



Justice Indira Banerjee
steps down from Bengal
post-poll violence case
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Fall in COVID-19 cases
should not be taken for
granted, says V.K. Paul
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Conservative cleric
tipped to win as Iran
votes for new president
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Rain washes out
opening day's play
in WTC final
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NEARBY



Flouting COVID-19 rules
will hasten 3rd wave: HC

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday took suo moto cognisance of violations of COVID-19 protocols at various markets across the Capital where people are seen not wearing masks and flouting social distancing norms.

CITY ► PAGE 2

NGOs slam jab clause in
market reopening order

GUWAHATI
lewduh, Meghalaya's largest traditional market in Shillong, reopened partially on Friday after a long lockdown. But the condition that business would be allowed only if the traders are vaccinated drew flak from various quarters.

NORTH & EAST ► PAGE 4

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SC refuses to intervene in HC ruling on student activists' bail

But says the June 15 order will not be treated as a precedent in any proceedings

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday did not intervene in the Delhi High Court decision granting bail to student activists Devangana Kalita, Natasha Narwal and Asif Iqbal Tanha, but said the High Court's order of June 15 would neither be treated as a precedent in any proceedings nor be relied on by the parties.

"It is clarified that the release of the respondents [student activists] on bail is not being interfered at this stage... The impugned judgment shall not be treated as a precedent and may not be relied upon by any of the parties in any of the proceedings," a Bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V. Ramasubramanian recorded.

The three students were granted bail by the High Court after a year's incarceration in Tihar Jail. They were accused of offences under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

THE ISSUE IS IMPORTANT It has pan-India ramifications. There are many questions involved here... We want to decide it for the good of the entire country

JUSTICE HEMANT GUPTA,
SUPREME COURT

THE ENTIRE UAPA WAS TURNED ON ITS HEAD along with the Constitution. The High Court judgment may be used by others booked under the UAPA to get bail

TUSHAR MEHTA,
SOLICITOR GENERAL

PA) in connection with the northeast Delhi riots, which broke out after the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) turned violent last year. The High Court accused the police of blurring the line between "terrorist act" under the UAPA and the students' right to protest against a law.

"The entire UAPA was turned on its head along with the Constitution..." Solicitor General Tushar Mehta objected in the Supreme Court on Friday during the appeal hearing.

"The issue is important. It has pan-India ramifications. There are many questions involved here... We want to decide it for the good of the entire country," Justice Gupta observed orally, issuing formal notice to the three students on the appeal.

Mr. Mehta argued that 53 people died and 700 were injured in the riots. "The right to protest does not mean the right to kill and hurl bombs," he submitted. If the protests were held on the "perceived belief" that the CAA was against a particular com-

munity, then "the lady who assassinated a former Prime Minister" also did it on the belief that injustice was done to a particular community, he stated.

Pushing for a stay of the judgment, he said the three students "may remain out" but the judgment may be used by others booked under the UAPA to get bail. A hearing on the limited question of bail for the students was used by the High Court to discuss an entire law.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Will continue fight: Narwal

Freed student activist Natasha Narwal says the struggle of other jail inmates without support systems has humbled her and strengthened the commitment to ensure that such injustice does not go unchallenged. ► PAGE 8

Banking on generosity



Much-needed meal: People being served food on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi on Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Tigress rescued from defunct U.P. factory

Though it was first spotted in March 2020, pandemic stalled the tracking efforts

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A tigress living in an abandoned rubber factory in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district at least since December 2019 was rescued after an 18-day tracking operation, officials said on Friday. She was released in the Duhwa Tiger Reserve at night.

The tigress was first found in the dilapidated factory, around 6 km from Bareilly, in November-December 2019, Mayukh Chatterjee, head of Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), told *The Hindu*.

The operation was carried out by a team of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, along with the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve and the WTI.

Sushant Soma, wildlife biologist, WTI, said, "The tigress is a fully mature adult, roughly aged around five-seven years. For her age, she seems a little less developed at just 115 kg."



Free at last: The tigress was released in the Duhwa reserve. At right is the tank where she was found. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

with a relatively small stature (body length is 140 cm) and pug size."

Dense vegetation
Spread over 1,200 hectares, the synthetic rubber chemical factory shut down three decades ago, leading to dense growth of vegetation on the compound.

As a result, there was ample prey available, including black buck, wild pigs and rhesus macaques, said Mr. Chatterjee.

The tigress was tranquilised after it was spotted in an old oil tank and an earthmover was used to tear the tank open, he said.

Chief Conservator of Forests, Bareilly zone, Lalit Verma said it was a tricky operation because the tigress was confined in the oil tank. "We were hoping it would come out due to hunger, but it did not," he said.

Mr. Verma said the animal was first spotted in

March 2020, and stayed on the premises for 15 months.

Second tiger
"Normally, in such time the animal moves elsewhere but it was continuously being spotted that too late night or in early hours," he said. A tracking operation was started then but due to the pandemic, the officials had to stop their efforts.

This is the second tiger to be rescued from the factory in the last three years.

No demand for virtual session, says LS Speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties may have written letters about holding a virtual session of Parliament during the COVID-19 period but none raised the issue on the floor of the House, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Friday in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Mr. Birla, who completed two years in office, not only defended the construction of a new Parliament in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic but also argued in favour of increasing the number of members in the Lok Sabha to ensure that one member doesn't have to represent an electorate size of 15-16 lakh people.

Asked about the pending disqualification request by Trinamool Congress against two of its members – Sisir Adhikari and Sunil Mondal – for alleged anti-party activities, Mr. Birla said he would refer the matter to the Privileges Committee once he has heard the views of the two rebel Trinamool MPs.

Talking about demands

for a virtual session of Parliament by Opposition leaders, Mr. Birla said,

"They may have written but when Lok Sabha proceedings were going on during COVID period, none said on the floor of the House that Parliament should function virtually or that Rule 266 needs to change. To change the rules, we need the approval of the House."

"As far as parliamentary meetings are concerned, while framing the rules, it was decided to keep the proceedings secret as members rise above party lines while debating issues," the Speaker added.

INTERVIEW

► PAGE 9

Buzz over Centre's possible meeting with J&K parties

Speculation as L-G, senior police officials meet Amit Shah

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing heightened political activity as the Centre mulls inviting all political parties from the Union Territory to New Delhi in the last week of June to start a political engagement, which is likely to pave the way for the restoration of statehood.

Several constituents of the Gupkar alliance, an amalgam of five political parties fighting for the pre-August 5, 2019, position of J&K, met in Srinagar on Friday to "discuss the future course", sources said. As J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and top police officials met Union Home Minister Amit

Shah in New Delhi on Friday, sources said the Centre is likely to invite the parties on June 24 or after that.

J&K was split into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh 22 months ago.

No invitation yet

"We have no information about any initiative. We have not got any formal invitation yet. Let them make it public. We have never blocked the way forward," Gupkar alliance spokesman M.Y. Tarigami told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Tarigami said J&K needed initiatives because the confidence was "completely shattered here".

"I urge the democratic Government of India that

enough is enough. Let there be initiatives to restore confidence in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh," he said.

The Gupkar alliance spokesman said the onus of proving sincerity lay with those who "hampered the normalisation" and with the leadership of the country.

"We have a set agenda that we agreed upon on August 4, 2019. We are for special constitutional position of J&K and against bifurcation of J&K. We are committed to it. However, this does not mean we will not talk. We will see that legitimate rights of people of J&K are restored," he added.

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SHAH REVIEWS WORK ► PAGE 8

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IN BRIEF

Major fire at Noida Metro office, none injured

NOIDA A major fire broke out at the corporate office of the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) located in Sector 29 here on Friday afternoon, prompting evacuation of scores of people from the building, officials said. Nobody was hurt in the blaze that was reported from the NMRC office located on the third floor of the complex around 1.30 p.m., Chief Fire Officer Arun Kumar Singh said.

'Baba ka Dhaba' owner attempts to kill himself**SAURABH TRIVEDI**

NEW DELHI The owner of a food stall allegedly attempted to kill himself by overdosing on sleeping pills and alcohol, said an officer on Friday.

Kanta Prasad (81), owner of a food stall known as *Baba ka Dhaba* in Malviya Nagar – is now undergoing treatment at Safdarjung Hospital. He is said to be stable.

"We have received a call from Safdarjung Hospital at 11.15 p.m. on June 17 informing that one Kanta Prasad was admitted in hospital," said the officer. The Investigation Officer went to the hospital and collected the MLC wherein intake of alcohol and sleeping pills have been mentioned as cause of unconsciousness.

"His son Karan confirmed the same. Further enquiry is under way," added the officer. Mr. Prasad grabbed attention on social media in October 2020 after a blogger posted a video of him crying about the lack of business because of the pandemic. Help had poured for him from across the world.

Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, OI-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

Breach of COVID-19 norms in markets will hasten third wave'

High Court takes note of photographs showing mass of people not wearing masks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday took suo motu cognoscence of violations of COVID-19 protocols at various markets across the Capital where people are seen not wearing masks and flouting social distancing norms.

A Bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Asha Menon said, "We have paid a huge price in the second wave. We do not know if there is any household that has not suffered in the second wave, closely or remotely."

"Such breaches will only hasten the third wave, which is likely to come, and this cannot be permitted," the HC said. The Bench issued notices to the Centre and the Delhi government noting that strict measures were required to be



People throng Sadar Bazar market after several lockdown measures were eased recently in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

implemented across the city to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

If COVID-19 norms continue to be flouted "we will be in a great trouble... God help us if all that happens", said the Bench.

The High Court directed

authorities to take strict measures to sensitise the public, shopkeepers and market associations.

The direction came after the HC took note of several photographs sent to its judges by AIIMS doctors showing people crowding marketplaces without following COVID-19 protocols.

Deploy personnel

The High Court suggested deploying civil defence volunteers and police personnel at marketplaces.

It has posted the case for further hearing on July 9.

During the hearing, the counsels for the Centre and Delhi government assured the court that strict measures are already being taken to ensure protocol is maintained at markets and also followed by the street vendors.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma, representing the Centre, said he will take up the concerns raised by the court to the authorities concerned.

"We cannot afford a third wave," Mr. Sharma added.

Pandemics part of draft Master Plan 2041

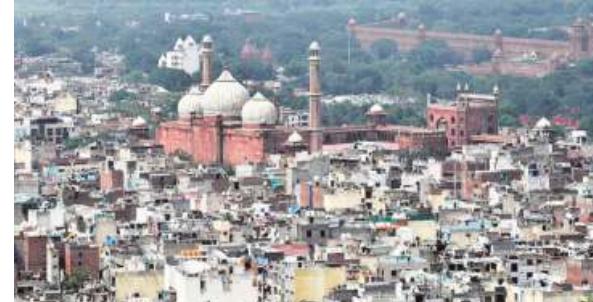
MPD also to focus on forming co-working spaces, support home-based work

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Apart from developing systems and infrastructure that can withstand or respond to earthquakes, fires, floods and other disasters, the draft Master Plan for Delhi (MPD)-2041 also lays out a plan for disease outbreaks and pandemics.

Mixed-use development with work centres, homes and other facilities in close proximity of each other and decentralised workspaces in the form of co-working spaces are some of the aspects underscored in the draft MPD 2041, as a part of its plan to reduce vulnerability to pandemics.

"Decentralised workspaces shall be promoted in the form of co-working spaces, shared workspaces within slum rehabilitation projects, support for home-based work and so on. Additional-



The draft facilitates creation of multi-facility plots, which can be temporarily repurposed during any disaster. ■ FILE PHOTO

ly, common community spaces shall be promoted to be utilised for providing refuge spots, common kitchens and quarantine spaces at the time of emergency," the draft MPD-2041 reads.

The plan also facilitates the creation of multi-facility plots, which can be temporarily repurposed along with other government facilities during times of disaster.

Further, the draft master

plan stated: "Development of adequate affordable rental or ownership housing options for the poor, worker housing, hostels for women and men shall be promoted to reduce crowding within dwelling units and support migrant housing in the city."

"Development of large green areas, mandatory creation of open areas, public spaces and plazas in new developments and reducing

built densities through planned regeneration will support requirements of social distancing during pandemics while providing an active public realm during normal times," the plan proposed.

The draft MPD-2041 also said better habitat design and green-rated developments will be promoted to reduce the dependence on mechanical ventilation systems.

The documents also proposed the development of a disaster response protocol for the national capital, outlining the procedure to be followed for different types of disasters. All service providing agencies shall develop emergency response plans and guidelines to ensure that there is minimal impact on delivery of these essential services during times of disaster," the draft plan read.

Seven people nabbed for running fake call centres

Accused used to dupe U.S. residents

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Seven people have been arrested for running a fake call centre that allegedly duped foreigners of several crores, the police said on Friday.

DCP (West) Urvija Goel said the accused have been identified as Gaurav (24), Amit Anand (46), Ajneesh Rana (37), Aryan Saxena (21), Yogesh Prasad (28), Neeraj Kumar (22), and Aman Preet Kaur (24).

The police said they got information that some persons were running an international online cheating racket in Tilak Nagar's Ganesh Nagar. The accused were engaged in using illegal techniques.

'Call from Amazon'

During probe, it was found that they were cheating people based in the USA on the pretext of providing them technical support by posing as tech supporters of Amazon. "On Thursday, the

police reached Ganesh Nagar where seven people were found engaged in calls," Ms. Goel said.

During interrogation, it was revealed that the tech support scam begins with a pre-recorded call, claiming to be from Amazon and telling the victim that suspicious transactions have taken place in their Amazon account.

Eventually, the accused would persuade them to connect for resolving that issue and get their computer or mobile remote access.

The police said the accused would then exploit the victim following which they would block the call. As the numbers used by the alleged were spoofed VOIP numbers, the complainant can neither call back nor trace those numbers, Ms. Goel said.

The accused got details of the U.S. residents using illegal techniques, the officer added.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Priyanka, D/o Kali Charan, R/o H.No. T-235/1A3, Hill Marg, Baljeet Nagar, New Delhi, Age: 20 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Long, Built: Medium, ID Mark: She has flexibility in leg while walking, wearing Black colour Suit Salwar and Slipper**

In feet, has been missing from her house since 08.06.2021. In this regard a DD No. 107A, dated 09.06.2021 has been registered at P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax: 011-24368639

Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641

DP/837/CD/2021

SHO

P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi

Ph. No.: 011-25872637, 8750870434

127 people fined per hour for not adhering to COVID norms

Govt. records highest daily violations on Thursday — 5,301

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

More than 3,000 people were issued fines every day over the last two months for not adhering to COVID-appropriate behaviour with Delhi government teams finding and prosecuting as many as 127 offenders per hour.

Delhi government recorded highest daily violations on Thursday — 5,301.

As many as 1,89,307 people were fined for offences ranging from not wearing face masks — or wearing them improperly — non-adherence to social distancing norms and spitting in public places between April 17 and June 17, according to government records.

The Capital went through a series of six-week-long lockdowns between mid-April and May during which prosecution figures remained relatively low compared to three recent weeks during which the city has been "unlocking" in phases.

With more people stepping out, more prosecutions are being made, said government sources. However, the same sources also concede the other side of the argument: higher prosecution is taking place because more and more people are being found not adhering to COVID



Delhi Police issuing challans to violators near Ring Road in the city on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ment Authority (DDMA) — saw 20,966 fines till June 6.

The second phase, during which the Delhi Metro in addition to neighbourhood and mall-based shops were allowed to open along with both private and public offices from June 7 to June 13, saw 29,343 prosecutions. In its third, ongoing phase of unlock, the Capital recorded 20,361 fines between just June 14 and June 17.

According to government records, the North district, with 27,273, saw the highest number of fines being issued between April 17 and June 17.

The Shahdara district with 26,483 and the South district with 21,295 fines was at second and third place in terms of the total number of fines issued, respectively. The northwest district, with 8392, recorded the lowest number of challans.

Delhi gets time till June 30 to operationalise ePoS in ration shops

Govt. violating NFSA, claims Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre has accused the Delhi government of violating the National Food Security Act (NFSA) by failing to operationalise electronic point of sale (ePoS) devices at its ration shops and implement the One Nation One Ration Card scheme.

The Ministry also emphasised the clause calling for doorstep delivery to TPDS outlets, distinguishing it from the Delhi government's drive to deliver ration to the homes of beneficiaries.

The letter added that the Delhi government failed to comply with Sections 28 and 29 of the NFSA by not conducting periodic social audits on the functioning of fair price shops or setting up vigilance committees at the grassroots level.

The Ministry also accused the Delhi government of being "insensitive to the needs and rights" of Scheduled Castes and Tribes by dismissing a directive to maintain data on beneficiaries from these communities. "It is very unfortunate that while other State Governments have assured that they would do the needful in this regard, GNCTD merely informed that the data was not available with them," said the letter.

Section 12 of the NFSA says that the Centre and States shall endeavour to undertake reforms in the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), including the "application of information and communication technology tools including end-to-end computerization in order to ensure transparent recording of transactions at all levels, and to prevent diversion", as well as leveraging Aadhaar and ensuring full transparency of records.

"By not operationalising ePoS devices at the fair price shops (for transparent distribution of foodgrains), GNCTD is in violation of Section-12 of the Act. Reforms under TPDS are mandated under the Act to promote transparency and rightful targeting," said the letter, noting that the Food Ministry has written more than 12 letters on the issue over the last three years. "However, the distribution of foodgrains in Delhi is still being done using old/manual register-based mechanisms. Further, this non-compliance is also blocking the implementation

of the Food Ministry's directives to the State to "take steps to fulfil the pending obligations of Section-12 of the Act immediately to enable the transparent distribution of foodgrains in the State".

Citing Section 38, which says that State governments shall comply with directions issued by the Centre for effective implementation of the NFSA, the Food Ministry issued directives to the State to "take steps to fulfil the pending obligations of Section-12 of the Act immediately to enable the transparent distribution of foodgrains in the State".

"The Prize Chits & Money Circulation Schemes (Banning) Act was registered in March and probe was taken up. During investigation, it was revealed that Chand used to run a small manufacturing unit of disposable paper plates at his house. After collecting money from the victims, he sold his house and absconded with his family, the police added.

After conducting preliminary enquiry into the complaint, a case under Sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating and dishonesty inducing delivery of property), 120-B (Criminal Conspiracy) and other relevant sections of the IPC was then registered.

"The investigation revealed that the accused used to accept the monthly deposit in cash and maintained registers for keeping records of subscribers and their respective shares, he said.

"The cheques, later on, got dishonoured upon presentation. In January 2021, the money was to be paid back in a lump sum after maturity. When the victims started asking Chand to pay them back, he sold his house and fled off," he added. He was tracked on the basis of surveillance and arrested on Thursday, the police said, adding further investigation in the case is going on.

3 held for duping people on pretext of jobs in airlines

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three men have been arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of getting them jobs in private airlines as well as the Airports Authority of India, the police said on Friday.

The accused have been identified as Himanshu Thakur, Subham Tiwari and Ajay Thakur. The matter came to notice after a complaint was filed at the IGI Airport police station by Surender Singh.

Timings

DELHI
SATURDAY, JUN. 19
RISE 05:24 SET 19:22
RISE 13:30 SET 01:06
SUNDAY, JUN. 20
RISE 05:24 SET 19:22
RISE 14:33 SET 01:41
MONDAY, JUN. 21
RISE 05:25 SET 19:23
RISE 15:40 SET 02:17

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	37	25
Safdarjung	37	25
Palam	35	25

Delhi Pilm Today
36°C A hot day with moderate winds likely. Thunder clouds may develop at few areas with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Pilm Tomorrow
37°C Rise in temperature likely. Light rain and thunderstorm activity likely at some areas.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

'Revert to 6-8 weeks gap between 2 jab doses'

NEW DELHI

A forum of scientists and doctors on Friday demanded that the government should revert to the original COVID-19 vaccination schedule for administering Covishield to people by keeping a gap of six to eight weeks between its two doses.

Delhi govt. hikes DA for workers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said that the Delhi government has increased the dearness allowance for unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and other workers in all scheduled employments, with effect from April 1, 2021.

These steps have been taken in the interest of the poor and working class who have suffered disproportionately due to the current pandemic. This order shall also benefit those in clerical and supervisory jobs", Mr. Sisodia said.

Under the dearness allowance, the monthly wages for unskilled labourers have been increased from ₹15,492 to ₹15,908. For semi-skilled labourers, their monthly wages have been enhanced from ₹17,069 to ₹17,537. For skilled labourers, the monthly wages have been increased from ₹18,797 to ₹19,291. For graduates and those with higher educational qualifications, monthly wages have been increased from ₹20,430 to ₹20,976," the government said in a statement.

The Delhi government said that minimum wage rates for the supervisor and clerical cadre of employees have also been increased. "The monthly wages for non-matriculate employees have been increased from ₹17,069 to ₹17,537 and for matriculate employees from ₹18,797 to ₹19,291. For graduates and those with higher educational qualifications, monthly wages have been increased from ₹20,430 to ₹20,976," the government said in a statement.

CM, L-G discuss measures to prepare for third wave

Steps are in place to meet oxygen demand, hospital beds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal on Friday met virtually to discuss preparations for the plausible third wave of COVID-19 hitting the Capital.

According to the government, Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Baijal and presided over a presentation inclusive of "extensive preparedness measures" highlighting enhanced healthcare infrastructure that the government has been building since the pandemic.

"The Chief Minister discussed in detail about the State Level Task Force constituted to increase the number of health workers, the committee for the management of the third wave and the Pediatric Task Force to stream-



Arvind Kejriwal •

line effective treatment of children from COVID-19," the government stated.

Oxygen supply

"He also apprised the L-G about PSA oxygen plants, cryogenic plants, LMO storage plants, oxygen and bed management in hospitals, arrangement of medicines and vaccination," the government also stated.

According to the government, preparations are being based on the possibility of

likely 37,000 and maximum of 45,000 cases per day during the possible third wave. If the third wave comes and oxygen demand increases, the Delhi government has worked on a war footing to maintain a rigorous supply of oxygen, the government said quoting the Chief Minister.

"The CM apprised the L-G that in a worst-case scenario of a possible third wave and the general situation, other preparations including augmentation of beds is being done," the government stated.

A committee, the government stated, has been constituted to assess the oxygen supply infrastructure in Delhi government hospitals having 100 or more beds and also examine the adequacy of provisions in the expansion plan and suggest the way forward.

