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by Vibhas Jha Sir
17th June, 2021
(Live-Online classes)



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by Alok Ranjan Sir
(Founder, Digmani Education)
1st week of Aug, 2021
(Live-Online classes)



Anthropology

by Ayaz Khan Sir
18th October, 2021
(Live-Online/Offline classes)



Mathematics

by Maneesh Singh Sir
17th June, 2021
(Live-Online classes)



Sociology

by Raj Kumar Rai Sir
18th October, 2021
(Live-Online/Offline classes)



Philosophy

by Dharmendra Sir
(Founder, Patanjali IAS)
18th October, 2021
(Offline classes)

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- | | | |
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Selections from Classroom Courses	7 out of 10	12 out of 20	76 out of 125	9 out of 10	17 out of 19	33 out of 36	7 out of 10	13 out of 19	47 out of 59	7 out of 9	15 out of 18	50 out of 71	30 out of 39 (77%)	57 out of 76 (75%)	206 out of 291 (70%)

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1 AIR

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E&T Engineering


1 AIR

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Classroom Course, Test Series, Interview Guidance Program



E&T Engineering


1 AIR

Tapan Prakash Jha
Classroom Course, Test Series, Interview Guidance Program





Press Trust of India challenges new IT rules in Delhi High Court

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Jaishankar travels to Tehran, calls on Iranian President-elect

Page 8



Haiti President Jovenel Moïse assassinated, First Lady injured

Page 13

Hurkacz stuns Federer; Shapovalov wins a marathon, meets Djokovic

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NEARBY



Rewari farmers join protest in Rajasthan

GURUGRAM
A large number of farmers from Rewari under the aegis of Bawali Khap-84 reached the protest site at Rajasthan's Shahjahanpur village on Wednesday to support the ongoing agitation against the three farm laws. Swaraj India national president Yogendra Yadav welcomed the farmers.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4



Odisha reports highest single-day COVID deaths

BHUBANESWAR
Odisha on Wednesday reported its highest single-day COVID-19 fatality as 59 people died, taking the toll to 4,358. The highest number of deaths were reported from the Khurda district. The State also registered 2,602 new cases, pushing the tally to 9.2 lakh. There are 28,015 active cases in the State at present.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

High Court seeks report on black fungus drug

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to submit a status report on the availability of Liposomal Amphotericin B, used for treating patients of black fungus, which primarily affects those who have recovered from COVID-19. The Centre was also asked to provide data on the quantity of the drug imported.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

Heavyweights shown the door as PM Modi rejigs Cabinet

Move aimed at bringing in qualified professionals and balancing regional and community aspirations in the run-up to upcoming elections

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a major shake up of his Council of Ministers almost midway through his second term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi oversaw the swearing-in of 43 Ministers (new faces and seven promotions to Cabinet rank) and dropped 12 Ministers (seven Cabinet and five Ministers of State) including Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's new Health Minister would be the newly elevated Cabinet Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

Government sources termed it an effort by Mr. Modi to strike a balance between political messaging of including MPs from various regional centres as well as from marginalised communities and beefing up the skill set of the ministries with professionally and educationally qualified additions.

Several ministries have been clubbed together, sources say, to increase synergy. For example, Odisha MP and former bureaucrat Ashwini Vaishnaw will be the Railway Minister, with additional charge of Information and Technology and Communications, and Dharmendra Pradhan will handle Education with Skill Development while Home Minister Amit Shah will have additional charge of the new Ministry of Cooperation.

The exclusions
The rejig was significant not just for the inclusions but also the heavyweights who were dropped, including Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar, Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Ministers of State Babul Supri-

EYE ON POLLS

A look at the new Cabinet of the Central government which was sworn in on Wednesday



Narayan Tatu Rane, 69
Minister of Micro,
Small and Medium
Enterprises



Sarbananda
Sonowal, 58
Minister of Ports,
Shipping and
Waterways;
and AYUSH



Virendra Kumar, 67
Minister of Social
Justice and
Empowerment



Kiren Rijiju, 49 | Minister of
Law and Justice



S.P. Singh Baghel, 61 | MoS,
Law and Justice



Ajay Kumar, 60 | MoS, Home Affairs
Devinish Chauhan, 56 | MoS,
Communications



Rajeev Chandrasekhar, 57 | MoS,
Skill Development and
Entrepreneurship; Electronics
and Information Technology

Cabinet berths aimed at Gujarat poll

The elevation of two junior Ministers to Cabinet rank and the induction of three more from Gujarat appears to be part of the BJP's strategy to give representation to the Patidars and OBCs ahead of the Assembly poll. ▶ PAGE 9



Jyotiraditya
Scindia, 50
Minister of Civil
Aviation



Ashwini
Vaishnaw, 50
Minister of Railways;
Communications;
Electronics and IT



Mansukh
Mandaviya, 49
Minister of Health
and Family Welfare;
and Chemicals and
Fertilizers



Ramchandra Prasad Singh,
63 | Minister of Steel



Bhupender Yadav, 52 |
Minister of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change;
and Minister of Labour
and Employment



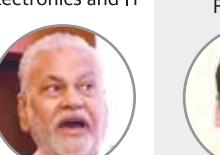
G. Kishan Reddy, 61 |
Minister of Culture;
Minister of
Tourism; and
Minister of
Development of
North Eastern
Region

West Bengal gets highest share ever

The BJP has tried to cater to different regions of West Bengal while inducting four of its MPs in the Council of Ministers. This is the highest-ever representation from the State in any BJP government. ▶ PAGE 9



Pashupati Kumar
Paras, 68
Minister of Food
Processing
Industries



Parshottam
Rupala, 66
Minister of Fisheries,
Animal Husbandry
and Dairying



L. Murugan, 45
MoS for Fisheries,
Animal Husbandry
and Dairying;
Information
and Broadcasting

CABINET COMPOSITION

12

SC Ministers

27

OBC Ministers

4

former CMs

11

Women
Ministers

25

Ministers from
25 States/UTs

Out of the 43
ministers sworn in,
36 are new faces

yo, Debashree Choudhary, Ratan Lal Kataria, Pratap Sarangi and Sanjay Dhotre.

While unhappiness with the handling of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is being cited as the reason why Dr. Harsh Vardhan had to go, Mr. Javadekar and Mr. Prasad's exits appeared to be over the failure to handle controversial issues hitting the government with regard to their ministries.

Portfolios announced

The portfolios of the new Ministers were announced late at night with Jyotiraditya Scindia getting the Civil Aviation portfolio and former Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan getting the Education Ministry. Mr. Pradhan's Petroleum portfo-

lio will be handled by Hardeep Singh Puri, who holds on to one of his old portfolios of Urban Development.

Former Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal will handle Ports and Shipping while the first Cabinet Minister from Arunachal Pradesh, Kiren Rijiju, will handle Law and Justice after the resignation of Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Janata Dal (United)'s R.C.P. Singh will be the new Steel Minister, and Pashupati Paras will occupy his brother, late Ram Vilas Paswan's old portfolio of Food and Consumer Affairs. BJP leader Bhupendra Yadav will be the new Environment and Labour Minister, replacing Mr. Gangwar, who quit on Wednesday, and the Ministry of External Affairs will have

three Ministers of State – V. Muraleedharan and new inductees Meenakshi Lekhi and Rajkumar Ranjan Singh.

Political signalling

With Wednesday's inclusions, the government now has a record 12 Ministers belonging to the Scheduled Castes, 27 belonging to the Other Backward Classes, eight Ministers belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and five Ministers belonging to the minority communities, including one Muslim, one Christian, one Sikh and two Buddhists. Women Ministers number 11 in the Modi government, with two Cabinet Ministers and others being Ministers of State.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

SHIV SAHYA SINGH
KOLKATA

Calcutta High Court Justice Kaushik Chanda on Wednesday imposed a cost of ₹5 lakh on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee while recusing himself from hearing an election petition filed by her. The cost has been imposed for "vilification adopted to seek recusal".

The Chief Minister had filed an election petition in June 2021 before the High Court, alleging irregularities in the counting process in the Nandigram Assembly poll. The matter came for hearing before Justice Kaushik Chanda.

Ms. Banerjee urged the

judge to recuse himself from hearing the petition, alleging that he had links with the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The order said, "The calculated psychological offensives and vilification adopted to seek recusal need to be firmly repudiated, and a cost of ₹5 lakh is imposed upon the petitioner... Such cost should be deposited with the Bar Council of West Bengal within two weeks from date, and upon such deposit, the Bar Council shall set aside the amount for the families of the advocates who had succumbed to COVID-19."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 8

Lekhi in, Harsh Vardhan all set for Delhi return

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Two-time BJP Lok Sabha MP from New Delhi Meenakshi Lekhi replaced the party's veteran local leader and Union Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan in the Union Cabinet on Wednesday.

Given his "seniority, experience and goodwill", party sources said Dr. Harsh Vardhan's exit heralds his return to Delhi politics in the run-up to the civic elections due early next year.

"Dr. Harsh Vardhan was the party's Chief Ministerial candidate in the 2013 Delhi Assembly polls. The party's

State unit will do much better if he is at the helm in one way or another," said a senior leader in the Delhi BJP.

According to party sources, Ms. Lekhi's legal acumen and experience in the administration of Lutyens' Delhi where most embassies are located, as Member, New Delhi Municipal Council, was expected to inform the choice of portfolios for her.

Ms. Lekhi, a practising Supreme Court lawyer, was named Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture.

VARDHAN HAS BECOME THE FALL GUY, SAYS CONGRESS ▶ PAGE 9

Paras not a member of LJP: Paswan

The ousted president of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Chirag Paswan, registered his protest against the appointment of his uncle, Pashupati Nath Paras, in the Union Council of Ministers. ▶ PAGE 9

Two arrested, police searching for a third accused



Kitty Kumaramangalam. ▶ ANI

office runs in the basement, tenants live on the ground floor and on the first floor.

Mr. Singh said police received a call around 10 p.m. about an incident of loot in a house in Vasant Vihar.

When the police reached the house, they were informed by the cook, Mithila, that her employer, Ms. Kitty, had been killed by the washerman and two others.

The cook said the PCR call was made by her brother-in-law Ajay.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SON LOSES MOTHER ON HIS BIRTHDAY ▶ PAGE 2



Dilip Kumar

Kumar's body was taken to his Pali Hill residence around 9.30 a.m., where friends, political leaders and colleagues, including Dhar-

mendra, Shabana Azmi, Shah Rukh Khan and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, paid their respects. "I am very sad today. I can't say anything. I've lost my brother," an emotional Dharmendra told reporters outside Kumar's residence.

Condolence messages for the much-loved star poured in, with President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi joining political leaders, the film fraternity and others to express their grief. "Dilip Kumar summarised in himself a history

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 10

Petrol price crosses ₹100/litre mark in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Boy beaten to death on theft suspicion

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 16-year-old boy was allegedly beaten to death on suspicion of theft in south-west Delhi's Kapashera on Wednesday afternoon. Police have registered a case.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-West) Ingit Pratap Singh said that the victim has been identified as Sandeep Mahto, who is from Jharkhand and a resident of Kapashera. His father works as a driver.

Police said that on Wednesday morning, Sandeep and two of his friends entered a farmhouse owned by one Prakriti Sandhu, a resident of Gurugram. "When the three boys entered, the security guard thought that they had come with the intention of committing theft. Therefore, the guard held all of them but Sandeep's friends managed to flee," a senior police officer said.

Dog bites on body
Police said the owner of the farmhouse then thrashed Sandeep with sticks and the stick appears to have hit him fatally on his head. However, Sandeep fled for 50-60 meters and collapsed. "There are dog bites on his body and it looks like dogs had bitten him when he was fleeing," the officer said.

Around 4.30 p.m., an e-rickshaw contractor then spotted Sandeep lying on the road and made a PCR call after which his family was called for identification.

Police said that a case has been registered and teams are looking for the farmhouse owner.

Farmers gear up for stir against fuel price hike

Protests to be organised across India for 2 hours today: SKM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Large contingents of farmers have started arriving at protest sites in preparation for their agitation on Thursday against fuel price hike, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said on Wednesday.

"At the call of Samyukt Kisan Morcha, protests will be organised across India on Thursday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon for two hours against the hike in diesel, petrol and cooking gas prices," the umbrella body of over 40 farm unions said.

The protesters will reach designated public locations with any means of transport including scooters, motorcycles, tractors, cars, buses, trucks and also with empty gas cylinders, it said. On Wednesday, the petrol price



The SKM has demanded that the fuel prices be halved with immediate effect. ■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

is in Delhi as well as Kolkata crossed the ₹100 a litre mark.

For peaceful march

The SKM has demanded that the fuel prices be halved with immediate effect. It has also appealed to the protesters to keep the demonstration peaceful and on the

roadside, without blocking any pathways.

"This is an issue that affects every section of the society, and SKM appeals that farmers, labourers, youth, students, women, employees, shopkeepers, transporters, traders and others be part of these protests everywhere," the body said.

Petrol crosses ₹100/litre mark in Capital

Cong. workers hold Centre responsible, demand Dharmendra Pradhan's exit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The price of petrol crossed the ₹100/litre mark in the Capital for the first time, fuelling protests from various sections.

