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NEARBY



O.P. Chautala released after 10 years in jail

GURUGRAM
Former Haryana Chief Minister and Indian National Lok Dal leader Om Prakash Chautala was on Friday released from Tihar Central Jail on completion of a 10-year sentence in a teachers' recruitment scam case. Mr. Chautala told party workers he will soon visit the farmers at the protest sites to seek their blessings.

NEWS ► PAGE 9

Two receive certificates without jab in U.P.

LUCKNOW
Mridula Mangalam, a PhD scholar in Allahabad University, received a certificate noting that she had been fully vaccinated even though she did not receive her second dose. In Mau district, Umda Rai, 65, received a provisional certificate for her first dose at the Doharighat Community Health Centre without even getting a jab. Official says the error could be due to a 'technical reason'.

NEWS ► PAGE 10

Rawat resigns, BJP legislators to meet today to elect new leader

Uttarakhand Chief Minister steps down amid delay in holding byelection

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat tendered his resignation to Governor Baby Rani Maurya late on Friday, ending his tenure just four months after he took oath, and paved the way for the appointment of a third Chief Minister for the State this year.

Mr. Rawat had been camping in New Delhi since Wednesday as he was caught in a legal limbo over his continuation as Chief Minister – while he is required to be elected as a member of the Uttarakhand Assembly within six months of having taken oath as Chief Minister, under the Representation of the People Act, bypolls are not held for vacant seats if the tenure of the Assembly expires within a year.

The Uttarakhand Assembly's term will expire in March 2022.

Mr. Rawat is a Lok Sabha MP from Uttarakhand and had replaced Trivendra Singh Rawat on March 10 as CM after the latter quit.

The BJP has called a meet-



Churning again: Tirath Singh Rawat speaking to the media in New Delhi on Friday. ■ ANI

ing of its legislature party in Uttarakhand on Saturday to elect a new leader, with Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar being appointed as observer for the meeting.

Many contenders

On a possible successor to Mr. Rawat, while many names are doing the rounds, sources said only someone who is already an MLA will be chosen this time round.

Sources, however, added

that Mr. Rawat's frequent courting of controversies and the scandal of fake RT-PCR tests during the Kumbh Mela earlier this year and mismanagement of the issue had also cost him dear.

Mr. Rawat did not speak on record about his intention to resign, while in Delhi, only stating that it was "up to the Election Commission of India to hold bypolls".

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

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LeT could be behind drone attack in Jammu, says DGP

BSF fires at drone; five militants, soldier killed in Pulwama

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Security agencies suspected the role of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in the twin drone-driven blasts on the Indian Air Force's technical airport in Jammu on June 27 and the possibility of it coming from across the border, Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh said on Friday.

"The probe [into the blasts] is in progress. We haven't reached any conclusion as to who is actually involved. However, on the basis of the past history of the LeT using drones to drop weapons, narcotics and improvised explosive devices (IED), we suspect the outfit is involved," Mr. Singh said.



On guard: A jawan keeps vigil near an encounter site in Pulwama in south Kashmir on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

India flags sighting of drone over mission in Pak.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A drone was spotted over the Indian High Commission complex in Islamabad last week and Pakistan has been asked to investigate the incident and prevent recurrence of such "breach of security", the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday.

The Indian mission has also lodged a strong protest

with Pakistan over the incident through a note verbale, which is a diplomatic communiqué, people familiar with the development said.

The incident came to light amid growing concerns in the security establishment in India after drones were used to carry out blasts at the Jammu Air Force station on June 27.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Goods exports touch record \$95 bn in Q1

47% rise in June despite second wave

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With India registering its highest quarterly merchandise exports of \$95 billion during the first quarter (April-June) of 2021-22, the country is now eyeing a target of \$400 billion in merchandise exports in the current fiscal, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

As per the official data released, the exports rose by 47.34% to \$32.46 billion in June, following a strong growth in sectors such as engineering, gems and jewellery and petroleum products. However, India was a net importer in June 2021 with a trade deficit of \$9.4 billion.

"Despite the severity of the second wave of COVID-19, the highest ever merchandise export in a



India is eyeing a target of \$400 billion merchandise exports in the current fiscal.

quarter of \$95 billion has been achieved in April-June 2021, surpassing the previous record of \$90 billion in January-March 2020," the Minister said.

He said measures such as sector-specific interventions had resulted in the record performance of exports.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Akhil Gogoi to revive anti-CAA movement

No foreigner to stay in Assam, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Sibsagar MLA and Rajoj Dal president Akhil Gogoi has vowed to revive the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) movement that lost steam in Assam after a violent start in December 2019.

Mr. Gogoi slammed the leaders of the movement for 'betraying' the people while he spent 18 months in prison.

He was released on July 1 after a special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) acquitted him and three others under charges of sedition, hobnobbing with Maoists and inciting violence during the anti-CAA movement.

"We will resume the anti-CAA movement and not allow any foreigner to stay in the State," Mr. Gogoi told journalists while on the way to his constituency. The MLA added that he would

mobilise support to oust the 'anti-people' BJP and their allies from power in 2026.

He listed the big dams and the toll gates on highways across the State among the other issues the Rajoj Dal and associate groups such as the pro-farmers Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti would take up.

Against doctors' advice

Mr. Gogoi had left the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital on Thursday ignoring the advice of the doctors, the hospital authorities said in a letter to the State's Home Department.

A copy of the letter was forwarded to the NIA, the Commissioner of the Guwahati Police and the Inspector-General of Prisons.

Mr. Gogoi was undergoing treatment at the hospital under security until his release.

Kerala's houseboats get ready to sail

Robust vaccination drive and govt. support reboot the pandemic-hit industry

PRIYADESHINI S.
KOCHI

The waters of the Vembanad lake are stirring once again. A robust vaccination drive underway has raised hopes of the Kerala houseboat industry to open for business as early as July.

As the latest lockdown eases, tourists and locals are being lured back with deals. Completely vaccinated guests can enjoy the backwaters at discounts up to 50%, while the partially vaccinated get a rebate of almost 40%, says Jobin J. Akkarakkam, vice-president, Kerala Houseboat Owners Federation. "Everyone is looking forward to resuming business, so we can maintain our staff and boats," he adds.

Last year's SOPs – temperature checks, mandatory



Keeping steady: The Kerala government provided aid to owners to maintain their houseboats during lockdown.

masking, sanitising boats and complete guest details on COVID-19 Jagratha Portal – which kicked in during two weeks of operations in December and January, will be invoked again.

Meanwhile, the Kerala government, which has added

₹50 crore to its already existing ₹100 crore budget for marketing tourism, is set to unleash two new campaigns, that will also highlight the benefits of houseboat holidays this year.

"The houseboat is like a bubble offering a secluded,

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

sanitised and safe space, which makes it an attractive holiday option during a pandemic," says Mr. Jobin.

Abraham George, MD, InterSight Tours and Travels, has been inundated with enquiries about the reopening of Kerala. "Once we ensure complete vaccination, we should open unconditionally, not with riders attached such as need for quarantine. The industry has huge investments. Everyone is wanting to travel and the houseboat experience is private and safe," he says.

To jump-start tourism, the Kerala government has declared tourism personnel in the frontline category, eligible for the first round of vaccination.

The houseboat is like a bubble offering a secluded,

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No stage to perform, street artistes take up odd jobs

Lockdown has worsened what was already a difficult existence; they are now planning to set up an exclusive village

SHINJINI GHOSH
NEW DELHI

A lack of recognition from the government and repeated lockdowns have led to several street performers of the Capital take up odd jobs to sustain themselves. While the artistes – who were earlier residents of the Kaptuthli Colony – maintained that the scenario was bleak even before the pandemic, the various lockdowns have only deteriorated their lives.

Ishamudin Khan, a street magician who has performed across the globe, said that there were dedicated arenas for such performers elsewhere but in India they are treated as "beggars."

"The condition is terrible and the lockdown has only



Street performers Ishamudin Khan, Manoj Khan, Anil Khan and Riyakat at Narela on Friday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

increased their troubles. In the past 70 years, no institution has added our profession as fine arts or arts. In India we are called beggars. This is also why we were simply put under the EWS category. Where are the Ministries of culture, tourism,

social justice and empowerment? Several have been forced to become autorickshaw drivers or garbage collectors," said Mr. Ishamudin.

Speaking at his Delhi Development Authority (DDA) allotted flat in Narela, Mr.

Ishamudin said: "I am a street performer and I have been placed in Narela. Where am I going to perform here? Simply allotting a flat does not solve the problem. I have generated revenue for the country and all I am asking is to give space for my work. All other major cities in the world have dedicated arenas while here there is nothing."

Own initiative

Mr. Ishamudin, who is dependent on aid from friends to sustain his family, said a group of such performers were also planning to acquire land in a tourist hub to set up a "magic village" to promote the art, in the absence of government assistance.

"Delhi-NCR has around 500 such families and we aim to shift at least 200 families first. The village will have food joint, handicraft, training and performance centres, besides a magic museum. We are banking on social media to help us raise funds. Some members are also ready to sell their land and contribute. We will buy the land ourselves and approach the government," said Mr. Ishamudin, adding that the village will be set up either in Chandigarh or Jaipur.

Ghaziabad resident Anil Khan had travelled to different cities across the country in the last 30 years but now makes a living by selling scrap.

Riyakat Ali, another street performer who is selling scrap to make a living,

said: "Due to the pandemic and restrictions, crowds are no longer permitted in public places. Even earlier there would be some resistance from authorities but we would manage. But now there is absolutely nothing. I have started selling scrap in order to sustain my family of nine and it is becoming increasingly difficult."

Mr. Ishamudin, who had his last international performance in Rangoon in 2019, added: "Our art is still alive but things like the lockdown have forced people into different odd jobs, which can lead to the tribe dwindling. Other countries are trying to save these tribes but it is not so here. Both education and justice are very expensive in this country."

Search on to trace 10 women who escaped from shelter home

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Friday said they are conducting search operations to trace 10 women who had escaped from a shelter home in Dwarka here over a month ago.

According to police, 12 women were rescued from a kotha on GB Road by a team from Kamla Market police station on March 13. A case was registered and all the women were kept under a shelter home in Dwarka based on directions of the Child Welfare Committee (East).

DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said: "On May 24, all 12 women escaped by breaking an exhaust fan hole from the

shelter home on the third floor of the building. Two of them sustained injuries and 10 succeeded in escaping. In this incident, a case of kidnapping under Section 363 of Indian Penal Code has been registered at Sector 23, Dwarka police station. For the purpose of searching these girls, an advertisement has been published in newspapers," the DCP added.

Wrong information
The advertisement in English dailies erroneously referred to them as residents of a children's home run by DMRC.

The DMRC clarified that the children's home run by the organisation houses only boys. "An advertise-

ment has been issued by Delhi Police regarding the kidnapping of 10 girls allegedly from DMRC children home in Tis Hazari. This is to clarify that the children home run by Salam Balaik Trust only accommodates boys and no girls stay there. Therefore, DMRC's children home has no connection whatsoever with this incident (sic)," it said.

All the women are in the age group of 20-26, police said. The two women, who sustained injuries, told police that they were not under any pressure from anyone but tried to flee as they did not wish to stay at the shelter home, a senior police officer said.

Man tries to extort ₹25L from father by staging kidnapping

He wanted to pay off debts; was traced to Rishikesh

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man was traced to Rishikesh where he went into hiding after staging his kidnapping in conspiracy with a woman to extort ₹25 lakh from his father to get rid of his debts, police said on Friday.

The man works as a supervisor at a company based in Panipat and was in a relationship with his colleague's wife. He was in debt and when he could not pay the dues, he plotted his kidnapping along with the woman to get rid of his debt, they said.

With the money, the couple also had plans to settle somewhere else, the police said. The matter came to the notice on June 29 when the man's father approached Aman Vihar police stating that his son had gone to Rohini to attend his friend's birthday party on June 25 and has been missing since then, the police said.

During investigation, it transpired that a woman contacted the victim's parents on June 28 and stated that their son is in a debt trap and he needs ₹25 lakh immediately to settle his debts. She also gave five account numbers of diffe-

C The man had taken money on interest and spent it for fun and enjoyment. He could not repay the loan amount and took another loan to pay back his previous dues

DCP (ROHINI)
Pranav Tayal

rent persons in which the demanded amount was to be transferred," he said.

With the assistance of technical surveillance and manual efforts, the woman was finally tracked down to a village near Tundala in Agra and during interrogation, she disclosed that the victim was in Rishikesh and she was in constant touch with him on another mobile number, the officer said.

A team was rushed to Rishikesh from where the 'missing man' was traced and then brought to Delhi, he said.

During interrogation, it was revealed that the man had taken money on interest and spent it for fun and enjoyment. He could not repay the loan amount and took another loan to pay back his previous dues.

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Timings**DELHI**

SATURDAY, JUL. 03
RISE 05:28 SET 19:24
RISE 00:53 SET 13:40
SUNDAY, JUL. 04
RISE 05:29 SET 19:24
RISE 01:23 SET 14:32
MONDAY, JUL. 05
RISE 05:29 SET 19:23
RISE 01:53 SET 15:26

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	41	27
Safdarjung	41	27
Palam	42	30

Delhi Palam Today
41°C Duststorm and thunderstorm with light rain may occur during early morning. A hot day with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
42°C Day remain hot with partly cloudy sky and light winds. Chances of thunderclouds development at some places.

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THE HINDU
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10 tested COVID positive every hour in June, 62% were men

As per govt. records, 7,804 individuals contracted the virus last month

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Six in every 10 people who tested positive for COVID-19 in the Capital last month were male while almost a third of the total men having contracted the virus during the period was aged between 30 and 60 years, according to the Delhi government records.

Over 10 people tested positive for COVID-19 every hour with as many as 7,804 individuals contracting the infection from June 1 to June 30. Of these, 4,873 or 62.44% were males.

Accounting for 1,627 of the total cases, around 21% of the male patients fell in the 14 to 30 age group, followed by patients from the 60-plus and below 14 years categories constituting a little over 9% (713) and slightly over 2% (165), respectively.

In June, four out of five patients – irrespective of



A girl gets tested for COVID at GTK Road on Friday morning. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

gender – were found to be aged between 14 and 60 years.

Every second patient

Every second patient among them was male and fell in the 14 to 60 age group with the gender accounting for over 51% of the total infections in this category.

According to statistics, 1,318 female patients fell in the 30 to 60 age group and 1,019 in the 14 to 30 category –

category – 89. In the 14 to 30 age group, the most number of infections, 447, were reported from the south district followed by 396 from the south-west and 364 from the New Delhi district.

The north-east district reported the least number of infections, 75, in this category as well.

With 216, 148 and 140 cases, the highest incidence of infection among the 60-plus age group was reported from the south-west, west, and New Delhi districts as the north-east district accounted for 19 cases.

The south-west, New Delhi, and north districts, with 44, 43, 36 cases, respectively, reported the maximum number of infections among those aged below 14 years; at 12, the north-east district reported the least number of infections in this age group.

City sees 93 new COVID cases with two deaths

Over 1.5 lakh vaccinated in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Capital on Friday reported 93 new COVID-19 cases and two deaths in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 14,34,374 and total fatalities to 24,983.

The health bulletin issued by the Delhi government said 73,565 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 0.13%. There are currently 1,041 active cases in the city, of which, 313 are under home isolation.

Providing figures on number of people vaccinated on Thursday, the bulletin said 1,57,728 beneficiaries have been vaccinated in



People at a vaccination centre in north Delhi on Friday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

24 hours, of which, 1,25,769 received their first dose. So far, 80,57,875 beneficiaries have been vaccinated out of which, 18,37,720 have received both doses.

Delhi court adjourns order for a month on Tharoor's trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday adjourned for nearly a month the order on whether to put Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on trial in a case related to his wife Sunanda Pushkar's death in a luxury hotel here.

Special Judge Geetanjali Goel, who was scheduled to pronounce order framing of charges against Mr. Tharoor, adjourned the matter for July 27 after the prosecution sought a week's time to file written submissions.

"An application has been received on behalf of prosecution seeking one week's time to file written submissions. Copy be supplied to the counsels of the accused. The application is allowed. Put up for orders/arguments if any, on July 27," the judge said in the order.

The court had earlier adjourned the matter for July 2 in view of the ongoing pandemic.

At request of counsel for petitioner, renotify before the roster bench on Monday when the HC will reopen after the summer vacations

C. HARI SHANKAR
HC Justice

of approved new excise policy 2021-22 for Delhi, the policy is yet to be made public or available on the Internet/ or government's website and as per the schedule of the tender, the last date for the pre-bid queries is July 5.

Pre-bid meeting

The plea said while the pre-bid meeting is scheduled to be held on July 6, and the submission of the e-bid is between July 12 to 20.

In order to prepare financially viable and attractive bids for the tender, it is necessary that the approved new policy should be made available to all prospective stakeholders and public in general, it said.

Providing figures on number of people vaccinated on Thursday, the bulletin said 1,57,728 beneficiaries have been vaccinated in

AUD student fined for 'derogatory' remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A final-year student of Ambedkar University here has been fined ₹5,000 for allegedly posting "distasteful remarks" online against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during the annual convocation held in December last.

The university's convocation was held on December 23 last year with Mr. Kejriwal as the chief guest.

In a statement, the university said people had joined its ninth convocation on YouTube. During the programme, the student started disrupting it using the YouTube chat room, it said.

"The comments made by the student were derogatory/slur/distasteful. The convocation is the most auspicious programme in the academic cycle of any student. The conduct... was unbecoming of a student and was against the values for which Dr. B R Ambedkar University stands."

Hustle the way



Women carry bundles of firewood over their head on a hot summer afternoon in Delhi. • SANDEEP SAXENA

Govt. celebrates third anniversary of Happiness Curriculum

Students told Sisodia how the programme helped them perform better in academic activities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday celebrated "Happiness Utsav" to mark the third anniversary of the Happiness Curriculum. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Happiness Curriculum has brought about a change in the lives of

children, their families and also teachers.

"If there has been any significant change amongst the children due to the Happiness Classes in just 2-3 years, in the coming 10 years, the children will adopt happiness in their life fully and it will grow to become an important component of their

everyday life. These are the real happiness agents and will bring a sea change in the society," Mr. Sisodia said.

Happiness Curriculum was launched in July 2018 by the Dalai Lama and has been running in all the classes from Nursery to 8th standard in the Delhi govern-

ment schools.

In an interaction with Mr. Sisodia, students shared how the curriculum had helped them become closer to their family, reduce stress and perform better in academic activities. Students also shared how they had encouraged their family members to practice mind-

fulness "Lakhs of children have practiced mindfulness and other activities learned in the Happiness Classes in their homes with parents and siblings during the pandemic. This has led to people feeling happier and stress-free even during difficult times," Mr. Sisodia ad-

Can't act against NGO for not submitting returns, Centre told

'Citizen can't be penalised for discrepancy in form by Centre'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has restrained the Centre from taking any coercive steps against an NGO that was unable to submit its annual return due to discrepancy in the new form prescribed for declaring foreign contributions.

The north-east district reported the least number of infections, 75, in this category as well.

With 216, 148 and 140 cases, the highest incidence of infection among the 60-plus age group was reported from the south-west, west, and New Delhi districts as the north-east district accounted for 19 cases.

The south-west, New Delhi, and north districts, with 44, 43, 36 cases, respectively, reported the maximum number of infections among those aged below 14 years; at 12, the north-east district reported the least number of infections in this age group.



The difficulty being faced by the petitioners [NGO] appears, prima facie, to be genuine

HIGH COURT

2020, the requirement of the account under the FCRA/FCR rules being in the SBI, New Delhi was introduced only in September, 2020 and the specific branch of the bank was notified only on October 7, 2020.

The NGO's accounts where foreign contributions were received were not in the SBI, till October 7, 2020. As a result, the NGO submitted that it has "become impossible" for it to submit the return under FC-4 form for the year 2019-2020.

The NGO submitted that though it made a representation to the Central government on June 15, this year the problem continues.

"The difficulty being faced by the petitioners [NGO] appears, prima facie, to be genuine," the court said.

The court's order came on a petition by Arbor Charitable Foundation, an NGO, which receives foreign contributions in accordance with the protocol set out in the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA). The NGO's grievance arises out of the pecularities in the new FC-4 form, in which returns, regarding foreign contributions received by it are required to be filed.

In September last year, the Centre made it mandatory for all NGOs to receive foreign contributions only at the New Delhi Main Branch of the State Bank of India (SBI). Prior to this there was no requirement of the FCRA account being in SBI.

A peculiar situation
The NGO submitted that this has resulted in a peculiar situation in which, though March, 31, 2020 would be the relevant date for filing of the return for the year 2019-

"You said it will open Pandora's box. What was there in Pandora's box?" Justice Shankar asked while rejecting the plea.

BJP protests outside Delhi Secretariat, seeks Transport Minister's dismissal

It says CM must take responsibility for 'financial discrepancies' +

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The State unit of the BJP on Friday protested against what it termed the "bus purchase scam" at the Delhi Secretariat, demanding the dismissal of Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot.