Archaeology department seeks demolition of 60 farmhouses in Aravalis

This comes after apex court orders

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

Against the backdrop of the Supreme Court's order to remove encroachments from forest land in Haryana's Khori in Faridabad, the State's Archaeology Department has told the government to demolish 60 "illegal farmhouses" in the ecological sensitive Aravali Area.

"To comply with the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, all such illegal farmhouses may also be demolished," read a communication from the department, sent by Ashok Khemka, Principal Secretary, (Archaeological Department) to the Chief Minister's office through the Ministry.

Petition rejected

Mr. Khemka added that the Supreme Court has rejected the plea petition of rehabilitating illegal encroachments of public land at public expense. "Therefore, the rehabilitation of illegal encroachers of ASI protected sites at Thir Mount Sirsa, Rakhigarhi and Prithvi Raj Fort Hansi needs a relook, and all such encroachers may be removed from public land without rewarding them for the encroachment," the NCRTC stated.

"NCRTC will be the first to implement 2 levels of AFC media validation – one at the concourse level and the second on the platform level. Platform level AFC gates will be provided for access to executive lounge for boarding the business class

farmhouses have been given electricity connections by the Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN) and do not have permission under Forest Conservation (FC) Act or the Controlled Area Act.

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) mobile app will facilitate booking of digital QR tickets, card recharge and other functionalities for commuters who will be able to utilise other card-based means to commute on the system as well.

NCMC card
"RRTS commuters will be able to use any NCMC card issued by any metro or transport authority or financial institutions in the country

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORT CORPORATION

coach," it also stated.

The NCRTC will adopt state-of-the-art Automatic Fare Collection (AFC) system but also QR code-based ticketing and EMV (Europay, Mastercard, Visa) Open Loop contactless card based on similar standards as the National Common Mobility

paper QR tickets can be purchased from the station ticket vending machines and ticket office machines for single journey between two stations, the NCRTC stated, adding that it had invited bids under the 'Make in India' initiative to procure this AFC system on Public Private Partnership (PPP).

The 82-km-long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is the first-of-its-kind project to utilise spherical bearings to enable high speeds. ■ FILE PHOTO

Card (NCMC).

The 82-km-long Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is the first-of-its-kind project to utilise spherical bearings to enable high speeds. The 17-km-long priority section between Sahibabad and Duhai on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor is targeted to be commissioned by 2023.

'Centre helping woman for son's treatment in Oz'

High Court disposes of mother's petition, asks her to file fresh plea if needed

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday said that the Centre was taking proactive steps to provide all possible help to a mother who sought medical assistance and treatment of her son suffering from a life-threatening health condition in Australia.

Justice Navin Chawla was informed by the Centre that visa and travel exemption approval form required due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been granted by the Australian embassy to the moth-



er, who is a widow.

"I find the government is taking proactive steps in the matter. The writ petition is disposed of with liberty to the petitioner to file a fresh

petition in case the need arises," the High Court said.

The Centre government standing counsel Ajay Digpaul said that though visa and travel exemption have been granted to the woman, they have now received a fresh application from the family seeking to arrange for repatriation of the son to India.

Mr. Digpaul said the government is looking into the issue and extending all possible help to the family. The advocate, representing the woman, said repatriation of

the son is an alternate prayer considering there are no flights to Australia and even after visa clearance, the mother will be unable to go there.

The woman, in her plea, has stated her son had gone to Australia in 2018 to pursue his higher studies. The plea said her son has been diagnosed with a life-threatening condition of end-stage renal failure requiring dialysis, nephrotic-range proteinuria with haematuria and is also at risk of thrombosis.

Out-of-turn promotions for 66 Delhi police personnel

Six of them were involved in nabbing Deep Sidhu while a few others played a role in arrest of spy

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI
The Delhi Commissioner of Police S.N. Shrivastava granted 'Out-of-turn promotions (OTP)' to 66 Delhi Police personnel for displaying extraordinary courage and dedication in year 2020-21 on Friday. Informing about the promotion through Twitter, he congratulated them for their achievements and wished them a bright

career.

The list includes six policemen who arrested actor-turned-activist Deep Sidhu, who was allegedly involved in Republic Day violence, and a policeman who investigated the murder of IB staffer Ankit Sharma during Delhi riots. Police constable Deepak Dahiya, on whom riot-accused Sharukh had pointed his gun, also made into the list.

Head constable Hamen Kumar Rathi of Special Cell has been promoted to the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspector for the apprehension of murderer, Haseen Qureshi, who was actively involved in the Delhi riots in north-east Delhi. He and his associates had brutally murdered IB officer Ankit Sharma.

ASI Lachchhi Singh, ASI Deepak, head constable

Ajay Kumar, constable Irfan, constable Naseem and constable Rahul have been promoted to the ranks of Sub-Inspectors, ASI and head constable for arresting wanted accused Sandeep Singh Sidhu alias Deep Sidhu. He was wanted in the violence at Red Fort on Republic Day.

ASI Rajesh Kumar, head constable Deepak Dahiya and head constable Vikas

have been promoted to SI and ASI for arresting a spy, Harpal Singh of Taran Taran district in Punjab, who was working on the directions of Pakistan Intelligence agency ISI.

He was passing information related to the Indian Army and their movement. Deepak has also shown exemplary courage during the Delhi riots when he stopped an armed rioter.

JNU notice to Aishe Ghosh for staging stir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University administration has issued a show cause notice to its students' union president Aishe Ghosh for staging an on-campus demonstration in solidarity with the ongoing farmers' agitation in December last year in violation of COVID-19 guidelines.

According to the notice issued by the JNU proctor's office, Ms. Ghosh was found "violating COVID-19 rules implemented by the university and the Government of India". Ms. Ghosh has been asked to reply to the notice by June 24.

The JNU Students' Union president said on Twitter that the notice has been issued for their protest on December 5 last year in support of a call given by the SKM, which has been spearheading the agitation against the farm laws.

With 165 fresh cases, city sees a downward trend in COVID-19

76,480 tests conducted with positivity rate of 0.22%: bulletin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 165 new COVID-19 cases on Friday along with 14 deaths and 260 recoveries, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

The bulletin added that 76,480 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 0.22%. Out of the total tests conducted, 53,724 were RT-PCR tests. The city has 2,445 active cases out of which 698 are under home isolation.

According to the notice issued by the JNU proctor's office, Ms. Ghosh was found "violating COVID-19 rules implemented by the university and the Government of India". Ms. Ghosh has been asked to reply to the notice by June 24.

The JNU Students' Union president said on Twitter that the notice has been issued for their protest on December 5 last year in support of a call given by the SKM, which has been spearheading the agitation against the farm laws.

The total number of cases since the pandemic began now stands at 14,32,033 and the total fatalities stand at 24,900. There are 5,452 containment zones in the city.

On Thursday, the city logged 158 cases, with a positivity rate of 0.20% and 10 deaths, indicating a significant fall in the count of daily



COVID-19 testing under way at GTK Road in north Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

fatalities due to the infection.

90,217 vaccinated

The government said that 90,217 beneficiaries have been vaccinated on Thursday out of which 60,395 received first dose. The total number of people vaccinated stands at 63,46,561, out of which 15,37,010 have received both doses.

Delivering the vaccination bulletin, Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi said that after Delhi received vaccine stocks for youths two days ago, the speed of vaccination in Delhi has increased. She said that for 45+, 8,65,000 doses of vaccines are currently available and for 18-44, stocks of five days of Covaxin and nine days of Covishield are available.

Sportsmen to be conferred degrees based on their performance: Minister

'Sports varsity to bring laurels to nation'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said that the upcoming Delhi Sports University is being set up with the vision to train and prepare sportspersons who could bring home 50 gold medals from the Olympics.

"The Delhi Sports University shall make India proud in sports, globally. The university will have world-class facilities and provide exceptional training to budding sportspersons. It shall nurture players to showcase India's sporting potential in international tournaments and bring umpteen medals to the country," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister said that the university will be a unique institution in the world of sports, and shall confer degrees up to the PhD level and sportspersons will be conferred degrees based on their sporting performance.

PIL seeks virus death records in Odisha

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

Nishikant Mishra, a senior advocate, has moved Orissa High Court seeking records of all COVID-19 deaths in the State.

A year after battling with COVID-19 pandemic successfully, Odisha appears to have failed during the second wave for which the infection has spread deep into rural areas with higher positivity rates. The State government is trying to hide its incapability by suppressing actual 'COVID-19 deaths,' mentioned Mr. Mishra, also a spokesperson of the State Congress, in the petition.

"The government said only 133 persons had died of COVID-19 in the month of April. The field reports, however, suggested that more people had died than the official figure," he pointed out.

NGOs slam jab clause in market reopening order in Meghalaya

Iewduh, the State's largest traditional market, opens partially after a long lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Iewduh, Meghalaya's largest traditional market in State capital Shillong, reopened partially on Friday after a long lockdown. But the condition that business would be allowed only if the traders are vaccinated drew flak from various quarters.

The East Khasi Hills district administration had on June 15 issued an order for the partial reopening of Iewduh from June 18 provided the shopkeepers and vendors have taken the COVID-19 vaccine.

The order also said 185 shops and an equal number of vendors would be allowed to open each day on a rotational basis.

Iewduh has more than 4,000 shops but the tradi-



A shopkeeper at a local market in Shillong. •

tional chief of the area had provided a list of 1,222 shops to the district authorities for reopening.

Local NGOs and political parties protested the order, asserting that the government does not have the right to force people to take the vaccine under any pretext.

On June 17, the youth

wing of the Khun Hynniew-trep National Awakening Movement, a regional political party, demanded revocation of the vaccination order asking the shops and establishments to indicate the vaccination status of their staff. It opposed another order directing the cab operators and bus drivers to get themselves vaccinated before resuming operations.

"Such orders amount to the violation of a person's constitutional rights besides going against a Supreme Court observation on medical autonomy of a person," youth wing president Thomas Passah said.

The Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Titosstarwell Chyne, al-

so said vaccination should be voluntary and could not be forced on the people.

Minister's defence

State Health Minister A.L. Hek defended the order. "This is more of an appeal meant for the protection of shopkeepers and customers," he said.

Rajya Sabha member and State president of the National People's Party, W.R. Kharlukhi, said epidemic or pandemic-related orders were issued and strategies adopted after inputs from health experts. "People and groups should stop opposing the vaccination orders and let the health experts do their job," he said.

Local organisations have also flayed cash incentives for people to get vaccinated.

Punjab govt. nod for stringent guidelines to curb illegal mining

It will ensure mineral extracted from State is accounted for'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

In a bid to curb illegal mining in the State and to check degradation of environment, the Punjab Cabinet on Friday gave its nod to additional set of stringent guidelines and rules through various amendments.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.



CM Amarinder Singh

their movement in real time," it said.

The amendments will also empower the government to levy strict penalty under Indian Penal Code and other laws, in case anyone tries to establish check-post for checking of slips or collection of illegal royalty.

Online registration

"It will also enable the Water Resources Department to keep a check on the stone-crushers, as their registration has been made mandatory on the online portal developed by the department. Al-

so, the material processed by them will be duly accounted for. Similarly, the rules for issuing transport permits to the vehicles transporting the minerals are also being suitably amended to check illegal transportation," the statement said.

Assam MLA quits Cong., to join BJP

He says party overlooked him for State president's post

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Congress in Assam lost one of its 29 MLAs, who is set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party on June 21.

Rupiyoti Kurmi, a tea community leader, submitted his resignation to party president Sonia Gandhi as well as Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary on Friday.

He had won the Mariani constituency in eastern Assam four times in a row since 2006 and was the only Congress MLA representing the tea plantation workers to have won in the 2021 Assembly polls.

"I will be joining the BJP on Monday," Mr. Kurmi said. The BJP is expected to field him as its candidate for the Mariani by-election.

Mr. Kurmi, the son of



Rupiyoti Kurmi handing his resignation letter to the Assam Assembly Speaker in Guwahati on Friday. • PTI

former Congress Minister Rupam Kurmi, made it clear that he quit the party after he was snubbed for the State president's post after incumbent Ripun Bora decided to step down. "Young leaders do not get a chance... The Congress ignores newcomers, grassroots workers and indigenous minority leaders," he told journalists.

Senior party MLA and former Minister Bharat Narah said Mr. Kurmi's resignation is a big blow to the party.

There is speculation that another MLA would quit the party.

Auctioning of two closed Assam paper mills cancelled

No private entity deposited earnest money within deadline

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The e-auctioning of two closed paper mills of the Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPCL) in Assam has been cancelled as no private entity deposited the requisite earnest money of ₹55 crore within June 15.

The associations of officers and employees of the Cachar and Nagaon paper mills had challenged the National Company Law Tribunal's nod to HPCL for auctioning the mills on June 30. The case came up for hearing on June 16.

The counsel for liquidator Kuldeep Varma told the court of Chief Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Justice Manash

Ranjan Pathak that "no one responded to the e-auction sale notice" on June 1 to deposit the ₹55 crore as earnest money within the deadline. The reserve price for the two mills was ₹1,139 crore and the auction was to have been conducted on the site of the Metal Scrap Trade Corporation on June 18.

Applications dismissed

The court observed that the e-auction was thus not going to take place and dismissed the interim applications challenging the sale of the paper mills.

"Now that the e-auctioning is not happening, the government should live up to its pro-

mise and revive its wholly-owned mills to end the trauma and torture of the employees who have not been paid their dues for 54 months," Manobendra Chakraborty, president of the Joint Action Committee of Recognised Unions told *The Hindu* on June 18.

"We have already lost 89 workers who died because of hunger and inability to get treatment for their illnesses, which violates the right to life guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has governments at the Centre and in Assam, and both have repeatedly assured the mills

will be revived," he said.

Odisha prepares for 1,500 daily paediatric cases

Move to deal with possible third wave

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha government has directed all district headquarters and sub-divisional hospitals to earmark at least 10 isolation beds as paediatrics care facilities.

Though there has been no certainty that the anticipated third COVID-19 wave will impact children disproportionately, the Odisha government is preparing to deal with 1,500 infections daily among children.

Statement on SOP

A statement from the State Health and Family Welfare Department on the standard operating procedure (SOP) to deal with the possible third-wave said, "Cur-

rently, approximately 8% of the total COVID-19 cases are in the age group of 0-18 years. In USA the contribution of cases of 0-18 years is up to 14%. Considering the possible surge of infection in the age-group, it is estimated to be around 15% of infected population. In the current wave, the State has registered average 10,000 cases during peak period.

The State's SOP says that about 300 children – 20% of the projected 1,500 daily cases – would be requiring hospitalisation, and 15 patients (5% of 300) might have to be put under intensive care support.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed that Bank of Baroda having its branch at J215, Naigaon Road, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-27 has sanctioned home loan to borrowers Mr. Manoj Saluja and Mrs. Rimpy Saluja R/o-G-705, Plot No. 210, 400 square yards, The Birla Mills Workers Co-operative Housing Society Limited, situated in Hesar Vihar, Pitampura, North Delhi-110034. General Public at large is therefore informed that if they have any objection regarding title/ownership /right/ interest in the above mentioned property any charge of their on the above mentioned property in any way, the same may be informed to Chief Manager, Bank of Baroda, J2/15, Naigaon Road, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi-27 within 7 days of this notice publication.

Chief Manager,
Naigaon Road
Rajouri Garden, New Delhi,
Ph. 011-25162937

PUBLIC NOTICE

KNOW all men by these presents that my client's name namely Rajender Singh S/o Charan Singh R/o 121, Lat Pana, Village Issapur, ND-73 has disowned and barred his son SANJEEV DAGAR and his wife SUNITA from all his moveable & immovable properties due to their bad behaviour, misconduct and disobedient attitude & my client's has severed all relations with both of them. If anybody deals with them shall do at his/her/their own risk and responsibility and my client's shall not be responsible for the same in future.

Vikram Singh - Advocate
Enrol.no.D/3691/2010

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT OPEN TENDER, Date: 16.06.2021
E-Tenders are invited on behalf of the President of India acting through Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Co-ordination), Divisional Railway Manager (Works), West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following work:- (1) NIT No.: DRW-W-JBP-64-2021, Name of Work with Location: Supplying and loading of 65mm machine crushed hard and durable track stone ballast as per Rly's specification of June 2016 including all lead, lift, taxes, royalties etc. at Kachhpura Depot under Assistant Divisional Engineer Jabalpur sub division, (Approx. Quantity: 60,000 cum). Approx. cost of the work: ₹ 5,34,25,200/- Completion Period: 16 months Last Date & Time for Submission of Tender: 09.07.2021 upto 15.00 hrs. Tender to be Opened on: 09.07.2021 at 15.15 hrs. Complete information of the above E-tender is available on website <https://irctc.gov.in> and also pinned on the notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) office of West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tenders.

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) West Central Railway, Jabalpur

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**Government of Jammu and Kashmir.
Office of the Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti PHE,
Ground Water Division,Sgr.
email : phedivisionawantipora@gmail.com**

Gist of e-Tender.
NIT No: -PHE/GWDS 10 of 06/2021 Dated: -06-2021

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir e-tenders are invited in 02 Cover System for Construction of 300 mm tube wells at below mentioned sites from registered water well drillers/contractors as per the details given in tender document.

S.No:-	1
Name of work:-	Construction of 300mm Production Tube Well at Dousra Tekkipura Lolab District Kupwara
Est. Cost Rs. in Lacs:-	Rs. 30.55 Lacs
Cost of Tender Document:-	Rs.1000/-
Time of completion:-	30 Days
Class of Contract:-	Registered for Construction of Gravel Packed Production Tube Wells
Prog:-	Languishing Kupwara LUP-2387
AAANo:-	AAA No: CE/PHE/DB/170 of 05/2020, dated: 18-05-2020
Critical Dates/Information.	
1. Publishing Date	16-06-2021 (1:00 PM)
2. Period of Downloading of Bids	16-06-2021 (10:00 A.M) to 24-06-2021 (2.00 P.M)
3. Period of Submission of bids	16-06-2021 (10:00 A.M) to 24-06-2021 (2.00 P.M)
4. Date of opening of Tender.	26-06-2021 at (2:00 P.M)
5. Tender Receiving Authority: Executive Engineer , (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water SrinagarKashmir-190011	
6. Document Cost: Non-Refundable in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer (Jal Shakti) PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar(at Saddr Treasury Srinagar) (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply)	
7. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days	
8. The bids can be downloaded or uploaded on www.Jktenders.gov.in	
9. The bids of only those agencies shall be accepted who possess valid registration certificate of construction Gravel Packed Production Tube Wells. However due to Pandemic the renewal Registration for 2021-22 is waived off for a period of 6 months from 01-04-2021 to 30-09-2021.	
10 Instead of EMD the firm has to furnish "Bid Security Declaration", format of the declaration is mentioned in the Bid Document	

Sd/
Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti PHE Ground Water Division,
Srinagar.

DIPK-3085/21

कार्यपालक अधिकारी का कार्यालय

ग्रामीण विकास विभाग प्रमंडल, साहेबगंज

ई—निविदा सूचना संख्या — RDD/SD/SAHIBGANJ/10RE/2020-21

1. कार्य की विस्तृत विवरणी:

क्रांति सं.	कार्य का नाम	प्राकक्षित राशि	अधिधन की राशि	परिमाण विपर का मूल्य	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	साहेबगंज जिला के दस्तकरा प्रखण्ड अंतर्गत मुहुर्मुहा में जमीनदेशीन के द्व				

Siddique Kappan's mother passes away

SC granted him bail to visit her in Feb.

STAFF REPORTER
MALAPPURAM

Incarcerated journalist Siddique Kappan's mother Khadeejakutty, 91, died at her house near Vengara here on Friday after a prolonged illness.

Mr. Kappan, secretary of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) in Delhi, was arrested and jailed by the Uttar Pradesh police while on his way to cover the killing of a girl at Hathras.

He was arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and sedition charges were slapped on him.

Mr. Kappan had visited his ailing mother briefly in February after the Supreme Court granted him five days' bail, which included his to-



Khadeejakutty

and-fro travel from Mathura Jail to his residence.

Her burial took place at the Poocholamadu Juma Masjid graveyard on Friday evening. She is survived by seven children, including Mr. Kappan. His father Mohammed Kutty had died several years ago.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Vishwanath reiterated, "The BJP leadership in the State is collapsing. This will not help the party and the government. Hence,

there is a dire need to replace Mr. Yediyurappa."

Saying that he was not the only person who was demanding leadership change, Mr. Vishwanath claimed that 80% of the MLAs who met party's national general secretary during the consultations had sought it.

"The government does not belong to a particular family," he said.

He linked the Chief Minister's son's visits to Delhi to an Enforcement Directorate case.

Meanwhile, responding to the public statements by Mr. Vishwanath, Mr. Yediyurappa said the BJP high command would decide on what action was to be taken against the MLC for demanding a change in leadership in Karnataka and for accusing his son of interfering in the affairs of the government.

The Chief Minister maintained that there was no dissident activity in the BJP. "Only one or two MLAs are speaking against me," he said.

Reopen places of worship, says IUML

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

On a day when hundreds of contract workers and casual labourers across departments who had lost their jobs protested against the Lakshadweep administration, a cadre review committee recommended the abolition of several existing posts in various departments.

The recommendation is to abolish the posts of Project Officer, Accounts Officer, Assistant Engineer, Assistant Project Officer and Junior Engineer in the District Rural Development Agency, which has been converted into the Department of Rural Development.

The posts of translator (Malayalam) and translator (Mahl), spoken on the Mini-



Agitation continues: Protests were witnessed on Agatti island against the retrenchment of contract staff in Lakshadweep.

coy island), should be abolished when the posts fall vacant in future, the committee recommended. It also recommended merging the Panchayat Department with the Rural Department "to derive maximum benefit by sharing the common pool of staff."

Several islands of the Union Territory witnessed protests by people who have been rendered jobless. Prem Nazir, 45, who had been a technician with the Lakshadweep Development Corporation Limited for 15 years told *The Hindu* from Kavaratti, "I was earning ₹11,000 a

month, but now I am forced to rely on a small business, an electric shop, for steady income. The COVID lockdown has hit that, too."

Meanwhile, a collective of people in Kerala formed to support the 'Save Lakshadweep' movement will organise protests against the Union government on June 21. K. Muraleedharan, MP, will inaugurate a dharna in front of the AG's office in Thiruvananthapuram; A.M. Arif, MP, will inaugurate a dharna in front of the Lakshadweep administration office in Kochi in which Hibi Eden, MP, will deliver the keynote address; a dharna in front of the Dweep administrative marketing office in Beypore will be inaugurated by E.T. Muhammad Basheer, MP.