Petrol price was increased by 35 paise per litre while diesel rates were increased by 17 paise a litre, according to price notification from State-owned fuel retailers. In Delhi, the price of petrol now stands at ₹100.21 per litre and diesel rates rose to ₹89.53 a litre.



A scene at a filling station in Delhi soon after the fuel price hike on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Demands rollback

The Delhi Congress organised a flash protest outside the residence of Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gases Dharmendra Pradhan, demanding his resignation for failing to keep fuel prices in check. Congress workers held the BJP government at the Centre responsible for the prices of

petrol and diesel and demanded a rollback of excise duty and VAT (value added tax) on these products to give relief to common people.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said that frequent petrol and diesel price hike, almost on a daily basis for the past many weeks, seems to have not affected

the BJP government at the Centre, which is least concerned about the plight of the common people. "The common people have been financially distressed by the pandemic crisis and are in no position to bear the extra burden of oil price hikes," Mr. Kumar said.

He added that the seven BJP MPs from Delhi were not concerned about people's difficulties as their interaction with the residents remains confined to asking votes during elections and fooling people with lies and falsehood. The protesters were stopped by the Delhi police as they moved towards the residence of the Union Minister.

Mr. Kumar said that despite crude oil price in the international market slumping, retail prices of petrol and diesel continue to soar in the country without any checks and balance. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is happy with his friends in the petroleum sector making enormous profits from the retail sale of oil products. "High cost of petrol and diesel has had an adverse impact on the prices of essential commodities as rising transportation costs get reflected when these products reach markets," he said.

Improved last-mile connectivity discussed at meet

Policies on shelter and social infra also find place among suggestions at DDA webinar

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

according to officials.

In a webinar held for consultations on the draft Master Plan for Delhi (MPD) 2041, suggestions pertaining to GIS-based plans, improved last-mile connectivity, detailed mandates on night shelters were discussed among other issues, officials of the Delhi Development Authority said.

Policies and plans pertaining to transport and mobility, shelter and social infrastructure were also discussed at the webinar held on Tuesday,

the major suggestions provided during the webinar were that MPD-2041 to be GIS-based plan, last-mile connectivity to be focused by promoting more Intermediate Public Transport (IPT) modes, facilities mandated for night shelters should be detailed out, women workforce participation to be reflected in provisions for housing," the urban body said.

Additionally, suggestions pertaining to the need for circular rates to be rationalised, permission for vertical mixed use needs to promote urban extension road (UER) with

zones to be adopted on the lines of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) corridors, development of rental housing, inter-linkage of MPD-2041 with the sub-regional plan for NCR and a healthcare infrastructure to cater to the pandemic situation, were among the other issues discussed, officials said.

Meanwhile, the "Main Bhi Dilli" campaign, a citizen's collective, demanded an extended period of six months, instead of the 45 days, to submit responses and feedback to the draft master plan.

metro services were also put forth.

The urban body is conducting a series of webinars for stakeholders and the next one is due on July 13. The draft MPD-2041 was placed in the public domain on June 9 and suggestions and objections from stakeholders were invited by the DDA.

Incident caught on camera; case filed

It was revealed that at the time of the incident, Vinod's wife Seema, mother Savitri Devi, two minor children and a relative Sachin were at home. In the video, Mr. Vinod's minor daughter can be seen reaching out to her mother whose chain was snatched by the accused at gunpoint. The accused could be seen tying Sachin and holding him hostage.

The police said that the accused robbed ₹7-8 lakh

in cash and jewellery worth lakhs after threatening Ms. Seema to give the locker's code.

A case has been registered and teams have been formed to identify and arrest the accused, the police said.

Relative arrested for killing wife, son of IAF employee in Palam

He was irked as aunt used to 'taunt' his family over money

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Accused was present during post-mortem and has been with the family since the murder to ensure that no one suspects him

POLICE

A day after wife and son of an Indian Air Force employee were found murdered at their residence in south-west Delhi's Palam village, police have arrested their relative in connection with the case.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Ingit Pratap Singh said that the accused has been identified as Abhishek Verma (33), a resident of Burari, who allegedly killed his paternal aunt Babita Verma (52) and her son Gaurav Verma (27). The accused was annoyed as his aunt used to allegedly "mentally torture and taunt" his family to return the money she had given for his sister's marriage.

Police said that on Tuesday evening, a PCR call was received by Krishan Swaroop Sudhir (55), who is employed as an accountant in the IAF Palam station, stating that his wife and son have been murdered. When police reached the spot, they found that the two had been killed using dumbbells and almirahs were open.

During investigation, police examined the CCTV footage and saw the accused taking an e-rickshaw to Dasharathpuri metro station where he stopped near a coffee shop. When police tracked down the e-rickshaw driver, he told them that the man had blood on his face and the currency note he gave was torn. So, the driver returned it because of which the accused used e-wallet to pay the driver ₹30.

E-wallet gives clue

When the mobile number was examined, it was found to be in the name of Abhishek Verma. Family members of the victim were asked if they knew this name, after which it was revealed that Abhishek is Babita's brother's son. Abhishek was arrested on Wednesday.

Police said that the accused was present during post-mortem and has been with the family since the murder to ensure that no one suspects him.

During interrogation, it was revealed that Babita had given ₹50,000 to Abhishek's family for his sister's wedding and she used to allegedly "mentally torture and taunt" his family to return the money.

Two days before the incident, the accused had come to the victim's residence and an argument ensued. Therefore, on Tuesday, Abhishek had allegedly come with a plan to kill his aunt but ended up killing the cousin as well because he had witnessed the murder.

Police said Abhishek had come on his two-wheeler, which he parked at Dasharathpuri metro station, and took an e-rickshaw to the house. He was also carrying an extra pair of clothes to change after the incident. After killing the two, Abhishek allegedly opened the almirah to mislead police and make it look like a robbery, police said.

Son loses mother on his birthday

Kitty would go out of her way to help people, says her sister

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI



Bangalore-based Congress leader Ranganjan Mohan Kumaramangalam (43) landed in Delhi on Wednesday morning after he received the news of his mother Kitty Kumaramangalam's murder on the night of July 6, which is his birthday.

Wearing a white shirt and a pair of blue jeans, unable to contain tears at Vasant Vihar police station, he was joined by his mother's family while completing police proceedings and last rites on Wednesday afternoon here.

"It's too uncanny that late P. Ranganjan Kumaramangalam lost his mother on his birthday. The family's two sons lost their mothers on their birthdays," said Kitty's sister Geeta Chaddha.

Talking about her sister, Ms. Chaddha said she was the sweetest person on the planet. "She was the most helpful person who would go out of her way to help people. She was intolerant to wrongdoing. She was vocal and that was her personality. I am sure she would have put up a fight while they were

smothering her because she was a warrior. I haven't met a person who was more selfless than her," the sister remembered of Kitty.

It has been learnt that Kitty used to financially help the accused Raju, her washerman, because he wasn't earning enough during the pandemic.

DU gets over 300 pleas for confidential results

Results of 47 applicants issued so far

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Senior officials of Delhi University on Wednesday said that the varsity had received over 300 requests for issuance of confidential results, of which 47 were issued.

DU had earlier announced that students will be permitted to apply for confidential results to ease the application process for higher education or jobs.

In a notice issued on June 25, DU had said that students can seek confidential results in order to apply for higher studies or job purposes.

DU Dean of Examinations D.S. Rawat said: "We have received 354 applications till date for the issuance of confidential results out of which 47 have been issued already. The examination got over on June 28 and the first confidential result was issued on June 30."

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DU Dean of Examinations D.S.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, JUL. 08
RISE 05:31 SET 19:23
RISE 03:47 SET 18:10
FRIDAY, JUL. 09
RISE 05:31 SET 19:23
RISE 04:34 SET 19:04
SATURDAY, JUL. 10
RISE 05:32 SET 19:23
RISE 05:27 SET 19:54

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	43	30
Safdarjung	43	30
Palam	42	31

Delhi Palam Today
40°C Duststorm & thunder-storm with light rain may occur at some places towards evening. Day would remain hot with partly cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
38°C Light rain and thunder-storm likely at some places with gusty winds. Drop in day temperature likely.

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L-G reviews progress of Yamuna project

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal reviewed the progress of work related to the restoration and rejuvenation of the Yamuna riverfront along with DDA Vice-Chancellor, senior officials and experts on Wednesday.

While appreciating the progress of the rejuvenation work undertaken so far, a senior officer present at the meeting said the L-G emphasised that each constituent project be assigned specific timelines that should be strictly adhered to for effective monitoring and timely completion of projects.

According to the officer, the L-G advised that the provision of eco-friendly amenities and conveniences in the above areas, including zero-waste toilets, drinking water, sit-outs, solar lights and signages be made available to encourage increased utilisation of these assets and to foster strong ownership of the community.

The L-G also advised the DDA V-C to take steps for adequate surveillance and security of the area in collaboration with local police.

Delhi gets own genome sequencing lab

Kejriwal inaugurates facility at Lok Nayak Hospital; machine will help identify all variants of COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday inaugurated the SARS CoV-2 genome sequencing facility at Lok Nayak Hospital. It will help in timely identification of COVID-19 variants and aid strategies to counter them, he said.

The third such facility in north India, Mr. Kejriwal stated that the machine will be able to identify and analyse all variants of COVID-19 for any future waves or spreads in the city. Until now, he added, Delhi was dependent on the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) for this purpose.

The machine will be able to sequence 5 to 7 samples in a day with a turnaround time of about 4 to 5 days. This fa-



Arvind Kejriwal at the genome sequencing facility at Lok Nayak Hospital in New Delhi. ■ PTI

cility will be used mainly for surveillance and public health purposes as identification of variants of concern in interest would be done.

Follow precautions
The Chief Minister also appealed to residents to follow

COVID-19-appropriate behaviour and take requisite precautions to prevent the outbreak of another wave of infection.

"We have been constantly reading in the newspapers that new variants and mutations of COVID-19 are emerg-

ing every day. So as to get our samples tested, we were dependent upon the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the lab of the Central government," he said.

"Through this machine, we will be able to analyse all the variants of COVID-19 and understand them for any future waves or spreads in Delhi, if at all they are witnessed. If we get to know the variant on time, we will be able to strategise our preparations well and it will be helpful in taking the right action," he said.

Mr. Kejriwal said the genome sequencer facility will be an asset not only for Delhi but for northern India.

The COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing and new viral variants were rapidly emerging leading to recur-

rent outbreaks.

As the pandemic was notorious for undergoing mutations, he said, it was of paramount importance to identify the circulating viral strains so that contact tracing can be done to check the further spread of variants.

Another facility soon

The Delhi government is setting up another SARS CoV-2 genome sequencing facility at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Services to tackle a possible third wave of CO-

VID-19 pandemic, he said. "I appeal to the public that while activities are being opened, the people of Delhi should follow social distancing and take the right precautions, else COVID-19 might spread again," Mr. Kejriwal added.

ber of patients had gone down.

"If we are preparing for the third wave of COVID-19, we need to see the arrangement for it," the Bench said.

The court was informed by the Centre's counsel that presently there are 17,000 cases of black fungus in the country, which have come down from 23,000-24,000.

In May, the High Court had allowed duty-free import of Amphotericin B till the Central government took a final decision on waiving the customs and other duties on the drug. The court had also asked the Centre to come out with a policy on distribution of Amphotericin B due to its current scarcity.

HC: submit report on black fungus drug

It also seeks details of imports from govt.

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to submit a status report on availability of Liposomal Amphotericin B, used for treating patients of mucormycosis (black fungus), which primarily affects those who have recovered from COVID-19.

A Bench of Justices Vinod Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh asked the Centre to also indicate the quantities of the drug imported and the outstanding supplies and also its domestic production.

No shortage

The court was informed that there was no shortage of the drug as of now as the num-

'North body hasn't given ration to 3.5L children'

No distribution for a year, alleges AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party MLA Saurob Bharadwaj on Wednesday alleged that the BJP-ruled North Corporation has failed to distribute mid-day meal ration for a year due to which over 3.5 lakh children from 700 schools are yet to receive their dry ration.

Mr. Bharadwaj said that due to COVID-19, all schools have remained shut.

The Delhi government took the initiative to give the children their due share in the form of dry ration by calling and giving it to their parents. However, in North Corporation schools, not even a single child has been

given the dry ration, he said. "It is very shameful that about 3.5 lakh students in about 700 schools are not receiving ration. The North body that was supposed to distribute 2,924 tonnes of ration has failed to distribute even 1 kg of it," he alleged.

"It is July now and not even a single child has received the ration since the last year," Mr. Bharadwaj said.

Responding to it, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that the North body had already dispatched dry ration to most of its schools and within the next 4 to 5 days ration distribution will start.

BJP accuses AAP leaders of siphoning off ration meant for poor

'They have been caught stealing and black-marketing it'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its leaders of siphoning off ration meant for distribution amongst poor in Delhi and selling them in the market.

