



Congress effects major reshuffle, Azad loses key Haryana post
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Ajay Maken moves SC against order on removal of slums
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Over 60 lakh COVID-19 cases may have gone undetected in India
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Azarenka claws back to beat Serena, takes on Osaka in final
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NEARBY



For third consecutive day, over 4,000 cases in Delhi
NEW DELHI
Delhi recorded 4,266 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday, as the city's tally mounted to over 2.09 lakh, with the authorities conducting a record 60,580 tests. The city had reported 4,308 new cases on Thursday, the highest single-day spike to date.
CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Agusta case: CBI seeks nod to prosecute ex-CAG
NEW DELHI
The CBI has sought sanction from the Defence Ministry to prosecute former Comptroller and Auditor General Shashi Kant Sharma, the then Joint Secretary (Air), former Air Vice Marshal Jasbir Singh Panesar, and three others in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal case.
NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

Cong. names candidates for reserved seats in M.P.
BHOPAL
The Congress on Friday announced its candidates for the by-elections to 15 Assembly seats, including all reserved constituencies, in Madhya Pradesh. Two of them were earlier in the BJP. The by-elections to 27 seats are due along with the by-elections nationwide and the Bihar Assembly election.
NORTH & WEST ▶ PAGE 5

+ ISI radicalised West Bengal student: NIA
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against a college student from West Bengal, who was allegedly radicalised online by the Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
The NIA said the accused, Tania Parvin, a resident of North 24 Parganas, was tasked by officials of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to "open fake Facebook profile and befriend armed force members in India to obtain sensitive information".

Parvin was first arrested by the West Bengal police on March 18. Later, the case was transferred to the NIA. "Investigation revealed that accused got radicalised in cyberspace by Pakistan-based cadres of LeT," the NIA said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

India, China agree on 5-point action plan

Jaishankar and Wang Yi for continuation of talks to ease tension, 'quick disengagement' of troops at LAC

Face to face

A timeline of the stand-off between India and China at the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh

MAY 5: Scuffle reported after Chinese mobilisation on the north bank of Pangong Tso, several soldiers injured

MAY 5-MAY 15: PLA transgressions, clashes with Army reported at Pangong, Galwan, Depsang, Sikkim, and other points on LAC

JUNE 6: Corps Commanders hold meeting, agree on disengagement plan. Four rounds held since

JUNE 15: Twenty Indian soldiers killed in clashes at the Galwan Valley, no word on Chinese casualties

JUNE 19: PM holds all-party meet, says 'no one has transgressed India's borders'

other mechanisms and working towards new confidence-building measures (CBMs).

Both sides also issued separate notes detailing their positions, indicating that several differences still remain in their agreement of the situation at the LAC, which has seen violent clashes, deaths of soldiers and gunfire exchanges for the first time in 45 years.

"The immediate task is to ensure a comprehensive disengagement of troops in all the friction areas. That is necessary to prevent any untoward incident in the future. The final disposition of the troop deployment to their permanent posts and the phasing of the process is to



Crucial talks: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Moscow. ■ ANI

JULY 5: Ajit Doval and Wang Yi speak, agree to expedite disengagement process. Troop build-up continues

JUNE-AUGUST: Four meetings of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China border affairs

SEPT. 4: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meets his Chinese counterpart in Moscow

SEPT. 7: Army says PLA fired gunshots; tensions escalate

be worked out by the military commanders," government sources said. However, neither the joint statement, nor the respective notes issued specifically spoke of a return to the "status quo ante" or positions prior to the stand-off in April. Nor do they specifically call on China to retreat from positions it has aggressed on at Pangong Tso, Depsang and other parts of the LAC.

The statement issued by China's Foreign Ministry on Friday quoted Mr. Wang as saying the relationship was "at the crossroads". "But as long as the two sides keep moving the relationship in the right direction, there will be no difficulty or challenge that can't be overcome," he noted.

His quoted remarks were in contrast to recent statements from China, including

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New grievance redress system unveiled in J&K

Step towards gaining trust, says L-G

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) Manoj Sinha on Friday launched the Jammu and Kashmir Integrated Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (JK-IGRAMS), in a bid to create an interface with the public and focus on governance issues in the Union Territory.

"It's a step towards gaining peoples' trust. JK-IGRAMS will be an effective grievance redress mechanism, which is the life and blood of any good governance system. A common citizen wants a sympathetic, courteous, responsive, and helpful administrative set-up," Mr. Sinha said.

Mr. Sinha, who took over as the Lieutenant-Governor on August 7, said his government is "committed to undertake all radical reforms to put in place people-centric good governance structure".

District Collectors and Deputy Commissioners will be the primary nodes for receiving, disposing and monitoring grievances.

chanism more robust and efficient. "There will be a minute by minute status update of the grievances on the portal... Action will follow if any delay or callousness is found while addressing people's grievances

MANOJ SINHA
J&K L-G

"It will be available round the clock with applicant OTP authentication, acknowledgement to applicant at each stage, feedback by complainant, and grievance submission through call centre by making a phone call between 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on all days except Sunday," an official said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

COVID-19 cases delay Puri temple opening

167 priests have been infected so far

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

COVID-19 infection among the priests is delaying the reopening of Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri. As many as 167 sevayats (priests) have contracted the virus thus far.

It is expected to take place in the next two weeks.

A few selected sevayats have been carrying out the daily rituals since March.

Janardan Pattajoshi Mohapatra, head of Chhatisha Nijog, a sevayat body, said many sevayats were now in home isolation. "While elderly priests have been advised not to come to the temple, many younger sevayats too suffer from comorbidities. Under these circumstances, there is a threat to the lives of both the sevayats and the devotees."

Lately, Puri has recorded sudden spurt in cases. As many as 279 cases were reported in the city on Friday.

"We are aware of the sit-

Future in the balance



Only the best: Youth perform physical exercises as part of tests for recruitment in the security forces, in the Ranbir Singh Pura sector of Jammu on Friday. ■ PTI

Flight with Kangana lands TV crew in soup

DGCA tells IndiGo to act against violations of flight safety, COVID-19 protocols

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday flagged violations of flight safety norms and COVID-19 protocol by television news crews on board an Chandigarh-Mumbai IndiGo flight carrying Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut earlier this week.

The DGCA also asked IndiGo to take "appropriate action" against the violators, senior officials said.

The regulator's actions came after a video went viral on social media showing unruly behaviour of television crew during the flight. The video shows the media persons crowding the aircraft's aisle and pushing one another to gain access to the actor,



Jostling for space: TV crews seen on board the Chandigarh-Mumbai IndiGo flight. ■@TALWARDIVYA/TWITTER

who was seated in one of the front rows.

"There are multiple issues. The prominent ones include photography on board in violation of Aircraft Rules 13, violation of COVID-19 protocols, and certain actions falling within the purview of time after an internal inquiry.

We have asked the airline to take appropriate action against those responsible," said a senior DGCA official.

As per the DGCA rules, an airline can put an "unruly passenger" on its "no-fly list" for a certain period of time after an internal inquiry.

The more than dozen television crew members who were with the actor from Chandigarh to cover her return to Mumbai amid the controversy, have been accused of violation of flight safety and COVID-19 related physical distancing norms.

The media frenzy inconvenienced other passengers, some of whom took to Twitter to protest, posting videos of the incident.

Some also highlighted the apparently lenient attitude of the airline towards the media crew even as it had punished stand-up comic Kunal Kamra with a six-month flying ban for allegedly heckling a TV anchor on board an IndiGo flight.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Activist-scholar Swami Agnivesh passes away

He was an advocate for dialogue between religions, fought against bonded labour

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Social activist, scholar, politician and Arya Samaj leader Swami Agnivesh passed away at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) here on Friday.

He was hospitalised for treatment of liver cirrhosis earlier this week. His condition became critical after he suffered multi-organ failure during the treatment, hospital authorities said.

Agnivesh was on ventilator and being monitored by a multi-disciplinary team.

The 80-year-old leader went into cardiac arrest at 6 p.m. Resuscitation was attempted, but he passed away at 6.30 p.m., the hospital authorities said in a statement on Friday evening.



Swami Agnivesh

involved in various areas of social activism, including campaigns against female foeticide and for the emancipation of women.

He served as the chairperson of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery from 1994 to 2004.

He was a prominent associate of Anna Hazare during the India Against Corruption movement in 2011 to implement the Jan Lokpal Bill.

Born in Andhra Pradesh, Agnivesh founded Arya Sabha, a political party based on Arya Samaj principles, in 1970. He was elected to the Haryana Assembly in 1977 and made Education Minister after two years.

He, however, resigned in protest against the Haryana government's inaction against policemen who opened fire at workers protesting against bonded labour.

In July 2018, Agnivesh was assaulted, allegedly by BJP Yuva Morcha workers, in Jharkhand's Pakur, where he was supporting tribal communities' protest against land acquisition by the State.

'An irreparable loss'

Condolence messages poured in for the departed leader. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted: "Swami Agnivesh ji, the founder of Bandhu Mukti Morcha and revolutionary leader of Arya Samaj, passed away today. Swami ji's death is an irreparable loss to the entire country including Arya Samaj. My humble tribute."

AN-NDNE

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR
 Telefax: 0194-2496089, Email ID: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

Gist of e-tender
 NIT No: MHCHD/TS /2020-21/96/e-tendering, Dated: - 09.09.2020
 E-tenders are invited from Original Equipment Manufacturers or their Authorized dealers/ Representatives for the below mentioned work

Name of Work	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees)	Earnest Money (Lacs of Rs)	Time of completion (in months)	Position of AAA/funds
Turnkey package for Design, Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning of 1000 LPM PSA technology based Oxygen Generating Plants with operation/ Maintenance for Three years post Commissioning at GMC Anantnag.	495	5000	9.90	04 Months	Available

1. Downloading of Bids:- The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in from 09.09.2020 (18.00 hrs) and can be downloaded from 09.09.2020 (18.00 hrs).
 2. **Pre Bid Meeting:** Pre Bid meeting shall be held in the office of Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Srinagar on 15.09.2020 (11:30 hrs) either in person or through virtual meeting.
 3. Uploading: The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 22.09.2020(10.00 hrs) to 29.09.2020 (15:00hrs) in two (02) covers.
 4. **Opening of Bids:** The bids received upto due date and time shall be opened on 30.09.2020 at 14.00 hrs or any date convenient to the department in the office of Superintending Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Srinagar.
 Sd/- Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar

DIPK-5388/20

GOVT. OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT (PURCHASE-2ND)
SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SOURA (SGR)

NIT NO: SIMS 20 (P-II) OF 2020 DATED: 10/09/2020
 Sub: Abbreviated notice inviting e-tenders for outsourcing of Sanitation Services at SKIMS, Soura, Srinagar.
 For and on behalf of Lt. Governor UT of Jammu & Kashmir, through Director, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, Srinagar, e-tenders are invited under two bid system from registered agencies with good track record, manpower capacity and relevant experience of three years or more towards providing Sanitation services in any govt./ Semi-govt. department/ Institution/ reputed Public/ private organizations, for a period of two years, as per the scope of work mentioned in the detailed NIT.
 The detailed tender document containing scope of work and other terms & conditions is available on www.jktenders.gov.in and complete bidding process will be online on said e-tender portal, as per following schedule:

S.No.	Description	Schedule
01	Tender Fee	Rs. 2000/-
02	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 5.00 Lakh.
03	Date & time for downloading of tenders	From 10/09/2020 to 03/10/2020 upto 4:00 p.m.
04	Date & time for submission of online tender	From 17/09/2020 to 03/10/2020 upto 4:00 p.m.
05	Date & time for opening of technical bids	06/10/2020 at 2:00 p.m.

 Any clarification will be entertained from 10/09/2020 to 16/09/2020 on all working days during office hours. No representation shall be entertained beyond the stipulated period.
 The tender notice is also available on SKIMS website www.skims.ac.in (for reference only)
 Complete bidding process will be online at www.jktenders.gov.in Technical and Price bids shall have to be submitted in electronic format on the said tender portal and in no case be submitted in physical form, unless demanded by SKIMS.
 Director SKIMS reserves the right to accept/reject or cancel any tender or all tenders in full or part thereof without assigning any reason.
 The tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed eNIT.
 No: SIMS 325/31/2019-1624-33-5274-77
 Dated: 10/09/2020
 Sd/- Asstt. Materials Management Officer (Purchase-2nd)
 No: SIMS : 5277, Dated: 10/09/2020
 Do Not smoke Bidli/Cigarette in train

IN BRIEF**L-G opens control centre of NDMC Smart City**

NEW DELHI
 L-G Anil Baijal on Friday inaugurated the Integrated Command and Control Centre of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Smart City. He also inaugurated Shera Maidan Sports Complex at Mandir Marg. Mr. Baijal asked the NDMC Chairperson to contact the head of other civic bodies or other such agencies for implementing it in other parts of Delhi too.

6 more trommel machines unveiled at Ghazipur

NEW DELHI
 East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir on Friday inaugurated six more trommel machines at Ghazipur landfill bringing the total number of such machines to be installed at the site within one year to 12.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	136	Gurugram	143
Ghaziabad	138	Faridabad	214
Noida	136	Greater Noida	180
Good	51-100	Moderate	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	301-400
		Severe	>401

AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) SOURCE: CPCB

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY**E-Tender Notice No. CWM-BR-17-2020**

Chief Workshop Manager (Bridge)/N.E. Railway/Gorakhpur acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for the following works:- S.No: 1, E-Tender No.: CWM-BR-17-2020, Description of Work: Metalizing with sprayed Aluminum after Sand Blasting of Newly Fabricated Steel Structures including painting and Supply & Welding of Studs in newly fabricated Composite Girder in Bridge Workshop/ N.E. Railway, Gorakhpur Cantt. with contractor's own labour, consumables, Air Compressor, tools & plants and all equipment. Approx. Tender Value: Rs. 1,60,11,519.00, Earnest Money: Rs. 2,30,100.00, Cost of tender form: Not Required, Completion period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 06 (Six) Month, 1. Date of E-Tender opening 11.00 Hrs. on 30.09.2020 2. Receipt of E-Tender upto 10.59 Hrs. on 30.09.2020

3. Detailed E-tender notice eligibility criteria, terms & conditions are available at website www.reps.gov.in
 Chief Workshop Manager (Bridge), Gorakhpur
 About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No. 09794845955
 Do Not smoke Bidli/Cigarette in train

AAP takes jibe at BJP over notices to demolish slums in the Capital

If Central govt. does not provide *pucca* houses to people, AAP govt. will do it'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Attacking the BJP over notices of demolition of slums in the city, AAP on Friday alleged that the BJP wants to demolish every slum in the city.



AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha.

The party also shared a letter written by the Delhi government-run Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to the Railways, in which it has been asked to not demolish any slum without providing alternative accommodation.

AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha said that the government has attached a list of 45,857 *pucca* houses in the letter and said that if the BJP government does not provide *pucca* houses to people, then the AAP government will do it.

in its affidavit to the SC, has noted that due to Kejriwal government you could not demolish the slums and had to note this on the affidavit. I want to tell you that not a single person will be displaced from these slums till the time Mr. Kejriwal is alive. We will not allow any such demolition," he said.

Mr. Chadha said that here the BJP-ruled Centre observed that the people who stay in the slums around the railway tracks are the reason behind dumping of garbage on the tracks. They noted that due to these people the railway tracks are dirty and that is why the BJP government wants these slums should be demolished and due to the Kejriwal government, they are unable to evict these slum dwellers, he said.

"This clearly exposes the real agenda of the BJP. But on behalf of the AAP, I want to tell the BJP that we are proud

of the fact that due to the Kejriwal government you could not demolish the slums and had to note this on the affidavit. I want to tell you that not a single person will be displaced from these slums till the time Mr. Kejriwal is alive. We will not allow any such demolition," he said.

Mr. Chadha said that the BJP government also submitted an action-taken report of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation to the SC, which also noted that due to Kejriwal government slum demolitions were stuck.

Meanwhile, the party said that many youth leaders, including Sachin Bidhuri, who had contested the Assembly elections from Tughlakabad on a Congress ticket, joined AAP on Friday.

'BJP, AAP shadow-boxing over settling slum dwellers'

Cong. chief says parties fooling people

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Opposition BJP on Friday issued an "ultimatum" to the Delhi government demanding that it shift slum dwellers residing near railway tracks to vacant flats in its possession.

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said the DDA, which comes under the Centre, had built 3,000 houses in the last six years for slum dwellers in Kalkaji; 2,800 in Kathputli Colony and 1,775 flats in Jailer Bagh, Ashok Vihar were about to be ready. "As many as 52,000 houses are ready for slum dwellers. The Centre has spent 50% of the cost of constructing these houses," Mr. Bidhuri said.

"The Delhi government considers slum dwellers only as vote bank, and never as human beings," Mr. Gupta alleged.

"Why is he silent on the

rehabilitation of the slum dwellers living along railway tracks? Why did the Delhi government deprive them of benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana?" he asked.

The Delhi Congress on Friday said that the BJP and AAP were shadow-boxing over the issue of slum clusters adjacent to railway lines facing imminent eviction. The Congress alleged that both parties are doing nothing to save those people.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said that despite being in power, the BJP and AAP fooled the people by trading charges and counter-charges instead of taking strong steps to address the relocation issue of the slum clusters. "Delhi Congress has filed a petition along with the aggrieved party, on

the guidance of senior lawyer Salman Khurshid, in the Supreme Court on Friday against its order for the demolition of the slum clusters near railway lines facing imminent eviction. The Congress alleged that both parties are doing nothing to save those people.

Mr. Kumar added that the BJP and AAP promised in their election manifestos that they would relocate the slum dwellers or give them in-situ flats, but nothing had happened and they were creating political melodrama.

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**Sh. Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana**

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Deemed to be and Private Universities	14
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Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, SEP. 12
RISE 06:05 SET 18:30
RISE 00:25 SET 14:49
SUNDAY, SEP. 13
RISE 06:06 SET 18:28
RISE 01:20 SET 15:42
MONDAY, SEP. 14
RISE 06:06 SET 18:27
RISE 02:21 SET 16:32

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	38	26
Safdarjung	38	26
Palam	38	27

Delhi Palam Today
37°C Comfortable morning turn warm afternoon with partly cloudy sky. Light dry winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C Dry weather with warm afternoon and partly cloudy sky likely.

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IN BRIEF

DU students can access their degrees online

NEW DELHI
Delhi University students can now access their degrees using DigiLocker, the university said on Friday. To access the degree, the student needs to make an account on the platform and raise a request with the university, entering their details following which a digital version of the certificate will be saved in their account.

Adopt courses to meet market needs: Minister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday visited polytechnic institutes at Dwarka and Rajokri and directed them to adopt courses that meet the market requirements.

"Both the institutes have good infrastructure and capable faculty. Courses of these institutes have become irrelevant due to their inadaptability with the changing times," the Minister added.

Mr. Sisodia had announced that focus on skill education will be his prime agenda during his second term as Minister.

Capital records second biggest spike in fresh COVID-19 cases

Mohalla clinics to start testing for the virus on working days from 2 p.m.-5 p.m.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded 4,266 fresh cases of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours - its second-highest single-day spike, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday. The total number of cases now stands at 2,09,748.

Over 60K testing

A record number of COVID-19 tests - 60,580 - were also done in the past 24 hours. This is the first time that over 60,000 tests were done in a day.

The number of cases has also remained high with Thursday and Wednesday witnessing the highest single-day spikes with 4,306 and 4,039 cases respectively.

Though the number of tests has gone up compared to Thursday, the positivity rate (percentage of people testing positive



People undergoing testing at a mobile centre in Azadpur market in the city on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

for every 100 tests done) has fallen to 7% from 7.3% on Thursday.

This is the lowest positivity rate in more than 20 days.

21 more deaths

Also, 21 more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 4,687, the bulletin added. Of the total cases, 1,78,154

people have recovered and there are 26,907 active cases.

Out of the total 14,230 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 8,199 (57.6%) were vacant, as per government data on Friday.

However, 57.8% of the ICU beds with ventilators have been occupied and 68.7% of the ICU beds

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
2,09,748	4,687
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
4,266	21

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

without ventilators are full.

Also, the number of containment zones in the city jumped to 1,329, which is the highest till now.

The government has decided that Mohalla clinics will start COVID-19 testing on all working days between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

"In order to augment the COVID-19 testing drive, it has been decided to initiate testing at all AAMCs from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on all working days with immediate effect," an order issued on Thursday read.