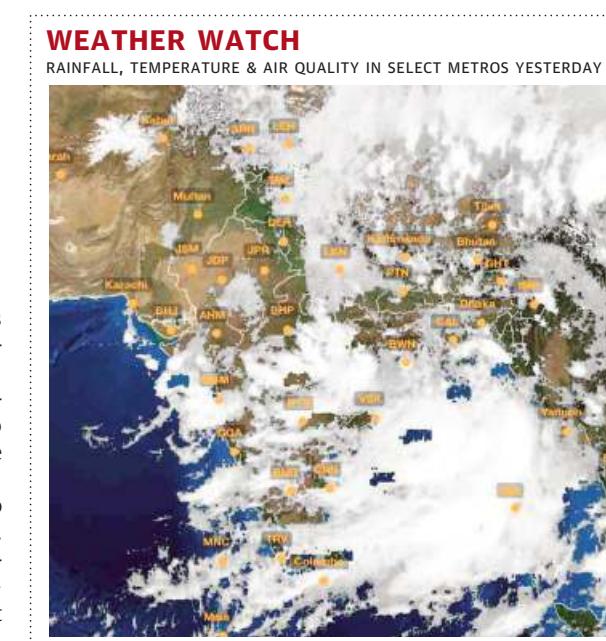
However, the govern-

ment stringently took a stance against opening places of worship while it allowed relaxations even to liquor outlets to function.

Mr. Basheer said they were law-abiding citizens and obeyed the rules enforced from time to time. "But this attitude of the government is wrong. We are not asking about reopening mosques but all places of worship in the State.

Briefing newsmen after a meeting of the party's national political advisory committee here on Friday, IUML leaders, including organising secretary E.T. Mohammed Basheer and general secretary P.K. Kunhalikutty, said the government had allowed many businesses and work places to open and markets were already buzzing with activity.

The IUML leaders deplored the decision of the government in not showing seriousness on the issue of keeping places of worship out of bounds for believers. "Freedom to worship at a place is part of a belief. It has now become inevitable to open places of worship," Mr. Basheer said.



Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Konkan & Goa, Rayalseema and Kerala. Thunderstorms with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	22...	31.5...	24.8	Kozhikode	11...	30.6...	24.0
Ahmedabad	33.3...	36.0...	25.9	Kurnool	0.7...	34.9...	25.9
Aizawl	8.6...	18.0	18.0	Lucknow	7...	28.2...	25.3
Aligarh	29.8...	25.5	25.5	Madurai	37.6...	26.0	26.0
Bengaluru	28.0...	20.4	20.4	Mangaluru	2.2...	29.6...	23.8
Bhopal	34.0...	22.5	22.5	Mumbai	83...	32.9...	24.4
Bhubaneswar	1.2...	30.4...	26.6	Mysuru	...	27.0...	21.6
Chandigarh	...	34.8...	27.4	New Delhi	...	36.6...	25.1
Chennai	36.2...	29.5	29.5	Patna	11.6...	30.8...	23.8
Coimbatore	32.4...	24.4	24.4	Port Blair	31.5...	26.4	26.4
Dehradoon	28.4...	22.4	22.4	Puducherry	34.7...	26.0	26.0
Gangtok	18.7...	23.4	23.4	Pune	18.2...	26.6...	21.5
Goa	31.9...	25.5	25.5	Raipur	54...	31.4...	24.0
Guwahati	34.5...	24.6	24.6	Ranchi	2...	26.2...	21.6
Hubballi	24.0...	22.0	22.0	Shillong	4...	23.2...	17.0
Hyderabad	30.8...	24.0	24.0	Shimla	2...	25.6...	16.0
Imphal	28.7...	21.1	21.1	Srinagar	5...	31.9...	25.2
Jaipur	30.8...	26.6	26.6	Tiruchi	37.7...	27.4	27.4
Kochi	30.8...	25.4	25.4	Vijayawada	0.6...	35.6...	27.5
Kohima	28.0...	18.2	18.2	Visakhapatnam	10...	32.6...	26.0
Kolkata	29.2...	23.5	23.5				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.3	17	107	.69	.85	■
Bengaluru	10	37	44	.94	.68	■
Chennai	26	7	35	.83	.97	■
Delhi	10	15	63	.66	.146	■
Hyderabad	.2	63	16	.32	.60	■
Kolkata	.9	20	18	.36	.47	■
Lucknow	...	43	60	.99	.107	■
Mumbai	.2	19	.2	.143	.102	■
Pune	.5	22	139	.141	.82	■
Visakhapatnam	12	50	33	.71	.95	■

Yesterday

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

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

NORTH & WEST

4 held for fake vaccination camps

Gang organised nine camps in Mumbai; police on the lookout for more members

RAINA ASSAINAR
MUMBAI

The Mumbai police arrested four men on Friday in connection with a fake vaccination camp organised by them at a residential society in western suburbs of the city.

Police filed an FIR against the four — Mahendra Singh (39), Sanjay Gupta (29), Chandan alias Lalit Singh (32) and Nitin Mode (32) — for organising the camp at Hiranandani Heritage in Kandivali on May 30.

Besides Hiranandani, the gang had conducted similar camps at two production houses, one college and some corporate houses in Kandivali, Borivali, Andheri, Parel and Thane, police said.

One person has been detained in Satna, Madhya Pradesh, and would be brought to Mumbai soon. It is suspected that he worked for a doctor who too is believed to



The four arrested in the Hiranandani Heritage vaccination case, at Kandivali police station in Mumbai on Friday. ■ PTI

be involved in the case, police said.

The main accused Mahendra Singh is a Class X dropout who used to work with a medical association. He supervised and allotted work to others at the camps. Mr. Gupta, who is into event management, made arrangements while

the other two worked with hospitals and stole data from CoWin app to use as IDs for those who were administered vaccines.

As many as 390 residents of Hiranandani Heritage paid ₹1,260 each for a shot, and ₹4.56 lakh was paid by the society to the organisers. One Rajesh Pandey had approached the society saying he was PRO of Kokilaben Ambani Hospital and wanted to organise a vaccination camp. Mr. Pandey is absconding.

Dilip Sawant, Additional Police Commissioner (North), said, "It is important that the society officials go through the circulars issued by the corporation and check on hospitals authorised to give jabs. There was no competent doctor present during the camp. With the help of BMC, we are investigating the vaccine's authenticity."

The accused have been booked under sections of cheating, forgery, adulteration of the IPC and relevant sections of IT Act. "We have also charged them for adulteration as the seals of the vials were broken," Mr. Sawant said. The accused have been remanded in police custody till June 25.

that the orders on restrictions be withdrawn and a provision be made for giving work for an additional 50 days to the villagers affected by the pandemic.

A 'Kaam Maango' (seek the work) campaign should also be launched in all blocks of the State and the measurement of task for giving wages reduced by half for the labourers who were recovering from the COVID-19 infection, Mukesh Nirvasit of the Abhiyan said. Representatives of about 100 organisations signed the memorandum, which was submitted to the Collectors at district headquarters and Block Development Officers in more than 50 blocks on Friday.

'Lift restrictions on MGNREGS works in rural areas'

Only 18.8 lakh got work this year in Rajasthan, say civil society groups

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Civil society groups in Rajasthan on Friday called for lifting of restrictions on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) works in the rural areas, while affirming that the State government's orders had weakened the flagship employment venture during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against 50 lakh labourers engaged for MGNREGS works during June last year, only 18.8 lakh have got the work this year, despite the rural population's complete dependence on the scheme for their livelihood. Works have not been sanctioned on a single



Women working at a site under the MGNREGS. ■ FILE PHOTO

work in each village panchayat. This has resulted in a very few persons getting employment in the villages, leading to hunger and starvation.

In a memorandum sent to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, the Suchna Evam Rozgar Adhikar Abhiyan has demanded

Life in jail till death for man in Kotkhai case

16-year-old girl's rape, murder had triggered outrage in Himachal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SHIMLA

A court here on Friday sentenced a 28-year-old man to life imprisonment for the remainder of his natural life in the Gudiya rape and murder case, which had triggered outrage across Himachal Pradesh four years ago. The court also imposed a penalty of ₹10,000 on convict Anil Kumar, alias Nillu, a wood-

cutter. The 16-year-old girl was raped and killed in a forested area in Shimla's Kotkhai when she was returning home from her school on July 4, 2017.

The court had held Anil guilty on April 28 under the IPC sections related to rape and murder and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Special Judge Rajeev Bhardwaj pronounced the order in the presence of the convict on Friday. Not satisfied with the verdict, Gudiya's mother demanded reinvestigation into the case.



Fair assessment

The unprecedented Class 12 evaluation system must be an open book to inspire confidence

With its marks tabulation framework for Class 12 students encompassing three assessment years starting with Class 10, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has ended prolonged anxiety among lakhs of students. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has also developed a similar system. Student evaluation after a chaotic pandemic year remains a challenge in all countries, and many have opted for a hybrid system of school-level internal assessments combined with any examinations that may have been held. The CBSE scheme, evolved to fulfil a Supreme Court mandate, distributes score weightage across the Class 10 public examination, the Class 11 annual test, and the Class 12 school tests in a 30:30:40 ratio for theory, and actual score for internal assessment and practicals. This aims to level out any aberrant phase in a student's performance. Since the marks considered from Class 10 will be the average of the best three subjects among five, students must feel reassured. When they wrote that examination, they had no inkling of the future importance of the score. A provision to take a Class 12 public examination at a later date to attain a higher score when the pandemic has waned should also have a calming effect. Evidently, there are some challenges to uniformly implementing the CBSE plan, and its success hinges on the approach of school result committees responsible for inclusion of Class 12 marks. Uneven access to devices and online connectivity in the final school year, with an impact on scores or even resulting in non-appearance must be resolved by the result committees.

Successful conclusion of Class 12 assessment, which lacks the standardisation available in a public examination, and declaration of results by July 31 depend on result committees marking the theory segment transparently and moderating marks for the senior secondary years based on the school's performance over a period of time. There is then the issue of fraud. Even in the U.K., reports indicate influential parents brought pressure on schools to give their wards an unfair hike in grades in a similar mixed evaluation system, with veiled threats of legal disputes. For fairness, CBSE mandates the participation of external members on the result committees, but it will take utmost openness to dispel students' apprehensions. State Boards waiting for the central model for comparison also need to draw up safeguards, including a dependable dispute resolution process. Education boards were caught unawares last year by the pandemic and could not evolve suitable evaluation tools. Unfortunately, the course of the pandemic remains uncertain, and developing a continuous assessment system for 2021-22 and beyond has become a necessity. The CBSE has taken the lead on this, and State Boards must not lose time in forming their own.

Cold peace

The US, Russia must reset their relationship to pragmatic levels and reduce tensions

The Geneva summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, on Wednesday, has set a pragmatic tone for engagement between the two competing powers. Mr. Biden had, in the past, called Mr. Putin "a killer". Relations have hit the lowest point in recent years since the end of the Cold War. The U.S. has accused Russia of interfering in its elections and launching cyberattacks and criticised its stifling of internal dissent, while Moscow has slammed America's "interventionist" foreign policy. Despite these differences, the leaders held talks on all critical issues, bringing diplomacy to the centre-stage. After the summit, they have struck cautious optimism that is rooted in self-interest. Mr. Biden sought a more predictable, rational engagement, while Mr. Putin said relations were "primarily pragmatic". They have decided to return their Ambassadors to the Embassies and announced "a strategic stability dialogue" to discuss terms of arms control measures. While there was no major breakthrough, which was not expected anyway, they could at least demonstrate a willingness to strengthen engagement and reduce tensions.

There are structural issues in the U.S.-Russia ties. When Russia ended its post-Soviet strategic retreat and adopted a more assertive foreign policy under Mr. Putin, partly in response to NATO expansion into eastern Europe, the West saw it as a threat to its primacy. The 2008 Georgia war practically ended the romance between "democratic Russia" and the West. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 renewed tensions. Russia was thrown out of the G8, and western sanctions followed. But such steps did not deter Mr. Putin. Ties hit rock bottom after allegations that Russian intelligence units had carried out cyberattacks and run an online campaign to get Donald Trump elected President in the 2016 U.S. election. Mr. Biden and Mr. Putin cannot resolve these geopolitical and bilateral issues in one summit. But they can certainly take measures to prevent relations from worsening. For the U.S., the cyberattacks are a red line. Russia, which had amassed troops on the Ukraine border earlier this year, sees NATO's expansion into its border region as a threat. Both countries should be ready to address their critical concerns and agree to a cold peace, which would help in addressing other geopolitical problems such as Syria. The U.S. should be less pessimistic about Russia's foreign policy goals. Whether the Americans like it or not, Russia, despite its weakened economic status, remains a great power. Mr. Putin should also realise that if his goal is to restore Russia's lost glory in global politics, he should be ready to cooperate with the West. Permanent hostility with other powers cannot be of much help to Russia.

What needs to be done with vaccines

Policy approaches must strike a balance between the achievement of health goals and exigencies of supply constraints

GEORGE THOMAS,
GAGANDEEP KANG &
JAYAPRAKASH MULIYIL

Vaccines have proven to be effective against the SARS-CoV-2 virus in preventing serious illness and death. In an article published in *Nature Medicine* on June 9, an analysis of data from the United Kingdom, gathered between December 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021 when the alpha variant was predominant, showed that the AstraZeneca vaccine had an effectiveness of 64% after one dose and 79% after two doses, in protecting against severe illness and death. In the same article (<https://go.nature.com/3zBxR8x>), the authors also found that a previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 had a significant protective effect against re-infection.

Vaccine data

On June 14, Public Health England released a report that showed that the AstraZeneca vaccine had an effectiveness of 71% after one dose and 92% after two doses in protecting from hospitalisation due to the delta variant (<https://bit.ly/2S9kk7j>). In the first report of vaccine effectiveness from India, researchers from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, reported an analysis of 8,991 staff who had been vaccinated between January 21, 2021 and April 30, 2021, predominantly with Covishield, in the *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (<https://bit.ly/3qeCEsB>). The protective effect of vaccination was 92% against need for oxygen and 94% against need for intensive care. There were no deaths, but about 10% of those who had received one or two doses were infected. Although sequencing was not available, many breakthrough infections were probably due to the delta variant strain. These data from the United Kingdom and India show that the Covishield vaccine is working against the variants.

More detailed studies on whether the vaccines are continuing to work, if yes, for how long, or against new variants, will continue to be needed. We also need to consider what we expect from vaccines at different stages of the pandemic. At the level of the individual, we expect vaccines to be safe and provide protection from disease and death at least, and preferably also from mild disease and infection. From the point of view of public health, we expect vaccines to decrease the burden of illness and spread of infection. For society, however, beyond the needs of public health, the ability to go back to productivity and social interactions also matters. These different needs require policy approaches that balance the achievement of health and societal goals with the potential impact, and the exigencies of supply constraints.

In a time of urgent need and short supply, a clear and measurable goal is essential. The prioritisation and delivery strategy needs to align with the goal to achieve maximum impact. We have been somewhat confused about the goal, with early announcements of vaccinating 300 million people being replaced by all adults. With the increase in highly transmissible variants, it is clear that to both prevent disease and slow spread, we will need to cover a larger proportion of the population, possibly extending at a later stage to children.

On herd immunity

When vaccines seemed to be somewhere in the future with no predictability on timing or supply, discussions on the pandemic focused on 'herd immunity' or the percentage of the population that needed to be infected or vaccinated in order to slow the spread of infection. The Swedish strategy of limited restrictions and the Great Barrington declaration (<https://gbdeclaration.org/>) attracted much opprobrium as ma-



nny scientific commentators considered it callous to follow a strategy which meant that a lot of people would get infected with the virus. Herd immunity or herd effect or herd protection is often a misunderstood term, but a key attribute is that the more transmissible the agent, the higher the level of the population that needs to be infected or vaccinated. With the delta variant, it is clear that the earlier plan to vaccinate a smaller proportion of the population is not appropriate and reaching up to 85% of the population might be necessary. This implies that not only will we have to consider all adults but we should be planning for children as well.

Long-and short-term goals

The control of infection in the population is the long-term goal. The short-term goal is to protect individuals at highest risk and to save lives. The deaths from COVID-19 show clearly that those who are the oldest are at the greatest risk of severe disease and mortality, with distinct stratification of severity by age, followed by those with comorbidities such as diabetes mellitus and hypertension. Yet, the risk of severe disease and death among younger people, though low, is not zero and therefore when large numbers of young people get infected some of them will die even with the best medical management. Nonetheless, the goal of preventing the maximum number of severe cases and deaths clearly requires an age descending approach.

This was indeed the strategy

that was initially implemented in India, but the opening of the age tiers has not kept pace with the supply. The Government has not revealed a clear road map of availability of vaccines and their supply to individual States. This has highlighted the reluctance by the Government of India to reveal information which would help in formulating a predictable delivery mechanism that could be communicated to citizens. Coupled with the anti-science statements made by those seen as close to the Government, this has led to a situation where the public is confused as to how best to cope with the novel coronavirus pandemic. With the promise of vaccines as at least a partial solution, but with no certainty on availability, doubt, fear, anxiety and depression are widespread.

To move forward, we must accept that it is extremely unlikely that we will achieve the goal of vaccinating every adult by the end of 2021. Therefore, based on the principles of public health, we must vaccinate those most at risk from serious illness and death first. Based on population pyramid data, we can extrapolate that there are about 360 million above the age of 45 years. Even though recent data from the United Kingdom with the delta variant indicates a slightly lower effectiveness against severe disease requiring hospitalisation with a single dose (71% with one dose and 92% with two doses), the high rates of previous exposures in India may make it feasible to immunise a large part of our population with a single dose, at least initially (<https://bit.ly/35vijAG>).

Rural focus

The final prioritisation and approach should be modelled before policy is made and implemented, but for delivery, a rural focus is key. We must take the vaccine to every village, building on the experiences of the pulse polio pro-

gramme and conducting elections. Community leaders should be empowered with information and tools to broadcast the message that the vaccine saves lives. The central government has centralised vaccine purchase but must revisit the private sector allocation and cede distribution to States, providing support when requested. The CoWIN app must not be a limiting factor on access to the vaccine.

Evidence, models, good data

As more vaccines become available the vaccination policy must be adapted quickly to changing circumstances. We must generate evidence and develop models to design the appropriate vaccination strategy for younger populations. If cases are climbing in a particular region, we should direct vaccine doses there to protect as much of the population as possible and decrease both disease and further spread. High vaccination coverage in cities may protect rural areas. Some professions are most likely to spread infection and should therefore be prioritised for vaccination.

Finally, the Government must trust its citizens and share the information that is solely available to it. A notable aspect of the pandemic is the absence of credible data from the government. This has led to speculative ideas based on poor or poorly understood information and misinformation. The management of the pandemic has been severely impacted by this lack of granular, interpretable, actionable data. We need to restore society to normalcy. Good data, or the ability to measure what matters, is the key.

Dr. George Thomas is the former editor of *The Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, Dr. Gagandeep Kang is Professor, Wellcome Trust Research Laboratory at the Christian Medical College, Vellore; Dr. Jayaparakash Muliyl is former Principal of the Christian Medical College, Vellore

In India, looking beyond the binary to a spectrum

A delay in the provision of marriage rights to same-sex couples would fall foul of constitutional guarantees, judgments



MANRAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM

nessed tremendous progress in establishing civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community.

International jurisprudence

In 2005, the Constitutional Court of South Africa in the case of *Minister of Home Affairs and Another vs Fourie and Another; Lesbian and Gay Equality Project and Eighteen Others vs Minister of Home Affairs and Others* [2005] ZACC 19, unanimously held that the common law definition of marriage i.e. "a union of one man with one woman" was inconsistent with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Consequently, the Parliament of South Africa was given 12 months to amend the Marriage Act 25 of 1961, failing which the Marriage Act would stand amended, by virtue of the decision of the Constitutional Court, to include the words "or spouse" after the words "or husband". As a result of the verdict, the Civil Union Act, 2006 was enacted, enabling the voluntary union of two persons above 18 years of age, by way of marriage.

In 2007 in Australia, the reforms to civil rights of queer community were prompted by the Honourable Michael Kirby (then judge of the High Court of Australia) writing to the Attorney-General of Australia asking for the judicial pension scheme to be extended to his gay partner of 38 years (at that time). After initial opposition from the Federal Government, the Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws - General Law Reform) Act 2008 came to be enacted to provide equal entitlements for same-sex couples in matters of, *inter alia*, social se-



curity, employment and taxation. Similarly, in England and Wales, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 enabled same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies or with religious rites.

More recently, in 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States decided that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples. The case of *Obergefell vs Hodges* ushered in a landmark shift in the American position and allowing same-sex marriages to be recognised and treated on a par with opposite-sex marriages. While doing so, the Supreme Court of the United States held the denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples to be a "grave and continuing harm, serving to disrespect and subordinate gays and lesbians". Across the world, the recognition of the unequal laws discriminating against the LGBTQIA+ community has acted as a trigger to reform and modernise legal architecture to become more inclusive and equal.

Courts and civil rights

In India, marriages solemnised under personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937 and so on. At present, though same-sex and queer

marriages are not clearly recognised in India, we are not bereft of judicial guidance. In the case of *Arun Kumar and Sreeja vs The Inspector General of Registration and Ors.* [W.P.(MD)No. 4125 of 2019 & W.P.(MD)No. 3220 of 2019], the Madurai Bench of the High Court of Madras employed a beneficial and purposive interpretation holding that the term 'bride' under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 includes transwomen and intersex persons identifying as women. Therefore, a marriage solemnised between a male and a transwoman, both professing the Hindu religion, is deemed to be a valid marriage under the Act. The import of this judgment cannot be overstated as it expands the scope of a term used in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 in a progressive manner and sets the stage for re-imagining marriage rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The judgment of the Madras High Court builds on the tenets laid down by the Supreme Court of India in *Shafin Jahan vs Asokan K.M. and Others AIR 2018 SC 1933 (Hadiza case)*, wherein the right to choose and marry a partner was considered to be constitutionally guaranteed freedom. By doing so, the Supreme Court held that the "intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable" and that "society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners".

The only logical interpretation from reading these cases together, it is apparent that any legal or statutory bar to same-sex and queer marriages must necessarily be held to be unconstitutional and specifically violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India. No longer can the position of the Union Government that marriage is a bond between "a biological man and a biological woman" be tenable.