The BJP claimed to have caught AAP worker red-handed while trying to steal dry ration from a storage point in Trilokpuri to sell it in the black market. Party also staged a protest against the local AAP MLA, it said.

"Ration meant for the poor had been stored in the Government Boys Senior Secondary School at New Ash-

ok Nagar. However, the AAP workers with the connivance of the school management stole the ration and started selling them in the open market," Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged.

Demands arrest
"We demand that an FIR be lodged against the AAP MLA and he should be arrested immediately. The Delhi Food and Civil Supplies Minister should also resign," he demanded.

Mr. Bidhuri claimed that 516 food kits had already been stolen and this was the

second time that AAP workers had come to pick up kits to sell in the open market, but we caught them red-handed.

Stolen ration had also been recovered from the house of an AAP party worker which he offered to return to the school, he alleged.

"What is most unfortunate is that action had been taken against the school principal in the matter, but no action had been taken against the AAP MLA or the party workers," Mr. Bidhuri alleged.

"We have sent all the evidence of the incident to L-G Anil Baijal for appropriate action," he said.

under home isolation.

Vaccination drive
According to the vaccination bulletin issued by the government, 34,688 beneficiaries were vaccinated on Wednesday, out of which 19,162 got their first dose.

The total number of beneficiaries vaccinated since the drive began has reached 85,04,690, of which 19,56,331 have received both doses.

The government said that Delhi was facing a shortage of vaccinations with Covaxin being used only for the second dose as its stocks are limited and have irregular delivery supply.

DELHI POLLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Create public awareness through advertisement, publications, posters or by other means with regard to **hazards of lead**.

Dealers

- Apply for registration by submitting online application in **Form - IV** available on DPCC website by creating user ID and password for the period of five years.
- Shall ensure that the used batteries are collected back as per the schedule against new batteries sold excluding those sold to original equipment manufacturer and bulk consumer(s).
- Shall file a half-yearly return of their sales and buy-back to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) in **Form - I** latest by 30th June (for Oct-Mar) and 31st December (for Apr-Sept) of every year.
- Set up collection centres either individually or jointly at various places for collection of used batteries from consumers or dealers and shall ensure that the collected batteries are sent only to the registered recyclers.
- Shall ensure that necessary arrangements are made with dealers for safe transportation from collection centres to the premises of registered recyclers and shall ensure that no damage to the environment occurs during the transportation.
- Create public awareness through advertisement, publications, posters or by other means with regards to **(a) hazard of lead (b) responsibility of consumers to return their used batteries only to the dealer or deliver at designated collection centre and (c) address of the dealer and designated collection centres.**
- Buy recycled lead only from registered recyclers.
- Bring to the notice of the DPCC or the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India for any violation by the dealers.
- Importers shall apply for registration as per **Form II** and **Form III** on the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) online portal for a period of five years (link: <http://cpcbrms.nic.in/>).



and buy-back of old batteries to the DPCC and manufacturer in **Form-V** latest by 31st May (for Oct-Mar) and 30th November (for Apr-Sept) of every year.

Recyclers

- Shall apply for registration to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change or an agency designated by it (if not applied already), by submitting information in **Form VI**.
- Shall submit half-yearly returns as per **Form VII** to the DPCC latest by 30th June (for Oct-Mar) and 31st December (for Apr-Sept) of every year.
- Shall make available all records relating to receipt of used batteries, sources, quantities and metal yield to be submitted to the DPCC.
- Create public awareness through advertisement, publications, posters or by other

Auctioneers

- Shall ensure that used batteries are auctioned to the registered recyclers only.
- Shall maintain records relating to receipt of used batteries, sources, quantities and metal yield and submit to DPCC.
- Shall file half-yearly returns of their auctions latest by 30th June and 31st December to DPCC in **Form-IX**.

Note: As per Batteries (Management and Handling) Amendment Rules, 2010, every dealer of Lead Acid Battery shall obtain registration from DPCC, within 30 days of this Notice and in case of failure legal action including prosecution shall be initiated.

Member Secretary

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Rewari farmers join protest in Rajasthan

Farmers' movement is gaining strength with each passing day, says Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

A large number of farmers from Rewari under the aegis of Bawali Khap-84 reached the protest site at Rajasthan's Shahjahanpur village on Wednesday to support the ongoing agitation against the three farm laws.

Welcoming the farmers, Swaraj India national president Yogendra Yadav said the farmers' movement was gaining strength with each passing day. He said that those who were claiming that the movement had lost its steam must see the huge number of farmers reaching the protest site at Shahjahanpur in tractors and trolleys. Mr. Yadav said the farmers' morale was high and they would soon emerge victorious.

He said farmers from neighbouring villages in Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab were reaching the Shahjahanpur protest site every day despite blistering heat. Mr.



Yogendra Yadav

peacefully continue with the agitation and their victory was confirmed.

The farmer unions have given a call for nationwide protest against the rise in prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas on July 8.

'Contest Punjab Polls'

Meanwhile, Haryana Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) chief Gurnam Singh Charuni said on Wednesday said that outfit involved in farmers' agitation against the new agriculture laws should contest the Punjab Assembly elections as it will "present a model on how the system can be changed".

Mr. Charuni, a key leader of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) which is spearheading the farmers' stir, said: "What I want to say is that we should not run 'Mission U.P.', but 'Mission Punjab'." SKM has planned a mahapanchayat in September and other activities in Uttar Pradesh, which

goes to the polls next year. "Now, we are moving for Mission U.P. A mahapanchayat will be organised on September 5. Other activities will happen. Then polls will come and we will work to defeat the BJP. If we assume BJP gets defeated, will the Centre then agree to our demands? Don't take it otherwise," asked Mr. Charuni in a video message, and cited the example of West Bengal, where the farmer bodies campaigned against the BJP.

"The BJP was defeated there, but did the Centre then accept our demand?" he asked.

Mr. Charuni said that the BJP and the Congress have not been able to change the system. "Then from whom should we expect to do this? If we have to change the system, then we will have to formulate a plan. And that plan should be 'Mission Punjab,'" he said.

(With PTI inputs)

Yadav added that the movement had improved the self-respect of the farmers who had risen above caste and religion to unite and fight for their rights.

'We stand united'

He said that 450 farmer organisations had joined hands to spearhead the ongoing agitation and still stood united despite the efforts from the government to create division. The Swaraj India chief said the farmers were awakened and had learnt to

closing down large-scale industries for five days and reducing contracted power load of continuous supply to industry by 50%.

"This has broken the back of the industry which is suffering losses of worth crores of rupees on a daily basis besides losing orders," said Mr. Badal, holding Chief Minister (Retd.) Captain Amarinder Singh responsible for the state of affairs.

He said collection of bills for the current cycle be deferred by two months for the sector. "Power should also be provided at a landing cost of

₹5 per unit as promised by the Chief Minister," he said, adding that the industry was paying nearly ₹10 per unit.

'PSPCL in a sad State'

Mr. Badal also demanded a special session of the Assembly to discuss the complete mismanagement of the situation. He said the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), which had been declared as the best electricity utility in 2015 during the SAD government led tenure, was now finding it difficult to even supply adequate power to the consumers due to lack of maintenance of transmission and distribution system," he said.

"Mismanagement and the Congress government's failure to add a single mega watt in the last four and a half years has led to a situation where farmers are not getting adequate supply for their paddy crop even as unscheduled power cuts are being imposed on domestic consumers. The Chief Minister owes an explanation as to how a power-surplus State during SAD tenure has become deficient and unable to even distribute power to consumers due to lack of maintenance of transmission and distribution system," he said.

Supported by a health research institution, the start-ups have conducted research and made intelligent planning with an out-of-box thinking to

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EDUCATIONAL

Shriomani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday demanded the Congress government provide financial package to the industry for the losses suffered by it on account of forced shutdown amid the ongoing power crises.

Mr. Badal said after suffering huge losses due to the COVID lockdown in the last one and a half years, the sector was presently in the grip of a "power lockdown" with the government imposing a three-day compulsory off,

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Shriomani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday demanded the Congress government provide financial package to the industry for the losses suffered by it on account of forced shutdown amid the ongoing power crises.

This is to inform all concern that Smt. Indra Dudi W/o Late Sh. Birbal Singh R/o House opposite Kirish Cyan Kinder, Delhi Road, Rohtak, who is the original allottee of Shop No 101, Block-II, Sector-29, Ganga Shopping Complex, Noida U.P., said property on General Power of Attorney basis to Col (Retd) O.P. Dudi S/o Late Sh. Birbal Singh R/o House No. 1418, in Sector-29, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P., and General Power of Attorney was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar, Noida, U.P., on dated 02.12.2006, as Document No. 503, and the Agreement to sell was executed in favour of Smt. Shiksha Dudi W/o Col. O.P. Dudi, R/o House No. 1418, in Sector-29, Noida, U.P., on basis of General Power of attorney. If any one has any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the commercial department of Noida authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Col. O.P. Dudi

Reference tender notice published on 18/06/2021 regarding supply of machinery & equipment for Common facility centre at Murthal, Sonipat, Haryana, this is to inform you that due to some unavoidable reasons the last date for submission of bids has been extended to 19/07/2021, 12 PM and bids shall be opened at 3.30 PM. Tender available on www.urida.org Capt. Deepak Raj (Secretary) Urba Rural Integrated Development Association, WZ-33A, Dayasara Road, Utam Nagar, New Delhi-110092

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CORRIGENDUM

Reference tender notice published on 18/06/2021

regarding supply of machinery & equipment for Common facility

centre at Murthal, Sonipat, Haryana,

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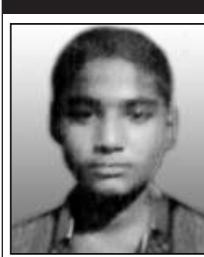
APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male **Namely:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 30 Years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5' 6", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Without clothes, **ID:** Mentally disturbed, who was found near Majdiya Hospital, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 21A Dated 30.06.2021 has been registered at P.S. Tigri, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

Sd/- SHO
P.S: Tigri, New Delhi
Tel.: 011-26041473

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



UMESH KUMAR @ LALA
General Public is hereby informed that one boy **Namely:** Umesh Kumar @ Lala, **S/o:** Late Sanjay Kumar, **R/o:** 102, Old Kondli Village, Gali No. 1, Jatav Mohalla, Delhi-110096, **Age:** 13 Years, **Height:** 4'. **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Blue Colour Jeans, Red & Black Jarsi and Hawai Chappal in Feet has been missing/kidnapped since 12.12.2018 from the area of P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 658/18, U/s 363 IPC, Dated 17.12.2018, has been lodged at P.S. New Ashok Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing/kidnapped boy but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing/kidnapped boy please inform the undersigned.

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-23011334
DP/576/ED/2021

SEARCH FOR MISSING FEMALE



USHA
General public is here by informed that this female namely Usha D/o Megha Ram R/o T-634/17, Near Chachi Ka Mandir, Baljeet Nagar, Delhi **Age :** 21 years, **Height :** 5'2", **Face :** Round, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Built :** Medium, wearing pink colour suit, red colour salwar and hawai chappal in feet, has been missing since 19.06.2021 at about 11:30 A.M. from her house. In this regard DD No. 31 dated 20.06.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing female may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
Fax: 011-25874034, 8750870434, 8750870436
DP/590/ED/2021

Punjab BJP gave incorrect feedback'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA CHANDIGARH

A day after the Punjab BJP issued a show-cause notice to him for his "anti-party" activities, former Minister Anil Joshi on Wednesday slammed the State unit alleging that it did not give correct feedback to the Centre on farm laws.

Mr. Joshi claimed that initially, farmers protesting against the farm laws had a few demands that could have been handled had the BJP's Punjab unit not projected that all was hunky-dory in the State.

He also said State BJP president Ashwani Sharma

should admit his failure and resign rather than issuing him notices.

Only traditional food items to be served at Assam govt. events

Handwoven gamosa to be used at official programmes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Only traditional food items will be served at government programmes in Assam, the State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma decided on Wednesday.

The decision has been taken in sync with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credo of 'vocal for local' for promoting indigenous food products, a government spokesperson said.

Assam has a variety of snacks, mostly on the sweater side and made of powdered rice, coconut and other locally available ingredients.

"Traditional snacks such as pitha and laaru will be served with tea at official functions from now on," the spokesperson said.

The Cabinet also decided to make it mandatory for

handwoven gamosa – the traditional multipurpose scarf-towel – to be used at government programmes.

Gifting an Assamese gamosa to visitors or dignitaries is a tradition in Assam. The tradition is similar for other indigenous communities with the Bodos, for one, using the arnai or a decorative scarf.

But over the years, cheaper machine-made gamosas from Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have threatened to push Assam's weavers out of business. According to a 2018 estimate by the State government, Assam has more than 13 lakh looms out of a total of 28 lakh looms in the country.

Seizures of machine-made gamosas under the Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985, have had little impact. The Act reserves certain

articles for exclusive production by handloom. These include the gamosa, angavastram and the Manipuri phanek.

Playing the State anthem 'O m' apunar dekh' at the beginning of all government programmes and meetings and the national anthem 'Jana gana mana' at the end was another decision taken by the Cabinet.