Demanding that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal take responsibility for alleged financial discrepancies related to the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses, protesters assembled at Rajghat from where they proceeded to

wards the Secretariat raising anti-Kejriwal slogans.

"The matter was raised in State Assembly also. The government had no satisfactory reply to allegations leveled by Vijender Gupta. It was after this that the BJP legislative party took up the matter with the Lieutenant Governor asking for a probe," said Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri.

BJP Rohini MLA Vijender Gupta said buses normally had a three-year guarantee and so there was no need to

Govt. holds interactive session for students with entrepreneur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday organised an interactive session as a part of its Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum (EMC) with Sanjeev Bikhchandani – founder of Info Edge India Ltd. – the company that owns Naukri.com.

Mr. Bikhchandani told students those successful businesses are built on deep customer insights and that they must study customer behaviour when they want to set up a business. "There

is no substitute for hard work. You will face hardships, especially in the initial years. Think of the long term and keep persevering... Dream big, start small is a mantra I have followed, and it really helped me."

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia speaking about the EMC and the government's initiative to give seed money to students with entrepreneurial ideas said the students would be given ownership of the profit from their venture, and the government would bear the losses if any.

"While ₹900 crore was spent on the buses' purchase, a whopping ₹5,000 will be spent on maintenance, which is a big scam. Hence, the dismissal of the Transport Minister is a must," Mr. Gupta alleged.

"More money is being spent on maintenance than their purchase value. In other words, ₹900 crore for 1,000 buses and ₹3,500 crore a year," Mr. Gupta alleged.

"While ₹900 crore was spent on the buses' purchase, a whopping ₹5,000 will be spent on maintenance, which is a big scam. Hence, the dismissal of the Transport Minister is a must," Mr. Gupta also said.

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"While ₹900 crore was spent on the buses' purchase, a whopping ₹5,000 will be spent on maintenance,

Leopard kills man in Pauri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PAURI (UTTARAKHAND)
A 28-year-old man was killed by a leopard in Uttarakhand's Pauri, officials said on Friday.

Prithvi Chand of Dwarikhals was attacked on Thursday when he had gone to the fields to graze his cattle, Re-

venue Officer Kunwar Prakash said. Villagers began looking for him when he did not return, he said. The man's partially eaten body was recovered around 9.30 p.m., he said. A trap has been set to capture the big cat, DFO, Garhwal range, Mukesh Kumar said.

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CANCELLATION NOTICE

The e-NIT invited vide this office e-NIT No.SE/Proc/02/2021-22 for Purchase of EHV Grade Transformer Oil is hereby cancelled.

S.No.: 1
NIT No.: SE/Proc/02/2021-22
Tender ID: 2021_PDD_122746_1
Description of Material: Purchase of EHV Grade Transformer Oil
Remarks: CancelledSd/
Superintending Engineer
(Procurement)
P&P Wing, KPDCCL

DIP/K-NB-1498/21

MADHYA PRADESH PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.
Tilhan Sangh Bhawan, 01 Arera Hills, Bhopal
Phone : 0755-2578915, URL: www.mpphscsl.in
Dated : 02.07.2021

TENDER NOTICE

Tenders for rate contracts of following items/Services shall be floated on websites from today to next 30 working days :

1. Online Tender Ref. No. T-209/OXYGEN GENERATION PLANT (300 LPM)/2021/uploaded on 24.06.2021 (Portal & Website)
2- Tender(s) for Various DrugsProspective bidders are requested to visit www.mptenders.gov.in/www.mpphscsl.in for further details.
M.P. Madhyam/101186/2021 CGM (TECHNICAL)Government of Jharkhand
Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society
Department of Health, Medical Education & Family Welfare Namkum, Ranchi.
Phone No: 0651-2261000, 2261856 & 2261002
Mail ID: procurementjrhm@gmail.come-Procurement Tender Notice
Tender Notice No.: NHM/NAM/26/2021 Date: 30.06.2021
Mission Director, Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Jharkhand, Namkum, Ranchi, invites e-Tender from eligible bidders for providing the technical support for Comprehensive 5 days IUCD Training.Blank tender documents with detailed conditions can be obtained through website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and bid should be submitted through e-procurement system only. Hard copies of technical bid and financial bid will not be entertained without detail proposal for technical support of IUCD, Tender Fee & Earnest Money Deposit (EMD).

Sr.No.	Particulars	Details
1	Name of the work	Providing the technical support for Comprehensive 5 days IUCD Training.
2	Date of Publication of Tender on website	02.07.2021
3	Date / time for receipt of bids on website	12.07.2021 To 20.07.2021 UP TO 01:00 PM
4	Date/Time for opening of Technical bid	21.07.2021 at 01:00 pm
5	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	2000 (Two Thousand Rupees)
6	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	2,00,000 (Two Lakhs)
7	Contact Number	9199969106/9110943588/9065527516

Note: The specified dates and time may change due to abrupt declaration of holidays or any other unforeseen circumstances. The same shall be informed through web-portal as and when required.

PR 248866 Jharkhand Rural Health Mission Society(21-22) #D Sd/- Procurement Incharge, JRHMS



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Akali Dal stages protests against Punjab govt. over power crisis

Party demands financial package for paddy farmers, reduction in VAT on diesel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal workers on Friday held demonstrations at several places in Punjab against the ongoing power crisis, blaming the Congress government for the same, which has badly hit farmers, domestic consumers and the industry as well.

The demonstrations were held outside the offices of the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) in many districts.

Plans to 'gherao' CM

The Akali Dal demanded an immediate financial package for paddy farmers who were forced to use diesel generators, besides demanding an immediate reduction in VAT on diesel by the State go-



Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal during a protest outside the PSPCL office in Fazilka on Friday. • PTI

vernment.

The party said if these corrective measures were not taken along with restoration of regular supply of power to farmers as well as the domestic and industrial consumers, the party would

gress government does not want to provide free power to the farmers, and this is the reason why it is not supplying power when it is needed the most."

No maintenance

Mr. Badal alleged the government did not make any attempt to ensure timely maintenance of thermal plants which had led to the closure of the Bathinda plant as well as the shut down of one unit of the Taldandi Sabo plant.

Former Minister Bikram Singh Majithia said instead of resolving the crisis, which had hit the State in the form of a power emergency, the Chief Minister was busy hosting five star luncheon meetings for the Congress leaders.

cessation of these agreements by the present government are the key reason behind the power crisis," he said at a press conference here.

Exchequer robbed

Mr. Mann alleged that so far around ₹20,000 crore had been paid to the private companies by fixed charge, which is nothing short of looting the exchequer of the State. "The Congress had backstabbed the people of Punjab by not cancelling the PPAs," he said.

Mr. Mann said after AAP forms the government in Punjab, a new power model would be implemented. "We will investigate PPAs with private thermal plants and, if necessary, will cancel them. Strict action will be taken against officials who made the wrong agreements," he said.

Rajasthan takes a big step in vocational education in schools

Introduces training in one skill beginning from Class 6

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Rajasthan is taking a big step in vocational education during the pandemic by introducing vocational classes beginning from Class 6 in schools as part of the new education policy of 2020. The State has also improved its ranking in the performance grading index in school education.

Chief Secretary Nirjan Arya said here on Friday that the vocational education

would aim at inculcating at least one skill in each student. The anganwadi centres would be connected with the schools and pre-primary facility started in the Mahatma Gandhi English Medium Schools at all the 33 district headquarters in the State, he said.

The modalities for vocational education were discussed at the first meeting of the steering committee on the implementation of the new education policy here.

The increase in the enrolment of students in Sirohi district by 12% during the pandemic, which is higher than the national average of 9%, was cited as an example of the State's good performance in education.

Mr. Arya said the task forces headed by Collectors in all the districts would review and implement the new education policy and formulate the plans for extending benefits to all students.

BJD, BJP spar over farmers' issues

Both parties prepare for the panchayat elections in 2022

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

Farmers' issues took the centre stage with the ruling Biju Janata Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party getting ready to face the panchayat elections scheduled in 2022.

While releasing COVID-19 assistance of ₹386 crore for landless farmers under the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) here on Wednesday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that his government would continue to help landless farmers till recommendations of M.S. Swaminathan

Committee were not implemented.

According to a statement issued by the CMO, landless farmers have been provided ₹1,000 in addition to their usual assistance under the Kalia scheme. This will benefit 18 lakh families.

Nucleus of economy

Terming the agricultural labourers as the nucleus of the economy, Mr. Patnaik said his government recognised their sacrifice. "We have continued our fight for the protection of the rights of the landless farmers. I have always demanded imple-

mentation of recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Committee. Till these are not implemented, the party will support them," he said.

The State BJP criticised the government saying despite repeated demands by the party, full list of Kalia beneficiaries was not made public. "When and how did the State government identify 18 lakh landless farmers? There has been no basis of the identification of the landless farmers. The government released huge funds to please the BJD cadres," alleged BJP spokesperson Golaka Mohapatra.

4,000-year-old settlement found during excavation in Odisha

Archaeologists find distinct traces of three cultural phases at the site

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies (OIMSEAS), the archaeological wing of the State government, has discovered a 4,000-year-old settlement and ancient artifacts in Balasore district.

Interestingly, the archaeologists have come across distinct traces of three cultural phases - Chalcolithic (2000 to 1000 BC), Iron Age (1000 to 400 BC) and Early Historic Period (400 to 200 BC) -

India (ASI) to document Durgadevi village in Remuna Tehsil. According to the ASI, the site has circular mud fortification of about 4.9 kms, in between the river Sona on south and the Burahabangal on its north-eastern borders. Interestingly, the archaeologists have come across distinct traces of three cultural phases - Chalcolithic (2000 to 1000 BC), Iron Age (1000 to 400 BC) and Early Historic Period (400 to 200 BC) -



An early historic site near Balasore town. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

from the excavation site.

"Two small nullahs Ganjagara and Prassana join the site on its north and south forming a natural moat

which was an ancient water management system developed at least 4,000 years ago," the institute said.

The archaeologists have

come across human settlement and artifacts belonging to the Chalcolithic period. "The major discovery was the base of a circular hut, black on red painted pottery, black slipped ware, red slipped ware and copper objects. The floor of the circular hut was rammed with red soil," OIMSEAS secretary and archaeologist Sunil Kumar Patnaik said. "The people were mostly leading settled life and had started agriculture, domestication of animals and fishing."

The material including

pottery remains of black burnished ware, black and red ware, iron objects like nails, arrow head, crucible and slag of various kinds belong to the Iron Age Period.

Early Historic Period cultural materials such as pottery specimens of red ware, terracotta ear studs, bangles, beads, and some conical objects were also discovered. "The lifestyle had improved to trade. The fortification signifies the emergence of urbanisation at Durgadevi around 400 to 200 BCE," said Mr. Patnaik.

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR DIRECTORATE OF HORTICULTURE TALAB TILLO, GOLE PULI, JAMMU (0191-250581(0), 2501219 (Telefax) Email: dirhortijmu-jk@nic.in

E-NIT No. Horti/Pur/02 of 2021-22 Dated:- 24.06.2021

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the Accounts officer Directorate of Horticulture, Jammu invited short term e-tender notice from eligible, registered and experienced event management agencies / reputed firms for infrastructures and other arrangements as per NIT for organizing of Divisional Level Horticulture Week at Fruit & Vegetable Mandi Akhnoor w.e.f 12.07.2021 or before 18th of July 2021 likely to be organized.

Interestingly, the archaeologists have come across distinct traces of three cultural phases - Chalcolithic (2000 to 1000 BC), Iron Age (1000 to 400 BC) and Early Historic Period (400 to 200 BC) -

Description of work

The detail of works is given in Annexure "A", "B", "C" Lacs

A. The Critical Dates are as follows:-

- The NIT consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of Quantities can be seen / downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in from Dt. 25.06.2021 at 3:30 am
- Bid Submission end: Last date of bid submission is on 05.07.2021 upto 14:00 hrs.
- Hard copy Submission : The hard copy of the bids will be submitted only by the bidder who is declared as L1 after opening of financial bids.
- Complete bidding process will be ONLINE.
- Bidding documents can be seen and downloaded from the website www.jktenders.gov.in. Bidding documents containing qualifying criteria for bidders, technical specifications, general terms and conditions , terms of contract and other details.
- Other details can be seen in the bidding document

Sd/-
Accounts Officer,
Member Secretary,
DLPC

DIP/J-3210/21

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1.The Executive Engineer, Shimla Division No-III, HPPWD, Shimla-3 on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD, for the works detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Starting date of downloading Bid	EMD	Cost of Tender	Deadline for submission of Bid
1.	Impro					

IN BRIEF



Aisha case: HC declines to stay proceedings

KOCHI
The Kerala High Court on Friday declined to stay all further proceedings in a sedition case registered by the Karavati police against Lakshadweep-native filmmaker Aisha Sultana for her controversial comments that the Central government had used bioweapon against the islanders.

'Explosion-like' sound heard in Bengaluru

BENGALURU
Residents in some parts of the city were startled by a loud 'explosion-like' sound around 12.30 p.m. on Friday. The Bengaluru city police suspect that it was a sonic boom produced during a fighter plane sortie in the city.

Tension at Srisailam, Nagarjunasagar

Stand-off may end soon, says govt. adviser

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

Tension continued to prevail at the Srisailam and Nagarjunasagar projects as efforts by the Andhra Pradesh government to stop Telangana from drawing water for power generation met with little success on Friday.

Officials on both sides engaged in dialogue, but the deadlock remained as the Prime Minister's intervention sought by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has not yet been received. The two projects had a large number of police personnel deployed at them to meet any contingency.

The Srisailam project, which is the major bone of contention, is under close surveillance, and so is the



Under pressure: Police personnel deployed at the Right Bank of the Srisailam Dam in Kurnool district on Friday. ■ U. SUBRAMANYAM

Rajolibanda diversion scheme in Kurnool district at the tri-State junction of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh government adviser Sajala Ramakrishna Reddy told mediapersons that there might be no need for the

Central government to take over the maintenance of the projects, expressing hope that the stand-off would end sooner than later with its intervention.

He asserted that Andhra Pradesh was trying to fully utilise the water allocated to it and had no intention of

"stealing water" as alleged by Telangana, and observed that Andhra Pradesh could not draw 40,000 cusecs of water from the Pothireddy-padu head regulator unless the minimum level was 881 feet.

The full reservoir level was not likely to last for more

than 15 days, in which time Andhra Pradesh had to utilise the water to meet its irrigation requirements.

Mr. Ramakrishna Reddy recalled Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's promise to settle the dispute over water releases to Rayalaseema as a "big brother", and said it appeared to have been "forgotten or deliberately ignored".

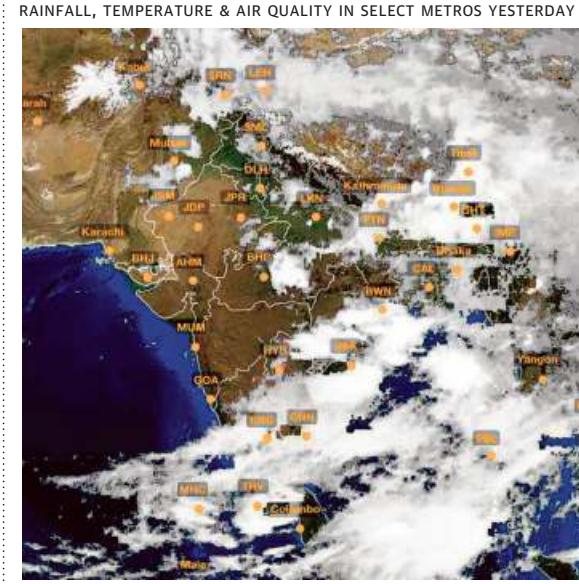
More forces deployed

The number of police personnel deployed at the Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme Right Canal worksite at the tri-State junction, and at the Srisailam Reservoir in Kurnool district, was increased on Friday.

Kurnool Superintendent of Police Falkeerappa Kaginelli told *The Hindu* that the situation was under control at both the sites.

(Inputs from Anantapur Special Correspondent)

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Bihar, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rayalaseema, coastal Karnataka, Karikal, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1.6	27.8	24.7	Kozhikode	32	32.0	23.8
Ahmedabad	—	37.4	27.0	Kurnool	—	32.3	27.3
Aizawl	0.2	—	22.5	Lucknow	—	38.5	29.0
Altahabadi	—	35.1	27.4	Madurai	0.8	38.6	24.5
Bengaluru	—	31.4	22.0	Mangaluru	30.1	30.6	23.8
Bhopal	—	34.0	25.8	Mumbai	0.2	33.2	27.6
Bhubaneswar	—	36.0	26.5	Mysuru	—	30.9	21.2
Chandigarh	—	39.9	30.0	New Delhi	5	41.3	27.2
Chennai	—	37.2	27.2	Patna	27	33.2	24.2
Coimbatore	0.4	33.4	23.6	Puducherry	—	34.2	23.2
Dehradun	—	36.0	25.3	Pune	—	31.6	23.3
Gangtok	27	20.2	17.5	Raipur	—	31.0	25.5
Goa	12	31.5	24.4	Ranchi	—	31.5	23.6
Guwahati	—	28.2	25.5	Shillong	2	32.3	17.6
Hubballi	—	28.0	22.0	Shimla	—	30.8	21.1
Hyderabad	18	29.8	22.0	Srinagar	3	29.9	16.8
Imphal	5	26.8	21.4	Thiruvananthapuram	7	32.4	23.8
Jaipur	—	40.2	29.9	Tiruchi	70	37.3	22.6
Kochi	5	31.2	24.6	Vijayawada	31	29.8	23.5
Kohima	—	26.4	18.4	Kolkata	15	35.6	24.6
							31.2
							28.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.7	16	99	.107	.112	■■■
Bengaluru	—	34	31	.50	.53	■■■
Chennai	.9	5	38	.48	.70	■■■
Delhi	11	55	100	.201	.305	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.2	62	23	.23	.40	■■■■■
Kolkata	.8	27	24	.60	.67	■■■■■
Lucknow	.6	40	59	.113	.151	■■■■■
Mumbai	12	30	.8	.54	.112	■■■■■
Pune	—	37	105	.24	.78	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	12	48	35	.46	.82	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Sonipat, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 365 indicating unhealthy levels of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 16.

NO₂: 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 heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

NORTH & WEST

The Keralite woman is languishing in an Afghanistan jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

A writ petition was filed in the Kerala High Court on Friday by the mother of Nimisha Fathima, a Keralite woman who is languishing in an Afghanistan jail following the killing of her IS fighter husband in an attack, seeking a directive to the Centre to take expedited steps to repatriate her daughter and minor granddaughter.

In her petition, K. Bindu, mother of Fathima, said that according to reports, after the killing of Abu Akbar al-Baghdad, leader of Islamic State in 2019 by the United



Nimisha Fathima

States Armed Forces, a group of 10 women and 21 children had surrendered to the Afghanistan police. Her daughter and granddaughter

were among the group. The Afghanistan government wanted to deport Nimisha and her minor child and other Indians detained in the Afghan jail. However, the Indian government had refused to take back its citizens.

It was the responsibility of Centre to bring back its citizens. Her daughter and granddaughter would not pose a threat to the security of the nation or society if they were brought back. In fact, her minor granddaughter could be rehabilitated and reintegrated into Indian society, she said.

at Kizhakkambalam, near here, by officials of Labour and other departments.

Sabu M. Jacob, chairman of the Kitex Group, told *The Hindu* that he was surprised that no official from the State had contacted him since he had announced the scrapping of the group's investment plans. This was in stark contrast to Chief Ministers, Industries Ministers and others contacting him over these three days, inviting him to invest in their States, he said.

The press release said Tamil Nadu had offered many incentives along with the in-

itation letter. The incentives included a 40% subsidy on investment, land at half the market rate, exemption on stamp duty, 5% interest rebate for six years, 25% subsidy for pollution control/environment protection measures, ₹4,000 to ₹6,000 per worker during the six-month training period, 50% subsidy for quality control mechanisms, low power tariff for five years, State GST waiver for capital investment, and the government paying up to 20% of wages for 10 years.

The invitation was in the wake of discussions held, Mr. Jacob said.

Sidhu attacks Amarinder on power crisis in Punjab

He says there is an over-dependence on private plants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

At loggerheads with Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, his former Cabinet colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday yet again fired shots at the Chief Minister about the ongoing power crisis in the State.

In a series of tweets titled, "Truth of power costs, cuts, power purchase agreements and how to give free and 24-hour power to the people of Punjab", Mr. Sidhu said there was no need of imposing power cuts in the State, if there's action in the right direction.

Pointing out that Punjab is buying power at average cost of ₹4.54 per unit while the national average is ₹3.85 per unit, Mr. Sidhu said that Punjab's over-dependence on three private thermal

plants in Punjab. Till 2020, Punjab has already paid ₹5,400 crore due to faulty clauses in these agreements and is expected to pay another ₹65,000 crore just as fixed charges, he added.

Advising that the Vidhan Sabha can bring in new legislation with retrospective effect to cap power purchase costs to prices available on the National Power Exchange at any given time, and thus, by amending the law, these agreements will become null and void, saving the public money, he said. He also added that Punjab's revenue per unit of consumption is one of the lowest in India, due to gross mismanagement of the system. Punjab State Power Corporation Limited pays ₹0.15 per unit "extra" on every unit supplied, he said.