Expanding scope of marriage
The domain of marriages, including religious marriages, cannot be immune to reform and review. Self-respect marriages were legalised in Tamil Nadu (and subsequently, in Puducherry) through amendments to the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Self-respect marriages, commonly conducted among those who are part of the Dravidian Movement, have done away with priests and religious symbols such as fire or *saptapadi*. Instead, solemnisation of self-respect marriages only requires an exchange of rings or garlands or tying of the *mangalsutra*. Such reform of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 to bring self-respect marriages under its very umbrella, is seen as a strong move towards breaking caste-based practices within the institution of marriage.

Similarly, understanding the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community today, the law must now expand the institution of marriage to include all gender and sexual identities. At least 29 countries in the world have legalised same-sex marriage. It is time that India thinks beyond the binary and reviews its existing legal architecture in order to legalise marriages irrespective of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Manraj Shunmugasundaram is Spokesperson, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Advocate, High Court of Madras. Inputs from Vadhana Bhaskar, advocate

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.

Assessment formula

The Supreme Court's approval of the CBSE's formula (along with the ICSE's) to assess the performance of Class 12 students this year is welcome, given the circumstances (Page 1, June 18). The pandemic has taught students an important lesson: that they cannot count on the usual eleventh hour preparations, as they should have performed well consistently in the last three years to score good marks/grades

this year. That said, one wonders how Class 10 marks can fit into Class 12 assessment especially in subjects such as business studies, accountancy, etc., which they would not have studied in Class 10. The evaluation would not reflect the correct performance.

S. RAMAKRISHNASAYEE,
Chennai

■ The disruption caused by the pandemic offers lessons to the Government, school boards and the education sector. Marks and grades are

determined only by examinations. Students' abilities and skills are not often taken into consideration. Content-based assessments and evaluations do not give a clear picture of skills and competence. Instead of giving importance to theoretical aspects of subjects, utility and practical aspects of knowledge must be focused on. Education must never be reduced to textbook-based information, and rote-learning. It must develop critical thinking,

creativity and analytical abilities. As the disruptions by COVID-19 are likely to lead to a review of our present education and examination systems, it could be a blessing in disguise.

VENU G.S.,
Kalluvathukkula, Kollam, Kerala

Political opportunism
Political leaders and party members switching parties in election times and then doing it all over again as a result of greed for political power as well as monetary gains has become the order

of the day in Indian democracy. No party is above board. Yesterday, those who talked of accountability and transparency in public life are at the forefront of deal making. Rank opportunism has become a normal practice in the political conduct of our leaders who seldom care about voter sentiments. Aaya Ram Gaya Ram politics, once popular in Haryana, has now spread to almost every State, courtesy an ambitious BJP whose double standards are

out in the open.

BRIJ B. GOYAL,
Ludhiana, Punjab

Nadal's decision

Rafael Nadal's decision to pull out of Wimbledon and the Olympics 'to prolong his career' defies logic as he is already 35. He should have a go at every Major. The race is against Novak Djokovic with a bunch of talented youngsters right behind.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

AN-ND-NDE



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A village basking in vaccine glory

Viewan in Kashmir has become the first village in India to vaccinate all its people with the first dose against COVID-19. **Peerzada Ashiq** reports on the challenges faced by officials in turning a reluctant village in a remote area into a role model for the country



Dr Jehangeer Ahmad interacts with a local, Zaveri Bano, in the first week of June in Viewan village, Bandipora, north Kashmir. (Below): Neelofar Jan, a public health worker, vaccines people near Athwatoo village in Bandipora district. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

A 3-km dirt track from Bandipora town allows vehicles passage to the whooshing Madhumati stream at Athwatoo village near the foothills of the Himalayas. The stream is noisy and in full flow – the glaciers nearby are melting fast under the warmth of the June sun in north Kashmir.



Across the stream, there are multiple narrow pony tracks on steep slopes. They lead to Viewan village, about 35 km away from the Bandipora district headquarters. On foot from Athwatoor, Viewan's last house is 11 km away. From here, the glaciers feeding the stream suddenly become visible and look like shimmering mirrors.

On the pony tracks, human habitation is visible first in Tangtari after 3 km of trekking. This cluster of 12 families is in the lower flanks of Viewan village.

About 2 km away, Taziyat Jan and her daughter Naziya Jan sit in a two-storey mud-and-wood house buttressed against a slope in the midst of a dense forest. In this village – quaint, inaccessible and quiet – Taziyat has received her first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine. "I had heard a lot of negative things about the vaccine. I was hesitant at first, but doctors counselled us and motivated us to take it. They said the vaccination certificates are going to be an important document to move around and visit offices. So, I agreed," she says.

Viewan shot into the limelight on June 7 when it was declared India's first vaccinated village against COVID-19. Everyone aged 18 and above has received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This glory has led to a big push for a pro-vaccine movement in Kashmir.

A remote village

There are 710 adults – 348 of them aged above 45 years and 362 above 18 years – in and around Viewan village. Unlike the rest of the country, where fear of the virus prevails and lockdowns are still in effect, the local farmers and herders in the village have resumed a normal routine with some confidence.

Nawab Gorji, Taziyat's husband, got vaccinated in the first week of June. He then left on an arduous journey to G.G. Gali along with his cattle comprising 500 sheep. The upper reaches have untouched, green meadows where the cattle enjoy grazing. Back home, a ferocious dog keeps watch against any attack by bears.

"I had fever and dizziness after getting vaccinated, but it subsided quickly. My husband and I feel fine now. I am worried for my daughter who has suffered from a foot disease since childhood. The treatment is expensive, and we have dropped the idea of visiting any hospital," Taziyat says.

Taziyat, like most inhabitants of Viewan, does not possess a radio, television or mobile phone. Only a few villagers have radio sets and trek to points

Gund Jahangir village emptied out and most of the people were shifted to quarantine centres last year. We dreaded walking through the streets and fields of Gund Jahangir," says Dr Masarat Iqbal Wani, Block Medical Officer, Bandipora.

Wani, backed by Ahmad, was keen to not only get rid of this label but also beat the virus. The team began to work on a model, now known as the Viewan model, to battle the pandemic. The thrust, Wani says, was to create a chain of resource persons who could dispel the various myths about the vaccine, develop a rapport with the hesitant population, and convey the importance of vaccination before convincing the people to take the jab.

"We chose Viewan among 29 other remote villages of Bandipora because even if a single COVID-19-affected person made his or her entry into these pockets, it would have been catastrophic. It would have been very difficult for the affected population to reach the nearest medical centres in the plains. Vaccinating them was like creating a buffer wall, which we did," Wani says.

All 267 villagers in the main cluster of Viewan village have been vaccinated with Covishield. In the other 28 villages, the 45-plus population has been inoculated with one dose.

The Viewan model

The officials decided to first sensitise the population. They chose locals to influence the villagers, initiated vaccination drives, and sent a dedicated team of medical practitioners door-to-door for inoculation. Doctors were stationed nearby to address medical complications arising from vaccination.

Around 600 people of the Bandipora health department split into 60 teams to vaccinate the population. The population aged 45 and above is nearing 100% inoculation this week. The pace of the drive for people aged 18 and above has slowed down due to a low stock of vaccines.

It was one such team comprising doc-

tors, one auxiliary nurse midwife, an accredited social health activist worker, an anganwadi worker, a booth-level officer, teachers, sarpanches, panchs, block development council members and voluntary influencers that visited Viewan on May 21 with a narrative and a method.

"There was hesitancy among the population regarding the vaccine. They had heard that some scientist had warned that people will die within two years of taking the vaccine," says Wani. Many men hid in the jungles to escape getting vaccinated. "We managed to vaccinate only six people in the village, including the sarpanch, on our first trip," he says.

Bagh Hussain, the sarpanch, says he could not sleep the night after inoculation. "We had heard that our limbs would fall off, we would die, etc. I was traumatised by these thoughts. But I realised that I need to show faith in the doctors to ensure that my community is safe from the virus," he says.

For the next 10 days after the first visit, the team did not disturb the village. It was in the first week of June that the team returned with more evidence. All the doctors and paramedical staff carried videos of people being vaccinated to earn the trust of the villagers. "Once we were back in the village, we called all the six people who had been vaccinated 10 days earlier to tell us how they feel. The live demonstration worked for the rest of the population," Wani says.

The team had another problem: all the elders in the village would either go to the fields or the upper reaches to graze cattle during the day. "So, we decided to do door-to-door vaccination at night. The sarpanch, who was vaccinated in the first trip, accompanied us to ensure that there was no communication gap," Wani says.

The vaccination drive would start after sundown and continue well into midnight. As there was no accommodation available in this remote village, the female staff of the health department

stayed with the families, and the male staff stayed at the Viewan high school building. The building has been empty since the second wave hit India: all the 80-odd students enrolled there are at home. The entire population was vaccinated within three days and two nights.

Recalling the tour of the village, Jehangeer Ahmad, who is in his 20s, says he started trekking around 8 a.m. and reached the village around 12:30 p.m. It was not easy to develop a connection with the villagers immediately.

"We started a free medical camp once we reached the village. People started trooping in. Most women were anaemic. We addressed their chronic diseases. At the same time, we made them understand that vaccine certificates would help people access government offices in the future besides saving their lives," Ahmad says.

Neelofar Jan, 30, a public health worker who vaccinated the villagers, has blisters from the arduous trek but that did not deter her from raising awareness about the vaccines. She says the women were very hesitant.

"We sat with them and educated them by providing a lot of details. We gave them a patient hearing. The biggest concern among women was infertility. We told them that this vaccine was like other vaccines which they had received as children to fight polio and measles. We told them that it is an immunity booster. Some people shut their doors but then, slowly, everyone started opening their doors to us," Jan says.

The task of sensitising the population was not possible without a local influencer. Azad Hussain Sheikh, a government teacher who has worked as a booth-level officer during elections since 2008, had developed a rapport with the population. "I have visited Viewan many times. People know me and have faith in me. I used that influence to reinforce a pro-vaccine narrative. It worked," Sheikh says.

Only 10 pregnant women could not be vaccinated in Viewan as the government has not yet approved of a policy to inoculate this segment. "When we vaccinated the entire eligible population of the village, we did not know that it would be the first village in the country to get this tag. We are very happy to achieve this feat. It was a joint effort between the top officials of the administration and grassroots representatives," Ahmad says.

Since the village has no Internet, there was no way the team could register the details online. Details were written manually on a file at the spot. "Three days later, when the staff returned, the data were fed into the application for an official record," Wani says.

A pro-vaccine movement

The focus on Viewan has spurred a pro-vaccine movement in Bandipora dis-

trict. Majaz Hassan Khan, a candidate from Banakoot who lost the block development council polls, says he used the technique deployed during electioneering in his block to get people vaccinated. "I went door-to-door and pleaded with the people to get vaccinated, just like I would do to seek votes. When a medical team is backed by the political class in such initiatives, it does multiply the effect," Khan says.

The Viewan model is being replicated across Bandipora. Health workers have drafted elaborate plans to go and inoculate people at night in far-off villages like Kundara, Chandaji and Sumlar where menfolk work in the fields during the day or take cattle for grazing.

"Late evening and midnight inoculations have proved successful in far-off villages. We need to design our vaccination plan according to the requirement of the population. Each village, semi-urban and urban pocket may require a different approach," Wani says.

About 27 km away from Wani's hospital at the district headquarters, shikaras (small wooden boats) are decked up, with blue boxes of vaccines placed safely at one end. Wearing personal protection equipment, doctors and paramedical staff have decided to create a vaccine buffer in and around Wular lake, India's third largest freshwater lake.

At Kolhama, an island in the lake, doctors took samples to check if the population has been affected by the virus. After this examination, healthcare workers started vaccinating about 2,400 people. In another cluster of Zuri-manz, 250 fishermen were vaccinated when they were out fishing in the lake during the day.

Bandipora's influencers, like kickboxing champion Tajamul Islam, 13, are also out on the streets to encourage those above 18 to line up for vaccination. "We can only defeat the virus by getting a jab," Islam says.

The Viewan model has impressed the Bombay High Court too. On June 12, while hearing a petition, the court underlined the need to look at the door-to-door vaccination programme carried out successfully by Jammu and Kashmir and Kerala, with special reference to the country's first village that has got vaccinated. "How is it that individual States like Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir have introduced and are successfully doing door-to-door vaccination? What is the Centre's comment on the Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir pattern?" the Bench asked.

Unaware of the glory, Taziyat keeps looking at the sky-touching ridges of the Bandipora mountains where her vaccinated husband has gone to graze the cattle. "I am waiting for him to return safely with healthy cattle. We need to earn money to treat our daughter. I hope everyone gets vaccinated and the pandemic ends," she says.



"I still remember when the houses in

FROM PAGE ONE

SC refuses to intervene on bail for activists

"A 100-page judgment [by the High Court] in a bail application discussing all the laws, that is what is troubling...," Justice Gupta observed.

Additional Solicitor General Aman Lekhi, also for the government, said the High Court imputed ambiguity to Section 15 of the UAPA, which defines a "terrorist act".

Justice Gupta said, "We understand the way the Act has been interpreted [by the High Court] requires to be examined".

Mr Mehta said, "The HC says eventually the riots were controlled, so it does not come under UAPA.... Now someone puts a bomb somewhere and it is defused by the police, is the intensity of the case less-

sened? If I kill somebody, should I be booked only under Section 302 IPC [murder] and not UAPA even if my act comes under the definition of a 'terrorist act'."

The law officer was questioning the High Court's remarks that the provisions of the UAPA are being casually used by the government when charges under conventional penal laws such as the IPC would very well do.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the students, said "I think the Solicitor General has a lot to say, we too have a lot to say.... In the meantime, let us not treat it [High Court judgment] as a precedent".

The court posted the government appeal for detailed hearing on the week commencing from July 19.

Twitter grilled by MPs over violation of IT Rules

The U.P. Police has ruled out the communal angle in the incident. The BJP members accused Twitter of showing bias against the saffron party, alleging that their fact checkers are more inclined to blame BJP instead of fighting fake news.

Sources said that Twitter officials informed the panel that the fact checking is done by a third party and not by Twitter itself.

Following the meeting, a Twitter spokesperson in a statement said, "We appre-

ciate the opportunity to share our views before the Standing Committee on Information Technology. Twitter stands prepared to work with the Committee on the important work of safeguarding citizens' rights online in line with our principles of transparency, freedom of expression, and privacy. We will also continue working alongside the Indian Government as part of our shared commitment to serve and protect the public conversation."

Buzz over Centre's outreach to J&K parties



Mehbooba Mufti and Farooq Abdullah were among those at a recent meeting of the Gupkar alliance. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

Sources said both the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), key constituents of the Gupkar alliance, are weighing their options in case a political process is announced by the Centre. The PDP is likely to hold a meeting of its leaders to "take stock of the situation and decide whether to attend it or not".

Sources said the constituents of the Gupkar alliance lack consensus on what terms to engage with Delhi and how to bridge the mistrust, sources said. NC president Dr. Farooq Abd-

ullah, who was summoned and his property was attached by the Enforcement Directorate in a case, has also dropped broad hints at engaging Delhi. Sources said Dr. Abdullah, also president of the Gupkar alliance, is likely to call a meeting of the constituents of the amalgam in coming days.

The Centre ended J&K's special constitutional position on August 5, 2019. It was followed by a major crackdown and jailing of the mainstream leaders of political parties, including Dr. Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti.

Exploring real-world issues will shape students into leaders'

Experts pitch for sustainability to be taught in colleges

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI



As part of its Career Counselling 2021 series, held in association with The Hindu Group, the Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science (HITS) hosted a webinar on 'Why sustainability must be a part of management education'.

Dr. David Easow, Deputy Director, International Affairs, HITS, said teaching real-world problems and finding solutions for them shape students into better leaders and make for a sustainable business world. "We all care for our environment and may not be fully aware of the situation in and around us, and thereby not know how to solve it. We must focus on sustainability and the skills to create a bet-

ter future and should be able to tackle global challenges," he added.

Dr. Miniya Chatterjee, CEO, Sustain Labs, had a question for the audience. What did sustainability mean when it was first coined 200 years ago? They were referring to food, she said, adding, "The meaning of sustainability has changed and moved away from academics. It's difficult to find universities pushing research on sustainability. The greatest need is for sustainable policies and businesses need education to be

SC judge withdraws from W.B. violence case

Justice Indira Banerjee recuses herself from hearing plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Justice Indira Banerjee

Justice Indira Banerjee on Friday withdrew from hearing a petition filed by the families of two BJP activists killed allegedly in the post poll violence in West Bengal.

Justice Banerjee was heading a Vacation Bench, which also comprised Justice M.R. Shah.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta asked whether the case could be placed before another Bench for hearing on Tuesday.

"The Registry will decide," Justice Shah said.

The case was heard by another Vacation Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and B.R. Gavai in May, in the first half of the summer holidays. It had then come up routinely before Justice Banerjee's Bench.

On May 25, the State government informed the Justice Saran Bench that FIRs

had been registered and several arrests made in connection with the incidents. That Bench asked the State to file an affidavit.

A joint petition was filed by Biswajit Sarkar and Swarnalata Adhikari. Mr. Biswajit is the brother of deceased Abhijit Sarkar and Ms. Swarnalata, the widow of Haran Adhikari. They have alleged "total inaction" and even "subversion" of the investigation on the part of the West Bengal administration and the police.

"The murders happened on the same day the Assembly election results were declared. The police stood by idly... The investigation into the crimes needs to be transferred to the CBI or SIT and requires court-monitoring," senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, for the relatives, had submitted.

The petition alleged that there was "indiscriminate" killing of innocent people in West Bengal following the election results by the "veneful" ruling party in the State.

The State countered in the affidavit that these false allegations of State complicity were drawn on the basis of hearsay reports disseminated on social media by miscreants.

The top court was misled about the law and order situation in West Bengal and the petitions "reek of political motivation", it stated.



Mamata Banerjee at an election rally in Nandigram on March 28, 2021.

was trying to interfere in the judicial process by creating pressure on the judiciary.

Advocate and Rajya Sabha member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Biplab Ranjan Bhattacharya said judges took oath under the Constitution, and which parties they represented as lawyers was completely immaterial.

Earlier in the day, Ms. Banerjee's petition challenging the election of the BJP's Subendu Adhikari from Nandigram was mentioned before the Bench of Justice Chanda Soumendra Nath Mukherjee, counsel for Ms. Banerjee.

"Justice Kaushik Chanda is seen sharing a stage with BJP's @DilipGhoshBJP. Unsurprisingly, he's also the judge who has been assigned to hear the #Nandigram case. As the Indian judiciary system gets murkier day by day, will there be any justice in this case? Only time will tell," the Trinamool Congress tweeted from its official handle.

Responding to the allegations, the BJP's State unit said the Trinamool Congress

TMC seeks transfer of Mamata's plea on Nandigram poll result

Judge assigned to hear petition has links with BJP, it alleges

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday alleged that the judge assigned to hear the election petition filed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the Nandigram poll results had links with the BJP, and sought the shifting of the matter to a different Bench.

In a letter addressed to the office of Acting Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court Rajesh Bindal, counsel for Ms. Banerjee asked for the "reassignment of the election petition so as to avoid any prejudice and presumption of prejudice against my client".

Several Trinamool Congress leaders, including party spokesperson Derek O'Brien, tweeted photographs alleging that Justice Kausik Chanda shared stage with the State BJP president. They also took to social media sharing a list of cases where Justice Chanda ap-



peared as a lawyer representing the BJP.

"Justice Kaushik Chanda is seen sharing a stage with BJP's @DilipGhoshBJP. Unsurprisingly, he's also the judge who has been assigned to hear the #Nandigram case. As the Indian judiciary system gets murkier day by day, will there be any justice in this case? Only time will tell," the Trinamool Congress tweeted from its official handle.

Justice Chanda directed that the Registrar shall file a report before the court as to whether the petition had been filed in conformity with the Representation of People Act.

SC requests Calcutta HC to defer hearing in Narada sting case

Top court will consider appeals on June 22

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear on June 22 appeals filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata

Banerjee and Law Minister Moloy Ghatak against the Calcutta High Court's refusal to immediately consider their affidavits countering allegations about their role on the day of arrest of four Trinamool Congress leaders by the CBI in the Narada sting tape case.

A Vacation Bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and V. Ramasubramanian requested the High Court to defer its scheduled hearing of the Narada case on June 21. Vacant Benches in the Supreme Court assemble on Tuesdays and Fridays. The top court urged the High Court to hold over the hearing to June 23.

Dwivedi and Vikas Singh, for the Law Minister and the West Bengal government, said the affidavits were "essential" to the case. It provides the truth on the events of May 17, the day of the arrest, they said.

If the Supreme Court hearing is kept on Tuesday, the High Court hearing

should be deferred," the senior advocate submitted.

"We will keep the hearing on Tuesday. Meantime, we hope the High Court will defer the hearing fixed on Monday to Wednesday," the Bench noted.

A five-judge Bench of the Calcutta High Court is hearing the Narada case. On June

9, the court said it would consider the affidavits later on. Mr. Dwivedi countered the CBI's claims that Mr. Ghatak was present in the courtroom with a mob when the four TMC leaders were produced after their arrest. The senior advocate said the Minister was in an official meeting at the time.

INTERVIEW | NATASHA NARWAL

Repression has not silenced voices of struggle'

It only exposes the fragility of the ruling regime and its anti-people character, says student activist

ASHOK KUMAR

Jawaharlal Nehru University student and Pinjra Tod activist Natasha Narwal, who was released from Tihar Jail on Thursday after more than a year of incarceration in a case pertaining to the northeast Delhi riots, says seeing the struggle of other inmates without support systems has humbled her and strengthened the commitment to ensure that injustice does not go unchallenged.

You have been in jail for more than a year. How does it feel to finally breathe free?

■ It feels good but still unreal. The joy of seeing our friends and loved ones is tinged with the pain of knowing that so many people continue to be unjustly incarcerated. Our minds also keep going back to the many other inmates and the children we spent so much time with who still remain behind bars. Yet, we were exhilarated to look at the open night sky.

Your release from jail was also not without some last-minute hiccups and alleged attempts by Delhi Police to further delay it. Your comments.

■ We had prepared ourselves for spending a long time inside, given how one has seen acts like UAPA keeping people inside for a long time and making bail very difficult, so despite the delays this is still unexpected. We are grateful for the Delhi High Court judgment which has been a big step forward for us.