Awards for govt. staff

Among other decisions was an annual performance-based award for five non-gazetted employees at the district and 10 at the State level. Apart from citations on Karimachari Divas (August 5) to mark the death anniversary of the State's first Chief Minister Gopinath Bardoloi, the award-winning employees will get a year's extension of service, the spokesperson said.

Health start-ups providing innovative solutions

They have begun rolling out new concepts of hybrid pharmacy and diagnostics

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

Health start-ups coming up in Rajasthan during the COVID-19 pandemic have provided some innovative solutions to overcome the crisis amid the virus infection putting an excessive burden on the public health infrastructure. The start-ups have kicked off with the new concepts of hybrid pharmacy and diagnostics.

Supported by a health research institution, the start-ups have conducted research and made intelligent planning with an out-of-box thinking to

provide succour to those affected by the second wave of pandemic as well as other other patients whose health needs constant monitoring. The institution provided orientation to several of the entrepreneurs who launched the new units.

CIIIE support

The Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIIE) at the Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR) University here has extended support to the nascent startups in the State and helped them with

the entrepreneurial skills. Home healthcare for the elderly patients was a major area of intervention in the services of start-ups.

CIIIE chairperson Sheenu Jain said here on Wednesday that while one of the start-ups had come up for operating in the sphere of hybrid pharmacy, another had launched health-based devices for diabetes and other allied diseases.

Supported by a health research institution, the start-ups have conducted research and made intelligent planning with an out-of-box thinking to

evolving the prototypes for start-ups and supported them through mentoring, legal assistance and company registration. Dr. Jain said the CIIIE would shortly become the first purely health-based incubator in Rajasthan and get the State government's support for laying a strong foundation for the units adding value to the healthcare services.

A women's entrepreneurship development programme launched by the CIIIE has helped out women entrepreneurs to take up the startup projects with profitable outcomes.

2 more held for 'indecent' sloganeering

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BALLIA (U.P.)

Two more people were arrested on Wednesday for allegedly indulging in "indecent" sloganeering against Uttar Pradesh Minister Upendra Tiwari and his family members, police said.

The police also said charges of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act have been added in the FIR.

After the initial probe, charges of the POCSO Act have been included in the FIR, he said.

Tiwari's family had demanded that the accused be booked under the POCSO Act as the slogans targeted the minister's two minor daughters.

IN BRIEF



Swami Prakashananda of Sivagiri Math is no more

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Swami Prakashananda, former president of Sree Narayana Dharma Sangham Trust and former head of the Sivagiri Math, passed away here on Wednesday. He was 99. The last rites were performed at Sivagiri Math.

Govt. attaches Roshan Baig's assets in IMA scam

BENGALURU
The government on Wednesday told the High Court of Karnataka that it has issued a notification on July 6, 2021, attaching around 20 immovable and movable assets of former Minister R. Roshan Baig situated in various parts of the Bengaluru in connection with his alleged involvement in the scam of I Monetary Advisory (IMA) group of companies.

Kitex: court order on minimum wages awaited

KOCHI
The Labour Department has said that action on the notice issued to Kitex Garments Limited, Kizhakkambalam, for violation of minimum wages rules as per Government Order (P) No. 143/2019 of December 30, 2019, will be taken in accordance with the orders of the court.

A.P. decides to reopen schools on August 16

VIJAYAWADA
The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to reopen schools on August 16. Speaking after attending a review meeting with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh said online classes would commence from July 12. Teachers would be given training on workbooks from July 15 to August 15, he added.

HC for further probe into Fazal's murder

Order to CBI comes after confessional statement of RSS activist that he was involved in the killing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHEE

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to conduct further investigation into the murder of National Development Front (NDF), now Popular Front of India, activist Mohammed Fazal at Thalassery in 2006 in view of the confessional statement given by a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) activist.

Justice Ashok Menon directed the CBI to constitute a special team to further investigate the case.

The order was passed while allowing a petition filed by P.K. Abdul Sathar, elder brother of Fazal, for a directive to conduct further investigation into the case. He

pointed out that further investigation was required in the light of the statement given by RSS activist Subeesh alias 'Kuppi' Subeesh that he was involved in the murder.

Subeesh made the confession in 2016 when he was interrogated by the Koothuparamba police in connection with the murder of CPI(M) activist Mohanan. He stated that Fazal was murdered by RSS workers, including himself and three others, namely Proneesh, Prabheesh and Shinoj.

The court observed that there was undoubtedly a need for examination of the confession statement of Subeesh and the attending circumstances. It might be true that the CBI might not be satisfied with the materials



Mohammed Fazal

now collected by the local police during the investigation in some other case involving Subeesh. But there was no harm in examining those materials also, as part of a further investigation. Without an examination of

those materials by the investigating agency, it was not proper to discard them altogether.

The Ernakulam CBI Special Court had earlier dismissed the petitioner's plea for further investigation, holding that once the final report is filed, the de facto complainant could not seek further investigation invoking the provisions under Section 173 (8) CrPC, without the investigating officer asking for it.

The State government had submitted before the court that the murder was a sequel to the NDF-RSS standoff in Thalassery in October 2006.

The CBI took over the investigation on the directive of the High Court on a plea by the victim's wife Mariyu.

According to the investiga-

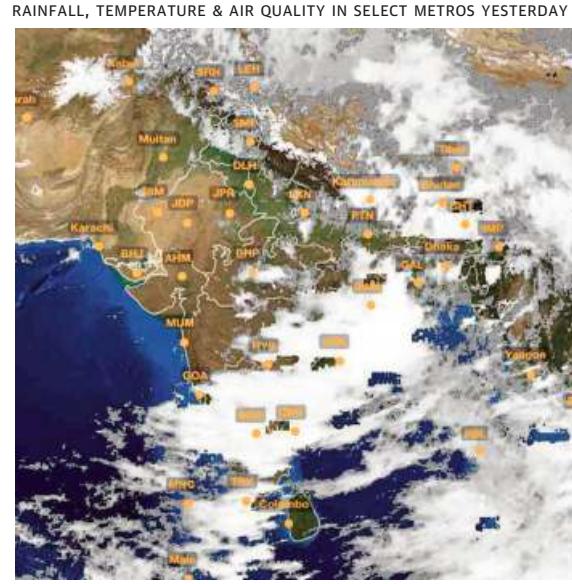
tion agency, Fazal of Madapedia from Kodiyeri was murdered allegedly by a group of CPI(M) sympathisers after he defected from the CPI(M) and joined the NDF on October 22, 2006.

Eight persons, including Karai Rajan and Karai Chandrashekaran, CPI(M) local leaders, were arrested by the CBI.

M.K. Sunil Kumar, alias 'Kodi' Suni, who had been convicted in the case of the murder of Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) leader T.P. Chandrashekaran, was named the prime accused in the case.

According to the CBI, the murder was masterminded by Rajan and Chandrashekaran because of political animosity.

WEATHER WATCH



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)
Forecast for Thursday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Assam, Sikkim, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, Konkan & Goa, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Rajasthan

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	84...	31.0...	25.6	Kozhikode	...	32.8...	25.6
Ahmedabad	38.5...	28.2	26.1	Kurnool	...	35.4...	26.1
Aizawl	...	27.0...	23.4	Lucknow	...	39.0...	28.2
Aligarh	...	39.1...	28.4	Madurai	...	38.5...	25.0
Bengaluru	...	29.4...	22.3	Mangaluru	6.3...	29.5...	24.5
Bhopal	...	37.8...	26.7	Mumbai	17.9...	33.5...	26.6
Bhubaneswar	...	33.8...	27.6	Mysuru	...	31.9...	21.4
Chandigarh	...	41.8...	26.7	New Delhi	...	42.6...	29.5
Chennai	...	36.2...	27.8	Patna	9...	33.8...	26.6
Coimbatore	...	35.0...	24.5	Port Blair	20...	29.4...	24.7
Dehradun	6.4...	35.4...	24.8	Puducherry	...	34.7...	26.0
Gangtok	45...	21.7...	19.5	Pune	77.2...	31.8...	22.1
Goa	5...	32.3...	26.1	Raipur	...	36.4...	27.0
Guwahati	...	33.6...	27.5	Ranchi	...	32.6...	24.3
Hubballi	...	28.0...	22.1	Shillong	7...	23.1...	18.7
Hyderabad	...	36.5...	24.6	Shimla	...	30.4...	22.1
Imphal	0.7...	31.8...	22.1	Srinagar	...	32.1...	16.8
Jaipur	...	40.4...	30.3	Thiruvananthapuram	...	32.5...	25.6
Kochi	22...	31.2...	24.4	Tiruchi	...	38.3...	25.6
Kohima	3...	31...	17.6	Vijayawada	...	37.8...	27.8
Kolkata	15...	35.7...	28.4	Visakhapatnam	...	34.8...	27.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	11	17	108	131	.126	■■■
Bengaluru	11	37	60	57	.126	■■■
Chennai	6	13	117	24	.42	■■■
Delhi	12	96	90	228	217	■■■
Hyderabad	5	39	35	57	.68	■■■■■
Kolkata	11	25	30	102	.98	■■■■■
Lucknow	4	44	86	135	.149	■■■■■
Mumbai	43	10	—	79	.103	■■■■■
Pune	5	20	81	127	.122	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	10	53	47	77	.112	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4 p.m., Chandigarh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 238 indicating unhealthy levels of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 17.

Achievement awards

ceive the Lifetime Achievement Award is the late Palla Venkanna, founder of Kadym Nurseries.

Among the writers are included the late Kalipatnam Rama Rao (Kara Master, Sri-kakulam) and Katti Padma Rao (Guntur).

Among the journalist Life-time Achievement awardees are Palagummi Sainath (Chennai) and retired cartoonist of *The Hindu* Surendra (Kadapa).

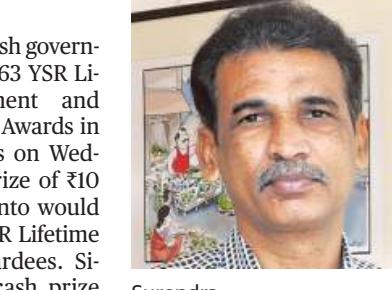
Achievement awardees include COVID-19 warriors Dr. Nitichandra (Professor, Pulmonology, Nellore), Lakshmi (staff nurse, GGH, Vijayawada) and Turubilli Tejaswi (staff nurse, Visakhapatnam).

The awards will be pre-

sented on August 14 or 15.

Andhra Pradesh announces YSR achievement awards

Surendra, retired cartoonist of *The Hindu*, among awardees



Surendra

ters, eight journalists, and eight COVID-19 warriors for the awards.

Among the YSR Lifetime Achievement awardees are the MSN Charities Trust (Kakinada), the C.P. Brown Library (YSR Kadapa), and the Maharaja Government College of Music and Dance (Vizianagaram).

The farmer who will re-

Recoveries dip as Maharashtra reports more than 9,500 fresh COVID-19 cases

Pune records highest infections; active tally climbs to 1.14 lakh; 179 patients succumb



A beneficiary receives a dose of COVID-19 vaccine as others wait outside at a hospital in Navi Mumbai. ■ FILE PHOTO

with the recovery rate standing at 96.05%.

"Of a total 4,31,24,800 laboratory samples tested thus far, 61,22,893 (with the average case positivity falling incrementally to 14.2%) have returned positive with

over 2.16 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pardeep Awate said.

Pune reported 1,533 new cases taking its total case tally to 10,63,678. Seven deaths were reported as the fatality

toll rose to 17,034. According to district authorities, the active cases went up to nearly 10,500 while the death toll touched 18,034.

Mumbai recorded 662 new cases to take its total tally to 7,26,278 while the active cases declined to 12,255. Nine fatalities took the city's death count to 15,573.

Kolhapur added more than 1,300 new cases taking its total cases to 1,68,015 of whom 12,902 are active. As many as 17 deaths saw the toll climb to 4,847.

Satara registered 1,114 cases and nine deaths as its total case tally rose to 1,99,014 of whom 7,675 are active while the fatality toll went up to 4,781.

Neighbouring Sangli logged more than 900 new cases and 17 deaths were charred to death.

Pune fire: flagrant violation of safety norms, labour laws at chemical unit, reveals report

Fact-finding team held interviews with survivors, kin of deceased, district officials

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

A fact-finding team, probing the horrific Pune chemical factory blaze last month in which 17 workers, most of them women, were killed, has found that the factory owners flagrantly violated safety and labour laws and that the authorities from the State Industrial Safety and Health Department connived with the factory owners in granting the firm a licence in the absence of all safety norms.

A fire erupted on June 7 on the premises of SVS Aqua Technologies in Mulshi taluk. The blaze, which sounded like a bomb explosion to 37 workers trapped inside the cramped working space, spread with such rapid intensity that 17 of them were charred to death.

having failed to pressure him to withdraw his complaint against former Home Minister Aishwarya.

On March 20 last, Mr. Singh wrote to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, alleging that Mr. Deshmukh directed suspended police officer Sachin Vaze to collect ₹100 crore from bars and restaurants over a month.

