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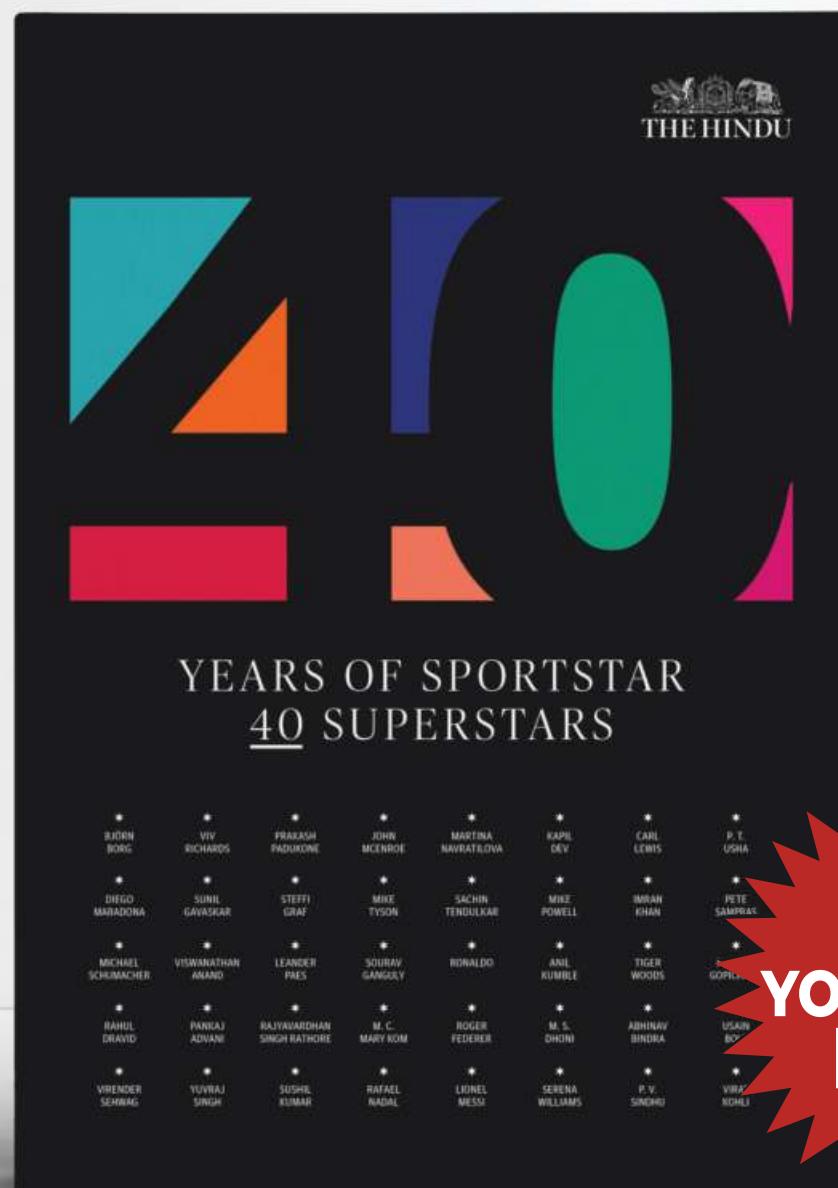
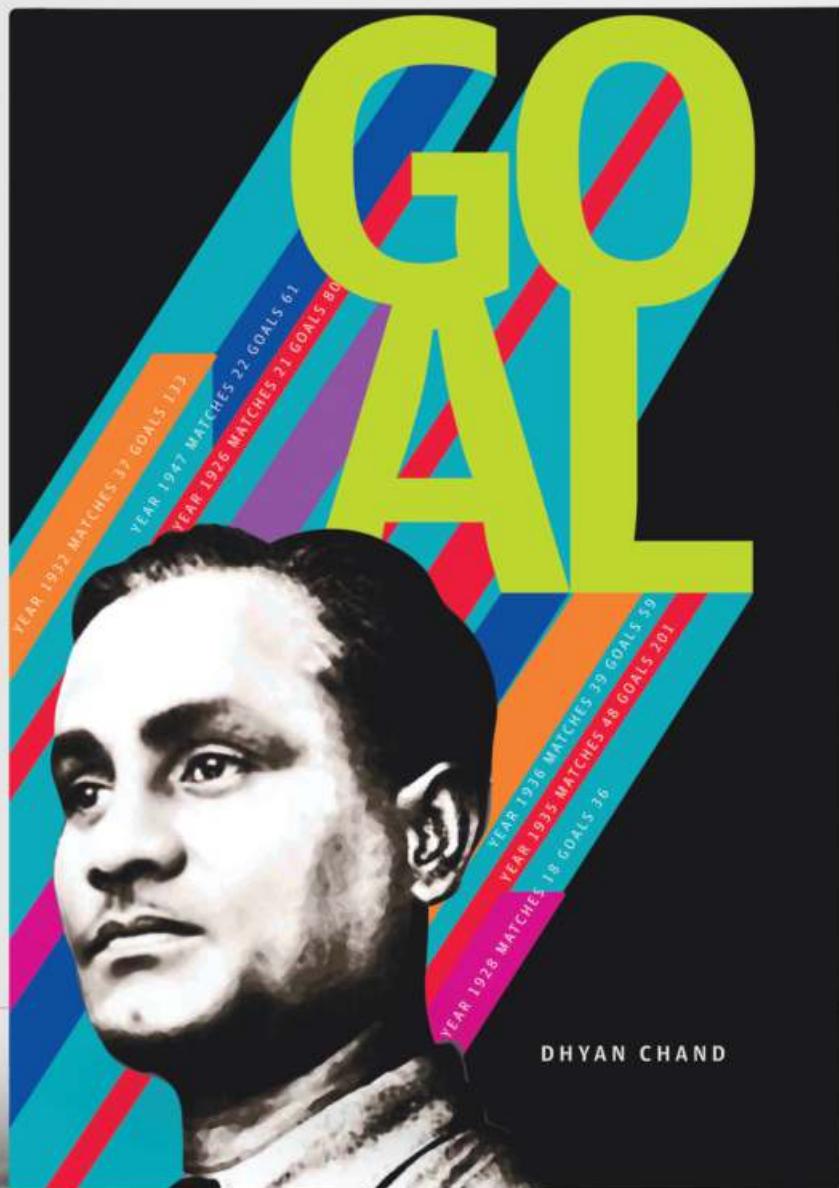
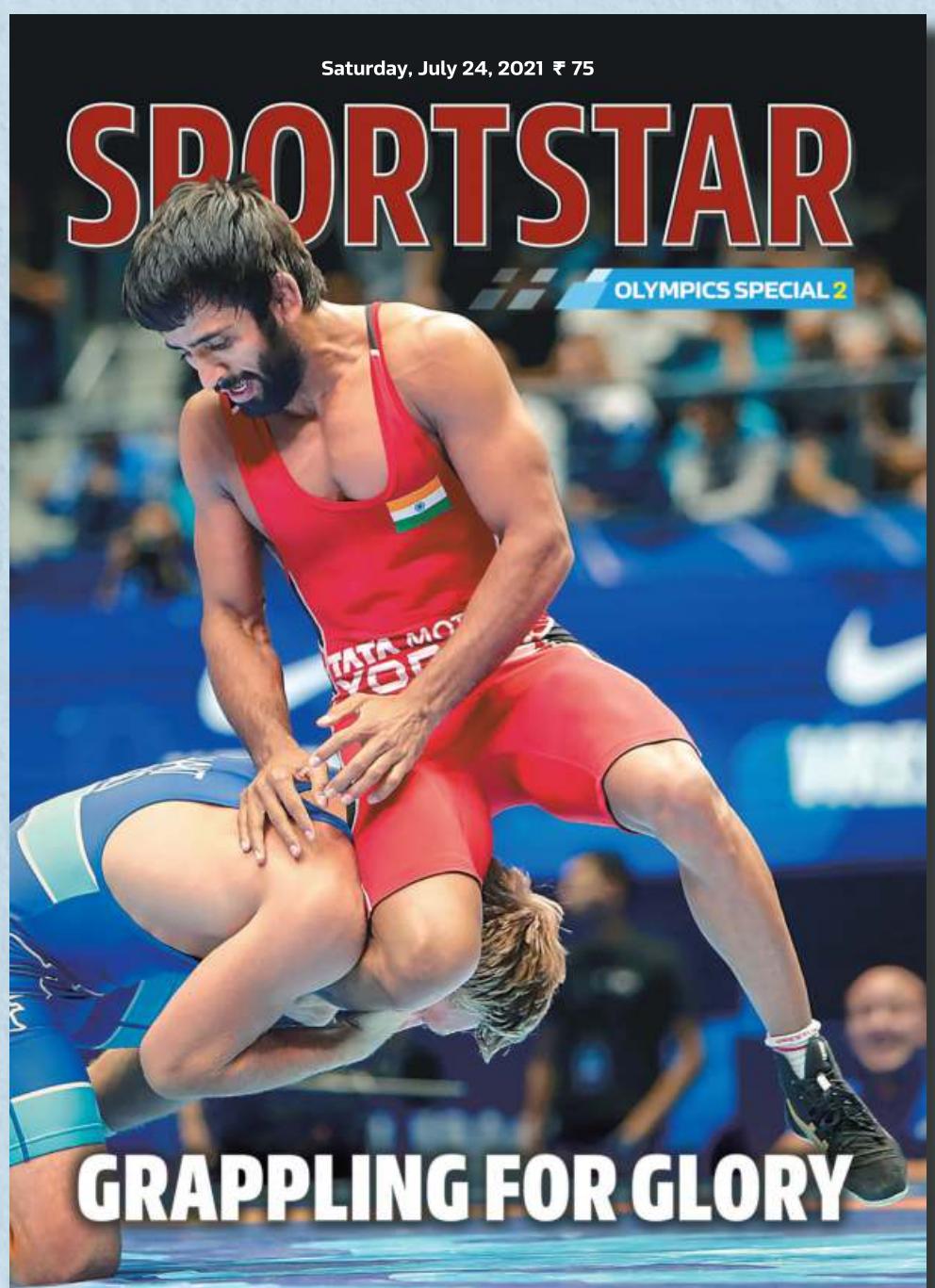
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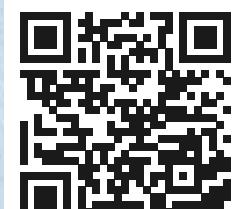
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Centre drafts simpler drone rules, seeks feedback from public
page 8



West Bengal CM to visit Delhi ahead of monsoon session
page 9



Akalis to move adjournment motion in LS on farm laws
page 9



Pant and throwdown expert test positive for COVID-19
page 13

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NEARBY



Booked under UAPA, Umar Khalid seeks bail

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Thursday posted the hearing on the bail application of former Jawaharlal Nehru University student leader Umar Khalid, arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with the north-east Delhi riots last year, for July 27.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Terror charges baseless, say kin of men held in U.P.

LUCKNOW
The families of an e-rickshaw driver and a battery seller, among those arrested by the Uttar Pradesh police from Lucknow on charges of plotting terror attacks in the State, are in a state of disbelief. They contend that the allegations levelled against the men are baseless.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Why do you need the 'colonial law' of sedition, CJI asks govt.

It suppresses freedom and is prone to misuse

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI



The use of sedition is like giving a saw to the carpenter to cut a piece of wood and he uses it to cut the entire forest itself

If you look at the history of use of this Section 124A of IPC, you will find that the conviction rate is very low. There is misuse of power by executive agencies

N.V. RAMANA Chief Justice of India

Gandhi, Tilak... Is this law necessary after 75 years of Independence?" Chief Justice Ramana, heading a three-judge Bench, orally addressed Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal and Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre.

The CJI said the sedition

law, or Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, was prone to misuse by the government. "The use of sedition is like giving a saw to the carpenter to cut a piece of wood and he uses it to cut the entire forest itself."

The CJI's oral statement in open court takes a signifi-

cant note amid rising public denunciation of Central and State law enforcement agencies using the law to silence dissent, muzzle free expression and deny bail to jailed activists, journalists, students and civil society members. A number of petitions have been filed highlighting the "chilling effect" sedition has on the fundamental right of free speech. The CJI's remarks have also opened the floor for debate and introspection on the court's own verdict in 1962, in the *Kedar Nath* case, which upheld Section 124A.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
STRONG MESSAGE ▶ PAGE 9

Maharashtra's active case number sees an uptick

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Maharashtra again saw a marginal rise in COVID-19 cases on Thursday, reporting 8,010 new cases as opposed to 7,391 recoveries, as the active case tally, which had dipped in the past few days, rose incrementally to 1,07,205.

The State had the highest number of cases in India, and the decline in cases at the end of the second wave

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Report cites cases of murder, rape and molestation

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) committee formed to investigate complaints of post-poll violence in West Bengal has recommended that cases of heinous crimes be transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

In its report to the Calcutta

High Court on Monday, the panel said it received 1,979 complaints covering over 15,000 victims during its inquiry. The panel visited the State from June 24 to July 10. "A large number of cases related to murders, rapes, molestation and vandalism received from local sources in West Bengal while the teams were camping there," the report said.

The Calcutta High Court-ordered panel, which was headed by NHRC member Rajiv Jain, concluded that

the State government had exhibited apathy towards the victims. It found that there was "retributive violence" by Trinamool Congress supporters against supporters of the "major Opposition party", referring to the BJP.

Hold trial outside State
"There is need to provide justice to victims and restore their confidence in the criminal justice system, which can be best rendered by a neutral agency. Hence, it is recommended that all hei-

nous cases, including murder, unnatural deaths, rape and grievous hurt, and complaints carrying these allegations, should be transferred to the CBI for investigation," the report said, adding that the trial of the CBI cases should be conducted outside West Bengal.

The report said there had been 29 complaints related to murder and 12 cases of attempt to rape/sexual assault/molestation.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 8

Jaishankar meets Ghani, U.S. officials

SUHASINI HAIDAR
TASHKENT

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani and U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser and special envoys on Thursday. "Discussed the situation in and around Afghanistan. Reiterated our support for peace, stability," he said.

FULL REPORT ▶ PAGE 8

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IN BRIEF



Water supply situation to improve soon: Chadha

NEW DELHI
Delhi Jal Board Vice Chairman Raghav Chadha on Thursday said the water supply situation in the city will improve soon with the water level increasing at the Wazirabad Barrage. He said Haryana released 16,000 cusec of water in the Yamuna at Hathikund Barrage on Tuesday and it is likely to reach Delhi on Friday morning. Thereafter, the water crisis in the city will be resolved, Chadha added.

Bail given to 4 in Israel embassy blast case

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to four persons, arrested from Ladakh for their alleged involvement in the low-intensity IED blast that took place near the Israel Embassy on January 29, court sources said.

Aerial objects banned in city till August 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner Balaji Srivastava on Thursday issued orders prohibiting the flying of aerial objects like drones, paragliders, and hot air balloons, ahead of Independence Day celebrations.

The order shall remain in force in the Capital for a period of 32 days from Friday till August 16 for security reasons, officials said.

According to police, it has been reported that certain anti-social elements or terrorists inimical to India may pose a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries and vital installations by using "sub-conventional aerial platforms". Therefore, the police chief has prohibited the flying of such aerial platforms over Delhi.

No plan to reopen schools till jab process complete, says CM

Students in Delhi can get admission in govt. schools without transfer certificates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said there are no plans to reopen schools till the vaccination process is complete.

"We are seeing trends internationally that there will be a third wave of COVID. So, until the vaccination process is complete, we would not like to take risks with children," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said no child will be denied admission in government schools in absence of a transfer certificate.

Parents' complaints

The move comes after he received several complaints from parents that private schools were not giving transfer certificates until the full fee is paid. The govern-



Sisodia says 28,000 applications received for Nursery, KG and Class I admissions in govt.'s Sarvodaya schools. ■ FILE PHOTO

ment announced the decision to ensure that students do not miss out on quality education due to financial losses arising out of the pandemic.

The Minister said students will be given admission in a government school and that the Education Department would ensure that the transfer certificate and other formalities be completed in a move to provide relief to pa-

rents. "Some private schools are holding back transfer certificates and asking parents to deposit the full fee first. For this reason, many parents are unable to get their children enrolled in government schools. Taking cognizance in this regard, the Directorate of Education (DoE) has been asked to ensure that provisional admission is granted to students. Also, DoE officials should directly secure the transfer certificate

from the pvt. private school concerned

MANISH SISODIA
Deputy Chief Minister

from the private school concerned and parents need not worry about it anymore," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister added that so far, 28,000 applications have been received for Nursery, KG and Class I for admission in the Delhi government's Sarvodaya Schools. He also said 90,000 applications have been received for Classes VI to XII (except Class XI).

Campaign seeks extension of window for sending suggestions to MPD 2041

'Main Bhi Dilli' campaign wants focus on gender-related issues

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The "Main Bhi Dilli" campaign on Thursday demanded an extension of the 45-day window for citizens to send in objections and suggestions to the draft Master Plan for Delhi 2041.

The need for local and zonal plans, recognition of diverse sectors of informal employment and a separate section on gender and women safety in the city, were some of the points raised by urban planners and volunteers with the campaign.

The campaign also said baseline studies and existing land-use information had not been shared by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) yet and that the deadline for objections was only a few days away. Volunteers said

the draft plan, which has three volumes, failed to reference each other and that there were contradictions across the same.

Gautam Bhan of the Indian Institute of Human Settlements, said: "Giving 45 days for objections and suggestions is not fair. It is pivotal to understand that when citizens are ready to participate, the deadline should be extended. At least three to six months should be given... We have even written to the DDA..."

Issues pertaining to housing, transport, livelihood and public spaces were also raised by members of the campaign, among other aspects.

There should be mandatory reservation of public land for affordable housing and land-based reservations for

EWS housings, said Mukta Nair of the Center for Policy Research, adding: "In the projection, they have not mentioned who the 34 lakh houses are for. How many are for the poor? Our demand is that a breakup of the same be given. Additionally, no government land has been committed for affordable housing..."

Kalpana Viswanath, founder of "My Safetipin", highlighted the need for an emphasis on gender and safety in the plan.

"There should have been a separate chapter on gender. Streets have to be safe for women, children, disabled and transgenders. If we want to have a night time economy, then it has to be planned as to how it will also be gender friendly..." she said.

Nuh police nab four involved in rape, murder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

A gang allegedly involved in two cases of kidnapping, murdering and raping women on the pretext of offering them lift has been busted, the police said on Thursday. They suspect that the accused could be involved in more such cases.

Acting on a tip-off, a Nuh Police Crime Unit arrested four persons, later identified as Devender, Manjeet, Rinku and Naasir, at Rangala Ghati village on July 13 while they were allegedly planning to commit a robbery. While Manjeet belongs to Palwal, the rest are from Nuh.

The accused have been taken on two days remand and being interrogated about their involvement in more cases.