How has one year in jail changed you as a person and an activist?

■ This past year in jail has brought many lessons that will remain with us for a long time. The love and support that people gave us – both inside and from outside – has been deeply inspiring. At the same time seeing the struggle of other inmates who do not have any strong support systems outside or even proper legal counsel

has humbled one and strengthened the commitment to ensure that such violence and injustice is not allowed to go unchallenged. We have also learnt to value our freedom, and freedom in society ever more dearly.

What are your views on a perception of some that we are living in an undeclared emergency and the freedom of speech has never been under threat like it is now.

■ The rise in state repression is striking. Yet despite the increase in repression, it has not been able to silence voices of struggle which have in fact been gaining in strength from the anti-CAA-NRC-NPR movement, to the farmer's agitation and the way people have spoken out against the mismanagement during the pandemic. Such repression is only exposing the fragility of the ruling regime and its anti-people character.

Is the current regime any different from earlier regimes in protecting the right to freedom of speech and protest? How?

■ ...this regime is trying to change the very fabric of our society, fanning hatred and pushing people into desperation. Our country and society have seen exceptionally bad times in the past some years; be it with regards to unemployment, caste and communal atrocities, attack on workers' rights... These conditions are giving rise to a deep discontent and dissent which this regime is seeking to crush by ever greater repression.

(For the full interview, log on to bit.ly/natashanarwal)

Shah reviews development work in J&K

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed various development projects of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Shah said all-round development and welfare of the people of J&K was the top priority of the Centre. He also congratulated the Lieutenant-Governor, Manoj Sinha, and his team for achieving 76% vaccination across the Union Territory.

The Home Minister impressed upon speedy completion of the Prime Minister's development package, flagship and iconic projects and industrial development projects," said a Ministry of Home Affairs release. The Home Minister said all the farmers should be provided benefits of the schemes being implemented for them.

Preparing amid COVID-19 duty is tough, says plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to pass a sweeping order to postpone the final exams of the post-graduate medical courses in universities across the country.

A Bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M.R. Shah was hearing pleas by PG medical students, who said preparing for the exams amid COVID-19 duty was difficult. They sought more time to study for the exams.

The court said it could not possibly be asked to pass a general order to postpone the exams, for which dates have not been announced yet.

The Bench said the National Medical Commission would keep in mind the CO-

SC declines to put off PG medical exam



Key role: Postgraduate medical students are among those working on the front line fighting COVID-19. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

should intervene on behalf of the doctors to ensure that they were given "reasonable time" to prepare for the exams.

On June 11, the court refused a plea by these students to waive the exams.

The Bench said the court had, however, intervened on behalf of the students whenever possible.

On June 11, the court, in a different case, ordered the postponement of the AIIMS' Post Graduate Entrance Test-INICET exams, scheduled for June 16, by a month after taking into consideration fatigue within the medical community after battling a particularly devastating second wave of the pandemic.

In that case, a group of doctors had similarly moved the Supreme Court challenging a notification that announced the exam in June in "utter disregard" of an assurance from the Prime Minister's Office to postpone PG exams by four months.

IN BRIEF



Court dismisses Christian Michel's bail petition

A special court on Friday dismissed the bail applications of British national Christian Michel, a key accused in the ₹3,700-crore VVIP chopper deal scam, in connection with the cases being pursued by the CBI and the ED. "Considering the overall facts and circumstances, serious nature of accusations ... I do not consider it to be a fit case for grant of bail," said Special Judge Arvind Kumar.

PPD's Parra shifted from Srinagar to Jammu jail

PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDP) youth president Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra was shifted from Kashmir to a Jammu jail on Friday, three weeks after a United Nations report suggested that he was tortured "in reprisal" for his participation in a virtual meeting with diplomats from UN Security Council countries in 2020. An official said Parra was shifted from the Srinagar Central Jail to the Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu.

Forest guards kill tiger in 'accidental firing'

An incident of "accidental firing" has resulted in the death of a tiger on the outskirts of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve. "On enquiry, it was found that the tiger died due to a bullet wound," said an official. The bullet was suspected to have been fired accidentally when a team of forest guards tried to scare the tiger away from a village nearby on June 17. Field Director of the park P. Sivakumar said an enquiry had been ordered.

Assam cancels Class 10 and 12 board exams

The Assam government on Friday cancelled the Class 10 and 12 board exams in view of the COVID-19 situation in the State. The Cabinet had on June 16 advised the Education Department not to hold the exams offline as the positivity rate had not dipped below a comfortable level. "We decided not to hold the exams in order not to expose the students to infection," Education Minister Ranjit Pegu said. The results would be announced by July 31 after an evaluation system is arrived at, he added.

Chennithala meets Rahul amid Cong. churn

Ripples from poll losses refuse to ease

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The meeting of former Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, Ramesh Chennithala, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday revived talks of a possible organisational reshuffle in the party.

Mr. Chennithala, who had shot off a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi to express his disappointment over the manner in which he was dropped from the LoP's post, is expected to be made an All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary.

Officially, though, the Kerala leader told reporters that he had come to discuss the reasons for Congress' loss in the recent Assembly elections.

Intense factionalism

The party is also faced with desertions and intense factionalism in States as diverse as Assam, Punjab and Rajasthan.

Barely days after Uttar Pradesh Congress leader Jitin Prasada quit to join the BJP, a four-time Assam lawmaker, Rupijyoti Kurmi, is expected to do the same after resigning from the party as a legislator. While the departure of Mr. Kurmi – a young leader from the tea garden community – hasn't grabbed headlines, his loss

INTERVIEW | OM BIRLA

'Nobody objected to building new Parliament when it was proposed'

Lok Sabha Speaker calls for smaller constituencies, increasing number of MPs

NISTULA HEBBAR
SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

As Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla completes two years in office, he speaks about the importance of letting all elected representatives have a voice in Parliament and says that none of the opposition MPs contested the need for a new building during meetings with him. Edited excerpts

Q As you complete two years, what would you say have been your achievements and the challenges you have faced?



■ Running the House at a time when COVID infections were fairly high was certainly a challenge. After a lot of brainstorming on how to run the House, Rajya Sabha Chairman and I agreed to have staggered timings for both the Houses and make seating arrangements for members of one House to sit in both the Houses. What's heartening is that even during this session, members participated the same way as they would during a normal session, with 167 members taking part. The next big challenge for me, as a second term MP, was to take along all the political parties as well as the very experienced members. I must say that everyone cooperated with me and we didn't face any disruption in the first session of my term.

I also started some new practices that came out of my experience when I was a first time member. I made it a point to encourage and allow all MPs to raise Zero hour notices, where most don't get the opportunity... On a single day, as many as 161 members spoke during Zero Hour. And in the first session of the current Lok Sabha, I think more than 400 MPs have spoken on the floor of the House.

Several Opposition members wrote letters to ask why Parliament, as well as Parliamentary panels, can't meet virtually when the Prime Minister can conduct meetings with Chief Ministers virtually? ■ They may have written but when Lok Sabha pro-

I don't think anyone wanted Lok Sabha proceedings virtually

ceedings were going on during the COVID-19 period, none said on the floor of the House that Parliament should function virtually or that Rule 266 needs to change. To change the rules, we need the approval of the House since they were framed with the House's approval. I don't think anyone wanted Lok Sabha proceedings virtually. As far as parliamentary meetings are concerned, while framing the rules, it was decided to keep the proceedings secret because members rise above party lines while debating issues. It's a forum where members can enforce accountability and officials are expected to speak their mind freely. I don't remember anyone asking for the rules to be changed while the House was in session.

Several members have asked for the restoration of the Member of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) especially during the pandemic...

■ Members have raised this issue in the House, and it's for the government to take a view.

What was the need for a new Parliament and why was the decision to continue construction in the midst of the second wave of COVID-19 taken, despite criticism?

■ The current Parliament House is a revered building for us, as it figured prominently in our fight for Independence. For the needs of that time, this building was appropriate too. But as the work of the Parliament ex-

ceeded, the number of members increased, the outer shape of the building saw little alteration, but inside ad hoc changes to adapt to new needs took place, making it vulnerable... For a long time there was talk of building a new Parliament that was appropriate to the times.

The Rajya Sabha chairperson and I had mentioned in both Houses that there should be a new building, looking at future scenarios. No one dissented when I raised this issue within the general purposes committee where leaders of all political parties in Parliament are represented. I have no comments on what is being said outside of that meeting, but inside nobody differed on the need for a new Parliament building.

The cost of the project is ₹970 crore and not ₹20,000 crore as is being said. Nobody in the government has

said that the cost of the project will come in the way of any spending on COVID-19 management. Is the Opposition saying that all infrastructural activity in the country should cease due to COVID-19? Much of it was continued. And the point is that not a single objection was raised at the appropriate forum over which I was presiding.

The proposed new Parliament has a seating capacity of 1,000 people for Lok Sabha. Former president Pranab Mukherjee had suggested raising the number of MPs because constituencies were too large and unwieldy. What is your view?

■ I agree with Pranab Babu. Constituencies currently have population running into lakhs, 16-17 lakhs in some cases. The government and

appropriated authorities may consider increasing the number of MPs, as a single person representing so many people is very difficult. One of the reasons I made it a point that as many MPs as possible should raise Zero Hour notices was because MPs are elected by such large electorates.

The Trinamool Congress asked for disqualification of two of its MPs [Sunil Mondal and Sisir Adhikari] for anti-party activities. What is happening to that request?

■ They have written to me with their complaints. I have said that the complaint be taken on board as per the form required, I shall ask the two named for their version and later refer it to the Privileges Committee which will then hear the matter.

Any time line by when this will be over?

■ Well, the anti-defection law doesn't specify a timeline in dealing with such complaints. All I can say is that the process will be carried out in the most transparent way.

But the recognition of the breakaway Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) as a group in the Lok Sabha was done almost overnight?

■ The LJP passed a resolution, the chief whip came along with the other four MPs and met me. Even then, I checked the signatures on the letter in person with all of them. No letter came challenging it, Chirag Paswan wrote two days after that.

Will you be asking for vaccination certificates from MPs for attending future sessions of Parliament?

■ We have only respectfully requested MPs to get vaccinated. As per our record, 425 MPs are vaccinated, some members suffered from COVID-19 recently and their vaccination is on hold. And we have not received any information from about 40-odd MPs. We are not making vaccination mandatory but want all MPs to be vaccinated as and when protocols suit.

This system will ease

Sale of illegal HTB cotton seeds doubles

Industry lobbies demand action against offenders



The sales doubled from 30 lakh last year to 75 lakh this year.

"It will not only decimate small cotton seed companies but also threatens the entire legal cotton seed market in India," National Seed Association of India president Prabhakar Rao said on Friday. "Regulators are only limiting their checking to licensed dealers and seed companies while this illegal variant adds another layer of modification, making the plant resistant to the herbicide glyphosate, but has not been approved by regulators. Fears include glyphosate having a carcinogenic effect, as well as the unchecked spread of herbicide resistance to nearby plants through pollination, creating a variety of superweeds."

However, a senior official at the Ministry said it was up to the State governments to enforce the policy. This comes even as activists from the Shetkari Sangathan have stepped up the reach of their civil disobedience movement to demand the legalisation of HTB cotton by encouraging farmers to plant the seeds in violation of government regulations.

Cotton is the only transgenic crop that has been approved by the Centre for commercial cultivation in India. It has been genetically modified to produce an insecticide to combat the cotton bollworm, a common

"To make matters worse, the illegal seeds are sold using the brand name of prominent companies ... Farmers are at risk with such illegal cotton seed sale as

there is no accountability of the quality of seed, it pollutes the environment, the industry is losing legitimate seed sale and the government also loses revenue in terms of tax collection," he added, noting that HTB seeds are often produced in Gujarat and then moved to Maharashtra.

"This year there is a big increase in such illegal cultivation especially in Maharashtra from 30 lakh packets last year to about 75 lakh packets this year," said a recent letter from the Federation of Seed Industry of India executive director Shivendra Bajaj to Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal.

Another official said following Central advisories to all cotton-growing States, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Telangana have seized HTB stock and taken punitive action against the culprits.

India, 3 EU nations begin naval exercise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The maiden Indian Navy and European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) exercise began in the Gulf of Aden on Friday. Five warships from four navies are participating in the two-day exercise. INS *Trikand* is participating in the exercise, along with Italy's *ITS Carabinere*, the Spanish Navy's *ESPS Navarra*, and *FS Tonnerre* and *FS Suffren* of France.

CBSE develops portal to tabulate Class 12 marks

It issues notifications to all principals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As schools grapple with the new formula to tabulate Class 12 marks approved by the Supreme Court on Thursday, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued a notification to all principals regarding the Information Technology system being developed in-house to aid them.

"This system will ease

down the calculation work, reduce the time taken and so many other hassles. This system will also pre-populate the marks of Class X of the students passed from CBSE. Efforts will also be made to take other Boards' Class X data," said the notification. The portal to check and update Class 10 results for all students will be available from Monday, while other software modules will be provided after that.

PARADIP PORT TRUST

e-TENDER CALL NOTICE

Name of the work : 08th Dry Docking & Repairs of TUG Parvati of Paradip Port Trust.

Estimated Cost put to tender : Rs. 1,09,37,841/- excluding GST. Last date & time of submission of tender through on-line bidding is 1500 hours on Dt. 20.07.2021.

For details, please log on to the website : <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app/>

Deputy Conservator

PPT/PR/45/21-22 Date : 18.06.2021

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, TWAD BOARD, MADURAI.

ADDENDUM/CORRIGENDUM

Ref : F.Thoothukudi UGSS / ABD / DO II / CW / DT.12.05.2021 (II call)

The period of sale of tender documents and receipt & opening of tenders called for in the reference is extended as below:

Name of work :	Providing Underground Sewerage Scheme to left out areas in Area Based Development Area of Thoothukudi Smart City (Period of completion-24 months)
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Period of sale of bid documents : Upto 5.45 P.M on 30.06.2021

Last date for receipt of tenders : Upto 3.00 P.M on 02.07.2021

Opening of tenders : At 3.30 P.M on 02.07.2021

All other terms and conditions already published remain unaltered.

Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, Madurai

DPT/1797/TENDER/2021 SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS

Online through eProcurement/ eBidding system at <http://eprocure.tnacadamia.com>

Procuring Authority Managing Director, Rajashan State Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC), Jhajhala Institutional Area, Jaipur-302005 (Rajasthan)

Bid Issue Date & Time 15/06/2021 05:00 PM

Pre-Bid Meeting Date & Time 22/06/2021 03:00 PM

Last Date & Time of Submission of Bid 28/06/2021 01:00 PM

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Online through e

'Third wave may hit by October'

But it will be better controlled, say experts in a poll

REUTERS
BENGALURU

A third wave of COVID-19 infections is likely to hit India by October, and although it will be better controlled than the latest outbreak, the pandemic will remain a public health threat for at least another year, according to a Reuters poll of medical experts.

The June 3-17 snap survey of 40 experts from around the world showed that a significant pickup in vaccinations will likely provide some cover to a fresh outbreak.

Of those who ventured a prediction, over 85% of respondents, or 21 of 24, said the next wave will hit by October, including three who forecast it as early as August, and 12 in September. The remaining three said the third



Cause of concern: COVID-19 will remain a threat for at least another year, according to medical experts. Picture shows empty beds at a hospital in Ahmedabad. • VIJAY SONEJI

wave would occur between November and February.

But over 70% of experts, or 24 of 34, said any new outbreak would be better controlled compared with the current one, which has been far more devastating – with shortage of vaccines, medicines, oxygen and hospital beds – than the smaller first surge in infections last year.

"It will be more controlled, as cases will be much less because more vaccinations would have been rolled out and there would be some degree of natural immunity from the second-wave," said Dr. Randeep Guleria, director at All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

When asked if children and those under 18 years

would be most at risk, nearly two-thirds of experts, or 26 of 40, said yes. But 14 experts said children were not at risk.

Earlier this week, a senior Union Health Ministry official said children were vulnerable and susceptible to infections but that analysis has shown a less severe health impact.

IN BRIEF



Bihar woman given both Covishield and Covaxin

PATNA A Bihar woman, Sunila Devi, was administered shots of both the Covishield and Covaxin vaccines at an interval of five minutes on June 16. She is under the observation of a medical team and is said to be well. The incident occurred at the Beldarikhali middle school vaccination camp.

Girl sells shirts after losing father to COVID-19

SHAHJAHANPUR Losing her father to COVID-19 in April, a Class 6 girl selling ready-made shirts outside her house in busy Khrni Bagh area of Shahjahanpur district has caught the attention of both the police and locals. Mahi's father, the sole bread earner of the family, used to supply ready-made shirts to shopkeepers. "The family has been assured of all help from my side," said Sadar Bazar police station in-charge Ashok Pal. PTI

Summit for vaccine internationalism begins

NEW DELHI The Progressive International's four-day Summit for vaccine internationalism opened on Friday, with the goal of ending "the pandemic as quickly as possible by securing COVID-19 vaccines for all". A release said the summit brings together Global south governments, political leaders, healthcare workers and vaccine manufacturers from over twenty countries and follows criticism of the G7's plan by U.N. aid chief Mark Lowcock as "not serious" and lacking "necessary urgency."

IMA, doctors protest over violence against workers

Health Ministry writes to States, UTs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Several doctors across the country took part on Friday in a nationwide stir called by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) over the recent incidents of violence against healthcare professionals. The doctors and the IMA demanded a Central law to curb such cases. The association said that around 3.5 lakh doctors participated in the protest today.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has urged all States and Union Territories to ensure that prompt steps are taken for the safety and well-being of healthcare workers while strictly implementing the amended Epidemic Diseases Act. In a letter, Health Ministry Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal said that healthcare workers are the most crucial resources in COVID-19 management on all fronts.

Health Minister calls for adherence to safety measures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government worked round the clock to stop COVID-19 last year and was successful in decreasing the active caseload to the minimum, said Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan on Friday. However, with the arrival of vaccines early this year and things returning to normality, people gradually invited laxity in their adherence to the simple code of pandemic-appropriate behaviour, he added. While the virus mutated and evolved itself, people let their guard down. All this compounded

COVID-19 numbers down but cannot lower guard: Paul

NITI Aayog member cautions about mutations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India is showing a steady decline in the number of new COVID-19 cases but this decline should not be taken for granted, said Member, (Health) of the NITI Aayog V.K. Paul on Friday. Speaking at a press conference, Dr Paul added that the virus is mutating and "we can't lower our guards".

"Studies have also shown that children have equal susceptibility as adults so we have to be ready to ensure that we are in a position to cater to them in case numbers rise again," he added.

Dr. Paul explained that a World Health Organization and All India Institute of



Dr. V.K. Paul

Medical Sciences (WHO-AIIMS) survey shows seropositivity in persons below and above 18 years of age is almost similar. "In persons above 18, the seropositivity rate is 67% and 59% in persons below 18. In urban areas, it is 78% in persons below 18 and 79% in above 18, while in rural areas, the seropositivity rate is 56% in persons below 18 years of age and 63% in persons above 18. The information

shows that the children are getting infected," he said.

On vaccination, Dr. Paul said there are studies that prove that it reduced the chances of hospitalisation by 75-80% even after contracting COVID-19. "It also reduced the risk of ICU admission and brings it down to 6% in vaccinated persons and oxygen requirement comes down to 8%. The study was done among health care workers, who are a high-risk group," he said.

Decline in daily cases

The Ministry said India has registered almost an 85% decline in daily new cases since the highest reported peak on May 7.

About 78.6% decline has been recorded in total active cases since the peak reported on May 10, the Ministry added.

India sees 47,045 fresh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

India recorded 47,045 new COVID-19 cases and 1,462 deaths till 8.30 p.m. on Friday. The country has so far reported a total of 2,98,09,031 cases and 3,84,984 deaths.

Maharashtra reported 9,798 new infections, followed by Tamil Nadu (8,633) and Andhra Pradesh (6,341). Maharashtra also recorded 648 fatalities, followed by Tamil Nadu (287) and Karnataka (168). Maharashtra's fatalities include backlog deaths which were missed in the previous reports.

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

Around 19.29 lakh samples were tested in the country on Thursday, the results for which were made available on Friday. About 32.59 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the country in the 24 hours ending 7 a.m. on Friday, which is 2 lakh doses fewer than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 16,000 doses fewer 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 31.24 lakh on June 17, which is slightly more than the 30.27 lakh recorded a week before (June 10).

While 16.1% of the population has received at least one dose, only 3.6% are fully vaccinated. The figures are based on the estimated population in 2021.

No role for State in last rites, says Allahabad High Court

Plea for disposal of bodies buried along the Ganga

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court on Friday dismissed a petition seeking directions to the Uttar Pradesh government to perform last rites, cremate or dispose the bodies found near river Ganga, saying, "If there is a death in a family, is it the responsibility of the State?"

The petitioner, Pranesh, a lawyer from Prayagraj, had pleaded with the court for directions to the State government and officials in Prayagraj to perform the cre-



Ganga's plight: The petitioner had sought proper disposal of bodies at different ghats in Prayagraj. • PTI

mation according to religious rites and dispose the bodies buried at different ghats in Prayagraj as early as possible. The petition also sought directions to the government to prevent or stop the burial of bodies near the river.

A bench of Chief Justice Sanjay Yadav and Justice Prakash Padia said the petitioner "has not done much research work" in respect of rites and customs which are prevalent among various communities living along the bank of river Ganga.

Join fight against pandemic: Vardhan

CSIR ties up with Tata Group to develop mobile testing laboratories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has tied up with the Tata MD, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, to develop mobile testing laboratories to increase COVID-19 testing capacity in rural India.

The initiative will utilise CSIR's network of close to 40 labs across India and help increase India's testing capacity in smaller locations in the country. "CSIR and Tata MD will jointly develop the testing capacity and the RT-PCR CRISPR test will be done using the Tata MD CHECK SARS-CoV-2 test kits that are powered by FELUDA technology from CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative

Biology (CSIR-IGIB)," a statement from the Science Ministry said on Friday.

Simpler test

The CSIR-IGIB had developed a coronavirus detection test that employed a gene-editing technology, called CRISPR.

A paper-strip based test that needs to be analysed in a laboratory, FELUDA's promise is that it is a relatively simpler test to execute, using which results can be known faster than in a traditional RT-PCR based test.