The FIR was registered on April 24, 2021, by police inspector Bhimraj Ghadge against Mr. Singh under several sections of the Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Civil Rights Protection Act, the Indian Penal Code, and the Maharashtra Police Act, at Akola.

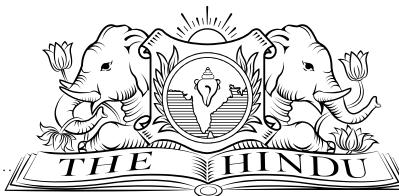
The team, organised by the Trade Union Action Committee, comprised Nitish Nawsagaray, a professor at the city-based ILS Law College; Vivek Patwardhan, a senior HR professional; advocate Vishal Jadhav; health and safety expert Prahlad Malvadkar; and social researcher Roma Makati. It held detailed interviews with the survivors, the kin of the deceased, and the Pune division and district authorities.

No training for workers

The report revealed that the factory had been in operation since 2012 but had neither obtained a licence under the Factories Act, 1948, nor even bothered to acquire one till 2020. Contrary to the line given out by the factory owners, the

workers were not given any training on the safety precautions or made aware of the enormous risk of handling chemicals, it said.

"Since commencement of its operations in 2012, no officer of the Industrial Safety and Health Department had ever visited the factory nor sent any notice even once till December last year regarding norms



Perfecting the test

CBSE's plan for Class 10 and 12 assessments should incorporate needs of stressed schools

Preparing for an uncertain academic year ahead during the pandemic, the Central Board of Secondary Education has decided on an assessment scheme for Classes 10 and 12 for 2021-22 under various scenarios, including the possibility that Board examinations can be conducted, should circumstances improve. The year gone by was extremely challenging for all Boards, and the CBSE had to hastily come up with a scheme to assess candidates in Class 12. It became clear that even with its high emphasis of academics, there was considerable deprivation for some students, and not all got the opportunity to complete their syllabus or attend online classes even in the national capital. The wide coverage of the Board, as of 2019, includes 1,138 Kendriya Vidyalayas, 2,727 government schools, 17,553 independent schools, 598 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and 14 Central Tibetan schools, and schools abroad. The diversity of students and their varied backgrounds was apparently reckoned to some degree while drafting the scheme for the coming year, which includes a mix of internal assessments for Classes 9-10 and 11-12, and term examinations in November-December and in March-April 2022. There will be a rationalised, compartmentalised syllabus split into two halves for each term. The scheme, which has the benefit of advance planning unlike the past year, must be responsive to the issues faced by all institutions in remote locations and the deprivation faced by less privileged students.

The CBSE's special scheme relies on syllabus rationalisation done through expert evaluation of interconnectivity of subjects, and a centralised protocol of question papers and marking scheme for the term examinations. In the case of term I, it will be a multiple-choice question (MCQ) type test stretching over 90 minutes, with machine-readable optical marking, and for term II, a short-and-long-answers model, if circumstances permit. Efficient as it may sound, the multiple-choice model is critiqued by some as inferior, with sometimes irrelevant and meaningless questions that add up to little in terms of assessment, helping only the marking process. An adjunct to the MCQ pattern could be a decentralised process, empowering regional CBSE units and external experts to consider the state of particular districts and come up with assessments tailored to specific situations. At the same time, the Board has done well to plan for different scenarios that could be imposed by the pandemic, where either of the term examinations or both cannot be held, or the second term has to be converted into the MCQ type. The fallback option in the worst-case scenario is a combination of internal assessments, practical and project work and theory examinations taken at home. The extreme uncertainty underscores the need to take online lessons to all classes of students, and factor in schools with special needs.

The surge

The Taliban should not be allowed to take control of Afghanistan through bloodshed

The rapid territorial gains made by the Taliban over the last two months should worry both the Afghan government and the regional powers who are invested in the country's long-term stability. The Taliban started their latest offensive on May 1, the day the remaining U.S. troops started withdrawing as part of President Joe Biden's plan. With 90% of U.S. withdrawal complete, the Taliban have taken control of 195 of Afghanistan's 407 districts, and are contesting 129 others. Most of their recent victories are in the northern provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar, which had resisted Taliban rule in the 1990s. In several northern districts, Afghan troops have either surrendered or retreated. If the north, home to Afghanistan's elite power brokers and leaders, is lost, the risk of a total collapse of the government in Kabul would increase. The government still controls most of the provincial capitals and cities but are practically surrounded by the Taliban. Given the pace of the Taliban's advancement in the countryside, it is possible they could launch an offensive to take the population centres once the foreign troops are out.

The Taliban's strategy is still not clear. Their political office in Doha, which started peace talks with Afghan government representatives in September 2020, continues to say they are committed to the dialogue. But on the battlefield in Afghanistan, they continue a relentless campaign aimed at capturing more territories. Part of the problem was the total abdication of leadership and responsibility by the U.S., which invaded Afghanistan 20 years ago. When direct talks between the U.S. and the Taliban began, the U.S.'s focus was not on finding a peaceful settlement to the crisis that it partly created, but on exiting the war. Therefore, instead of putting pressure on the Taliban to extract concessions, the U.S. struck a deal with them, completely ignoring the concerns of Kabul. Now, the Taliban are much more powerful on the ground and even if the peace process is revived after American pullout, they would negotiate from a position of strength. But that should not stop Kabul and regional powers China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and India from seeking a political settlement. A violent takeover of the country by the Taliban, like in 1996, would not serve anybody's interests. The Taliban would also not find international legitimacy if they capture Kabul through bloodshed. Afghanistan's past experiences suggest that one-party regimes – the communist regime, Mujahideen or the Taliban – failed to stabilise the country or sustain themselves in the long term. Now that the invading troops are exiting Afghanistan, the warring parties' focus should shift towards settlement and building lasting structures of power. Else, Afghanistan would fall into another cycle of violence.

Darkness at noon, felled by the judiciary

Posterity will blame the judiciary for the incarceration and unfortunate death of Father Stan Swamy



AJIT PRAKASH SHAH

It has been 81 years since Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* was first published. The novel is set in the backdrop of the Great Purge of the late 1930s in the Soviet Union under Stalin. This period was marked by, among other things, political repression, police surveillance, general suspicion of the opposition, imprisonment, and executions. Decades on, thousands of miles away, darkness fell at noon in India too, when Father Stan Swamy passed away at a private hospital in Mumbai on July 5. Omnipotently reminiscent of the macabre world Koestler had drawn, Fr. Swamy's death is much more than the death of an activist accused of terrorist activities. It is the result of a systemic abuse of majoritarian authority and disregard for the rule of law.

His life in a nutshell

For many, Fr. Swamy will be remembered as an inspiration. A Jesuit priest, he chose to make the upliftment of marginalised communities in Jharkhand his life's work. He lived and worked in a single room, prolifically writing (over 70 books are credited to him) on dispossessed people. He was an activist for most of his life, and used the legal system to fight for the rights of those who were being unfairly targeted, and thought that the Constitution would help in securing justice, even moving the Jharkhand High Court in a public interest litigation on undertrials. When doing all of this, surely, he would never have imagined that his fate would be decided by the very system he used and believed in.

It started in August 2018, when the Pune police raided Fr. Swamy's single-room home, seized his computer, cell phone, books and some classical music cassettes. Another raid took place in June 2019. Finally, on October 8, 2020, Fr. Swamy was arrested by the Na-

tional Investigation Agency (NIA), under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the 16th to join a roster of professors, activists, writers, and public intellectuals, as a suspect in the Bhima-Koregaon case. Fr. Swamy, aged over 80, remained an accused, in the custody of the state, till his death. Besides being arrested for what many believe to be improbable causes, and being possibly the oldest person ever accused of terrorism in India, the most tragic story is how his detention was handled by the state, by the police and worst of all, by the courts.

Fr. Swamy was arrested on flimsy evidence of some propaganda material and communication with other activists in the field, such as Sudha Bharadwaj and Varavara Rao, who were also arrested for similar charges. The authenticity of some of the allegedly indicting documentation, including a key report, has been questioned by international forensic data experts. But the state defended its arrest arguing that these issues must be gone into only during trial, and that the accused – i.e., Fr. Swamy – should remain in jail until then.

Pointer to judicial decline

This is the outcome also of the problematic Watali judgment, which I discuss in subsequent paragraphs. Repeated pleas for medical assistance by Fr. Swamy were consistently ignored or dismissed. Medical reports taken on record clearly showed that Fr. Swamy had the degenerative Parkinson's disease, and could not even do basic tasks, such as holding a spoon, writing, walking or bathing. Indeed, the court noted that he had a severe hearing problem, and was physically very weak. But even that did not move them. Every regular bail application that was filed by his lawyers was unequivocally rejected.

When he applied for medical bail, the court kept adjourning the matter, and merely offered him the services of a private hospital. In my opinion, this demonstrates a lack of sensitivity on the part of the judges, which is deeply saddening.

The series of events that led to Fr. Swamy's eventual and tragic



passing is testimony to the judicial decline that we have seen in recent years, which coincidentally or not, appears to be coterminous with the current political regime in India.

Why is the political establishment, and the police, so emboldened to pursue cases under UAPA against individuals like Fr. Swamy? A key reason, undoubtedly, is the weak judiciary we have today. Indeed, our judiciary today suffers from a great many flaws besides mere weakness. In Fr. Swamy's case, the judges displayed apathy of a shocking order. It is perplexing when, on the one hand, the Chief Justice of India grandiloquently states that personal liberties and fundamental rights must be protected, and courts do precisely the opposite.

A weakened central principle
It would not be too bold to suggest that the idea of the "presumption of innocence" – a central principle of criminal law and procedure – is on a terribly weak footing these days in our country, and this should worry all of us greatly.

The source of this worry is the Supreme Court of India itself. Its April 2019 decision in *National Investigation Agency vs Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali* on the interpretation of the UAPA has affected all downstream decisions involving the statute. This decision has created a new doctrine, which is that effectively, an accused must remain in custody throughout the period of the trial, even if it is eventually proven that the evidence against the person was inadmissible, and the accused is finally acquitted. The illogic of this veers on the absurd: Why must an accused remain in jail only to be

eventually acquitted?

According to the decision, in considering bail applications under the UAPA, courts must presume every allegation made in the First Information Report to be correct. Further, bail can now be obtained only if the accused produces material to contradict the prosecution. In other words, the burden rests on the accused to disprove the allegations, which is virtually impossible in most cases. The decision has essentially excluded the admissibility of evidence at the stage of bail. By doing so, it has effectively excluded the Evidence Act itself, which arguably makes the decision unconstitutional.

Bail hearings under the UAPA are now nothing more than mere farce. With such high barriers of proof, it is now impossible for an accused to obtain bail, and is in fact a convenient tool to put a person behind bars indefinitely. It is nothing short of a nightmare come true for arrestees.

This is being abused by the government, police and prosecution liberally: now, all dissenters are routinely implicated under (wild and improbable) charges of sedition or criminal conspiracy and under the UAPA. Due to the Supreme Court judgment, High Courts have their hands tied, and must perforce refuse bail, as disproving the case is virtually impossible.

As a result of this decision, for instance, a High Court judge can no longer really adjudicate and assess the evidence in a case. All cases must now follow this straitjacketed formula of refusing bail. The effect is nearly identical to the draconian preventive detention laws that existed during the Emergency, where courts deprived people access to judicial remedy. If we want to prevent the disasters of that era, this decision must be urgently reversed or diluted, otherwise we run the risk of personal liberties being compromised very easily.

The most flagrant abuse of the UAPA, and constant rejection of bail applications of those accused as a means of silencing opposing voices, can be seen in the Bhima Koregaon cases, including Fr. Swamy's case, as well as the cases per-

taining to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), where mere thought is elevated to a crime. In multiple instances, evidence is untenable, sometimes even arguably planted, and generally weak overall. But as a consequence of UAPA being applied, the accused cannot even get bail. Courts cannot go into the merits of the case due to the Supreme Court judgment.

An issue for the judiciary

When courts do go into such matters, as in the instance of the Delhi High Court granting bail to three young activists accused in a conspiracy relating to the 2020 riots in Delhi, the Supreme Court uncharacteristically decides to weigh in. The Supreme Court reportedly expressed "surprise" and dissatisfaction at the High Court's decision, giving the direction that the decision will "not to be treated as precedent by any court" to give similar reliefs. Specifically, the Supreme Court reportedly said that "in a bail application, a 100-page judgment discussing all laws is surprising us", perhaps forgetting that the case that started it all, i.e., the Watali judgment of the Supreme Court, was itself a judgment in a bail matter! This seems to imply that only the Supreme Court can hold forth on matters of statutory interpretation, and that High Courts – which are constitutional courts in their own right – may not? By extension, if statutes ought not to be examined at all by High Courts, does this mean that individual arrestees must languish in jail till, say, the constitutional validity of the statutes under which they are arrested are decided? Surely, this would be completely irrational.

Posterity will blame the judiciary for the incarceration and unfortunate death of Fr. Swamy, and the continued imprisonment of so many others like him. But voices will continue to rise in protest. As Fr. Swamy himself said, though, "we will still sing in the chorus. A caged bird can still sing."