Booked under UAPA, Umar Khalid seeks bail

Court posts hearing for July 27

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday posted the hearing on the bail application of former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student leader Umar Khalid, arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in connection with the north-east Delhi riots, for July 27.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat asked the prosecution to respond to Mr. Khalid's bail plea by the day following the hearing.

Arrested Sept. last
Mr. Khalid was arrested on September 13, 2020 in the north-east Delhi riots case being investigated by Special Cell, where charges under the anti-terror law UAPA have been invoked.

Besides Mr. Khalid, Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha, JNU stu-



Umar Khalid

dents Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita, Jamia Coordination Committee members Safoora Zargar, former Aam Aadmi Party councillor Tahir Hussain, and several others, have also been booked under the UAPA.

The Delhi High Court had recently granted bail to Mr. Tanha, Ms. Narwal and Ms. Kalita in the UAPA case, saying the state had blurred the line between the right to protest and terrorist activity in its anxiety to suppress dissent.

Sharjeel denies encouraging violence, moves court for bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

JNU student Sharjeel Imam, arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and sedition law, has moved a bail plea before a court here in a case related to making allegedly inflammatory speeches during the protests against CAA and NRC at two universities here.

In the bail plea, which came up before Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat for hearing on Thursday, Mr. Imam claimed that he never participated in or encouraged any violence during the course of any protest or demonstration and is a peace-loving citizen.

During the hearing, advocate Tanveer Ahmed Mir, representing Mr. Imam, read parts of his speech to the court and said that they do not fall within the meaning of sedition law.

Neighbour and four others nabbed for kidnapping three-year-old boy

Accused planned to sell the toddler to make quick money

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Five persons have been arrested for allegedly kidnapping a 3-year-old boy from north Delhi's Timarpur, the police said on Thursday.



Accused in police custody
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lance and other suspects were then identified," an officer said.

On July 13, information was received that a woman and her mother in Jahangirpuri were trying to sell the child. "Immediately, a raid was conducted and Raj Rani and Anuj Rani were arrested. The child was then rescued," Mr. Alphonse said.

During interrogation, it was revealed that Seema, also from Jahangirpuri, hand-

ed over the child to Anuj who then gave him to her mother to take care of him. Seema was subsequently arrested. She allegedly told police that Sarvesh gave her the child after which he was arrested from Mukundpur.

When questioned, Sarvesh said Sunita had given him the child. "Sarvesh had promised Sunita that he would give her ₹70,000 for the task. Due to the monetary crisis during the pandemic, she agreed to commit the crime," Mr. Alphonse said. Raj, Anuj and Seema committed the crime for easy money. Sarvesh is an auto-driver, they said.

"They were looking for a possible buyer," the DCP said.

Army man, vendor arrested for supplying classified papers to Pak.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

An Army man and a vegetable vendor have been arrested under the Official Secrets Act for allegedly providing classified documents to the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, the police said on Thursday. The Army headquarters confirmed that the documents in question were classified in nature.

Accused Habir-ur-Rahman (41) used to supply vegetables at the Pokhran Army base camp. He was held for getting sensitive documents from the Army man for money and providing them to the ISI. The police held Rahman on Tuesday from Pokhran in Rajasthan.

The Delhi Police Crime Branch received information that some sensitive documents related to defence establishment were being sent to the neighbouring country via spy network. "We got inputs about the

involvement of Rahman in the racket. Our team then conducted a raid and nabbed him after due verification," said Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Praveer Ranjan.

During questioning, Rahman could not give any satisfactory reply as to why he was in possession of these documents or their source, said DCP (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj. We also found that the accused used WhatsApp to send the documents to his handlers, a senior officer said.

It was found that Army man Paramjit supplied the papers to Rahman. The duo met when Paramjit was posted in Pokhran. He is now posted as a clerk at Agra Cantt. The police said Rahman had come in contact with a few handles in the spy racket when he was in Pakistan in 2019. Rahman was asked to share the secret documents with them and the money for doing the job was sent through the hawala network.

Inspired by crime series
The accused told the police that they were inspired by several episodes of crime series.

Arora, the main accused,



The accused in custody
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

used to live with his partner in a rented flat. To meet their needs, he formed a group and was also took drugs and consumed liquor to gain confidence to commit the crime, a senior officer said.

The police said the incident took place on the intervening night of July 7-8

Three held for robbing medical store owner of over ₹1 lakh using toy gun

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three men were arrested for allegedly robbing the owner of a medical store and his brother-in-law of ₹1.5 lakh and two gold chains in south Delhi's Neb Sarai, the police said on Thursday.



The accused in custody
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The accused – Vasu (22), Md. Sameer (21) and Ritik Arora (21) – threatened them with a toy pistol, they said, adding that two gold chains and ₹40,200 have been recovered from them.

Inspired by crime series
The accused told the police that they were inspired by several episodes of crime series.

The police said the incident took place on the intervening night of July 7-8

when Nandan Kumar, owner of the medical store at IGNOU Road, was going home with his brother-in-law on their motorcycle.

When they reached Sainik Farm area, three men on a motorcycle overtook them and robbed them at gunpoint. They also took the duo's mobile phones.

DCP (South) Atul Kumar Thakur: "Our team identified the motorcycle used by the accused. During probe, traps were laid, and the accused were held from Dakshinpuri and Freedom Fighter."

During interrogation, the accused said they did not chase the victim or two nights before committing the crime.

As farmers thronged borders, traders bore the brunt of stir

Unable to pay rent or bear other expenses, shopkeepers resorted to firing employees or taking kids out of school

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

It has been almost eight months since farmers started protests at Delhi's borders. It is around the same time that the businesses in the area began to take a hit.

Manjeet Dahiya (32) – who runs a mobile shop near the first stage at Singhu border – said he has been running into losses since January. The losses have been mounting, he said, adding: "I pay a rent of ₹5,000, which is difficult to pay now."

Mr. Dahiya, who lives in Haryana's Nahri, is also a farmer. He manages farming and shop simultaneously. "My mother, wife and daughter depend on my earnings."

Farming helps me earn a little. I understand their [protesters'] concerns but this stir will not yield any solution. We can't even try talking to them because they won't understand."

He said when the protest began, the earnings were good but after the area was restricted for the public and roads were barricaded, "the shopkeepers here started incurring losses".

Suresh Pandey, who runs a grocery shop, said he had to take two of his three children out of private school because he couldn't afford the fees.

"My sons used to study in a private school and daughter in a government school. I couldn't pay the fees, so school authorities stopped teaching them. I had no other option but to get their names struck off the rolls," he said.

No choice left

Mr. Pandey pays ₹15,000 per month as rent for the shop. "But I have not been able to pay it for the last four months. I have told the owner that I will pay when I can. He has agreed now. If the owner asks for rent, I will have to shift my



Farmers at Shiv market on the Singhu border on Thursday.
■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

shop to a wooden cart. Which other option do I have?" he asked.

He said he is only able to manage food with the earning from the shop and has seven members in his family, including parents, wife and three children.

Vijay, who runs a spare parts shop in Kundli, said he had to fire four employees because he couldn't afford them anymore. "No one comes here to buy because they get stuck in traffic. There are no earnings. I don't know how I will survive," he said.

Farmers have been protesting against the new farm laws since November 26 at Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders.

Timings

DELHI

FRIDAY, JUL. 16
RISE 05:35 SET 19:21
RISE 11:23 SET 23:41
SATURDAY, JUL. 17
RISE 05:35 SET 19:21
RISE 12:24 SET 00:00
SUNDAY, JUL. 18
RISE 05:36 SET 19:20
RISE 13:28 SET 00:16

Delhi Weather
max min
Delhi City 37 23
Safdarjung 37 23
Palam 35 25Delhi Palam Today
36°C Rise in day temperature likely. Pending rain/shower and thunderstorm likely at some places with cloudy sky and warm and humid day.Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C A spell of light rain or thunderstorm likely at some places with partly cloudy to cloudy sky and humid day.© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
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Sisodia meets athletes ahead of Olympics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Vice-Chancellor of Delhi Sports University Karnam Malleswari on Thursday interacted with the four athletes from Delhi who will be representing India at the Tokyo Olympics 2020.

Of the four, three athletes have been part of the Mission Excellence programme of the Delhi government that provides financial help and training to athletes.

Mr. Sisodia said that the vision of CM Arvind Kejriwal has been realised as athletes who were a part of the Mission Excellence programme were representing India. "The Delhi government not only rewards the players who win medals, but also makes them worthy of winning medals by helping players during the days of their struggle and training," Mr. Sisodia said.

L-G rejects Delhi govt's list of lawyers'

Bajjal has sought Cabinet nod for police's list of advocates to appear for protesting farmers, says govt.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday said that Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal has refused to let a panel of lawyers constituted by it to appear in trials of cases registered against the protesting farmers.

Cabinet meet

"The L-G has asked the Delhi government to give Cabinet's approval on a panel of lawyers suggested by the Delhi police. The police, who are investigating the cases registered against the farmers, want to appoint a panel of their own lawyers, upon which the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called an immediate meeting on Friday," read a statement from the Chief Minister's office.



L-G Anil Bajjal



Satyendar Jain

Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain has rejected police's proposal of appointing lawyers of the latter's favour, as per the statement. "In view of this decision, the L-G has asked the Delhi government to call for a Cabinet meeting and has pressured it to take a decision in favour of the police's choice of lawyers," the statement said.

The government said that

the farmers have been protesting against the three farm laws for several months and the police have registered several cases against them.

Fair hearing

The Delhi government had formed a panel of lawyers for a fair hearing of the cases registered against the farmers. The city police, on the other hand, wants to push a panel

of its own lawyers. In this regard, a list of lawyers was sent by the police to Delhi Home Minister Satyendar Jain for approval. After inspecting the list, Mr. Jain rejected it," the statement read.

Later, Mr. Jain sent a list of lawyers to the L-G, but he refused to approve the list, the government said.

A Raj Niwas source said the matter pertains to the request made by the police for appointment of special public prosecutors for the cases related to violence on the Republic Day this year.

"It has nothing to do with 'farmers' protest' as being deliberately made out with ulterior motives. Individuals with predetermined agenda and vested interests deliberately carried out acts on January 26, 2021, in full media

presence that were not only an affront to the national morale but aimed at bringing shame to the country internationally," the source said in response to the allegations.

It stated that apart from the earlier disagreement on the file, the L-G in the said meeting on July 1 with Mr. Jain, has "clearly and categorically expressed his disagreement" at the Home Minister's turning down of the "valid request" of the police.

"The same was also reiterated and clearly conveyed in a subsequent letter from the L-G to the CM requesting him to convene a meeting of the Council of Ministers to consider and decide upon the said disagreement at the earliest. The Cabinet, if at all, is doing just that," sources stated.

HC declines plea to reduce dosage gap

Petition pertained to Covishield vaccine

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday declined to entertain a petition seeking to reduce the 12-16 week interval for the second dose of Covishield vaccine to eight weeks for persons over 50 years of age and those having comorbidities.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh asked Siddharth De, who filed the public interest petition (PIL): "Are you aware of any procedure? How are doses fixed? Who is fixing the doses? We will have to alter the procedure if at all we have the power to do so".

Dr. De's counsel said that



Vials of Covishield at a vaccination centre in New Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO

there was a COVID working group and other expert groups, which looked into the aspect. The counsel said based on studies conducted by scientists in the U.K., there was a need to reduce the dosage interval in view of the new variants of COVID-19.

Vaccination dips by 50% due to shortage

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The number of COVID-19 vaccines administered in the city in a day fell by about 50%, as the city is facing a vaccine shortage yet again, according to Delhi government data.

The vaccine stock will last for only less than a day, as per a vaccination bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

The city has faced a similar situation on Monday and a day later. Health Minister Satyendar Jain had said that 500 vaccination centres were shut due to shortage in the city. Only 64,983 doses of vaccine were administered on Wednesday compared to 1,29,054 doses administered on Tuesday, as per the bulletin.

Meanwhile, the city reported 72 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,35,353, according to health bulletin. There was only one death reported and the total number of deaths stood at 25,022.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday flagged off the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccination Programme at the Aam Aadmi Polyclinic in Paschim Vihar. He said that the vaccine that usually costs between ₹1,500 and ₹6,000 will be administered for free at Delhi government's centres and each child will get 3 doses at specified time period.

Free power promise will work, but AAP needs more to win: experts

'It has a good chance in Punjab but not in other States in Assembly polls'

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which came to power in Delhi for the first time in 2013, by fighting against the "high" electricity and water bills during the then Congress regime, is trying to play the same game in its attempt to win a State outside Delhi.

In the past fortnight, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal travelled to three poll-bound States and made the same announcement: If the AAP is elected to power, then each house will get up to 300 units of free electricity, old power bills will be waived off, there will be no power cuts, and free electricity will be provided to farmers.

In the run-up to the 2013 Delhi election, the AAP, which was then a greenhorn, launched 'Bijli Paani Satya-



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Punjab AAP president Bhagwant Mann (right) and former State IGP Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh in Amritsar on June 21. ■ FILE PHOTO

itical parties also make similar promises.

"It will work for the AAP because even if other parties in these three States also promise the same, people will believe the AAP more as they have an example of Delhi to show, where people have been getting the benefits of it for years," Mr. Rai said.

Political analyst Neerja Chowdhury agreed and said that 'bijli-paani' was one of the first issues the AAP took up after the party was formed.

"[Mr.] Kejriwal was lampooned for it and many asked where the money will come from? But the AAP won the election and implemented the promise on water in the first week itself and elec-

ANALYSIS

tricity later on, and sustained it. This has built his credibility. Like we have a 'Metro man', Kejriwal is the 'Bijli-Paani' man," she said.

Both of them said that the AAP has a good chance in Punjab in the 2022 Assembly elections.

"During the 2020 Assembly elections in Delhi, even after the BJP playing the communal card, the AAP won the election. The result was a vote for the Delhi model of governance. The AAP has a good chance in Punjab this time. In Goa, they had a decent local leadership, but then there were problems and they lost. In Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, the AAP does not have a strong local presence and network of party offices. Even if they get 10% vote share this time, the party should keep working on the grassroots level and



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal felicitating family members of Sunderlal Bahuguna in the Delhi Assembly. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

CM appeals Centre to award Bharat Ratna to Bahuguna

Honouring him will inspire the youth'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday appealed to the Central government to award the Bharat Ratna to Sunderlal Bahuguna for the award.

"To honour Bahuguna with the Bharat Ratna will be an honour for the Bharat Ratna. It will inspire the youth of our country to realise the struggle he undertook in his life," Mr. Kejriwal said while presenting a cheque of ₹1 lakh to the family of the environmentalist in honour of the legacy he has left behind.

New excise policy will minimise corruption'

Delhi govt. defends it in High Court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday defended its new Excise Policy 2021-22 before the Delhi High Court saying that it minimises corruption and gives fair competition in liquor trade.

The Delhi government has been faced with several petitions challenging the new excise policy before the High Court. A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh issued notice to the government on some fresh pleas on the issue. The court, however, did not pass any order on staying the policy or extending the July 20 deadline for applying for tender under the policy.

One of the counsel opposing the policy argued that the new policy divides Delhi into 32 zones, but permitted only 16 players in the market. This, the counsel said, would lead to monopoly.

"Control is for public welfare and not for you to run



your business. It is for the public at large. It is not meant for you to run your business or put you in difficulty," the Bench said.

The petitions challenging the new policy claimed that it is illegal, unfair, arbitrary and violative of the Delhi Excise Act of 2009.

The plea also seeks to quash the June 28 e-tender notice of the Delhi government, prescribing the procedure to be followed for inviting zone-wise electronic bids for grant of 32 zonal licences of retail vends of liquor for supply of Indian and foreign liquor brands in the Capital.

Congress takes out cycle rally to protest price hike

Party leaders detained by police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Thursday organised a cycle rally across the city to protest against price rise, frequent hikes in the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas, milk and other essential commodities.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar, along with AICC in-charge of Delhi Shakti Singh Gohil and co-in-charge Imran Masood, who

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- JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Naqabgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

IN BRIEF



Karnataka offers big sops for medical oxygen units

BENGALURU

Karnataka, which faced a severe shortage of oxygen during the peak of COVID-19 second wave, has decided on a slew of incentives, including 25% capital subsidy, for private companies that set up medical oxygen plants in the State.

Four suffocate to death while digging well

KOLLAM
Four persons suffocated to death while digging a new well at Kundara, near Kollam, on Thursday. According to the police, all the four died of asphyxiation due to lack of oxygen inside the well. Though the police and Fire and Rescue Services were pressed into action, their lives could not be saved.

Assembly ruckus: SC refuses to accept Kerala govt's argument

'Not convinced that withdrawal of prosecution against MLAs is in public interest'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to accept the Kerala government's argument that the Speaker and not the police has the authority to take action against the Left Democratic Front MLAs who vandalised the Legislative Assembly during the Budget speech in 2015.

"So, let's say in an extreme case, if an MLA empties his revolver inside the Assembly, can you say the House is supreme on this?" Justice D.Y. Chandrachud retorted at the Kerala government side. The court was also not convinced by the State government's line that withdrawal of prosecution when MLAs have damaged the *sanctum sanctorum* of democracy?"



A file photo of the LDF members taking away the chair of the Speaker from his podium. ■ C. RATHESH KUMAR

Justice Chandrachud asked. Justice M.R. Shah asked why the State government was trying to defend the accused persons in the case. The court has reserved for

judgment the appeals filed by the Kerala government and accused persons, which include Kerala Education Minister S. Sivankutty, against a High Court order which had confirmed a Magistrate's decision to refuse the Prosecutor permission to withdraw the criminal case.

Televised images from the day of the incident show legislators come to blows on the House floor and hurl chairs, computers and other public property soon after Finance Minister K.M. Mani began his Budget speech during the United Democratic Front government's tenure.

The apex court has consistently taken a strong *prima facie* view against the conduct of the MLAs.

Panel to safeguard interests of Lakshadweep people set up

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

Leaders of major political parties, cultural activists, litterateurs and filmmakers on Thursday met here to form a Lakshadweep Aikyadarya Samithi (Lakshadweep Solidarity Committee) to safeguard the interests of the Lakshadweep islanders and support them in all possible ways in their fight against the "undemocratic, unconstitutional measures being forced on them by the Lakshadweep administration."

Benny Behanan, MP, will be the chairman of the committee, and Elamaram Karreem, MP, will be its general convener.



Political party leaders with filmmaker Aisha Sultana at the solidarity meet in Kochi on Thursday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

Aisha Sultana, filmmaker against whom the Lakshadweep police have booked a case of sedition, also attended the meeting. Briefing the media on the discussions, Mr. Kareem said the meeting had resolved to support the

fight of the islanders against draconian rules such as the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation and the Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation imposed by the Dweep administration.

Even though ZIKV cases had not yet been reported from other districts so far, a high level of alert needed to be maintained in all districts

Alert as Kerala capital reports 28 Zika cases

Plan to test all fever cases with rashes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With 28 Zika cases being reported from Thiruvananthapuram district, the Kerala Health Department has sent a state-wide alert to test all cases of fever with rashes for Zika virus (ZIKV) infection.