"Apart from vaccination, rapid testing and isolation of SARS-CoV-2 positive persons have emerged as the best strategy in combating COVID-19. This initiative in partnership with Tata MD, to de-

ploy the RT-PCR CRISPR test across multiple CSIR labs spread across the country is an important step. This will augment the national capacity to test for COVID and detect it locally," Shekhar Mande, Director-General, CSIR, said in a statement.

For expanding reach, Tata MD is also deploying a proprietary 3-room design mobile testing lab that can conduct end-to-end, on-site COVID-19 testing to increase the testing capacity.

"By partnering with CSIR's network of labs and deploying fully equipped mobile laboratories, we are confident that we can quickly augment testing capacity using faster and scalable methods. This will signifi-

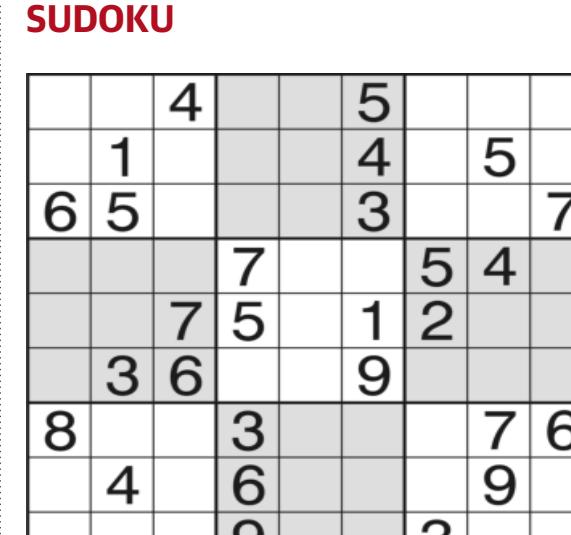
cantly enhance the ability of State and district administrations to ensure wider availability and easier access to testing on an ongoing basis," said Girish Krishnamurthy, CEO and MD of Tata Medical and Diagnostics.

The FELUDA technology has already been licensed to the Tata Group by CSIR in 2020. The test was employed – it isn't clear how many – during the concluded Kumbh Mela in Haridwar.

So far 13 CSIR labs have been engaged in carrying out RT-PCR testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first CSIR lab to deploy the test was the CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13277

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

A	G	E	O	F	R	E	A	S	O	N	Y	A	I	F
S	N	O	Y	A	I	F	S	N	O	Y	A	I	F	S
C	O	V	E	D	L	I	C	O	V	E	D	L	I	C
E	O	M	G	L	R	D	E	E	O	M	G	L	R	D
N	A	I	R	A	C	A	D	E	N	C	H	A	T	E
I	R	A	N	I	E	B	E	T	H	I	R	A	N	I
R	A	N	I	E	B	E	T	H	I	R	A	N	I	E
N	A	P	P	Y	R	A	S	H	O	U	T	E	N	A
A	P	P	Y	R	A	S	H	O	U	T	E	N	A	A
P	R	O	L	A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	B	E	P
R	O	L	A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R
O	L	A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R	O
L	A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L
A	C	T	I	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A
C	E	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T
E	N	T	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E
N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E	N	A
A	C	T	E	N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C
C	E	N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E
E	N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E	N
N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E	N	A
A	C	T	E	N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C
C	E	N	A	R	B	E	P	R	O	L	A	C	T	E
E	N	A</												



Instapick

Hot air balloons: Multimedia artist Patricia Piccinini will fly her two whale balloons, Skywhale and Skywhalepapa, around Australia through 2021 and 2022. Celebrating fathers' roles as caregivers, the aerial sculptures depict 'the whale papa holding babies'. Meanwhile, artist Brian Donnelly, aka KAWS, is taking his character, Companion, as a hot air balloon to international cities. @kaws on Insta



Talking Point

Euro 2020: The European Championship is pan-continental for the first time, with host cities ranging from Seville, Spain to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Fans are banking on Britain going ahead with full unlock plans: it would mean a full stadium for the final at Wembley Stadium on July 11. Meanwhile, Cristiano Ronaldo's Coca-Cola snub has highlighted the flip side of the rise of celebrity ambassadors.

YARN IT! Betting on Father's Hour

Save the trick questions and make time for TV, specifically, Euro Cup TV!

JANE DE SUZA

I'm a great dad, don't get me wrong, but Father's Day terrifies me. It's another date I'm reminded that I forgot. If you really want a Dad's Day, it should be up to us dads to pick any one. Like casual leave. I'll take it whenever I want to. Huge extended family function? Sorry, I can't make it - I'm having a Father's Day. Else, allow us a Father's Hour - 24 of them to permute. There's the match and I'm claiming my Father's Hour. With about 5000 calories in deep-fried snacks and a remote control within arm's reach. And of legitimately being emotionally

unavailable (which is non-bailable jailable in the wife's eyes). It's not true that I never listen. I devoutly listen to the chaps in the commentary box who are kindly celebrating Father's Hour with me, whether they're fathers or not.

What makes Father's Day even more alarming is being asked what I want to do. The para above, obviously. But this 'What I want to do' is intricately linked to 'What we want to do' as a family. It's a devious trap. The last time we did this family time, it clashed with the Roland Garros finals. So we sat through a family movie, with puppies and babies, which got my wife weeping. I was weeping too.



SREEJITH RAVIKUMAR

Real tears. Because my friend kept pinging me about the nail-biting first set. I was so emotionally available, emotionally overwrought even - that I had to rush to the loo, to get him to aim his video at his TV. I returned to

find that the puppy was still lost, or was it the grandpa? And they unfairly stayed lost through the second set as well.

What I'd like on Father's Day is not to be asked trick questions. And really, they're all trick questions. Which section is the kid

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli's column, Spit Take, will be back as per schedule on July 3

Pick of the week

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



Payal's NYC trunk show

While she has been promoting her floral lightweight lehangas, and joining other designers for fundraisers during the second wave, Payal Singhal has also been busy getting back into the international pop-up circuit. #PSTravellingTrunkShow is underway at Radisson Hotel in New York, and includes her SS'21 collection 'The New Normal', menswear and wedding accessories. June 18-19. Also on payalsinghal.com. Closer home, Amazon Fashion has its Wardrobe Refresh Sale from June 19 to 23.



Knowing Sita

Aalaap begins a six-part series called *The Goddess: Six-Fold* with storyteller, artist and practitioner of Sanatana Dharma, Vinay Varanasi. Expect immersive storytelling with the focus on *Sita: The Power of the Feminine*. The curators will explore the many meanings and metaphors of the goddess. June 19 onwards. @aalap_concepts on Instagram. Meanwhile, National Centre of Performing Arts (NCPA) has an introductory music programme for five to seven-year-olds, starting July 5. Registration closes on June 21. ₹15,000, soimumbai.com/prelude



Hear, hear

Not travelling yet? British travel writer Aaron Millar will prime you for your first post-pandemic getaway with his stories from around the world. Check out his podcast, *Armchair Explorer*. Another podcast for the moment: Deepa Narayan's *What's a Man: Masculinity in India*. New episodes from June 23 feature feminist queer activist Manak Matiyani and Sanjra Jha, the author of *How to Raise a Feminist Son*. But this weekend, a recent episode, *Fathers and Sons*, may be of interest, as it explores relationships between fathers and sons.



Art likes print

Adult colouring sheet, art by muralist and visual artist Anup Varkey... *The Irregular Times*, a new art+design newspaper, has this and more in its first issue. Titled *Please Wait For The Host To Start This Meeting*, it is fuelled by plans to build a community-driven culture around design and zine-making. From Tarini Sethi and Anant Ahuja, the team behind visual arts and design initiatives like The Irregulars Art Far (an anti-art fair for independent artists). ₹750 at theirregulartimes.com



Playing with the Khans

If it feels like it's too soon, you are not alone. *World Music Day* (June 21) returns and with it scores of initiatives. Sony India has special offers on headphones and other audio products till June 21. Tourism Virginia is helping travellers plan 'country music' holidays for, sigh, 2022. But our favourite is the collaboration with *sarod* maestro *Ustad Amjad Ali Khan* with Eagles' guitarist *Joe Walsh*. Khan's sons Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash are also part of the equation that has resulted in a three-song EP, *Prayers-East Meets West*. On Universal Music.



Asanas unite

Let's not forget International Yoga Day (also on June 21). Accessory brand Fastrack has a fitness band, Reflex 3.0, that they say will track all yoga movements at ₹2,495. Yoga-based wellness platform, *Sarva*, has a new campaign #StartTohKaro featuring Malaika Arora and Mira Kapoor. With 14 live sessions from 6.30 am onwards that can be accessed if you register for the Yoga Day Pass. ₹499-₹999. *sarva.com* Meanwhile, The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations has an online celebration from 6 pm to 7.30 pm IST on UN WebTV

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For Father's Day, listen to my answers, though. Permanent answers which never change. To kid #1, you're too young for a boyfriend, and you always will be. To kid #2, no, your haircut doesn't suit you, and what it costs doesn't suit me. To both: I'm not paying your criminally-high fees for your vocabulary to comprise single alphabets like k, or c u.

Actually, Father's Day isn't so bad. Those kind chaps have planned the Euro Cup fixtures around it. Let's celebrate it with some family time and weep together - at the sheer beauty of this pass or that impossible save - and re-watch old matches for the 19th time. We'll have such a great Father's Day, you may just forget to remind me about it from the next year on.

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

GREEN LIVING

Plant-based drinks, a card game on birds, and Stella McCartney's latest eco-collection

Return to Earth

Compiled by Nidhi Adlakha



Plant-based Drinks

Only Earth
The latest entrant on the plant-based beverage bandwagon is Singapore-led Only Earth. Launched earlier this year, it is the brainchild of entrepreneur Kunal Mutha of Chennai's Mohan Mutha Group. Having made the switch to veganism two years ago, the athlete-in-making has kicked off his offerings with oat and coconut milk, and will soon be launching an almond variant. All products come in a one litre pack and are also available on leading online portals such as Amazon, Big Basket, and QTROVE. ₹300 per pack, on myonlyearth.com



Upcycled Plastic Bags

EcoKaari
Pune-based EcoKaari, known for transforming plastic waste into utility products, has a sale for Father's Day. Having upcycled close to 15 lakh plastic bags to date, the social enterprise handcrafts its 'fabrics' using the charkha. From totes and handbags (₹800 onwards) to cutlery kits and planters, the products pair traditional craft with contemporary designs. They also have a plastic donation drive in the city. Details: ecokaari.org

Autumn 2021

Stella McCartney

The celebrated London-based fashion designer says her latest Autumn 2021 collection is their 'most sustainable collection to date' and is inspired by 'J is for Joy, from the McCartney A to Z Manifesto'. Featuring jackets, knit jumpers, patchwork silk trousers, boots, sneakers, and more, the line is reportedly crafted from eco-fabrics such as Econyl, forest-friendly viscose, sustainable beechwood, and old-stock fabrics. ₹20,723 onwards, on stellamccartney.com

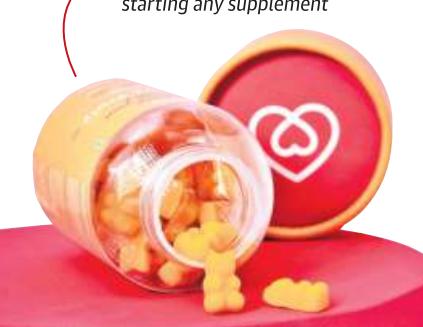


Immunity Gummies

Yours Truly

The evergreen superfood, turmeric, gets a new avatar in these vitamin-rich gummy bears for adults. An offering by the 2020 entrant in the nutraceutical industry, Yours Truly, the gummies claim to be '100% vegan, gluten-free, and enriched with antioxidants'. Rich in curcumin, the pops are said to boost the immune system, and improve digestive, brain and liver health. The founders advise two gummies every morning, and one before bedtime. ₹399 for 30 gummies. yourstrulycares.com

Disclaimer: Consult your doctor before starting any supplement.



Eco Apparel

UpcycleLuxe
NIIFT graduate and founder Harshita Chandra calls the four-month-old venture 'India's first e-commerce sustainable fashion tech marketplace'. Partner brands include Ahmed, Doodlage, Kajware, Punah, The Loom Art, and more. While the women's edit (₹2,000 onwards) includes pleated pants, draped shirts, tunics and dresses, the collection for men (₹4,500 onwards) comprises bomber jackets, shirts and trousers in shades of blue, grey and peach. upcycleluxe.com



Birds of Kodaikanal

Hoopoe on a Hill

This hand-illustrated card game is the latest launch by the women-led organisation based in Kodaikanal. Known for retailing wild honey gathered by adivasi communities of Palani Hills, Tamil Nadu, the group has focussed on the many winged inhabitants of the hill station for the game. To play, you need to match the pairs of 20 bird species. Also available are beeswax crayons, candles, coffee, and a range of wild honey. The card game is priced at ₹450, on hoopoeonahill.com



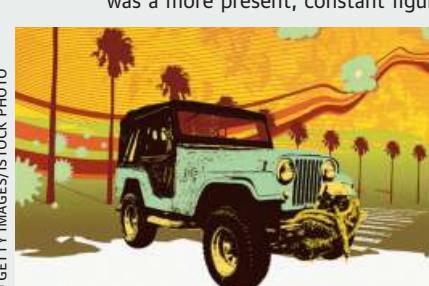
What he gave me

With time, good memories return, says this writer about losing her father as a teen

CHRYSELLE D'SILVA DIAS

There was nothing extraordinary about the day my father died. I recall coming home from college, and finding an empty house; my friend pulling up in an auto-rickshaw, saying "Hurry up, your dad's in hospital". In the days before mobile phones there was no other way to get the news to me.

I was 18 that year, the oldest of three siblings. As a self-obsessed teen, I don't remember having long conversations with him. My mother was a more present, constant figure



FASHION

Jamdani: deadstock to dresses

FAYE REMEDIOS

Revival isn't new for this fabric. "Jamdani has the potential to bring about an artisanal diversity by utilising modern techniques. However, for us to sustain the skill and artisans associated with it, we need to make it more mainstream and link it to fashion," believes designer Anavila Misra.

Most recently, Kolkata-based designer Kavya Singh Kundu used deadstock (saris, stoles and scarves) from weavers in Phulia, West Bengal, to create an upcycled collection. In 'Tale as Old as Time', she has experimented with cuts, switching up the traditional aesthetic to



create versatile pieces such as one-shoulder dresses. "Going forward, we need to simplify the weave and work on more youthful and detailed silhouettes to make it more relevant," she says, pointing to how a section of younger weavers are creating fresh, contemporary motifs, which are almost like abstract works of art. "These appeal to a younger demographic as well as to an international clientele, and will ensure that jamdani continues to have a future," adds Kundu.

Read the full story, with tips on where to stock up, on weekend.thehindu.com

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

Smriti Bhaduria and Kartik Vasan are living their best lives, travelling across Canada and the Americas, breaking brown stereotypes, and funding their #IndianVanLife from their own pockets



The 'Dodge'y lifestyle

VIJAY LOKAPALLY

A gun-toting priest stopping you outside a church can be daunting. But for Smriti Bhaduria and Kartik Vasan, ambassadors of Indian van life, it's just one of the many memorable experiences they've been making since they sold their condo in downtown Toronto last year and hit the road in a vintage, brown camper van, their dog Everest in tow.

"When we entered the US, in the state of Oregon, in January, we were trying to take a picture of Mt Hood while driving through Portland," recalls Kartik. "As we pulled into the parking lot of a church, a man waved us down. He seemed friendly, but when he got closer we realised he was holding a big gun in his hand. We remained calm and soon found out that he was the pastor of the church and was only cleaning his gun," he laughs.

Breaking brown
You could say that the travelling bug had bitten Smriti and Kartik well before that. "I've seen 100 cities in India, as my father had a touring job [as a power grid safety head]," says

The couple, in their early 30s, met in Toronto in 2014. A year earlier, Smriti had read about an old couple travelling from Patagonia (South America) to Alaska and the idea of caravanning had appealed to her. So, when she met Kartik, she shared it with him. "Smriti's love for the outdoors and adventure completely changed my outlook towards life," he says.

Smriti and Kartik with their dog Everest.



(Clockwise from far left) Kartik Vasan and Smriti Bhaduria with Everest, their Border Collie-Labrador, and the 44-year-old 77 Dodge B200 van; snapshots from their travels so far • @THEBROWNVANLIFE



have not monetised our trip yet; we fund it with our jobs," says Kartik, an IT consultant.

Map to everywhere

The two have also tried to be distinct from their western counterparts. "Since we are possibly the only Indians pursuing this life full time, we did not have a reference point. We also realised that whatever we do might become a reference point for others. So it was important for us to bring representation into the dialogue. We discuss all the social and cultural issues Indian kids and adults might face starting a life like this," explains Smriti.

The duration of their journey is still unknown (though visiting 10 countries is one of their goals).

"In terms of itinerary, our immediate goal is to get to Patagonia while exploring different countries in Central and South America, and experience all the cultures. We will go to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and by next year enter Colombia to start the South American leg of the journey."

And Everest will play the role of a security guard everywhere. "Our photo model, best hiking partner, and optimism booster," Smriti signs off.



rival. People often feel we come from rich backgrounds or that we have a lot of savings, but the truth is we have worked really hard to obtain this lifestyle. The idea of letting everything go does not sit well with our Indian upbringing, so we decided to keep our jobs while living and travelling in different places," says Smriti, who is in digital marketing.

In fact, the duo had started planning their remote jobs early on, so they could support their caravanning lifestyle. "We work from 6.30 am to 1.30 pm, and then take the rest of the day to explore or cover distance. We

Smriti. Kartik's father was a diplomat, because of which he grew up in seven countries. So, when they got the van in 2018 (a spur of the moment decision while on a camping trip), they started thinking about quitting their jobs and travelling with just their savings.

However, it was not easy convincing their parents of their plan to live a nomadic life – working remotely, exploring nature and living in a 77 Dodge B200. Van life was a foreign idea. As Kartik recently told Conde Nast Traveller, "Our brown upbringing has conditioned us to live a certain way. My parents often tell us and tell us, 'Your friends just bought a home.' But these are fleeting feelings. When you park in a beautiful spot, the moment just passes by."

The youngsters received the green signal once they tied the knot last year in February. Today, the two call their parents regularly and "show them beautiful sunrises and sunsets. This gives them peace of mind knowing that we are safe, working and still able to see new places".

Their Instagram, @thebrownvanlife, has over 8,000

followers too.

Kartik and Smriti travel slowly – usually driving between three to five hours daily, and never at night – so they get to stay in a place for a few days. "We don't burn too much fuel because it impacts the environment. All our electricals are solar powered, so we are eco-friendly and self-sustaining," adds Kartik. The van is outfitted with a queen-size bed, a kitchen with a fridge, and a 20-gallon water tank.

Finding their balance

In January this year, the couple drove across several states in the US. "We were in a grocery store in Utah when they announced they had extra vaccine slots. So we walked in for yoghurt and came out vaccinated! Which was such a stress relief for our parents and for us," says Smriti. After exploring the US for four months, they entered Mexico. "We are currently in Baja and ready for the ferry to Mainland Mexico," she says.

Detailed paperwork is a critical part of the venture. "We have Canadian permanent residency, but hold Indian passports. Our biggest advantage is our 10-year US visa that allows us to travel to all of North and Central American countries with a visa on arrival.

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Conservative cleric tipped to win as Iran votes in presidential poll

Turnout expected to be low as opposition groups have urged a boycott

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iranians voted on Friday in a presidential election, in which conservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi is seen as all but certain to coast to victory after all serious rivals were barred from running.

After a lacklustre campaign, turnout was expected to fall to a new low in a country exhausted by a punishing regime of U.S. economic sanctions that has dashed the hopes of many for a brighter future.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, cast the first vote in Tehran and then urged Iran's nearly 60 million eligible voters to follow suit before the scheduled close of polls at midnight.

"The sooner you perform this task and duty, the better," said the 81-year-old, stressing that voting "serves to build the future" of the Iranian people.

Pictures of often flag-waving



Decisive poll: Ebrahim Raisi, a presidential candidate, waving at mediapersons after casting his vote in Tehran. • AP

ing voters dominated state TV coverage, but away from the polling stations some voiced anger at what they saw as a stage-managed election.

Economic woes

"Whether I vote or not, someone has already been elected," scoffed Tehran shopkeeper Saeed Zareie about the pre-election vetting that barred all but seven of the more than 600 hopefuls. "They organise the elec-

tions for the media."

Enthusiasm has been dampened further by the economic malaise of spiralling inflation and job losses, that has been deepened by the pandemic.

"I'm not a politician, I don't know anything about politics," said Tehran mechanic Nasrollah. "I have no money. All families are now facing economic problems. How can we vote for these people who did this to us? It's not right."

Iranian opposition groups abroad and some dissidents at home have urged a boycott of the vote they see as an engineered victory for Mr. Raisi, the 60-year-old head of the judiciary, to cement ultraconservative control.

But many queued to vote at schools, mosques and community centres, some carrying Iran's green, white and red national flag.

One conservative mother wearing the full-body black chador came with her two young sons dressed in the camouflage uniform of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Ultimate political power in Iran, since its 1979 revolution toppled the US-backed monarchy, rests with the supreme leader.

But the President, as the top official of the state bureaucracy, also wields significant influence in fields from industrial policy to foreign affairs.

What led to the Biden-Putin summit?

Unlike in the past, the focus of the U.S. President's Europe visit was on China

STANLY JOHNY

In 2011, Joe Biden, then Vice President in the Obama administration, visited Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. Inside Mr. Putin's office, Mr. Biden "held his hand a few inches from his nose," he recalled later in a conversation with journalist Evan Osnos. "I said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, I am looking into your eyes, and I don't think you have a soul'."

When Mr. Osnos, who has described this conversation in his book *Joe Biden American Dreamer*, asked if he said that to Mr. Putin, Mr. Biden replied, "Absolutely, positively".

In March 2021, after assuming the White House, Mr. Biden described Mr. Putin as a "killer". He also said the Russian leader was "going to pay" for the "interference" in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Three months later, the same Mr. Biden met Mr. Putin in the Swiss city of Geneva and sought a more predictable relationship between the "two great powers".

Western alliance

In the past, when American Presidents visited Europe and met NATO allies, Russia had been their main focus.

But this time, when Mr. Biden went to Europe, his first foreign trip after becoming the President, the focus was

on China – a sign of the emerging shifts in the global power balance. Mr. Biden held a host of talks with separate blocs in Europe – the Group of Seven (G7), NATO and the EU – with a focus on strengthening the western alliance.