DMRC deploys flying squads across stations to keep check on violators

92 passengers fined ₹200 each for not adhering to new norms

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Following complaints on social media from commuters pertaining to co-passengers not wearing masks and adhering to social distancing norms, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Friday said they have deployed flying squads across corridors to carry out random checks.



A passenger gets his hands sanitised at Rajiv Chowk metro station. ■

are still found flouting the norms then they will be penalised under relevant Delhi Metro law," said DMRC spokesperson Amrit Dayal.

The DMRC has also introduced a new set of announcements inside metro coaches. "In addition, there is a deployment of over 1,500 DMRC officials, staff and civil defence volunteers at metro stations across the network to guide and help commuters who may not be fully aware of these newly introduced norms," said an offi-

cial. From Saturday, the nearly 400-km-long Delhi Metro network will become fully operational with services available throughout the day. Services on the network have resumed since September 7 in a graded manner with staggered timings. On Friday, the Magenta Line (Jainakpuri West - Botanical Garden) and Grey Line (Dwarka - Najafgarh) corridors became operational. Services under the Stage 2 operations were extended to 12 hours a day before being made available throughout the day from September 12.

NEET exams

The DMRC also announced that in view of the NEET examination on Sunday, services on the Phase-III network, which usually begin from 8 a.m. on Sundays, will be available from 6 a.m.

Ridership on the Delhi metro network crossed the 1 lakh mark with a footfall of around 1.28 lakh till 7.30 p.m. on Friday.

24-yr-old trader arrested for molesting several women

He faces two FIRs already, say police

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

A man has been arrested for allegedly molesting women on isolated roads in the city, the police said on Friday.

The 24-year-old trader, Tauseef Khan, was seen groping a woman on August 13 in Daryaganj on a CCTV footage, they said.

The incident happened when the trader stalked and groped the victim when she was about to enter her home. After committing the crime, he fled the spot. The woman then lodged a complaint at Daryaganj police station following which an FIR was registered under the Indian Penal Code section of molestation. The accused was then formed to nab the accused. During the investigation, CCTV footage of around 20 cameras was scanned. A

scooty was seen in few cameras following which the registration number of the two-wheeler was taken down, an officer said.

"The vehicle was registered in the name of a person, who lives in east Delhi. A team reached the house. The house owner informed that the particular vehicle is with his relative, who lives in the Old Delhi. The accused was then nabbed," said an officer. "The accused confessed to the crime. He said in the evenings, he stalks women on his scooter and then molests them. He admitted of molesting more than 30 women in the last two months," said an officer.

The police said they have only two FIRs registered against him. Based on his confession, the police will reach out to other victims.

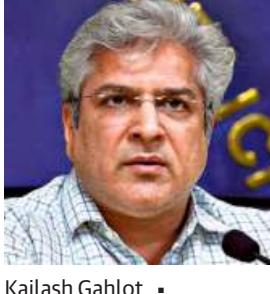
Gahlot reviews phase-2 trials of contactless e-ticketing app

6% of total ticketing was done through app within five days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot reviewed the phase-2 trials of the contactless e-ticketing app in cluster buses on Friday. He also conducted a real-time inspection of the app on route 429 during by purchasing a ticket.

The department has started the phase-2 trial of contactless e-ticketing app 'Chartr' in its cluster buses. The trial is being conducted by a Special Task Force, which consists of expert members from Transport Department, Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT-D), Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Ltd. (DIMTS), Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and World Resources Institute (WRI).



Kailash Gahlot ■

The phase-1 trial of the 'Chartr' App was conducted for three days on all cluster buses of route number 473.

"Now that we have increased testing and are witnessing another spike in cases, an app-based contactless ticketing is crucial in minimising surface contact. This is a very simple and smooth process, and I could book my ticket in a few seconds. I am extremely happy to note

that within five days of starting trial, 6% of total ticketing on the selected routes are being done through the app now," the Transport Minister said.

Ticket booking

Passengers can take an e-ticket through the app after boarding the bus. The app can be downloaded from Google Playstore. One can also WhatsApp "Hi" on 9910096264 to get the app URL. A user can also see all stoppages of a bus and all the buses arriving in the next half an hour with details like expected time of arrival (ETA). The ETA also gets updated real time during the passenger's journey in the bus. Once the passenger reaches their destination as entered in the app, the ticket becomes invalid.

Poor response to renewal of bar licences in Gurugram

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

Around one-third of the bar owners in the Millennium City have sought the renewal of licences since the government decided to grant permission to them to serve liquor to the guests starting this month.

Cyber Hub has been hit hard with uncertainty over the opening of the offices in its surroundings. Of the 91 bars and hotels in the West Zone of the Gurugram Excise Department, including the Cyber Hub, only 35 have applied for the renewal of licences since September 1. The department has, so far, issued licences to 22 of them.

Similarly, the East Zone, comprising Sector 29 commercial area and Golf Course Road, has received 66 applications for renewal and 29 of these have been approved. The East Zone has 196 bars and hotels.

Eight and 12 bars in West and East Zones respectively had already surrendered their licences before September 1.

The hotels with ratings of three stars and above were allowed to serve liquor in rooms through an order on July 16.

Sources in the excise department said the bar owners in the Cyber Hub were reluctant to open their outlets since the management of most of the corporate offices in Cyber City area had informally conveyed to their employees that they might need to work from home this year.

Deputy Excise and Taxation Commissioner (Excise, West) Anirudh Sharma told *The Hindu* that the government had not fixed any deadline for the renewal of the licences keeping in view the unprecedented situation and its approach was pro-business.

'DU trying to resolve issues of students aspiring to go abroad for higher studies'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University on Friday told the High Court that its officials are exploring the best possible solution to address the issue of early results for the students, who have got admission in foreign universities for higher studies.

The counsel for Delhi University said till now there are eight students of postgraduate

programmes and 180 students of undergraduate courses who have requested for comfort letters to be submitted to foreign universities for admission. A Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Subramonium Prasad granted time to the varsity to take a decision on it and listed the matter for further hearing on September 14.

Advocate Mohinder Rupal, representing the Delhi Univer-

sity, said the varsity officials are conferring with each other to come up with the best possible solution to address the anxiety of the students studying in final year undergraduate courses who have applied to foreign universities for admission, so that the comfort letters are worded properly and the aspect of the date of declaration of the results is also dealt with.

The accusers are directors of a U.P.-based com-

Two arrested for duping scores of investors

They siphoned off 42K cr. by offering high returns through ponzi scheme

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested for allegedly cheating thousands of people in several States. They swindled approximately ₹42,000 crore by promising them good returns through a ponzi scheme, police said on Friday.

The accusers are directors of M/s Garvit In-

novative Promoters Limited and have been identified as Sanjay Bhati and Rajesh Bhardwaj, they said. They were arrested by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police. A probe was initiated after the police received complaints from several victims.

Elaborating on the du-

In January 2019, the

company launched an electric bike scheme. In this scheme, they again provided a lucrative offer to invest ₹1.24 lakh for a bike and get an assured return of ₹9,500 per month till one year. Initially, the company had repaid the amount but after winning investors confidence, they defaulted and absconded," he said.

No CBSE exam results in their hands yet, future in limbo for riot-affected students

Board claims results of many students sent to respective schools

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

At least three girls from north-east Delhi, which was affected by the riots that broke out earlier this year, are a clueless lot as they have not received their Class XII results yet.

While Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said schools have been informed about the results and told to communicate them to the students, sisters Sonam (18) and Muskan (17), and their friend Layba (18) have been waiting since July 13 when the results were announced. They claimed to have visited their school several times only to return disappointed.

Sonam and Muskan want to devote a year to prepare for entrance examinations for a law degree. Currently, however, they

are looking for jobs in the private sector. "We need our Class XII certificate to apply for jobs. What should we do?" asked Sonam.

Layba's father Shamshuddin, a factory worker, said his daughter had to plead with an institution

SIDDHAA COUNCIL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
 (Central Council for Research and Information, Chennai - A Member of the Council of India)
 Anna Govt. Hospital Campus, Arumbakkam, Chennai - 600 025. E-mail: crsiddha@gmail.com
 Phone: 044-26214925, 26214809, Web: <http://crsiddha.tn.nic.in>

Walk-in-Interview
 Applications are invited for selection of Research Associate (Siddha)-1 No. in SCRU, New Delhi and Research Associate (Siddha)-1 No., Senior Research Fellow -1 No., Therapist (Male and Female)-2 Nos. for various IMR Projects in SCRI, Chennai through Walk in interview which will be held on the date to be notified later. Last date for submission of online application is 27.09.2020(05.00 PM). Details are available in the website www.siddhaouncil.com and www.crsiddha.tn.nic.in.

Director (Scientist-II) I/C

Office of the Executive Engineer Road Construction Department, Road Division, Seraikella-Kharsawan

Short-Term e-Procurement Notice

e-Tender Reference no.: RCD/SERAIKELA/760 Dated :11.09.2020

1	Name of Work	Ordinary Repair of Ramganti-Tikar Road from Km. 0.00 to Km. 08.80 under Non Plan Head for the year 2020-21
2	Estimated Cost (Rs)	Rs. 1,50,00,000.00 (Rupees One Crore Fifty lac) Only
3	Time of Completion	03 (Three) Months
4	Date of Publication of Tender on website	18.09.2020 from 10.30 A.M.
5	Last date/Time for receipt of bids	25.09.2020 upto 12.00 Noon
6	Date & Opening of Place	28.09.2020 at 12.30 P.M. Chief Engineer (Com) cum Model Officer, e-Procurement Cell, RCD, Jharkhand, 1st Floor, Engineer's Hostel No.-2, Dhurwa, Ranchi-834004
7	Name & address of office Inviting tender	Executive Engineer, RCD, Road Division, Seraikella-Kharsawan
8	Contact no. of e-Procurement officer	9431793906
9	Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	0651 - 2403007

Executive Engineer,
RCD, Road Division,
Seraikella-Kharsawan

PR 232743 (Road) 20-21 (D)

SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON



General public is hereby informed that one person namely Deepak Bhel, S/o Jawhar Lal Bhel, R/o H-14 2nd floor West Patel Nagar, Delhi. Age 45 yrs., height 5'9", wheatish complexion, face round, built thin wearing red colour T-shirt, brown colour lower and hawar chappal in feet has been missing since 24.08.2020 from the area of PS Patel Nagar, New Delhi.

Deepak Bhel In this regard a DD No. 62-A Dt. 26.08.2020 has been lodged at PS Patel Nager, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing/kidnapped person may kindly inform to the following.

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-23011334

S.H.O.,
PS Patel Nager, Delhi
Ph.: 011-25872637, 8750870434
DP/345/CD/2020

Letter no: kha.Up.Ni.01(Chini Vitran Yojna)-11/2020 - 1341 Date -11/09/2020

Government of Jharkhand
Directorate of Food & Consumer Affairs
Ground Floor, Engineers Hostel, HEC, Sector - III
Dhurwa, Ranchi - 834004, Jharkhand

Corrigendum Notice
 Tender No. kha.Up.Ni.01(Chini Vitran Yojna)-11/2020 - 954 dated 29.07.2020
Corrigendum Notice regarding "Empanelment of Suppliers for supply of Free Flow white Crystal Sugar (Grade-S-30/ M-30) for Third Quarter (Oct20 to Dec20) of Financial Year 2020-21 Under Reverse Auction Mode".

With reference to advertisement under PR No. - 231298 Directorate of Food and Consumer Affairs (20-21) and Tender No. kha.Up.Ni.01(Chini Vitran Yojna)-11/2020 - 954 dated 29.07.2020, regarding "Notice for Empanelment of Suppliers for supply of Free Flow white Crystal Sugar (Grade-S-30/ M-30) for Third Quarter (Oct 20 to Dec 20) of Financial Year 2020-21 Under Reverse Auction Mode". This is to inform all prospective Manufacturers/ Producers/Traders that the reverse e-auction held on 24.08.2020 stands cancelled and the bids for the same stands null and void. kindly refer the Departmental website <https://jharkhand.gov.in> or <https://www.neml.in> for the re-auction schedule and further details.

PR 232718 Directorate of Food and Consumer Affairs(20-21) (Dilip Turkey)
Director Directorate of Food & Consumer Affairs

Sd/-
(Dilip Turkey)

Director Directorate of Food & Consumer Affairs

ADVERTISEMENT

In continuation to Advertisement No JHQ/GEN-59/2006 dated Itanagar the 4th August 2020, inviting online application for filling up of 1 (one) vacant post of Jailer on deputation basis to the Directorate of Prison and Correctional Administration under the Government of Arunachal Pradesh in the Pay Matrix Level-7 (Rs.44900-142400/-) for a period of 3 (three) years. The prescribed application form, details of post, eligibility criteria, etc are given in the official website: www.arunprisons.nic.in.

It is hereby informed that the last date for receipt of online application is extended upto 31st October 2020.

Sd/-
(C.N. Longphai)
Inspector General of Prisons
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh

DIPR/ARN/13137-39/20

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
 Office of the Executive Engineer-3, SWM-1, Behind Dasappa Hospital Compound, N.R. Road, Bengaluru-560 002.

No: EE-3/SWM-1/TEND/03/2020-21-Call 3 Date: 10.09.2020

SHORT TERM RE-TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer-3, SWM-1 invites tenders for "Selection of Service Provider for Transportation, Processing and Scientific Disposal of Household Biomedical and Sanitary Waste from Various Dry Waste Collection Centers or any Designated Location Located in BBMP Jurisdiction" for One Year. Any reputed firms/Companies/ Consortium of Companies, Company registered under Companies Act 1956/2013, authorized by Karnataka State Pollution Control Board under Biomedical Waste Disposal are eligible to apply. In case of Consortium, the number of members shall not exceed Two.

Name of the Work	Packege No	Zone	EMD (₹ in Lakhs)
Selection of Service Provider for Transportation and Scientific Disposal of Household Biomedical and Sanitary Waste from Various Dry Waste Collection Centers Located	2	West	6.64
	3	South	5.90
	4	Mahadevapura	5.01
	5	Bommanahalli	4.01

Calendar of Events : 1) Last Date for Receipt of Tenders is 28.09.2020 upto 4:00 pm. 2) Last Date for Uploading Queries on 16.09.2020 upto 4:00 pm. 3) Pre-Bid Meeting on 18.09.2020 at 11:00 am at the Undersigned Office. 4) Date of Opening of Technical Bids are on 30.09.2020 by 04:00 pm or Next Working Day. 5) Opening of Financial Bids will be intimated to Technically Qualified Bidders. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours on working days or from website: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer-3, SWM-1

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Sub: Transfer of ownership in respect of unconstructed Plot No.401 GP Sector-19 Unit 10, Estate Officer, ITC, subsequent upon the intestate death of allottee Co-allottee Sh Sunil Kumar Goyal.

Sh. Sunil Kumar Goyal who was the allottee and has not registered or re-allotted the said plot to his surviving legal heirs: 1-Anita Goyal (Wife) 2-Meheta Goyal (Daughter)

Smt Anita Goyal W/o Sh.Sunil Kumar Goyal R/o C-113 Mahendr Enclave Near Sector 10, HUDA Road, along with her husband deceased, within 10 days of the date of publication of the notice, otherwise the Estate Officer may accord permission to transfer the said property to the HUDA police and may not entertain subsequent claim, if any. Legal heirs: Anita Goyal on behalf of Estate Officer Dushyant Yadav (Advocate)

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE 1ST ADDITIONAL DISTRICT JUDGE, KURNool (A.P.)

M.V.O.P. No.170/2018

U. Sridevi & others

..... Petitioners

Vs Jagjot Singh & 2 others

..... Respondents

NOTICE TO 1ST RESPONDENT

Jagjot Singh, S/o Pritam Singh, Hindu, Major, R/o. AG-23 Sanjay Gandhi TPT Nagar, New Delhi, Regd. Owner of the Lorry bearing No: NL-01-0690

Where the petitioners have filed the above case for claiming compensation against the respondents.

Deceased U. Sreenivasa Rao died in a road accident

that took place on 08-07-2017 at 7-40 P.M. near V.R. Colony Junction, Kurnool Town, on N.H-44 Hyderabad to Bangalore road. The 1st respondent to be appeared before the Court on 29-09-2020 at 10-30 A.M and to file objections otherwise you will be deemed set-ex-parte.

By order of the Court.

P.V. Ramana Reddy,

Advocate, Kurnool (A.P.)

Cell: 09440205141.

UDAY SHANKAR (Advocate)

Seat No.111, Civil Wing,

Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-110054

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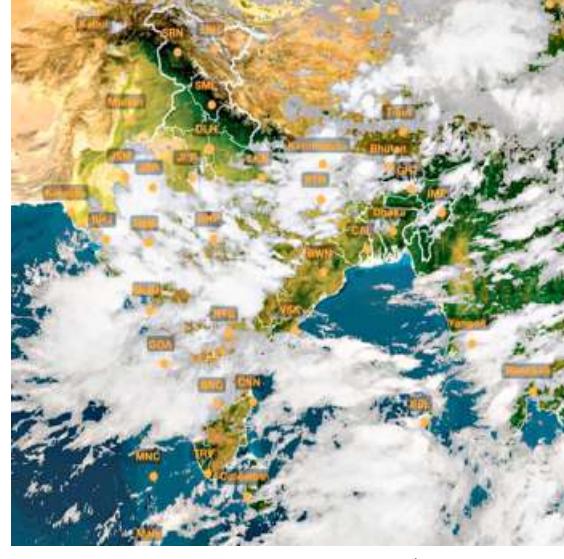
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WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, Odisha, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Konkan & Goa, coastal Karnataka, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Yanam, Telangana, Rayalseema and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	0.7	26.3	23.4	Kozhikode	60.8	26.0	23.4
Ahmedabad	0.2	34.8	27.0	Kurnool	1.2	33.5	25.1
Aizawl	3	28.1	20.3	Lucknow	—	35.7	27.0
Allahabad	—	36.0	27.8	Madurai	—	36.8	24.1
Bengaluru	—	25.8	19.9	Mangaluru	29.6	26.7	22.6
Bhopal	20.4	32.5	23.1	Mumbai	—	33.2	26.5
Bhubaneswar	—	36.4	25.8	Mysuru	—	25.0	21.3
Chandigarh	—	36.0	25.5	New Delhi	—	37.8	26.0
Chennai	—	34.3	27.8	Patna	0.2	33.4	24.0
Coimbatore	—	28.6	23.4	Pondicherry	—	31.7	25.5
Dehradun	—	33.0	24.7	Pune	2.7	32.6	22.9
Gangtok	21	20.2	18.2	Raipur	52.2	32.6	24.2
Goa	—	29.0	25.5	Ranchi	—	32.7	23.4
Guwahati	0.2	34.2	24.6	Shillong	0.8	25.1	18.3
Hubballi	—	26.0	22.0	Shimla	—	25.9	16.1
Hyderabad	2.5	30.2	23.0	Srinagar	—	30.4	13.6
Imphal	5.5	29.2	20.7	Thiruvananthapuram	16.5	32.0	24.6
Jaipur	—	35.2	27.6	Tiruchi	0.5	33.6	24.8
Kochi	14.4	29.2	23.2	Vijayawada	—	33.6	24.0
Kohima	1.6	24.2	18.0	Visakhapatnam	—	34.8	27.8
Kolkata	1.1	35.8	27.5				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	21	45	51	...51	...63	GREEN
Bengaluru	—	19	25	...30	...49	GREEN
Chennai	7	33	49	110	—	RED
Delhi	9	13	36	207	130	RED
Hyderabad	8	41	28	50	79	GREEN
Kolkata	9	21	8	37	55	GREEN
Lucknow	6	57	41	241	123	RED
Mumbai	16	21	7	61	137	GREEN
Pune	36	16	49	38	33	GREEN
Visakhapatnam	10	45	16	46	72	GREEN

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

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

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

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

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

Visakhapatnam

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ahmedabad, Gujarat recorded an average air quality index (AQI) score of 274 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 16

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

Police to probe drug charge against Kangana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Friday asked the Mumbai Police to probe drug use allegations against Kangana Ranaut, while the Bollywood actor turned her attention to Congress president Sonia Gandhi asking her to intervene and stop the harassment of women.

The city police received a communication from the State Home De-

partment to probe claims that Kangana used banned substances and narcotics drugs, a senior police official said.