Ajit Prakash Shah is Former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court and Former Chairperson, Law Commission of India

Agents of change and a new chapter in Israel's politics

After the Netanyahu years, Israel, a divided society, is now looking forward to some domestic stability



KHINVRAJ JANGID

Benjamin Netanyahu is out and Israel has got a government without him after 12 years. The new government has cobbled together a very unexpected coalition of eight political parties led by Naftali Bennett (picture) who is head of the smallest segment of the coalition. With only six seats of his far-right party, Yamina, Mr. Bennett has surprised all by preventing two things – Netanyahu's hold on power and the fifth national election that most Israelis feared coming their way.

It is Yair Lapid, Israel's new Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister-in-waiting, who is the key architect of the coalition. Mr. Bennett acknowledged him in his first speech in the Knesset (<https://bit.ly/3wmqVcG>) by saying that Mr. Lapid "showed national responsibility, political generosity, and without whom we would not be here today". Under the coalition deal, Mr. Bennett will be the Prime Minister for the first two years, followed by Mr. Lapid for the remaining two. While there are not many who predict that this coalition will last that long, the ve-

ry strange union is still a welcome change in Israeli politics after the four national elections in less than two years. The eight parties do not have any ideological coherence but the single agenda to keep Mr. Netanyahu out of power, in the short run, and to uphold the democratic system based on consensus building, in the long run.

Diverse team

What makes this coalition unique as much as fragile is the fact they fight each other on the most essential matters of politics. Yet, the fight against Mr. Netanyahu has given the Israeli people the most representative government: the coalition has three right-wing parties, two centrist parties, two left-wing parties and one Arab party. Women leaders have done well too, comprising nine Ministers out of the total of 27 Ministers. It is remarkable from the gender point of view as Israel, like most other nation-states, is male-dominated. There is no religious party in the coalition, but Mr. Bennett is a religious individual unlike Mr. Netanyahu; he is also the first kippa (skull cap) wearing Prime Minister of Israel.

The political stalemate is over for the time being, and Mr. Netanyahu is not the 'King Bibi' of Israel after all. He has been outdone by the far-right political leaders who were once his loyal aides; they include Mr. Bennett, Mr. La-



pid and Avigdor Lieberman. What makes the new government unprecedented is the fact that the far-right, in order to fight its mentor Mr. Netanyahu, walked up to the left parties as well as an Arab-Israeli party of Mansour Abbas. While Israel is a strong and militarily capable state, it is also deeply divided as a society, with too many fundamental frictions among its Jewish population. Therefore, diverse and different ideological groups in this government can help in enabling political stability and inner-social-cohesion. The role of one Arab party in the government is much needed assurance for the otherwise marginalised and stigmatised Israeli Arabs minority.

The challenge ahead is to satisfy each party's core ideological interests but not at the cost of the other so that the fickle unity can last. It demands compromise, reconciliation and acceptance of the other.

The challenge ahead is to satisfy each party's core ideological interests but not at the cost of the other so that the fickle unity can last. It demands compromise, reconciliation and acceptance of the other.

Anti-Netanyahu sentiment is pivotal thus far and this will be the glue but a constructive and long-lasting common minimum programme is what the Israeli democracy is striving for after a battered past.

Change of leadership

Mr. Bennett was born and raised by American immigrant parents who moved to Israel from the United States after the 1967 war. He is a former commando of the army's most prestigious commando unit, Sayeret Matkal, the one that Netanyahu used to boast about himself. Mr. Bennett made his way to active politics in the aftermath of the Lebanon war in 2006. Though religious, he is not ultra-orthodox. He is a self-made millionaire who had a greatly successful high-tech career. In short, he is a poster boy for a Start-Up Nation.

As a free-spirited entrepreneur, he has an astonishing ability to take risks and can be called a politically audacious leader. He was Mr. Netanyahu's loyal man for long and served under him as Defence and Education Ministers, and in those years, he demonstrated his far-right inclinations without any qualms such as advocacy for settlements, annexation of major parts of West Bank, Jewish religion and its major role in Israeli society and politics. However, while he struggled to come out of the shadow of Mr. Netanyahu, he transformed himself as flexible and ne-

gotiable politician which was clear when he delivered his first speech and said, "Twice in history, we have lost our national home precisely because the leaders of the generation were not able to sit with one and another and compromise. Each was right, yet with all their being right, they burnt the house down on top of us. I am proud of the ability to sit together with people with very different views than mine." It is going to be intriguing how he conducts himself with the others in the coalition and revisits some of his core ideological beliefs and assumptions.

The world watches

Israeli foreign policy is Prime Minister-driven, so the world awaits to see how the new leader will be outside Israel. He has not given many hints about his foreign policy agenda except that he will work to cement Israel's special relationship with the United States, and that he is also well-prepared to deal with Iran firmly and aggressively like his mentor, Mr. Netanyahu. As far as Hamas is concerned, he is likely to leave that to the Defence Minister as he thinks it is a security issue and not a political question.

Khinvra Jangid is Associate Professor and Director, Jindal Centre for Israel Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Dilip Kumar

The kohinoor of Indian cinema, Dilip Kumar, has moved to another world. What an actor! What a powerful pair of eyes! He acted through his eyes, excelled in tragic roles, and was rightly given the title, 'Tragedy King'. Dilip Saab stood out, his subtle emotions conveyed through expressions that conveyed it all. Thank you, Dilip Saab, for everything.

BALASUBRAMANIAM PAVANI,
Secunderabad

■ Dilip Kumar had an innate flair for tragic and forlorn

roles. His influence on Hindi cinema was so profound that it could be divided as the pre- and post- Dilip Kumar eras. His performances were so complete that there was nothing left unsaid. That he repeatedly produced blockbusters out of pathos, was proof of his immense ability to bring out the different dimensions of tragedy. He was neither one-dimensional nor formulaic. He never overacted and herein lies the core reason for his immense success.

V. LAKSHMANAN,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

■ He was one of Indian cinema's first superstars, a thespian par excellence, who could deliver sterling performances in varied roles proving beyond the pale of doubt that when it came to histrionics he was indeed a class apart. Dilip Kumar was the last of the golden troika that ruled the roost in Bollywood, the other members being Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand. A magnetic personality with an angelic smile, Dilip Kumar had an entire generation in a thrall for decades.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ Words that resonate
"I am not a silent spectator, but part of the game, and ready to pay the price whatever be it," were the words of Father Stan Swamy in an interview before he was arrested by the NIA. They resonate now, loud and clear, in all of us who have long been spectators. We watch until the game is over and then play the blame game. It is a challenge for all of us who are now talking about justice and injustice to take a clear stand on the cause for which Father Stan Swamy died.

We need to be the voice for

the voiceless and fight against all elements that suppress the truth and the rights of every Indian citizen.

Challenging negative social norms

India touches a demographic milestone this World Population Day, but roadblocks remain



ARGENTINA MATAVEL PICCIN

In these troubled times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Population Day on July 11 brings some positive news – India has entered a demographic sweet spot that will continue for another two to three decades. Half of India's population is under 29 years of age, which means that in this period, a greater proportion of young people will drive India's economic growth and social progress. So, they must not only be healthy, knowledgeable and skilled but must also be provided with the rights and choices to develop to their fullest potential, including, and especially, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission (Stans et al, 2018) in looking at how to improve SRHR in populations formulated a comprehensive definition of SRHR that encompasses a broader range of issues. These include SRHR and issues such as violence, stigma and respect for bodily autonomy, which greatly impact the psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals.

Developmental goals

India's population growth is now stabilising. The decline in overall fertility notwithstanding, the population will continue to grow because of the effect of 'population momentum'. It is like a Jumbo Jet that has started to descend but will take some distance to stop. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), presently at 2.2 children, will soon reach replacement level (2.1). However, the TFR remains higher than the national average of 2.2 children among women who live in rural areas, have little formal education and are in the lowest income quintile – a majority of them live in the poorer States.

Changing social norms is one of the biggest challenges for India to address the needs of the next generation. For example, India's population stabilisation strategy must be adjusted keeping in mind the rights of wo-



Turning the focus on women and improving access to information and services leads to better health outcomes. ■ FILE PHOTO

men and girls. Women must have a greater say in choosing their family size. Prescriptive or coercive methods, such as one- or two-child norms, have rarely worked well anywhere for long. It goes without saying that for women and girls, the empowerment to make choices leads to better health outcomes, such as knowing how to prevent unintended pregnancy or giving birth with the help of a skilled birth attendant.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in healthcare systems and has led to serious gaps and challenges in the provision of information and services on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Even before the pandemic, pervasive negative social norms, health system barriers and gender inequality hindered universal access to SRHR as envisioned under the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). On World Population Day this year, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India recognises that even if health systems are understandably strained, the provision of these services cannot wait. Any further delays will curtail the health and well-being of women and girls, the consequences of which can last a lifetime.

In the last two decades, India has

made substantial gains with SRH indicators. Progressive policies for maternal health have resulted in improved rates of institutional delivery and a decline in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) from 327 in 1999-2001 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18, as per Sample Registration System (SRS) data.

There have also been significant shifts in family planning in the past decade, and data from the National Health Family Survey 5 for the year 2019-20 (NFHS-5) show how contraceptive prevalence has improved in most States. We ought to celebrate India's success, as it significantly contributes to global progress.

The current government, with programmes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), has made some efforts to challenge existing social norms and has underlined that investments in social causes must go alongside economic progress. All sections of society must embrace this call for positive change, each doing their part, from the individual to the institution level. The UNFPA is keen to take India's success models and strengthen the South-South Collaboration further.

Poor indicators

But success is hard-earned and never assured. There are many challenges

on the path to 2030, the goalpost for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Two million adolescent girls (15-19 years) each year had a pregnancy, and of these, nearly 63% were unwanted or unintended (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). This points to inadequate information and access to SRH services for this age group. In girls aged 15-19 years, 22.2% had an unmet need for contraception, according to NFHS-4.

Girls are still marrying too young – 26.8% of women aged 20-24 years are married before they turn 18, often having their first child within the first year of marriage. Far too many girls and women face gender-based violence and harmful practices that are socially sanctioned. All of these practices are rooted in social norms, beliefs and practices that deny women their bodily autonomy.

India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries, becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report (2021). Time to achieve the ambitious targets of the SDGs is running out. India must hence choose its priorities carefully. Our analysis seems to suggest that placing youth, women and girls at the centre of policymaking and services could trigger a positive ripple effect. If young people, and adolescent girls in particular, have access to education, relevant skills, information and services to make healthy choices, including related to SRH, are empowered to exercise their rights, and have access to opportunities for employment, then India will be on a clear path to achieve its goals.

What research and practical experience show is that when women can make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, and when they have access to services to support their choices, societies are healthier and more productive. A woman who has control over her body gains not only in terms of autonomy but also through advances in health, education, income and safety. She is more likely to thrive, and so is her family. The UNFPA calls upon stakeholders to help build a new set of social norms to drive this mission.

The author is Representative, UNFPA India and Country Director, UNFPA Bhutan

Haryana's misplaced priorities

The State's poor record on the NITI Aayog's SDG index points to deep flaws and lax governance



DEEPENDER SINGH HOODA

Haryana's performance towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is disappointing. The NITI Aayog's latest report on SDGs has put Haryana among the top three States in terms of unemployment and crime, with a dismal show in the fields of health and education and in industrial and economic growth as well. The results are the outcome of the current dispensation's misplaced priorities. The report ranks Haryana 14th among all States with 67 composite points, just a notch above Tripura. Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, its neighbouring States, have done pretty well.

However, Haryana could have done much better as the Congress government led by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda had handed over a robust State to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014. As per the NITI Aayog report, at 11.16%, there is no change since 2019 in the number of people living below the poverty line (BPL) in the State. Clearly, the government has failed to lift people from the vicious circle of poverty. Similarly, there is no change in the proportion of the children below five who continue to be underweight (28.80%) and stunted (34.90%). As many as 55% of pregnant women in the age group of 15-49 years continue to be anaemic. Crimes against women were 88.7 per one lakh female population in 2019, which went up to 108.5 in 2020. The State reported 3.90 murders per one lakh population in 2020 as compared to 3.74 in 2019.

Instead of living in an ivory tower, the government must focus on adding resilience to education, which has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the claims around 'Digital Haryana', the State failed to ensure seamless online classes for all students. The current State government had also promised to build a medical college in every district.

Before 2005, there were only eight universities in the State, but the number went up to 43 during the Congress tenure from 2005 to 2014. Many technical education institutes, ITIs and new government colleges were opened during the Congress regime, but in the past seven years, only two universities have been set up.

Bigger challenges such as improving gross enrolment ratio, checking dropouts, addressing poor student-teacher ratio and in-

roducing enabling interventions for providing skill training in schools and colleges have taken a backseat. The government has not been able to implement a zero vacancy policy, due to which a large number of teaching posts are vacant. In schools, 31,232 posts of teachers were lying vacant as of last year.