The Ministers for Health and Local Self Government (LSG) held a joint review meeting here on Thursday to organise coordinated micro-level plans for containment across districts.

The list of aedes hotspots would be prepared and handed over to local bodies for launching control measures. District medical officers and Health and LSG officials were present.

as the vector, aedes aegypti, was present in high density in all districts, it was pointed out at the meeting.

Health Minister Veena George said seasonal dengue cases too had begun to be reported from all districts and hence intensive vector control measures, including source reduction, fogging and mobilisation of the public to make individual homes aedes-free was the need of the hour.

The term family will include the person who seeks the benefit, his or her parents and siblings below 18 years as also his or her spouse and children below 18.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Friday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Bihar, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam and Karaikal.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...35.0...	27.2	25.5	Kozhikode	25...	27.4...	23.5
Ahmedabad	...36.0...	27.5	25...	Kurnool	35...	30.2...	23.7
Aizawl	...-	-	-	Lucknow	37.4...	28.9	-
Aligarh	...37.5...	28.8	26.5	Madurai	36.5...	26.5	-
Bengaluru	18.8...	24.6...	19.9	Mangaluru	46.4...	26.2...	23.0
Bhopal	...33.8...	25.2	23.6	Mumbai	38...	31.6...	24.6
Bhubaneswar	0.2...	34.3...	26.1	Mysuru	10...	24.6...	20.0
Chandigarh	...34.0...	26.6	23.4	New Delhi	26.3...	36.6...	23.4
Chennai	14...	31.4...	23.9	Patna	...-	36.4...	27.8
Coimbatore	0.3...	27.2...	21.4	Port Blair	2...	30.8...	25.0
Dehradun	0.4...	30.5...	22.8	Puducherry	3.6...	31.9...	23.1
Gangtok	7...	29.3...	16.9	Pune	...-	31.8...	21.8
Goa	12.2...	26.5...	23.6	Raipur	...-	34.3...	25.6
Guwahati	...30.0...	25.8	23.4	Ranchi	7...	30.7...	22.1
Hubballi	...24.0...	21.0	17.7	Shillong	...-	26.0...	17.7
Hyderabad	69...	29.2...	21.8	Shimla	...-	26.6...	18.9
Imphal	1...	29.8...	20.6	Srinagar	...-	31.6...	17.4
Jaipur	...37.9...	27.4	25.0	Thiruvananthapuram	7...	31.9...	25.0
Kochi	16.6...	30.8...	24.0	Tiruchi	1...	33.9...	26.6
Kohima	7...	24.2...	17.6	Vijayawada	6...	32.6...	24.6
Kolkata	...35.0...	27.4	25.8	Visakhapatnam	9...	31.6...	25.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.8	15	120	.111	.111	■
Bengaluru	.8	65	48	—	.31	■
Chennai	13	5	37	.30	.68	■
Delhi	.9	15	.72	.212	.146	■
Hyderabad	—	64	.17	.9	.17	■
Kolkata	10	17	.18	.27	.41	■
Lucknow	.7	41	.49	.78	.100	■
Mumbai	44	20	.18	.23	.29	■
Pune	16	18	.48	.68	.50	■
Visakhapatnam	15	34	34	—	.51	■

In observation made at 4.00 pm - Bhopal, Rajesthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 166 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra recorded a healthy AQI score of 11

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



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(શ્રીકૃષ્ણ એપેક્ષ બેંક)



Ending the impasse

India, China cannot put the distrust of the past behind without resolving the border issue

India's relations with China have been in deep freeze for over a year. The crisis on the LAC remains unresolved, and tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides still remain deployed in forward areas. Against this backdrop, Wednesday's meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Dushanbe assumes significance. Their last meeting in Moscow, in September 2020, took place in the aftermath of the Galwan Valley clash and at a time of a tinderbox-like situation south of Pangong Lake, with troops and artillery dangerously close to each other on the heights of the Kailash Range. A political agreement then paved the way for both sides to disengage in February, but the agreements in Galwan and Pangong Lake, where both sides have put in place no-patrolling zones, have not been followed at other disputed sites, in Depsang, Demchok, Gogra and Hot Springs.

Will the Dushanbe meeting similarly break the impasse? The initial readouts from both sides do not inspire confidence. Mr. Jaishankar said the unresolved situation was "visibly impacting the relationship in a negative manner" and "assessing the overall relationship", it was peace on the border that provided "the foundation for the development of ties since 1988" when the post-1962 freeze ended. Mr. Wang did not appear to view the boundary dispute with the same seriousness, instead calling for it to be kept "in an appropriate place" while "expanding the positive momentum of bilateral cooperation". Where both sides did agree is in their assessment, as Mr. Jaishankar put it, that "a prolongation of the existing situation was not in the interest of either side". The difference from Moscow to Dushanbe is that China, which last year was equally concerned after India's counter-deployments to take the heights of the Kailash Range where even shots were fired in warning – the first firing since 1975 – now appears to be in no hurry to restore the *status quo* elsewhere. India, having declared that normalcy cannot be possible without disengagement and de-escalation and signalled its intent with measures including scrutiny on Chinese investments – bilateral trade, however, is still booming beyond pre-pandemic levels thanks to huge imports of medical supplies – will now have to stay the course to underline its resolve on restoring the *status quo*. Mr. Wang also said that Beijing's "strategic judgment on China-India relations remains unchanged". Whether China's PLA, which has been dragging its feet on negotiations to restore the LAC *status quo* since February, shares that judgement remains to be seen. The only way for Beijing to demonstrate that is indeed the case will be to resume negotiations on the LAC at the earliest. Unless a full restoration of peace and a de-escalation on the borders happen, the relations in all other spheres will remain cloaked in distrust.

Growing precarity

Fuel levies must be cut to ease the burden on consumers reeling under rising inflation

The latest inflation data based on retail and wholesale prices are yet again flashing cautionary signals as spiralling costs continue to dog the pandemic-hit economy. CPI-based inflation stayed stuck above the RBI's 6% upper bound for the second straight month, with June's provisional annualised 6.26% only a touch slower than the six-month high pace of 6.3% registered in May. Inflation at the retail level was largely propelled by sharp increases in key food item prices including oils and fats, which surged almost 35% from a year earlier and gained 2.9% from May's levels, as also egg, which jumped 19.4% year-on-year and 6.2% from the preceding month, and pulses and products, which climbed 10% from June 2020. As RBI officials reviewing the State of the Economy in the central bank's monthly Bulletin released on Thursday observed, fuel inflation, which excludes petrol and diesel, surged to a record 12.7% in June driven by LPG, kerosene and the rural poor's mainstay, firewood and dung-cake. And, disconcertingly, LPG and kerosene prices have also registered increases so far in July. Transport costs remain persistently high as both petrol and diesel prices continue to rise, with the former now averaging ₹102.92 a litre in the four major metros as on July 12, and diesel at almost ₹94, according to the Bulletin article. With global crude oil trending higher, the unabated rise in domestic transportation costs is bound to reflect in retail prices of farm produce and products shipped from factories.

Wholesale price inflation also stayed stubbornly high at 12.07% in June, after May's record 12.94%, as price gains in the fuel and power category soared 32.8% annually, and those of manufactured products edged up to 10.88%. Medium and small-scale industrial units, already struggling to cope with the pandemic's impact on demand and overall finances, now face rising raw material and input costs. With manufacturing activity contracting in June for the first time in 11 months as per IHS Markit's PMI, the economy is visibly struggling to regain traction in the wake of the second wave, which has eroded demand and consumptive capacity in both urban and rural markets. Add to this the looming possibility that this year's monsoon rains may be less than adequate, either temporally or spatially, disrupting agricultural output and the outlook for both inflation and growth gets significantly clouded. With cumulative rainfall since June 1 being 5% below average and 12 weather subdivisions spanning 37% of the country's area experiencing deficient rainfall as on July 15, and the pandemic still nowhere near under control, the risk of precarity and hardship rising in the rural hinterland is very real. The Government must, at the very least, cut fuel taxes to ease the burden on consumers.

A strong Indian state must be humane too

Having an audit system to review cases such as Fr. Stan Swamy's will also help reassure international liberal opinion



VIVEK KATJU

Father Stan Swamy passed away in a Mumbai hospital last week, on July 5, while his case for bail was going on in the Bombay High Court. On being informed of his death, the Bench hearing his case is reported to have observed, "with all humility at our command, this is a shocking news. We passed that order, to take him to the hospital of his choice. We have no words to express our condolences..." Fr. Swamy, 84, was suffering from Parkinson's disease, bilateral hearing loss, back pain and "generalised weakness". His health had begun to deteriorate since his incarceration in Mumbai, after his arrest on October 8, 2020, by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), in the Bhima Koregaon case. On May 28 he was moved to a private hospital, following a court order, but his condition had worsened. Meanwhile the court had continued hearing his bail application but not arrived at a decision.

Global criticism

Like the Bombay High Court Bench, Fr. Swamy's many admirers in India and abroad would have been "shocked" at his death while still in custody. This important fact – that he continued to be in custody in Mumbai – will not be missed by those who followed the case, including human rights or-

ganisations abroad, for Fr. Swamy had wished to be allowed to return to Jharkhand, but tragically that was not to be. Naturally, even then the law would have taken its course in respect of the trial.

The Indian system's treatment of Fr. Swamy has attracted substantial and pointed criticism from significant international quarters. Mary Lawlor, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders, after his death, plainly made the accusation that he was arrested on "false charges of terrorism". The European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore, did not go so far, but said that the European Union had been "raising his case repeatedly with the [Indian] authorities". In a statement on July 6 on Fr. Swamy's death, Liz Throssell, the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, stated, "We are deeply saddened and disturbed" and went on to describe him as a "long standing activist, particularly on the rights of indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups". The United States State Department expressed sadness at his death and called him a " Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist". And, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom "condemned in the strongest terms the deliberate neglect and targeting by the government of India that led to the death of Father Stan Swamy... long-time human rights defender".

A defence that is wooden

While denying him bail, a special NIA court concluded that the "material placed on record thus prima facie denote[d]" that Stan Swamy



"was not only the member of the banned organisation Communist Party of India (Maoist) but he was carrying out activities further in the objective of the organisation which is nothing but to overthrow the democracy of the nation". This opinion clearly has not been taken into consideration nor has it been found to be credible by international observers. Fr. Swamy has continued to be described as a human rights activist.

It is also doubtful that the defence of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), that "Authorities in India act against violations of law and not against legitimate exercise of rights. All such actions are strictly in accordance with the law", will find many takers in respect of the Fr. Swamy case, both with regard to his arrest as well as denial of bail.

In response to criticism in the case, the MEA, on July 6, also noted that "India's democratic and constitutional polity is complemented by an independent judiciary, a range of national and state level Human Rights Commissions that monitor violations, a free media and a vibrant and vocal civil society. India remains committed to promotion and protection of human rights of all its citizens (<https://bit.ly/3kh4CCN>)".

This, no doubt, is true as a general proposition. However, these words will inevitably be refracted through the prism of denial of bail to an ailing, very old man who was considered by influential sections of international opinion to have been an activist for the tribal people, assisting them in the preservation of their rights and their way of life. Also, inevitably, they will not be able to forget that it took almost a month for the jail authorities to provide a straw, supper and winter clothes to Fr. Swamy, as Parkinson's disease made it difficult for him to hold cups or glasses. The 'straw and supper' may become a visual metaphor, for words too paint pictures. These aspects, among others, will raise questions about the MEA's statement especially among Christian church groups abroad because Fr. Swamy was a Jesuit priest and it will not be unnatural for them to take some interest in the matter.

Perceived path of the state

All this will also be viewed in the context of the events of the past few years, when international liberal opinion has been deeply concerned by what it perceives as the direction taken by Indian society and polity. There is of course no question of pandering to such opinion on India's core security interests in issues relating to terrorism from abroad and indiscriminate violence driven by ideology-driven direct perpetrators of violence against the state causing, *inter alia*, the loss of innocent lives. However, diplomacy requires engagement with international liberal opinion, not wooden and inflexible assertions of general principles only. The Government has refused to engage with either

domestic or global liberal opinion.

What has to be realised is that even as the national public culture and mores seek to shed the vestiges of both their anglicised and Persianate past, it needs to retain the old value of caring. Indeed, a strong and effective state can and must also be a humane state, which it hardly was in the case of Fr. Swamy. When India embarked on the great national enterprise after Independence, it did so on the principle that it would achieve development not through an authoritarian polity but a democratic and liberal one, despite the obstacles and challenges that lay in the way.

For the superior judiciary

Yes, special laws were, and continue to be required to meet the challenges that arise from violence that cannot be confronted under the ordinary criminal statute. Their application, however, requires constant review. As jail is the rule and bail the exception for those charged under special laws, there should be very strong evidence to substantiate these charges. But in some cases, this is obviously not so. Consequently, the accused while languishing in jail for many years are acquitted during trials indicating that there was insufficient evidence *ab initio* to lock them up. This is unacceptable and the superior judiciary needs to redress the situation through an audit of such cases. Fr. Stan Swamy's case should provide an impetus to put such an audit machinery in place as India approaches the 75th year of its Independence. It will also reassure international opinion that India is a responsive state.

Vivek Katju is a former diplomat

Interference an investigating officer can do without

Growing instances of judicial interference in an investigation are not only undesirable but also not sanctioned by law



R.K. RAGHAVAN

It is an accepted axiom in a democracy such as India that the Executive shall abide by the Constitution. By the same logic, the bureaucracy is answerable to the lawfully elected government. It is this unassailable legal position which keeps a check on police conduct in a democratic nation.

Writing just after a Minneapolis police officer was sentenced in the United States, on June 25, to 22-and-a-half years in prison for the horrific murder of a hapless citizen, George Floyd, and the enormous media publicity it has received the world over – Floyd was videotaped in May 2020, that showed him dying as the officer was kneeling on his neck – my uneasy feeling is that government and public distrust of the police will further widen. Even a straightforward and law-abiding policeman will hardly be believed. The onus will be on him to prove that he is honest and humane.

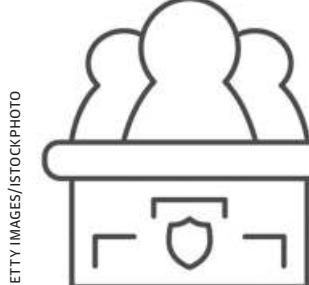
The Minneapolis court verdict will no doubt receive support from everyone who believes in a system of checks and balances. My question, however, is whether happenings of this kind and our own horrific episode in Sattankulam, Tamil Nadu, when in June 2020, a

58-year-old father and his 31-year-old son were subject to police brutality and died, justify further curbs on the police authority to investigate an established crime. I know well that I will be in the minority when I plead for at least a slightly kindlier view of police conduct and more latitude to them in the standard operating procedures which they follow, especially when they investigate a complicated crime.

Top court's observation

It is in this context that I cite a recent Supreme Court of India observation (<https://bit.ly/2VCEByS>) that courts have no authority to direct an investigating officer to in turn direct the arrest of any particular individual connected with a crime. This view should be examined in the background of growing instances of subordinate judicial officers, and even High Courts sometimes, directing the investigating officer to effect the arrest of a particular individual who has come to adverse notice as a suspect in the commission of a crime.

I am happy that the highest court of the land has intervened in the matter. I have come across many instances of courts bullying police officers, asking why 'x' has been arrested and not 'y'. Such directions cut at the roots of criminal justice ethics, because the bedrock of English jurisprudence that we have adopted with some modifications is the principle that anyone hauled up by law should be considered innocent unless he



is proved guilty. The direction to the police with regard to arrests during a criminal investigation is harmful to police morale and cuts at the roots of field policing. Court observations that smack of a lack of faith in police ability and integrity will make grass-root level policemen even more arbitrary than now and force them into carrying out questionable actions that will cast aspersions on an officer's ability to think for himself.

I strongly believe that the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) vests sufficient discretion in the investigating officer to take such decisions as arrests and searches, and even the dropping of further action after registering a first information report.

Court interference – mind you, it is not intervention – in the day-to-day investigation is not only undesirable but is also not sanctioned by law. I am of the view that except for the Supreme Court, in whom the Constitution vests enormous authority and discretion which are not questionable, the lesser courts shall not give directions in the matter of arrests and

searches.

Courts should remember that the police are a well-established hierarchy that is obliged to ensure objectivity during a criminal investigation. Every investigation is supervised by at least two immediate senior officers. In the more important cases, there are a few more levels. It is their duty to ensure that every investigation is handled lawfully and impartially. Where supervisory officers fail in their duty because of sheer indolence or buckle under external pressure, they deserve to be pulled up by courts. But not before they are found guilty of indifference or malfeasance.

FIR is mandatory

We need to educate the Executive and the common man that it is now well-established law that a first information report is not an act of charity to the aggrieved complainant. It is mandatory that every police station in the land should register a complaint under the relevant sections of a statute the moment a cognisable offence is made out in the complaint. The complaint may be false or frivolous in order to settle personal scores. But the basic requirement is registration.

There is another safeguard against police misconduct. The CrPC makes it obligatory for the investigating officer to write a diary that details the action taken every day following registration. To such a diary are attached witness statements. When in doubt, the com-

petent court, which already has a copy of the first information report, can demand to see the case diary. If the content of such a diary establishes the complicity of an individual, the court can question an investigating officer as to what he proposed to do on the basis of such evidence. Directing an investigating officer to go ahead with an arrest even before he has scrutinised the evidence collected is unsustainable in law.

Holding up a mirror

I am not pleading the cause of police officers, many of whom are burdened with the task of unravelling the truth in a complicated occurrence. I also concede that there are many dishonest police officers at all levels who work overtime to sabotage an investigation with a view to saving an offender or are waiting to please a rank outsider for monetary consideration. To paint all police officers with the same brush is hugely unfair to a majority of investigators.

To sum up, I would place the blame for the ills that affect the police, particularly in the area of criminal investigation, squarely at the door of many senior officers who are waiting to be browbeaten by outsiders or are looking for unethical avenues to aggrandise themselves.

R.K. Raghavan, a former Central Bureau of Investigation Director, is currently Professor of Criminal Justice and Policing at the Jindal Global School, Sonipat, Haryana

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.

Afghan's future

Despite what the Kabul government and India's External Affairs Ministry say, it seems probable that all of Afghanistan will soon be under the control of the Taliban. The Taliban have defeated the Americans, just as their predecessors did the British and the Soviets. But it is unlikely that they will be the insular tyrants of 1996, as both they and Afghanistan have changed. They are more aware of the wider world now. They are likely to convene a *Loya Jirga*, and Afghanistan is likely to be ruled as a loose confederation of tribal leaders. Foreign powers will be well advised to stay out of Afghanistan's politics for now. Afghans in the last two centuries have never tolerated a ruler propped up by outsiders, and will not tolerate one again.

India should continue aid, but not make the mistake of telling Afghans what to do in their own country.