The Mumbai Crime Branch will look into the matter, he added.

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said on Tuesday that the Mumbai Police will probe allegations by Adhyayan Suman, son of actor Shekhar Suman, that Ms. Ranaut took drugs.

INTERVIEW | DIGVIJAYA SINGH

'Congress will recover lost ground in M.P.'

Ahead of bypolls, the former State Chief Minister says there is anger among voters

SIDHARTH YADAV

After rebel Congress MLAs and their supporters switched sides along with Jyotiraditya Scindia, the party is scrambling to shore up its organisation in the Gwalior-Chambal region. In an interview, Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh says the party will recover lost ground ahead of the bypolls for 27 Assembly seats in M.P.

The party has suffered erosion of its organisation in the Gwalior-Chambal region. How challenging has it been to rebuild the organisation there?

■ Mr. Scindia wanted a share in more than 10 districts, including Morena, Neemuch, Mandsaur and Ujjain. We used to allow him to control those districts organisationally. Out of his appointees, 35-40% have left. Kamal Nath has kept all our people together and reconstituted the organisational structure in those districts from the booth to the district level. New people have joined us. And I think we will be able to recover the lost ground. At the same time, people never expected Mr. Scindia to leave the Congress. And even his supporters have not approved his act of leaving.

What will the strategy be for the by-elections?

■ Promises, keep them apart. Because people are quite fed up with promises. But what is more important is people feel let down. The electorate feels cheated as they voted for the Congress. Therefore, there is huge anger against them.

You've recently said the lack of ideological clarity was harming the Congress. Do you view the perceived saffron posturing by Mr. Nath and the central leadership around the ground-laying ceremony for

the Ayodhya Ram temple as an example of that?

■ Why give it a colour? The Congress respects people of all religions. We have never done politics of religion. If Mr. Nath or the Congress has welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court for the temple, it is not against the ideology. And he has always respected people of other religions. But there is no question of taking sides on that.

Will the lack of a permanent leadership in the Congress and the letter of the leaders have a bearing on the coming elections countrywide?

■ It is unrelated. Further, Sonia Gandhi is the undisputed leader of the Congress. As regards the 23 signatories, instead of writing a letter and making it public, they could have asked for the issues to be discussed in the committee, requested Ms. Gandhi, for it who would have definitely agreed. I have been in the party since 1971. Congress has had splits four-five times. Every time, it is this family which has got the bulk of the Congress supporters. Therefore, I personally do not visualise the Congress without the Nehru-Gandhi family.

The Parliament session is going to begin from September 14. What is going to be the party's agenda this time?

■ There are three ordinances that may affect farmers, small and medium traders and consumers. We are opposing all three. The fourth relates to the opening up of the cooperative sector for public share holdings. Narendra Modi and the BJP say Sardar Patel would have been a better PM than Jawaharlal Nehru. If Mr. Modi idolises Sardar Patel, why is he acting against the cooperative movement that made Sardar Patel the leader of farmers of Gujarat?



Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department

Online
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer, Salooni Division, HPPWD Salooni-176320 H.P. on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, invites the items rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Description of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Starting date of downloading	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Deadline for submission of bid	Time Limit	Class
1.	Construction of 40.00 metre span Steel Truss Bridge over Siul River on Bhandal Panoga road at K.M. 0/550 under Nabard Project (RIDF-XVII) in Tehsil Salooni, District Chamba H.P. (SH: Construction of balance work of bridge and approach road to bridge i.e. Formation Cutting 5/7 metre wide and construction of Retaining walls).	74,64,812/-	17-09-2020	1,07,200/-	01-10-2020 up to 11.00 A.M.	180 Days	B & C

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in. The Date of Technical bid opening: **01-10-2020 11.30 A.M.**

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Salooni Division,
HPPWD Salooni.

Punjab CM hits out at AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday termed as 'irresponsible' the Aam Aadmi Party's 'negative' campaign about the State government's handling of the CO-VID-19 situation.

In a virtual meeting with party MLAs, Capt. Amarinder said India is facing a war-like situation, and a united fight alone could tackle the problem. But AAP was busy in petty politics amidst the crisis, he said. Contrary to what AAP was projecting, Delhi's situation was much worse than Punjab, he said. With 2.90 crore population, Punjab has 18,000 active cases, while Delhi with 1.80 crore has 25,000 plus active cases.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Chamba Division, HPPWD Chamba H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the items rate bids, in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Tender form (Rs.)	Class	Completion period
1.	Construction of ware house for storage of EVMs and VVPATs at Baloo near Chamba. (SH: C/o building portion including W.S. & S.I. boundary wall, site development, rain water harvesting system & septic tank).	1,34,90,582/-	1,67,400/-	5,000/-	A & B	24 Months

KEY DATES:-

1. Date of Online Publication: 17.9.2020 10.00 Hours.
2. Document download Start and End date 17.9.2020 10.00 Hours up to 07/10/2020 17.00 Hours.
3. Bid Submission Start and End date 17.9.2020 10.00 Hours up to 07/10/2020 17.00 Hours.
4. Date of Technical Bid Opening: 08/10/2020 11.30 Hours.

Submission of original Documents: The original instruments in respect of cost of documents and EMD should and other Technical Document be submitted to the tender inviting Authority i.e. Executive Engineer, Chamba Division, HPPWD Chamba on or before **Le. 08/10/2020 at 11.00 Hours** and thereafter no documents will be entertained. This office is not responsible for any email, postal delay, Courier services and any other type of Transportation services.

BID OPENING DETAILS: The bids shall be opened 08/10/2020 11.30 hours in the office of the Executive Engineer, Chamba Division, HPPWD Chamba by the authorised officer. In their interest the tenderer are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders. The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the bids without declaring any reasons thereof.

Executive Engineer,
Chamba Division,
HPPWD Chamba
Pin-176310
Tel.01899-222229
Email:- ee-cha-hp@nic.in

Punjab Government
led by
Chief Minister
Capt. Amarinder Singh
pays glowing tributes to the

VALIANT SOLDIERS OF THE 36th SIKHS BATTALION

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Glimmer of hope

India and China have taken the first step to begin real disengagement at the border

The "five-point consensus" reached by the Foreign Ministers of India and China in Moscow on Thursday provides a glimmer of hope of a diplomatic solution, while thousands of troops from both countries remain deployed along the border. It is, however, only a glimmer. Each point, outlined in a joint statement, has been affirmed previously by the two neighbours, both in past boundary agreements and in talks held since June that have failed to de-escalate tensions. The LAC remains tense, facing its worst crisis since 1962. Both sides have agreed to take guidance from previous understandings, including on "not allowing differences to become disputes", a formulation of 2017 that has not lived up to its promise. They agreed the current situation suits neither side, troops should quickly disengage, maintain proper distance, and ease tensions. Both sides said they would abide by all existing agreements, continue dialogue, and expedite work on finding confidence building measures to maintain peace.

At the same time, stark differences remain, including on the key question of whether both sides will return to the *status quo ante* prior to China's transgressions. The issuing of the joint statement was somewhat unusually accompanied by separate press statements, which struck discordant notes on key issues. India stressed that peace on the boundary was essential for ties, and that recent incidents had impacted the broader relationship. The Chinese statement, on the other hand, sought to emphasise the importance of "moving the relationship in the right direction" and to put the border "in a proper context". China's statement also quoted India's Foreign Minister as saying India believed China's policy toward India had not changed and that it did not consider relations to be dependent on the settlement of the boundary question. This characterisation of India's stand was a sharp contrast from Delhi's recent public statements, which have emphasised border peace as a prerequisite to taking forward the broader relationship. Moreover, a day before the talks, China's official news agency issued a commentary placing the onus entirely on India to defuse tensions, accusing India of "reckless provocations", telling India "to learn from history", and reiterating that China "will not lose an inch of territory". It is welcome that India and China have finally found something to agree on. Thursday's consensus, however, is only the first step of a long road ahead. The continuing rounds of talks should be aimed sincerely at disengagement, and not at presenting a veneer of diplomatic engagement even while China strengthens its hold along the LAC. India will need to verify before it can trust each of China's steps from now on.

Pushback

Chinese students are caught in a broad-brush U.S. response to espionage

The Trump administration has revoked visas for more than 1,000 Chinese citizens, mainly students and researchers, deemed to be risks to national security owing to their alleged connections to Chinese military establishments and concern over industrial espionage. The White House's latest policy action has been housed under Mr. Trump's May 29 announcement responding to China's curbs on democracy in Hong Kong. Among the reasons stated was the intention to block the entry of persons associated with slave labour, thought to be a reference to alleged rights violations of China's Uighur Muslims. According to the Department of Homeland Security, the revocation is also targeting those who might engage in unjust business practices or attempt to steal coronavirus research, and, more broadly, abuse their student visa status to exploit the intellectual property of academia. This visa policy comes after measures that have tightened the screws on the U.S. immigration system, including halting the issuance of green cards and skilled worker visas and challenging the issuance of student visas for college programmes that have migrated entirely to online mode due to the pandemic. However, in the prior cases of visa issuance bans, the nationals of a single country were not targeted in the way that Chinese citizens have been under this week's visa revocation.

The deeper context of this spat is the cycle of hostile tit-for-tat exchanges between Washington and Beijing, principally tariff wars in the realm of trade, but extending to human rights and China's COVID-19 response. On the one hand the Trump administration might have overreached in this broad-brush policy, perhaps sweeping up innocent researchers with no more than nominal association with a government-affiliated academic entity in China. However, it is more than likely, given the successive industrial espionage incidents that have been prosecuted by the U.S., that potential spies or saboteurs are facing removal proceedings too. Ultimately, countries such as China and Russia, which have arguably sought to interfere in the U.S.'s domestic affairs, could be facing a blowback. However, given the pressure-cooker conditions in U.S. politics due to an imminent election, there is a strong likelihood of a heavy-handed response to any further suspicions of foreign interference, especially because such a response would be of considerable campaign value to the incumbent. If Mr. Trump remains in the Oval Office, he will doubtless persist with his friendly approach toward Moscow, while seeking to keep Beijing on the back foot. The policies of his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, are expected to be the reverse to an extent, although Chinese President Xi Jinping would be unwise to anticipate a quick thaw in frosty bilateral ties in that case too. Either way, China's economic aggression will continue to face pushback from a wounded and angry America.

A game of chess in the Himalayas

In the stand-off with China, India has two choices — walk into the trap that has been laid, or learn from the 1962 event



STANLY JOHNY

With the tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) refusing to die down, despite the marathon military and diplomatic-level talks, the obvious question that stares at every stakeholder is this: is 2020 another 1962? While the future is uncertain, the present is undoubtedly tense. As stated by India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, this is "surely the most serious situation" along the India-China border "after 1962".

The parallels are hard to ignore. In August 1959, after the first border clash between Indian and Chinese troops in Longju, in the eastern sector, China said Indian troops had crossed the McMahon Line and opened fire, and the Chinese border guards had fired back. The next day, New Delhi protested against the Chinese statement, saying it was Chinese troops that had moved into Indian territory and opened fire. Sixty-one years later, the statements issued by India and China after the border clashes are eerily similar. Both sides accuse each other of transgressing across the LAC. Both sides accuse each other of opening fire. Both sides blame each other for the current stand-off.

The trigger

What led to the war? To understand the current tensions, one has to go back in history. When the Longju incident happened, not many in India might have thought the border tensions would lead to a full-scale Chinese invasion.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon were absolutely certain that China would not attack India. Nehru had betted big on India's friendship with China. He saw both countries as victims of imperialism and the natural leaders of Asia. The realist in Nehru believed that peace on India's northern border was an imperative for the newly-born republic's rise and material development. So in the 1950s, Nehru continued to defend China in international fora. India accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and signed an agreement with Peking over trade with Tibet. But what Nehru hoped in return for India's friendship was China respecting its bequeathed boundaries — the McMahon Line in the east and the frontier (based on the 1842 Tibet-Kashmir agreement) in the west.

The first setback to this position was the Longju incident. Within two months, an Indian police patrol team in Kongla Pass in Ladakh came under Chinese attack. This was a wake-up call for Nehru. He asked Chinese troops to withdraw from Longju in return for an assurance from India not to reoccupy the area and proposed that both sides pull back from the disputed Aksai Chin, where China had already built (unilaterally) a strategic highway. China rejected this proposal and made a counter offer — to recognise the McMahon Line in the east in return for India's recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Aksai Chin. Nehru, having checked the historical maps, documents, including revenue records and land surveys, which he got from the India Office in London, rejected the Chinese offer because he thought it would mean India abandoning its legitimate claims over Aksai Chin. After the collapse of the Nehru-Zhou Enlai



[Chou en Lai] talks in 1960 in Delhi, tensions escalated fast. China intensified patrolling along the border. In November 1961, Nehru ordered his Forward Policy as part of which India set up patrol posts along the LAC, which was seen as a provocation in Beijing. In October 1962, Mao Zedong ordered the invasion.

The parallels

The situation today is not exactly the same as 1962. Back then, the Tibet factor was looming over India-China ties. As soon as the Dalai Lama took refuge in India, Chinese leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, had threatened "to settle accounts" with the Indians "when time comes". China also feared that India was providing help to Tibetan rebels, after the 1959 rebellion. Today, both sides have managed to sidestep the Tibetan question in their bilateral engagement. And unlike in 1962, when India was not politically and militarily prepared for a war with China, today's conflict is between two nuclear powers. But the problem is this: while the overall situation is different, the border conflict looks similar to what it was in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The boundary has still not been delimited and demarcated. China has not recognised the McMahon Line and India has not accepted China's control over Aksai Chin.

Despite the volatile situation, an uneasy truce prevailed on the border at least since 1975 and both sides have made improvements in ties since Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988. This period of truce allowed both countries to focus on their development. But that truce has now been disrupted with China first moving to block Indian patrolling in the Finger area of Pangong Tso and the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh during the summer. India then made a forward move on the southern banks of Pangong Tso last month, similar to Nehru's Forward Policy in 1961, taking over the heights of the Kailash Range. When Nehru ordered the Forward Policy, his aim was to secure the vast border and prevent further incursions. He never thought China would attack. Now, despite the experience of 1962, India appears to be taking a calculated risk by making forward movements. This led to the opening of fire in the region, for the first time in 45 years. So, practically, the border situation is back to what it was in 1961.

Strategic dominance

In the run-up to the 1962 war, Mao had taken a "unity and struggle" policy towards India. This meant, laying emphasis on unity with India on mutually agreeable matters while continuing the struggle over the border issue. Nehru failed to understand the gravity of this approach. He first saw only unity, and, after the Longju and Kongla clashes, he saw only struggle. China, on the other side, consistently played what game theorists call the game of "strategic dominance" — the strategy which would yield positive outcomes, irrespective of the strategies of the rival player. Back then, China saw itself as the most powerful force in Asia. Japan had been devastated by the

war. The British withdrawal and the partition of the subcontinent had changed the geopolitical balance in the continent. Mao was facing challenges to his leadership within the party after the disastrous Great Leap Forward. Globally, there were cracks in the Sino-Soviet alliance, especially after the Soviet intervention in Hungary. When it set the ball of border tensions rolling, it knew that the ultimate risk would be a limited war and it was ready to take that risk because even in the event of a war, China calculated that it could retain its strategic dominance. And it did so in 1962.

Understanding China's moves

The Chinese strategy today is not very different from that of the 1960s. Now, China considers that it has arrived on the global stage as a military and economic superpower. The COVID-19 outbreak has battered its economy, but it is recovering fast. India, on the other side, is in a prisoner's dilemma on how to tackle China. India is a big, rising power, but is going through short-term challenges. Its economy is weak. Its geopolitical standing in the neighbourhood is not in its best days. Unlike in the 1960s, when Nehru's non-alignment was blamed for Chinese aggression, today's India has cautiously moved toward the United States. But still, there is no guarantee that it would deter China or if the U.S. would come to India's help in the event of a war. A combination of all these factors might have led China to believe that it can play the game of strategic dominance once again. If India plays it on China's terms, there will be war. The question is whether it should walk into the trap laid in the Himalayas, or learn from the experiences of 1962.

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Smothering the housing rights of the urban poor

A Court order, on Delhi's slum dwellings, threatens to undo the promise of the right to housing offered in earlier verdicts



MATHEW IDICULLA

In a short order (<https://bit.ly/3hkfF2F>) with devastating consequences, the Supreme Court of India on August 31 ordered the removal of about 48,000 slum dwellings situated along the railway tracks in Delhi. A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, in one of his last orders before his retirement, directed State authorities to remove the *jhuggi jhopri* clusters in the railway safety zone within a period of three months. Most shockingly, the order stated that "no Court shall grant any stay with respect to removal of the encroachments" and in case any such interim order is granted "that shall not be effective".

Relying on an affidavit filed by the Railways, the Court observed that there is a "predominant presence" of slums in close vicinity of the 140 km-long railway line in Delhi. It noted that while the National Green Tribunal had constituted a special task force for the removal of encroachments from railway property — "There seems to be some political intervention against removal of such encroachments". The Court ordered that these "encroachments" should be removed

within three months and "no interference, political or otherwise, should be there."

A flawed order

The Supreme Court order which seeks to summarily demolish informal settlements of poor urban residents is deeply disturbing and raises serious legal questions. The order is fundamentally flawed because the Court has ignored principles of natural justice, judicial precedents on the right to shelter, and state policies governing evictions.

The order violates principles of natural justice and due process since it decided on the removal of *jhuggi jhopri* without hearing the affected party, the *jhuggi* dwellers. The order was passed in the long-running case, *M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India & Ors.*, regarding pollution in Delhi and was in response to a report by Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority for the National Capital Region on the piling up of garbage along railway tracks. However, neither this case nor the report concerns itself with the legality of informal settlements. Still, the Court made an unconvincing connection between the piling of garbage and the presence of slums and gave an eviction order without giving the residents a fair hearing.

The Court ignored its long-standing jurisprudence on the right to livelihood and shelter upheld in various judgments. In the landmark decision concerning



pavement-dwellers, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in *Ola G. Tellis & Ors. vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation & Ors.* (1985) held that the right to life also includes the "right to livelihood" and that no eviction shall take place without notice and hearing those affected. Further, in *Chameli Singh vs. State Of U.P.* (1995), the Supreme Court recognised the "right to shelter" as a component of the right to life under Article 21 and freedom of movement under Article 19(1)(e).

The Court also failed to consider the policies and case laws on slum eviction and rehabilitation in Delhi. In *Sudama Singh & Others vs. Government Of Delhi & Anr.* (2010), the High Court of Delhi held that prior to any eviction, a survey must be conducted and those evicted should have a right to "meaningful engagement" with the relocation plans. The procedure laid down in this judgment formed the basis for the Delhi Slum and JJ Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy, 2015. This was reiterated in *Ajay Maken & Ors. vs. Union Of India & Ors. (2019)*, a case concerning the demolition of Shakur Basti on railway land, where the Delhi High Court invoked the idea of the "Right to the City" to uphold the housing rights of slum dwellers.

This case led to the framing of a Draft Protocol for the 2015 Policy on how meaningful engagement with residents should be conducted. However, neither the case laws nor the state policies were referred to by the Court.

Evictions amid pandemic

The Supreme Court order that threatens to leave lakhs of people homeless amid a health and economic emergency is callous and unconscionable. As the pandemic makes urban informal livelihoods more vulnerable, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing has called on member-states to declare an end to forced evictions. However, as in a recent report of the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), over 20,000 people were displaced in 45 incidents of forced evictions between March 25 and July 31, when India was under lockdown. Over the last three years, over five lakh people have been evicted, most often for various "city beautification" projects.

The courts have also played an active role in such demolition drives, often under the premise of environmental protection. The present order follows the trajectory of court-led evictions, highlighted by Anuj Bhawania in his book,

Courting the People: Public Interest Litigation in Post-Emergency India, whereby the court admits a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), ignores the specific issues and proceeds on a tangential topic, relies on reports of court-appointed committees and orders the demolition of slums, often without hearing the affected population. This represents a dangerous turn of PIL jurisprudence whereby its procedural relaxations are used to deny principles of natural justice to the most marginalised groups.

The promise of the right to housing offered by *Sudama Singh and Ajay Maken* is now being undone by an insidious and legally dubious order that pre-empts other courts from giving orders to stop the eviction. The Court disdainfully refers to how "political interference" does not allow "encroachments" to be evicted. However, it is often through such political negotiations that residents of informal settlements incrementally make claims on housing and exercise their "Right to the City". These residents would now need to employ a combination of political and legal strategies to protect their housing rights and ensure that no eviction or rehabilitation is conducted without their prior informed consent.

