya lost to Abdullaev 5-3 in the final.

Dahiya falters in final

ATHLETICS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HENGelo (Netherlands)

Leteisenbet Gidey lowered the women's 10,000m world record just two days after Sifan Hassan set the mark on the same track.

Gidey clocked 29 minutes, 1.03 seconds at the Ethiopian Olympic trials, which is being held in the Netherlands. Tsigie Gebre selama was second in 30:06.01. Gidey took 5.79 seconds off Hassan's record.

"I expected to run a

world record," said the 23-year-old Gidey. "I'd like to try to break the world record again and break 29 minutes."

Gidey. FILE PHOTO

28,520 Challenger, Lyon: Singles (first round): Fernando Verdasco (Esp) bt Sumit Nagal 6-7(5), 7-6(3), 7-5. €66,640 Challenger, Bratislava: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Luca Margaroli (Sui) & Sriram Balaji bt Mathias Bachinger & Tobias Kamke (Ger) 6-3, 6-7(5), [10-3]. \$52,080 Challenger, Orlando, USA: Singles (first round): Nicolas Mejia (Col) bt Sasikumar Mukund 6-4, 6-1. Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Jack Vance & Tennyson Whiting (USA) bt Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Purav Raja 6-3, 3-6, [10-7]. \$25,000 ITF women, Madrid: Singles (first round): Karman Kaur Thandi bt Ekaterina Kavionova (Rus) 6-1, 6-4.

Contract with Chinese apparel sponsor snapped following criticism: Narinder Batra

IOA prepared to go with unbranded sports kits at Tokyo

Contract with Chinese apparel sponsor snapped following criticism: Narinder Batra

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Having snapped sponsorships with Chinese company Li Ning, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is prepared to go with unbranded sports kits at the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

The IOA, however, has not given up hope on finding a replacement sponsor in the short time available but admits it won't be easy.

Time running out

"The IOA, the athletes, sports everyone exists because of the public and if public sentiment is against something then there is no question of going ahead with it. We took a decision to

withdraw from the contract after criticism and we are in the process of initiating talks (for a replacement sponsor). But we have only till the end of June to finalise things and honestly, it isn't enough time," IOA president Narinder Batra told *The Hindu*.

Batra and secretary-general Rajeev Mehta had, on Tuesday night, issued a joint statement, withdrawing the contract without naming Li Ning.

"We are aware of the emotions of our fans and we in the IOA have decided that we will withdraw from our existing contract with an apparel sponsor. Our athletes, coaches and support staff, will wear unbranded apparel.

...we would like our athletes to be able to train and compete without having to answer questions about the apparel brand. As it is, they have all been challenged by the pandemic over the past year and a quarter and we want them to not be distracted," they had announced.

Reaction

Reacting to the announcement, China's Foreign Ministry in Beijing said on Wednesday it "hoped that the Indian side will be objective and fair in viewing the normal cooperation between the two countries, rather than politicising the issue."

The IOA, along with the Sports Ministry, had un-

veiled the Indian kits for the Tokyo Olympics only last week at a virtual event.

"Getting the kits ready is not an issue, they are being readied even now for those confirmed qualified and we have the measurements of all those who are on the long list."

"If we manage something in time, great. Otherwise they will remain unbranded. But there can't be a compromise with the standards," Batra added.

"Olympics is a huge stage and there can be no compromise with the prestige of representing the nation there. Anyone can spend huge amounts to get their name on the kit but we will have to

look at the credentials also," he insisted.

Domestic brand best bet IOA treasurer Anandeshwar Pandey admitted that a well-known domestic brand was India's best bet at the moment.

"Given the conditions and the circumstances, I believe getting an Indian brand on board will be the best thing. Without compromising on quality, it will also be a proud thing on the global stage."

Shiv Naresh remains the front-runner for the same as the most experienced Indian manufacturer.

(with inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

Indian Grand Prix scheduled for June 21

Athletes not to take part in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan events

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India has scheduled the 4th Indian Grand Prix for June 21 at NS-NIS Patiala.

There had been uncertainty over the event with the federation hoping to arrange competitions abroad for Indian athletes ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, but the travel restrictions and quarantine rules in most countries forced it to explore other options.

A 40-member national team was expected to travel to Kyrgyzstan (T. Kolpakova International Competition in Bishkek) and Kazakhstan (Qosanov Memorial in Alma-Ata) later this month. However, the AFI was informed of a mandatory 14-day isolation for those arriving from India, regardless of a negative PCR test or vaccination certificate, forcing the AFI to drop the idea.

The worst affected athletes of the severe restrictions and cancellations have been shotputter Tajinder Pal Singh Toor and javelin thrower Annu Rani, besides the 4x100m women's relay team, all on the fringe of qualifying.

List of events: Men: 400m, 1500m, Long Jump, Triple Jump, Shot Put, Javelin Throw, 400m Hurdles; Women: 100m, 200m, 400m, 1500m, 5000m, Discus Throw, Javelin Throw, 4x100m relay.

"We do not want to impact the training schedule of our athletes by making them go through a long quarantine process with six weeks left for the Olympic Games. We will focus on providing them with good competition in the Indian Grand Prix and National inter-state Championships from 25-29 June in Patiala," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said.

The worst affected athletes of the severe restrictions and cancellations have been shotputter Tajinder Pal Singh Toor and javelin thrower Annu Rani, besides the 4x100m women's relay team, all on the fringe of qualifying.

Prithu, Savitha favourites

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Grandmaster Prithu Gupta and Savitha Shri enjoy the top seeding in the open and girls' sections in the National (under-18) online rapid chess championship that begins on Thursday.

Winner of the Polgar Challenge – the first leg of the Julius Bar Challenge Tour – third seed Praggnanandha gained an opportunity.

Categories.

In all, around 235 players from 29 affiliates of the All India Chess Federation have entered the open section. Among the girls, around 130 participants from 27 affiliates form the field.

In this 11-round event, three rounds are scheduled on Friday and four each on the following two days.

No comparison with Messi, says Chhetri

Dismisses any talk of putting him in the same space as the Argentine

FOOTBALL

SHYAM VASUDEVAN

CHENNAI

Sunil Chhetri might be among the upper echelon in global football, but he remains grounded to reality. The Indian football team captain has gone past Lionel Messi to become the second-highest international goalscorer among active footballers, but he is quick to dismiss any comparison between him and the Argentine icon.