MANO DANIEL,
Chennai

Astrology and India
In a nation that still blindly adheres to numerous irrational practices, the idea of a society founded on one of logic and reason is too far a dream (OpEd, "No pseudoscience, please", July 15). Despite many being educated and/or having access to various technologies, adherence to scientific temperament has taken a back seat in the minds of many. Any discussion challenging the validity of such blind beliefs is most often scorned or termed as hurting prevalent cultural sentiments. This reluctance to accept rationale over blind beliefs and related

practices is what has also stalled growth and development.

ADHIRASREE K.,
Puttur, Palakkad, Kerala

■ Every progressive thinking person in India must oppose the introduction of this course by IGNOU which goes against the spirit of the Constitution in promoting scientific temper, the spirit of enquiry and reform. Every effort must be made by the Government, universities and the general public to promote astronomy and not astrology. Astronomy affords ample opportunities to advance the frontiers of knowledge and science.

KARRA ANIL KUMAR,
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

author, Appu Nedungadi, is sarcastic about astrology: that humans believing in the planets directing their course of life is akin to the fish of the sea thinking that their life is shaped by the ships criss-crossing the waters. It is quite intriguing to see India looking to subjects such as astrology, with no interest in the iconoclastic philosophies of those such as Charvaka that will show us India's intellectual vibrancy even in ancient times and help foster scientific temper.

SUKUMARAN C.V.,
Palakkad, Kerala

■ Being a contemporary of the writer and witnessing astounding human achievements in exploring space, I think all of us should ponder over the decision of a premier academic institute launching astrology as a degree course. It would be laudable if further opinions

and suggestions of great scholars on the subject are taken into account for the inclusion or withdrawal of astrology as a core subject.

RANJANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

■ Astrology is a subject which may be of interest to some people. How can anyone object to pursuing a subject which is of interest to him? Notwithstanding the opinion of the writer, there are many who still believe in astrology. Perhaps the writer needs to take some time off to explore the subject.

V.S. JAYARAMAN,
Chennai

■ While I agree that astrology is not a panacea and has its own limitations, calling it a "pseudoscience" instead of "ancient science" is undoing the works of writers such as Varahamihira. The writer is advised to go through the

works of B.V. Raman, K.N. Rao, P.V.R. Narasimha Rao and Barbara Pijan. I would say the article lacks depth in terms of research in astrology.

JAY D.,
Mumbai</

Is the Indian stock market in a bubble?

PARLEY

Investors believe stocks are overvalued but disagree on how to play the market

Since the nationwide lockdown announced by the Prime Minister in March last year, the Indian economy has faced its worst contraction in history. Yet, the country's stock indices, the Sensex and the Nifty, have almost doubled in price from the low that they hit in April 2020. Many analysts and even the Reserve Bank of India now believe that stocks are in a bubble. In this conversation moderated by Prashanth Perumal J., Anand Srinivasan and Alok Jain discuss the current state of Indian markets. Edited excerpts:

Can you shed light on the divergence between the stock market and the real economy?

Anand Srinivasan: The markets are going up on liquidity. Basically, all central banks are printing money and this money has to go somewhere. So, what we are having is asset price inflation. The prices of gold, crypto assets, stocks, and even collectibles have increased dramatically. While we may look at the Indian market in isolation, we have to understand that this is not the only market that is going up. All equity markets are going up. When you see year-to-date comparisons, India is not in the top five countries whose exchanges have done well. There is a lot of money chasing very few stocks which are of high quality. Nearly 45% of the index is controlled by five stocks. The Nifty is trading at around 29 times its earnings and its price-to-book ratio is at 4:23. So, the markets are indeed highly overvalued.

Also, Nifty earnings per share is at ₹559, and ₹100 of this can be attributed to tax sops to corporations. These have driven prices of these companies up further. But the reality of the rest of India is different. India and the rest of the world are going through a K-shaped recovery where the rich are accumulating a larger share of resources from the rest.

Do current valuations worry you or even matter to you?

Alok Jain: We don't look at valuations because our focus is on price trends. We follow the principle of

"Bhav Bhagwan Che (Price is God)". We believe that price incorporates all the information that is required to be incorporated into a stock. However, as Anand said, it's a liquidity-driven rally. It is always a liquidity-driven rally. We tend to equate the real economy with the stock market at all times, but they hardly ever meet. That is the sole reason 90% of all economists and analysts in the market are not able to call what's going to happen next. Traditional valuation models are getting broken because the whole money supply equation is changing. If Japan can trade at 34 times earnings, the U.S. at 28 times earnings, and China at 19 times earnings, Nifty could trade at 40 or 30 or 20. You take your pick and you can justify it there. Coming back to liquidity, the Fed has pumped about \$5 trillion or so and so have other central bankers. We are sitting in a vulnerable situation across markets. So, there is no real model that you can rely upon for investing when there's endless money flowing around. One should ride the trend till the end and not sit out of the market.

AS: Alok says everything is about liquidity. I will pick up two cases from history. Let's talk about 1989 when the Nikkei peaked at 40,000. Now, 31 years later, the Nikkei is nowhere near 40,000. It is still about 30% below its peak. The Dow Jones in 1929 crashed from 800 to double digits. It took the index 25 years to recover this loss. So, this party has to come to an end sometime. We don't know when exactly but the early warning signs are there. American inflation is running at 4% for the first time in many years and Indian inflation has been consistently higher than what the RBI projected 10 out of the last 12 months. Some say this inflation is transitory. But one year of inflation is not transitory. We have to wait and watch because as inflation begins to bite, that is when politicians will remove the punch bowl and the party will come to an end. I don't see this happening until early-2022 because U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell will not want to spoil the party now – his nomination is due.

AS: If I look at any of the big names who have made money over the last 150 years, they didn't make money by riding the market. They made money only by staying invested and finding quality companies at good prices. Liquidity in the markets will come and go. From the late 1990s to today, America has been under the influence of steroids injected by the U.S. Federal Reserve. So we're looking at a gush of liquidity over 20 years. But the history of markets shows that interest rate cycles do



Alok, what is your technical view on the market while looking at the charts?

AJ: From our perspective, nothing much has changed. The way we work is that we have long-term models which measure momentum and we then allocate across stocks. So far, we have not seen our models go to cash. As the market plateaus or starts to go down, our models tend to go into cash gradually and that has not yet started to happen so there is no concern right now about the uptrend. Over the last month or so, the markets have kind of stagnated. But there is enough opportunity and activity within the mid-cap and small cap space. So, nothing really has changed. There may be an episode of profit booking but that would be a very normal reaction. The fear actually is that any market could become the next Japan where the market spends years consolidating so that valuations can catch up with price. This could be just like what we've seen in the real estate market. In case liquidity keeps gushing through, we could be at 18,000 on the Nifty and the resulting pain could be deeper and longer. So, we need to be ready with a plan to exit the market.

AS: Alok says everything is about liquidity. I will pick up two cases from history. Let's talk about 1989 when the Nikkei peaked at 40,000. Now, 31 years later, the Nikkei is nowhere near 40,000. It is still about 30% below its peak. The Dow Jones in 1929 crashed from 800 to double digits. It took the index 25 years to recover this loss. So, this party has to come to an end sometime. We don't know when exactly but the early warning signs are there. American inflation is running at 4% for the first time in many years and Indian inflation has been consistently higher than what the RBI projected 10 out of the last 12 months. Some say this inflation is transitory. But one year of inflation is not transitory. We have to wait and watch because as inflation begins to bite, that is when politicians will remove the punch bowl and the party will come to an end. I don't see this happening until early-2022 because U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell will not want to spoil the party now – his nomination is due.

We tend to equate the real economy with the stock market at all times, but they hardly ever meet. That is the sole reason 90% of all economists and analysts in the market are not able to call what's going to happen next.

ALOK JAIN

turn. It is hard to predict when the cycle will turn, but it should turn in the next five years. When the interest rate cycle turns, equities will witness a fall. That is the time to accumulate equities. In America, it was between 1969 and 1974 that Warren Buffett made most of his stock purchases. Then, there was the period in 1987 when there was a major crash. In 2002, there was a major crash again. The only difference is that the pullback in stock prices this time has been much faster and more violent, which has not allowed people like Mr. Buffett to buy. But markets still have pockets of values.

Alok, what is your take on the fundamentalist viewpoint on markets?

AJ: There's nothing wrong in the fundamental view. The only question is, while Mr. Buffett is quoted so many times, how many people can act like Mr. Buffett? You can't really emulate the qualities of great investors. So, we need to find more common man strategies, so that you can live your life peacefully and also have healthy returns on your money instead of just hoping for positive long-term returns. In Japan, the generation that started earning and investing money from 1990 has not seen any gains so far. How many would survive in that kind of an en-

vironment? That can happen to any country. So, just investing based on great names, quality and great fundamentals did not ensure positive returns to Japanese investors. There are very few lucky guys who can really say that they started investing 20 years ago and that they're sitting with multibaggers. That's not the average investor's journey. Our approach to the market is very clear. We will not predict where the market is going. Instead, we will allow the market to tell us what to do.

AS: Since Alok said people have not made money in Japan, let me quote a story. About one and a half years ago, Mr. Buffett decided to buy in Japan. He went to the bank and took a loan of several billion dollars at near-zero interest rate, payable over 25 years, and bought five big companies which had a dividend yield of over 5%. He uses the dividends to pay off the loans and now basically owns a 5% stake in five Japanese business conglomerates free of cost.

That is value investing. So, you basically get money free, you put it into a company whose dividend will pay off the loan with low interest, and then you can relax. This is the way it should be. I agree it is very difficult. It takes enormous patience. If people cannot do this, then the alternative is to buy the index for the long term. Just keep buying the index over the next 30-40 years and go to sleep. Put in 50-60% of your money into the index and the balance in bonds and go to sleep and the index will take care of it.

Does investing in the index sound like a sensible strategy to momentum investors?

AJ: Interestingly, if you look at the index, the index itself is a momentum portfolio. Every six months, the index committee will sit around and throw out the laggards from the index, and bring in stocks that are rising. So, the index is actually a beautiful momentum index. You can buy index ETFs (exchange-traded funds) or index funds at a low cost and actually run a momentum strategy. That can be your base momentum strategy. Then you can take premium products and run premium momentum strategies. My short point here is that if the index itself is like a momentum strategy that really validates momentum investing.

AS: The index in India is a very shallow index. When I say index, I am talking about a broad index like the S&P 500. Unfortunately, we don't have mutual funds which follow the BSE 500 in a big manner. The best you can do is buy the Nifty and the Nifty Next 50. If you get an index for the Nifty 500, buy the Nifty 500 and go to sleep.

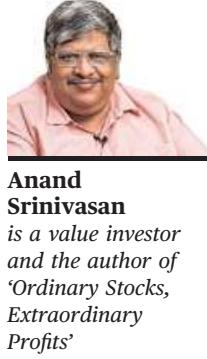
The difference between momentum investing and the Nifty strategy is we keep the Nifty and buy more of it when the index goes down. What makes the difference between following the Nifty strategy and the momentum strategy is that I have to pay a 2% fee to the manager. In the case of the Nifty, I have to pay only 0.05% to the manager. This fee difference makes a big difference over a period of 10 or more years.

AJ: The S&P 500 is also similar to a momentum portfolio. It is rebalanced four times in a year instead of two times as is the case with the Nifty. And in the last decade, 200 companies have gone out of S&P 500 and 100 new companies have come into the index, so it is a beautiful momentum portfolio. Additionally, there is over 200 years of data showing that momentum as a factor has beaten other factors such as value and growth.

How do you see the markets going forward?

AS: I see this bubble continuing to play out depending on two things. One is inflationary expectations because inflation expectations will determine when the U.S. Federal Reserve will raise interest rates. If U.S. President Joe Biden allows inflation to run to 7% or 8%, then he may be forced to bring it down, and the Fed will be forced to apply the brakes very quickly. If this episode of inflation turns out to be transitory, the current momentum in stocks will continue for a year or so. It all depends on the inflation trajectory.

AJ: The inflation bogey is upon us, and I don't foresee inflation dying out. More than inflation, real interest rates need to be watched, because a nominal interest rate rise may also get absorbed in the market. It will take some external event probably for the U.S. Fed to change course. So, the current trend seems par for the course.



Anand Srinivasan
is a value investor and the author of 'Ordinary Stocks, Extraordinary Profits'



Alok Jain
is a SEBI-registered investment adviser and a momentum investor at weekendinvesting dot com



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

A star who stood his ground

Unlike today's Bollywood actors, Dilip Kumar never withheld from speaking his mind

KUNAL RAY

The recent demise of thespian Dilip Kumar has led to an outpouring of grief on social media and quite rightly so. The nation has just lost one of its most consummate actors who will always be cherished for his versatility. While reminiscing his work, people will discuss *Daag*, *Naya Daur*, *Madhumati*, *Sagina Mahato*, *Shakti* and other films. Though he had retired from acting and was ailing for a long time, his presence served as a reminder of a sensibility that has now come to elude the contemporary Hindi film industry.

Standing up for causes
Kumar was a successful actor, a superstar so to speak who never withheld from speaking his mind or endorsing the causes that he believed in, most of which were humanitarian. He was regularly involved in relief work during the various riots that rocked Mumbai. He stood resolute with Deepa Mehta when she was vilified and attacked during the release of her controversial film, *Fire*. Kumar frequently spoke against and denounced acts of fascism and majoritarianism.

He was regularly involved in relief work during the various riots that rocked Mumbai. He stood resolute with Deepa Mehta when she was vilified and attacked during the release of her controversial film, *Fire*. Kumar frequently spoke against and denounced acts of fascism and majoritarianism.

Far from reality

The ongoing pandemic has further radicalised our viewing habits. With a surge of OTT platforms, there is a new access and heightened awareness amongst the mainstream Hindi cinema audience about other Indian film cultures such as Tamil and Malayalam.

New as well as old films are released and available on these platforms. Watching Malayalam and Tamil cinemas specifically alongside contemporary Hindi cinema has made audiences realise that the larger questions and concerns facing the country are perhaps posed in those film cultures beyond the glamour citadel of Mumbai whose cinema seems to be increasingly irrelevant to the reality of contemporary India. Contemporary Hindi cinema has nothing to compare with films like *Karnan* or *Veyilmarangal*. Purely fantasy-based escapist cinema can never outperform cinema confronting the real.

What will Hindi cinema do when this realisation dawns upon its audiences? May be Kumar's death could be reckoned as a wake-up call to attempt necessary course correction.



Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune

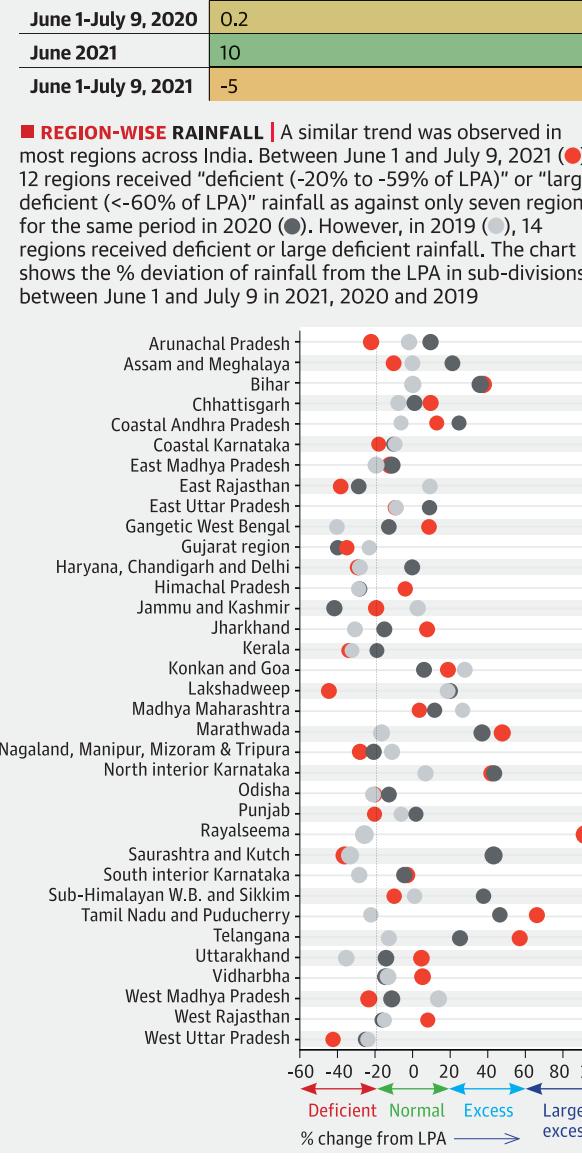
DATA POINT

Poor rains hamper sowing

Rainfall during the southwest monsoon reduced sharply in July compared to June, impacting the sowing of major Kharif crops. The deficit in rainfall is high in West Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Gujarat, the Saurashtra and Kutch regions, and Kerala this year and has reduced the area sown by more than 10% until July 9, 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. The area sown under paddy, coarse cereals, pulses and oil seeds decreased significantly across many States compared to the last five years. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumant Sen and Jasmin Nihalani

SLOW MOVING | In June 2021, India received 10% more rainfall than the long period average (LPA) due to the southwest monsoon. However, this reduced in the final days of June and early July. As a result, the cumulative rainfall received between June 1 and July 9 was 5% less than the LPA. While the deficit in 2021 was more than 2020 in the considered period, it was still better than 2019

REGION-WISE RAINFALL | A similar trend was observed in most regions across India. Between June 1 and July 9, 2021 (●), 12 regions received "deficit (-20% to -59% of LPA)" or "large deficit (<-60% of LPA)" rainfall as against only seven regions for the same period in 2020 (○). However, in 2019 (●), 14 regions received deficient or large deficient rainfall. The chart shows the % deviation of rainfall from the LPA in sub-divisions between June 1 and July 9 in 2021, 2020 and 2019



STATE-WISE SOWN AREA | The table lists the % change in area sown till July 9, 2021 compared to the average area sown in the 2016-2020 period for select States. States where the area sown in 2021 has decreased compared to the average are coloured red. For instance, in 11 States, the sown area for paddy this year was lower than the average area between 2016 and 2020. The average area reduced in 10, 9 and 11 States for coarse cereals, pulses, and oil seeds, respectively

% change in sown area from avg. of 2016-2020

State	Paddy	Coarse cereals	Pulses	Oilseeds
Bihar	-43.18	-26.43	-51.32	-78.81
A.P	-41.12	-51.20	-84.02	-72.55
Odisha	-38.41	-20.24	-12.95	-12.86
Rajasthan	-37.96	-51.22	-48.69	-21.28
West Bengal	-33.96	8.59	-50.15	-11.11
Jharkhand	-22.05	-37.23	-3.72	-14.23
Gujarat	-19.71	-31.92	13.47	30.98
Haryana	-18.04	-66.97	161.90	171.22
Karnataka	-16.56	24.13	21.57	14.82
Chhattisgarh	-12.57	2.97	22.77	-43.97

FROM PAGE ONE

'Why do you need the colonial law of sedition?'