Mathew Idiculla is a lawyer and researcher on urban issues and a consultant with the Centre for Law and Policy Research. The views expressed are personal

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.

Bollywood case

A suicide is a tragic and avoidable loss of life whether it involves a celebrity or an ordinary citizen, especially if it had been entangled in a web of mental illness (Editorial, "Something rotten", September 11). The newsroom drums beat the wrong tunes of lurid gossip instead of telling a sensitive narrative about society's imposition of a taboo of mental illness as a plausible reason the actor concerned failed to seek medical help. Broadcasters lost an opportunity to start a conversation about stripping mental sickness of secrecy and shame that force even celebrities to hide their problems, suffer in silence, and take the extreme step when their minds could no longer

handle the debilitating assault of despair. Television's tabloidisation speaks to its inherent nature as an uninteresting and shallow medium.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

- TV anchors have little time to discuss worries over COVID-19, the substantial GDP contraction or the heightened border stand-off. Even the political narrative in the Bihar Assembly election seems to have been hijacked. It is now more centred on the unfortunate death of an actor and the ongoing inquiry. The credibility of any news channel depends upon the sense of occasion, proportion and urgency that it shows in the coverage of events, issues and news. Sensationalism should have no place here. While letting

the investigating agencies do their roles, news channels should confine themselves to their chosen and expected role — of providing information that is credible.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Malappuram, Kerala

- If the pandemic has been the prime concern for each one of us, a murder mystery is prime-time concern of a large section of the vocal media, as there is hardly any other entertainment with cinemas closed and scope for experimentation in the kitchen has its limitations. The editorial makes one recall the Readers' Editor's column, on fact-checking, (OpEd page, September 7).

SAURABH SINHA,
Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

- It is sad that so much time is being allocated to this case

and the law not allowed to take its course. One feels like switching off the television set the minute the news on the case appears as Rhea Chakraborty's right to privacy and dignity as a woman have been flung to the wind. It is unmistakable that there are political overtones to the case. In the end, this is one case where the Supreme Court of India should step in, *suo motu*, and stop the media trial.

N.G.R. PRASAD,
Chennai

- Can talks resolve the border conflict? India and China should understand that it is in their best interests to pursue peace despite everyone knowing how stubborn China is about its territorial integrity. We can see a recognisable difference between China's statements and the actions of its troops. Even after over 70 years of Independence, India still has border issues with its neighbouring countries; a solution needs to be found.

NANDINI SHIRURKAR,
Pune, Maharashtra

- Defusing border crisis The talks that India's External Affairs Minister has been having with his counterpart do not seem to be effective. China appears to show scant respect for the pursuit of reason and peace. The meetings should not end with lunch, a dinner and a

photo session but should be purposeful from India's point of view.

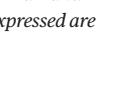
D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

■ educational institutions for the development of a country. And in the pandemic, just as in other fields, education has been hit hard too. Exams have had to be called off, students unable to finish the syllabus and online platforms proving to be of little help as many students do not have access to the required technology or a good net link. And talk now is shifting to the reopening of the schools. Before coming to any conclusion, the government should observe the results other nations experienced when they reopened institutions.

Students are the pillars of the country and any step taken in the field of education must be 100% safe.

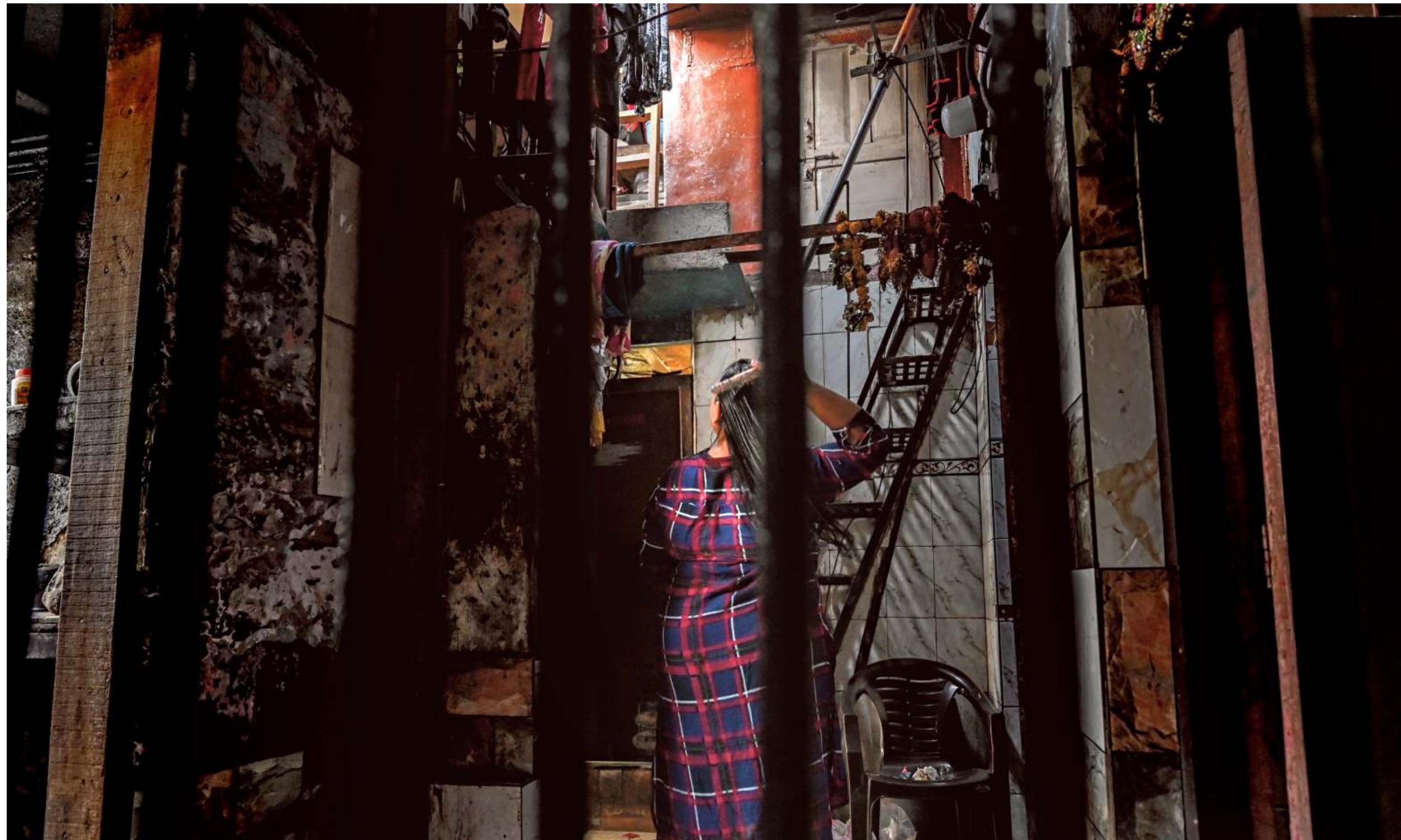
NIRMALA BISHNOI,
Chennai

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Sex work with face masks and hand sanitisers

With lockdown norms easing, sex workers have resumed business in Delhi's Swami Shradhanand Marg. But workers worry as physical distancing is impossible in this trade. **Hemani Bhandari** reports on the situation of the women during the lockdown and the efforts they are taking to protect themselves now



A sex worker at a brothel on Swami Shradhanand Marg in New Delhi. (Below) An elderly man peeps into a room where a dance performance is taking place. •SAHIBA CHAUDHARY

It is a little past 7 p.m. and 45-year-old Sonia wonders how the evening will play out. She is dressed in a nightgown and a mask. Her make-up box containing brilliant shades of lipstick and an array of mascaras lies open in front of her. Sonia is not sure how many men will turn up today. In Kashmiri building on Garstion Bastion Road (GB Road, now renamed Swami Shradhanand Marg) in New Delhi, business is listless in COVID-19 times. Most women left for their native villages once the nationwide lockdown, announced to contain the spread of the virus, was imposed on March 25; only a handful have returned several months since. The building used to heave to loud music, now it has fallen silent. The world's oldest trade faces its toughest challenge from a 21st century pandemic and the end is nowhere in sight.

Sonia is one of the courtesans, or 'ta-waif' as she calls herself, who lives in 'kotha' 5217, also known as Kashmiri building. All the women of this kotha are trained in the classical dances and music. They take pride in carrying forward the legacy of mujra performances, the dance of courtesans which originated in Mughal courts. But this year has been particularly difficult for them. With the number of COVID-19 cases steadily rising across the country, the laughs and songs of the night are a faint echo of the past.

Taking precautions

An hour later, two men climb up the paan-stained staircase. They wear masks around their neck. There is a whiff of alcohol in the air. The women, who are decked up in their shimmering outfits, are not wearing their masks. But they all possess masks, they say. The women say no camp was set up to test the sex workers for COVID-19. Whoever wanted to get a test done went for a test on their own.

A bottle of sanitiser is kept on one side of the room. One of the drunken men pulls out a ₹100 note and pushes it into the golden blouse of the woman nearest to him. It is impossible to practise physical distancing in this trade.

"I feel scared all the time but what can I do? This is my work. If I act on this fear, I won't be able to earn. I am not trained to do anything else," says the woman in the golden blouse.

The staircase goes up to the second floor. In a hall sits Saloni. She returned to Delhi on August 17 as lockdown norms were slowly eased. She is wearing denims and a white tee. The hall, which by 8 p.m. generally starts filling up with men holding cigarettes in their hand and carrying a bottle of alcohol in their pockets, is empty. Saloni's soft voice echoes in the hall and for a brief



moment, it creates the illusion that there are many voices.

By now, Saloni would have been ready, mostly in a saree, but today she starts dressing up only a little after 8:30. "Kitna soona lag raha hai yahan. Accha nahin lag raha (It's so empty. It doesn't feel right)," she says.

Priyanka, who stands close to her, agrees. She feels a sense of loss too. The 40-year-old woman has been working here for the last 22 years. She has two teenage sons who are both aware of what their mother does for a living.

"They've accepted it," she says. Priyanka learnt dancing here at the kotha. "I don't know when things will become normal. I am just waiting," she says.

By normal, she means no sanitiser, no masks, no virus.

As of now, there are only a handful of customers. They are quite apprehensive too. "But masks and sanitisers are the only solution we have," says Saloni.

It's impossible not to have close contact in this profession, says Priyanka. "I can't die hungry. I have to feed my family after all. The most we can do is not allow people who have visible symptoms to come here." By visible symptoms, she refers to coughing and breathlessness.

She has gleaned this information from television.

The women don't indulge in sex work inside the kotha here. It's an elite place. Customers come and take them in their cars, mostly to hotels, after making prior appointments," says a 36-year-old tea seller working near the building.

In the present scenario, it is a guess how the women will conduct themselves should they choose to leave with a customer.

In contrast to the kotha, where there are mujra performances, are the brothels. Here, women are slowly getting back to the trade after the pandemic hit their pockets. It wasn't something they had anticipated or could prepare for in advance. Their daily earnings dwindled and slowly disappeared as the nationwide lockdown kept getting extended.

"In the last 25 years that I have been here I have never faced such a situation," says Pooja, a native of Rajasthan who lives in a brothel right opposite Kashmiri building. Her parents in the village pushed her into sex work, she says, and now she doesn't want to get out. Since the lockdown, Pooja has been making her ends meet and taking care of her teenage son with her meagre savings. Local NGOs have been providing rations once every 15 days.

The sex workers haven't yet figured out how they'll save themselves from contracting the virus. But they have their 'own ways,' they say.

For instance, at one of the brothels on the road, the kotha in-charge, or 'madam', as she is referred to, is Kamla. She says she doesn't allow any "riff-raff" and people who don't "look hygienic" to step in. Just then, a lean man climbs up the stairs after gazing at one of the women standing by the window. He is welcomed with a liberal spray of sanitiser. "This is a must," says 23-year-old Devika.

For money, which is hard to come by in these times, they will eventually succumb to what the "customer demands," says Kamla. But women like her are hopeful that the COVID-19 situation will get better and they won't have to worry while coming in close contact with their clients. "As of now, we are encouraging only known customers and accepting the ones who look clean," she says.

But in a trade where close contact is an absolute necessity, how do you save yourself from the constant threat of COVID-19? "You can't," she says plainly. She is aware of the occasional brawls that break out even now when the women insist that men wear condoms. The fear from the virus will induce some sanity in the business, she hopes.

Helpful customers, kinder police
During the pandemic, a handful of loyal customers are helping the women and

the kotha. The caretaker of kotha 5217, Inderjeet, says a 65-year-old client who has been visiting the kotha since his youth has been helping the women. "He has been coming here for decades. He was a patron of music and was popular here. His entire family knows he comes here regularly and he considers this place his second home," he says. During the lockdown, the old-timer called up Inderjeet and others at the kotha and asked them if they needed ration or money. He got them ration delivered too. "There are two businessmen in this area who are regulars. They took care of us monetarily whenever we needed help," Inderjeet says.

Over the last few months, the police too have been trying to make sure the women working here are fed. Often called to settle local brawls in the past, policemen appear to have emerged as the saviours now.

A Delhi Police Assistant Sub-Inspector, who has been a beat officer here for over three years, is unhappy that the women have been given an informal nod by "higher-ups" to start working again. "Itne mahine bachi rahi hain. Ek do mahine ki baat aur thi. Bachti rehti. In-me se ek ko bhi corona go gaya to bohot nukasaan ho jaega (They have remained safe for months. It was only a matter of one or two months and they would have remained safe. If one of them contracts the virus, it'll spread like wildfire)," he worries.

The Assistant Sub-Inspector talks of how he organised ration kits to be delivered twice a month for the women who chose to stay back. Ration kits typically involve some rice, lentils, oil, salt and flour. In a business where exchanging notes is a daily affair, the pandemic has dealt a cruel blow. Independent women are now at the mercy of others. Luckily for them, help has come from several quarters, including the police, who are not exactly known for their kindness to those less fortunate and

lower down the social ladder.

The Assistant Sub-Inspector also recalls helping women working at the brothels by getting them married against the wishes of those who controlled their lives. He says, "The women may now sound like that they don't wish to leave but most of them had been forced into sex work. Often, girls fall in love with a client and wish to go with them. They just want to be sure that they won't be troubled after they leave, so they rope in the police. I have helped many such girls get married."

Most women working here have his number saved on their phones and call him in case there is a problem. "Most complaints used to be about drunken men creating a ruckus about money or forcing themselves on women. Often, the men take energy pills before coming here, which causes problems to the women," he says. However, in the last five months, the only calls he has received are from women in financial distress.

It's not just clients and the police who have helped the sex workers on Swami Shradhanand Marg. Three boys, all sons of sex workers, also tried to do their best during the initial months of the COVID-19 outbreak. Arjun Rathor (24), Kunal Kumar (19) and Aakash (18) were born and brought up here. When the lockdown was announced, they saw how their mothers and aunts were bravering a financial crisis. They knew what they had to.

"All three of us reached out to all the NGOs and their members and told them about the situation. Thankfully, a lot of people came forward and helped us with ration, sanitary pads, and food from time to time," says Arjun.

In their early teenage years, Arjun and Kunal became volunteers at an NGO called Kat Katha which aims to enable women and children at brothels to study and realise their dreams. Arjun now works for an NGO called Change With One as a photographer. "The NGO I work for got us rations a few times and Kat Katha also helped us," he says.

Kunal got in touch with an organisation which helped with sanitary pads. The trio also worked with the police whenever they facilitated ration distribution. "I could see that my mother and other women living in the brothel were facing a very hard time. This is the least we could do," Kunal says.

Pride in the profession

Sonia's two children - a 16-year-old son and a 19-year-old daughter - live with her family in Rajasthan. The children don't know what she does in Delhi. "According to them, I have a private job here," she says. "One of my children is in school, the other in college." A trained classical singer, Sonia has been

working in the kotha for the last 20 years. She learnt singing from a school in Mandi House. A photograph of her holding a sitar stands in a corner of her room. Sonia shows it to every client who walks in. "This is our family tradition. My paternal aunt and grandmother used to be tawaifs too," she says.

For Sonia, there's a sense of ancestral pride which comes from the history attached to the kotha. It's one of the most famous kothas on Swami Shradhanand Marg, and is considered "posh" in the trade. Touching her ears in obeisance, Sonia mentions historical characters who used to perform and sing. "Begum Akhtar saamne raha karti thi, Noor Jehan Begum saamne raha karti thi. Naseem Bano ki building saamne hi hai (Begum Akhtar, Noor Jehan, Naseem Bano... they all used to live across the street," she says. "Hum mujre wale hain aur baki sab peshewale wale hain (We only perform mujra and others in the area indulge in sex work)," she says.

Sonia is protective of all the young women who work here. She ensures that they don't talk to 'strangers'. She claims that no woman in this brothel has been forced to work here.

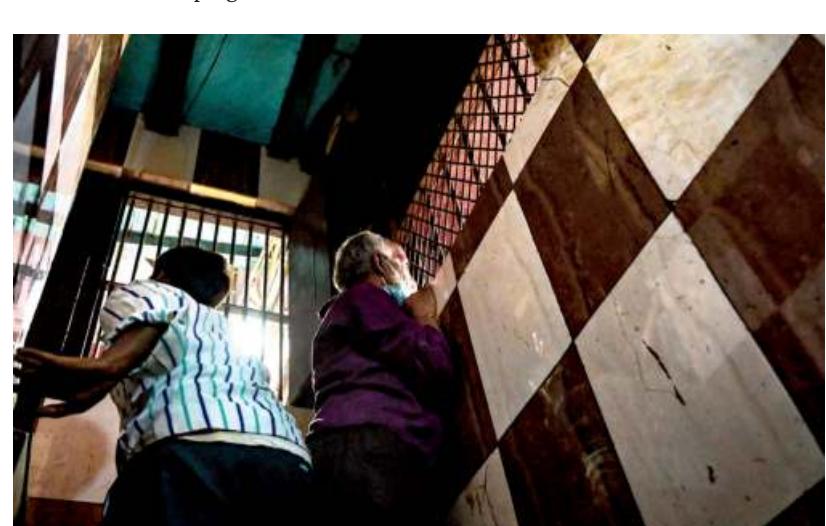
Preeti, 28, agrees. As she gets ready for the evening in her blue and gold sequined dress, she says, "I have come here on my own. No one has forced me." She works out of the adjacent room.

Caregiver Inderjeet cribs about the change in attitude of customers and the women who live here. He talks of a more genteel past. His patrons are no longer alive and he is responsible for the safety of the women who have made Kashmiri building their home. Inderjeet prays that this too will pass. He hopes that business will pick up once the virus is taken care of by a vaccine.

Saloni, 30, sits opposite Inderjeet. She says she learnt dancing here at the kotha when she joined about eight years ago. For her, this is a "family business". She has a five-year-old daughter who believes her mother goes to "office".

Just then Saloni receives a call from a friend who works here with her and who is at home. She has just delivered a baby. "Lockdown main sabki ladkiyan ho rahi hain... pata nahi aisa kyun ho raha hai (During the lockdown, all the women working here have given birth to daughters... I don't know why this is happening)," she says. She does not sound happy. In a profession peopled with women, who do not always call the shots, the birth of a boy is what brings cheer to their lives. The future of a daughter remains as uncertain as the life of the mother who gave birth to her.

Names have been changed to protect the identity of the women



FROM PAGE ONE

India, China agree on 5-point action plan

Countering the Chinese claims, government sources here said the events of the past few months have "inevitably impacted the bilateral relationship". In particular, India had made the point that the mobilisation of a large number of PLA troops was responsible for the "flashpoints along the LAC".

"The Chinese side has not provided a credible explanation for this deployment," the sources said, blaming the "provocative behaviour of Chinese front-line troops at numerous incidents" for the violence, while Indian troops had "scrupulously" adhered to protocols.

Military commanders' meetings in the next few days will chalk out the steps for disengagement more clearly, which the Foreign Ministers will review before deciding on the course ahead. While border commanders agreed to disengagement procedures in June as well (which made lit-

tle headway), the government feels that they now have concrete proposals and commitments from Mr. Wang, who is also the State Councillor, thus indicating a "policy decision" by Beijing to disengage.