Navjot Singh Sidhu ■

plants was to blame.

"There's no need for power-cuts in Punjab or for the Chief Minister to regulate office timings or AC (Air Conditioners) use of the common people... If we act in the right direction," he said in a tweet.

Mr. Sidhu said that Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) were signed during the previous Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP government with three private thermal power

HC directs PWD, NHAI to fill potholes on highway

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Friday directed the Maharashtra Public Works Department (PWD) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to fill potholes and carry out repair work on the Mumbai-Goa National Highway.

A Bench was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by one Owais Pechkar, a regular commuter on the highway. The plea highlighted the increase in the number of potholes and sought a direction from the court to the State and the

Centre to repair them.

The PIL said although the highway was being widened, the work had been delayed for years, inconveniencing citizens and causing regular traffic congestion.

The plea also sought a direction from the authorities to ensure proper barricading of portions, where a road-widening work was underway along the highway, to prevent loss of lives.

The Bench said, "The situation on the highway is not good. We want the State PWD and NHAI to look into the immediate issues, including potholes."

State can vaccinate all by Aug. 31: Pawar

Deputy CM urges Centre to ensure constant supply of doses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE



Unjust green

India must continue to monitor discrimination in vaccine passports issue

The European Union's decision to enforce a "Green Pass" to allow travel within the EU from July 1, and linked to specified vaccines, has set off a storm of protest from several quarters including India. According to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) that sets the guidelines, the vaccines given "conditional marketing authorisation" were Comirnaty (Pfizer/BioNTech), Vaccine Janssen (Johnson & Johnson), Spikevax (Moderna) and Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca), which makes it clear that neither of India's vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, as well as Russia's and China's, would be eligible for the EU Digital COVID Certificate (EUDCC), as the Green Pass is formally called. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar took up the exclusion strongly with EU authorities this week, particularly the case of Covishield, which is made under licensing and certification from AstraZeneca, and cleared by WHO. India has argued that the entire idea of "vaccine passports" would leave developing nations and the global south at a disadvantage, as they have restricted vaccine access. An unspoken but valid criticism is that there is a hint of racism in the action – the EMA list only includes vaccines already used by Europe and North America. A letter of protest on the EMA's decision was also issued by the African Union and the Africa CDC this week, which called Covishield the "backbone" of the COVAX alliance's programme, that has been administered in many African countries. The EMA list is not binding however, and countries can choose to include others individually. After India's vocal protests, and its subtle threat to impose reciprocal measures, at least a third of the EU has said they would recognise Covishield (Estonia has accepted Covishield and Covaxin).

While the news that Austria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland (not an EU member) have accommodated India's concerns is welcome, there are still some hurdles before Indian travellers. Most of these countries are not at present accepting Indian travellers at all, as no non-essential travel is allowed to EU countries, and the spread of the Delta variant, first identified in India, has meant further travel restrictions. In addition, Indians who have taken doses of Covaxin will need to wait even longer, until this vaccine receives WHO clearance. Finally, as more nations complete their vaccine programmes, they will seek to tighten their border controls with "vaccine passports" and longer quarantines in order to curtail the spread of new variants. While it is necessary for the Government to keep up with these actions worldwide, and battle discriminatory practices, the real imperative remains to vaccinate as many Indians as possible, given that more than six months after the Indian inoculation programme began, only 4.4% of those eligible have been fully vaccinated.

Net loss

The Centre must help provide Internet links to all schools as an essential service

The digital divide in India's school education system, reflected by the absence of computers and Internet access on campus, emerges starkly from the Education Ministry's Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), for the pre-pandemic year of 2019-20. Physical infrastructure has traditionally meant good buildings, playgrounds, libraries and access to water and toilets, but the advent of hybrid learning even ahead of the coronavirus crisis has made essential online access and computers key adjuncts to make the learning process more engaging. During 2020-21, it became painfully evident that most students had to rely on remote learning, but many faced the double jeopardy of not possessing their own computing devices and smartphones at home, and their schools remaining in the dark without such facilities. In remote areas, particularly in the Northeast, many had to travel closer to mobile phone towers to access the Internet on shared phones to get their lessons. The latest data confirm that a mere 22% of schools across the country on average had Internet access, while government institutions fared much worse at 11%. On the second metric of functional computer access, the national average was 37% and for government schools, 28.5%. Beyond the averages, the range of deficits reflects deep asymmetries: 87.84% of Kerala schools and 85.69% in Delhi had an Internet facility, compared to 6.46% in Odisha, 8.5% in Bihar, 10% in West Bengal and 13.62% in Uttar Pradesh.

Students and teachers not being able to use computers and the Internet is acknowledged to be a form of deprivation, especially during the pandemic, just as the inability to attend in-person classes is another. Many scholars see the teaching-learning process as multi-dimensional, helping to inculcate social skills. COVID-19 has, however, compelled all countries to evaluate hybrid education models, with a mix of lessons delivered virtually now and on campus later when the virus threat abates. In such a multi-layered process, bringing computers and the Internet to all schools cannot be delayed any longer. The Centre must explore all options, such as the National Broadband Mission, the BSNL network and other service providers, to connect schools, including all government institutions that are severely deprived; the upcoming 5G standard with the benefit of high wireless bandwidth may also be able to help bridge the gap quickly. Getting computers to schools should also not be difficult because, apart from public funding, communities, corporates and hardware makers can use recycling and donation options. The UDISE+ shows that many schools have fallen through the net, and they need urgent help to get connected.

In centenary backdrop, this is no hand of peace

Beijing's recent and muscular behaviour towards India could stem from deeper tensions within China



M.K. NARAYANAN

An atmosphere of unpredictability prevails as regards India-China relations, even as China embarks on its 100th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Memories of the bloodiest clash in recent decades that occurred in the Galwan Heights in June last year, are still vivid in India's memory. The situation in Eastern Ladakh currently remains tense. After some progress in talks over troop disengagement in the vicinity of Pangong Tso Lake and the Kailash ranges, matters have since reached a stalemate. Meanwhile, there is new information on China's manoeuvres in the border regions across Ladakh. China is reportedly raising new militia units comprising local Tibetan youth, to be deployed in Eastern Ladakh, for both high altitude warfare and surveillance. India has, meanwhile, been expressing its concern to China about the continuing 'close up deployments', which has only produced a strong verbal riposte from China.

All this has left an indelible imprint on the state of relations between the two Asian giants, who share a several thousand kilometre land border. Answers to the question as to why China chose to attack Indian positions in Ladakh, without any provocation, causing the death of a platoon of soldiers belonging to the Bihar Regiment, are still not forthcoming. An answer needs to be found before a reset in India-China relations can take place.

Global concerns

India's concerns about China are grounded in reality. Other nations today have, however, begun expressing concern about the threat posed by China to the existing world order. During the past month, both the G-7 and North At-

lantic Treaty Organization, have criticised China for its military ambitions and the threat it poses to world peace. China is, however, unlikely to be deterred by any of this, and its mindset is best revealed by its actions in the South and East China Seas, its treatment of its Uighur Muslim minority, and its actions in Hong Kong.

A lesser nation might be deterred by the kind of criticism that China faces today, but it does not seem to impact China. Moreover, and notwithstanding the hype surrounding India's membership of the Quad and the role assigned to it by the United States and the other western powers in the Indo-Pacific, to think that this may have rattled China, compelling it to indulge in actions that verge on the erratic would be a mistake. China could be expected to have fully catered for all such eventualities.

Going back into the past

We may, hence, need to look elsewhere to find a proper explanation for China's behaviour *vis-à-vis* India, and also elsewhere. Delving into China's recent past, and examining periods when it possibly acted in a similar erratic manner, may provide some clues. In the late 1950s and 1960s, China's then Chairman, Mao Tse Tung/Mao Zedong, when finding himself in a difficult situation on account of his ill-conceived policies and programmes (history tells us that Mao confronted one of the worst famines in history on account of his misadventure of the Great Leap Forward Movement) rather than accepting his mistake and retracing his steps, embarked on his campaign to attack India, in spite of the close friendship that existed at the time between the two countries.

Later, it was surmised, that Mao's actions were intended partly to divert attention from China's internal turmoils at the time, and possibly more important, to counter the dissidents who existed within the CPC, and who were critical of Mao's autocratic attitude and his ill-conceived policies. Other instances of this kind exist and



can be quoted: Deng Xiaoping's behaviour following the Tiananmen Square movement in the 1980s, is an excellent example.

A leader in a hurry

Xi Jinping is seen today as a Mao clone, someone who seeks to achieve the same kind of dominance over the CPC as the latter. Like Mao, he is a man in a hurry, seeking to consolidate his power and achieve a pre-eminence of the kind enjoyed by Chinese Emperors in the past. He has assiduously attempted to accelerate the pace at which China expects to overtake the U.S. as the world's number one super power which, however, seems to be stalling for a variety of reasons. China's attempt, under Mr. Xi, to become the world's most powerful military is also nowhere in sight.

On the other hand, China's misadventure in the Ladakh heights in June last year, exposed certain shortfalls with regard to mechanisation of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), diminishing the latter's hopes of becoming fully mechanised by the time the PLA celebrates its Centenary in 2027. Much of the blame for both situations is being attributed to Mr. Xi. Given the extent of concentration of power in his hands, this is leading many in the Party to question Mr. Xi's claims to omniscience.

Apart from this, several of Mr. Xi's other ideas have run into difficulties. His plans to remake the global order on terms favourable to the CPC seem to have gone awry. The Chinese economy – though performing better than most other world economies – is showing signs of slowing down. Mr. Xi had been betting on technolo-

logical prowess and economic heft to achieve the kind of geo-political transformation that he wished for, but this is clearly not happening at present.

Most important, and despite having accumulated so much power, Mr. Xi seems to be finding it difficult to push through his 'new socialist ideology' with Chinese characteristics' (through which he hoped to demarcate himself from his immediate predecessors like Hu Jintao) and is intended to be his lasting legacy.

There are some clues

Undoubtedly, therefore, Mr. Xi is finding himself in a difficult situation, including within the Party. There is an old Chinese proverb that says "the wind sweeping through the tower heralds a storm rising in the mountain" and this, perhaps, provides a clue to Mr. Xi's, and Chinese, behaviour in the recent period. The extent of inner-party tensions is little known to the world outside, given the opacity of Chinese society, but the existence of dissidence or dissension within the CPC is no secret, however.

While it is generally believed that the CPC is a monolith entity, the reality is otherwise. In the 100 years of its existence, the CPC is known to have gone through several transformations, many of an idealistic nature, leading to serious upheavals. Deep fissures have existed, and perhaps, still exist, within the party, though the extent may not be known outside. What is generally seen is that during such periods, China's attitude often borders on the erratic. The question is whether something of this nature is occurring at present inside the CPC and China.

It is tempting to think that history is again being repeated, and China's recent erratic behaviour is largely due to growing inner-party criticism of Mr. Xi's policies and actions, rather than due to extraneous factors. The Ladakh adventure (or misadventure) could well have been a misguided attempt by Mr. Xi to demonstrate to his opponents within the CPC that he is well and truly in command. One

could also anticipate that this could well be a prelude to a limited purge of dissenters within the highest echelons of the CPC.

An accumulation of problems does produce in closed societies (such as China) a 'pressure cooker' syndrome, where the safety valve is often in the hands of the leadership. If the latter is precariously poised, and out of sync with reality, it leads to erratic behaviour. What may be aggravating Chinese leadership concerns at this time also is that the world is seemingly tilting towards India at this juncture, regarding it as more sophisticated, diplomatically, and more flexible, ideologically, compared to an increasingly obdurate China. Within the CPC itself, there are reportedly quite a few who prefer 'peaceful coexistence' to sustain peace, as compared to Mr. Xi's more muscular approaches.

India needs to be on guard

A final thought. It is worth remembering that Mr. Xi is one of the few world leaders known to have made a study of Goethe's works, including *Faust*. Not only that, some of Mr. Xi's actions, such as modelling himself on Mao and a practising advocate of Maoism 2.0 – despite the humiliation both he and his father suffered at the hands of Mao prior to, and during the Cultural Revolution – tend to make him out to be something of a Faustian character. Was Mr. Xi, through his aggressive behaviour in Ladakh, and notwithstanding the warm relations that he is known to have with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, preparing the ground for a 'Faustian Bargain'. If so, Mr. Xi has made yet another serious miscalculation, not only about the ground situation but also the mood of the nation and its leadership. This could cost him dear. What all this suggests is that 'peace is not at hand', and that India should expect, and prepare for, more situations of this kind, with many more provocations coming from China.

M.K. Narayanan is a former National Security Adviser and a former Governor of West Bengal

Rural power solutions even other States can emulate

As a recent ruling by Rajasthan's power regulator implies, enabling energy access must go beyond powering rural homes



HARSHA MEENAWAT & BHARATH JAIRAJ

Over the past decade, India has made great strides in expanding energy access in rural areas. Credible estimates suggest a near doubling of electrified rural households, from 55% in 2010 to 96% in 2020 (World Bank, 2021; <https://bit.ly/2UEgQp>).

However, the measure of access to power supply, has been the number of households that have been connected to the electricity grid. While this is a significant measure, it discounts large areas of essential and productive human activities such as public schools and primary health centres. And despite greater electrification, power supply is often unreliable in rural areas.

A recent ruling by Rajasthan's power regulator points to this yawning gap, but also suggests solutions that other States could emulate. The Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) has ordered the State's three power distribution companies, or discoms (the Jaipur, Ajmer and Jodhpur Vidyal Tarhan Nigam Limited) to solarise unelectrified public schools. This has the potential to electrify about 1,500 government-

run schools in the remote parts of the State with roof-top solar panels and generate about 15 megawatts (MW) of power. The RERC has also suggested installation of batteries to ensure storage of power.

Apart from enabling education, this ruling would benefit several other crucial aspects of rural life. Government schools serve as public spaces in rural areas. They doubled up as COVID-19 care centres in the past year (<https://bit.ly/367tq7V>) and have housed villagers from extreme weather such as storms and floods, apart from turning into polling centres come election season.

Battery storage of power ensures that they cater to children's after-school activities. Schools could also extend power supply to mid-day meal kitchens, toilets, and motorised water pumps and not limit it to powering fans and lights in classrooms.

Clean energy drive
The RERC order also directs Rajasthan's cash-strapped discoms to seek corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for the solarising drive and allows schools ownership of the power systems in a phased manner. This removes the burden of infrastructure development expenses on discoms, while also ensuring clean energy for the schools.

The power that is generated could also be counted towards the discoms' Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO). RPO is the pro-



portion of power that distribution companies must procure from renewable sources. This ratio is a gradual annual progression to encourage greater use of renewable energy and to provide for a phased manner to reduce dependence on climate warming fossil fuels.

Achieving a target

In 2019, Rajasthan set itself an ambitious target of producing 30 GW of solar energy by 2025 (Rajasthan government, 2019). It currently has an installed capacity of about 5 GW (<https://bit.ly/3cyjIT>), most of which are from large-scale utility plants, or solar parks with ground-mounted panels. The State must install at least 7 GW every year for the next four years to achieve this target. This is not impossible, but it would require investment and installation on a war basis.

While Rajasthan is India's largest State in terms of land mass with vast, sparsely populated tracts available to install solar parks, bulk infrastructure of this scale is susceptible to extreme weather events. With climate

change increasing the possibility of such events, a decentralised model of power generation would prove to be more climate resilient.

Taking a cue from the RERC ruling, a greater number of public buildings could be used to install roof-top solar panels. Buildings such as primary health centres, panchayat offices, railway stations and bus stops could easily be transitioned to utilising clean energy. And with battery storage, the susceptibility of grid infrastructure to extreme weather events could be mitigated. This is called climate proofing.

For instance, the power blackout in the American State of Texas due to an extreme weather event earlier this year was caused due to inadequately climate-proofed natural gas equipment, which supplied domestic electricity. While the State's Governor Greg Abbott blamed it on frozen wind turbines and solar panels, about 70% of power that is generated in Texas is from natural gas and coal-fired power plants. Windmill power is about 20% and solar is a mere 1%.

Large-scale projects are generally financed by companies that wish to profit from economies of scale. They are less interested in investing in rural electricity as it is not as lucrative. Large-grid based projects add to the supply of power in urban areas, and therefore, only marginally further greater energy access goals.

As solar installations become inexpensive and with rapidly ad-

vancing battery storage technologies, decentralised solar power generation has become a reality. A State such as Rajasthan, which is most exposed to solar irradiation, could set an example by making its urban and rural centres, power generators, consumers, and suppliers in the same breath. Indeed, its government has an ambitious plan to catapult the State into being a power "exporter", but it must consider the possibility of achieving this through means that do not destroy the environment and are most productive, cost-effective, and optimal for human activity.

Working together

One of the hurdles to holistic, climate resilient, clean energy access is the lack of convergence between government departments.

In Rajasthan, for instance, the discoms could work with the State's Education Department to determine the schools that require electrification, and their expected demand and infrastructure expenses. They could then liaise with the CSR arms of companies to generate funding, and with industry to produce cost-effective solar photovoltaic panels and batteries.

Sustaining these new power systems would require some unlearning and re-learning, but it is not unimaginable.

Harsha Meenawat and Bharath Jairaj are researchers at the World Resources Institute, India's Energy Programme

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.

Crisis in schooling

India prides itself in being one of the leading software hubs of the world, but it is clear that it has failed the vast multitude of our school-going children during the pandemic crisis – by depriving them access to online education (Page 1, "In last academic year, only 22% schools had Internet," July 2). With the present and abysmal levels of these tech facilities, it would be futile to plan for "hybrid teaching and learning" during the academic year 2021-22, as the time and

resources required to ramp up such facilities quickly may be too short. As many schoolchildren have already lost a full academic year without learning anything, – it is even worse in rural India – plans for 2021-22 should be realistic and aimed at providing some solid education. Plans should be made for physical classes only. If necessary, the syllabus for the academic year should be reduced by 40% to 50% so that the rest of the syllabus could be covered during the limited number

of physical classes held in a staggered manner.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ It is not only school but even college students too who face problems. Many have semi-functional phones, poor or no Internet. There is also the issue of them having poor knowledge to use the net/computers.

KIRTI WADHAWAN,
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

China watch

A letter ("Letters to the Editor," July 2), presented a

negative picture of the Communist Party of China. If so, how did China make rapid strides on the economic front and become a dominant global power challenging the supremacy and hegemony of the U.S.? Whether one likes it or not, one has to admit that China is now, strongly, shrewdly and strategically, making moves to further expand its sway across the world. The role played by the U.S. pertaining to Afghanistan, Iraq, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the Iran nuclear deal make the rhetoric and

Change, but no closure, in Plachimada

The defunct Coca-Cola building in Plachimada was recently converted by the Kerala government into a COVID-19 care facility. But it will take more than a transformation to appease the people of the village who won the battle against the multinational company but are still waiting for compensation, writes **Abdul Latheef Naha**

In Plachimada, a small Adivasi village in Palakkad district of Kerala, a building, once infamous, was lying derelict and abandoned until recently. Overrun by weeds and bushes, it was hard to imagine that this building was once the bottling plant of Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages, the Indian subsidiary of the Atlanta-based manufacturer of aerated drinks. Spread over 34 acres, the 35,000 sq ft 'Coke building', as it is referred to by the locals, used to look haunted. Winds would whistle through broken windowpanes and snakes would lie hidden in the thick undergrowth. People rarely loitered in the area.

Today, the sprawling single-storey edifice wears a fresh coat of paint. The 'Coca-Cola' logo has disappeared from the entrance of the building, which smells of disinfectants and paint. The contested site now serves an important purpose, to meet the challenges of the times. The Government of Kerala has spruced up and converted the building into a COVID-19 care facility. The company that had once caused grief to the locals closed the plant and left long ago, but the building remained a symbol of despair. While the government believes that it has now become a sign of hope for all those affected by the raging pandemic, the villagers of Plachimada are not as enthused.

A transformed space

The miraculous transformation took barely six weeks. The local bodies, helmed by the Perumatty Grama Panchayat in Palakkad, led the efforts. The building had caught the attention of the local administrators during the peak of the second COVID-19 wave in May. Palakkad was seeing more than 3,500 infections every day on average and a test positivity rate of more than 30%. The State Minister for Power, K. Krishnankutty, who wields great influence in the eastern Chittur belt, including the Perumatty Grama Panchayat, is largely credited for converting the Coke building into a healthcare facility with a clear eye on a possible third wave of the pandemic sweeping across the district.

It was important for the administration to ensure that the building was swiftly transformed. In May, discussions on the project assumed a sense of urgency. In just a day, 200-odd volunteers under the leadership of the Perumatty Grama Panchayat president, Risha Premkumar, cleared the weeds and bushes in the compound of the plant. Eight neighbouring panchayats under the Chittur Block joined hands and offered to donate up to ₹10 lakh each when the District Disaster Management Authority and the Chittur Block Panchayat chipped in ₹30 lakh each. With ₹1.4 crore in their pocket, the authorities were excited to take up the work of the new COVID-19 care centre. Officials in Coca-Cola chipped in too, offering their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to renovate the building. According to sources in the government, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages has spent ₹60 lakh from its CSR funds in three phases, including to repair the building. Officials of the company refused to speak to this reporter.