Compromised education has a direct relation to employability. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-19) data pegged Haryana's unemployment rate at 9.2%, which was significantly higher than the all-India figure of 5.8%. In February, data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy revealed a 26.4% unemployment rate, the highest among States; in 2012-13, the Department of Economics and Statistical Analysis had put the unemployment rate in Haryana at just 3%. But instead of providing jobs, the current regime's focus is on ill-thought steps like providing reservation in private jobs.

Worsening numbers

Similarly, Haryana has failed to enhance the quality of health infrastructure. It was the first State in the country to give free medicines to OPD patients in government hospitals. Free referral transport service for expecting mothers for delivery, patients of BPL families, accident victims and freedom fighters, had attracted the attention of other States. The Congress had laid significant emphasis on the health sector. One State health university and four medical colleges were set up at Karnal, Faridabad, and Nuh in Mewat, including one for women in the rural area of Sonepat district. Also, AIIMS-II and the National Cancer Institute were set up at Badshah village in Jhajjar district.

The State's financial health, which is worsening due to mounting debt, huge funds deployed on various boards and corporations, and interest payments on borrowings, is also disturbing. Infrastructure development has come to a standstill – in the last seven years, not even a single new metro station was added, while during 2005-2014, four towns were linked to metro services through new lines. The fiscal situation is equally concerning. As per the Budget Estimate for 2021-22, the debt liability of the State is likely to go up to ₹2.30 lakh crore as of March 2022. It was ₹70,369 crore in 2013-14.

Haryana is suffering on all counts due to the misplaced priorities of the current government. The State used to be one of the top performers in areas like per capita income, investment and agricultural productivity, but it has now slipped to the 14th position on the SDG index. The indicators suggest that governance has gone for a toss.

The author is a Rajya Sabha MP from the Congress

A long road for migrant workers

The guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court are welcome, but they require robust systems

AAGAM JAIN

The Supreme Court on June 29 pronounced its judgment in the migrant labourers case. The case was initiated last year after the national lockdown was announced on March 24. Thousands of landless labourers had started walking towards their home States due to the loss of employment and income. The Supreme Court took cognisance of the matter on May 26 that year and acknowledged the plight of the workers in light of the strict lockdown.

The court has laid down numerous guidelines to provide relief to workers and efficiently tackle the problem till the threat of COVID-19 subsides. Two of the most important components to protect the migrants during this time were the food and travel arrangements insisted on by the court. In the orders pronounced in May this year, it laid down that



dry ration be provided to migrants who want to return to their homes. Further, the court said that identity proof should not be insisted upon by the governments since the labourers might not be able to furnish it. Secondly, the court called upon the State governments to arrange transportation for workers who need to return to their homes. These guidelines by the court are crucial to ensure the safety of workers.

The Supreme Court fixed July 31 as the deadline for the States to implement the 'One nation One Ration Card' scheme. Under this scheme, the States are to complete the registration of migrant workers in order to provide dry ration to them. But it is unlikely that a standardised system can be developed within the deadline prescribed by the court.

Apart from dry ration, the top court also directed the State governments to run community kitchens for migrant workers. However, there are administrative problems in implementing these measures. First, migrant workers keep moving in search

of employment and it is difficult to cover them all under the scheme. Second, many States do not have the necessary infrastructure to run and maintain community kitchens on such a large scale.

Important directives

Under the National Food Security Act, migrant workers are issued ration cards and they are entitled to dry ration under various government programmes, such as the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme, during the pandemic. In the order passed on June 29, the court affirmed the Right to Food under Article 21 of the Constitution. In furtherance of this, the court asked the States to formulate their own schemes and issue food grains to migrants. This is an indispensable step to keep more than a fourth of the population of the country safe and healthy during the pandemic.

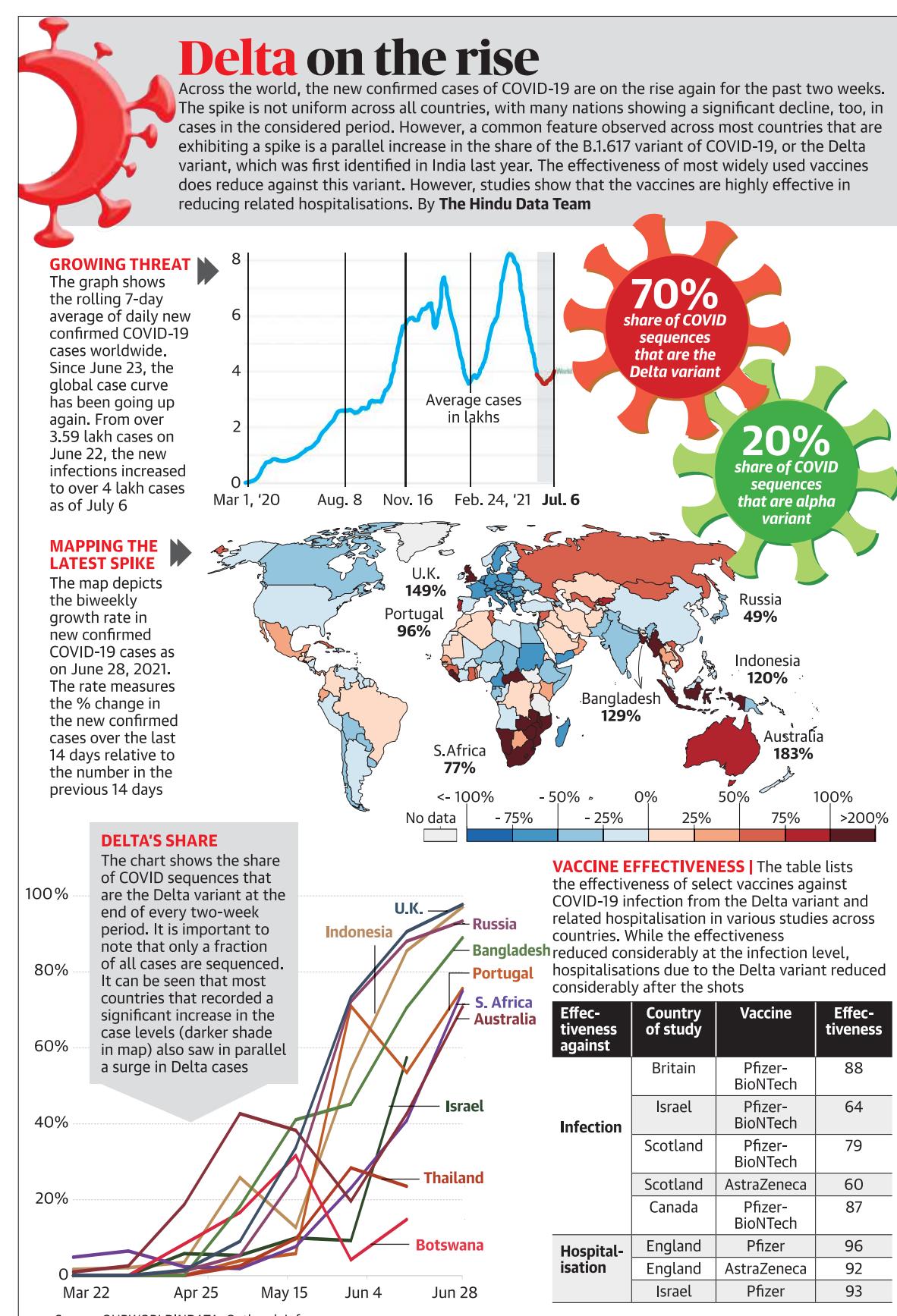
However, there are no normative data that would allow the States to identify eligible migrants. The court took cognisance of the issue and directed the Ministry of Labour and Employment to ensure that the National Database for Unorganised Workers is updated by July 31.

Finally, the top court recognised the need for direct cash benefit transfer to workers in the unorganised sector. But it did not issue any guidelines for the same as the workers need to be covered by the States themselves.

The Supreme Court has given a purposive declaration in the case but the bulk of the judgment seems declaratory rather than mandatory. In order to efficaciously implement the orders of the court, the State governments need to work with the Centre closely. With the third wave of COVID-19 infections looming, it is imperative to ensure that government machinery works to its full potential and robust systems are developed to withstand the challenges.

Aagam Jain is a II-year student at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru

DATA POINT



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 8, 1971

Kissinger, Indira hold discussions

[NEW DELHI, JULY 7] A major outcome of discussions, which Dr. Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's Adviser on National Security Affairs, had to-day with the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was stated to be a clear recognition by the visiting diplomat that a "political solution" was necessary to solve the Bangla Desh problem and to ensure the return of refugees to East Pakistan.

Dr. Kissinger did not spell out the ideas of the U.S. administration but he gave enough indication during the talks with the Prime Minister that the plan of President Yahya Khan for breaking the present constitutional and political deadlock in East Pakistan would not serve the purpose.

The Prime Minister had 15-minute discussions with Dr. Kissinger before the advisers on both sides joined the talks.

Earlier, Dr. Kissinger had held talks with Mr. Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister, on the Bangla Desh situation for nearly two hours ... After analysing the Bangla Desh problem in depth, the Prime Minister was stated to have emphasised that there was no question of the refugees being turned back to their country to be butchered by the Pakistan Army which had received reinforcements from the U.S.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 8, 1921

Indian women's right to property

Mrs. Kamala Bai writes:-

Under the auspices of several ladies' associations, an influential gathering of Indian ladies was held at Baroda to support Mr. T.V. Seshagiri Iyer's Bill for the right of property to Indian women, which is to be brought up at the next session of the Assembly. Shrimati Sarada Gowri Mehta presided. Shrimati Deepakba, Venu Da Ben, Sreemati Suraj Ben and Mrs. Kashi Bai Herelekar were the principal speakers. About three hundred Gujarathi and Marathi-speaking ladies were present. As a result a resolution was passed unanimously supporting Mr. T.V. Seshagiri Iyer's Bill and the association placed on its record its thanks to him for his efforts for the emancipation of women. It is requested that ladies in all parts of the Presidency and elsewhere should convene meetings to support Mr. Seshagiri Iyer's Bill and give due information to Mr. Seshagiri Iyer, as well as the Government and the Press, so that they may know that he has the support of all women in India behind him.

FROM PAGE ONE

Cabinet reshuffle attempts inclusion

"The spread of the Council of Ministers has been to reflect not just marginalised sections of society but also marginalised regions like the northeast with a Minister each from Tripura [Pratima Bhownick] and Manipur [Rajkumar Ranjan Singh], a Cabinet Minister [Virendra Kumar] from Tikkamgarh in Madhya Pradesh, et al," said a government source. Women emerged as a significant vote bank for the BJP in the general elections and in the Bihar Assembly poll, and therefore form a sizeable presence in the government.

This sense of inclusion is tinged with the need to beef up the governance deficit that emerged especially during the second wave of the pandemic. Former Chief Ministers Mr. Sonowal and Narayan Rane, have been made Cabinet Ministers and those with experience in State governments like Purushottam Rupala and long-term MPs like Virender Singh, a six-term MP, have been included. Former bureaucrat and Odisha MP Ashwini Vaishnav was included as a Cabinet Minister and gets the Railway portfolio.

The current government has 13 lawyers, six doctors, five engineers, seven civil servants, seven Ph.D.s and three MBAs along with 68 Ministers with graduate degrees.

Like all reshuffles, this one too made a significant nod to the States going to polls next year, with Uttar Pradesh getting seven ministerial berths, taking its tally in the Council of Ministers to 14. Uttarakhand saw the inclusion of Ajay Bhatt; for Punjab, the elevation of Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri was a nod to Sikh sentiments; and Manipur got Rajkumar Ranjan Singh in a Minister of State berth.

Gujarat, which goes to polls a little later in 2022, got two Cabinet berths with Mr. Mansukh Mandaviya and Mr. Purushottam Rupala's elevation, and a Minister of State berth for Darshana Jardosh, MP from Surat.

With the inclusion of four Ministers – Nishith Pramanik, John Barla, Subhash Sarkar and Shantanu Thakur, Mr. Modi established that West Bengal would continue to be important as a political project for the BJP.

The inclusion of Maratha strongman Mr. Rane proved the same for Maharashtra, with the portends of a peaceful relationship between the Centre and the Maha Vikas Aghadi-led Maharashtra government not very sunny. The reshuffle was the result of a massive stock taking exercise undertaken by the Prime Minister for over a month.

P.R. Kumaramangalam's wife murdered at home

Ms. Mithila told the police that Raju came to the house as usual around 8.30 p.m. to pick up the laundry. She said as soon as she turned after opening the door, he overpowered her and dragged her into a room.

Meanwhile, two others, later identified as Raju's friends Rakesh and Suraj, entered the house. They allegedly smothered Ms. Kitty with a pillow. "The articles and cash that are missing are yet to be ascertained. At least three bags are missing and a few briefcases were open at the spot," the officer said.

After the accused left, Ms. Mithila managed to free herself and call her brother-in-law. Sources said she would also be examined.