Russia's initiative

The meeting between the Foreign Ministers was facilitated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Later, a Russia-India-China lunch set the stage for the bilateral talks on Thursday. It is expected to be followed by Special Representatives' talks and another meeting of the Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs.

In November, Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi are expected to attend the G-20 summit in Saudi Arabia, which will be the first time the two leaders, who have not yet spoken to each other during the stand-off, could meet.

New grievance redress system unveiled in J&K

The existing portal has now been integrated downwards to the district level by mapping nearly 1,500 public offices in 20 districts of the Union Territory.

The move comes at a time when a sense of disconnection and alienation has been growing among the people, especially in the Kashmir Valley, which has remained on edge ever since J&K's special status was revoked last year.

Mr. Sinha has also direct-

ed district Superintendents of Police and Deputy Commissioners to be present in their offices from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. five days a week from Monday. "Similar directions are announced for the Divisional Commissioners and IGP's of Jammu and Kashmir regions," he added.

Earlier, Mr. Sinha had also announced the 'Back to Village' campaign, wherein officers will visit villages and address public grievances.

ISI radicalised West Bengal student, says NIA

"Tania Parvin gradually became part of about 70 jihadi groups," the agency said in a statement.

According to the agency, LeT cadres based in Lahore, Pakistan had introduced the accused to officials of Pakistani ISI, who tasked her to open fake Facebook profile and befriend armed force members in India to obtain sensitive strategic information, NIA added.

The accused was also active in various Palestinian and Syrian Jihadi social me-

IIP shrinks 10.4% in July as recovery slows

"Part of the reason is local/partial/ weekend lockdown imposed in many parts of the country, often without much advance intimation. This is not allowing orderly recovery of economic activities," Mr. Sinha said.

He noted that the IIP growth trend mirrors the GDP weighted workplace mobility trend, which also flattened out in July and August after a sharp recovery in May and June, adding that "the process of industrial recovery will take a while and require sustained policy support."

In its official statement releasing IIP data, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme

Implementation repeatedly stated that, "It may not be appropriate to compare the IIP in the post pandemic months with the IIP for months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic."

The manufacture of pharmaceuticals, which saw 22% growth, and tobacco products which posted 6.1% growth, were the only two sectors in positive territory in July. The auto sector and paper and beverages manufacturing continued to see contractions over 30%. The declining trend in textile (-14.8%) and garment manufacturing (-28.7%) could be important from an employment perspective.

Flight with Kangana lands TV crew in soup

No action was taken against the television crew, who continued broadcasting the actor's arrival in Mumbai surrounded by CISF commandos. According to officials, Ms. Ranaut had not lodged any complaint with the airline or any other authority over the actions of the media personnel.

In a statement, IndiGo said, "We have given our statement to DGCA regarding the matter. We would like to reiterate that our cabin crew, as well as the captain followed all the requi-

site protocols, including announcements to restrict photography, follow social distancing and maintain overall safety. IndiGo also followed the requisite protocol of documenting this matter in its post-flight report."

"We are in receipt of certain directions from DGCA. We will follow the prescribed guidelines," it added.

Flight safety experts said the airline should have handed over the errant passengers to law enforcement agencies immediately.

Active cases in Karnataka, A.P. close to a lakh each

The two States record 207 deaths in a day; Bengaluru still a hotspot with 3,426 new cases; Telangana, Kerala add 5,414 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

With 130 deaths in 24 hours, Karnataka's COVID-19 toll breached the 7,000 mark and touched 7,067 on Friday. The State added 1,013 deaths to its toll in the last one week.

Recording the discharge of 12,545 people, the State said its active cases reduced

COVID-19

from 1,01,537 to 98,326.

On Friday, 9,464 new cases were reported. In all, 770 patients were being monitored in ICUs.

Bengaluru Urban reported 3,426 cases taking its total to 16,631. With 30 new deaths, the city's toll touched 2,370. A total of 64,666 tests were conducted including 28,350 rapid antigen tests.

Telangana on Thursday

reported 2,426 cases. With another 13 deaths reported the same day, fatalities rose to 940.

The Directorate of Public Health and Family Welfare said 2,324 persons recovered on Thursday and active cases stood at 32,195. This included 25,240 who were in home and institutional isolation.

Andhra Pradesh had 9,999 new infections on Friday. The death toll climbed to 4,779 with 77 new deaths, the Health Department said. The highest single-day tally so far was 10,830 cases.

There were 96,191 active cases in the State. Another 71,137 samples were tested with an overall positivity rate of 12.30%.

COVID-19 spread was fastest in the past two months as 95% (5,18,518) of all cases were reported then.

Kerala's cases crossed the one lakh mark on Friday to touch 1,02,254, with the re-

Fogged out

Many owners are getting their vehicles fumigated to avoid contracting the coronavirus. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



New technology: A garage using the fumigation fogger disinfection machine to clean a car in Bengaluru on Friday. ■ K MURALI KUMAR

porting of 2,988 new cases.

Testing was done for 35,056 samples. Active cases stood at 27,877. State Health department data said 282 patients were in ICUs, 66 of

them on ventilator support.

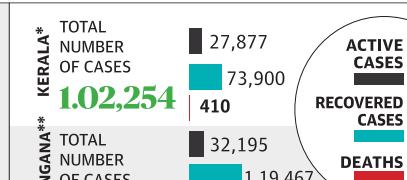
The government added 14 more deaths to its provisional COVID-19 death list.

Three deaths each were

reported from Thiruvanan-

thapuram, Palakkad and Thrissur, two from Alappuzha, and one each from Malappuram, Kozhikode and Kannur.

Tamil Nadu's overall tally



*Kerala has a mismatch of 67 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons. **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Thursday. ***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths

Kerala Higher Education Minister appears before ED

Congress, BJP leaders demand K.T. Jaleel's resignation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday demanded the resignation of Kerala Higher Education Minister K.T. Jaleel on the ground that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had questioned him in connection with probe into the UAE consulate-linked gold smuggling case.

A top official with Enforcement Directorate in New Delhi told *The Hindu* that Mr. Jaleel had appeared before the agency's team in Kerala. The official declined to give further details.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala de-

manded Mr. Jaleel's resignation.

Mr. Chennithala said that the Minister's "wrongs" had brought the Central law enforcement to the doorstep of the government. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president

Mullappally Ramachandran said it was the first time that a Cabinet Minister had found himself on the wrong side of Central agencies.

BJP's charge

BJP State president K. Surendran said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was scared to seek Mr. Jaleel's resignation because the Minister had 'partnered' with the Chief Minister in several economic crimes. He accused Mr. Jaleel of accepting foreign aid without Central sanction and abetting the smuggling of gold in Koran consignments addressed to the UAE consulate.

The Minister was not imme-

diately available for comments.

3 priests murdered in Mandya temple

Hundi boxes found emptied: police

STAFF REPORTER
MYSURU

Three priests were found brutally murdered and the hundi boxes ransacked on Sri Arakeshwara Swamy Temple premises in Mandya early on Friday.

Police said the bodies of Ganesh, 55, Prakash, 58, and Anand, 40, were lying in a pool of blood at the temple situated in Guttalu on the outskirts of Mandya town. The deceased were not only priests, but also worked as guardians and slept on the temple premises.

According to police, the heads of the deceased were crushed allegedly with boulders while the hundi boxes had been taken out of the

A file picture of Sri Arakeshwara Swamy Temple in Mandya.

temple and emptied. Currency notes in the hundi boxes were missing and the coins had been left behind. The miscreants had also ransacked the *sancrum sanctorum* of the temple in search of valuables.

All-party meet wants bypolls cancelled

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An all-party meeting chaired by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here on Friday decided to request the Election Commission of India to call off the Assembly bypolls in the Chavara and Kuttanad constituencies in November.

The Left Democratic Front and United Democratic Front agreed to petition the State Election Commission to advance the elections to local bodies "minimally and not inordinately", given the COVID-19 situation. However, the BJP did not agree to the proposal to advance the local body polls. BJP State president K. Surendran said the LDF and the UDF were scared to face the electorate.

SC allows NLSIU to conduct admission test

No results till further hearing: Bench

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, to conduct its National Law Admission Test (NLAT) 2020 scheduled for September 12.

However, a three-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan ordered the premier law institute to neither declare the results nor proceed further with the admission process till the court took a final decision on the validity of the NLAT.

The court said it was allowing the NLSIU to conduct the exam because it did not want to add to the stress of students by any change in schedule at this last minute.

"Since students are re-

ady, exams can be held tomorrow [September 12]. We will not stay their holding.

But you will not declare the results or hold admissions until we decide," Justice Bhushan said. Issuing notice to the NLSIU, the court said this was a "very serious matter and requires detailed examination". It has scheduled the next hearing for September 16.

Senior advocate Nidhesh Gupta and advocate Vipin Nair, for petitioners Rakesh Kumar Agarwalla and former NLSIU Vice-Chancellor Venkata Rau, said the NLAT was a "hogwash". Mr. Rau said the sudden notification by the NLSIU about a separate admission test had left thousands of aspirants in a state of fear and confusion.

IN BRIEF



E.P. Jayarajan tests positive for COVID-19

KANNUR
Kerala Industries Minister E.P. Jayarajan was admitted to Kannur Government Medical College Hospital at Pariyaram after he tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 on Friday. The Minister and wife, P.K. Indira, who also tested positive for the viral infection, were admitted to separate isolation rooms at the hospital.

Kerala High Court stays KC(M) symbol allotment

KOCHI
The Election Commission's decision allotting the election symbol "two leaves" to the Kerala Congress (M) faction led by Jose K. Mani was stayed by the Kerala High Court on Friday for a month. Single judge P.V. Asha passed the order on a petition filed by P.J. Joseph, who heads the rival faction in the party.

Adani Group issued LOA in airport in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
The Airports Authority of India issued a letter of award to the Adani Enterprises Ltd to go ahead with the handing over of the

Thiruvananthapuram international airport. The Adani Enterprises Ltd of the Adani Group won the bid to manage and operate the airport for 50 years.

Maoist 'courier' held in Bhadrachalam

BHADRADRI-KOTHAGUDAM
An alleged courier of a senior Maoist leader was arrested and explosive materials were seized from him in Bhadrachalam town on Thursday, police said. The person was identified as Paddam Kallu, 23, from Peddagelur village of Chhattisgarh's Bijapur.

Custody of actors Ragini, Sanjanaa extended

CCB said they had crucial information on drug racket and had not cooperated with the investigation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Friday obtained custody of actors Ragini Dwivedi and Sanjanaa Galrani along with four others for three more days (till Monday).

The accused were produced before the First Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate through video-conferencing as the CCB sought five more days of police custody. The CCB said the accused had not cooperated with the investigation, and as they had crucial information about the drug racket, more time was needed to question them.

The defence argued that

information from their questioning of the two actors so far. CCB officials claimed that though they had incriminating evidence against the duo, they had failed to get a statement from the actors to corroborate the evidence.

They alleged that the investigating officers were having a tough time as Ragini and Sanjanaa had created a ruckus while undergoing a medical test at K.C. General Hospital on Thursday. This led the police to seek custody of the accused to question them further, sources said.

Meanwhile, the CCB arrested Praetek Shetty, an alleged drug peddler who was earlier arrested by the Banaswadi police in 2018.

The police said they had not been able to elicit much

information from their questioning of the two actors so far. CCB officials claimed that though they had incriminating evidence against the duo, they had failed to get a statement from the actors to corroborate the evidence.

'6.4 million were likely infected in May'

COVID-19 infection had already spread to rural India between May and June, says ICMR sero survey

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

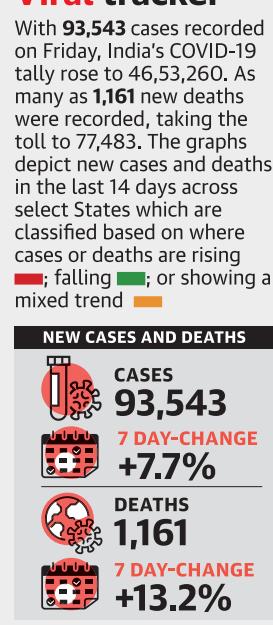
In May, India potentially had 6.4 million COVID-19 infections and for every confirmed case, 82 to 130 infections went undetected, according to the results of the first sero survey conducted by over 50 scientists of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and other institutions.

These findings, which now formally appear as a peer-reviewed paper, describe a nearly month-long investigation to check the spread of infection when India was in the middle of a lockdown and were known to the government at least by early June. However, details – such as the probable all-India infections – have only now been made public after the paper was published on Thursday in the Indian Journal of Medical Research, the council's in-house medical journal.

At a press conference on June 12, ICMR Director-General Balram Bhargava said, "0.73% of the population surveyed in 83 districts was likely infected by the virus", but he didn't specify what the all-India prevalence was.

The survey had identified

Viral tracker



83 districts but eventually sampled participants in only 70.

Manoj Murhekar, Director of the National Institute of Epidemiology, the lead author of the study, told *The Hindu* that the proportion today of those confirmed and those who had probably been exposed to the infection would be still be high but significantly reduced from May.

Estimated infections

The results of a COVID-19 serology survey conducted from May 11 to June 4 was published on Thursday by the Indian Journal of Medical Research. In the survey, 28,000 adults from 70 districts were tested for the presence of antibodies, that generally form within 2-3 weeks of a COVID-19 infection. Highlights from the survey:

- By early May, India potentially had 6.4 million COVID-19 infections. That is, for every confirmed case there were 82-130 undetected infections.
- Between May and June, the infections had already spread to rural India. Close to 70% of those who tested positive were from rural areas.
- Those in "occupations with a higher risk of exposure" were 39% more likely to be infected than those who weren't.

"The sero survey conducted recently in Chennai shows that there were about 25 infections for every RT-PCR confirmed case (or 1:25) and this is a city with a high degree of testing. Testing was much lower in May. I'd say the ratio now would certainly be below 1:80."

The ICMR is in the midst of another serology survey in the same villages and cities, the results of which are likely

by the end of the month. "The prevalence of the infection will naturally be much wider," said Dr. Murhekar.

For the survey from May 11-June 4, a total of 28,000 adults from 21 States across 70 districts were tested for the presence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies.

"The findings of our survey indicated that the overall seroprevalence in India was low, with less than 1% cent of

the adult population exposed to SARS-CoV-2 by mid May 2020. The low prevalence observed in most districts indicates that India is in early phase of the epidemic and the majority of the Indian population is still susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection," the paper said.

The survey also showed that the infections, between May and June, had already spread to rural India.

Ensure free movement of oxygen: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Friday asked the States/Union Territories to ensure that no restriction is imposed on the movement of medical oxygen and noted that they were responsible to ensure that every hospitalised COVID-19 patient receives oxygen.

"It has come to the knowledge of the Union Health Ministry that a few States are trying to curb the free inter-State movement of oxygen supplies by exercising provisions under various Acts and also mandating the manufacturers/suppliers located in the State to restrict their oxygen supplies to only the hospitals of the State," noted the Ministry in a communication.

India currently has less than 3.7% of active patients on oxygen support, as per Health Ministry data.

Fees must for forest use, Mines Ministry told

Environment Ministry rejects request seeking exemption

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Mines has requested an expert advisory committee of the Environment Ministry to exempt it from the Supreme Court-mandated fees that prospectors pay when they dig exploratory boreholes in forests, records of a meeting show.

The Net Present Value (NPV), as it is called, is a monetary approximation of the value that is lost when a piece of forest land has been razed. This is on the basis of the services and ecological value and there are prescribed formulae for calculating this amount which depends on the location and nature of the forest and the type of industrial enterprise that will replace a particular parcel of forest. The SC man-



The Mines Ministry sought relief for exploratory work in forests. *GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

dates this must be paid by those who use forest land for non-forestry purposes.

On August 18, officials from the Ministry of Mines requested that 'prospecting and exploring' in forests be exempted from the purview of the Forest Conservation Act. They argued that "... all areas of exploration are not

converted into mining. Only about 1% cases are converted to mining. Considering these, payment of NPV is regarded as an avoidable expenditure. Even payment of NPV at a rate of 2% or 5% is one of the major challenges which leads to delay in the exploration activities."

The Secretary of the Environment Ministry refused saying it would be 'inappropriate' for his Ministry to grant such an exemption as this was mandated by the Supreme Court.

The Forest Advisory Committee, the Environment Ministry constituted panel, however recommended that the Ministry "may consider charging NPV on borehole basis instead of the present practice of charging 2 or 5% NPV of the total forest area in the lease area."

Mizoram polls led to case spike: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Congress has blamed the sudden spike in COVID-19 positive cases in Mizoram on the elections to the village and local urban councils in August.

Mizoram, the only northeastern State not to have had any COVID-19 fatality, recorded 141 cases – the highest single-day spike – on Thursday.

The PM CARES Fund is a public charitable trust registered under the Registration Act, 1908. It was not set up through a Central or State Act. It has argued that it is

Questions over FCRA nod for PM CARES

It is exempt from foreign donation rules

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

The PM CARES Fund has received exemption from all provisions of the law meant to regulate foreign donations, although it does not seem to meet the precondition of being a body established and owned by the government whose accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG).

Responding to a recent query under the Right to Information (RTI) Act asking for details and documents on the exemption, the Home Ministry said it had to "seek the consent" of PM CARES before giving out the information, as it would be considered a "third party" under the RTI Act. It also invoked the clause that allows information to be denied if it is held as part of a fiduciary relationship.

According to the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section on the PM CARES website, the fund "has received exemption from operation of all provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010" or FCRA.

On January 30, 2020, the Home Ministry issued a fresh order "to exempt organisations (not being a political party), constituted or established by or under a Central Act or a State Act or by any administrative or executive order of the Central Government or any State Government and wholly owned by the respective Government and required to have their accounts compulsorily audited by the CAG or any of the agencies of the CAG".

The PM CARES Fund is a public charitable trust registered under the Registration Act, 1908. It was not set up through a Central or State Act. It has argued that it is



The Fund got ₹39.68 lakh in foreign currency in March.

not a public authority under RTI; all bodies established by the government are public authorities under that Act. The Fund is audited by an independent auditor, not by the CAG.

Assistance will be provided to actual cultivators. Agricultural input subsidy will be provided to small and marginal farmers who have sustained a crop loss of 33%. Farmers will get subsidy at ₹6,800 per hectare in non-irrigated areas, ₹3,500 per hectare in areas under assured irrigation and ₹18,000 per hectare for all types of perennial crops. Perennial crops will include mango, cashew, coconut, kewra and betel vine.

Assistance will be provided to actual cultivators. Agricultural input subsidy will be provided to any affected farmer will not be less than ₹2,000 for perennial crops and ₹1000 for other crops. Twenty of the 30 districts of Odisha were affected by incessant rain and the consequent floods during the last week of August.

About 20,000 pulse-seed kits will be provided to flood-affected farmers during the rabi season. One lakh farmers will be trained on seed treatment programme with free supply of chemicals and bio-pesticides to cover one lakh acres for increasing production of rabi crops.

As part of the immediate steps for arranging and distributing quality certified seeds in sufficient quantity, special assistance will be provided to farmers with higher subsidy of around 75% on certified quality seeds. According to the government, expeditious steps will be taken for crop loss assessment and steps will also be taken for invoking mid-season adversity under the crop insurance scheme.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - e-TENDER NOTICE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Tender No: KWA/HO/SP/03/2020-21 Empanelment of Third Party Inspection Agencies (TPI) in implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in Kerala - Expression of Interest on behalf of State Water and Sanitation Mission. EMD: ₹ 100000/- Tender fee: ₹7500/- Last Date for submitting Tender: 3.10.2020, 03.00pm. Phone: 8281597973.

Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in Sd/- Chief Engineer (HRD & GL), Jalabhavan, Thiruvananthapuram

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE
Office of the Deputy Chief Engineer, Transmission Circle - Kochikode
Tender ID: 2020_KSEB_382339_1 *Supplying, Laying, Testing and Commissioning of 3C x 300 sq.mm 33 KV UG cable with 24 fibre OFC and constructing and commissioning of OH line for river crossing for Power evacuation from Chathankottunada SHEP stage II to 110 KV Substation Kuttiyad *PAC: Rs. 3,94,56,583/- Last Date: 19-09-2020, 4 PM.