With money flowing in, new toilets were built and water facilities arranged. Apart from electrical partitioning and plumbing work, the Nirmithi Kendra arranged cots, beds, and electrical fittings. A new spacious kitchen was set up with facilities to cater to more than 600 people. Engineers with experience in the medical field oversaw the setting up of a triage facility and sheds for biomedical waste disposal. With everyone working at a frenzied pace, the goal was accomplished in about six weeks.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan could barely conceal his excitement when he inaugurated the hospital virtually on June 17. He was all praise not only for the officials of Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages but also for all those who worked to build the treatment centre. "Four weeks is record time in setting up such a huge facility. The Plachimada treatment centre will give us a fillip in the fight against COVID-19. The centre will be most suited for COVID-19 treatment as it is located quite a distance away from areas where people live," he said.

The care facility has 550 beds. Of them, 100 are oxygen beds, 50 are ICU beds and 20 have ventilators. It also has air-conditioned ready-made cabins, a portable X-ray console, a round-the-clock pharmacy, and a COVID-19 outpatient wing. The capacity of the oxygen tank set up at the centre can be enhanced from 1 KL to 2 KL.

At the time of going to press, 40 COVID-19 patients had sought admission at the facility. "The infrastructure is right. We can accommodate 400 patients now. Very soon, we will raise it to full capacity," said Nenmara Divisional Forest Officer R. Sivaprasad, the nodal officer of the centre. Doctors and nurses have been appointed to take care of 200 patients round the clock. The patients here are not as fearful and concerned about the virus as those in other parts of



An inside view of the new COVID-19 facility in Plachimada, a village in Palakkad district of Kerala. The building was the bottling plant of Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages until 2005. (Below): Adivasi women sit outside the Palakkad civil station on May 4, 2017, demanding compensation. ■K.K. MUSTAFAH



the State. For now, none of them is critically ill. At present, only B-category patients are being admitted.

A water-guzzling plant

The unusual silence in the hospital is in contrast to the pitched struggle of the people in Plachimada some two decades ago. The people don't show the same excitement that politicians and the government authorities display about the COVID-19 care facility.

Santhi C.S., a 43-year-old Adivasi woman who was at the forefront of the agitation against Coca-Cola, said: "The people of this village are still suffering. We haven't been given a single paisa of compensation. So, how can we smile?"

Many who were part of the agitation echoed her sentiments. They said that applauding the transformation of a plant that had destroyed their water resources would amount to "making fun of the cause for which they stood". Santhi, an ASHA worker, had been jailed several times along with other leaders of the agitation. She had also undergone a week-long hunger strike. "They are cheating us. These political leaders have their vested interests," she said.

Worries about official promises and initiatives stems from the events in Plachimada that grabbed global attention in the early 2000s. A few months after Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages began operation in Plachimada in 2000, the villagers in the neighbouring areas began to face problems. According to one study by Dr Sathish Chandran, the water in some open wells and shallow bore wells which the villagers depended on began to taste strong and bitter; according to another study by Jananeethi, an NGO, it started tasting salty and hard after the company began manufacturing.

The plant, the villagers realised soon, was a water-guzzler: it drew about 20 lakh litres of groundwater from six bore wells and two ponds in the area every day. As a consequence, local wells were slowly sucked dry. As the company had extracted excess groundwater, the villagers began to drink water with high levels of calcium and magnesium.

Studies conducted at a laboratory at the University of Exeter, U.K., found high levels of lead and cadmium in the sludge from the factory. The villagers had not been aware of the health threats posed by these metals until activists and scientists informed them about it. The sludge was initially sold to the farmers as fertilizer. Later, it was given free. When protests erupted, the sludge was dumped by the roadside.

"Many of us developed skin rashes and deformities. Although we stopped consuming the contaminated water in our wells, many of us had already fallen sick because of it," recalled Santhi.

M. Thankavelu, son of Mayilamma, the 'Plachimada Heroine' who stood at the forefront of the agitation until her death in 2007, was at the brink of death after he contracted psoriasis. "Like my mother, I too contracted this terrible disease from our exposure to toxic water. I could not move out of my house for about a year. I never thought I could survive to speak to you now," he said.

C. Murugan, a paddy labourer from Plachimada, said that at least half a dozen people had miscarriages because of the contaminated water.

Waiting for compensation
However, the people of Plachimada remain disappointed. Governments have come and gone, but their promises have not been fulfilled. "The transformation of the building seems to be an effort to whitewash the actions of the multinational company. Governments have always been supporting the company. That's why our leaders have not given the villagers who suffered from water pollution a single paisa in compensation," alleged Arumughan Pathichira, State general convener of the Samara Samithy (Anti-Coca-Cola People's Struggle Committee), demanding people's right to natural resources, especially water. Groups from different parts of the country joined the agitation. National activists like Medha Patkar and Van-

dana Shiva inspired the protesters. Hundreds of protesters, including women and children, were arrested and beaten up. Soon, the agitation turned into a long legal battle.

A world water conference organised near Plachimada in January 2004 adopted a declaration which stated that "it is our fundamental obligation to prevent water scarcity and pollution and to preserve it for generations... Water is not a commodity. We should resist all criminal attempts to marketise, privatise and corporatise water. Only through these means can we ensure the fundamental and inalienable right to water for the people all over the world".

The people won the agitation in 2005 when the company finally put up the shutters and left Plachimada. In 2017, Coca-Cola submitted to the Supreme Court that it had no intentions of resuming operations in Plachimada. Santhi, the joint convener of the protest body, said that it was not a mere victory of their agitation; "it was a victory of all such struggles to come".

Waiting for compensation
With water rapidly depleting and giving them all kinds of health problems, the residents soon became parched. Many had to trek long distances for potable water. Their primary livelihood from farming was affected and agricultural production declined.

From April 2002 to March 2004, Plachimada witnessed fierce and protracted protests, under the banner of the Coca-Cola Virudha Janakeeya Samara Samithy (Anti-Coca-Cola People's Struggle Committee), demanding people's right to natural resources, especially water. Groups from different parts of the country joined the agitation. National activists like Medha Patkar and Van-

ed the property and compensated the victims," he said. Arumughan warned that the villagers would strengthen their agitation until the victims are duly compensated.

A government-appointed high-level committee headed by the then Additional Chief Secretary, K. Jayakumar, had assessed the degradation of the environment and damage suffered by the people of Plachimada and recommended a compensation of ₹216.24 crore to be paid to them. The committee had also recommended setting up a tribunal for proper distribution of damages. Although the State Assembly passed the Plachimada Coca-Cola Victims' Relief and Compensation Claims Tribunal Bill in 2011, it did not get the Centre's nod. And though the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government had assured the people that a tribunal would be formed, in its 2016 Assembly election manifesto, this promise has not been kept. The LDF has got a consecutive second term in Kerala but the people of Plachimada are not hopeful.

Coca-Cola has consistently opposed the setting up of a tribunal. It has claimed that the estimated losses were computed through a flawed process. According to Coca-Cola, its operations in Plachimada did not cause any water depletion or environmental damage as the company had followed the same protocol in the village as it did around the world.

The residents of the village scoff at this claim. "Everyone knows that the company has left leaving behind a trail of misery. We need compensation," said Sakthivel K., general convener of the Samara Samithy. Sakthivel was among the dozen-odd agitators who were arrested by the police on June 17 for protesting outside the new COVID-19 facility while the Chief Minister was in-

augurating it. Front-line leaders of the Samara Samithy – Vijayan Ambalakkad and Vilayodi Venugopal – also courted arrest along with Sakthivel.

Preparing for a third wave
For the State government, this new facility is more than politics. Minister Krishnankutty, who has been involved throughout the process, said the Plachimada facility will go a long way in strengthening the district's preparedness to face another wave of COVID-19 infections. "We are thinking about how we can overcome the problems we faced in the second wave. Such a hospital in government control will help provide care for COVID-19 patients from all sections. We can ensure equity in treatment for everyone in the rural sector," he said.

Water for the facility will be drawn from a large pond within the compound. It will be used after UV filtering. Two tanks of 10,000 L capacity each have been set up and fresh pipelines have been laid for the purpose. Sivaprasad said that potable water was available and storage capacity would be enhanced when more patients come. Today, almost all houses in the village have pipeline connections and water is being pumped in from the Bharathappuzha river.

The facility is close to Kerala's border with Tamil Nadu. If the COVID-19 situation worsens during a third wave, the hospital can be opened for the people from Tamil Nadu as well. The Palakkad district administration has given consent for this.

"We are happy we could use the abandoned factory to gear up for the next phase of the pandemic," said Premkumar. "We had faced many shortcomings when we set up first-line treatment centre for COVID-19 at the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Development Park at Kanjikode. Here, we have been able to address all of them," she said.

State Health Minister Veena George recently visited the Plachimada hospital and said that the State was prepared to face a third wave. Problems that the district saw during the second wave included a shortage of oxygen beds, ICU beds and ventilators. Some private hospitals refused to set aside beds for COVID-19 treatment. A recent assessment also found that a large number of category-A patients had occupied the beds, leading to a shortage of beds for category-B patients. Given the failure to treat non-COVID-19 cases, long distances from houses to hospitals, and non-cooperation of some private hospitals, cases shot up in Palakkad in recent months.

A committee of officials and people's representatives will be in charge of the Plachimada COVID-19 hospital. But the people still want closure for their past suffering. Kanniyamma, 75, said the early 2000s were a terrible time. "We lost peace, our drinking water, our sound health," she said. The State government may have seized an opportunity to heal Plachimada, but its residents are still far from being placated.



FROM PAGE ONE

Uttarakhand Chief Minister steps down

He then departed for Dehradun on Friday and held a late night press conference there, where he spoke of his achievements since March 10.

While his press office handed over a five-page press note enumerating these "achievements", Mr. Rawat again refused to confirm whether he was quitting. He then met with State BJP chief Madan Kausik and other senior party leaders at his residence.

Following the meeting, close to midnight, Mr. Rawat reached the Raj Bhavan to

tender his resignation.

Sources in the BJP, however, said that Mr. Rawat's problem wasn't just whether bypolls would be held or not, but also the seat from which he would content.

While the Gangotri seat has been vacant for sometime with the death of sitting MLA Gopal Rawat in April this year, prospects of his victory were not convincing.

A couple of MLAs on safe seats were asked to vacate it for the Chief Minister but they reportedly refused to do so.

Goods exports touch record \$95 bn in Q1

Further, Mr. Goyal said as per his discussion with stakeholders, he was confident that the services sector will achieve \$350 billion exports by 2025, and may even go up to \$500 billion very soon.

He added that the Commerce Ministry has decided that in collaboration with private sector, EPC, industry associations, MSME, engineering, agriculture, automobile, and steel sector, this year the country will be targeting to achieve merchandise exports of \$400 billion.

He also pointed out that India received the highest ever FDI inflow in 2020-21 of \$81.72 billion, up 10% compared to \$74.39 billion in 2019-20.

"The positive momentum continues with FDI inflow of \$6.24 billion during April 2021, which is 38% higher

than April 2020," he said. Additionally, he said that the number of startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has crossed 50,000 and was spread across 623 districts in India. With these startups, nearly 1.8 lakh formal jobs have been created by over 16,000 recognised startups in 2020-21.

On remission of duties and taxes on export products, the Minister said it is at a very advanced stage of inter-ministerial discussion.

"It was a colossal task, there are about 11,000 items which need to be studied... We will shortly notify the rates. We will be very soon coming out with more details of rates for different sectors. This is not a subsidy to any exporter, this is only a refund of taxes," he added.

The positive momentum continues with FDI inflow of \$6.24 billion during April 2021, which is 38% higher

'LeT could be behind drone attack in Jammu'

"Alert BSF troops fired at a quadcopter belonging to Pakistan on Friday morning at 4:25 a.m. as it was trying to cross the IB in the Arnia sector. Due to the firing, it returned back immediately," a BSF spokesman said.

On the June 27 attack, Mr. Singh said the security agencies had a suspicion that drones came from across the border. "But the second aspect [of being launched locally] can't be ignored."

On the day of the twin attacks, he said, the police arrested a person, who was

tasked to carry out an IED attack at a public place to inflict maximum casualties. "We have captured a module, which delivered an IED from across [the border]. It was an RDX-fitted one and fabricated to fit on a drone. We are investigating if the two incidents are linked," he added.

In Pulwama, the five terrorists killed include LeT's district commander Nishaz Lone, alias Khitab, and one Pakistani terrorist, said Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar.

India flags drone over mission in Islamabad

"We expect Pakistan to investigate the incident and prevent recurrence of such breach of security," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a media briefing.

It is learnt that the drone

was sighted within the complex when an event was being held at the mission.

Asked about the drone attack on Jammu airbase, Mr. Bagchi declined to comment.

Kerala's houseboats get ready to sail

The government also rolled out a programme to provide a maintenance grant, ranging from ₹80,000 to ₹20,000 depending on boat profile, so owners can keep their boats water-worthy through the inactivity of lockdown.

A boat's annual maintenance is a costly affair. "Every year the bamboo sheets on a boat's roof are changed. It is labour intensive and requires 50 to 60 men. Wages are high, ₹1,200 daily, since it is a skilled job," says Mr. Jobin. "Add work on the engine, inverter, generator, air conditioners, furnishing, flooring... It is more expensive than maintaining a house," he says.

Alappuzha-based houseboat owner Jose Abraham is applying for a grant as soon as he renews the Pollution

Control Certificate. He runs two boats under SKA Houseboats, one with five bedrooms while the second has eight bedrooms and an 80 X 20 feet convention hall that can accommodate 150 people. "The boat has hosted meetings of top corporates and clubs in the good old days," says Mr. Abraham, explaining that boat trips are priced according to the boat category.

Migration of labour is one of the biggest disruptions the industry is facing. Manish Kumar E.M., a licensed boat driver who worked in the capacity for seven years has moved to painting and tile work at a construction site to earn daily wages. "The last 15 months have been very tough and I had to find work to keep the family going," says Mr. Kumar, who has two children.

Alappuzha-based houseboat owner Jose Abraham is applying for a grant as soon as he renews the Pollution

Judges must look at facts of a case and its human aspect: CJI

A decision made by the court will echo through time, have repercussions'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Judging is not an easy task, Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana said on Friday.

On one hand, the Chief Justice said, a judge should focus on law, precedents and facts of a case and, on the other, the human aspect. Judges should use the "little discretion" law allows to keep sight of the human suffering and toll behind every case. A decision of the court would echo through time. It will have repercussions. A judgment becomes the law of the land. A judge has to keep all this in mind while dealing with a case, he said.

"Deciding cases is not an easy task. We not only have to focus on the law and pre-

cedents surrounding the issue before us, as well as the facts of the case, but also the repercussions of what we decide and the precedent we may be setting.

**JUSTICE N.V. RAMANA,
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA**



the hearts and minds of the people of the country.

The CJI termed the Bar "the protector of the institution".

He said, "Lawyers must respect the institution and protect the judiciary from any onslaught which is likely to affect the functioning of the judicial system. I know, the Supreme Court Bar is always a frontrunner when it comes to supporting the institution from motivated attacks. They always cherish the contribution of judges and appreciate their hard work. They never forget the efforts of judges".

The CJI was speaking at a farewell organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association for retiring judge Justice Ashok Bhushan.

He said Justice Bhushan, besides his "remarkable judgments", had, as a "humanist judge", left a mark in

to us, is the area in which a judge has flexibility to display his philosophy," he observed.

The CJI underscored that the strength of the institution lay in the unity of the Bar and the Bench.



issued notice to the district authorities of certain areas for failing to prevent the violence.

The next hearing is on July 13.

Following the court's directive on June 18 to probe the violence, a committee of the NHRC visited the State, held meetings and hearings and submitted an interim report on June 30.

HC asks Bengal police to take note of NHRC report

Bench says cases should be registered

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Friday directed the West Bengal police to register cases on the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in connection with post poll violence in the State.

Issuing interim directions in the matter in which the court had directed the NHRC to set up a committee to probe the allegations of post poll violence, a five-judge Bench headed by acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal directed that medical treatment be provided to those who suffered injuries.

It directed that a second autopsy be carried out on the body of deceased BJP worker Avijit Sarkar, who was allegedly killed during the clashes. The court also

BJP MLAs disrupt Governor's speech in Bengal Assembly

They said there was no mention of deaths of party workers

SHIV SAHAI SINGH
KOLKATA

The West Bengal Legislative Assembly witnessed noisy scenes on Friday, the first day of seventeenth legislative Assembly, with BJP legislators raising slogans during the address by Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The Governor had to cut short his address. The eighteen-page speech was summed up by the Governor in a few minutes. Amidst the din and ruckus, it was not clear which portions of the speech was read and which were not.

BJP MLAs led by Leader of Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, stood up on their seats and held up photos of party workers allegedly killed during post poll violence as Governor Dhankhar read his speech.

Speaking to journalists, Mr. Adhikari said there was

no mention of the post poll violence in Governor's address, prepared by the State government. The BJP leader said the Governor had been sensitive to the issue of post poll violence and visited Siyalkot and Nandigram but had to read the speech which was approved by the State Cabinet.

Despite a bitter exchange of words between Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Governor Dhankhar a few days ago, both exchanged pleasantries ahead of the Assembly session.

Earlier, Governor Dhankhar had objected to contents of the speech and said that certain portions of his address would not go well with the people.

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'China has improved its air operations'

It has improved infrastructure after disengagement, says Air Force chief

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Since the disengagement in eastern Ladakh in February, there had been a kind of *status quo* on the ground but China had strengthened infrastructure and improved efficiency of air operations, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal (ACM) R.K.S. Bhadauria said on Friday.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat said both the nations understood that returning to the *status quo* was in their best interest for ensuring peace.

Responding to questions on the proposed integrated theatre commands, ACM Bhadauria said the IAF was "fully committed" to integration and theatre commands. "We must get it right."

'Supporting role'

Earlier, responding to questions on the theatre commands and reports of certain reservations on the part of the IAF, Gen. Rawat said while the Air Force had an air defence charter, it was also required to provide sup-

port to the ground forces. "Do not forget that the Air Force continues to remain a supporting arm of the armed forces, just as the artillery or engineers support the combatants within the Army. They have an air defence charter and support the ground forces in time of operations," he pointed out. This was the basic charter they have to understand.

ACM Bhadauria said, "It is not a supporting role alone. The air power has a huge role to play in any of the integrated battle role..."

Gen. Rawat noted that the proposed theatre commands comprised an air defence command, a maritime theatre command and two land based commands on the West and North. However, the Army's Northern Command, which overlooked both China and Pakistan, would be left as it was for now.

ACM Bhadauria said China had spent a lot of energy building infrastructure at many of their airfields, which he termed "defensive"



Taking stock: Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat during a recent visit to the forward areas along the LoC. ■ ANI

in nature because they have analysed as to "what all can be hit by us quickly" if the situation required. "The other issue is they are looking at covering deficiencies wherever they are. Apart from infrastructure, in terms of training and other issues, they have done other methods to bring in efficiencies in air operations," he observed.

They were monitoring the situation closely and had taken across the board actions. "We are much more capable than we were one year back. It's not that we have maintained *status quo* on our capability," he stressed.

Responding to questions on the situation in Ladakh, Gen. Rawat cautioned not to take things lightly. "We must be prepared for any misadventure and respond accordingly. We have responded in the past and will do so in the future," he asserted.

He said the ongoing talks at various levels for disengagement and de-escalation would take time. "I think in a gradual manner, we should be able to achieve the *status quo*, because if you do not achieve the *status quo* and remain in this kind of a position, it could lead to misadventure at some time."

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Attack using drones aimed at IAF assets'

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Om Prakash Chautala was on Friday released from the Tihar Jail on completion of a 10-year sentence in a teachers' recruitment scam case.

Addressing party workers assembled on the Delhi-Gurugram border to welcome him, the octogenarian leader said he would soon visit the farmers at the protest sites to seek their blessings. He would also visit villages across the country.

"That attack has failed and our assets are safe. One strike had high explosives; other was fragmentation round..." the Air Chief said at a webinar. "We have gone over the subject in terms of the implications of this kind of capabilities in the hands of non-state actors and the kind of effect the armed drone capabilities would have in future conflicts," he stated.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Bipin Rawat cautioned against hybrid attacks. He noted that the next attack need not be through a drone.

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

The attack on the Jammu airbase last Sunday, believed to have been carried out by drones, was a terrorist attack targeting the Air Force's assets, said Chief of the Air Staff RKS Bhadauria on Friday. He asserted that they had the capabilities to counter such attacks.

He thanked people for supporting his party against the "wrong" policies of the government and assured them that he would continue to fight for the poor, downtrodden and farmers.