The CJI drew the attention of the Attorney General to the conviction rates under sedition. "If you look at the history of use of this Section 124A of IPC, you will find that the conviction rate is very low. There is misuse of power by executive agencies," the Chief Justice said.

The CJI asked the government why it did not throw out the sedition law along with the hundreds of "stale laws" it had expunged from the statute books. "Your government is taking out a lot of stale laws from the law books, why have they not looked into this," Chief Justice Ramana asked Mr. Venugopal. People had suffered and were scared of the misuse of the sedition law, Chief Justice Ramana said.

"We are not blaming any particular government or State. But do look at how Section 66A of the Information Technology Act is continuing to be used... How many unfortunate people have suffered? And there is no accountability for all this..." he noted.

'People are scared'
The CJI said the sweeping powers of Section 124A gives even a village police officer carte blanche to trample on the right to liberty and free speech of ordinary citizens.

"If a police officer wants to fix anybody in a village for something, he can use Section 124A... People are scared. Our concern is misuse of the law and the lack of accountability. Why has it continued in the statute book even after 75 years of our Independence," Chief Justice Ramana asked the government's law officers repeatedly.

The Chief Justice said the Supreme Court would "definitely look into this Section 124A".

"The situation on the ground is grave... If one party does not like what the

other is saying, Section 124A is used... It is a serious threat to the functioning of individuals and parties," Chief Justice Ramana noted.

Mr. Venugopal submitted that the court need not strike down Section 124A. "It is enough to see if there were any excesses in its use and limit the Section to its real purpose... That would be enough," Mr. Venugopal said.

The Bench issued notice to the Centre on a petition filed by retired Army General S.G. Vombatkere, represented by advocates P.B. Suresh and Prasanna S., to quash Section 124A.

In its order, the court has also issued notice to the government on a writ petition filed jointly by the Editors Guild of India and cartoonist Aseem Trivedi.

The Bench noted that two other petitions filed by Kishore Chandra Wangkemcha and M/s Aamoda Broadcasting Company Private Limited, the latter against the Andhra Pradesh government, was pending before the apex court. Both cases concerned sedition charges.

A Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit had issued notice in the Wangkemcha case. The Aamoda petition is before a Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud. The CJI Bench on Thursday said all these petitions posed "similar questions of law". The Bench ordered that the cases be listed before an appropriate Bench for hearing.

Meanwhile, senior journalist Arun Shourie and NGO Common Cause, both represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, has moved the Supreme Court to quash Section 124A. Their petition contended that a "presumption of constitutionality does not apply to pre-constitutional laws as those laws have been made by foreign legislature or body".

The Chief Justice said the Supreme Court would "definitely look into this Section 124A".

"The situation on the ground is grave... If one party does not like what the

Simpler drone rules in the offing

Govt. releases Draft Drone Rules, 2021, for public consultation until August 5

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Simplified drone rules, which abolish the need for a large number of approvals and give impetus to research and development, are in the offing in the country.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday released the Draft Drone Rules, 2021, for public consultation until August 5.

The rules will replace the Unmanned Aircraft System Rules, 2021, notified on March 12, 2021.

"The intent is to make the rules user-friendly and to encourage drone research and development. This is another important step towards realising the vision of India as a drone hub," said Amber Dubey, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, and head of the drones division.

"Drones are bringing the next big tech revolution around the globe with reduced costs, resources and time taken for operations. It is upon us to ride on the new



Giving a lift: Fresh regulations abolish the need for large number of approvals. ■REUTERS

wave and facilitate its uptake, especially among our start-ups," tweeted Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia.

The number of forms to be filled to seek authorisation before operating a drone has been reduced from 25 to six, according to a statement issued by the Mi-

nistry.

While most drones will need a unique identification number, a certificate of airworthiness, a remote pilot licence for the person controlling the drone and prior permission, no such appro-

vals will be required for drones used for research and development by entities and educational institutions recognised by the Union government, State governments or Union Territory Administrations, start-ups recognised by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and drone manufacturers having a Goods and Service Tax Identification Number.

Unlike the previous rules, which required drone operators to have a principal place of business within India, there are no such restric-

tions for foreign-owned companies registered in India in the new proposed rules.

Drones will also not need security clearance before registration or licence issuance.

The Quality Council of India and certification entities authorised by it will issue airworthiness certificates for drones, instead of the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation.

In order to encourage indigenous manufacturing, import of drones and drone components will be regulated by the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade. Moreover, the Union government may specify certain standards for obtaining a certificate of airworthiness for drones, which will promote the "use of made-in-India technologies, designs, components and drones; and India's regional navigation satellite system named Navigation with Indian Constellation [NavIC]," accord-

'2 million Indian accounts banned during May-June'

Focus on harmful messages: WhatsApp

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

WhatsApp banned two million Indian accounts to prevent harmful behaviour and spam on its platform between May 15 and June 15, according to the company's first monthly transparency report released on Thursday.

"Our top focus is preventing accounts from sending harmful or unwanted messages at scale. We maintain advanced capabilities to identify these accounts sending a high or abnormal rate of messages and banned 2 millions accounts in India alone from May 15 to June 15 attempting this kind of abuse," the platform said.

The company identifies an Indian account via +91 phone number.

Stating that more than 95% of such bans are due to the unauthorised use of automated or bulk messaging, the company added that these numbers have increased significantly since 2019 because its systems have increased in sophistication, and hence are detecting more accounts even as it believes there are more attempts to send bulk or automated messages.

"We ban the vast majority of these accounts proactively, without relying on any user reports," the Facebook-owned firm said. Globally, the monthly average of accounts banned or disabled on the platform is about 8 million. The company also received 345 grievances from users during the period relating to issues such as ban appeal, product support, account support and safety support. Of this, the company took remedial action in 63 instances. The majority of users who reach out to WhatsApp are either aiming to have their account restored following an action to ban them or reaching out for product or account support.

Indigenous faiths are fading away, says Sarma

Assam CM defends creation of dept.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday defended the State government's move to create a department for preserving indigenous faiths that were "fading away" due to the "preaching and professional management systems" of mainstream religions.

Replying to a Zero Hour notice in the State Assembly regarding the creation of the department, the Chief Minister said time, modernity and global religious communities have threatened the tribal belief systems," the Chief Minister said.

The indigenous faith and culture department would be allotted ₹100-crore in the first year.

faiths in Assam.

"The mandate of the new department, to be put under the joint control of the Directorates of Archaeology, Museum and History and Antiquarian Studies, will be to interact with the tribal people, study the folklores, customs and practices for ensuring these are not forgotten," he said.

"Sadly, the vicissitudes of time, modernity and global religious communities have threatened the tribal belief systems," the Chief Minister said.

The indigenous faith and culture department would be allotted ₹100-crore in the first year.

On the draw



Jaishankar meets Ghani, discusses Taliban

They focus on advances by the militia within days of the U.S. and NATO troop pull-out from Baghram

SUHASINI HAIDAR
TASHKENT



Worrying situation: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday. ■PTI

troops' pull-out from the Baghram airbase this month.

The Afghan president's office said that Mr. Jaishankar had also promised to continue India's humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, with a gift of 150,000 tonnes of

dealing with the Taliban that have claimed several key towns and border checkpost areas in the last week.

This was the first high-level meeting between Delhi and Kabul since the government decided to pull out all Indian personnel from the Consulate in Kandahar. Internal assessments have suggested that while the Taliban has not been successful in moving in to many more populated cities, it will seek to control Kandahar, which was its traditional base. Officials said President Ghani was "determined" to take back some of the strategic areas taken over by the Taliban.

Mr. Jaishankar also met U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall and U.S. Special Representative on Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, who are attending the conference, and are understood to be discussing the possibility of an American military base in one of the Central Asian countries, including in Uzbekistan, where the U.S. had shut down its Karshi-Khanabad base in 2009.

Mr. Jaishankar said he had exchanged views on the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

In his speech on Friday, Mr. Jaishankar is expected to speak about the importance of security in the region for connectivity to prosper, including an end to terrorist safe havens and support cross border terrorism.

IN BRIEF



PM meets Kovind, briefs him on important issues

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called on President Ram Nath Kovind. "Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi called on President Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan and briefed him on important issues," the official handle of the Rashtrapati Bhavan

tweeted. This comes ahead of the monsoon session.

'Plea by Bhima Koregaon accused is fallacious'

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Thursday told the Bombay High Court that the plea challenging the order of extending the period of filing a chargesheet in the Bhima Koregaon violence case by the sessions court is "fallacious". The court was hearing a petition filed by activist Sudha Bharadwaj, along with other accused. The arguments will continue on July 23.

Malegaon blasts: NIA may reduce witnesses

MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday told the Bombay High Court that it will consider reducing the number of witnesses in the 2008 Malegaon blasts trial. The court was hearing a petition filed by Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Purohit, who is an accused in the case.

Five held for damaging Deputy Speaker's car

CHANDIGARH

After invoking sedition charges among other allegations against a group of protesters, who allegedly damaged the official car of Haryana Deputy Speaker Ranbir Gangwar in Sirsa recently, the police arrested five persons on Thursday. The incident happened during a protest against farm laws.

Fault lines within the Punjab Cong. widen

Amarinder, Sidhu meet supporters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The fault lines within the Punjab Congress were exposed on Thursday with Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh and former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu holding separate meetings with their supporters after reports emerged that Mr. Sidhu could be the next Punjab Congress chief.

The party is yet to officially announce its formula to broker peace between the Chief Minister and Mr. Sidhu, but the All India Congress Committee in-charge for Punjab, Harish Rawat, told a news channel that a formula had been worked out around Mr. Sidhu as the new Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief, while

the Chief Minister met his supporters even as his camp made it clear that Capt. Singh continued to oppose the idea of two Jat Sikhs (Mr. Sidhu and himself) leading both the government and the party. The Chief Minister is said to have made this clear to the high command.

Separately, Mr. Sidhu is learnt to have met the MLAs who are backing him.

Gira Sarabhai passes away

She played a crucial role in setting up several institutions

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD



Gira Sarabhai, co-founder of the renowned National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad and a pioneer of design education in India, passed away here on Thursday. She played a crucial role in setting up several other institutions and contributed immensely in the field of art and architecture.

With her brother Gautam Sarabhai, she founded the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad; the B.M. Institute of Mental Health; and several institutes of the Gujarat University – well known.

The eighth child of Ambalal and Saraladevi Sarabhai, Gira had no formal education as she was homeschooled before she moved to the U.S., where she was trained at the famous Taliesin West Studio in Arizona with noted architect and designer Frank Lloyd Wright.

"The last of the Sarabhais from papa's generation just passed away. My aunt Gira, who built up the extraordinary textile museum, one of the best in the world," noted dancer and Gira's niece, Mallika Sarabhai, posted on Facebook.

NHRC panel seeks CBI probe into Bengal riots

The panel concluded that the police and government officials had been found lacking. "It is quite evident that police is working under influence and in a biased manner and do not have the courage to take action against looming goons belonging to the ruling dispensation," the report said.

The panel said out of the 9,304 people accused in the cases, only 14% had been arrested.

The committee also added that it found victims hesitant to speak during its 311 spot visits in the State, with some even reporting being threatened after meet-

ing with the NHRC teams. Several victims also complained that they were being discriminated against in getting vaccination for COVID-19 because they were perceived to be supporters of the main Opposition party," the report said.

Among the heinous crimes alleged following the completion of Assembly election in May, the panel said women in Kenboma village reported that "police along with Trinamool Congress goons broke into their houses at midnight" on May 23 and they were taken into custody "in semi-nude condition".

SC sends strong message to government

Chief Justice indicates that Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code may have passed its time

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana's remarks in open court on Thursday sends a strong message to the government that the Supreme Court is *prima facie* convinced that sedition is being misused by the authorities to trample upon citizens' fundamental rights of free speech and liberty.

The Chief Justice has sent a clear signal that Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code may have passed its time.

The CJI has made it clear that the court is sensitive to the public demand to judicially review the manner in which law enforcement authorities are using the sedition law to control free speech and send journalists, activists and dissenters to jail, and keep them there.

In a way, the court has questioned the need for the continuance of Section 124A – a colonial provision which

was used to jail the Mahatma – in the law books of a modern democracy. This is a step away from the court's own *Kedar Nath* judgment of 1962 which had upheld Section 124A but read it down to mean any subversion of an elected government by violent means. The court will have to re-examine whether this 59-year-old judgment holds in the modern context when the State is itself using a punitive law to impose serious burdens on free speech.

The CJI's reference to low conviction rates under the sedition law resonates with a petition filed by senior journalist Sashi Kumar, highlighting the "dramatic jump" in charging a person with the offence of sedition since 2016.

In 2019, 93 cases were on the ground of sedition as compared to the 35 cases that were filed in 2016. The same constitutes a 165% increase. Of these 93 cases,



N.V. Ramana

chargesheets were filed in a mere 17% of cases and even worse, the conviction rate was an abysmally low 3.3%," Mr. Kumar, represented by advocate Kaleeswaram Raj, noted.

The National Crime Records Bureau reports show that in 2019, 21 cases of sedition were closed on account of no evidence, two were closed for being false cases and six cases held to be civil disputes. Mr. Kumar referred to the sedition cases registered against climate activist

Disha Ravi, filmmaker Aisha Sultana and journalists Vinod Dua and Siddique Kappan.

'Defining limits'

The CJI's observations culminates the resolve shown by the court in recent months to examine the sedition law.

In May, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said "it is time to define the limits of sedition". The judge had flagged the indiscriminate use of the sedition law against people who aired their grievances about the government's COVID management, or even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic.

"This is muzzling the media," Justice L. Nageswara Rao, another Supreme Court judge, had noted while considering a plea made by two TV channels, TV5 and ABN, against the Andhra Pradesh government for using the se-

dition law to "silence" them. The CJI Bench issued notice on Thursday to the government on a petition filed by the Editors Guild of India to quash the sedition law. Senior journalist Arun Shourie has also challenged the constitutionality of Section 124A.

Justice U.U. Lalit, in his recent judgment quashing a sedition case against Mr. Dua for his alleged remarks about the Prime Minister and the Union Government in a YouTube telecast, upheld the right of every journalist to criticise, even brutally, the measures of the government with a view to improve or alter them through legal means.

The time is long past when the mere criticism of governments was sufficient to constitute sedition. The right to utter honest and reasonable criticism is a source of strength to a community rather than a weakness, the judgment recorded.

Hold byelections to vacant seats, Trinamool urges EC

COVID-19 cases have fallen in West Bengal, delegation says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A six-member delegation of the Trinamool Congress met the Election Commission on Thursday, urging it to hold the byelections to the seven vacant Assembly seats in West Bengal.

The delegation, in a memorandum, argued that the number of COVID-19 cases at present was 17 times lower than that in April-May when the Assembly election was held.

It is crucial for the Trinamool Congress that the by-elections are held before November for Mamata Banerjee to continue as the Chief Minister.

Article 164(4) of the Con-



Strong demand: Trinamool members after the meeting with the Election Commissioner in New Delhi. •PTI

sition states: "A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of the Legislature of the State shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister."

Ms. Banerjee lost the Nadigram seat by a margin of 1,956 votes. She took oath on May 5 and has till November 5 as per law.

She was hoping to get elected from the Bhabanipur seat, her home constituency which was vacated by Trinamool leader Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay.

Notice issued to 3 MPs under anti-defection law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has issued notices to MPs Sisir Adhikari, Sunil Kumar Mondal and K. Raghu Rama Krishna Raju under the anti-defection law.

Mr. Adhikari and Mr. Mondal had switched over to the BJP from the Trinamool Congress, while YSR Congress Party's Mr. Raju has been speaking against the party's supremo. The Trinamool Congress and the YSRCP had approached Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, seeking their disqualification. The three leaders have been asked to respond within 15 days of the receipt of letters, a source told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

The timing of the notices are significant as it not only comes just days before the Parliament session but also

ahead of a proposed visit by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to Delhi later this month. The ruling YSR Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh had questioned the delay as well as the neutrality of the Speaker.

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Birla had explained the procedure.

"They [TMC] have written to me with their complaints. I have said that the complaint be taken on board as per 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," Mr. Birla had said.

"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," he added.

Mamata to visit Delhi to meet 'old and new friends'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said she will visit Delhi during the monsoon session of Parliament and meet "many old and new friends".

"I have not visited Delhi since the [West Bengal Assembly] election. This was because of the prevailing COVID-19 situation in the State. Now the situation has vastly improved. Usually I visit when Parliament is in session and meet many old and new friends," she said.

She did not confirm the date of her visit, but said if time permitted, she would call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Kovind.

The visit assumes significance as leaders of several Opposition parties are holding discussions on the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The development also comes at a time when the recent meeting between poll strategist Prashant Kishor with the Congress leadership has triggered a lot of speculation in the political circles. Mr. Kishor

or was engaged by the Trinamool Congress in the 2021 Assembly election.

The Chief Minister also wondered why the NHRC report on post-poll violence in the State was leaked to the media. She said the pre-poll violence was being projected as post-poll violence. "When the court gives us time, we will file affidavit and give our opinion. Instead of giving report to the court, they have leaked it outside. They should at least respect the court. The hearing has just started. We from the govern-

ment have to give our opinion." She said the report was misleading and leaking it amounted to political vendetta because the BJP had lost the election in the State.

The Chief Minister said the Election Commission had sought the State government's opinion on holding polls to two Rajya Sabha seats from the Allahabad High Court in Uttar Pradesh two years ago.

"Our Chief Secretary has replied that the situation here is conducive to holding both the Rajya Sabha polls and also bypolls to seven Assembly seats," she said.

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Vaccination drive affected in Meerut

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

After local media reports suggested that the vaccination drive has been affected in the last 2-3 days in the Meerut-Saharanpur zone because of the paucity of vaccine doses, local officials said it was not a matter of concern.

"The supply has been erratic in the last few days but we will make up in the coming days," said R.K. Tandon, Chief Medical Officer, Baghpat.

Fifteen out of 60 centres reportedly ran out of stock in the district but officials refrain from talking in specifics. "It depends on supply. On some days we achieve 70-80% of the target on others, we inject 10% over the target," said Dr. Tandon.

In Meerut, 22 of 61 centres reportedly ran out of stock in the last couple of days.

"I can't confirm or deny it. We inject whatever we get from the State. In the last few days, the demand has increased," said Praveen Gautam, vaccination officer, Meerut.

Vaccines to be moved quickly at terminals

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

To expedite the release of COVID-19 vaccines imported into the country, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has put in place a COVID Response Plan at all major airports, with dedicated teams to fast-track vaccines' evacuation at each air cargo terminal.

The import and export of COVID-19 vaccines through courier services has also been permitted without any value limit, through amendments to the Courier Imports and Exports (Electronic Declaration and Processing) Regulations, that prescribed limits on the value of goods that could be brought in through courier.

"As the vaccines would be transported through special containers equipped with temperature monitoring and tracking devices, provision has also been made for their duty-free temporary admission," the Board said in a statement, adding that a Standard Operating Protocol (SOP) was being developed for the instant release of vaccines from airports.