The G7 industrialised nations – the U.S., the U.K., Germany, France, Italy, Canada and Japan – issued a communiqué slamming Chi-



Joe Biden meeting Vladimir Putin in Geneva on June 16, 2021. • AP

na's human rights records. Issues such as the detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang, the crackdown on dissent in Hong Kong, growing tensions with Taiwan and the alleged lack of transparency on COVID-19 were all mentioned in the G7 statement.

The 30-member NATO, whose traditional focus has been on Russia, has also issued a statement in which China has been mentioned multiple times.

NATO members warned against the "systemic challenges to the rules-based international order" emanating from China's rise. The U.S. and the 27-member EU have decided to cooperate more on technology, regulation, industrial development and trade in an attempt to help the West compete better with China.

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The China focus

This approach is in line with the Biden administration's overall focus on reorienting American foreign policy to deal with the China challenge more effectively. In the past six months since he assumed office, Mr. Biden has taken a host of decisions in this regard. He ended America's support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and is pulling back all American troops from Afghanistan by September 11.

In March, he called the first summit of Quad countries – the U.S., India, Japan and Australia – which decided to boost vaccine production to help other countries. At home, the U.S. Congress passed the \$250 billion tech and manufacturing Bill, which would ensure funds for the semiconductor research, design, and manufacturing initiatives. The aim is undoubtedly to counter China. And then, Mr. Biden travelled to Europe to rally reluctant allies around the U.S. in the emerging geopolitical contest.

The message from Geneva is that the leaders wanted to establish rules of engagement so that the countries can better address their differences and seek common ground on issues of mutual interest. With some predictability in ties with Russia, Mr. Biden can strengthen his China-focused foreign policy. And with a less hostile America, Mr. Putin can retain Russian influence in the country's backyard.

In the past, President Donald Trump had sought to isolate China and reach out to Russia. But, amid allegations that a Russian cyber campaign helped him win the 2016 elections, Mr. Trump's attempts to build a bond with Mr. Putin met with strong resistance in Washington. But Mr. Biden, an establishment Democrat himself, seems to be having more leeway in the Russia policy.

It's too early to see any meaningful change in Russia-U.S. relations. But the Geneva summit suggests that policymakers in Washington have at least started thinking of Russia as a secondary challenge that needs to be tackled diplomatically, not only through coercion, if the U.S. wants to take on a rising China.

NEWS ANALYSIS

to resist any move by NATO to expand into its backyard.

Ukraine remains an unresolved crisis. Earlier this year, Mr. Putin had assembled Russian troops on the Ukraine border in a direct challenge to Mr. Biden. After he recalled Russian Ambassador from Washington and asked the American Ambassador to return for consultations, bilateral relations between the two countries practically collapsed. On the other side, Russia was steadily deepening its partnership with China. Mr. Biden appears to have wanted to arrest this free fall of ties and bring in some order.

Detente with Russia

In the Geneva summit, Mr. Biden stopped short of cha-

'Verbal truce' with Turkey, says France

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

A "verbal ceasefire" is in place between France and Turkey after months of row over global crises, such as Libya, Syria, that strained ties between the NATO allies, the French Foreign Minister said on Friday.

This comes after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron at the NATO summit this week.

Hong Kong newspaper raises print run fivefold after arrests

ASSOCIATED PRESS HONG KONG

Hong Kong pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* increased its print run more than fivefold to 5,000,000 copies as residents lined up Friday to buy the paper in a show of support for beleaguered press freedoms, a day after police arrested five top editors and executives.

The raid on the paper's offices by hundreds of police and security agents – along with the freezing of \$2.3 mil-

lion worth of its assets – marked the first time a sweeping national security law has been used against the media. It was the latest sign of a widening crackdown on civil liberties in the semi-autonomous city, which has long cherished freedoms that don't exist elsewhere in China.

Police said the editors were arrested on suspicion of foreign collusion to endanger national security, based on over 30 articles that authorities said had called for international sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

On Friday, the National Security Department charged two men, according to a government statement. The *South China Morning Post* newspaper cited an unnamed source saying they are *Apple Daily's* chief editor Ryan Law and Cheung Kim-hung, the CEO of *Apple Daily's* publisher Next Digital.

Turkey to secure Kabul airport

Biden agrees to provide 'certain forms of U.S. support'

REUTERS WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan agreed in a meeting this week that Turkey would take a lead role in securing Kabul airport as the United States withdraws troops from Afghanistan, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Thursday.

However, the two leaders were not able to resolve the long-standing issue of Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 defence systems, Mr. Sullivan said, a bitter dispute that strained ties between the NATO allies.

Mr. Sullivan told reporters that Mr. Biden and Mr. Erdogan, in their meeting on Monday at the NATO summit, discussed the Afghanistan issue. Mr. Erdogan sought certain forms of

U.S. support to secure the airport and Mr. Biden committed to providing that support, Mr. Sullivan said.

"The clear commitment from the leaders established that Turkey would play a lead role in securing Hamid Karzai International Airport and we are now working through how to execute to get to that," Mr. Sullivan said, giving the first details from the U.S. side of the meeting.

Contentious issues

Turkey and the U.S. have been at odds over a host of issues, including Ankara's purchase of Russian defence equipment, policy differences in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean and expectations for a breakthrough in first face-to-face meeting between Mr. Erdogan and

Mr. Biden were slim.

The two leaders sounded upbeat after their meeting although they did not announce what concrete progress they made. One potential area of cooperation has been Afghanistan, where Ankara has offered to guard and operate Kabul airport after U.S. and NATO forces withdraw in coming weeks.

The security of the airport is crucial for the operation of diplomatic missions out of the Afghanistan as Western forces pull out.

Last week, a Taliban spokesman said Turkey should withdraw its troops from Afghanistan under the 2020 deal for the pullout of U.S. forces, but Mr. Sullivan said the Taliban comments did not deter the "detailed and effective" security plan the U.S. was putting together.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD (A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road Bengaluru – 560 001. website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-08/2842/2021-22 Date: 18.06.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Through GOK e – Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting Item rate Tenders under two cover system as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible contractors registered in KPWD Class-III (Civil) & Above and eligible contractors registered in KCEI Class-II (Electrical) & Above who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following works: (1) Formation of 18M Wide Road (Road No.20) Including Asphalt, Construction of RCC Drain & Providing and Laying of HDPE water supply dual pipeline at Doddaballapur 3rd Phase Industrial Area, Bengaluru Rural District. (2) Implementation of Rain Water Recharge Structures at Aerospace park Industrial Area, Near KIAL, Bengaluru Rural District. (3) Repair & Reconditioning of Street Lights at Belur Industrial Area 1st, 2nd & 3rd Stage, Dharwad District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 13.07.2021 upto 04:00 pm

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/-

Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.



Sri Lanka to seek India's help to treat COVID-19 affected lion

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities on Friday said they would seek guidance from India on treating animals contracting COVID-19, after a lion at a Colombo zoo tested positive.

Eleven-year-old Thor, a lion gifted by a zoo in Seoul in 2013, tested positive for COVID-19, becoming the first known case of an animal contracting the deadly virus in the island nation, which is currently experiencing a persistent third wave, with over 60,000 active infections.

"We are seeking guidance from the Central Zoo Authority in India in order to treat Thor," said Ishini

Wickremesinghe, Director General of the Department of National Zoological Gardens. In a statement on Friday, she said Thor experienced breathing difficulties and did not eat over the last few days. Soon after, authorities at the Dehiwala Zoo in Colombo decided to test the lion for a possible COVID-19 infection.

While antigen tests showed a negative result, a few PCR tests taken subsequently showed the lion as COVID-19 positive. Thor has since been receiving oxygen support, while other animals have been isolated, according to zoo authorities. The animals' keepers have also been sent to quarantine.

ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT 2021-22

University of Hyderabad, an Institution of Eminence, ranked 6th among Universities and 15th under overall category in NIRF rankings 2021, listed in Category-I of UGC (Category of Universities only) for grant of graded autonomy Regulations 2015, with NAAC grading of 3.72 out of 4.00; invites bright, aspiring students committed to excellence to apply for admission to various 5 Year Integrated P.G., P.G., M.Tech courses and Ph.D. programmes through an All-India entrance examination.

Candidates are required to apply [online](http://acad.uohyd.ac.in) through University website: <http://acad.uohyd.ac.in>.

IMPORTANT DATES

Online Application start date	21.06.2021
Last date for submitting the Online Application	20.07.2021
Downloading of Hall Tickets & Dates of Entrance Examinations	To be announced later. The Entrance Exam will be held tentatively during August/September, 2021

For further details including courses offered, eligibility criteria, prescribed fee, reservation policy and the Prospectus 2021-22, please refer to the website <http://acad.uohyd.ac.in> or <http://www.uohyd.ac.in>

Sd/-

Dr. Devesh Nigam
Controller of Examinations

ICMR - NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

R-127, Second Main Road, TNHB, Ayappakkam, Chennai – 600077.

ONLINE INTERVIEW

Candidates are invited for Online zoom app Interview for the posts of: **PROJECT CONSULTANT, PROJECT SCIENTIST- B (Non-Medical)**, on contract basis under various projects at ICMR - NIE.

For application proforma and other details regarding qualification and experience, etc., please refer to www.nie.gov.in

Director

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, CENTRAL CIRCLE, RURAL WORKS, BHUBANESWAR

MARKET WATCH

	18-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52344	0.04
US Dollar	73.86	-0.29
Gold	46460	-0.85
Brent oil	73.55	1.21

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	694.35	-47.45
Asian Paints	3047.20	-13.10
Axisc Bank	736.30	-2.30
Bajaj Auto	4167.10	113.20
Bajaj Finserv	11999.35	180.80
Bajaj Finance	6087.05	36.80
Bharti Airtel	538.75	10.10
BPCL	472.35	-4.55
Britannia Ind	3619.20	-38.95
Cipla	960.90	9.95
Coal India	146.40	-5.75
Divis Lab	4197.30	-10.05
Dr Reddys Lab	5283.90	-2.60
Eicher Motors	2707.55	33.80
Grasim Ind	1480.75	22.55
HCL Tech.	975.25	-11.15
HDFC	2488.10	0.80
HDFC Bank	1479.80	13.70
HDFC Life	709.70	8.90
Hero MotoCorp	2891.35	-22.75
Hindalco	371.35	2.10
Hind Unilever	2482.90	65.20
ITC	204.55	-1.10
JSW Steel	670.60	-25.75
Kotak Bank	1760.45	-5.60
L&T	1476.00	-11.55
M&M	781.55	-24.15
Maruti Suzuki	6959.35	-10.00
Nestle India Ltd.	17670.65	-388.40
NTPC	113.55	-3.85
ONGC	120.25	-4.85
PowerGrid Corp	233.00	-6.85
Reliance Ind	2225.65	10.00
SBI Life	982.55	-0.75
State Bank	412.90	-7.35
Shree Cement	28045.80	-322.30
Sun Pharma	668.50	3.45
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	739.80	-5.20
Tata Motors	337.40	-8.25
Tata Steel	1092.30	-11.45
TCS	3297.30	-20.45
Tech Mahindra	1070.70	-9.55
Titan	1711.30	-0.10
UltraTech Cement	6693.90	-10.95
UPL	808.00	-27.05
Wipro	549.80	-8.90

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.66	73.98
Euro	87.77	88.16
British Pound	102.40	102.85
Japanese Yen (100)	66.87	67.19
Chinese Yuan	11.45	11.50
Swiss Franc	80.14	80.54
Singapore Dollar	54.90	55.17
Canadian Dollar	59.53	59.82
Malaysian Ringgit	17.79	17.87

Source: Indian Bank

Forex reserves rise to record high of \$608 bn

MUMBAI The country's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$3.074 billion to reach a record high of \$608.081 billion in the week ended June 11, RBI data showed. PTI

'Q2 manufacturing expectations drop'

RBI's June Industrial Outlook Survey points to adverse economic conditions: Bhide in MPC's minutes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Early results from the RBI's June Industrial Outlook Survey show that not only has the summary index of current business conditions for the manufacturing sector dropped for the current quarter, but also that the index of expectations for the second quarter of FY2022 has declined, as per observations made by Shashanka Bhide, member of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, at the MPC meeting earlier this month. The RBI on Friday released the minutes of the meeting.

"These perceptions of business conditions point to the adverse economic conditions," Dr. Bhide noted.

He said while the data on the impact of the second



Hard times: The summary index of current business conditions for manufacturing declined for Q1. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was limited, qualitative data from the surveys of households and enterprises suggest 'significant dent' in consumer and business sen-

timent. "The survey of Consumer Confidence conducted by RBI in the last week of April and up to May 10, in 13 major cities... reveals a sharp rise in the percentage of res-

pondents who perceive the current general economic conditions to be worse than a year back, compared to a similar survey conducted two months back," he added.

Importantly, 51.5% of the respondents opined that economic conditions would be worse a year ahead.

Observing that the economy's recovery would hinge on the decline in the spread of the disease, he said, "acceleration in the vaccination program and availability of health care would be a key to boost the confidence of the consumers, workers and producers in the resumption of their economic lives".

Ashima Goyal, another member, cautioned against laying too much store by the latest round of the RBI's sur-

veys, noting that these were conducted during a "period of highest fear and uncertainty that very likely affected consumer responses" given that the number of fresh cases peaked on May 7. "Robust inferences have to await surveys taken in more normal times," she suggested.

Forecasts less reliable'

Dr. Goyal also noted that the MPC had moved to data-based guidance, given that expectations and forecasts were less reliable in times of 'such uncertainty', a view echoed by fellow member Jayanth R. Varma.

Prof. Varma said the MPC must be sensitive to the risk that inflation expectations could become entrenched if inflation remains elevated for too long.

S&P lifts ICICI Bank's rating outlook to stable

Agency says stake sales to help lender



position," it said.

In a statement, S&P forecast that ICICI Bank will maintain a risk-adjusted capital (RAC) ratio of more than 10% over the next 24 months.

"Our expectation factors in 13-14% credit growth for the bank, an improvement in earnings and sale of stake in insurance subsidiaries over the period," it said.

Wipro to raise junior staff pay from Sept. 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

IT services major Wipro said it will give wage hikes to junior employees with effect from September 1.

"Wipro Limited will initiate merit salary increases for all eligible employees up to Band B3 (assistant manager and below), effective September 1. In January, the company had announced salary hikes for eligible employees in these bands, who form 80% of the company's workforce - this is the second hike in this calendar year," it said.

As announced earlier, all eligible employees above band C1 (managers and above) will receive pay hikes effective June 1, Wipro added.

RBI clears Centrum's way for PMC Bank takeover

Gives nod for small finance bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Paving the way for the takeover of crisis-ridden Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday granted in-principle approval to Centrum Financial Services to set up a small finance bank (SFB).

Centrum was one of the applicants for takeover of the PMC Bank.

"This 'in-principle' approval has been accorded in specific pursuance to the Centrum Financial Services Limited's offer dated February 1, in response to the expression of interest notification published by the PMC Bank Ltd.," the RBI said.

In September 2019, the

RBI had superseded the board of PMC and placed it under regulatory restriction after detecting financial irregularities, hiding and mis-reporting of loans given to the realty developer HDIL.

PMC's exposure to HDIL was over ₹6,500 crore, or 73% of its total loan book size of ₹8,880 crore as of September 19, 2019.

Hyundai unveils Alcazar SUV

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

South Korean carmaker Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) forayed into the premium 6/7 seater sport utility vehicle (SUV) segment with the introduction of Alcazar.

"This new product is wholly designed and developed in India at a cost of ₹650 crore," said Tarun Garg, director, sales, marketing and service, HMIL. It had an indigenisation level of 90%, he said.

"In the last 10 days, it secured 4,000 bookings," he added. The SUV is priced upwards of ₹16.53 lakh for diesel engines and ₹16.30 lakh for petrol engines. It will have a waiting period of 6 to 8 weeks.

Paytm seeks investor nod for ₹120-bn new stock sale

Aims to raise \$3 bn in 'biggest-ever' IPO

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

Digital payments firm Paytm is seeking shareholder approval to sell up to ₹120 billion (\$1.62 billion) in new stock in what could be the country's biggest-ever initial public offering at a total of \$3 billion.

Paytm, which counts China's Alibaba and Japan's SoftBank as backers, will sell new shares and will also have an option to retain an over-subscription of up to 1%, the company said in a notice for an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) of shareholders in Delhi on July 12. The company is aiming to raise \$3 billion via the public listing on Indian bourses, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters.

While Bharti Airtel added 40.5 lakh wireless users, Vodafone Idea gained 10.8 lakh customers during March compared with the previous month.

Jio added 79.18 lakh wireless subscribers in March, taking its customer base to about 42.29 crore. Bharti Airtel's user base swelled to 35.23 crore as of March 2021.

'London's Old War Office complex will have residences, a hotel, restaurants, a spa'

LALATENDU MISHRA

The Hindu Group recently put up its OWO Residences by Raffles, Europe's first Raffles-branded residences, on the market. Targeted at ultra-high-net-worth individuals, who may aspire to own a piece of the Old War Office, the property's redevelopment is set to be completed in 2022.

Group co-chairman G.P. Hinduja said the property, which had stood witness to many wars and had been closed to the public for more than a century, had been transformed into a destination of tolerance, peace and happiness. Excerpts:

How significant is this development?

■ We have a great liking for heritage buildings and we gained great experience in restoring Carlton House Terrace, which is our residence now. We have a good team in place under the company Westminster Development Services.

This vertical will work on development of heritage properties. My son Sanjay and my daughter-in-law Shalini (wife of Dheeraj Hinduja) have been actively involved in this project. We are already in negotiations with 2-3 more such iconic heritage properties.

For the Hinduja family and the Group, this is our largest real estate redevelopment. The Old War Office has seen many wars and bad times; our aim was to transform this into a destination of tolerance, peace and happiness. There is nothing quite like 'The OWO' – a building constructed in 1906 for government and war.

In the 21st century, it has undergone a transformation on a scale never achieved before, giving it new life and

purpose. We have tried to maintain its originality. We are converting a Grade II listed century-old building into luxury, serviced residences with a five-star hotel. Located on Whitehall, close to 10 Downing Street, St James's Park, Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Westminster, The OWO is one of London's most important addresses.

Residents, hotel guests and visitors will be a short stroll from Buckingham Palace, The National Gallery, The Tate and The Royal Academy. Our late father always taught us to act local and think global. We have been living here for 40 years and wanted to create a legacy of our contribution to the U.K. The OWO is our commitment to Britain.

What has gone into this?

■ It has been a journey of learning and discovery, restoration and conservation, alliances and partnerships, and even the most unexpected – a global pandemic. We have brought in the world's best architects, engineers, craftsmen and designers to create a location never seen before for homeowners, hotel guests and visitors.

Having undergone a monumental and painstaking transformation over the last five years, this landmark is set to complete in 2022 and will also comprise the Capital's first Raffles Hotel with 125 rooms and suites, a collection of nine restaurants and bars, and an immersive spa. We worked closely with organisations specialising in historic buildings including Historic England and the Prince's Regeneration Trust.

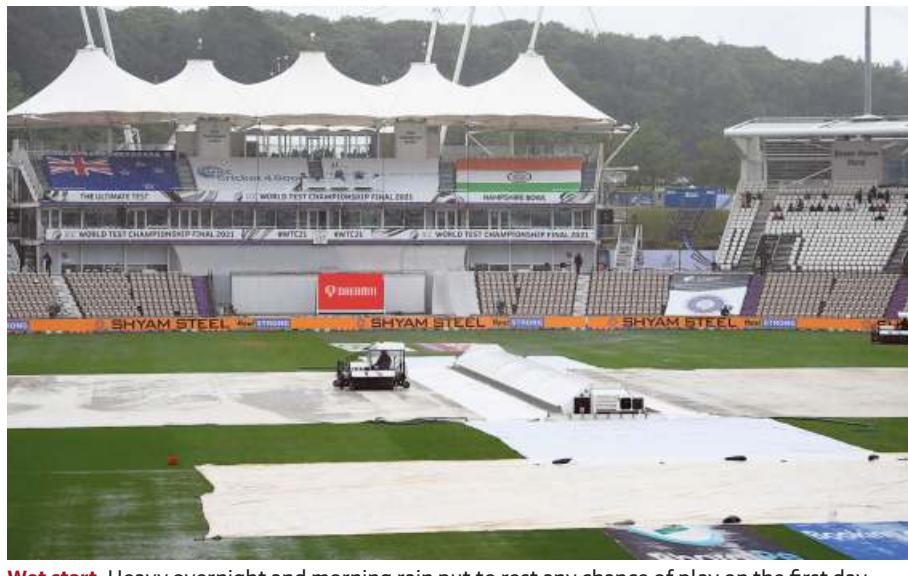
What was the cost of acquisition? How much did you invest in restoration?

■ There is a huge demand

for private residences in the pandemic-hit world. We have received a good response. However, we are being very careful; we want to conduct a KYC and background check for every buyer.

The total value of the project was £1.2 billion. At the time, the media widely reported the purchase price was £340 million. We had a Switzerland-based company as a partner in this project; however they faced some financial difficulties midway to the global pandemic following which we bought their shares. This is owned 100% by the Hinduja family.

We have spent 5 years on the



Wet start: Heavy overnight and morning rain put to rest any chance of play on the first day.

■ GETTY IMAGES

Rain washes out first day

Reserve day to come into effect as six hours of play is lost

WTC FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SOUTHAMPTON

The eagerly-awaited opening day of the World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand was rained out here on Friday, which is set to bring the reserve day into the equation.

As per the ICC playing conditions guidelines for the WTC final, if required, the reserve sixth day can now come into effect with six hours of play lost on day one itself.

There was forecast of rain and thunder showers and the heavens opened up last evening with relentless downpour continuing till afternoon.

Puddles everywhere

With puddles forming throughout the outfield, even the best drainage system couldn't have possibly forced some action on the opening day.

Umpires Michael Gough and Richard Illingworth, after multiple inspections, called off the game at 7.30 p.m. IST (3 p.m. local time).

While there has been

talk about Southampton being the preferred venue, it has been learnt that the BCCI was taken into confidence by both the ICC and England and Wales Cricket Board before they finalised the venue which also has a five-star facility within the premises, helping create a tight bio-secure bubble.

Fickle weather

The English weather is known to be fickle and, in any case, there was no guarantee that the match being played at any other venue would have not led to a wash-out on the first day.