Sunaina Chautala, principal general secretary, women's cell, INLD, said the release of Mr. Om Prakash Chautala had infused new energy into the workers and the party would return to

2013 in connection with the Junior Basic Training teachers' recruitment scam case. He was on emergency parole since March 26, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Free at last: Om Prakash Chautala being greeted by INLD supporters after being released from jail on Friday. ■ PTI

power with a thumping majority.

Son's charge

INLD principal general secretary Abhay Chautala, at a press conference in Chandigarh, said the Congress was to be blamed for implicating his father in the recruitment scam. He also accused the Aam Aadmi Party of delaying the release of his father for more than two years.

Denmark steps in to provide AstraZeneca jabs to Bhutan

India could not supply repeat doses due to shortage

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

After weeks of uncertainty over vaccine supplies, Denmark stepped in to provide Bhutan with 2,50,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines on Friday, about half of its requirement to complete the inoculation of its population.

"Around 2,50,000 AstraZeneca vaccines are coming to Bhutan as a donation from the Danish government to help Bhutan combat COVID-19 and secure that the citizens get the second jab in time," said a statement from the Danish Embassy in Delhi, which also oversees relations with Bhutan.

The complainant was also told to talk about the bribe amount in a coded language, referring to ₹1 lakh as "one kg".

On June 26, Mr. Patel was directed by Mr. Kumar on a WhatsApp call to pay the first instalment of ₹5 lakh through an "angadiya" firm in Delhi. The amount was to be collected by a middleman, the FIR states.

The supplies, which are part of an entire tranche of about 5,50,000 being coordinated by the European Union through its Civil Protection Mechanism, which was reported by *The Hindu* earlier this week, were necessitated because India was unable to provide the second round of Covishield doses



A file photo of AstraZeneca's vaccine. ■ REUTERS

due to the coronavirus pandemic's second wave and domestic vaccine shortages.

On Friday, the government repeated its earlier stand that it could not supply to Bhutan, along with other neighbouring countries, that have been hoping that India would resume its "Vaccine Maitri" export consignments, many of which have been paid in advance.

"Currently our priority is on domestic production for the domestic vaccine programmes," said MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi, res-

ponding to queries from journalists.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Bhutan's Health Minister Dchen Wangmo had said Bhutan understood India's current problems and said it would not be "morally right" to push India for more vaccines at this time, and her government had reached out to about 17 other countries, requesting that they provide any surplus unexpired vaccines on an emergency basis. "Denmark received requests from many countries for vaccines, but since Bhutan had few options, the government decided to help Bhutan," said Danish Ambassador to India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka Freddy Svane.

A statement from the Danish government said the vaccines would be delivered at the "earliest possible." Bhutanese officials said they had requested the vaccines by next week, so as to complete their second dose distribution by mid-July.

ED summons Yami Gautam in FEMA case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned actor Yami Gautam in connection with an inquiry under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

It is alleged that the inquiry is into an amount equivalent to ₹1.5 crore received in Ms. Gautam's bank account. She has been asked to appear on July 7.

touch with the authorities and elicit a response on the counselling schedule, but to no avail.

The plea also flagged the issue of simultaneously conducting the counselling for NEET-PG and NEET-MDS.

Plea to announce dates

"It will be unrealistic to organise the counselling for both the examinations together, as it would infinitely delay the counselling for the NEET-MDS candidates and would cause undue hardship to the NEET-MDS aspirants," the aspirants said.

The petition asked the court to intervene and direct the Medical Counselling Committee to release the counselling dates at the earliest and not later than three weeks.

Probe custodial deaths of two Myanmar women'

Did not get medical care: rights group

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Manipur Human Rights Commission has been asked to probe the alleged custodial deaths of two women from Myanmar, who were among 29 refugees kept at a centre that was turned into a temporary prison.

The two women, identified as 46-year-old Ma Myint and 40-year-old Mukhai, died of COVID-19 without proper medical care, a rights group called Human Rights Alert (HRA) said in a letter to the Commission on July 2.

HRA's executive director, Babloo Loitongbam, said the 29 Myanmar nationals, including six minors, were kept in judicial custody at Saadhbawana Mandop in Churachandpur district's New Lamka after they were arrested on March 31 for entering India illegally.

They were remanded to police custody on April 7 after a local court recorded that they "crossed the border due to threat and fear of persecution as a result of the military coup ... without any valid documents and papers". They were later remanded to judicial custody, with the Manipur government declaring the centre as a temporary prison under



Sealed Tenders are invited for the following:

1/NT-01/2021-22 Empangement of Agencies for deployment of module of equipment on hire to assist in various activities inside Steel Plants on as and when required basis for a period of 3 yrs.

2/NT-02/2021-22 Project Management Consultancy Services for setting up of Briquetting project at FSNL Bhilai.

The vendors who are enlisted with us are also required to submit the offers as per tender. The due date for submission of tender will be on or before 02.08.2021 by 2:30 PM and tenders will be opened on 02.08.2021 at 3:00 PM. Visit our website www.fsnl.nic.in for tender documents, Corrigendum, Time Extensions etc.

AGM(MM)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
"Construction of white/back water storage RCC tower (Refractored)"
Due date for submission at Kaghazpuram - 14.07.2021

Interested bidders may purchase a complete set of Bid Document, against submission of a written application to TNPL and upon payment of applicable non-refundable fee of ₹100/- by Demand Draft/Bankers Cheque in favour of Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited, payable at Trichy. Alternatively, details of the bid may be viewed at TN Govt., TNPL website and a soft copy of the Bid Document can be obtained against request by e-mail.

DIPR/1938/Tender/2021

TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper

NOTICE INVITING BID FOR

"Construction of white/back water storage RCC tower (Refractored)"

Due date for submission at Kaghazpuram - 14.07.2021

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DIPR/1938/Tender/2021

NOTICE INVITING BID
Bid Reference No.: OSMCL/2021-22/SHORT-PAEDIATRIC/25

Online Bids through e-Tender portal (<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>) are invited from eligible bidders for Supply of Pediatric Items (Re-Tender) as per the particulars mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Date and time
1.	Date & time of release of bid	02/07/2021, 11 AM
2.	Date & time of Online bid submission	Start Date & Time 02/07/2021, 3 PM End Date & Time 09/07/2021, 11 AM
3.	Date & time of Online Technical bid Opening	09/07/2021, 11:30 AM
4.	Date of opening of Price Bid	To be informed to the qualified bidders

The bid document with all information relating to the bidding process including Prequalification criteria and terms & conditions are available in the websites: www.osmcl.nic.in and <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. OSMCL reserves the right to reject or modify any conditions of the tender or cancel the tender or cancel the issued purchase order at any stage without assigning any reason thereof.

CAD-541

SD/-
Managing Director,
OSMC Ltd., Odisha
OIPR-0112/11/0038/2122

Former Haryana CM Chautala released after 10 years in jail

He will soon visit protesting farmers to seek their blessings

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Om Prakash Chautala was on Friday released from the Tihar Jail on completion of a 10-year sentence in a teachers' recruitment scam case.

Addressing party workers assembled on the Delhi-Gurugram border to welcome him, the octogenarian leader said he would soon visit the farmers at the protest sites to seek their blessings. He would also visit villages across the country.

Addressing party workers assembled on the Delhi-Gurugram border to welcome him, the octogenarian leader said he would soon visit the farmers at the protest sites to seek their blessings. He would also visit villages across the country.

He thanked people for supporting his party against the "wrong" policies of the government and assured them that he would continue to fight for the poor, downtrodden and farmers.

Mr. Chautala was jailed in



Free at last: Om Prakash Chautala being greeted by INLD supporters after being released from jail on Friday. ■ PTI

2013 in connection with the Junior Basic Training teachers' recruitment scam case. He was on emergency parole since March 26, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

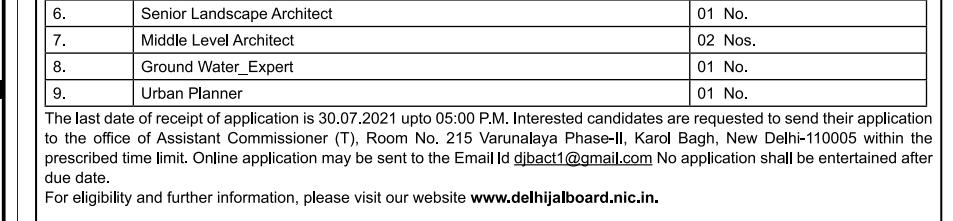
Sunaina Chautala, principal general secretary, women's cell, INLD, said the Congress was to be blamed for implicating his father in the recruitment scam. He also accused the Aam Aadmi Party of delaying the release of his father for more than two years.

touch with the authorities and elicit a response on the counselling schedule, but to no avail.

The plea also flagged the issue of simultaneously conducting the counselling for NEET-PG and NEET-MDS.

Plea to announce dates
"It will be unrealistic to organise the counselling for both the examinations together, as it would infinitely delay the counselling for the NEET-MDS candidates and would cause undue hardship to the NEET-MDS aspirants," the aspirants said.

The petition asked the court to intervene and direct the Medical Counselling Committee to release the counselling dates at the earliest and not later than three weeks.



Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for engagement of following Consultants/Specialist on contractual basis in Innovation Cell of Delhi Jal Board initially for a period of 01 (one) year which may be further extended as per requirement.

S No.	Name of the post	No. of Posts
</

In Uttar Pradesh, two receive certificates without vaccination

Official says error could be due to a 'technical reason'

OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

On June 18, Mridula Mangalam, a PhD scholar at Allahabad University, received a certificate noting that she had been fully vaccinated. The final certificate of vaccination said she had been administered the second dose of Covaxin by health staff Anita at the Community Health Centre (CHC) (Soraon) in Prayagraj district. While being certified as being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 would have been a matter of joy for the 25-year-old scholar, it came as a big shock to her.

Ms. Mangalam got the certificate even though she did not receive her second dose. In fact, she said, she did not even go to the CHC on the said day. "I scheduled my appointment for vaccination but couldn't go," she stated,



Jam-packed: People waiting in queues to receive COVID-19 vaccines at a centre in Prayagraj on Thursday. ■ PTI

reasoning that it was raining and the CHC was over 20 km away. She said she later tried to contact a senior official but was told that it was due to a human error and the matter would be resolved if she visited the centre.

Ms. Mangalam then struggled to reschedule her appointment as she had received her certification of full vaccination. On May 22, she went to the CHC but was told there was a server problem and that they could not do anything about it.

"They told me to create another account with a diffe-

rent number and asked me to get the first dose of Covaxin with the new account," she said. This way she would have got her two doses. But though she registered with another number, she had not been able to get a slot for a dose of Covaxin.

In Mau district, Umda Rai, 65, is facing a similar situation. On May 4, she received a provisional certificate for her first dose at the Doharhatal CHC, without even getting a jab, said her son Vidyashankar Rai. Mr. Rai said his mother did not go to the CHC for her vaccination

as she had developed fever days before the appointment. "We thought as per government guidelines, we should not get her vaccinated while she was having fever..." he stated.

Mr. Rai, a shopkeeper, emphasised that he complained on the helpline number and even spoke to an official about the problem but no solution came about.

Dr. B.K. Yadav, vaccination in-charge, Mau, said such cases were "rare" but they would be probed if the person submitted a written application. "The person can then get vaccinated."

The "mistake" in the portal could be due to a technical reason arising if a person booked a session for more than one person through the same number. "The person gets a verification code. Without that, it [vaccination details] cannot be entered into the portal. How her vaccination code reached the vaccinator [would be probed]," he added.

Top official reacts to query on varying figures

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A May 13 estimate, by one of India's top officials overseeing the COVID-19 pandemic response, that India would have 216 crore doses of vaccines from August-December was based on an "optimistic, aspirational assessment" and on what vaccine manufacturers had conveyed to the government.

V.K. Paul, Chairman, National Empowered Group on Vaccine, at a press briefing on Friday was responding to a query on why there was a mismatch between his May projection of 216 crore vaccine doses and a Health Ministry affidavit to the Supreme Court on June 26 that said 135 crore doses would be available from August-December.

The discrepancy is significant as the Centre has said that it plans to vaccinate all adults, estimated to be 93.94 crore, by the end of 2021, thus requiring 186-188 crore doses. So far, 33 crore doses have been administered, and 51 crore doses, including those already given, are expected to be administered by the end of July. After a burst of vaccination post June 21, that saw 90 lakh doses administered in a day and over 50 lakh doses on average subsequently for the rest of the week, the last week of June has been relatively lacklustre, with a daily average of about 35 lakh vaccine doses administered.



V.K. Paul

"When we had said over 200 crore doses will be available, we had said that this was based on information provided by manufacturers of how much they were optimistically, and I had said 'aspirational,' likely to deliver," said Dr. Paul. "It was important to share this with people because [at] that time there was a doubt whether vaccines would be available. However, we had also said that planning by the Health Ministry was based on 90 crore doses being made available by our two leading companies [Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech]," he said.

"Teams will be supporting them in their efforts for targeted COVID-19 response and management, and effectively tackling the pandemic," said a government release.

COVID review teams sent to six States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central government has sent multi-disciplinary teams to Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Manipur, which are reporting a high number of COVID-19 cases.

"Teams will be supporting them in their efforts for targeted COVID-19 response and management, and effectively tackling the pandemic," said a government release.

The two-member teams sent to States comprise a clinician and a public health expert each.

They will monitor the overall implementation of COVID-19 management, involving testing, surveillance and containment operations; adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour; availability of hospital beds and logistics, including ambulances, ventilators and medical oxygen; and vaccination progress. They will suggest remedial actions.

ED attaches actors' assets in Sandesara case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets belonging to actors Dino Morea and Sanjay Khan, Aqeel Abdulkhalil Bachooali aka DJ Aqeel, and son-in-law of late Congress leader Ahmed Patel, Irfan Ahmed Siddiqui, in the case against the Sandesara group and others.

They include immovable properties, vehicles and bank balances. "These attached assets belong to Sanjay Khan (₹3 crore), Dino Morea (₹1.40 crore), Aqeel Abdulkhalil Bachooali (₹1.98 crore) and Irfan Ahmed Siddiqui (₹2.41 crore)," said the agency, adding that the total attachment in the case now stood at ₹14,521.80 crore.

The agency, in a statement on Friday, alleged that the Sandesaras, who are the promoters of the Sterling Biotech group, had diverted the funds in question to Mr. Khan, Mr. Morea, Mr. Bachooali and Mr. Siddiqui.

The ED is conducting the money laundering probe based on a First Information Report registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation, alleging that several public sector banks were cheated. The total proceeds of the alleged crime have been calculated to be over ₹16,000 crore.

The ED has so far filed four chargesheets in the case and arrested four persons.

Cong. questions 'silence' on Covaxin deal

Contract with Brazil has run into fraud allegations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Raising Bharat Biotech's controversial \$320 million deal to supply 20 million doses of Covaxin to Brazil, the Congress party on Friday asked why the Narendra Modi government was "conspicuously silent" on the serious allegations.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinivas told mediapersons that since Covaxin was developed along with the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), "It is important for us to raise these questions because Bharat Biotech may be a private entity but public



Sharp controversy: Brazil had signed a \$320 million deal with Bharat Biotech for 20 million doses of Covaxin. ■ AP

funding was diverted for the development of this vaccine, taxpayers' money was put into this."

On Wednesday, the Brazilian Health Ministry suspended a contract to procure 20 million doses of Covaxin over allegations of the vaccine's price being increased from \$1.34 to \$15 per dose by the Indian manufacturer.

Ms. Shrinivas claimed that Brazil's Opposition parties

had also raised the issue of offshore payments demanded by Madison Biotech, a Singapore-based company and a partner of Bharat Biotech.

The allegations also are that a \$45 million offshore payment was asked by Madison Biotech and it lies at the centre of the controversy," she said.

Ms. Shrinivas also targeted BJP leaders over their response to former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's tweet that "July is here but vaccines are not".

Ms. Shrinivas said, "Please ask all these Ministers who tweet from the air-conditioned chambers, acting like petty two-rupee trolls, to go to rural India, smaller towns, and see how bad the vaccination [programme] is."

J&J jab creates more antibodies against Delta variant than Beta

Biological E likely to produce the vaccine, says V.K. Paul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Johnson & Johnson's single-shot vaccine elicited more antibodies against the Delta variant, the most dominant form of the SARS-CoV-2 in India, than against the Beta variant, which was first isolated in South Africa.

"We believe that our vaccine offers durable protection against COVID-19 and elicits neutralising activity against the Delta variant. This adds to the robust body of clinical data supporting our single-shot vaccine's ability to protect against multiple variants of concern," said Paul Stoffels, M.D., vice-chairman of the Executive Committee and chief scientific officer at Johnson & Johnson, in a statement on Friday.

These results were part of a pre-print study that analysed eight volunteers.



The findings were part of a pre-print study that analysed eight volunteers.

viewed) publication and based on an analysis of a group of eight vaccinated volunteers. Antibody levels alone aren't an indicator of a vaccine's ability to elicit protection against infection. They are part of the company's larger 44,000 volunteer-strong phase 3 trial that has so far reported an efficacy of 85% against severe disease.

On Friday, Dr. V.K. Paul, Chairman of the National Empowered Group on Vaccination, said the Hyderabad-based Biological E would likely be producing the vaccine.

Voices against 'taxes' by NSCN grow stronger

People of Nagaland, Manipur speak out

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

People in Manipur and Nagaland are speaking up against the collection of "taxes" by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), particularly the Isak-Muivah faction.

Kahuto Chishi Sumi, the headman of Hevisi village in Dimapur, wrote an opinion piece in *The Morung Express* titled 'Taxation for dummies'. His write-up followed a statement by the NSCN (I-M)'s criticising Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi

for trying to "criminalise the Naga political movement by questioning the taxation right of the NSCN".

Other people have also been criticising the outfit. "NSCN (I-M) stated that they collect tax to 'support Naga people's political movement'. But the fact is that NSCN (I-M) is exploiting the Nagas..." Abiema Lisham wrote on Twitter. Traders said they are forced to sell duplicates of branded items to make "sustainable profit" after paying up to 22-24% "taxes" to various groups.

When the man wanted his wife's body to be carried up to the hearse, no one from the hospital came forward to help him.

With much difficulty, Mr. Kanhar carried his wife's body from the bed and went down the stairs from the female ward on the second floor. He found a stretcher on the ground floor and, after placing the body, dragged it to the hearse. The vehicle driver, too, refused to help him.

He finally had to take the help of his ailing father, who was carrying Mr. Kanhar's two-year-old daughter. They put the child on the floor and finally placed the body in the vehicle. The video of Mr. Kanhar carrying his wife's body has since gone viral.

The woman was suffering from severe anaemia and respiratory distress syndrome. Blood transfusion was also done. Despite the best efforts of doctors, she died. Hospital staff were supposed to oversee the transportation of the body from the bed to Mahaprayan vehicles (hearse)," said Kandhamal Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Rajashree Patnaik. "Hospital staff were found to have neglected their duty. Two employees, including a staff nurse and an attendant, have been suspended."

Patnaik. "Hospital staff were found to have neglected their duty. Two employees, including a staff nurse and an attendant, have been suspended."



A snapshot from the video that went viral online.

Man forced to carry wife's body to hearse, 2 suspended

Hospital staff in Odisha refused to help him; video goes viral on social media

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR

Two employees at the Kandhamal district headquarters hospital in Odisha were placed under suspension after a man was forced to carry his wife's body on his own without help from hospital staff.

Balakrushna Kanhar, who belongs to the Kandha tribe of Motingia village under Phirningia Block, had admitted his wife to the hospital on June 29. She was suffering from severe anaemia and respiratory distress. She breathed her last on Thursday.

When the man wanted his wife's body to be carried up to the hearse, no one from the hospital came forward to help him.

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Instapick

Mumbai's 'treetop' walkway: As we get back outdoors, some good news. Later this year, Malabar Hills will be home to a 700 metre wooden elevated forest trail to be designed by architect Rahul Kadri. Meanwhile, forest 'bathers' can appreciate the new Merlin Bird ID app from New York's Cornell Lab. It can identify bird sounds of over 400 species. On GooglePlay and iOS.



Talking point

Euro Cup 2021: It's been a thrilling week for football fans as Raheem Sterling and Harry Kane shot England into the quarter-finals with a 2-0 win against Germany. Later tonight, watch England and Ukraine wrap things up at the quarter-final in Rome. And let's not forget all the action at Copa America 2021 in Brazil, with the quarter-finals scheduled this weekend.