According to the plan, teams would plan their schedules so that there was adequate personnel working around the clock.

Partial lockdown extended by another two weeks in Odisha

Restrictions relaxed to a great extent as test positivity rate comes down

STAFF REPORTER
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government on Thursday extended the partial lockdown in 10 districts by another two weeks till August 1.

The lockdown restrictions have, however, been relaxed to a great extent. The test positivity rate which was around 5% around July 1, has come down to 3%.

Last time, the restrictions were imposed differently in 30 districts – 20 districts comprising western and southern districts in Category A and 10 coastal districts in Category B.

"Even now, the TPR continues to be high in some districts such as Khordha, Cuttack and Puri in Category-B. Around July 1, about 3,000 cases used to be detected daily. Now, it has dropped to 2,000. Of them 70-80% are reported from category-B districts," said Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra.

"Cases detected from Khordha and Cuttack dis-



Women fish-sellers sitting beside a wall painting advocating wearing of masks in Bhubaneswar. ■ FILE PHOTO

tricts constitute 40% of the State's caseload. There has not been any improvement in the pandemic situation as was expected," said Mr. Mohapatra.

Keeping the livelihood of people in mind, shops have been allowed to remain open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. in 20 Category-A districts, where the TPR and reporting of daily cases were relatively low. There will be no weekend shutdown there. Besides, the night curfew will

be from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Similarly, the duration for keeping shops open has been extended by four hours in Category-B districts. Now,

shops will remain open from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. instead of

present 6 a.m.-2 p.m. window. Both weekend shutdown and night curfew will be in force in the 10 coastal districts.

In an important announcement, the government has allowed operation of bus services in all districts within

the State, except Puri where the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath is celebrated. There will be no bus service in Puri till July 25. The government has, however, not allowed any inter-State bus service. Taxi and auto-rickshaw services have been restored in the fifth lockdown.

Spas allowed to open

Similarly, beauty parlours, spas, saloons and gyms have been allowed to open. They have been asked to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Outdoor sports activities can be organised without spectators. Outdoor and indoor film shootings have been allowed.

Restrictions for educational institutes, parks, malls, cinema halls, exhibition, theatres, weddings and death rituals remain.

Cautioning people to wear mask and maintain physical distance, Mr. Mohapatra said there were reports of people contracting virus even after being fully vaccinated as was seen in Bhubaneswar.

Health Ministry tells States to scale up bed numbers

Facilities in paediatric hospitals to be improved

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry on Thursday stressed the need to ramp up COVID-19 testing, tracking, treating and isolation strategy, and directed the State governments to increase the number of beds including in paediatric care and makeshift hospitals at the sub-district level.

The Ministry reviewed the preparations under the recently approved ₹23,123-crore "India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package: Phase II" with Health Secretaries and senior officials of the States and the Union Territories.

"In the meeting stakeholders were also asked to ensure availability of critical drugs, testing kits and PPEs besides enhancing oxygen availability and strengthening home and village/community isolation centres/COVID care centres," said the Ministry. A quick gap analysis on infrastructure components was advised.



Key step: The States are setting up paediatric wards to fight a potential third wave of the pandemic. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

No application received yet for Covishield authorisation: EMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has not received any application from the Serum Institute of India for authorisation of Covishield.

The comment from the agency came a fortnight after the EU introduced the EU Digital Covid Certificate (EUDCC), also known as the

"green pass" that makes intra-EU travel possible.

"We confirm that we have not received a marketing authorisation application for Covishield," said Salvador Ruiz Carrillo de Albornoz, Press Officer of EMA.

India's Covishield vaccine, which is based on AstraZeneca's formula, is not among the authorised vaccines under the EMA.

Delta Plus variants found in less than 1% of samples

INSACOG has sequenced 42,869 coronavirus genomes

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The Delta Plus variants constituted less than 1% of coronavirus samples that were sequenced in India in June and continuing outbreaks in India were primarily being led by the Delta variant, said a report from the India Sarscov2 Genome Consortium (INSACOG).

The Delta variant (B.1.617.2) as of Thursday constituted 88% of the nearly 1,300 coronavirus samples genome-sequenced in June, a little more than in May when they made up 87% of the nearly 8,700 samples sequenced. The decline in samples processed in June, a scientist familiar with the sequencing told *The Hindu*, was because it often took a few weeks before samples for a particular month were processed.

"Delta sub-lineages AY.1 and AY.2 are declining globally with near zero cases in the last week of June in either the U.K. or the U.S., where they were most frequently seen. They also continue to be below 1% in available sequences from June in India. It is likely that neither AY.1 nor AY.2 is more transmissible than Delta," the INSACOG noted in a July 9 release that has just been made public.

According to the plan, teams would plan their schedules so that there was adequate personnel working around the clock.



Keeping track: Variants are globally monitored for increased infectivity and resistance to vaccines. ■ FILE PHOTO

blic. "Meanwhile AY.3 has been identified as a new Delta sub-lineage. It is primarily seen in the U.S. with single reclassified cases in the U.K. and India. There are no known significant properties of this mutation, but since it is a Delta VOC sub-lineage, INSACOG will continue to monitor it."

The INSACOG has, as of Thursday, sequenced 42,869 coronavirus genomes from India. The 10-lab consortium primarily tracks international variants of concern (VOC) namely the Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta (and their sub-lineages) variants.

These are the variants globally monitored for the increased infectivity and resistance to vaccination or

treatments. It also scans for variants of interest (VOI), which have not yet become serious enough to warrant more stringent surveillance.

As of Thursday, 13 States had provided over 1,000 samples to the various INSACOG labs for analysis with Maharashtra having provided the most (7,868) followed by Delhi (5,353) and Kerala (4,721).

The Alpha variant prevalence, the INSACOG said, has declined further in India and globally and Beta was also seen at "very low levels" in India. The Gamma and Lambda variants had also not been seen in over 10,000 community samples sequenced by INSACOG since May.

INTERVIEW | PRATIMA MURTHY

'Children have shown resilience'

But lack of physical activities can affect them, says the Director of NIMHANS

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

Pratima Murthy, Director, NIMHANS, Bengaluru, says mental health needs to be addressed at the individual, societal level, and policy level. She discusses the implications of the pandemic on mental health. Excerpts:

COVID-19, an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, has affected people in various ways – financially, physically, emotionally. What kind of myriad mental health issues has it led to?

Initially, people's fears were about contracting the infection. They feared going out. There were worries about what kind of mask and protection was adequate. There were fears of contamination and people started sanitising all grocery items. Subsequently, once it was clear that chances of surface transmission of the virus were uncommon this fear subsided. But then during the second wave, the virus affected a lot more people; entire families got infected. It created panic.

Then, generally, when a person is sick, family members rally around that person and provide a lot of care and support. Similarly, in case of death, family and friends come together to provide support to the ag-

grieved family. There are several rituals that take place, which in a way help deal with the loss. Lack of social support particularly during grief is very psychologically distressing.

So, a lot of people are finding it difficult to come out of the trauma, some are facing repeated panic attacks.

How has the pandemic affected the psycho-social health of children?

Children have perhaps shown the maximum amount of resilience as they are ones who had to make the maximum amount of change – they have not been able to go to school; they had to adjust to the new online medium of education; then there are a large number of children who have no or limited access to even online education.

We held a painting competition for children to explore how they managed the lockdown. Though the paintings of some children reflected the loneliness and isolation they experienced during the first lockdown, paintings of most children were positive and hopeful. They admired the frontline workers; created pictures on how they were playing indoor games and doing a lot many activities with family members. But when confine-



Lack of social support particularly during grief is very psychologically distressing

ment became protracted, it became difficult for children to adjust to what we call the new normal.

Older children faced uncertainty regarding their academic future. Lack of access to a lot of developmental activities, especially for children who were out of school, or those in vulnerable populations can certainly affect their mental well-being.

Another worry is too much exposure to consumer technology. During this prolonged confinement at home, children have started using technology for non-academic purposes, which can expose them to other influences such as gaming, gambling, pornography. Lack of physical activities,

peer interaction, social gatherings can affect their physical development and cultural competency.

Mental health seems to be emerging as a big concern. How can it be tackled knowing very well that not many people seek help for mental illness in the country?

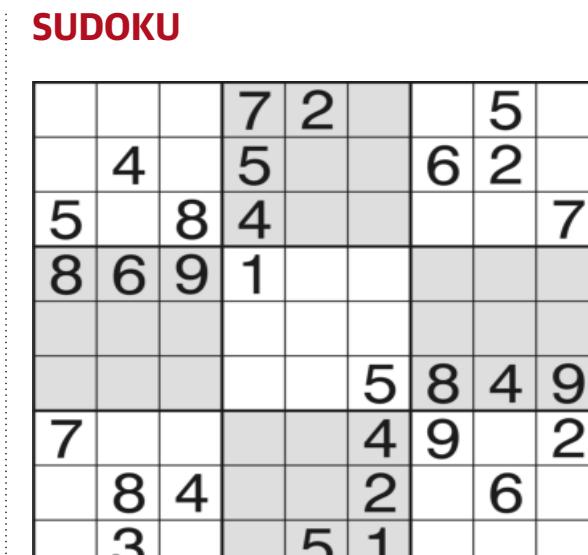
There has always been a gap between the need and treatment for mental illness. Somehow, people never felt comfortable talking about their emotionality. And I think now that there is a greater awareness of more aspects of mental health among wider population, we too need to address it at an individual level, at the societal level, and at the policy level.

First, people need to realise that just like the way they seek medical help for their physical illness, they need to seek help when they feel mentally distressed. Then, they also have to learn the ways to de-stress their mind, to deal with stressful situations.

Then, mental healthcare must be integrated with physical healthcare. In fact, government's District Mental Health Programme is a step in this direction.

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

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13301

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

R	E	L	A	P	S	E	D	C	H	O	I	C	E
E	O	O	X	E	N	L							
S	A	U	E	P	A	N	H	S	S	L			
A	U	T	G	E	N	L							
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FAITH

Rajas and tamas

Lord Krishna tells Uddhava that a person with the guna of rajas has certain characteristics, said P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. He has kaama (desire), eehaa (puts in a lot of effort), mada (arrogance), trishna (has great desires), sthabha (pride), aaheehi (asks the Lord for wealth), bhida (looks down on others), sukha (

Taliban offer truce for prisoner release

A 3-month ceasefire proposed; Pakistan confirms militants have seized Spin Boldak border crossing

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

The Taliban have offered a three-month ceasefire in exchange for the release of 7,000 insurgent prisoners, an Afghan government negotiator said on Thursday, as Pakistan confirmed the militant group had control of a key border crossing.

"It is a big demand," said Nader Nadery, a key member of the government team involved in peace talks with the Taliban, adding the insurgents also demanded the removal of their leaders' names from a United Nations blacklist. It was not clear how the government would react to the ceasefire offer, or how new it was, and it comes as the U.S. accelerates the pace of a troop withdrawal due to be finished by August 31.

A spokesman for the Taliban said he was only aware



Growing tensions: Stranded people gather at the Pakistani border town of Chaman on Wednesday. • AFP

of the suggestion of a ceasefire over the forthcoming Eid al-Adha holiday. Mr. Nadery's revelation came as Pakistan security forces used tear gas on Thursday to disperse hundreds of people who tried to force their way across the border from Chaman to Spin Boldak in Afghanistan.

On Thursday, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry confirmed the border crossing was in

the hands of the Taliban. "They have taken control of Spin Boldak border crossing," said Ministry spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, a day after the Taliban seized the town.

The border was closed on Wednesday by Pakistan officials after the Taliban seized Spin Boldak. "An unruly mob of about 400 people tried to cross the gate forcefully. They threw stones,

U.K. will work with Taliban'

REUTERS

Britain will work with the Taliban should they enter the government in Afghanistan, British Defence Minister Ben Wallace told the *Daily Telegraph* in an interview. "Whatever the government of the day is,

which forced us to use tear gas," said a security official on the Pakistan side.

He said around 1,500 people had gathered at the border on Wednesday waiting to cross. Jumadad Khan, a senior government official in Chaman, said the situation was now "under control".

An Afghan Taliban source told AFP that hundreds of people had also gathered on the Afghan side, hoping to

provided it adheres to certain international norms, the U.K. government will engage with it," he was quoted as saying. However, Mr. Wallace warned that Britain will review any relationship "if they behave in a way that is seriously against human rights".

travel in the other direction. "A formal meeting to open the border is scheduled for today, and hopefully, it will open in a day or two," he said. Later on Thursday, a Pakistan official said the border would open on Friday.

The crossing provides direct access to the Balochistan province in Pakistan, where the Taliban's leadership has been based for decades.

China to send team to Pak. for bus blast investigation

But the country refrains from calling it a 'bomb attack'

REUTERS

BEIJING

China said on Thursday it will send a team to Pakistan to help investigate a blast on a bus that killed 13 people, including nine Chinese workers, after it backed away from an earlier assertion that the explosion was a bomb attack.

Zhao Lijian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, told a regular briefing that China would cooperate closely with Pakistan in the investigation.

Wednesday's blast sent



The blast, which killed 13 people, sent the bus crashing into a ravine.

Initiative. China is a close ally and major investor in neighbouring Pakistan, and various anti-Pakistani government militants have in the past attacked Chinese projects.

On Wednesday, Mr. Zhao had called the blast a "bomb attack" but Pakistan said a mechanical failure caused a

gas leak that led to the explosion.

Senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi met Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and urged Pakistan to investigate the blast but he stopped short of calling it an attack, according to a post on Thursday on the Chinese Foreign Ministry's website. But Mr. Wang told Mr. Qureshi that if it was indeed a "terrorist attack", Pakistan should immediately arrest the culprits and punish them.

Mr. Wang, who is China's State Councillor and Foreign Minister, said "lessons should be learned" and both sides should strengthen security measures for China-Pakistan cooperation projects to ensure their safe and smooth operation.

China to ban unvaccinated adults from schools, hospitals

Notices have been issued in several cities and counties

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

Millions of Chinese people face bans from public spaces, including schools, hospitals and shopping malls, unless they get a COVID-19 vaccine, under new rules covering nearly two dozen cities and counties.

COVID-19 first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, but since then, the country has largely brought it under control, and Beijing is determined to keep it that way.

The new rules, which follow the emergence of the highly contagious Delta variant across Asia, will be im-



China aims to inoculate 64% of its population by the end of next year.

posed on numerous second-tier cities in a possible marker of what is to come for the whole country. China has a national target of inoculating 64% of its 1.4 billion population by end of the year.

In Chuxiong city in the southern province of Yunnan, all residents above the

age of 18 need to get at least one dose of the vaccine by July 23, according to a government notice. Those who fail to meet the deadline "will not be allowed to enter public facilities including hospitals, nursing homes, kindergartens and schools, libraries, museums, and prisons or take public transport". A month later, two shots will be required.

Similar notices were issued in at least a dozen cities and counties across the country, including six in eastern Jiangxi province, one in Sichuan, one in Guangxi and three in Fujian province.

Nature's fury



Battered down: A destroyed road next to the Ahr river in a flood-affected area in Schuld, Germany, on Thursday. Heavy rains and floods have killed at least 45 people in the country and left many more missing. • REUTERS

'General feared Trump's Reichstag-style takeover'

Book cites Mark Milley's comments

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The Pentagon's top General feared late last year that then-president Donald Trump would abrogate the Constitution to retain power in a move resembling Adolf Hitler's 1933 Reichstag takeover, according to a new book.

Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley saw Mr. Trump's refusal to accept defeat to Joe Biden in the November election as a possible sign that he intended to retain power by any means, according to excerpts from the book by Washington Post reporters Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker that were reported by the *Post* and *CNN* on Thursday.

"This is a Reichstag moment ... The gospel of the Führer," Mr. Milley told Pentagon aides, the authors re-

port. In 1933, Hitler took advantage of a suspicious fire at the Reichstag, the German Parliament, to suspend civil liberties and concentrate authority in his government, setting the stage for the Nazi consolidation of power.

When Mr. Trump called for a march on Washington by supporters in November, Mr. Milley expressed worries that he was deploying "brownshirts in the streets", the book says, referring to Hitler's violent followers. And as Mr. Trump persisted in claiming, with no evidence, that there was poll fraud and planned another rally on January 6, when his followers attacked the Congress, Mr. Milley schemed with other top officials to resign, one by one, to signal that they would not go along with any coup by the outgoing president.

Polish judicial reforms illegal, rules EU court

Warsaw has set up a disciplinary chamber at the Supreme Court in a sweeping overhaul of judiciary

REUTERS

BRUSSELS/WARSAW

The European Union's (EU) top court ruled on Thursday that Poland's system for disciplining judges undercuts the bloc's laws, part of an escalating battle over democratic rules that risks Warsaw losing some of its key deve-

lopment funding.

Poland's ruling nationalists set up a disciplinary chamber at the Supreme Court in a sweeping overhaul of the judiciary already condemned by the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg and the bloc's Brussels-based executive, which acts

as the guardian of laws across the 27 member states.

Reinforcing that, the ECJ ruled that the chamber "does not provide all the guarantees of impartiality and independence, and, in particular, is not protected from the direct or indirect influence of the Polish legisla-

tive and executive".

The ECJ had already told Warsaw to immediately stop all proceedings at the disciplinary chamber but Poland's top court said on Wednesday the demand ran counter to its constitution and the country should not comply. "It is an obvious

conclusion for any Polish citizen that the constitution is the highest legal act," Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters on Thursday. Both he and Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro said they considered the EU stance to be politically motivated.

Cuba allows travellers to bring in food duty-free

PM announces decision in TV address

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HAVANA

Travellers arriving in Cuba can now bring in food, medicine and other essentials without paying customs, the government said Wednesday in a concession to angry and unprecedented street protests. Prime Minister Manuel Marrero said in a televised address there would be no limit placed on these

goods coming in and the change will be in effect until the end of the year.

Cubans took to the streets on Sunday over economic hardship marked by shortages of food, electricity and other essentials. One of the demands was for people arriving in Cuba to be able to bring in food, medicine and personal hygiene items without customs duties.

S. Africa calls up troops to crush looting

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

JOHANNESBURG

South Africa mustered its army reserves on Thursday in a bid to quell looting that has stoked fears of shortages and dealt a crippling blow to its already battered economy.

"All reserve members are to report for duty at first light tomorrow morning 15 July 2021 at their respective units," Army Chief Lieutenant-General Mbatha said in orders issued overnight as the unrest entered its sixth day. Soldiers should "report ready with their necessary equipment", the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

On Wednesday, the government said it would call out around 25,000 troops to tackle the emergency – 10 times the number that it initially deployed.

Police Minister Bheki Cele hailed the boost from the military, saying he was confident it would "turn around the volatile situation in parts of KwaZulu-Natal" province, the epicentre of the unrest.

The unrest began a day after former president Jacob Zuma – who commands support from some of the country's poor – began a 15-month jail term on four others for alleged use of forced labour in the region.