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in Ref. PR/MC1/E230/E-Tender/2020

KERALA STATE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM, VIKASBHAVAN P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 33

Tender No. KSSTM/B/70/2020 Date: 09/09/2020

TENDER NOTICE
Tenders under single cover system are invited by the Director, Kerala State Science & Technology Museum from reputed Contractors/Agencies for the supply and installation of mirror maze at Regional Science Centre, Chalakkudy, Thrissur.
Last Date of submission of e-Tender 30/09/2020, 3 PM

For more details visit our site: www.kstmuseum.com (Sd/-) Director-In-Charge

ANDHRA PRADESH MEDICAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Plot No.9, Survey No.49, IT Park, Mangalagiri-522503, Guntur District, Amaravathi Region, Andhra Pradesh, email : ce.apmhidc@gmail.com

Tenders are invited for Civil Wing: T.N.No.2/APMSIDC/TECHNICAL/2020-21, Dated:10.09.2020. 1) Upgradation / Strengthening of A/Hs / CHCs at various places in Andhra Pradesh under Regional Package-2 (2nd Call) (Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore Districts, No. of Works - 45, ECV Amount- Rs.2110.82 Lakhs)

2) Supply, installation and commissioning of Oxygen Generation Plant at Ongole & Nellore in Andhra Pradesh through Reverse Tender cum e-Auction

3) Empanelment of Consultants for Institutional Buildings in the State of A.P. Equipment Wing : Procure and supply of HBNC kits for 42572 ASHAs working in 13 districts of A.P. Drugs Wing: 1) Tender 76/APMSIDC/Medicine Wing/2020-22, DT.12.09.2020 for Procurement and Supply of General Medicines 2) Tender 77/APMSIDC/Medicine Wing/2020-22, DT.12.09.2020 for Procurement and Supply of Surgical Consumables.

The other details can be seen at the website <http://msidc.ap.nic.in>. DIPR 317PPCL, Dt: 11-09-2020 Sd/- Managing Director

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED

Regd. Office: 10-15/1, 4th Floor, Sri Sai Towers, Besides SIRS Company, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.

Tender No. MtGz/21/2020(3)KMS-2019-20 Dated: 11.09.2020

RE-TENDER NOTICE

APPOINTMENT OF MANUFACTURERS/ DISTRIBUTORS/ DEALERS FOR SUPPLY OF 7663 UNITS OF UNIVERSAL MOISTURE METERS TO RHYTHM BAHROSA KENDRAS IN ANDHRA PRADESH STATE FOR STRENGTHENING OF PADDY PROCUREMENT OPERATIONS AT VILLAGE LEVEL THROUGH A E-PROCUREMENT PLATFORM.

Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd invites Tenders for Appointment of Manufacturers/ Distributors/ Dealers for Supply of Universal Moisture Meters.

Interested Manufacturers/ Distributors/ Dealers from all over India may visit www.apcscln.org and www.apeprocurement.gov.in to view and download tender documents at cost of free. Interested tenders to submit bids should be registered in the website www.apeprocurement.gov.in and should obtain digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature certificates are mentioned in the website www.apeprocurement.gov.in or contact the helpdesk of procurement portal. Phone numbers: 08645-246370/71/72/73/74.

Last date for online registration and completion of formalities for e-auction shall be up to 5.00 PM of 16.09.2020 and tentative date for online e-auction through e-procurement platform would be on 18.09.2020.

Sci- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

'People cannot be evicted without provision for rehabilitation'



Ajay Maken. *FILE PHOTO

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Ajay Maken approached the Supreme Court on Friday against "blanket directions" issued by the court on August 31 to remove 48,000 slum clusters located in safety zones along railway tracks in Delhi within three months.

The apex court order, passed by a Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra, who retired on September 2, had specifically barred any kind of "interference, political or otherwise" against their removal. It had said that any order of interim stay passed by any court against the removal of these encroachments should be deemed ineffective.

Calling it a "devastating order", the former Union Cabinet Minister questioned the validity of passing an order without first hearing the affected people or their representatives.

"This letter of urgency is being filed because the Respondents (Ministry of Railways, Delhi government, etc.) have already initiated the process of identification and removal of jhuggies and have issued demolition not-

ices in various slums in Delhi. They have circumvented the established procedure by law with respect to rehabilitation prior to demolition as under the Delhi Slum and JJ Rehabilitation and Relocation Policy of 2015," Mr. Maken submitted in court through his lawyer, advocate Nitin Saluja.

The Congress leader referred to a decision of the Delhi High Court passed in 2019. He said the court, acting on a petition filed by him, had laid down the protocol for removal of slums. He said a slum cannot be demolished and its people cannot be evicted without first making provision for their rehabilitation.

"Slum dwellers have a fundamental right to the city. They are an integral part of the social and economic fabric of the town," he said. "If the demolition of slums is carried out, more than 2,50,000 people will be forced to move around the city in search of shelter and livelihood."

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Panel to oversee OFB corporatisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The government has constituted an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) under the Chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to oversee the corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), the Ministry of Defence said on Friday.

This follows the decision of the government to convert the OFB into one or more than one 100% government-owned corporate entities, the Ministry said in a statement.

Other Ministers in the EGoM are Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of State for Labour and Employment Santosh Kumar Gangwar and Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievance and Pension Jitendra Singh.

The terms of Reference of the EGoM include matters related to various categories of employees including protection of their salary and pension of existing employees and extension of financial support to the entity.

Agusta case: CBI seeks nod to prosecute ex-CAG

Four others may also be investigated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has sought sanction from the Defence Ministry to prosecute former Comptroller and Auditor General Shashi Kant Sharma, the then Joint Secretary (Air), former Air Vice Marshal Jasbir Singh Panesar; and three others in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper deal case.

The permission has also been sought for the prosecution of Deputy Chief Testing Pilot S.A. Kunte, Wing Commander Thomas Mathew and the then Group Captain N. Santosh.

The CBI had registered the case in March 2013 alleging payment of kickbacks in the deal for supply of 12 VVIP helicopters by AgustaWestland.

Deal approval

It is alleged that Mr. Sharma, a 1976 batch Indian Administrative Service officer, had a role in initiating the process for procurement of the helicopters when he was Joint Secretary (Air) in the Defence Ministry from 2003 to 2007. The deal was approved when he was the Director General (Acquisition) in 2010.

The agency had filed the first charge sheet in the case

Congress goes in for overhaul

G23 gets a breather as no major changes have been made in posts of signatories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Congress late on Friday evening brought about large-scale changes to its organisation structure, reconstituting the Congress Working Committee (CWC), appointing a six-member committee to assist Congress president Sonia Gandhi, and reworking the general secretaries in charge of various States.

Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was one of the 23 signatories of the recent letter demanding an overhaul and reform within the party, has been dropped as general secretary in charge of Haryana, though his position in the CWC remains intact.

There has been no significant change in the position of the other signatories – Anand Sharma, Jitin Prasada and Mukul Wasnik have been retained in the CWC. In fact, Mr. Wasnik, is also a part of the six-member committee formed to assist Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

Mr. Prasada, in significant increase in responsibilities, has been appointed as in charge of West Bengal, which goes for polls in April 2021.

In other major changes in the CWC, Tariq Anwar, who in 1999 walked out along



Striking a balance: Ghulam Nabi Azad, second from left, has lost charge of Haryana, but his position in the Congress Working Committee remains intact. ■ FILE PHOTO

with Sharad Pawar and P.A. Sangma, has found his way back. Mr. Anwar, who was in the Nationalist Congress Party, rejoined the Congress more than a year ago.

The other new entrant is Jairam Ramesh, who for the first time is finding his place as a permanent invitee to the CWC. Salman Khurshid, who has repeatedly spoken in favour of the Gandhi family, has won a berth in the CWC. Another old-timer Pawan Kumar Bansal, too, has found a place.

Motilal Vora, 91, who has long served as party treasurer and was administration

in-charge of the party, has been divested of all his responsibilities, including those pertaining to the CWC, owing to his age.

Randeep Singh Surjewala, who is the current communications in-charge for the party, has been appointed as general secretary in charge of Karnataka. Mr. Surjewala has been the communications in-charge for nearly six years now. Sources indicated this could mean that the party will soon have a new communications in-charge in his place.

A total of nine general secretaries or in-charges of va-

rious States and departments have been removed. This list includes Mr. Azad,

Mr. Vora, Ambika Soni, Mallikarjun Kharge, Luizino Faleiro, Gaurav Gogoi, Asha Kumar, R.C. Khutia and Anugrah N. Singh.

Mr. Gogoi, who was appointed as deputy leader of the party in the Lok Sabha, too, has been divested of all charges.

The six-member committee that will assist Ms. Gandhi comprises A. K. Antony, Ahmed Patel, Ambika Soni, K.C. Venugopal, Mukul Wasnik and Randeep Singh Surjewala.

24 candidates score a perfect 100 in JEE Mains

Results of the admission test were published late on Friday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

In a year when the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the Joint Entrance Examination (Main) by five months, 24 students scored a 100 percentile score, topping the engineering entrance examination.

There were eight students from Telangana and five from Delhi who achieved the perfect score, the highest among the States. Only one girl student, Chukka Tanuja from Telangana, was among the toppers.

At the time of going to print, the National Testing Agency, which conducts the examination, had not yet released the full-all-India rank list or the cut-off score for eligibility to attempt the JEE Advanced to be held on September 27. Students can check their scores and the final answer keys at jee-main.nta.nic.in.

The JEE Main is used as an entrance examination for admission to the undergraduate engineering courses at the National Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes for Information Technology and institutions run



Tough process: Students departing after appearing for the JEE Mains in Jabalpur on September 2. ■ PTI

by some State governments. The top 2.5 lakh students will be eligible to appear for the JEE Advanced, which is the admission test for the elite Indian Institutes of Technology.

The examination is held twice a year, and students are allowed to attempt the examination both times and then select their best score. More than 11 lakh students wrote the examination in January, and 8.58 lakh registered to write it in April. Due to the pandemic, the second examination was postponed till September 1-6. It is not yet known how many students attempted the examination both times.

The examination has been marred by multiple postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic this year, with a section of students and parents demanding further postponement due to fear of infection and difficulties in transportation caused by local lockdowns.

Despite widespread social media protests, letters from several State governments and multiple court cases to postpone the examinations, the second session of JEE Main was held last week.

Over a quarter of registered students failed to appear. Out of the total 8.58 lakh registered candidates, only 74% or 6.35 lakh students actually wrote their exams.

Let virtual courts stay: law panel

It also pressed for better video conferencing infrastructure in districts

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI



New mode: A Division Bench of the Karnataka High Court hearing a case via video conferencing. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Parliamentary Panel on Law and Justice headed by BJP MP Bhupender Yadav has recommended continuation of virtual courts even in a post-COVID scenario but also sounded a word of caution that infrastructure needs to be upgraded especially in district courts to implement this.

This is the first report to be presented by any parliamentary panel on the impact of the pandemic.

In its report "Functioning of the Virtual Courts/ Courts Proceedings through Video-Conferencing", the panel has argued that transfer of certain categories of cases, like cases pertaining to traffic challans or other petty offences, from regular court establishments to virtual courts will reduce the pendency of cases. It has suggested that a full fledged virtual court should be piloted in the first instance. Currently there are 30 million pending cases.

The committee further stressed that, "It is time, the courtroom which is often regarded as the last bastion of antiquated working practices opens its doors to latest technology."

During the pre-COVID period, the video-conference (VC) set up was primarily

used for conducting remand matters to prevent movement of prisoners between courts and jails. Such VC facilities have been operationalised between 3,240 court complexes and corresponding 1,272 prisons.

Note of caution

Stakeholders including Bar Association members and others who met the committee have noted that the present infrastructure does not support virtual court proceedings. The committee was informed that 3,477 court rooms are supported with facilities for virtual proceedings while 14,443 are still to be provided with them.

A representative of the Bar deposing before the panel said, "As far as e-Courts and Virtual Courts are concerned, I can say with cer-

tainty and with an element of responsibility that in India, almost 50% lawyers, particularly in district courts, do not have any laptop or computer facility. How can we assume and presume that they would participate in these Virtual Courts and e-Courts?"

The Calcutta Bar Association cited another instance before the committee. "There are 38 judges in the Calcutta High Court but there is not sufficient infrastructure to enable all Hon'ble Judges to undertake virtual hearings. For example, on 03.08.2020 only 8 Hon'ble Judges were able to take up matters virtually both in Division Bench as well as singly," Association representatives said.

Many witnesses said the virtual court hearings, especially during peak hours

when many people log into the video-conferencing system, was subject to frequent crashes of the system and said entire proceedings can be vitiated by one glitch.

Privacy concerns

There were also concerns that virtual courts will compromise privacy of data as well as confidentiality of discussions and court proceedings. For instance, courts in the United States had to deal with Zoom bombing – an unwanted intrusion by hackers and internet trolls into a video conference call – while conducting court proceedings through Zoom, which is a third party software application. Currently, third-party software applications such as Vidyo, Cisco and Jitsi are being used in India for conducting hearings through video-conferencing.

"Third-party software is not only an unviable option but also poses a major security risk as such software programs and applications are prone to hacking and manipulation. The Committee recommends the Ministry of Law and Justice and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to address data privacy and data security concerns while developing a new platform for India's judicial system," the report said.



No space: Footpaths are often overtaken by showrooms and illegally parked vehicles in cities. ■ V. RAJU

'Streets for People' challenge launched

Push for pedestrian-friendly spaces

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) Ministry on Friday launched an initiative for making cities more pedestrian-friendly, which HUA Minister Hardeep Puri said was a response to the need for walkable spaces under flyovers, re-imagining dead spaces in neighbourhoods, and creating walking links through parks and institutional areas.

The challenge, organised by the Smart Cities Mission of the Ministry, is not limited to the 100 Smart Cities as all cities with a population of over 5 lakh, and capital cities, can apply.

Mr. Puri said that in the post-COVID-19 world, cities needed to be built in a way to deal with any future pandemics. The Ministry said the challenge included creation of pedestrian-friendly streets in areas with high footfall, re-imagining the spaces under flyovers, reviving dead spaces in neighbourhoods, and creating walking links through parks and institutional areas.

Along with the recent initiative promoting cycling in cities, the 'Streets for People Challenge' would help cities provide safer means of transport with social distancing. The challenge, organised by the Smart Cities Mission of the Ministry, is not limited to the 100 Smart Cities as all cities with a population of over 5 lakh, and capital cities, can apply.

Mr. Puri also launched the Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework 2.0, which gives cities a roadmap for tackling climate change.

FAITH

The restless mind

Vallalar, in his Deivamaniyalai, laments that his mind is not under his control. This is an anguish expressed by many saints, to make us realise that control of the mind is the first step towards God realisation, said M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. Thayumanavar compares the mind to a monkey. A monkey is always restless, and never remains in one place for long. The mind is also akin to a monkey, because it never remains focused on anything. It keeps thinking of different things, one after another. When this is the nature of the mind, how can we concentrate on God? Vallalar compares the mind to a mad monkey, in another work of his. He addresses his mind as a monkey and declares to his mind, "Do not think I am like others. You cannot control me."

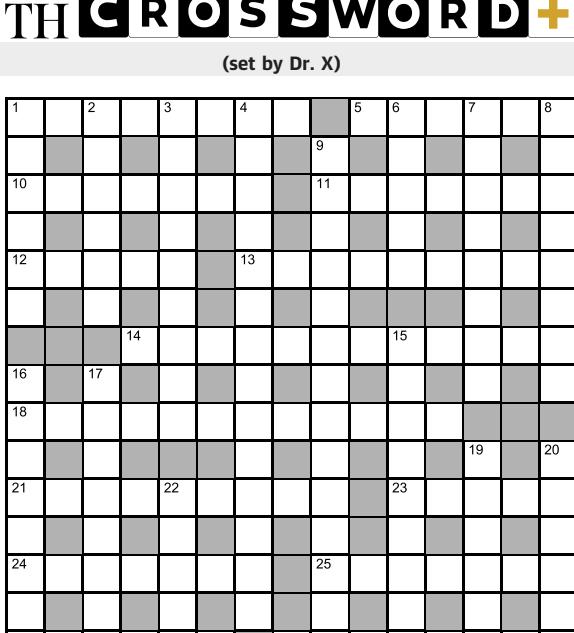
Thayumanavar speaks of the importance of keeping the mind free of worldly thoughts. In Kandar Anubhuti, Araunagirinatha says that Lord Muruga taught him to be silent. Silence is a form of penance, and aids meditation. Constant chattering bodes no good. Most of us have not acquired the practice of remaining silent and still, and therefore, our minds too do not remain focused on God. Even when we go to a temple, the mind is in rewind mode, going over the day's activities and happenings. Or we spend time observing how others in the temple are dressed. True worship is to feast one's eyes on the deity in such a way that when we come home and meditate, we are able to bring up before the mind's eye the deity we saw in the temple.

Vallalar also says that his old karma follows him. The solution to this is again worship of God. Appar says that after he witnessed the dancing form of Siva in Chidambaram, his karma was destroyed. This means his sanchita, prarabdha and agama karma were all destroyed in one stroke.

TH CROSSWORD + 13039

(set by Dr. X)

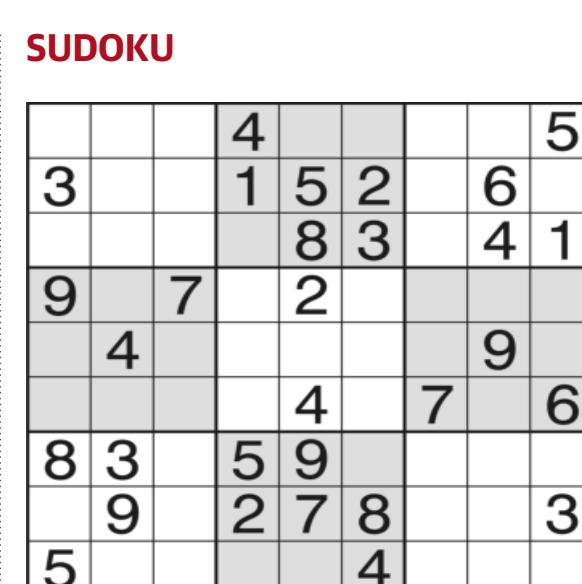
Lockdown getting you down?
Come over to our crossword site
@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



ACROSS

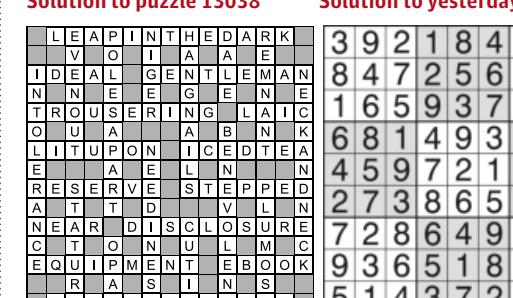
- Careless indiscretions by husband to cheat around (8)
- Celebration by daughter getting prize in attraction at amusement park (6)
- One finds smoker terribly annoying (7)
- Confuses and attacks taking rook for bishop (7)
- Chop piece of ham in cellar (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13038



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



A portrait of the moment

Hari Kunzru on his new novel, *Red Pill*, and why writing this intense story of privacy, surveillance, and paranoia was therapeutic

VANGMAYI PARAKALA

Novelist Hari Kunzru is in his study, in a casual T-shirt, a wall of books behind him. It could have been any other pleasant pre-fall morning, but it isn't – the world is in the middle of a pandemic. Yet, Kunzru is a busy man.

On September 3, the 1969-born writer started a podcast called Into The Zone and is now in the midst of launch activities for his sixth book, *Red Pill*, which released in India on September 8. "It's a funny time, a strange time to be launching a book," says New York-based Kunzru over a video call.

His latest gripping work starts off with the British-Indian protagonist's time at a writer's fellowship in Wannsee, Germany, but quickly unravels into a whole lot more. It is at once a story about surveillance and privacy, paranoia, and mental health, Donald Trump's election into the White House, and the narrator's obsession with an ultra-violent police show that leads him to tracking its alt-right director on the dark Web's various forums.

Kunzru talks to us on the current conversation on democracy, why surveillance is hard to write about, and the formal deviations that he was tempted to make in writing *Red Pill*. Excerpts from the interview:



How excited are you for the launch?

I'm very interested to see how it lands right now, because there's an election coming up in the US, and everything is very tense. A lot of the themes of the book relate to that kind of atmosphere, the anxiety that I know is in many places in the world as well.