Pick of the week

Virtual tours, events and launches you just can't miss



Workshop for poetry lovers
The National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, is curating an eight-session workshop on the interpretation of select verses of Kalidasa's 'Meghdoot - The cloud messenger'. Speakers will explain the Sanskrit poems for new-age poets in Hindi. The sessions beginning on July 7, will be conducted by Dr. Rishiraj Pathak along with guest speakers, over zoom call every Wednesday till August 25. The 90-minute sessions will start at 6.30 pm. Fee ₹2,000 per participant. For registration call 8879114939/ 9819002515



At Paris Couture Week
Representing India at the 2021 edition of the Paris Haute Couture Week are designers **Rahul Mishra** and **Vaishali Shadangule**, the country's first female designer to showcase her couture collection at the event. July 5 to 8.
hautecouture.fchm.paris



Haute horology
A new addition to **Fabergé's Visionnaire collection** is the DTZ Dynamist watch, with a ceramic and titanium case. Displaying two time zones simultaneously, the timepiece is complemented by a classic black fascia in addition to yellow gold accents. ₹21,96,245. faberge.com



Mind matters
Tinder India steps in to battle India's rising mental health crisis with free resources and therapy sessions on its app. In collaboration with Visit Health, the initiative has guided meditations, fitness videos, etc. Free sessions are valid till July 31. tinder.com



A podcast with Karadi
In Karadi Tales' latest podcast, *The Little Book Makers*, authors and illustrators interview one another about their favourite children's books. A new episode drops every Saturday at 6 pm and this week's session features **Anushka Ravishankar** and **Samit Basu**. spotify.com



Wimbledon 2021
The Grand Slam is back after a year's gap, with **Novak Djokovic** as the men's singles defending champion. Winning Wimbledon would give him his 20th major title, tying him with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. **Serena Williams** retired through injury earlier this week amidst several casualties on the wet courts. Despite the reduced star presence – the absence of Naomi Osaka, Nadal, Simona Halep and Dominic Thiem – one hopes for action-packed days leading up to next weekend's finals. leawimbledon.com



Catch up at Cannes
The Indian lineup at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival features **Invisible Demons**, Rahul Jain's documentary on Delhi's air pollution crisis; *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, by FTII alumnus Payal Kapadia; and *Eka* by Kolkata-born director Suman Sen, which will be part of the La Fabrique Cinema programme. International titles to keep an eye out for include *The French Dispatch*, Annette, and others. July 6-17. festival-cannes.com



(Clockwise from left) Snapshots of the Zoom rehearsals, and Raveesh Jaiswal
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Live from Stratford-upon-Avon

Bombay Theatre Company's latest offering is a play performed from England via Instagram

GOWRI S

Three friends gather in a home at Stratford-upon-Avon in England for a quiz night as an audience scattered around the globe watch on Instagram, in real time, from their couches. This is what international theatre looks like in a pandemic world. As screens take over, actors, directors and playwrights from all over the world are experimenting with new formats – from plays performed through Minecraft to live shows on WhatsApp groups – and Mumbai-based Bombay Theatre Company (launched in 2019) is no different. Their latest offering, *Quiz Night*, features actors located in the UK, directed remotely from India, performing live through Instagram for audiences worldwide. The 15-minute play, with a very British premise, follows a physical quiz night where the friends gather

for the first time after the lockdowns are eased in the UK. The reunion lays bare an elephant in the room, which was hidden behind the rush of life all along.

If split screens and remote performances from multiple cities were the rage until recently, *Quiz Night* adopts a different approach: partly because the actors could come together in one place. Raveesh Jaiswal, director of this show and founder of Bombay Theatre Company, blocked the play over Zoom from Mumbai. "All the virtual international plays we have done in India, are two-actor or three-actor plays, with the cast based in their respective burrows and houses. Whereas, this play will happen in the living room of a country house in England," explains Jaiswal, who along with cast members Hannah



McBride, Stacey Warner and writer Joshua Gallagher, devised a strategy that would work for the story as well.

"It's an out-and-out British play. I frankly didn't want to change or 'Indianise' anything," he says, adding that the script by Joshua captured the bleak times in a light-hearted manner. "It is based on a real activity [online quizzes] that was happening in England a lot during the pandemic." But he feels the premise would be relatable to the Indian audience, since we had our own ways of coping with being cooped up at home.

This is not the first time Bombay Theatre Company is collaborating with international talent for virtual shows. Last year, they had worked with New York-based actors and directors for live virtual productions and have done 22 Instagram plays till date since 2020. Jaiswal had always wanted to go international with Bombay Theatre Company and sees these virtual collaborations as the first step. "I am very systematic with my approach. Once the actors come together, I leverage Zoom. So we connect there and do play readings. We then get into characterisation. Post that, I also block the scenes on Zoom," he says. Rehearsals are done through proxy Instagram accounts meant solely for this purpose. When the cast goes live with the rehearsals, Jaiswal gives feedback through the comments section. The process also involved detailed starter mails on how to operate the platform and navigate its pitfalls.

The fact that live plays on social media at least attracts a live audience, makes them closer to theatre, than a recorded performance where actors perform to an empty theatre. "One of the actors that I worked with told me that he felt butterflies in his stomach... the same way you feel on stage," says Jaiswal. Instant gratification and the push to keep at the performance, remain the same, because a responsive audience is present.

The play will be performed on July 3 at 7.30 pm (IST) on Instagram @the_bombay_theatre



■ SREEJITH R KUMAR

SPIT TAKE

Those were the days

From selfie fails to the survival of the fittest at weddings... remembering the good times

on Facebook. 636 likes, 97 shares. Good times, I tell you, good times.

Festivity

It was marriage season. I had a warm fuzzy feeling. I had just handed over my cheque of ₹10,001 from my defunct bank account to the couple. And it was time for lunch. For me, the genuine feel-good factor of attending a wedding has always been getting to eat in the coveted first batch.

I had learnt to identify the hungry *mamis* in the gathering, and stick with their twitchy noses.

Placing my trust in their stealth and speed had paid rich dividends over the years. This time, too, was no

different. Abandoning my wife (she hampered my speed), I had positioned myself behind a group of four veterans who had seen more weddings than Mountbatten Mani Iyer. As the doors of the meals section opened, I slippedstreamed like Häkkinen in their wake into the dining room.

The meal, needless to say, was excellent.

But, for me, the real thrill had always been what came after the meal. It was that indescribable joy of walking out of the dining room, adjusting the waistband of my pants and giving a look to the sorry folks trying to get into the second batch (which included my wife, lol), a look that said 'Listen, suckers, the food was excellent. I had an extra *appalam*. Your turn may have come now, but I ate *first*. Remember that, losers. My food was the freshest. I'll always have that and you won't.'

How I long for that community feeling. Sigh.

Culture

My readers are aware that I'm all about culture. And by that, I mean classical dance. I was invited to an NRI *akka*'s dance recital. I put on my favourite *Fabindia kurta* that I had last worn for a funeral. (It had been washed, okay!) My wife viewed me with suspicion. 'You're ready,' she said. 'Without being threatened with violence? And want to go?'

I nodded.

Our car mysteriously broke down on the way. We did make it to the cocktail party hosted by her husband, though.

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a satirist. He has written four books and edited an anthology.

NOT READY FOR HEELS YET? STOCK UP ON EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE SLIP-ON

Post-lockdown juttis

Vegan sliders at Fizzy Goblet

After collabs with Rahul Mishra and Payal Singhal, this popular New Delhi brand has tied up with Tribe Amrapali for a collection pegged on the seven lucky charms, including the four leaf clover. In neutral shades, each leatherette *jutti* comes with a detachable anklet. ₹3,200 onwards, on fizzygoblet.com



Threadwork at Shilpsutra

The Delhi brand's SS'21 couture collection, *Srjan*, comprises hand-painted *juttis* in shades of grey, peach, blue and pink. 'Basant' (pictured here) features colourful crystal beads, hand-painted fabric, and a hand-embroidered geometric pattern. ₹3,199 onwards, on shilpsutra.com



Hand embroidery at Pastels and Pop

Dedicating their Spring Summer 2021 launch to their artisans based in Bihar and West Bengal, the Bengaluru brand's 'Promise of Tomorrow' collection features *juttis* with colourful thread work, *zardosi*, and knot embroidery. ₹2,800 onwards, on pastelsandpop.com



Zari florals at Needledust

'Summer Wishes', the new collection from the Delhi brand, comprises a mix of pastel hues and quirky designs. Aptly called sunflower serenade, sea of sand, and strawberry lemon pie, to name a few, the *juttis* come with detailing on the front and back. ₹3,690 onwards, on needledust.com



Former magazine editors and journalists are taking their skills and roster of contacts to e-tailers like Amazon, Myntra and Nykaa. Will it prove to be the Promised Land?

Fashion editors' e-commerce switch

VARUN RANA

You don't have to be a fashion insider to know that the past few years have not exactly been easy on print publications. Within this segment, lowered ad budgets and dwindling subscriptions (with social media bringing brands and designers closer) have hit fashion magazines the hardest. Over the past two years, this has led to a few shutting shop in India, with veteran editors and journalists out of jobs.

Amid all the gloom, those who once set trends and could make or break brands with their editorial power have found an unlikely refuge in e-commerce. Multi-brand e-tail destinations like Nykaa, Tata CliQ, Myntra, Amazon and Ajio, among others, now employ many whose bylines once populated the pages of *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire* and *L'Officiel*, to name a few.

But what could mass e-retailers want from people whose sole job it was to talk to select audiences who would rarely, if ever, shop from such portals?

The answer is simpler than the question makes it seem.

For years, fashion editors and journalists have been walking a tightrope between their responsibilities to their advertisers and their readers. In an ideal scenario, readers would take precedence. But in the real world, where fashion titles in India come to rely heavily on ad-sales, their allegiance shifted to those paying the bills and salaries. They had to survive.

Now, these writers who grew up knowing and understanding the Indian fashion industry and customer inside-out find themselves free from that insane balancing act. It is not surprising that the top people at India's fast-growing e-commerce sites turned to them. Their reasons range from the social and cultural legitimacy that comes when on-boarding respected names, to utilising their clout and roster of contacts to expand retail categories. Former journalists also bring an editorial edge to the way such e-commerce giants talk about the products they sell.

Bringing in some heft

This isn't new. Back in 2012, I was offered the post of fashion editor at Myntra when its founders were still running the com-

pany. Apart from overseeing the almost daily shoots for both clothes and accessories, one of my main roles was to suggest cool, young brands to on-board for the then-emerging category of homegrown designer labels with accessible price points. I was no path-breaking forerunner; it was too early in the day for that category to exist – no matter how farsighted the founders may have been.

Besides, once there, I realised that I wasn't ready or trained enough to bridge the divide between luxury fashion and e-retail. I also found it challenging to fit my style of working into the kind of detailed, structured way a corporate office is run. Used to taking decisions, and being responsible for them, it was hard for me to run my images and copy past the desks of those who specialised in data analytics and SEO/SEM, and had literally no connection to my dreamy world of fashion.

For our recently-liberated friends, though, it could be said



Digital campaigns, and a couple of editors who made the switch – Rochelle Pinto, editor, Tweak India; and Nonita Kalra, editor in chief, Tata CLIQ Luxury

a beast that never sleeps.

A recent chat room on Clubhouse – that wonderful new app making audio addicts of us all – reminded me of the conversations I used to have with my peers at various fashion weeks. We spoke about designers, retailers, our editors and publishers, and the future of fashion in India. Too soon, it seems, the future is here, standing in front of us. *Mais ou sont le neiges d'antan?* Where are the snows of yesterday, it asks, mockingly.

It is here that I tell myself to have more faith in an industry that has become a major player in the world economy. In India, the domestic textiles and apparel industry contributes 2% to the GDP, 7% of industry output in value terms, and 12% of the country's export earnings, according to government figures.

In these significant numbers, all set to climb in the future, shines a silver lining. Former journalists may yet invent new forms of expression to meet growing necessities. Maybe the voices of my peers will come out stronger for having been honed by the needs of homegrown brands, labels, and companies that can no longer be ignored.

The talk of locally-relevant material has been growing louder over the years; owned content that does not rely on inaccessible tastemakers is already being spoken of as the way forward. Who knows, we could even see new magazines coming out, funded by successful e-retailers. Perhaps this is the deep breath before the much-awaited plunge?

Varun Rana is a fashion commentator.

that they have trained for this. And it shows. Myntra has launched a successful video series with famous fashion and celebrity stylists; something I wouldn't have thought they'd ever do because of the mass-oriented price points their merchandise represented earlier. Nykaafashion has an expanding array of brands as well as designer labels on one platform.

Already, shoots, videos, and captions on social media, emails, website banners, and even digital ads have begun looking

pricey. But she says such price tags on skincare are attributed to their development and ingredient concentrations. She explains, "It is inevitably going to be 'luxury' because it is so expensive to make it that way. I do think people are beginning to appreciate and understand that process."

The great equaliser

The skincare luminary has worked with some famous faces such as Jennifer Lopez, Venus Williams and Kim Kardashian, but she says skin health is an equaliser for her. "Skin is skin," she insists, "there is no difference between a celebrity's skin and yours. My fundamental advise never changes: protect and boost your skin barrier function, provide it with essential nutrition and hydration, and combat inflammation with skincare ingredient science. Avoid make-up, irritating and aggressive ingredients, acid peels and lasers. Heal and protect your skin and it will glow."

When the coronavirus pandemic hit the beauty and skincare industry hard, Dr Sturm found she and her teams had to pivot hard to a new normal.

"For me, it caused an emergency acceleration [product development, expansion, etc] of the things that I intended to carry out anyway at my company to improve the customer experience."

One of the more popular ventures is Skin School, a series of free-to-attend, monthly live digital classes via Eventbrite, focussing on the needs of young adult and teen skin; the series (on YouTube) features celebrities such as model Hailey Baldwin and actor Colton Haynes, among others.

Dr Barbara Sturm's products are available on the Global Store on Nykaa's mobile app.

FOOD SPOT

The charm of chholey bhaturey!

Neither light nor heavy is what the writer loves about Anandji's chholey bhature in Lajpat Nagar



Delicious Anandji's plate of chholey bhaturey

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

RAHUL VERMA

It all started with a trip to a doctor. I was touched when two of my dear friends said they'd come along with me. After the consultation, though, they didn't go their respective ways back home - instead they went looking for a well-known chholey bhaturey wallah in Rajinder Nagar. I was a little unhappy that they could think of the all-time favourite dish when I was not feeling well. And I must say I snickered a bit when I heard that the chholey bhaturey shop was shut when they went there.

But since then I have been thinking of this delicious street food that gladdens most hearts. I was in particular thinking of Chacha di hatti. Now Chacha, as many of you may know, is an iconic shop in Kamla Nagar in North Delhi. Generations of students have written their tutorials or found their life partners while munching on Chacha's bhatureys. I was feeling rather nostalgic about his fare when a close friend who lives in the university area promised to

bring some over.

He did, and we had a happy breakfast the next day. The chholey (chickpeas curry) in particular had been well cooked with just the right amount of spices. Still, I thought, it wasn't what I had eaten in the 80s and 90s. But that was largely because a day-old bhatura (fried Indian bread) doesn't give you the kind of pleasure that a freshly fried bhatura just off a hot kadai does. All in all, though, I enjoyed my brekkie.

The stomach still yearned for more. So, a couple of days later, I ordered some chholey bhaturey from Anandji's in Lajpat Nagar. I would say this signature dish at Anandji's is among the best you get in south Delhi. His is a 25-year-old shop in Lajpat Nagar 1 (shop number 3, Krishna Market). I had placed my order on Zomato an hour before lunch time, and the food came dot on time.

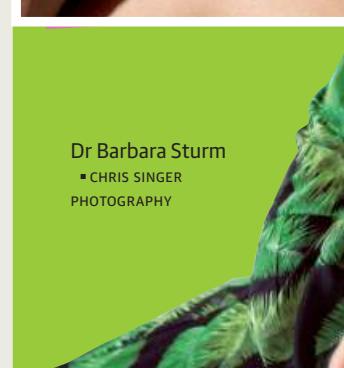
This time, I had no regrets. The bhatura was soft, a bit moist, and not the least bit rubbery. The chholey had been cooked with some small pieces of

potatoes, which blissfully added to the taste. There was a pickled piece of carrot on the side, and a sharp green chilli. I didn't have their onion rings, but cut some chunks of a red onion at home. I tore off a piece of the bhatura, rolled it around the dark, aromatic chholey and popped it into the mouth, and then took a bite of the pickle, the chilli and onion. And what a delicious mouthful that was!

There are some great chholey bhaturey places in Delhi - among them Nagpal's in Amar Colony and Nand in Sadar Bazar, where the bhatureys are fried in desi ghee. But I like Anandji's because despite the fact that you can't make bhaturas without deep frying them, you don't get a heavy feeling after eating a plateful. I had one bhatura with a bowl of chholey, and some homemade curd, and thought it was a delicious lunch, indeed. Not light, no, but not heavy either.

I think I have had my fill of chholey bhaturey. Till the next craving, that is.

The writer is a veteran food critic



Dr Barbara Sturm
• CHRIS SINGER
PHOTOGRAPHY

Barbara Sturm: growing her empire

The German skincare specialist talks about bringing her products to India, her bestsellers, and why they are pricey

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

At the mere mention of retinoids, Dr Barbara Sturm is aghast, her crystal blue eyes wide with disappointment. During a virtual event ahead of the June 8 launch of Dr Barbara Sturm products on the Global Store on Nykaa's mobile app, the internationally-acclaimed inflammatory doctor and skin specialist lets a virtual room of influencers and journalists that retinol is inflammatory and can do more harm than help.

A deep appreciator of Ayurveda, she tells *The Hindu Weekend* in an email interview that her love for skincare and holistic beauty comes from – like most people – her mother, who was a chemist, and her grandmother, who was a pharmacist.

"They both loved milk baths and dry brushing, and would mix creams for us as children. We would often go into the forest during my childhood and pick medicinal herbs and roots," she recalls.

"I was taught early on to use ingredients found in nature for their healing properties, and to treat the skin gently. This is something that is deeply rooted in my skincare philosophy and skincare line."

Science of ingredients

But the framework of Dr Sturm's Germany-made line sits in that sweet spot between nature and science. "Advanced ingredient science is what I build my skincare solutions around – potent, key ingredients that have been widely, clinically studied for their properties and efficacy."

That is why she has created so many 'white

According to Nayar

The Dr Barbara Sturm launch on the Nykaa Global Store is one success among many for Nykaa CEO-founder Falguni Nayar. The platform already has big names such as Evolve, Rodial and Cosmedix, showcasing the shifting demands for luxury beauty.

"We show brands the opportunity that India presents as a fast-growth, evolving market, and spend considerable time and effort to assist them in bringing operations to the country. Seeing the overwhelming response we receive around these brands, we continue to work to build further access for the Indian consumer," says Nayar.

T-shirt products such as the Hyaluronic Serum (₹10,660), Sun Drops SPF 30 (₹5,050), etc – all in her trademark sand-blasted glass bottles and tubs. One of her more novel and pandemic-ready inventions is her reusable Nano Silver Mask that both protects and cares for the skin (price TBC).

She is also known for her Darker Skin Tones products that aim to even out and brighten rather than lighten the skin of melanin-active Indian consumers. Dr Sturm's products are also geared towards women's needs, such as her V Collection specifically for intimate skin care.

Yes, the products are

After 2 decades, U.S. exits key Afghan base

Bagram Airfield, which was key to U.S. war against al-Qaeda, has been handed over to Afghan forces

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL

After nearly 20 years, the U.S. military left Bagram Airfield, the epicentre of its war to oust the Taliban and hunt down the al-Qaeda perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, two U.S. officials said on Friday.

The airfield was handed over to the Afghan National Security and Defence Force in its entirety, they said on condition of anonymity.

One of the officials also said the U.S. top commander in Afghanistan, General Austin S. Miller, "still retains all the capabilities and authorities to protect the forces."

Gen. Miller met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Friday and according to a Da-



Security challenges: Afghan soldiers standing guard at the gate of the Bagram Airfield on Friday. ■ REUTERS

ri-language tweet by the presidential palace the two discussed "continued U.S. assistance and cooperation with Afghanistan, particularly in supporting the defence

and security forces."

U.S. President Joe Biden on Friday said the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan is "on track" but it will not be completed with

U.S. to relocate Afghan translators: White House

WASHINGTON

Translators and other Afghans who assisted U.S. forces during the war will be relocated to countries outside of Afghanistan while visa applications to the U.S. are processed, the White House said on Friday, declining to give further details. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki also said that the drawdown of U.S. forces from Afghanistan was expected to be complete by the end of August.

in the next few days.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Mr. Biden said that some U.S. forces will still be in Afghanistan in September as part of a "ra-

tional drawdown with our allies."

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's district administrator for Bagram, Darwais Raufi, said the American departure was done overnight "without any coordination with local officials or the Governor's office", and as a result, early on Friday dozens of local looters stormed through the unprotected gates before Afghan forces regained control.

The Taliban too welcomed the American withdrawal from Bagram Airfield. In a tweet by spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, they called it a "positive step," urging for the "withdrawal of foreign forces from all parts of the country."

Six million EU citizens apply to stay in UK.

Scheme gives them right to live there

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

More than six million EU citizens have applied to stay in the U.K. after Brexit, the government said on Friday, nearly twice the number thought to be living in Britain before it left the bloc.

There was a late flurry of applications ahead of a June 30 deadline for the settlement scheme, designed to allow EU citizens residing in the U.K. to retain the same rights as they enjoyed before Brexit.

But since the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1, EU citizens wishing to settle or stay have faced tougher tests to secure residency and employment.

The final figure of 6.02 million applications, with 5.1 million grants of status, is far higher than the 3.7 million EU nationals originally estimated to be in the country when the scheme launched in March 2019.