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Phone : +91 422 2422222, Fax : +91 422 2425706 Website : www.b-u.ac.in

PG ADMISSION - 2021 - 22

The last date for admission to various Post Graduate / Under Graduate Degree / Diploma / PG Diploma and Certificate Courses has been extended upto 31.07.2021. The admission will be based on the marks scored by the candidates in all the semesters as decided by Competent Authority. Those who had already applied earlier need not have to apply again. However they have to submit their final semester mark sheet through web portal.

PLEASE REFER OUR Website www.b-u.ac.in for complete details.

DIPR/584/Display/2021

REGISTRAR i/c

DIPL/584/Display/2021

LOOK OUT NOTICE

The person shown in the photograph named Smt. Gomathi, Age 33, W/o Ramayam, 102 Colony East Street, Eduthavaiadham P.O, Kallukuruchi Taluk, Villupuram, Tamilnadu is found missing since 02/03/2021. For the above, a case in Crime No. 73/2021 U/s 57 of KP Act 2011 & 75 of JJ Act 2015 was registered at Pattambi Police Station. If any information received about the missing person, please intimate the same to the nearest Police Station or with the following telephone numbers.

Pattambi Police Station : 04662212224
Inspector SHO, Pattambi PS : 9497987157

Sub Inspector of Police, Pattambi PS - 9497980625 (1124/F/2021/I&PRD)

ANDHRA PRADESH MARITIME BOARD 1st Floor, Port Admin. Building, Kakinada-533007.

ADVERTISEMENT

Tender Notice No.3/SE/DB/2021-22, Dt.14.07.2021 for the work of "Engaging the Professional Services of one Chief Surveyor and Two Surveyors on contract basis for the purpose of Surveying Inland Vessels in the Andhra Pradesh State."

The Qualification criteria can be downloaded from the website <https://www.ports.ap.gov.in> from 16.07.2021 and further details can be had from the undersigned. Contact Ph: 8985922645.

DPR 253/PI/CL, Dt. 15.07.2021
Sd/- Chief Executive Officer, APMB, Kakinada

KMF KARNATAKA COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LIMITED

KMF Complex: Dr.M.H.Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bengaluru – 560029

KMF/ENGG/DAIRY-purchase/2021-22 Date: 12.07.2021

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Karnataka Milk Federation Limited, Bangalore (KMF) intends to acquire a Milk Processing & Packing Dairy Plant at the following region on purchase basis. In this regard, KMF invites tender from eligible company/individuals who is owing the Dairy Plant through e-procurement portal under 2 cover system (Technical & Financial). The interested Dairy firms can participate in the tender by logging on to website : www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in and also contact Help desk E-mail : helpdesk.blr@intarvo.com & helpline no. 080-22371090, 22340060, 22340948.

"1 LLPD expandable to 1.5 LLPD capacity Milk Processing & Packing dairy plant in and around Panaji/Ponda city, Goa State".

1. Tender schedules may be downloaded from 16.07.2021 to 18.08.2021 up to 4.00 pm

2. E.M.D. amount – Rs. 10 Lakhs

3. Pre-bid meeting date: 28.07.2021 at 03.30 pm

4. Last date for tender submission on date: 18.08.2021 up to 4.00 pm

5. Tender (part-1) to be opened on date: 20.08.2021 at 11.30 am

6. As the tender documents are voluminous in nature, the bidders are requested to submit all the documents in sealed cover to M.D. KMF in person or through postal along with submission through e-procurement portal on or before 20.08.2021. For further details please contact 080-26096888/26096869 in office hours.

For Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd.,
Sd/- Director (Engineering-2)

MARKET WATCH

	15-07-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	53,159	0.48
US Dollar	74.54	0.07
Gold	47,443	0.89
Brent oil	74.09	-1.36

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	699.60	+1.85
Asian Paints	2983.60	-18.35
Axist Bank	774.15	-4.10
Bajaj Auto	3940.00	-13.85
Bajaj Finserv	12958.95	-32.25
Bajaj Finance	6129.70	-4.20
Bharti Airtel	525.45	-4.60
BPCL	447.05	-1.65
Britannia Ind	3460.85	-24.90
Cipla	973.60	-3.55
Coal India	146.70	-1.45
Divis Lab	4607.30	-15.90
Dr Reddys Lab	5393.65	-2.80
Eicher Motors	2667.50	-32.50
Grafix Ind	1557.25	-10.55
HCL Tech.	1039.75	50.30
HDFC	2540.10	9.00
HDFC Bank	1520.70	21.55
HDFC Life	693.65	5.15
Hero MotoCorp	2884.65	-16.05
Hindustan	401.45	9.80
Hind Unilever	2412.35	-2.50
ICICI Bank	667.45	3.10
IndusInd Bank	1055.10	2.50
Infosys	1580.80	3.90
Indian Oil Corp	106.30	-0.80
ITC	206.25	2.15
JSW Steel	699.10	-1.30
Kotak Bank	1750.05	1.90
L&T	1609.35	64.65
M&M	779.90	-6.25
Maruti Suzuki	7307.00	-19.75
Nestle India Ltd.	17621.85	82.15
NTPC	120.30	-0.45
ONGC	116.90	-3.90
PowerGrid Corp	230.40	0.45
Reliance Ind	2082.35	-3.65
SBI Life	1052.95	0.55
State Bank	431.70	0.65
Shree Cement	28427.45	12.75
Sun Pharma	683.00	-2.95
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	772.35	4.15
Tata Motors	310.25	0.70
Tata Steel	1255.95	11.25
TCS	3202.25	-11.60
Tech Mahindra	1112.45	33.95
Titan	1701.55	-8.80
UltraTech Cement	7189.65	71.60
UPL	836.25	16.50
Wipro	575.90	14.20

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 15		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.34	74.66
Euro	87.92	88.30
British Pound	103.25	103.72
Japanese Yen (100)	67.61	67.93
Chinese Yuan	11.51	11.57
Swiss Franc	81.30	81.66
Singapore Dollar	54.92	55.16
Canadian Dollar	59.41	59.69
Malaysian Ringgit	17.69	17.78

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Lamborghini unveils sports car at ₹4.99 crore

NEW DELHI Italian super sports luxury carmaker Lamborghini on Thursday unveiled the Huracan STO model in India at a price tag of ₹4.99 crore (ex-showroom). The Huracan STO - Super Trofeo Omologata is a road-homologated super sports car. It is powered by a V10 naturally-aspirated 640 hp engine, capable of accelerating from 0-100 km/hr in three seconds.

Google Cloud expands footprint in India

NEW DELHI Google Cloud announced expanding its footprint in India with its second 'Cloud Region' in the country. It is located in Delhi-NCR. "It is a large commitment from us in capital and infrastructure investment and is designed to allow us capture the opportunity that we see around growth coming from existing and new customers," said Thomas Kurian, CEO, Google Cloud.

WNS June quarter net surges 80% to \$27 mn

MUMBAI WNS (Holdings) Ltd. said its profit for the quarter ended June 30 surged by 80.6% to \$26.8 million from the year-earlier period on easing pandemic-related pressures, revenue growth and client expansion. Revenue grew by 21.9% y-o-y to \$253.2 million. Revising the guidance for 2022, it said net revenue is expected to be between \$961 million-\$1,009 million, up from \$868.7 million in FY21.

Ex-EPL MD Vats to join Pidilite as deputy MD

MUMBAI Sudhanshu Vats, former MD & CEO, EPL Ltd., will join Pidilite Industries Ltd. as deputy MD from September 1, the company said on Thursday. An alumnus of IIM-Ahmedabad and NIT Kurukshetra, Mr. Vats has a 30-year career spanning diverse firms. M.B. Parekh, executive chairman, Pidilite said the talent and experience of Mr. Vats will be of great value to Pidilite.

Inflation to persist at elevated levels for a while: RBI officials

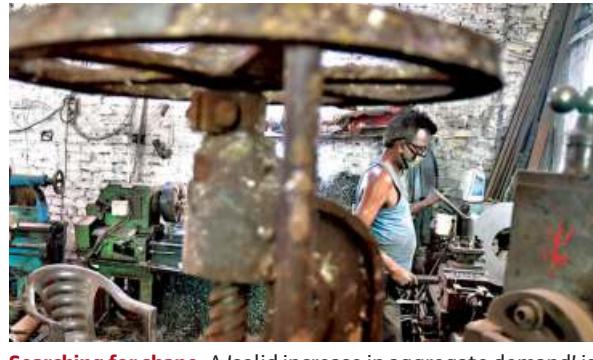
Price pressures to ease in third quarter of 2021-22, they write in a Bulletin article

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The tapering of the second wave, coupled with an aggressive vaccination push, has brightened near-term prospects for the economy but inflation will remain elevated for some more months, senior RBI officials wrote in an article on the 'State of the Economy' in the RBI's monthly Bulletin.

While several high frequency indicators of activity were recovering, a 'solid increase in aggregate demand' was yet to take shape.

On the supply side, agricultural conditions were turning buoyant with the revival in the monsoon, but the recovery of manufac-



Searching for shape: A 'solid increase in aggregate demand' is yet to take shape, say RBI officials. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ting and services sectors had been interrupted by the second wave, they added.

The pick-up in inflation was driven largely by adverse supply shocks caused by the pandemic, including

increases in margins and taxes, and sector-specific demand-supply mismatches, the article's authors wrote.

"These factors should ease over the year as supply side measures take effect,"

'Q1 low base to lift growth to double digits'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Economic recovery has gained momentum after the lifting of localised lockdowns imposed in the aftermath of the second wave, but is 'incomplete,' according to a ICRA report.

The Indian economy will grow in double digits for the April-June period on the low base of 2020-21 but will still be short of the levels observed in the first quarter of FY2021, it said.

"The real GDP in QFY22 will trail the QFY20 level, while recording a double-digit y-o-y expansion," it said. The nationwide lockdown had resulted in a 23.7% GDP contraction in the June quarter of FY20.

Merchandise exports grew 48.3% to \$32.5 billion in June and were almost 30% higher than June 2019, while services exports based on an estimation stood at \$17.35 billion or

9.1% higher than June 2020 and about 1% lower than June 2019.

"With surging exports and relatively subdued gold imports in May-June 2021 dampening the aggregate trade deficit to a three-quarter low \$31 billion in Q1 FY2022, we expect the current account to revert to a small surplus in that quarter," ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said.

The last date for putting in bids is August 6, as per a notice issued by DIPAM.

Listing of LIC is crucial for the Centre as it aims to raise ₹1.75 lakh crore in FY22 from minority stake sales and privatisation.

June exports rise 32%, imports surge 74%

Trade deficit at 3-quarter low in Q1'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Exports from India rose almost 32% to \$49.85 billion in June from the year earlier month and were 17.17% higher than the pre-COVID level of June 2019.

Imports stood at \$52.18 billion, rising 73.65% in June year-on-year and 1.08% higher than June 2019, according to the quick estimates released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Thursday.

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Listing of LIC is crucial for the Centre as it aims to raise ₹1.75 lakh crore in FY22 from minority stake sales and privatisation.

Wipro Q1 net profit jumps 35%

Demand is robust, see double-digit growth this year: CEO



Thierry Delaporte

In the IT services segment, which accounts for more than 95% of Wipro's gross revenues, the company reported 21.3% growth in revenue in constant currency to \$2.41 billion from a year earlier. Sequentially, IT services revenue growth was at 12% in constant currency terms.

Headcount rises 12,178

In Q1, the IT firm added a net of 12,178 employees to take total headcount to 209,890.

Saurabh Govil, chief human resources officer, Wipro said, "We are seeing an unprecedented intake of freshers. We will send out offer letters to 30,000 freshers this year who would join the company next year."

The company intends to onboard more than 6,000 freshers in the second quarter. Wipro's attrition jumped to 15.5% in Q1 from 12.1% in the immediately preceding three-month period.

Home sales rose 67% in H1, COVID-19 slows pace'

Affordable housing slips: Knight Frank



New home sales in eight top markets across India increased 67% to 99,416 units during January-June, even as the pandemic's second wave impacted the momentum that had begun in the second half of 2020, property consultancy Knight Frank India said in its latest report.

Launches at 103,238 units in the first half (H1) of 2021 were 71% higher year-on-year, with a majority of the sales happening in January-March. The second wave's impact was evident on a sequential basis with sales and new launches declining 62% and 43% in the April-June quarter. Affordable housing or residential properties below ₹50 lakh felt the heat

with their share in total sales declining by about 500 basis points. The report, 'India Real Estate - Residential, January-June 2021', said this trend was directly related to the challenges thrown up by the pandemic which reduced the economic confidence of homebuyers in that category due to the threat of job loss, lower income, CPI inching up and other challenges.

Experts say the recovery is mainly due to delayed monsoon and a surge in economic activities amid easing of lockdown restrictions by States.

Power usage returns to pre-Covid level



Power consumption during July 1-14 last year was 50.79 BU. It was recorded at 52.89 BU in the first fortnight of July in 2019. Thus, consumption has not only grown year-on-year but also returned to the pre-pandemic level.

Experts say the recovery is mainly due to delayed monsoon and a surge in economic activities amid easing of lockdown restrictions by States.

States get ₹75,000 crore of GST dues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Thursday released ₹75,000 crore of GST compensation dues to States and Union Territories and said this would help them plan their public expenditure for improving health infrastructure and other capital spending projects. Raised via market borrowings by the Centre, the funds were passed on as back-to-back loans to States and account for 47.16% of the ₹1.59 lakh crore proposed to be raised for their GST compensation dues in FY22.

Inflation, which had ruled above the tolerance band during June-November 2020, had again moved above the upper tolerance threshold in May and June.

'Kharif harvest key'

"The sense is that inflation will persist at these elevated levels for some months before easing in the third quarter of 2021-22, when the kharif harvest arrives in markets," they posited.

Pant isolating after July 8 positive test for COVID-19

Throwdown specialist Garani also contracts virus — 'close contacts' Saha, Easwaran and bowling coach Arun quarantining

INDIA IN ENGLAND

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

At least two members of India's touring contingent in the United Kingdom have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and training assistant Dayanand Garani contracted the virus during the Indian squad's break after last month's World Test Championship final loss to New Zealand.

Besides Pant and Garani, a BCCI statement confirmed that reserve opener Abhimanyu Easwaran, wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha and bowling coach Bharat Arun have been isolated for having been identified as close con-

tacts of Garani, a throwdown specialist.

As a result, India's squad, which reassembled in London over the last couple of days, has travelled to Durham without these five individuals.

The BCCI statement added that Pant, who has been isolating on his own, was diagnosed on July 8 while Garani was confirmed to have been contracted COVID-19 on Wednesday.

While Pant will have to clear two successive negative RT-PCR tests, the other four who have stayed back at the team hotel in London will have to quarantine for 10 days.

It means that India may struggle to find a wicketkeeper for the warm-up match in

Durham. K.L. Rahul may be forced to keep wickets against the Select County XI from July 20 ahead of the first Test in Nottingham on August 4.

No response

The Hindu on Monday had reached out to BCCI secretary Jay Shah and chief executive Hemang Amin to confirm whether four cricketers had been in isolation but the duo did not respond.

Interestingly, a day later, Shah sent an email to all the members of India's contingent to take extreme precautions in the wake of the Delta variant outbreak in the UK.

However, the email was sent hours before the three-week break ended.

During the break, multiple

players and support staff members attended marquee sporting events including Euro 2020 and the Wimbledon, which had large crowds. Some cricketers also travelled to Scotland for a break.

It is understood that once Pant, who attended a Euro game at Wembley, was confirmed to have contracted the virus last week, three other players — a spinner, a pacer and a reserve pacer — served the isolation period before being cleared to enter the biosecure bubble and board the bus to Durham.

The BCCI statement confirmed that all members of the touring contingent were administered a second dose of the vaccine during the last three weeks.



Laid low: Pant was confirmed to have contracted the virus last week. ■ FILE PHOTO

Rhodes to lead 'County Select XI'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA DURHAM

Warwickshire captain Willfred Rhodes will lead a 14-member Select County XI in a three-day warm-up game against India here from July 20-22, the ECB said on Thursday.

County Select XI squad: Will Rhodes (Warwickshire, Capt.), Rehan Ahmed (Leicestershire), Tom Aspinwall (Lancashire), Ethan Bamber (Middlesex), James Bracey (Gloucestershire), Jack Carson (Sussex), Zak Chappell (Nottinghamshire), Haseeb Hameed (Nottinghamshire), Lyndon James (Nottinghamshire), Jake Libby (Worcestershire), Craig Miles (Warwickshire), Liam Patterson-White (Nottinghamshire), James Rew (Somerset), Rob Yates (Warwickshire).

In pursuit of history and a piece of precious metal

Manpreet's men aim to end four decades of heartbreak; Rani's women keen to take a big step

TOKYO OLYMPICS HOCKEY

Y.B. SARANGI

History will be repeated when men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh carries the Tricolour, along with boxing legend M.C. Mary Kom, at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games. Manpreet will be India's first hockey player to do so after Pargat Singh in 1996.

The inspiring midfielder and his well-knit team will be keen to see history revisit India on the turf as well. In four decades, India has not made it to the semifinals.

The most successful hockey nation in the Games' history has not earned a podium finish after its gold in 1980.

The men and women have given themselves an extra ounce of motivation by making a nationalistic announcement — any medal, if it comes, will be dedicated to the COVID-19 warriors of the country.

Manpreet and his squad have prepared well for the arduous task of achieving a long-desired medal. Steeling the body and the mind to overcome doughty opponents and tricky situations has been one of the key aspects of their preparations. The well-balanced team has pedigree and promise.

The defence is experienced, the midfield is energetic and the forward line is sharp. Drag-flicker Harman



Carrying a billion dreams: The Indian hockey teams have the wherewithal and talent to gladden the hearts of the faithful with an Olympic medal after a long wait. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

preet Singh and Co. will enhance the goal-scoring scope.

Medals in top level events — including the Champions Trophy, World League, Asia Cup, Asian Games and Asian Champions Trophy — apart from recent wins over reigning Olympic champion Argentina in the FIH Pro League have instilled self-belief in the side.

The experience of playing against Germany and Great Britain will also help.

Clubbed in Pool A with Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and Japan, the Graham Reid-coached team has the potential to break the jinx.

The women's hockey team, which made it to the Rio Games after 36 years, is eager to take the next big step by ensuring a respectable finish in Tokyo.

The team has shaped well

under the guidance of coach Sjoerd Marijne.

Led by the iconic Rani Rampal over the last four years, it has claimed medals in elite events, including the Asia Cup, Asian Games and Asian Champions Trophy, apart from securing a top-eight finish in the 2018 World Cup.

Solid leadership group

Rani forms a solid leadership group with vice-captains Deep Grace Ekka and Savita. Like a beacon light, they will play a key role in steering the side, consisting of youngsters as well as seasoned campaigners, on the Olympics' high-pressure platform.

The side has developed qualities such as fighting till the end, playing without fear and understanding each other's role well.

The players will need to stay calm and rely on their

fitness to execute the plans well.

Some proven customers in the back line, apt performers in the middle and an interesting combination of seasoned hands and greenhorns up the field sum up the team's strengths. Gurjit Kaur will be the leading hand in penalty corner conversion.