India has conquered the 'away' barrier

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Just as the weather gods swung a damp curtain across Southampton's Ageas Bowl and washed out the WTC final's opening day, it was also time to acknowledge India's switch in mindset that helped Virat Kohli's men travel so far.

Back at Centurion, South Africa, 2018, disappointment was writ large on Kohli's visage. India had lost a Test it should have won and the mood in the press conference room was grim.

The skipper breathed fire: "If you want to win away from home, you've got to eat, breathe and sleep with it in your mind. You have got to dream about it."

And when India won the next Test – it lost the series 2-1 though – at the Wander-

ers on a rather vicious pitch, Kohli's men appeared to have got the message.

Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri made a conscious effort not to complain about conditions away from home. As bowling coach B. Arun would say, "We wanted to make the foreign soil our home ground."

Shastri got the side to make this mental switch. Away games were no longer seen as a barrier. And when India stunned Australia 2-1 in the Test series down under in 2018-19, Shastri said, "The lessons we learnt in South Africa enabled us to win here."

The conquering of the 'away series' psychological hurdle has been a huge factor in India progressing to the WTC final.



Big change: The Indians have become confident travellers.

WI makes early inroads

SA IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GROS-ISLET (ST. LUCIA)

West Indies made early inroads during rain-interrupted first session to have South Africa struggling at 44 for three at lunch after the visitors were put in on the opening day of the second Test here on Friday.

Heavily criticised after choosing to bat first on a seaming pitch a week earlier in the first Test at the same venue, home captain Kraigg Brathwaite did not hesitate to bowl first on winning the toss again.

The decision was justified with Shannon Gabriel, who missed the first Test through injury, Jayden Seales and senior seamer Kemar Roach picking up a wicket each.

SCOREBOARD

South Africa – 1st innings: Dean Elgar (batting) 22, Aiden Markram c Chase b Gabriel O, Keegan Petersen c Holder b Seales 7, Rassie van der Dussen b Roach 4, Kyle Verreyne (batting) 1; Extras (b-1, lb-8, w-1); Total (for three wkts. in 25 overs, **at lunch**): 44.
Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-26, 3-37.
West Indies bowling: Roach 9-5-11-1, Gabriel 6-3-11-1, Seales 4-1-8-1, Holder 5-3-0, Chase 1-1-0-0.
Toss: West Indies.

Shafali dazzles with second fifty of the match

India follows on after being bowled out for 231 in the first innings; Ecclestone picks up four

INDIA IN ENG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BRISTOL

India was 83 for one at stumps after being forced to follow-on on the third day of the one-off Test against England here on Friday.

Debutant Shafali Verma once again looked in great touch as she remained not out on 55 off 68 deliveries when the day's play ended after the final session was washed out. The other opener, Smriti Mandhana (8), departed early. Deepthi Sharma (18 batting) was the other unbeaten batter.

SCOREBOARD

Deficit of 165
Earlier, resuming at 187 for five, India was all out for 231 in its first innings, 165 runs short of England's 396.
Deepthi Sharma (29 not out) was the only player to put up a fight even as the others fell cheaply.
From 167 for no loss, India lost eight wickets for 30 runs. Left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone finished with four for 88.



Icing on the cake: Shafali, known for her exploits in limited-overs cricket, showed that she could handle the red ball with aplomb too. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The Dutch coast into the pre-quarterfinals

Sweden takes control of its progress with a win over Slovakia

EURO 2020

REUTERS
AMSTERDAM

An early Memphis Depay penalty and a Denzel Dumfries goal gave the Netherlands a convincing 2-0 victory over Austria on Thursday and a place in the Euro 2020 last 16 as Group C winner.

The Dutch cannot be overtaken at the head of the standings after a second win while Austria's hopes rest on the result of its last match against Ukraine.

The 11th-minute spot-kick provided an early platform for the home side and flying full back Dumfries proved a popular scorer at the Johan Cruyff Arena as he doubled the tally in the 67th minute with his second goal in as many matches.

The Dutch were awarded the penalty after Dumfries was caught on the foot by Austrian captain David Alba on the corner of the penalty



Dispatching it: The Netherlands' Memphis Depay made no mistake from the spot against Austria. ■ REUTERS

area. But it was only given after referee Orel Grinfeld consulted the pitchside VAR monitor, with Depay dispatching spot-kick powerfully underneath the diving Da-

niel Bachman.

The second goal came after Donyell Malen beat the offside trap and unselfishly played in the charging Dumfries, whose finish was en-

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

GROUP F

Hungary vs France
6.30 p.m.

Portugal vs Germany
9.30 p.m.

GROUP E

Spain vs Poland
12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD)

thusiastically celebrated by his team mates and the 16,000-strong crowd.

Emil Forsberg's second-half penalty sealed Sweden a 1-0 win over Slovakia in Saint Petersburg on Friday as the Scandinavians moved top of Group E. A point in its final game against Poland would be enough for a top-two finish for Sweden in the group.

The results: Group C: the Netherlands 2 (Depay 11-pen, Dumfries 67) bt Austria 0.

Group E: Sweden 1 (Forsberg 77-pen) bt Slovakia 0.

Group D: Croatia 1 (Perisic 47) drew with Czech Republic 1 (Schick 37-pen).

niel Bachman.

The second goal came after Donyell Malen beat the offside trap and unselfishly played in the charging Dumfries, whose finish was en-

SHORT PASSES

Eriksen discharged from hospital

COPENHAGEN Christian Eriksen was discharged from the hospital on Friday, nearly a week after collapsing on the field during a match. The Danish soccer federation wrote on Twitter that Eriksen has been through a successful operation to fit a cardiac device. "The operation went well, and I am doing well under the circumstances," Eriksen said in the tweet. AP

Busquets returns to Spain squad

SEVILLE Spain got its most experienced player back at the European Championship on Friday. The Spanish soccer federation said Sergio Busquets tested negative for COVID-19 on Thursday, so he was allowed back with the team after being in isolation since testing positive on June 6. The Barcelona midfielder will be in Seville for Spain's match against Poland on Saturday, though he is not likely to play after not practising regularly. AP

Playing XI can be changed as the toss is not yet over, says Sridhar

Reveals that the players, staff are following the women's Test

ASHWIN ACHAL
S. DIPAK RAGAV

On a dull day of endless waiting and no cricket action, it is important to stay in good spirits. India fielding coach R. Sridhar was certainly in a cheerful mood, starting the end-of-day media interaction with his own take on the viral Cristiano Ronaldo-Coca Cola incident.

"Should I move the Coke bottle before we start? Will the share prices be affected if I do it?" Sridhar joked, before taking questions from the media.

Given that the toss has not been conducted yet, and that persistent rain can affect match conditions, the Indian team has the option to make changes to the playing eleven announced earlier.

"I think the playing eleven which was announced on Thursday is the eleven which takes the pitch and conditions out of the equation.

"It's the eleven which can play and perform on any given surface, and in any given weather conditions. But having said that, the toss is not yet over. If a decision needs to be taken, it will be taken



Umbrellas out: Southee, Boult and Wagner make a splash on a rainy day in Southampton. ■ GETTY IMAGES

at the time of the toss," Sridhar said.

Shafali (Varma) reminds us so much of Viru (Virender Sehwag), with the way she plays and her mindset," Sridhar said.

Wait and see

New Zealand vice-captain Tom Latham stated that the playing eleven is yet to be finalised.

"We have not confirmed the final eleven. We have to wait and see when we get the chance to look at the wicket," Latham said.

Milkha's condition turns critical



Milkha. ■ FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHANDIGARH

Legendary Indian athlete Milkha Singh's condition turned critical on Friday evening as he developed complications, including fever and dropping of oxygen saturation level, after a bout with COVID-19, in the Intensive Care Unit of the PGIMER hospital here.

The 91-year-old, who tested negative for the virus on Wednesday and was shifted to a general ICU, is being closely monitored by a team of doctors. "His condition has turned critical," PGIMER sources said.

Osaka to skip Wimbledon

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Japanese star Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from Wimbledon, her agent confirmed on Thursday, weeks after the World No. 2 pulled out of the French Open citing her struggle with depression and anxiety.

"Naomi won't be playing Wimbledon this year," Osaka's agent Stuart Duguid said in an email to AFP.

Osaka has been in the spotlight since withdrawing from the French Open. Wimbledon is the second tournament Osaka has withdrawn from since abandoning her French Open campaign af-



Osaka. ■ AFP

ter one match. She also withdrew from a WTA tournament in Berlin.

Meanwhile, US Open champion Dominic Thiem joined Nadal in withdrawing from the Tokyo Olympics.

World No. 5 Thiem said he wanted to concentrate on Wimbledon.

Oosthuizen and Henley in the van

Molinari, Bello a stroke behind after a delayed first round

US OPEN

REUTERS
SAN DIEGO

Louis Oosthuizen completed his first-round play in the US Open with a pair of pars on Friday morning to maintain a share of first place at Torrey Pines. The South African is tied with Russell Henley, who posted a 4-under 67 in the first round on Thursday.

Oosthuizen began the US Open with a sub-70 round for the third year in a row. Upon returning to the course on Friday, he had two holes to play to finish his first round.

Italy's Francesco Molinari and Spain's Rafa Cabrera Bello are one stroke back at 3-under.

Big bunch

Two-time champion Brooks Koepka, Xander Schauffele, Hayden Buckley, Spain's Jon Rahm and Masters cham-



Giving it his all: Russell Henley set the pace on Thursday with a four-under 67 on Thursday. ■ AFP

A total of 23 golfers ended up under par through the first round.

Leading scores: 67: Russell Henley (USA), Louis Oosthuizen (RSA); 68: Francesco Molinari (Ita), Rafa Cabrera Bello (Esp); 69: Brooks Koepka (USA), Xander Schauffele (USA), Hayden Buckley (USA), Hideki Matsuyama (Jpn), Jon Rahm (Esp), Rikuya Hoshino (Jpn).

TV PICKS

WTC final 2021: India v New Zealand, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.

England Women vs India Women: Only Test, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

F1: French GP (Qualifying); SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six HD (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m., 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Golf: USGA: US Open championship: Eurosport (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Bucks take series into decider

LOS ANGELES
Milwaukee Bucks beat Brooklyn Nets 104-89 in game six of their NBA playoff series on Thursday.

The result (semifinal): EC-
Milwaukee Bucks 104 bt Brooklyn Nets 89 (Series tied 3-3).

JSW to be additional sponsor for Olympics

NEW DELHI
The Indian Olympic Association has roped in JSW as an additional sponsor for the Tokyo Olympics. "We are happy to announce one more sponsorship offer confirmed with the JSW Group for the Tokyo Olympic Games. Mr. Parth Jindal, CEO of JSW has confirmed a sponsorship of ₹1 crore to the IOA," the IOA said in a statement on Friday.

Ankita Raina in doubles semifinals

NOTTINGHAM
Ankita Raina and Renata Zarazua of Mexico beat Great Britain's Naomi Broadby and Murray Sharpen 7-6(4), 6-3 to enter the doubles semifinals of the \$100,000 ITF women's tournament here.

Other results: \$25,000 ITF women, Figueira Da Foz, Portugal: Pre-quarterfinals:

Arianne Hartono (Ned) bt Riya Bhattacharya 6-3, 6-2.

Kevin O'Brien ends ODI career

LONDON
Ireland all-rounder Kevin O'Brien, whose 50-ball century against England in a 2011 World Cup match remains the fastest in the tournament's history, has quit One-Day Internationals, Cricket Ireland said on Friday.

Praneeth wins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Telangana's V. Praneeth (10 points) defeated Delhi's Sankalp Kukreja in the 11th and final round to win the National (under-14) online rapid chess title on Friday.

In fact, Rajasthan's Vranchank Chouhan (9.5) did Praneeth a favour by beating the 10th round joint-leader Sandip Nagare to become the runner-up. Sandip topped an eight-player tie for third place at nine points.

Final standings (after 11 rounds): 1 V. Praneeth (Tel, 10 points), 2 Vranchank Chouhan (Raj, 9.5); 3-10. Sandip Nagare (Mah), A.R. Ilamparthy (TN), Sankalp Kukreja (Del), Harsh Suresh (TN), Bhavesh Mahajan (Punjab), Mohamad Imran (AP), Om Manish Kadam (Mah) and Sahib Singh (Del) (9 each).

Indians need to improve in technical ability: Stimac

'Only by playing over 40 games a season, they can compete against the best'

FOOTBALL

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA

KOLKATA
The national coach Igor Stimac said there are not enough players with requisite technical ability to make the senior national football team competitive enough.

Speaking to the media on Friday, following India's recently concluded World Cup qualification campaign, Stimac said that the stake-holders of Indian football should look at this fact and devise a system that would help Indian footballers have enough games to grow in terms of technical ability.

"To be honest there are not many players with the

New-look men's squad for Tokyo

Three veterans dropped as selectors opt for fresh-legs formula

HOCKEY

UTHRA GANESAN
NEW DELHI

The 16-member Indian men's hockey squad for the Tokyo Olympics was announced on Friday with a few surprise inclusions and omissions that reiterate the team management's preference for youngsters.

Only five players from the Rio Olympics have been retained, with P.R. Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh playing their third Olympics. Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh and Surender Kumar are the other three.

Surprise exclusions

While Birendra Lakra, who missed Rio due to a knee injury and surgery, returns, the most surprising exclusions are those of the striking trio of S.V. Sunil, Akashdeep Singh and Ramandeep Singh.



Best among equals: The relatively young Indian team will hope to make a mark in Tokyo.

▪ TWITTER/THEHOCKEYINDIA

The three have a collective 600 caps and 200 international goals in major competitions.

While Hockey India said the team was "fuelled with a fresh approach-based in-

tense training and preparation" at the ongoing preparatory camp, the absence of seniors, along with Varun Kumar, seems to indicate persistence with the fresh-legs formula in team selec-

tion, especially in the attack section.

Tough task

"It has not been an easy process to make the final selection as there is a lot of quality

and ambition in this group of players. The performance levels of all the athletes are at an optimum level and more importantly they work well together," coach Graham Reid said.

Focused on training

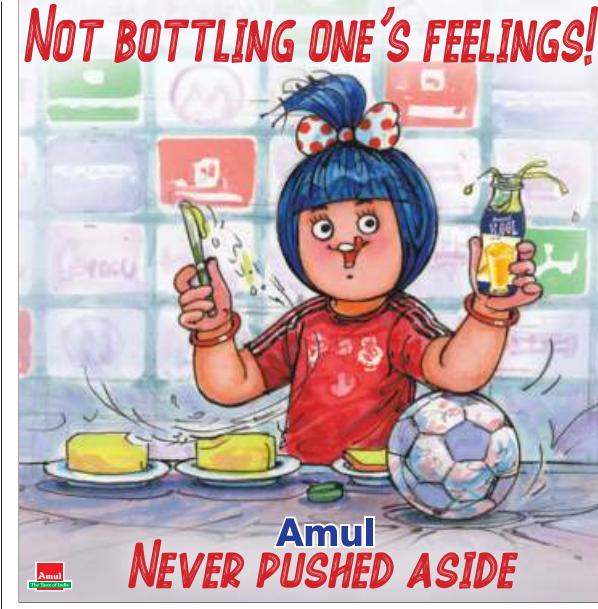
"We are now focused on training with the same intensity and our goal is to put forward our best performance as a collective unit in Tokyo," he added.

India is grouped in Pool A along with Olympic champion Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and host Japan.

The squad: Goalkeeper: P.R. Sreejesh; Defenders: Harmanpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Surender Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Birendra Lakra; Mid-

fielders: Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit;

Forwards: Shamsher Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Lalit Upadhyay and Mandeep Singh.



Neeraj, Vinesh's Europe extension approved



Neeraj Chopra. ▪ FILE PHOTO



Vinesh. ▪ FILE PHOTO

camp in Budapest, Hungary at a cost of ₹9.01 lakh. She is being accompanied by coach Woller Akos and physiotherapist.

While the government has provided approximately ₹1.61 crores to Neeraj in the current Olympic cycle through the ACTC and TOPS, it has spent ₹1.81 crores on Vinesh.

The Government's Mission Olympic Cell also approved wrestler Bajrang Punia's proposal to engage men's 70kg u-23 world champion Mirza Khulukhia as additional sparring partner in Russia at a cost of ₹2.53 lakh.

Verstappen fastest overall in practice

REUTERS

LE CASTELLET

Red Bull's Formula One World championship leader Max Verstappen pushed Mercedes off the top of the timesheets in French GP practice on Friday with the battle between the teams looking as close as ever.

The Dutch driver lapped Le Castellet's Paul Ricard circuit in one minute 32.872s in the afternoon, 0.008 quicker than Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas, who led the first session with a lap of 1:33.448. Bottas set his best lap on the slower medium tyres, however, rather than the softs used by Verstappen.

Ecuador and France, are expected to take part.

"The idea is to get some good sparring. Facing different national sparring styles and different opponents is important. We get good sparring in India, but the boxers know each other well. It's not the same when you go out and spar with others from different countries," high performance director Santiago Nieva told *The Hindu* on Friday hours before the squad's departure to Italy.

In the run-up to the Olympics, Nieva said, "the focus is on how to be more effective, more aggressive and add more power on the punches".

"Different situations re-

quire different solutions and you have to be quick to find out what suits you better. There are different intelligence levels and the best way to explain a point to someone is to show it to him on the video."

Back in training

According to Nieva, Manish Kaushik (63kg) and Satish Kumar (+91kg) have got back to training after recovering from COVID-19.

Nieva expressed satisfaction over the Indian boxers' exposure tours amid the pandemic. "Compared to other countries and bearing in mind the current situation, we are in a good position," he said.

Brazil has it easy against Peru

Under-strength Venezuela holds Colombia goalless



Keeper's day out: Venezuela custodian Wuilker Farinez stonewalled everything that Colombia threw at him. ▪ AP

scored 77 goals in 92 games.

"It's obviously a great honour for me to be part of the team's history," a tearful Neymar said.

"To be completely honest, my dream was always to play for Brazil, to wear this shirt. I never imagined I would reach these numbers."

Pele backed Neymar and wrote on Instagram, "Today, he took another step towards my goalscorer record for the (national) team. And I'm rooting for him to

get there."

An understrength Venezuela managed just one shot at goal for the second game in a row but shut out a superior Colombia.

Venezuela mustered just one shot at goal compared to Colombia's 17, requiring a dazzling performance from its goalkeeper Wuilker Farinez to keep a clean sheet.

The results: Group B: Colombia 0 drew with Venezuela 0; Brazil 4 (Alex Sandro 12, Neymar 68, Everton Ribeiro 89, Richarlison 90+3) bt Peru 0.

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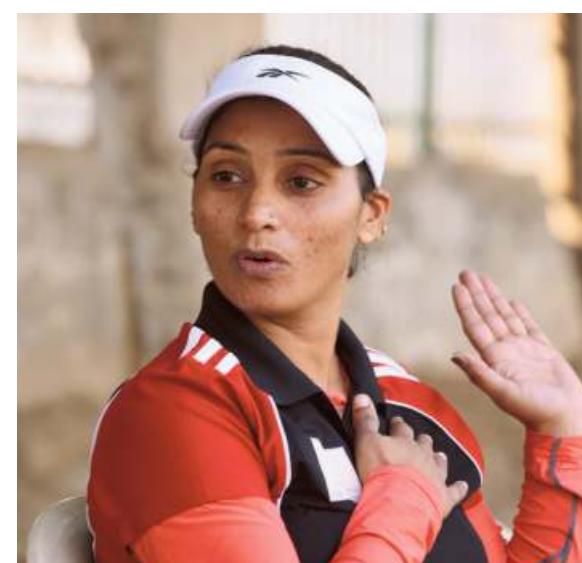
In 2002, when the Indian women's hockey team won the Commonwealth Games gold, Pritam Rani Siwach was one of the pillars of that victory. But the 46-year old is happier and prouder today with three of her trainees making it to the squad for the Tokyo Olympics.

The three – Neha Goyal, Nisha Warsi and Sharmila – are products of the academy run by Pritam and her husband Kuldeep in Sonepat since 2004. While Neha has been around for a while, cementing her place in the national side, Sharmila and Nisha are relative newcomers.

Proud as a parent

"I feel like I am personally going to play in the Olympics, I don't think I ever felt this proud even as a player. It is like three of my own daughters have achieved something."

"Given their background and the absence of support, for them to reach this level



Excited: Pritam Rani says it feels like she is personally going to play in the Olympics. ▪ FILE PHOTO

and for a small academy like mine to have a role in their development, the feeling cannot be explained," Pritam told *The Hindu*.

While Neha's story has been told before – an abusive father, a supportive mother and her determination – Pritam believes Nisha and Sharmila deserve equal

appreciation.

"Nisha too has been with me for almost seven to eight years, she came as a fifth-standard student."

"Coming from a Muslim family, it was far more difficult for her to pursue sports because of societal pressure. She even quit for a while before I convinced

her mother and sister to let her continue," Pritam said.

Sharmila, on the other hand, had other hurdles. Despite a supportive family, Sharmila, who belongs to Kandi village in Hisar had to adjust to living on her own all these years.

"Several of my girls stay at the Tika Ram School hostel because we do not have a residential academy or place for them to stay," Pritam said.

Proof of success

She insists she isn't looking for any long-term financial support from the officials. "For girls like them, I hope the government takes note of our efforts and supports us. All we seek is sanctioning an astro-turf field and a residential academy."

"The operational part we will manage ourselves. I have applied many times but there has been no response. If they want proof of success, I think these girls have given them that. Hopefully now things will move," she said.

When quarantine did wonders for bonding

We understand each other very well now, says Deepika Kumari

ARCHERY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KOLKATA

The 10-day quarantine period in Paris did wonders for team bonding, feels seasoned Deepika Kumari as Indian women's archery team gets ready for its final Tokyo Olympic qualifier event on Sunday.

Stimac's contract with the All India Football Federation expires in September and the former World Cupper from Croatia hoped that the national federation would appreciate the qualitative progress the team has made.

As regards preparing the



Deepika. ▪ GETTY IMAGES

the fast-improving Ankita Bhakat – the only change to the team that missed out on the team quota from the World Championships in 2019.

"Normally, I stay aloof and take time to gel with the juniors, but during this quarantine in Vichy, we would spend hours together after practice," said Deepika from Paris. "Transparency hona chaiseye team game mein (transparency is key to team's success) and I think it is helping us tremendously. I'm happy with the team coordination. We understand each other very well now," she said.