More than 4,00,000 applications were made in the final month before the scheme ended, the Home Office said, adding that those who had missed the deadline on "reasonable grounds" could still make a late application.

"When we left the EU we



Priti Patel

promised to protect the rights of EU citizens who have made their life in the U.K., and developed the hugely successful EU Settlement Scheme to ensure they could call the U.K. home in the years to come," Home Secretary Priti Patel said.

The government has touted the settlement scheme as the successful delivery of promises made to EU nationals in the U.K. after Britain's withdrawal from the bloc in December and the end of free movement.

Initial investigations indicate that this is a lone wolf-style act of domestic terrorism," Chris Tang, a former police chief, told reporters outside the hospital where the officer was taken.

Mr. Tang said officers later searched the attacker's home and found materials on his computer that showed he had been "radicalised".

Hong Kong policeman stabbed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

A 50-year-old man who died after stabbing a Hong Kong police officer was a "lone wolf" attacker who had been politically "radicalised," the city's security chief said on Friday.

Footage of Thursday evening's attack was caught by a local journalist's livestream.

It showed a man in a dark T-shirt stabbing an officer in the back in the shopping district of Causeway Bay.

Police said the man – who has not been publicly identified by authorities – then stabbed himself in the chest and later died of his wounds.

The 28-year-old officer suffered a punctured lung and underwent surgery overnight.

"Initial investigations indicate that this is a lone wolf-style act of domestic terrorism," Chris Tang, a former police chief, told reporters outside the hospital where the officer was taken.

Mr. Tang said officers later searched the attacker's home and found materials on his computer that showed he had been "radicalised".

U.S. issues moratorium on death penalty at federal level

Biden had pledged to pass law to end capital punishment

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) has issued a moratorium on federal executions while it reviews policies and procedures, the Department said in a statement. U.S. President Joe Biden had said on his campaign website that he would legislate the end of capital punishment at the federal level and incentivise states to follow suit.

"The Department of Justice must ensure that everyone in the federal criminal justice system is not only af-

fated the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States, but is also treated fairly and humanely. That obligation has special force in capital cases," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement released on Thursday.

Apart from the moral case against the death penalty, the data show that in its application, it is biased against racial minorities, especially African Americans.

Under former President Donald Trump, the federal government carried out 13 executions. This is the high-

est number of executions under any presidency since the 19th Century, Reuters reported.

The review, ordered by Mr. Garland, will include an assessment of the "risk of pain and suffering" caused by pentobarbital – a lethal injection drug. The Trump administration's DoJ had adopted a single drug, instead of a three drug protocol. The review will also look into November 2020 expansion of federal execution methods beyond lethal injection and policy changes to expedite executions.

After engine trouble, cargo plane lands in Pacific Ocean

report around 1.40 a.m. of a downed inter-island transport plane. About an hour later, rescuers in a Coast Guard helicopter spotted the debris field and two people in the water, she said.

One person was hoisted into the helicopter and taken to Queens Medical Center in good condition, Lt. Commander Evelyn said. The Honolulu Fire Department rescued the other person, who was also in a good condition, she said.

The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board will investigate the

plane which was en route from the U.S. to Japan. The plane had reportedly experienced engine trouble and was attempting to return to Honolulu when they were forced to land the Boeing 737 cargo aircraft in the water, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement.

U.S. Coast Guard Lt. Commander Karin Evelyn said in an email that they received a

Israel strikes Hamas site in Gaza over fire balloons

Military says it targeted a weapons manufacturing site

REUTERS

JERUSALEM

Israeli aircraft bombed a Hamas site in the Gaza Strip overnight in response to incendiary balloons launched from the Palestinian enclave, Israel's military said on Friday.

Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas confirmed one of its sites had been struck. Israel's military said it had hit a Hamas weapons manufacturing site. There were no reports of casualties.

Since a May 21 ceasefire ended 11 days of Israel-Hamas fighting, Palestinians in Gaza have sporadically launched balloons laden with incendiary material across the border, causing fires that have burned fields in Israel.

Palestinians say the balloons aim to pressure Israel to ease restrictions on the coastal enclave.



Rushing for cover: People escaping tear gas shells fired by Israeli security force in East Jerusalem on Friday. ■ REUTERS

Balloon launches had ebbed after Israel eased some curbs on Gaza last week. But on Thursday, balloons were again launched from Gaza, causing at least four brush fires near Israeli cities along the border.

Male responds to India's letter on media 'attacks'

Refrain from publishing false news: govt.

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

and create hatred among the local population towards these friendly nations. This also puts the diplomats' lives in danger and hinder their diplomatic work." The Ministry referenced the host state's obligations to provide security to resident diplomats under the Vienna Convention, which the Indian High Commission had also cited in its letter.

In a press release issued on Friday, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry said it took note of articles published repeatedly in some local media, levelling "false accusations" against resident diplomats, apparently responding to concerns raised by the High Commission of India last week over "malicious" media reports.

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The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) – of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, and former President and Speaker Mohamed Nasheed – which leads the Maldives's ruling alliance said it was "deeply concerned" over the recent reports in published in local news portal *Dhiyares*, "expressing disparaging and ill-founded remarks about Indian diplomats in the Maldives.

It comes a week after the Indian High Commission sent a letter, dated June 24, to the Ministry, seeking action on persons behind "repeated attacks" in the media on its diplomats, and enhanced security in the wake of such coverage.

While some Maldivians, in their social media posts, termed India's request as an attack on the country's media freedom, the Foreign Ministry echoed India's concerns aired in the letter, and said: "These actions affect the decades long friendly relations Maldives has maintained with friendly nations,



गोपनीय सरकार / Government of India
अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान / Department of Space
भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संस्थान / Indian Space Research Organisation
द्रव्य नोन प्रणाली के/ द्रव्य लिक्वाइड प्रूपलेस्य सेंटर / LIQUID PROPULSION SYSTEMS CENTRE
विज्ञापन सं/ Advertisement No. एलएपीएससी / LPSC/01/2021

तिरुवनंतपुरम के निकट विज्ञान में स्थित भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संस्थान में विज्ञापन पटों की भर्ती हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं। Applications are invited for the following posts for LPSC Unit located at Vizianamala near Thiruvananthapuram:

पद का नाम : वैज्ञानिक सहाय्यक [स्तर 7 (वेतन मेड्रिक्स : ₹ 44,900 - ₹ 1,42,400/-)]	Name of Post : SCIENTIFIC ASSISTANT [Level 7 (Pay Matrix : ₹ 44,900 - ₹ 1,42,400/-)]
पद सं/ Post No. 743	विज्ञापन को संबंधित विज्ञान में विज्ञापन पटों की भर्ती हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं। Applications are invited for the following posts for LPSC Unit located at Vizianamala near Thiruvananthapuram:
पद सं/ Post No. 743	प्रिफिल को संबंधित विज्ञान में विज्ञापन पटों की भर्ती हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं। Applications are invited for the following posts for LPSC Unit located at Vizianamala near Thiruvananthapuram:
पद का नाम : कठि. अनुवादक अधिकारी [स्तर 6 (वेतन मेड्रिक्स : ₹ 35,400 - ₹ 1,12,400/-)]	Name of Post : JUNIOR TRANSLATION OFFICER [Level 6 (Pay Matrix : ₹ 35,400 - ₹ 1,12,400/-)]
744	स्नातक में अनिवार्य या चयनित विषय के रूप में या परीक्षा के माध्यम के रूप में अंग्रेजी विषय के साथ मान्यता प्राप्त विश्वविद्यालय से हिंदी या अंग्रेजी के अलाकान्तर दिखी ; Masters degree from a recognized University in Hindi as a compulsory or elective subject or as the medium of examination at the degree level.
744	स्नातक में हिंदी माध्यम या चयनित विषय के रूप में या परीक्षा के माध्यम के रूप में अंग्रेजी विषय के साथ मान्यता प्राप्त विश्वविद्यालय से हिंदी या अंग्रेजी विषय में स्नातकोत्तर दिखी ; Masters degree from a recognized University in English as a compulsory or elective subject or as the medium of examination at the degree level.
744	स्नातक में अनिवार्य या चयनित विषय के रूप में या परीक्षा के माध्यम के रूप में अंग्रेजी विषय के साथ, हिंदी या अंग्रेजी के अलाकान्तर दिखी ; Masters degree from a recognized University in any subject other than Hindi or English, with English medium and English as a compulsory or elective subject or as the medium of examination at the degree level.
744	स्नातक में अनिवार्य या चयनित विषय के रूप में या परीक्षा के माध्यम के रूप में अंग्रेजी विषय के साथ, हिंदी या अंग्रेजी के अलाकान्तर दिखी ; Masters degree from a recognized University in any subject other than Hindi or English, with English medium and English as a compulsory or elective subject or as the medium of examination at the degree level.
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744	स्नातक में

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	52,485	-0.32
US Dollar	74.74	-0.25
Gold	46615	0.65
Brent oil	75.82	0.27

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	710.40	7.30
Asian Paints	3005.00	-16.60
Axius Bank	750.65	4.20
Bajaj Auto	4175.35	-29.20
Bajaj Finserv	11750.45	-66.00
Bajaj Finance	5997.75	30.60
Bharti Airtel	525.00	2.35
BPCL	462.75	-0.00
Britannia Ind	3545.30	-50.50
Cipla	979.20	1.10
Coal India	147.65	2.00
Divis Lab	4519.65	83.95
D Dr Reddy's Lab	5575.70	17.20
Eicher Motors	2661.00	-14.30
Grafix Ind	1489.75	-0.85
HCL Tech	984.65	-0.85
HDFC	2475.70	16.30
HDFC Bank	1480.40	-6.35
HDFC Life	687.50	1.75
Hero MotoCorp	2919.85	-2.65
Hindalco	376.05	-3.35
Hind Unilever	2487.30	9.30
ICICI Bank	640.25	9.40
IndusInd Bank	1009.65	1.95
Infosys	1567.80	7.40
Indian Oil Corp	108.45	0.90
ITC	202.40	-0.60
JSW Steel	671.30	-9.25
Kotak Bank	1715.15	-0.95
L&T	1485.65	-6.65
M&M	782.60	3.15
Maruti Suzuki	7573.85	-10.55
Nestle India Ltd.	17602.00	-44.20
NTPC	117.50	0.15
ONGC	118.45	-0.40
PowerGrid Corp	227.95	-2.85
Reliance Ind	2129.05	31.10
SBI Life	1007.20	0.30
State Bank	424.40	4.00
Shree Cement	27014.90	-45.05
Sun Pharma	681.25	-0.75
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	763.60	7.55
Tata Motors	344.90	0.65
Tata Steel	1136.00	-27.55
TCS	3325.45	-16.05
Tech Mahindra	1089.40	4.25
Titan	1754.75	14.45
UltraTech Cement	6719.90	12.65
UPL	799.35	7.85
Wipro	538.60	-0.75

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.54	74.86
Euro	88.20	88.58
British Pound	102.51	102.97
Japanese Yen (100)	66.91	67.21
Chinese Yuan	11.50	11.55
Swiss Franc	80.56	80.93
Singapore Dollar	55.17	55.43
Canadian Dollar	60.08	60.35
Malaysian Ringgit	17.90	18.00

Source: Indian Bank

Laurus gets DRDO nod for COVID-19 drug

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

Drugmaker Laurus Labs has received licence from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to manufacture and market 2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2DG), an oral drug indicated as an adjunct therapy for hospitalised COVID-19 patients.

Announcing this, the company said it has already applied for emergency-use authorisation for the product with the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation. The Drugs Controller General of India had, on May 1, gave emergency approval for use of 2DG in COVID-19 patients.

Laurus Labs is among a clutch of firms being issued a licence to make and market 2-DG, sources said.

Last month, the DRDO invited expressions of interest from pharmaceutical companies, offering transfer of technology for manufacturing 2-DG.

India sees 'consensus' by Oct. on OECD-G20 global tax deal

Share of profit allocation, subject-to-tax rules' scope yet to be addressed: FinMin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
A day after joining the OECD-G20 framework for a global minimum tax, the Finance Ministry on Friday said significant issues including share of profit allocation and scope of subject-to-tax rules were yet to be addressed, and a 'consensus agreement' was expected by October.

A total of 130 countries on Thursday agreed to an overhaul of global tax norms to ensure multinationals pay taxes wherever they operate and at a minimum 15% rate.

The solution should result in allocation of meaningful and sustainable revenue to



Closing ranks: The pact outlines a solution to address tax challenges from digitalisation of the economy. ■ R. V. MOORTHY

market jurisdictions, particularly for developing and emerging economies, the Ministry said in a statement. A majority of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on

arising from digitalisation of the economy, it added.

It comprises Pillar One – reallocation of additional share of profit to the market jurisdictions, and Pillar Two – regarding minimum tax and subject-to-tax rules.

Deloitte India Partner Sumit Singhania said the consensus would quicken ongoing efforts to reset the almost century-old international tax rules. It provides an objective definition for "largest (sales more than \$20 billion) and most profitable (more than 10% global profitability) MNEs to be subject to new nexus and profit allocation rules," he added.

VIL dials investors for funds, moots 'floor price' for tariff woes

Telco's loss narrows to ₹7,023 crore in quarter ended March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI
Cash-strapped Vodafone Idea (VIL) said it is in active talks with potential investors for fund raising, and asserted that 'floor price' remains the 'best and most preferred' fix for industry's woes arising from tariff-related issues.

VIL confirmed that it has approached the government to extend moratorium on spectrum instalments. It highlighted that the sector's biggest pain point comes from pricing issues, and conceded that tariff hike is 'absolutely' essential to revive the sector now under stress.

Speaking at analyst call post Q4 earnings announce-



ment, Ravinder Takkar, CEO VIL said, "On fund raising, we are currently in active discussion with potential investors." Mr. Takkar did not give firm timeline for fund raising – which has been significantly delayed – but emphasised that the company is fully engaged with investors and 'interest' continues.

Base Erosion and Profit Shifting members (including India) on Thursday adopted a statement containing an outline of a consensus solution to address tax challenges

Retailers, wholesalers get MSME tag

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

On whether VIL had an alternate plan ready if it was unable to raise funds, he insisted, "I don't think there is any reason to start creating Plan B. We are confident that funding will take place in the coming weeks."

"Pricing is much lower than it needs to be, whereas the consumption that customers and overall citizens enjoy is significantly higher than what it used to be several years ago," Mr. Takkar said.

VIL's consolidated loss narrowed to about ₹7,023 crore for the quarter ended March, mainly on the strength of cost optimisation. The loss stood at ₹11,643.5 crore in the year-earlier period.

The revised guidelines will benefit 2.5 crore retail and wholesale traders.

Big Tech's push into financial sector poses risks, says RBI

Firms could become dominant players undermining banks'

REUTERS

MUMBAI

Plans by Big Tech to foray further into India's financial sector pose risks for traditional banks as the tech firms have the potential to become dominant players in financial services, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The plans would also create governance-related challenges for regulators, the RBI wrote in its Financial Stability Report.

'Opaque governance'
Major technology firms "straddle many different lines of business with sometimes opaque overarching governance structures," the



central bank said.

The RBI said concerns included operational risks, too-big-to fail issues, challenges for antitrust rules, cybersecurity and data privacy. But it added that positive outcomes could include efficiency gains and more access to financial services.

Forex reserves surge by \$5 bn to \$609 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

India's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$5.06 billion to touch a record high of \$608.99 billion in the week ended June 25, 2021, RBI data showed.

In the previous week ended June 18, the reserves had declined by \$4.41 billion to \$603.93 billion.

During the week under review, the increase in the reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves. FCA rose by \$4.7 billion to \$566.24 billion. Gold reserves rose by \$365 million to \$36.296 billion. The special drawing rights with the IMF remained unchanged at \$1.49 billion.

SAT stays ban on Franklin Templeton's Kudva, wife

SEBI had barred the duo for a year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

The couple had redeemed their MF units when the schemes were under pressure

against the Sebi's order.

In an order on Thursday, the SAT said the SEBI order "shall remain stayed during the pendency of the appeal. In so far as the direction to keep the redemption amount in an escrow account, the said direction will continue".

With regard to the penalty, the tribunal directed them to deposit 50% of the penalty amount within three weeks.

The tribunal has given four weeks to SEBI to file a reply and a rejoinder may be filed within four weeks thereafter. The matter has been listed for August 30, 2021.

Digit Insurance to raise \$200 mn

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Digit Insurance is raising up to \$200 million from existing and new investors in a round that pegs the Fairfax-backed general insurer's valuation at \$3.5 billion.

The fund raising, from existing investor Fairfax Capital and new investors Sequoia Capital India, IIFL Alternate Asset Managers and a few others, is subject to insurance regulator IRDAI's approval. Digit Insurance said it is raising the funds by diluting 5% equity, to maintain solvency.

This is one of the biggest funding rounds in the Indian insurance industry, bringing the total capital infused into Digit to \$442 million. In a smaller funding round in January, it was valued at \$1.9 billion, the company said.

Edelweiss Financial to exit insurance broking JV for ₹308 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Edelweiss Financial Services said it will exit the insurance broking business by selling its 70% stake in Edelweiss Gallagher Insurance Brokers Ltd. for ₹307.60 crore.

"The company has entered into an agreement to

divest its entire shareholding (currently 70%) in Edelweiss Gallagher Insurance Brokers Ltd., a subsidiary, engaged in the business of insurance broking to Arthur J Gallagher & Co.," Edelweiss Financial Services said in a regulatory filing.

Gallagher, who previously

held 30% in the business, will now be acquiring the balance shares, taking its stake to 100%, as per the filing.

The company said as per the agreement, 37 lakh equity shares of ₹10 each, representing 70% of the paid up share capital of Edelweiss Gallagher Insurance Brokers

Broker.

Rakesh Shah, chairman, Edelweiss Group, said the sale will provide the firm "with the flexibility to reallocate capital and invest in scaling up our fast-growing life and non-life insurance businesses, making this a win-win for both of us."

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY ANANTAPUR ANANTHAPURAM - 515 002 (A.P) INDIA

Ref.NIT/No.1/JNTU CER/FD/Food Testing Lab Equipment & Furniture/2021-22 Dt:02-07-2021

e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Tenders are hereby invited from reputed Companies / Agencies / Firms for the Supply / Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Food Testing Laboratory Equipment and Furniture for the JNTUA College of Engineering, Kalikirki, Chittoor Dist., through e-procurement portal <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> with Tender ID No.421257. Tender schedule from 03-07-2021 & Last Date of Tender submission is 17

Pioneering Jabeur continues her dream run

Tunisian beats former champion Muguruza in a pulsating three-setter; Djokovic fends off Kudla's challenge

WIMBLEDON

AGENCIES
LONDON

Trailblazing Ons Jabeur reached the last 16 at Wimbledon on Friday, coming back from a set down to beat 2017 champion Garbine Muguruza 5-7, 6-3, 6-2 in 2 hours and 26 minutes.

The 26-year-old threw up even as she earned two match points, kneeling down in the corner of Centre Court. She later attributed this to a "stomach inflammation."

But such was her unwavering focus that even after Muguruza saved one match point, Jabeur made no mistake on the second, falling on her back in celebration and getting back up to a standing ovation.

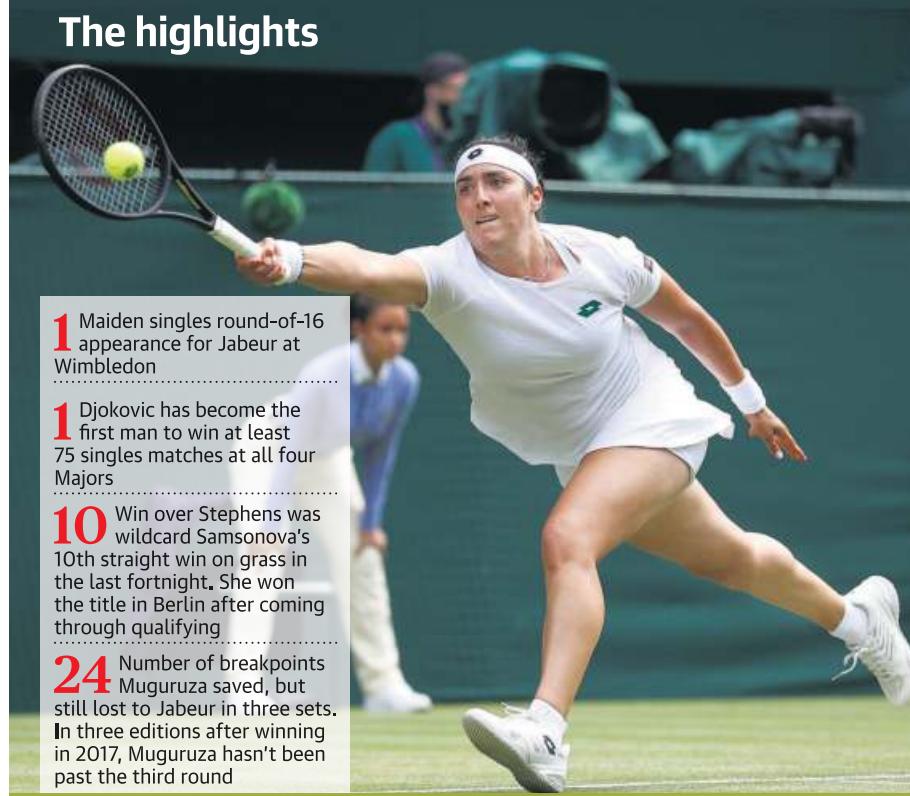
She will next meet Poland's 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek, who was ruthless in her demolition of Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-1, 6-0.