Members with loads of experience but relatively less exposure may spring surprises on opponents. Exposure tours to Germany and Argentina early this year should prove beneficial.

India, placed with World,

European and Pro League champion Netherlands, Olympic champion Great Britain, Germany, Ireland and South Africa in Pool A, will have to give its best in order to achieve a dream finish.

The hot and humid weather of Tokyo should make

both the Indian teams feel at home. Hockey fans will eagerly wait to see how seamlessly the Indians switch to Games mode in pursuit of a piece of the historic metal.

THE SQUADS

MEN

Dilpreet Singh, Rupinder Pal Singh, Surender Kumar, Manpreet Singh (capt.), Hardik Singh, Gurjant Singh, Simranjeet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, P.R. Sreejesh (GK), Sumit, Nilakanta Sharma, Shamsher Singh, Varun Kumar, Birendra Lakra, Amit Rohidas, and Vivek Sagar Prasad.

WOMEN

Navjot Kaur, Gurjit Kaur, Deep Grace Ekka, Monika, Reena Khokhar, Sharmila Devi, Nikki Pradhan, Savita (GK), Nisha, Vandana Kataria, Udit, Namita Toppo, Lalremismaili, Naminee Kaur, P. Sushila Chanu, Ranji Rampal (capt.), Salima Tete and Neha.

From epic dominance to harrowing drought

India has won eight gold, the last medal coming in 1980

REWIND

Y.B. SARANGI

India's dominance in hockey for nearly three decades, spanning six Olympics in the previous century, is one of the Games' epic tales. Olympic glory first gave the country, which was firmly under British rule, its own identity, and in subsequent years earned it a lot of pride on the global stage.

India's first gold medal, even if it was against a depleted field in the 1928 Amsterdam Games, was an unheard-of moment for a nation experiencing its freedom struggle.

The 1932 Los Angeles Games established the country as one of the sport's powerhouses. The following edition in Berlin enabled India complete a unique hat-trick of gold medals in hockey wizard Dhyan Chand's farewell Olympics.

In the post-World War II London Games in 1948, independent India won its first gold medal, beating the host 4-0 in the final. The Tricolour going up on English soil and the national anthem playing in London was special.

In the 1952 Helsinki, and made it three-in-a-row after Independence, and six-in-a-row overall, in Melbourne. The 1956 edition triggered the mouthwatering India-Pakistan rivalry, with India ma-



First and last: The 1928 team, which included Dhyan Chand, sitting second from left, started the gold rush while the outfit led by V. Baskaran, fourth from right, won in 1980.

naging a 1-0 win in the summit clash.

India took silver for the first time in the 1960 Rome Olympics, after losing to Pakistan 1-0, but regained gold with an identical victory over its arch-rival in Tokyo four years later.

Internal issues were responsible for bronze medals in 1968 and 1972 in Mexico and Munich respectively. But India saw a new low, returning without a medal on astro-turf from the 1976 Montreal Games.

The boycott-marred 1980 Moscow Olympics was the

Roll of honour

■ Gold: 1928 (Amsterdam), 1932 (Los Angeles), 1936 (Berlin), 1948 (London), 1952 (Helsinki), 1956 (Melbourne), 1964 (Tokyo), 1980 (Moscow)

■ Silver: 1960 (Rome)

■ Bronze: 1968 (Mexico City), 1972 (Munich)

last Games where India won a hockey medal, a gold. The lowest point came when the team failed to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

TOKYO TITBITS



Olympic Laurel for Muhammad Yunus

Nobel Peace Prize awardee Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh will become the second recipient of the Olympic Laurel when he receives the trophy during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Games on July 23. Professor Yunus receives the award for his extensive work in sport for development.

Azarenka, Kerber pull out Victoria Azarenka, who won the mixed doubles gold and singles bronze at the 2012 London Games, has withdrawn from the Tokyo Olympics, citing "challenges from the pandemic". Angelique Kerber, who bagged a singles silver in 2016, also pulled out on Thursday.

IOC guidelines for medal ceremony The athletes on the podium will wear masks, put their medals around their own necks, and will not pose for group photographs with presenters and volunteers during the ceremonies, the International Olympic Committee said on Thursday. Additional podium modules will be placed between the medalists to allow for social distancing.

Sania looking for an elusive Olympic medal



V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

Primed: Sania, who will be playing in her fourth Olympics, says she will give it her best shot in Tokyo. ■ FILE PHOTO

For someone who redefined the levels of excellence in the world of women's tennis, the 34-year-old Sania Mirza is all geared up to chase one more goal — an Olympic medal.

The six-time Grand Slam-winner, making her fourth Olympics appearance, will take part in the women's doubles competition, along with Ankita Raina, at Tokyo.

"I consider it a great honour and privilege to be representing my country for the fourth time in the Olympics, in Tokyo," she said in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"Yes, it is quite amazing that when I started out in tennis almost three decades ago, it was all about dreaming of winning a Grand Slam. I had never imagined I would one day jointly hold the record of most appearances (four) in Olympics by an Indian woman. This is another record that I will be personally very proud of," Sania said.

"It has been reasonably good under the prevailing pandemic conditions but, ideally, I would have liked to have got a few more matches under my belt before heading to the Games," she said.

"The Tokyo Olympics are obviously going to feel very different without spectators. The stringent rules and restrictions are definitely going to make things more difficult," she said.

"Ankita has been ranked in the top-100 in doubles and that is something none of my earlier women partners had managed," Sania said.

"Of course, it is never easy for any player to immediately adjust to playing against the best in the world and we will definitely need to punch way above our weight to make an impression at Tokyo," she said.

Let the shuttle fly high!



Catching up: The Badminton Association of India general-secretary Ajay Kumar Singhal, fourth from left, interacted with coach P. Gopi Chand, third from left, and Tokyo-bound shuttlers R. Satwiksairaj, P.V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and Chirag Shetty in Hyderabad on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Oosthuizen, Spieth light up opening day

Former in the lead, latter joint second

REUTERS
SANDWICH (UK)

Former champions Louis Oosthuizen and Jordan Spieth sparkled in the morning sunshine as the 149th British Open started at Royal St. George's on Thursday.

"Probably in my mind it was the perfect round I could have played," he said.

The 2020 tournament was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but up to 32,000 fans are being allowed each day this year as part of a government test event.



Sizzling start: Oosthuizen had a 'perfect' first round. ■ REUTERS

Pragg stuns Sargissian

CHESS WC

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

R. Praggnanandhaa stunned Armenia's Gabriel Sargissian in 41 moves to inch closer to a place in the third round of the World Cup chess on Friday.

On a day when D. Gukesh pulled off a creditable draw against 17th seed Daniil Dubov, B. Adhiban and D. Harika were the other winners among the 12 Indians on view during the first game of the second round. P. Iniyar and R. Vaishali lost.

Indian results (second round,

Second game ends in a draw</h2

TV PICKS

Golf: The Open Championship: Eurosport (SD & HD), 11 a.m. & 9 p.m.
Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
England vs Pakistan: 1st T20I, Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 11 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Donnarumma joins PSG on a free transfer

PARIS
Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma has joined Paris St Germain on a free transfer after leaving Serie A club AC Milan, signing a five-year deal, the French Ligue 1 side said on Wednesday. **REUTERS**

Aditi, Pajaree share lead at team event

MICHIGAN
Aditi Ashok and her Thai partner Pajaree Anannarkarn shot a 5-under 65 to share the lead with three other teams on the opening day of the Dow Great Lakes Bay Invitational here. **PTI**

McLaren chief Zak Brown to miss British GP

SILVERSTONE
McLaren chief executive Zak Brown will miss the British GP this week after testing positive for the coronavirus. The team said its preparations for the F1 race here on Sunday will not be affected. **AP**

Marsh's all-round show takes Australia home

GROS-ISLET
An all-round performance by Mitchell Marsh (75 and three for 24) earned Australia its first victory of the five-match T20I series as it hung on for a four-run win over the West Indies in the fourth match on Wednesday. West Indies leads series 3-1.
The scores: Australia 189/6 in 20 overs (Mitchell Marsh 75, Aaron Finch 53, Hayden Walsh 3/27) bt West Indies 185/6 in 20 overs (Lendl Simmons 72, Evin Lewis 31, Mitchell Marsh 3/24). **Australia won by four runs.**



Smashing knock: Danni Wyatt came out of the crease to counter Poonam Yadav's loopy slow deliveries. **REUTERS**

'89-Wyatt' power short-circuits India

Eight-wicket victory helps England wrap up the T20I series 2-1

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHELMSFORD

Opener Danni Wyatt smashed an unbeaten 89 off only 56 balls to overshadow an elegant 70 by Smriti Mandhana as England claimed an easy eight-wicket victory over India in the third T20 International to wrap up the series 2-1 here on Wednesday.

Having already lost the three-match ODI series by the same margin, the Indian women, under Mithali Raj and Harmanpreet Kaur, have now lost four successive white-ball series including the two against South Africa at home.

The evening belonged to Wyatt, who took on an out-of-form Radha Yadav (0/37 in four overs) and Poonam Yadav (0/32 in four overs).

Wyatt came out of the

crease to counter Poonam's loopy slow deliveries and hit her all over the park.

Good support

She was ably supported by all-rounder Nat Sciver, who chipped in with 42 off 36 balls with four boundaries after having bowled economically to take one for 16 in four overs.

Earlier, Smriti's stroke-filled 70 (51b, 8x4, 2x6) powered India to 153 for six in

20 overs. After losing opening partner Shafali Verma in the first over and Harleen Deol in the fourth, Smriti added 68 for the third wicket with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (36, 26b, 5x4, 1x6).

Setback

The loss is a big setback for the Indian team which is set to play the 50-over World Cup in New Zealand early next year.

India will next travel to

Australia and the tour also features a day-night Test match.

The scores: India 153/6 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 70, Harmanpreet Kaur 36, Sophie Ecclestone 3/35) lost to England 154/2 in 18.4 overs (Danni Wyatt 89 n.o., Nat Sciver 42). **England won by eight wickets and eight balls to spare, clinches the three-match series 2-1.**

Player-of-the-match: Danni Wyatt; **Player-of-the-series:** Nat Sciver.

SRCC wins FIDE B-School Super Cup

Proves superior to MIPT Business School in two-match final

CHESS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



All smiles: The SRCC team which emerged victorious. ***SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

joining the action from the fifth round of the league phase.

Ankit also won all four games in the knockout after contributing four points from six games in the league.

Besides SRCC, there were six other Indian teams from four institutions – Gargi University, Indian Institute of Management (Jammu), T.A. Pai Management Institute (two teams each) and Bharathidasan Institute of

Management – but none could get past the league stage.

The results:
Final: Match 1: SRCC bt MIPT Business School 2.5-1.5; **Match 2:** SRCC bt MIPT Business School 3-1.

Third place: Moscow School of Management bt University of Toronto 3-1.

SRCCs individual performance:

Kinal Gajwa (8 points from 10 games); Vantika Agrawal (7/7), Tarini Goyal (captain) (6/7), Rishi Sardana (7/9), Arijith M. (3/4) and Jeet Jain (3/7).

Pogacar wins 18th stage, extends lead

TOUR DE FRANCE

FORMULA ONE

S. DIPAK RAGAV

This weekend's British Grand Prix will see the debut of a new format called Sprint Qualifying race.

Here is a low-down on what the format is and how it will operate.

What: The new format will be a sprint race held on the Saturday, instead of the traditional qualifying, to set the grid for Sunday's race.

How: It will be a 100-km race that will happen over 25-30 minutes with no mandatory pit-stops. The top-three drivers will get three, two and one championship points respectively.

Overall, Pogacar now has an advantage of five minutes 45 seconds over Vingegaard with Carapaz in third place overall, a further six seconds behind.

Colombian Rigoberto Uran, fourth overall at the start, cracked in the penultimate ascent to the Col du Tourmalet to drop out of the top 10. Australian Ben O'Connor is now fourth, 8:18 off the pace two days before Saturday's final individual time trial.



Trial time: The new format will be launched at Silverstone where Perez and Verstappen are having a chat. ***GETTY IMAGES**

We are expecting a very strong performance from Mercedes and Lewis

CHRISTIAN HORNER,
Red Bull boss

days of the weekend for the fans. It also helps both the circuit promoters and broadcasters.

Where: The new format will be held in Silverstone, Monza (Italian GP) and at one more venue in the calendar which is not yet finalised.

The idea is to have this format at select venues to bring some variability during the season and not to replace the existing qualifying format altogether.

Important to always believe in yourself, says Sindhu

Nothing comes easy; everyone has to chase their goal'

BADMINTON

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD



P.V. Sindhu. ***GETTY IMAGES**

World champion P.V. Sindhu's advice to the budding talent in any discipline is to believe in themselves, enjoy the sport and show the desired passion.

The Rio Olympics silver medallist, speaking at the virtual interaction of Bridgestone's campaign 'Chase your Dreams' on Thursday, said that some might be successful very early in their career and some very late.

Years of hard work

"But, the most important thing is to always think that 'I can do it'. It requires years of hard work to reach the levels of some of the greats of the sports," Sindhu said.

"I am sure if all the pa-

On what have been the biggest lessons in her journey so far, Sindhu said focus, endurance and performance were the key to her success story.

"One has to remain focused, make the right kind of efforts, and must have a vision. Nothing comes our way easily. Everyone has to have a goal and keep chasing it, as this campaign suggests," she said.

Indian Olympic Association joint secretary Namdev Shirsankar thanked Bridgestone for the support to the Olympics contingent.

"We are sending the biggest squad for the Tokyo Games with many firsts. And we are hopeful of a memorable performance," he said.

Bridgestone India MD Parag Satpute, and Deepak Gulati, Chief Marketing Officer, Bridgestone, also spoke.

Divij-Gille duo exits

SPORTS BUREAU
HAMBURG

Divij Sharan and Sander Gille of Belgium were beaten by Ivan Sabanov and Matej Sabanov of Croatia 6-3, 6-4 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €1,168,220 ATP tennis tournament here.

In the Challenger at Amersfoort (Netherlands), the duo of Arjun Kadhe and Michael Geerts of Belgium was beaten 6-3, 7-5 in the quarterfinals, by top seeds Sergio Galdos and Goncalo Oliveira.

The results: €1,168,220 ATP, Hamburg: **Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Ivan Sabanov & Matej Sabanov (Cro) bt Sander Gille (Bel) & Divij Sharan 6-3, 6-4.

€44,820 Challenger, Amersfoort, Netherlands: **Doubles (quarterfinals):** Sergio Galdos (Per) & Goncalo Oliveira (Por) bt Michael Geerts (Bel) & Arjun Kadhe 6-3, 7-5; **Pre-quarterfinals:** Geerts & Kadhe bt Johan Nikles (Sui) & Carlos Sanchez Jover (Esp) 6-2, 6-4.

bers seem to be increasing and it is a problem for 'real' women to compete against them."

The World Athletics' DSD regulations only apply to athletes who are 'biologically male' (46 XY) but it does not stop them from competing in jumps, throws and long distance events in international meets and Usha feels that is not fair.

"This issue used to be a big problem in the 400, 800 and 1500m but I can see many of them in other events. They should not be allowed to compete with real women in all events," she said.

"Earlier, they were very strict about it. During our time, we had gender testing and we were given a card too. Every team was tested. And only 'real' girls were allowed to compete."

Usha calls for a separate category for DSD athletes

Feels there are a few cases in the Indian circuit too

ATHLETICS

STAN RAYAN
KOCHI



P.T. Usha. ***FILE PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ**

She is the fastest quartermiler this year and when Namibia's Christine Mboma came up with that amazing 48.54s in a meet in Poland recently, many felt that the 18-year-old would be the favourite at the Tokyo Olympics.

But the other day, World Athletics removed Mboma and another Namibia quartemiler Beatrice Masilingi, the world's third fastest this year, from its Tokyo list.

The Namibian National Olympic Committee also explained through a media release that the World Athletics' rules pertaining to 'Athletes with Differences of Sexual Development' required the two to undergo

medical tests and since they were found to have high testosterone levels they would not be eligible to compete in events ranging from the 400m to the mile. The two will now be running the 200m in Tokyo.

Another athlete, Niger's Aminatou Seyni, was also

Deepak Hooda quits Baroda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
VADODARA
Experienced batsman Deepak Hooda has reportedly left the Baroda cricket team after a fallout with skipper Krunal Pandya last season.

NOC granted
He has been granted NOC by the Baroda Cricket Association.

The development was confirmed on Thursday by BCA secretary Ajit Lele.

In January, the BCA had suspended Hooda, who had stormed out of the camp before the start of Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, for the last domestic season for "indiscipline" and "bringing disrespect to the game."

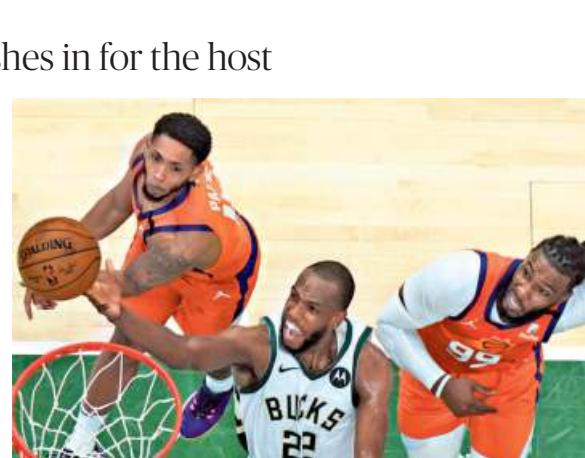
Hooda had claimed that Krunal had misbehaved with him.

The 26-year-old Hooda, who made his first-class debut in 2014, has played 46 matches and scored 2,908 runs, with nine hundreds, 15 fifties.

A right-arm off-spinner Hooda has also 20 wickets to his name.

Bucks rally to draw level with Suns

Khris Middleton cashes in for the host



Driving force: Khris Middleton scored 40 points to power Milwaukee Bucks' comeback on Wednesday. ***AP**

Middleton made the money plays in the final two minutes with a freakish nod to Antetokounmpo, whose block of Deandre Ayton kept the Bucks' lead at four points with 1:15 to play.

Antetokounmpo deferred more than usual and had 26 points, 14 rebounds, eight assists, three steals and two blocks.

For most of the night, only foul stopped Booker. The Suns' top scorer scored 42 despite being dogged most of the second half by foul

trouble. Booker's effort was his ninth game in these playoffs over 30 points.

He had 10 points on 3 of 14 shooting in Game 3. Phoenix shot 51.3% from the field and held the Bucks to 40.2%.

The series now shifts back to Phoenix for Game 5 on Saturday and Middleton said the Bucks had to take the momentum with them.

The results: Milwaukee Bucks 109 (Middleton 40, Antetokounmpo 26) bt Phoenix Suns 103 (Booker 42). Series tied 2-2.

I don't count shots. I let the shots come to me and I take it," Middleton said. "I don't count stats or shots until the end of the game."