You end the book with the 2016 US elections. It's almost time for the next one. Have these intervening years added to the book?

I didn't know the book was going

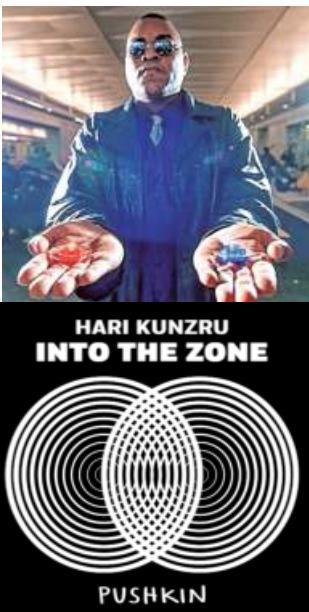
to end at that moment, until sometime after I'd started. But the idea – that the protagonist has apocalyptic fears about the world, but his wife is a more pragmatic person, a mainstream Democratic Party voter who believes in the political process and that the world is essentially a reasonable place – interested me. It became apparent that it would be interesting to have those two perspectives start to bleed into each other. There is a sort of question mark over democracy and its procedures that seems to be a bigger conversation than one country. It's the right time for this book.

How did the concepts of privacy and surveillance string together seemingly different sections of the book?

Surveillance is a very difficult thing to write about because much of it is to do with how we behave when we feel we are being watched. Any one of us who has an electronic device – we understand that we are at least potentially being watched. But it's a very hard thing to generate a conflict out of. A lot of my characters seem to have a conversation with a double, or with somebody who is like them, but unlike and opposed to them. And in this story, the character Anton [the alt-right director of the fi-



In **verse** (clockwise from below) The novel's title refers to the 'blue pill, red pill choice' in the film *The Matrix* (1999), the podcast's cover and his new book ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



There are a couple of scenes where it matters: like the scene where he meets the refugee father and daughter, and they look at each other and have that moment of 'Oh okay, you have brown skin too'. Because one of the things about being in Berlin in the first half of 2016 was that it was just after Angela Merkel [Chancellor of Germany] had allowed in a million refugees in an extraordinary gesture. Very frequently, Germans would mistake me for a refugee, and would speak to me as they would speak to a new refugee – either very positively, or very negatively. It was very interesting to me to understand that I was being seen like that.

Published by Simon & Schuster, *Red Pill* is priced at ₹599

Watch Hari Kunzru in conversation with Vangmaya Parkala on weekend.thehindu.com

E-STORE EDIT



MAGANDEEP SINGH

Everyday sneakers and structured gowns

Gaurav Gupta now has an online store. Also, there's a new space for sneakerheads

Sneakerhood by Ajio

The Sneakerhood – apart from being a catchy-yet-not-trying-too-hard pun on the term sneaker-head – is a tidy little marketplace from online shopping platform Ajio for the first-time sneaker-shopper as well as those who are looking to acquire another for their collection. They have a fairly large virtual inventory covering the usual suspects like Armani Exchange, Nike, Skechers, Adidas, Steve Madden, ASICS and Puma. The price range (from approximately ₹2,000 to ₹20,000) will leave most buyers happy with the choice at hand.

The sorting could use some work as it keeps throwing up other irrelevant options (like briefs and trunks under shoes!). But outside of that, you can arrange them neatly enough – by colour, size, style, brands – to zero in on what you may want.

But serious sneakerheads who nerd over every

upcoming launch may not be entirely taken with this site. It is a collection of regular sneakers and not the coveted lifestyle ones (like Air Jordans, Nike SB, Adidas Yeezy) which have people queuing up online or outside stores and the kind which sell for many times on the seconds market. Very few addresses sell those in India and even then, the launches are on pre-appointed dates and times. I suspect Ajio too will acquire such events and that would add some serious cred to their already large inventory.

Even if they don't, remember that those chaps make up a tiny percentage of the total sneaker sales volumes. The regular Jai doesn't want to spend two months' earnings on a pair of shoes and most people will never get the deal behind camping overnight for anything that you will wear on your feet! Add in a few exclusive discounts and deals and you are sorted. So, by all means, check out this new online space; even if not for buying, it'll make for some seriously cool eye candy.

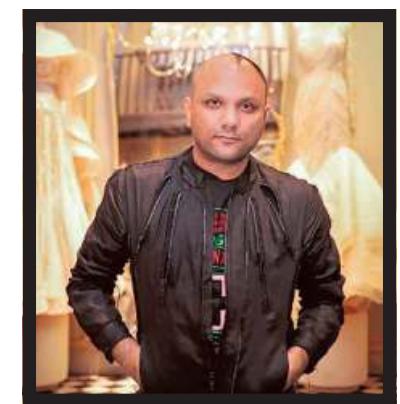
Up next: Hopefully, a dedicated tab to navigate to Sneakerhood from the Ajio homepage and improved search options that do not include all the footwear on the site

gauravguptastudio.com

SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS

Joining designers like JJ Valaya and Tarun Tahiliani, Delhi-based Gaurav Gupta has brought his couture to the online space. And in just a couple of days, smaller items like the Galactic loafers for men and ruffled tops for women have sold out.

While the Comfort Couture edit features structured pantsuits, capes and gowns starting at ₹30,000 for a co-ord set, both men and women have bridal edits – evening wear, reception,



sangeet and destination wedding included. Unlike many other designers, Gupta isn't reluctant about adding 'sale' to his beautiful website. There are inaugural discounts of up to 70% for the taking – try the peplum dresses for under ₹10,000, linen bandhgala jackets at ₹24,000 and Gupta's signature sari gown at half the price.

The brand's online couture process is fairly straightforward. Once an order is placed, a design consultant will get in touch for sizing and customisation details (lining, coverage and length). The garment will be handmade in their atelier and delivered in sustainable, recycled plastic packaging. The site is laid out seamlessly and is light enough to load even with a slow internet connection (useful if you are shopping while on another endless Zoom call). A quick view option would make for easier browsing. Payment options include credit and debit cards via RazorPay and PayPal.

Up next: Augmented reality shopping and ready-to-wear collections



Terry Fox Run online

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss.



Swipe nights begin

Like most annual events, the 12th edition of the Terry Fox Run in Chennai has gone online. From tomorrow to September 20, sign up to take part in the virtual run that aims to spread awareness and raise funds for cancer research. There is no registration fee (although you are welcome to donate) or age limit: all participants can run, walk, skate or cycle on any one of these days, take a photo and upload it to the site to get a certificate of participation. Details and registration on terryfoxrunchennai.in.



'Conscious retail' fix

Starting today at 10 am, for three consecutive weekends, dating app Tinder brings their Swipe Night event to India. The first-person, in-app, interactive event follows a group of friends, with users playing the protagonist. You'll be challenged with moral dilemmas and practical choices that impact what happens next (almost like a choose your own adventure book) and who you match with once the event ends. There are only seven seconds to make each decision. On the Tinder app.



Jogen via Japan

Via Kochi magazine has curated an online pop-up store called *7Things*. This includes graphic T-shirts, wellness products from Nature's Veda, home décor from Viakerala, kurtas by Aaraam Se, accessories by Annahmol, cookware by kitch.in and western wear by Salt Studio. Till tomorrow, on store.viakochi.com. Handloom weaves from Benaras, Ikat and Kota Doria find a place in *Padmashali*'s new website. Get ready for the festive season with saris, dupattas and salwar sets, starting from ₹5,000. On padmashali.co.



Tamil comedy rising

Amazon Prime Video got its first unscripted Tamil show yesterday. The new edition of *Comicstaan* – the hugely popular stand-up reality show – goes regional with *Semima Comedy Pa*, and judges Preaveen Kumar, Karthik Kumar and Rajmohan Arumugam. Joining these veteran comic artistes are Vidylekha Raman and Mervyn Rozario as hosts. The show features seven comics, including Abhishek Kumar of the viral Mrs Janaki fame, Syama Harini and Annamalai, Yogi and Karthi Durai. Now streaming.



News for 10 and below

In an increasingly digital world where kids are exposed to news and global affairs, how do parents explain what is happening around us? Former Reuters correspondent and mother to eight-year-old girl *Leela Sivasankar* and *Lynda Prickitt* breaks down international and national news in a way that children can grasp. They share their conversations in *Newsky Jacuzzi*, their weekly podcast, which has junior journalists (not one above the age of 10) bring us information from different parts of the world. Available on Apple Podcasts.



Fall for bridal wear

Chennai-based designer *Chaitanya Rao* is coming up with a virtual runway show featuring a bridal collection created for the digital wedding. "I had a little over a week to make seven new designs, working within the constraints of what the karigars could," he explains. The line includes organza saris and silk blouses with floral embroidery and organic cotton jacket lehengas featuring traditional motifs. For the rest, we will have to wait till the show debuts on his social media platforms on September 15 at 5.30 pm.

Pick of the week



Terry Fox Run online

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While the pandemic highlights the benefits of a green lifestyle, fearmongering makes it easy to dismiss an important step to wellness: tolerance

Going overboard with clean living?

VASUDHA RAI

Wellness may have got its 'new luxury' tag in 2016, but the last few months have seen it reach peak green. Just think back to the numerous healing webinars, *kadha* (the immunity-boosting drink with ingredients like *tulsi* and turmeric) recipes, DIY skincare and online guided meditation classes that many of us sat through in the last few months. The pandemic has amplified every aspect of holistic living.

The good news? The goal has shifted from the outer aspects of weight loss to internal benefits such as immunity. But wellness has also become a fertile, money-making ground. Legacy brands are tapping into our fear of chemicals by re-visiting their iconic products – removing parabens, silicones and sulphates (from Kiehl's Ultra Facial Cream to Laura Mercier's Tinted Moisturiser). And green living, which began as a tool to simplify life, is now a lot more complicated.

Diets, dairy and pitfalls
For instance, in addition to feel-

ing guilty about straying from a trending diet, or fearing products loaded with 'toxins', one faces judgement for not living sustainably. The smallest infringement sees trolls descending, and the current cancel culture enables such opinions that neither respect boundaries nor personal choice. It is no wonder that beauty bloggers like Arjun Sudhir (@justaskarjun) have reservations labelling themselves. Known for reviewing skin-friendly products, he has opted for the 'eco-lux' tag over 'green beauty influencer'.

"I've had people unfollow me because I posted pictures of food containing meat," recalls the Melbourne-based beauty expert.

Sudhir tells me he has never liked the word clean because "it implies that everything else is dirty". He isn't the only one re-examining why we want to go 'clean' or 'green'. Bali-based

ashwanga yoga teacher Deepika Mehta got into the lifestyle much before it became a trend or a business proposition. Back in '98, after reading a book called *Fit For Life*, she switched to raw food and was vegan for a decade. "Initially, it gave me a huge burst of

energy, but the intense discipline was coming in the way of social interactions and family time," she recalls. Today, to balance things out, she allows herself the 70/30 rule, eating clean 70% of the time and reserving 30% for indulgences. Now along with her primarily plant-based diet, she also enjoys eggs and dairy. She calls it following the middle path. "I feel healthier when I'm not obsessed."

In its extreme, the fixation with health food is known as orthorexia, the latest eating disorder where one feels panic for not eating clean. Jordan Younger, who first went as @theblondevegan, changed her handle to @thebalancedblonde when she realised that veganism was detrimental to her health. In June 2014, when she announced she was 'breaking

vegan' (also the title of her book), Younger was trolled heavily with someone commenting, "I'll come down to barbecue your family later". Fashion designer and beauty entrepreneur Masaba Gupta points out that a green lifestyle can also be "enormously expensive": "Clean living is becoming a heavy load for followers who can neither afford nor abide by its stringent rules," she says.

Beyond the fine print
Even though wellness runs on the principles of kindness and acceptance, these days the expectations are fairly rigid: absolute perfection or nothing else. I regularly receive messages expressing 'disappointment' not only when I post a mainstream brand, but also for green products where a single

ingredient could cause offence. Most recently, it was maltodextrin in my collagen powder (which I'd posted as something I was trying out but didn't recommend).

While one roots for sustainability, the argument that 'cleaner is safer' isn't always right. Yes, there are carcinogenic compounds and endocrine disruptors, but to label everything chemical as a 'toxin' creates a breeding ground for fear and intolerance. As a former beauty editor, I have learnt that 'natural' ingredients aren't always inherently safer. For example, lemon juice in skin brightening serums can cause more harm than good (it increases skin's sensitivity to the sun); the word 'handmade' can often mean that the products haven't gone through the strin-

Consumers have to take responsibility to research before spending because there's no way to confirm product claims even with traditional brands

MAMTA MODY, Elle India

Many brands have started avoiding using words like 'clean' and 'non-toxic' because of the backlash they get from mainstream bloggers

ARJUN SUDHIR, blogger

FOOD SPOT



RAHUL VERMA

Amritsar has been on my mind for a while now. I keep thinking of all the food that the Punjab city has to offer, and planning (in my mind) a *dhaba* crawl. The first stop will be for a frothy glass of *lassi*, then for some hot, freshly fried Amritsari fish, on to soft *kulcha* and *chholey* and so on.

The good bit about life is that when you can't fulfil your dream, your dream comes to you. Last week, I received a message from a young hotel executive I'd met during those days when people met people. She told me that The Oberoi Gurgaon was now delivering food, and sent me a copy of its huge menu. I looked at it, and decided I would have the Amritsari fare: *machhi*, *gosht*, *chholey* and *kulchey*.

I am greatly fond of Amritsari fish. I tried cooking it at home once, but without much success. I suppose it is – as our master cooks tell us – a town's air and water that add to the taste of regional cuisine. I had picked up the recipe from a slim book that I read every now and then just to get a whiff of Amritsar. The author of *The Dhabas of Amritsar* is a food lover called Yashbir Sharma. He talks about little places and their well known food items, and even provides the reader with recipes.

In the Amritsari fish recipe he says the fillet is first mixed with vinegar. The vinegar is then wiped off with a napkin. The fish is dipped in a mix of *besan*, red chilli powder, ginger-garlic paste, cumin, whole coriander seeds, *ajwain*, chopped coriander, and occasionally some rice flour for added crispiness.



Travel from home (Left)
Amritsari Choley-kulcha,
(Bottom) Amritsari Meat
Tariwala ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

mom, and bay leaves – had been added to hot ghee. Ginger, garlic, and onions were fried, and then fresh tomato purée went into the masala. The mutton was cooked on slow heat, and, when done, topped with strong black cardamom powder and pepper. I had some of this with a *lachche paratha* and was ready to call it a day.

But I had to first taste the Amritsari dal – mixed panchmela dal – which also had a *tadka* of ghee. Then I had a bit of the Amritsari *chholey* with *kulchey* (₹1,025), but realised that it was actually Pindi *chholey*, which is dark, thick, and dry. The *kulcha* – not the kind you get in Amritsar, but delicious, nevertheless – had a thick stuffing of potatoes and onion. I ended my meal with something called *Kahlua rasmalai*. I would have liked the rasmalai without the *Kahlua*, I think. Or the *Kahlua* without the rasmalai.

The delivery menu (call 981289169) is huge and includes everything from Peking duck and Moplah biryani to nigiri sushi and lemon roast chicken. You can also ask for breads, pastries, quiches, and meats.

I like the way hotels and restaurants are reaching out to us. I may not be in a restaurant right now, but I do get a picture of the hustle and bustle there. I can imagine them, just as I can visualise my Amritsari food fiesta.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

Amritsar on my mind

The Oberoi brings *dhaba* food home, at a time when a trip seems almost impossible

ed with turmeric, chilli powder, and salt. Then, it is dipped in a mix of *besan*, red chilli powder, ginger-garlic paste, cumin, whole coriander seeds, *ajwain*, chopped coriander, and occasionally some rice flour for added crispiness.

I loved the fish (₹1,225). It had a nicely crispy outer layer, and the river sole fillet within was moist yet firm. But what I really enjoyed was the Amritsari Meat Tariwala (₹1,475). The pieces were just the right size (40g, said the chef!) and were deliciously tender. I suppose what gave the curried its incredible taste was the ghee it had been cooked in. In a heavy cast iron vessel, whole masalas – cinnamon, carda-



Consumers have to take responsibility to research before spending because there's no way to confirm product claims even with traditional brands

MAMTA MODY, Elle India

gent quality checks they would otherwise undergo in a lab.

With little regulation around it, 'clean' in the personal care industry is open to interpretation. In India, there are hardly any certifying authorities nor guidelines to keep the industry in check. Without this, there is no way of knowing which products are following protocols despite mnemonics of cruelty-free, vegan or fair-trade printed on packaging. "Consumers have to take responsibility to research before spending because there's no way to confirm product claims even with traditional brands," says Mamta Mody, beauty and health director, *Elle* India. Lavanya Krishnan the founder of The Boxwalla, a US-based green beauty box service adds that in the past couple of years, she has noticed an increase in fear-based rhetoric to sell such products. "People often conflate safety with sustainability, therefore discussions end up being black and white which is simply not accurate," she says. True that. When you view wellness as a deeply personal journey, you'll realise that clean living is important, but it is also key to respect personal choice. In the long run, imperfections are sustainable and tolerance is the greenest option of them all.



Cat Deeley's book of joy

The TV personality and now author Cat Deeley says her first book for children encourages self-expression and is a reminder to find pleasure in everyday things

KARISHMA UPADHYAY

Bedtime story sessions in the Deeley-Kiely home in Los Angeles are special. Cat Deeley, the *So You Think You Can Dance* host (since 2006) reads 'everything and anything' to their two sons Milo (4) and James (2) – from information on the cornflakes box, encyclopaedias on dinosaurs, *Peter Rabbit*, *Thomas The Tank Engine* to the British children's book *Guess How Much I Love You*. "They love books and I love reading to them. I do silly voices and they read along. We sometimes make up our own theme tunes," shares the television presenter in an email interaction.

Finding the words

Soon Deeley, 43, will be able to read her own children's book for her sons. With the release of *The Joy in You* on September 15, she has added 'children's book author' to her already impressive list of roles. *The Joy in You* is a book of moments, ideas, thoughts and feelings, top and tailed with love. I wanted to be able to show my children a snapshot of life's journey and make them contemplate what will fundamentally make them happy," says the former teen model who got her big television break with *SM:TV*, a popular children's show, that also kickstarted the hugely successful careers of television presenting duo, Ant and Dec.

With wonderful illustrations by

British artist Rosie Butcher, the book encourages children to believe in themselves and embrace self-expression. "For many years, it had been my ambition to author a children's book. After becoming a mama myself, it felt like the time was right. I know how I feel at the end of the day when it comes to bedtime. Normally I'm too tired to think and completely inarticulate. I wanted to create a book for those moments, that said everything I wanted to say when I couldn't find the words," says Deeley, who was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Host for a Reality or Reality-Competition Programme in 2011. When she isn't encouraging dancers on the American reality show, the artiste has been a guest actor, reality show presenter and also became a UNICEF UK Ambassador in 2010.

It began with Noddy

Deeley tells me her love for reading started as a child. "I was an insomniac even when I was little. I would read all the time when I couldn't sleep, insistently devouring books at all times of the night or early morning." Her favourite author was Enid Blyton. "My obsession began with Noddy. I would remember every single word on every single page, correcting my mother if she skipped over anything. Then I progressed to *The Faraway Tree*, *The Enchanted Wood*, *The*



(Above) Deeley with her book and (top) an illustration by Rosie Butcher

Wishing Chair, *The Famous Five*, *The Secret Seven* and *Malory Towers*.

It's no wonder that Deeley wants to pass on her fondness for books to her children. The high point of this summer, she says, has been teaching Milo to read. "It's his new passion and hopefully he will carry his love for a great book into his adult life too." These are turbulent times and the world can seem like a scary place even for adults but Deeley, as always, is looking for positives. "Everyone is healthy and I get guilt-free time to spend with the boys. I've not missed a minute of James' gabbling and his ridiculously cute little lisp."

In between dance

In June this year, Deeley announced that the 17th season of *So You Think You Can Dance* had been cancelled because of pandemic-related restrictions. Understandably the fans, much like Deeley, were also heartbroken. For the 15 seasons that she's been a part of the show, it's been a source of constant happiness in her life. "I enjoy the fact that when the right dancer comes together with the right choreographer, hair, make up, music, lighting, staging something magical can happen. Something that can physically move the audience in the way any great piece of art should be able to."