Landmark feat

It was another landmark performance by Jabeur, who only last month became the first Arab woman to win a WTA Tour title, triumphing on grass at Birmingham.

Jabeur, whose best Grand Slam finish is quarterfinals at the 2020 Australian Open,

The highlights



1 Maiden singles round-of-16 appearance for Jabeur at Wimbledon

10 Djokovic has become the first man to win at least 75 singles matches at all four Majors

10 Win over Stephens was wildcard Samsonova's 10th straight win on grass in the last fortnight. She won the title in Berlin after coming through qualifying

24 Number of breakpoints Muguruza saved, but still lost to Jabeur in three sets. In three editions after winning in 2017, Muguruza hasn't been past the third round

C First time I played on Centre Court and the energy was amazing. This is my favourite place. Last time we met, she beat me. This was my revenge, in a nice way — JABEUR, AFTER BEATING MUGURUZA

said she was nervous at the outset against Muguruza but gradually settled into a rhythm.

Her Spanish opponent had taken a tight first set but Jabeur worked her way back

and by the third set, she clearly held the upper hand.

Muguruza's serve was consistently under pressure with Jabeur breaking in the first service game of the deciding set.

Muguruza saved several break points on her next service game but Jabeur broke again for 4-1. From then on, the Tunisian was never really under pressure, save from herself, as she closed out the

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THE RESULTS

Third round

Men: 1-Djokovic (Srb) bt Kudla (USA) 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(7); 5-Rublev (Rus) bt 26-Fognini (Ita) 6-3, 5-7, 6-4, 6-2; 8-Bautista Agut (Esp) bt Koepfer (Ger) 7-5, 6-1, 7-6(4); Fucsovics (Hun) bt 9-Schwartzman (Arg) 6-3, 6-3, 6-7(6), 6-4; 17-Garin (Chi) bt Martinez (Esp) 6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4; Sebastian Korda (USA) bt 22-Evans (GBR) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; 25-Khachanov (Rus) bt Tiafoe (USA) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Women: 21-Jabeur (Tun) bt 11-Muguruza (Esp) 5-7, 6-3, 6-2; 8-Karolina Pliskova (Cze) bt Martincova (Cze) 6-3, 6-3; Samsonova (Rus) bt Stephens (USA) 6-2, 6-4, 7-Swiatek (Pol) bt Begu (Rou) 6-1, 6-0; 23-Keyes (USA) bt 13-Mertens (Bel) 7-5, 6-3; 18-Rybalkina (Kaz) bt Rogers (USA) 6-1, 6-4; 2-Sabalenka (Blr) bt Osorio Serrano (Col) 6-0, 6-3; Golubic (Sui) bt Bencic (SUI) 6-2, 6-1.

Fallen seeds

Men: 9-Schwartzman, 22-Evans, 26-Fognini

Women: 11-Muguruza, 13-Mertens

16 years.

Also on Friday, Nick Kyrgios and Venus Williams won their mixed doubles opener against the American pair of Austin Krajicek and Sabrina Santamaria 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

and Ankita put up a good fight in the second, and even led for a brief period with a break of serve.

Bopanna was clearly the best player on view with his powerful serve and solid groundstrokes. However, Sania's serve didn't really click.

Ramkumar came up with some big serves, while Ankita gave it her all after growing in confidence as the match wore on.

In another mixed doubles first-round tie, Divij Sharan and Samantha Murray Sharpen (GBR) outlasted the Uruguay-Kazakhstan pair of Juan Ignacio Cerundolo and Galina Voskoboeva 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 in a match that lasted two hours and 19 minutes.

Spain keeps its nerve to overcome a gutsy Switzerland

Simon excellent under the bar for the winner even as the rival penalty-takers fumble their lines

EURO 2020

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ST. PETERSBURG

Goalkeeper Unai Simon was the hero as Spain edged past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 on penalties on Friday to set up a Euro 2020 semifinal against Belgium or Italy.

After a 1-1 draw which saw the Swiss play for 43 minutes a man down, Simon made two saves in the shoot-out to help keep Spain's bid for a record fourth European crown alive.

It was heartbreak for Switzerland, which was bidding to reach the semifinals of a major tournament for the first time in its history.

Spain forged ahead early on when Denis Zakaria put

through his own net, but Switzerland was the better side for long periods and Xherdan Shaqiri, standing in for the suspended Granit Xhaka as captain, equalised in the 68th minute.

Reduced to 10 The Swiss were reduced to 10 men with 13 minutes remaining, though, when midfielder Remo Freuler was dismissed for a tackle on Gerard Moreno.

Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer, the hero of the penalty shoot-out win over world champion France in the last 16, made a string of fine saves in extra time. But Simon saved from Fabian Schär and Manuel Akanji, while Ruben Vargas



Simon the saviour: Schar's effort is thwarted by the Spanish goalkeeper. ■ GETTY IMAGES

blazed over in a tense finale as Spain snuck through, with Mikel Oyarzabal smashing home the winning spot-kick.

After scoring 10 goals in its previous two matches, this was a return to the type of profligate performances

which saw Spain draw its first two group games.

But the 2008 and 2012

winners had made a dream

start to this quartefinal, taking the lead in fortunate circumstances in only the eighth minute.

A corner was cleared only as far as Jordi Alba, whose left-footed volley was diverted past Sommer by Switzerland midfieler Zakaria.

It was the 10th own goal of Euro 2020, more than the other 15 editions combined.

But the underdogs found the equaliser four minutes later, as Freuler latched onto a loose ball and squared for Shaqiri to slot into the far corner and score his third goal of the tournament.

The result: Switzerland 1 (Shaqiri 68) drew with Spain 1 (Zakaria 8-0g) in regulation time. After extra-time, Spain won 3-1 on penalties.

TODAY'S MATCH

QUARTER FINALS

Czech Republic vs Denmark, 9.30 p.m.

Ukraine vs England, 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

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

Ukraine is also on a high after Artem Dovbyk's header at the end of extra-time gave it a 2-1 win over Sweden.

Meanwhile, Denmark and the Czech Republic both welcome back injured players for their quarterfinal in Baku after an extended rest since their last-16 victories.

Select County XI for India's warm-up game: ECB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is working on COVID-19 protocols to organise a warm-up game for the touring Indian team against 'Combined Counties' side in the third week of July as a tune-up for the first Test in Nottingham starting on August 4.

The three-day match, which might be accorded First Class status, will pit the Indian team against a 'Select County XI' which in earlier times was known as 'Combined Counties'. The tentative date could be between July 20-22.

India looks to stop an England sweep

Vice-captain Harmanpreet's form a cause for concern for visitors

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WORCESTER

An under-fire Indian women's team would be desperate to address vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur's prolonged lean patch as it seeks to stop a marauding England side from completing a 3-0 sweep in the final ODI here on Saturday.

Having lost six out of the last seven ODIs, the Mithali Raj-led side is finding it difficult to stem the rot as it faces the ignominy of another one-sided series defeat after being thrashed by the South Africans on home soil.

Mithali recovers

Mithali has recovered from the neck pain she felt during



Gone! Harmanpreet has failed to fire in the ODI series so far, falling for 1 and 19. ■ GETTY IMAGES

the second ODI and is set to lead the team.

While the bowlers came up with a much-improved game in the second ODI, the batting let the team down yet again with Mithali left to do all the heavy lifting, which is also affecting her game.

One of the primary issues that has been overlooked over the past four years has been Harmanpreet's poor performance. Harmanpreet, whose epic 171 against Australia in the 2017 World Cup became a defining moment for the wo-

men's game in the country, has since gone off the boil.

With Mithali and the likes of Jemimah Rodrigues, Punam Raut, Deepa Sharma and Tanya Bhatia not having the ability to play the power game, openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma are facing additional pressure.

In the first game itself, there were 181 dot balls against a bowling attack that has Katherine Brunt, Anya Shrubsole, Nat Sciver, Kate Cross and Sophie Ecclestone. It has been relentless with its tight lines.

Tammy Beaumont and Sciver are in good form and home team skipper Heather Knight will look to find her touch.

Match starts at 3.30 p.m.

Morgan's men seal series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Captain Eoin Morgan and Joe Root hit unbeaten fifties as England cruised to a series-clinching win over Sri Lanka in the second ODI at the Oval on Thursday.

England finished on 244 for two with seven overs to spare, chasing 242 for victory. Morgan (75 n.o.) and Root (68 n.o.) shared an unbroken stand of 140.

Player-of-the-Match Sam Curran had set up the victory with a spell of five for 48.

Jonny Bairstow and Jason Roy ensured England made a brisk start to the chase. Even after losing the openers, England remained in command, with Morgan and Root in fine form.

"It was really special to get my first five-for and to be playing in front of fans as well," the 23-year-old Cur-



Eoin Morgan. ■ REUTERS

ran, playing on his Surrey home ground, told Sky Sports.

The scores: Sri Lanka 241/9 in 50 overs lost to England 244/2 in 43 overs (Jason Roy 60, Joe Root 68 n.o., Eoin Morgan 75 n.o.).

Mohoric posts first stage win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LE CREUSOT (FRANCE)

Matej Mohoric posted his first stage win in the Tour de France on Friday following a long breakaway in the race's longest stage.

The 249km hilly trek from Vierzon to Le Creusot was the longest in 21 years.

Mohoric was part of a group that formed more than 200km before the finish line. He went solo in the stage's finale, using a tough climb to drop his remaining breakaway companions and reach the finish line in Le Creusot alone.

Aronian stuns Carlsen

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

Levon Aronian stunned Magnus Carlsen 2-0 in the blitz tie-breaker and will face Vladislav Artemiev in the final of the Goldmoney Asian Rapid online chess tournament.

Following the loss of the first set on Thursday, Aronian scripted a memorable comeback by winning the second set 3-1.

Meanwhile, Artemiev won twice with white pieces against Ding Liren after the first game ended as a draw for a 2.5-1.5 to force the tiebreaker, which Artemiev won 1.5-0.5.

The results: Semifinals: Second set: Levon Aronian (Arm) bt Magnus Carlsen (Nor) 3-1 (Aronian won the blitz tiebreaker 2-0; Vladislav Artemiev (Rus) bt Ding Liren (Chn) 2.5-1.5 (Artemiev won the blitz tiebreak 1.5-0.5).

Ranatunga slams SLC

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's World Cup-winning skipper Arjuna Ranatunga on Friday slammed the island's sports leaders for agreeing to a tour by a second-string India side. He said the

TV PICKS

Wimbledon 2021: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
England Women vs India Women: 3rd ODI: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.
F1: Austrian GP (Qualifying): SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Copa America 2021: Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 a.m. & 6.30 a.m. (Sunday)
NBA: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m. (Sunday)

COPA AMERICA

TODAY'S SCHEDULE
QUARTER FINALS

Uruguay vs Colombia, 3.30 a.m. (Sunday)
 Argentina vs Ecuador, 6.30 a.m. (Sunday)
 Live on Sony Ten 2 and Sony 6 (SD & HD)

IN BRIEF



Toni Kroos retiring from German national team

BERLIN
 Toni Kroos said on Friday he was retiring from Germany's national squad. "I had already made the decision to retire after this tournament for some time. It had been clear to me for a while that I will not be available for the World Cup 2022 in Qatar," tweeted Kroos. AFP

PSG, Ramos agree on two-year deal: report

PARIS
 Paris St. Germain has struck a deal to sign Spanish defender Sergio Ramos, French radio network RMC reported on Thursday. The report said Ramos had agreed a two-year contract with PSG. REUTERS

UEFA suffers setback in Super League case

MADRID
 A Spanish court on Thursday ordered European soccer's governing body UEFA to cancel all legal sanctions imposed on Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus for planning the creation of the breakaway European Super League. REUTERS

Lahiri in a tough spot; Thompson leads

DETROIT
 Anirban Lahiri carded a one-under 71 in the opening round to tie tied 87th at the Rocket Mortgage Classic here on Thursday. Davis Thompson matched a Detroit Golf Club record with a nine-under 63 to take the early first-round lead. PTI

Aditi recovers from slump to be T-71

DALLAS
 Aditi recovered from a mid-round slump to card an even par 71 and lie tied-71st in the Volunteers of America Classic here on Thursday. Aditi, who dropped a bogey and a double bogey in her opening round, was just outside the projected cut line. Ko Jin-Young of South Korea was in the lead with a 63. PTI

Hurdler McNeal's ban upheld, to miss Games

LAUSANNE
 American Olympic 100m hurdles champion Brianna McNeal will miss the Tokyo Games – and even the 2024 Paris Olympics – after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) dismissed her appeal against a five-year ban for an anti-doping rule violation. REUTERS

Wrestler Malik handed two-year ban

NEW DELHI
 His hopes of competing in the Olympics over, Indian wrestler Sumit Malik was on Friday banned for two years by the sport's world governing body UWW after his B sample also returned positive for a prohibited stimulant. The 28-year-old has one week to decide if he would accept the sanction or challenge it. PTI

Mixed fortunes for Bhullar, Shubhankar

KILKenny
 Gaganjeet Bhullar shot a one-under 71 and was tied 73rd on the opening day of the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open. Shubhankar Sharma carded two-over 74 to be T-123. PTI

I now know the art of running better'

Sprinter Dutee Chand says her first objective is to make it to the semifinals at Tokyo

ATHLETICS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

At 25, Dutee Chand has every reason to feel proud. She is the first Indian athlete to make it to the Olympics for the second straight time in the 100m (she will also compete in the 200m), having made the cut for next month's Tokyo Games by virtue of her world rankings.

"I am delighted even though, honestly, I was a bit worried whether I would make it because there were not too many competitions for me to protect the world rankings," Dutee said in a chat with *The Hindu*.

"It will be great if I can realise my ultimate dream of an Olympic medal which is not that easy. To make it to the Olympics for the second straight time is itself a huge thing for me," said an elated Dutee.



Optimistic: Dutee Chand's coach N. Ramesh says his ward is capable of pulling off a surprise at the Tokyo Olympics. ■ V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

For the 'pocket dynamo', at 4 feet 11 inch, it has been a fairytale success story given the kind of adversities she has had to face both in the sport and in life.

"I owe everything to Ra-

mesh Sir (SAI athletics coach N. Ramesh), Gopi Sir (P. Gopichand) for being with me in 2014 when everyone had written me off.

"I am also grateful to the federation, Odisha Govern-

ment and the Government of India.

"They gave me a second life in athletics," said the two-time Asian Games silver medallist.

"In Rio, I was very ner-

vous, overwhelmed by the big names around. Now, I am more confident and know the art of running better," said Dutee.

No change in methods

"I don't think there is any need to be different in my training methods. What I need to produce the expected results is well taken care of by Ramesh Sir," added Dutee.

Asked about her prospects, the sprinter said "you need a little bit of luck and good weather to start with. My first objective is to make it to the semifinals and I know it is not going to be that easy."

"I think Dutee is more mature as compared to Rio, better understands on how to run the race and how to stay away from distractions before the Games. She is capable of pulling off a major surprise," said coach Ramesh.



Mariyappan. ■ FILE PHOTO

India for their continuous patronage," he said in a video message.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Satyanarayana said Mariyappan has been training diligently since last October at the SAI Centre (Bengaluru). "There is still time for the Games which begins on Aug. 24. I feel he can still improve," he said.

Warholm sets 400m hurdles world record



On the fast track: Norway's Karsten Warholm blazes away to a new men's 400m hurdles mark. ■ AP

REUTERS
OSLO

four years before the Norwegian was born and was the longest-standing record in men's track.

Twice world champion Warholm raced to an early lead and never let up as he was roared on all the way to the finishing line, which he crossed ahead of 2019 Pan American Games champion Alison dos Santos by more than six tenths of a second.

Advanced equipment: Sindhu gets quick nod

BADMINTON

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

World champion and 2016 Olympic Games silver medalist P.V. Sindhu's request to buy advanced recovery equipment was approved by the Government of India within 24 hours, according to a media release.

"It is happy that it did not take even a day for the Sports Authority of India to approve my request for the recovery system. The clearance was really quick, and I will be able to place an order and procure it in time to

take it with me to the Olympic Games," Sindhu said on the administrative sanction to procure the Game Ready recovery system on Friday.

"It will help me immensely after each long training session or match as it is a portable cold and compression recovery system," Sindhu said of the system that is rated better than conventional Rest-Ice-Compression-Elevation methods of recovery.

"Sometimes one gets exhausted and experiences stiffness after matches. This will help in a quick and systematic recovery," she said.

Bucks take series lead



Hey guys, watch! The Hawks defenders are left mere spectators as Bucks' Brook Lopez goes for a basket. ■ AP

NBA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

from reaching the NBA finals for the first time since 1974.

Milwaukee won despite playing without two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo, who is out with an injured knee.

He watched the game from the sidelines, standing with his teammates almost the entire game.

The result: Eastern Conference finals: Milwaukee Bucks 123 bt Atlanta Hawks 112 (Bucks lead series 3-2).

FINA confirms Maana's spot

SPORTS BUREAU

Backstroke Maana Patel's universality spot at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was confirmed by FINA, the Swimming Federation of India announced on Friday.

The 21-year-old from Gujarat will compete in 100m backstroke and will be the third Indian swimmer in Tokyo alongside Sajan Prakash and Srihari Nataraj.

Best performance

Maana is the current National record holder in the women's 50m, 100m and 200m backstroke events and also has the best Indian performance across all three distances.

Harika in final

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOZHIKODE

D. Harika reached the final of the Women's Speed chess championship, stunning the reigning World blitz champion Kateryna Lagno of Russia in the semifinals. The Indian, who came to the main draw through the qualifiers, won a thrilling match via the tie-breakers.

Harika won 14-13, after the scores were level 11.5-11.5 at the end of three segments.

Sandhu backs Rajound for Dronacharya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former national boxing coach Gurba Singh Sandhu has recommended two-time Commonwealth Games medal-winner Manoj Kumar's personal coach Rajesh Kumar Rajound for the Dronacharya award for a second successive year.

Being a former awardee, Sandhu is entitled to recommend names for the National sports awards.

Rajound has played a key role in shaping Manoj's career.

2022 CWG events in India cancelled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Commonwealth archery and shooting championships, which were scheduled to be held in Chandigarh before the 2022 Birmingham Games, have been cancelled due to the "uncertainty" posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision was taken by the Commonwealth Games India (CGI) Executive Board with the support of the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF).

Richardson's 100m dreams upended

REUTERS
KINGSTON

American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson has accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for cannabis, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) said on Friday, ruling her out of the 100 metres in Tokyo although she may yet be able to run in later relay events.

The positive test came at the U.S. Olympic trials last month where Richardson established herself as a gold medal contender by winning the 100m in 10.86 seconds.

Richardson said in an NBC interview on the *Today Show* on Friday that her ac-



Sha'Carri Richardson. ■ AFP

tion came during the trials while she was dealing with the news of the death of her mother.

A 30-day ban backdated to the time of the adverse result could leave Richardson clear to race in the 4x100m relay at the Olympics in the first week of August, if she is selected by USATF.

Mariyappan to be the flagbearer at Paralympic Games

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

T. Mariyappan, who will defend the men's high jump (T-42) gold at the Tokyo Paralympic Games, said he is thrilled to be the flagbearer of the Indian team.

"I am very happy to be nominated as the captain of the Indian Paralympics Team at Tokyo. I take this opportunity to thank my coach Satyanarayana and all my friends for their support. I am happy to have qualified for the Tokyo Games [with a jump of 1.86m at the selection trials in New Delhi] and promise that I would do my best and if possible win a gold with a world record. I also take this opportunity to thank the Tamil Nadu Government, Government of India, Sports Authority of India and the Paralympic Committee of

India for their continuous patronage," he said in a video message.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Friday, Satyanarayana said Mariyappan has been training diligently since last October at the SAI Centre (Bengaluru). "There is still time for the Games which begins on Aug. 24. I feel he can still improve," he said.

Hamilton on top after first day of practice

AUSTRIAN GP

REUTERS
SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA)

Seven-time Formula One World champion Lewis Hamilton unlocked some pace and led a Mercedes one-two on the first day of practice for the Austrian Grand Prix on Friday.

Red Bull's championship leader, Max Verstappen, had been quickest in the opening session at the Red Bull Ring, where he won the Styrian Grand Prix last Sunday, with a time of one minute 05.143 seconds.

Hamilton clocked a best lap of 1:04.523 in the afternoon, with teammate Valteri Bottas second in 1:04.712.

and Verstappen third, but the Briton was not celebrating. "They've definitely got something extra in their bag, I already know that," he said of Red Bull.

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