Until she returns to set, though, Deeley finds moments of contentment every day. "The older you get the more you realise it's the simple things that bring you cheer – laughing at a great joke, that first cup of coffee in the morning, waking up to a sunny day. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of our joyful six-year-old selves."

Published by Penguin Random House, *The Joy in You* is priced at ₹1,299

■ JOSEPH SINCLAIR

Intra-Afghan peace talks to begin today

President Trump terms negotiations 'exciting'; Pompeo warns the process is likely to be 'contentious'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISLAMABAD

Much anticipated negotiations between Afghanistan's warring parties are likely to be "contentious," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned on Friday, but are the only way forward if Afghans are to find peace after decades of relentless conflict. Mr. Pompeo made his comments en route to Qatar, where intra-Afghan negotiations are to begin on Saturday, a day mostly reserved for ceremony before the hard task of hammering out a road map for a post-war Afghanistan begins.

The negotiations were laid out in a peace deal Washington brokered with the Taliban and signed in Doha on March 29 aimed at ending the war and bringing U.S. troops home ending America's longest conflict.

"We expect Saturday morning, for the first time in almost two decades, to have the Afghans sitting at the table together prepared to have what will be contentious discussions about how to move their country forward to reduce violence and deliver what the Afghan people are demanding – a reconciled Afghanistan with a go-



On guard: Security personnel at an Afghan National Army (ANA) outpost in Kunduz Province in March after an attack by Taliban militants. • AFP

vernment that reflects a country that isn't at war," Mr. Pompeo said on the plane taking him to Doha.

U.S. pullout
President Donald Trump made the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan a promise before the 2016 presidential election. In the countdown to this November's presidential polls, Washington has ramped up

pressure to start intra-Afghan negotiations.

At a news conference on Thursday, Mr. Trump called the talks "exciting" and said Washington expected to be down to 4,000 troops by November. Even though delays have plagued the start of talks, Washington began withdrawing some of its 13,000 troops after the February 29 deal was signed.

Withdrawal of the remain-

ing troops does not hinge on the success of intra-Afghan negotiations but rather the commitment made by the Taliban in the deal to fight terrorist groups that could threaten the U.S. and its allies. UN envoy to Afghanistan Deborah Lyons called the talks possibly "the start of something truly momentous". She called for a reduction of violence as Afghanistan waits to reach a

permanent cease-fire.

Ready to return

Mr. Pompeo in his comments made it clear the U.S. was ready to return soldiers to Afghanistan if it saw a threat emerging and the Taliban reneged on their commitments. The White House and its peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad have refused to give specifics on commitments made by the Taliban, citing security concerns. "Our commitment to reduce our forces to zero is conditioned on them executing their obligations under the agreement (which is) so very clear about their responsibilities with respect to terrorist activity taking place in Afghanistan," Mr. Pompeo said.

But Mr. Pompeo warned of spoilers to peace. "It's very clear that the violence levels have to come down to acceptable levels," he said.

The Afghan delegation left the capital late on Friday afternoon for Doha and it included Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the High Council for National Reconciliation,

the powerful umbrella group that will oversee the negotiation team headed by former intelligence chief Mohammed Masoom Stanikzai.

Nepal party concludes prolonged meeting

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

The prolonged meeting of the Standing Committee of the ruling Nepal Communist Party ended on Friday. The meeting was convened in July and continued ever since which makes it one of the longest discussion for the party in recent times.

"The meeting of the Nepal

Communist Party Standing Committee has concluded by passing a special resolution based on the report of the task force. Disputes within the party have ended and party unity has been strengthened," said Foreign Minister of Nepal Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

The Standing Committee meeting was convened a

month after the new map of the country was unveiled, which brought the country into a diplomatic spat with India. The map was passed unanimously by the ruling party though it failed to bridge differences between the sections of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and party co-chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda".

With the meeting behind him, Mr. Oli is expected to focus on Nepal's foreign relations in the coming weeks.

affairs". The 13-point resolution aims to create a smooth working condition for Prime Minister Oli, who has the assurance of the committee to execute his political responsibilities as per electoral promises. It also gave Mr. Prachanda the central authority to "convene meetings of the party and execute, control party

and affairs.

Hackers from Russia, China targeting U.S. vote: Microsoft

Cyberattacks focused on campaign staff of Trump, Biden

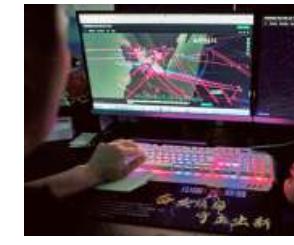
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Microsoft said on Thursday it thwarted recent cyberattacks from China, Russia and Iran targeting both Republican and Democratic presidential campaigns, as technology giants scrambled to protect election security less than two months ahead of the U.S. vote.

The announcement came as Twitter said it would implement a policy next week to remove "false or misleading information intended to undermine public confidence in an election," including unverified claims of victory; and Google said it would take steps to ensure the "autocomplete" search feature doesn't make such misguided suggestions.

Microsoft said that attackers have been targeting staff from the campaigns of President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden.

"In recent weeks, Microsoft has detected cyberattacks targeting people and organisations involved in the



The attackers have targeted political operatives and think tanks in Europe. • AFP

upcoming presidential election," said corporate vice president Tom Burt.

It was clear that "foreign activity groups have stepped up their efforts targeting the 2020 election as had been anticipated," according to Mr. Burt.

The attackers have targeted political operatives, think tanks, consultants and political parties in Europe as well, Microsoft said.

It identified a Russia-based group called Strontium which Mr. Burt said "has attacked more than 200 organisations," and China-based Zirconium, which he said "has attacked high-pro-

file individuals associated with the election, including people associated with the Joe Biden for President campaign and prominent leaders in the international affairs community."

An Iran-based group dubbed Phosphorus has been targeting personal accounts of people associated with the Trump campaign, Microsoft said.

The majority of those attacks were stopped by Microsoft security tools, and those targeted or compromised were alerted, according to Mr. Burt.

Russia is trying to undermine voters' faith in the U.S. electoral system and especially in voting by mail ahead of the November 3 election, according to a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) analysis.

A statement in August from the National Counterintelligence and Security Center said Russia is actively working against Biden's candidacy, favouring Mr. Trump as it did in 2016.

Bahrain to normalise ties with Israel

REUTERS
JERUSALEM/DUBAI

Bahrain is set to normalise relations with Israel, the diplomatic correspondent for Israel's public broadcaster Kan said on Friday, without citing sources.

Another Israeli reporter, Raphael Ahren of the *Times of Israel*, said U.S. President Donald Trump would on Friday announce that Bahrain

was joining its neighbour the United Arab Emirates in formally establishing ties with

Israel. The White House had no immediate comment.

Mr. Trump will on Tuesday host a White House ceremony solemnising the Israel-UAE deal, which was announced on August 13.

The Kan reporter, Amichai Stein, said in a tweet that Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa would be in Washington on Monday.

Neither Bahrain's government communications centre nor Bahrain's Embas-

sy in Washington immediately responded to a request for comment.

Last week, Bahrain said it would allow flights between Israel and the UAE to use its airspace. This followed a Saudi decision to allow an Israeli commercial airliner to fly over it on the way to the UAE.

Bahrain, a small island state, is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and the site of the U.S. Navy's regional headquarters.

Kim displayed uncle's corpse, says Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL

The headless body of Kim Jong-un's executed uncle was displayed to senior North Korean officials, U.S. President Donald Trump told the author of an upcoming book on the U.S. President.

Jang Song Thae, the North Korean leader's uncle by marriage and a hugely powerful figure within the regime, was purged for treason and corruption in 2013, in what was widely seen as Mr. Kim mercilessly asserting his authority.

"Kim tells me everything. Told me everything," Mr. Trump told the *Washington Post* investigative journalist Bob Woodward, according to his forthcoming book *Rage*.

"He killed his uncle and he put the body right in the steps," Mr. Trump said, in an apparent reference to a building used by senior officials. "And the head was cut, sitting on the chest," he added in excerpts from the book seen by AFP.

EU stands united as Brexit trade talks unravel further

Irish govt. calls U.K.'s new Internal Markets Bill unacceptable

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS

The 27 European Union nations on Friday presented a reinforced united bloc in dealing with the United Kingdom and negotiating a trade deal after the British government said it plans to violate part of the Brexit divorce agreement signed by both sides less than a year ago.

Anger and bafflement at the U.K.'s plans not to honour an international treaty with a bill that would diminish the EU's oversight of trade between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland mixed with steadfast resolve to stand together as time runs short to find a smooth economic transition for Brexit by December 31.

"We have never in recent history – or, maybe in ancient history dealing with other countries – seen such a renege on an agreement," Ireland's Europe Minister, Thomas Byrne, said.



Bruno Le Maire
"It is unacceptable," he told the BBC.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's plan put the talks on future trade deal in an even deeper rut. Even though a no-deal Brexit on January 1 would hit EU nations like Ireland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands especially hard, none were ready to cave in and meet U.K. demands, which the EU views as seeking free access to the EU market while refusing to guarantee fair competition.

The British government has acknowledged it would violate the Brexit agreement with the Bill that would diminish the EU's oversight of trade between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland. But it denies it is trying to renege on the agreement.

"We will never accept any

kind of decision that might weaken or jeopardise the European single market, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said. He added, "We have made very clear that all European countries remain united and strong."

At a meeting of eurozone Finance Ministers in Berlin, all other comments made backed Mr. Le Maire's stance.

Ireland, which has the EU's only land border with the U.K., stands to lose the most in a breakdown of trade talks. Irish Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe welcomed "solidarity and support" from his colleagues in other EU countries.

The British government has acknowledged it would violate the Brexit agreement with the Bill that would diminish the EU's oversight of trade between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland. But it denies it is trying to renege on the agreement.

"We will never accept any

U.K. inks key trade deal with Japan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Britain on Friday announced its first major post-Brexit trade agreement – a deal with Japan – as its negotiations with the European Union become increasingly fractious.

The Department for International Trade said the accord, which largely replicates the current EU-Japan deal, will be worth £15.2 billion (\$19.5 billion).

The government said U.K. businesses will benefit from tariff-free trade on 99% of exports to Japan and that it will give British businesses a gateway to the Asia-Pacific region.

U.K. Ministers trumpeted the new bilateral agreement with Japan as a clear sign to Brexit opponents that agreements can be struck elsewhere.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Twitter that the deal showed "we have taken back control of our trade policy & will continue to thrive as a trading nation outside the EU."

N. Korea issues shoot-to-kill orders to prevent virus: U.S.

It has created a new 'buffer zone' on the Chinese border

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

North Korean authorities have issued shoot-to-kill orders to prevent the novel coronavirus entering the country from China, according to the commander of US forces in the South.

The impoverished North – whose crumbling health system would struggle to cope with a major virus outbreak – has not confirmed a single case of the disease that has swept the world since first emerging in China, the North's key ally.

Pyongyang closed its border with China in January to try to prevent contamination, and in July state media said it had raised its state of emergency to the maximum level.

U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) commander Robert Abrams said that the border shutdown had increased demand for smuggled goods, prompting authorities to

effects" of economic sanctions imposed on the North over its nuclear programs, he added, with imports from China plunging 85 percent.

The isolated country is also grappling with the aftermath of Typhoon Maysak, with its state media reporting more than 2,000 houses have been destroyed or inundated.

As a result, General Abrams did not expect to see any major provocations from Pyongyang in the near future, although he said it might show off a new weapons system at next month's celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the founding of Kim Jong-un's ruling party.

"They've got North Korean SOF (Special Operations Forces) out there. ... Strike forces, they've got shoot-to-kill orders in place."

The border closure had effectively "accelerated the



Kim Jong-un
intervene.

The North introduced a new "buffer zone, one or 2 km up on the Chinese border," General Abrams told a conference organised by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on Thursday.

"The regime right now – the military – is focused principally on getting their country recovered and to help mitigate the risk of COVID-19," he said.

"We're not seeing any indications right now of any sort of lashing out."

ELSEWHERE



Abe plans major military shift for Japan

TOKYO
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Friday Japan must strengthen its ballistic missile defences, a potentially controversial proposition given the country's pacifist Constitution. "I believe it is necessary to enhance deterrence and thereby further reduce the possibility of an attack against Japan by ballistic missiles and others," Mr. Abe said. Japan's armed forces are restricted to self-defence by the post-war Constitution and the country relies heavily on the U.S. under a bilateral security alliance.

Uproar in Pakistan over gang rape case

Police chief chides victim for being out late

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LAHORE

that no one in Pakistani society would "allow their sisters and daughters to travel alone so late".

Protests held

Sheikh went on to say the woman – a resident of France – probably "mistook that Pakistani society is just as safe" as her home country.

Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari said his remarks were unacceptable.

"Nothing can ever rationalise the crime of rape," she added. Protests were held in cities across Pakistan on Friday, and Mr. Sheikh's comments sparked demands for his resignation.

Flames cut off areas of California, Oregon & Washington; rip through 7,46,000 acres of dry vegetation



Widespread damage: A jet dropping fire retardant to douse the blaze in the Angeles National Forest on Thursday. • AFP

on Thursday evening.
Half a million people have been evacuated in neighboring Oregon, where the government said firefighters were "prioritising life (and) safety as they battle a record 9,00,000 acres of wildfires."

Climate change amplifies droughts which dry out regions, creating ideal conditions for wildfires to spread out-of-control and inflict unprecedented material and environmental damage.

Local Oregon officials confirmed two deaths in the Santiam Canyon region south of Portland, and a third in the Ashland area, near the California border.

Police

TV PICKS

US Open: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5 p.m., 7.30 p.m., 10 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)**Tuscan Grand Prix:** Qualifying, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.20 p.m.**NBA:** Sony Six, 6.30 a.m.**MotoGP:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 4 p.m.**PGA Tour:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 3.30 a.m.

IN BRIEF



Trinbago Knight Riders claim CPL title

TAROUKA Trinbago Knight Riders lifted the Caribbean Premier League title with an eight-wicket victory over St. Lucia Zouks in the final here on Thursday. Chasing a target of 155, TKR won with 11 balls to spare as Lendl Simmons (84, 49b, 8x4, 4x6) and Darren Bravo (58, 47b, 2x4, 6x6) added 138 runs for the unbroken third wicket. TKR also became first team in CPL history to win all matches en route to the title. Earlier, TKR skipper returned four for 30 to restrict Zouks to 154. PTI



Lakers leave Rockets staring down the barrel

MIAMI Anthony Davis had 29 points and 12 rebounds as Los Angeles Lakers dominated Houston Rockets 110-100 to take a commanding 3-1 lead in their NBA Western Conference series on Thursday. **The results:** LA Lakers 110 (Davis 29) bt Houston Rockets 100 (Westbrook 25, Harden 21) **Lakers 3-1.** AFP



CA slams online racist abuse of Dan Christian

SYDNEY An irate Cricket Australia (CA) has slammed online trolls as "uneducated" after all-round Dan Christian was targeted for speaking up about "casual racism" in the sport. Christian took part in a panel discussion in which he said he had experienced the problem of racism first-hand. "It's more of a casual racism," he said. His comments saw two Twitter users saying: "How can someone who looks white be discriminated against?" AFP



Nadal gearing up for return after long break

ROME Rafael Nadal, absent from the US Open, is preparing for his return to competition after a six-month break at the Foro Italico in Rome, the organisers of the Italian Open tweeted on Thursday. "Rafa Nadal is already here, doing his first training sessions," said the tournament's official account with a photo of the Spaniard, while videos posted by fans showed Nadal hitting on the statue-lined clay court with Stan Wawrinka. AFP



Leeds confirms one-year deal with Bielsa

LONDON Leeds confirmed on Friday that manager Marcelo Bielsa had signed a one-year deal ahead of the club's first Premier League game in 16 years. He will remain head coach for the 2020-21 season, Leeds said in a statement. AFP

Azarenka takes on Osaka for title

Williams loses way after winning first set; Brady makes the Japanese sweat

US OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NEW YORK

Victoria Azarenka came from a set down to stun record-chasing Serena Williams on Thursday and set up a US Open final against Japan's Naomi Osaka.

Azarenka recovered from a 6-1 hammering in the first set to win the next two 6-3, 6-3 and schedule her first Grand Slam final appearance in seven years.

Azarenka, who had a son in December 2016, will bid to become only the fourth woman to win a Grand Slam singles title in the Open era after having children. She faces a formidable opponent in two-time Grand Slam winner and fourth seed Naomi Osaka, who defeated 28th seed Jennifer Brady 7-6(1), 3-6, 6-3.

Remarkable run The former World No. 1 is enjoying a remarkable renaissance in New York that the Belarusian credits to finding humility, following several years disrupted by injury and a custody battle over her son.

After a first set plagued by double faults and unforced errors, Azarenka turned the tide in the se-

Serena's struggles

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MUGELLO (ITALY)

Before this, the American had won 92 and lost only one match in her Major career after winning the opening set 6-1 or 6-0 (2014 Wimbledon against Alize Cornet)

Since her comeback in March 2018 after maternity break, Serena has won just one of the 20 tournaments she has entered (Auckland WTA International, January 2020). She has lost five finals, including four at Majors

cond, upping her service game and getting more returns in play as she began to dictate lengthy rallies. She sustained the momentum and went on to win the decider.

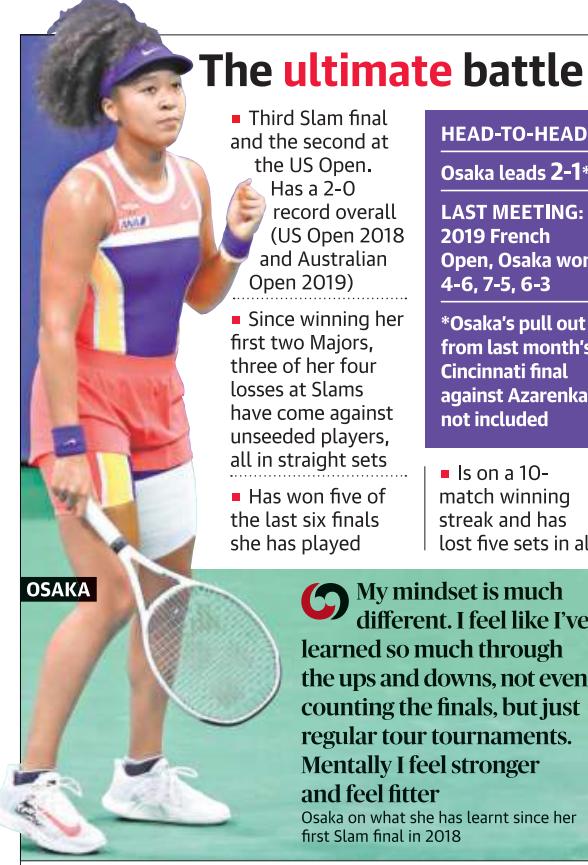
The defeat ended Williams' hopes of winning a record-equalling 24th singles Grand Slam.

Brady, 25, had not dropped a set during her run to her first Grand Slam semifinal. And, the World No. 41 went toe-to-toe with Osaka until the first set tie-break. In set two, Brady broke serve in the eighth game to take a 5-3 lead.

She then successfully held to take the match to the decider. The breakthrough came when Osaka broke serve in the fourth game that included a lucky net-cord point for the Japanese.

Osaka has now won her last 10 matches.

THE RESULTS

Women: Semifinals: 4-Naomi Osaka (Jpn) bt 28-Jennifer Brady (USA) 7-6(1), 3-6, 6-3.**Men's doubles: Final:** Mate Pavic (Cro) & Bruno Soares (Bra) bt 8-Nikola Mektić (Cro) & Wesley Koolhof (Ned) 7-5, 6-3.**OSAKA****AZARENKA**

The ultimate battle

HEAD-TO-HEAD**Osaka leads 2-1*****LAST MEETING:**

2019 French Open, Osaka won 4-6, 7-5, 6-3

***Osaka's pull out**

from last month's Cincinnati final against Azarenka not included

■ Is on a 10-match winning streak and has lost five sets in all**■ Has won five of the last six finals she has played****■ My mindset is much different. I feel like I've learned so much through the ups and downs, not even counting the finals, but just regular tour tournaments. Mentally I feel stronger and feel fitter****Osaka on what she has learnt since her first Slam final in 2018****SATURDAY'S SCHEDULE****Women's final, 01.30 a.m. (Sunday)****SATURDAY'S SCHEDULE****Women's final,**