Mr. Singh said a team went to Raju's residence in Bhanwar Singh Camp, from where he was arrested. He reportedly told the police that he was familiar with the house because he was a reg-

Judge recuses from Mamata's election case

In a strongly worded order, Justice Chanda said the petitioner had approached the Hon'ble Chief Justice (Acting) on the administrative side on June 16, 2021 by way of writing the letter for reassignment of the case. "The election petition was first taken up for hearing on June 18, 2021, before this Bench, and quite surprisingly, nothing regarding recusal was revealed. No clue was given to me as to the fact that the petitioner had already approached the Hon'ble Acting Chief Justice for reassignment of the petition," the Judge said.

In the 13-page order, Justice Chanda referred to tweets by leaders of the State's ruling party, and as well as statements in public, and said that a "deliberate and conscious attempt was made to influence my decision before the recusal application was placed before me for judicial consideration on June 24, 2021".

While recusing himself from hearing the case, Justice Chanda said he had "no personal inclination to hear out the case of the petitioner. I had no hesitation in tak-



Justice Kaushik Chanda

ing up the case, either". "I have, however, decided to recuse myself from this case for a different reason."

The Judge also stated, "Since the two persons involved in this case belong to the highest echelon of the State politics, in the name of saving the judiciary, some opportunists have already emerged. These troublemakers will try to keep the controversy alive and create newer controversies. It would be contrary to the interest of justice if such unwarranted squabbles continue along with the trial of the case, and such attempts should be thwarted at the threshold."

4 States alerted on virus surge

Step up testing, Centre directs Odisha, Assam, Tripura & Sikkim

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has sent letters to Odisha, Assam, Tripura and Sikkim, pointing to a rise in COVID-19 cases despite a decline in the national curve. It directed them to take steps such as improving containment measures and ramping up testing, vaccination and emphasising pandemic-appropriate behaviour.

The letter, signed by Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, to the State Chief Secretaries is common in format except for the details on the caseloads. In Odisha, five districts (Baleswar, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Khorda) had shown an increase in cases over the previous week. The Odisha case fatality ratio was less than 0.46%, but there was an increase in deaths over the past two weeks. Three districts had reported a test positivity greater than 10%.

With the inclusion of four Ministers – Nishith Pramanik, John Barla, Subhash Sarkar and Shantanu Thakur, Mr. Modi established that West Bengal would continue to be important as a political project for the BJP.

The inclusion of Maratha strongman Mr. Rane proved the same for Maharashtra, with the portends of a peaceful relationship between the Centre and the Maha Vikas Aghadi-led Maharashtra government not very sunny. The reshuffle was the result of a massive stock taking exercise undertaken by the Prime Minister for over a month.



Worrying trend: People crowding a market in Bhubaneswar. In Odisha, five districts saw a rise in cases. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

In Tripura, there was a 11% increase in the number of weekly new cases, with 2,814 cases reported during June 28-July 4. All eight districts reported more than 100 new cases over the previous week. Four out of eight districts had reported a test positivity rate above 10%.

25% jump in Sikkim
Sikkim had a weekly positivity rate of 18.7% and was consistently over 15% during the last four weeks. There was a 25% increase in the weekly new cases over the previous week. In Assam, four out of

33 districts were showing an increase in the weekly new cases and 29 out of 33 districts had reported over 100 new cases. Two out of 33 districts had shown a positivity rate of over 10%.

On Tuesday, Balram Bhagava, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said at a press conference that 73 districts were clocking over 10% positivity and that this was a cause of worry. "We have to be careful, responsible and cautious – the second wave is still on in some parts of this large country," he said.

The northeast States and Union Territories were advised to strictly monitor the situation at district/city level. They could consider imposing restrictions in a calibrated manner in districts with high case positivity and higher bed occupancy.

Impose curbs if needed, says Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the COVID-19 situation in all the northeast States and Union Territories.

The status and trends on active cases, case fatality rate, case positivity rate (CPR) and vaccination status were discussed. "It was noted that of the 73 districts in the country with CPR above 10%, 46 districts are in northeast States, where strict containment measures need to be taken," said a government release.

The northeast States and Union Territories were advised to strictly monitor the situation at district/city level. They could consider imposing restrictions in a calibrated manner in districts with high case positivity and higher bed occupancy.

Indemnity issues hold up U.S. vaccine donation

Clause is still under discussion: official

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

More than a month after the U.S. announced the donation of 80 million doses of American-made COVID-19 vaccines to dozens of countries including India, and Vice-President Kamala Harris called Prime Minister Narendra Modi to convey the decision, the vaccines are being held up by regulatory issues over indemnity, Indian and U.S. officials confirmed.

According to the officials, the demand by the U.S. companies, including Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson, to be granted an indemnity or waiver of liability has yet to be resolved, which is also holding up the donations from the U.S. Since June 3, the U.S. has already distributed 40 million doses to about 12 countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh.



The U.S. has distributed 40 million doses to 12 nations.

Signment was due to arrive this week.

During his visit to the U.S. in May, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had met pharma company executives and U.S. business chambers who had conveyed concerns about India's request for them to provide vaccines without receiving indemnity in case of side effects. The indemnity would be used as a legal defense to protect the U.S. firms, which have pointed out that they cannot take responsibility for cold-chain lapses and transportation problems within India.

"Yes, liability issues remain unresolved," confirmed one official involved in the negotiations, adding that the 'dilemma' on the Indian side is that if the U.S. companies are given indemnities, all vaccine makers, including Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech and Sputnik, would be resolved.

The MEA declined to comment on the issue, directing queries to the Ministry of Health.

Health Secretary Bharat Bhushan told *The Hindu* that the specific provisions of indemnification are still under discussion, indicating that not only are the U.S. vaccine donations on hold for the moment, but casting a cloud over the delivery of Moderna vaccines, which have already received Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in India, of which the first con-

Last month, the U.S. announced the distribution of 80 million doses as part of its "COVID-19 Global Response and Recovery Framework". Indian officials had estimated that India's share would total not more than a mere 2 million doses, less than half of its daily disbursement of vaccines, but said the donation was important as it made more types of vaccines available to Indians.

(With inputs from Bindu Shajan Perappadan)

NCBS lab retracts paper after data fraud

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A research paper by scientists at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), among India's top research institutes and part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, announcing a breakthrough in the field of chemical biology, and published in the prestigious *Nature Chemical Biology* (NCB), has been retracted as its key findings were manipulated.

On October 5, 2020, the paper "Discovery of iron-sensing bacterial riboswitches" was published online in the NCB. The publication was announced in an NCBS

press release on October 6, 2020. Its listed authors were Siladitya Bandyopadhyay, Susmitnaranay Chaudhury, Dolly Mehta and Arati Ramam, the last of whom was the group leader and is faculty at the NCBS.

The finding was significant as it announced the discovery of a new class of RNA (ribonucleic acid) molecules that could detect iron. Thus far, it was thought, iron could be detected only by specialised protein. RNA molecules, it has emerged, could detect nickel, cobalt, manganese but being able to detect iron, a key element that is vital for governing many biochemical processes,

opened the possibility of designing RNA-based sensors.

Though it had ostensibly passed the process of peer review, within weeks of the discovery being made public, independent commentators said images included with the article, that provided critical proof of the discovery, appeared manipulated.

In response, Ms. Ramesh uploaded original images and denied manipulation. Other commentators pointed out several more discrepancies in the original files.

Inquiry held
Ms. Ramesh meanwhile informed NCBS Director Satyajit Mayor of these comments.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran. • TWITTER

Jaishankar calls on Iranian President-elect

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a rare diplomatic gesture, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar travelled to Tehran on Thursday, and called on Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, a month before he assumes office.

Mr. Jaishankar, who made a transit halt in Tehran on his way to Moscow for bilateral consultations, handed over a personal message to Mr. Raisi from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and also met with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.

"Appreciate [Mr. Raisi's] warm sentiments for India.

Deeply value his strong commitment to strengthen our bilateral ties and expand cooperation on regional and global issues," Mr. Jaishankar tweeted after his meeting, which was the first such call on Mr. Raisi by a foreign dignitary since he won the presidential poll on June 19, Indian officials said.

"I am sure this visit will be the basic basis for Iran-India relations during the Presidency of Ayatollah Raisi," said Rasoul Mousavi, a senior diplomat in the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, describing Mr. Jaishankar's meetings.

Give details on information panel, says SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Central government to place on record the latest information on the appointment of Information Commissioners, vacancies and pendency of cases in the Central Information Commission (CIC), the apex adjudicatory body for disputes under the Right to Information Act.

A Bench of Justices S. Abdul Nazeer and Krishna Murari directed the government amidst submissions by advocate Prashant Bhushan, for activist Anjali Bhardwaj that "party acolytes" and bureaucrats had been appointed to the CIC in an opaque manner despite a direction from the court in 2019 that the appointment process should be transparent. "Pendingy of the cases in the CIC has grown to 36,000. The RTI Act is being destroyed," Mr. Bhushan said.

Ethics code questioned
PTI has challenged the constitutional validity of the rules as it purports to regulate digital news media.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice J.R. Midha issued notice to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on the petition.

The court tagged the plea to be heard along with similar petitions filed by several online news outlets against the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 on August 20.

The rules were notified on February 25, 2021.

PTI said the rules enabled the government to "virtually dictate content to digital news portals, and squarely violate media freedom".

The High Court is already seized of similar pleas by major online news portals such as *The Wire*, *The News Minute*, *Alt News*, and the Quint Digital Media Ltd.

HC slams Juhi Chawla for not depositing penalty

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed shock over the conduct of Bollywood actor Juhi Chawla and two others of "not willing to gracefully deposit" a

PTI challenges new IT rules in Delhi court

They allow govt. to dictate content

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

India's largest news agency, Press Trust of India (PTI), has approached the Delhi High Court, challenging the 2021 Information Technology (IT) Rules. It said the Central government was attempting to regulate digital news media.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice J.R. Midha issued notice to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on the petition.

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HC slams Juhi Chawla for not depositing penalty

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to stop further circulation of a film purportedly based on the life of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput that was released on a website on June 20. A bench rejected Mr. Rajput's father's plea against releasing the film *Nyay: The Justice on OTT platforms*. The HC will hear the case on July 14.

Arrested Hizb leader dies in gunfight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

A Hizbul Mujahideen commander, active since 2012, was killed in a gunfight, a day after he was arrested at a checkpoint in Handwara, Kashmir, on Wednesday.

On the disclosure of the militant, identified as Mehraj-ud-din Halwai, a search operation was launched at Pizipora Renan in Handwara. "On reaching the hideout where he had kept his arms, he took his hidden AK-47 rifle and started firing. He was killed in the ensuing gunfight," IGP Jay Kumar said.

'Spyware used on activists in Bhima Koregaon case'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An online database on spyware Pegasus' use was recently launched by Forensic Architecture, Amnesty International and Citizen Lab to document attacks against human rights defenders.

In a statement on July 3, Amnesty said the interactive platform – Digital Violence: How the NSO Group Enables State Terror – showed the connections between 'digital violence' of Pegasus spyware and the real-world harms faced by lawyers, activists,

and other civil society

IN BRIEF



'Health Minister Harsh Vardhan made a victim'

KOLKATA
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the BJP was not serious about governance and had made a victim of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. "Do you really think they are serious about governance? All meetings on COVID-19 were chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Now they are making the Health Minister a victim. Had they been serious, the second wave of COVID-19 would not have happened," she said.

Average age of Council of Ministers now 58 years

NEW DELHI
The average age of the new Council of Ministers has reduced to 58 from 61 previously, following the reshuffle. Nisith Pramanik, 35, Lok Sabha MP from Cooch Behar, West Bengal, is the youngest Minister to be sworn in, while the oldest member in the Council is 72-year-old Som Parkash. There are 77 members in the Council of Ministers now. PTI

'Assam is grateful to PM for inducting Sonowal'

GUWAHATI
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inducting Sarbananda Sonowal into the Union Cabinet. He extended his wishes to Mr. Sonowal. "My sincere gratitude to you Aadarnima PM Sri @narendramodi for giving Assam the great honor by inducting Sri @sarbanandsonowal as a Cabinet Minister in Union Cabinet. Assam is elated today as in past 25 years no one ever occupied a Cabinet post since 1996," he said. PTI

Reddy thanks PM for post as Union Minister

HYDERABAD
Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for elevating him as Union Minister, G. Kishan Reddy on Wednesday said he would make it an endeavour to live up to Mr. Modi's expectations. The Secunderabad MP, who was sworn in as a Cabinet Minister, had previously held key positions in the BJP. "I express my deep sense of gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for the trust reposed in me", he said in an official communication. He also thanked Home Minister Amit Shah for his guidance. PTI

BJP drawing up its playbook for 2024 battle

Of the 77 Ministers, 48 are from non-upper caste backgrounds; first test of the new equations will be in U.P. in 2022

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The massive reshuffle in the Union Council of Ministers on Wednesday has the seeds of the political battle lines to be drawn for the Lok Sabha election in 2024.

The Narendra Modi government now has 27 Ministers belonging to the Other Backward Classes (OBC), 12 to the Scheduled Castes, eight to the Scheduled Tribes and five to minority religious communities, and 11 women, who represent some of the more marginalised regional areas of the country as well.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Of the 77 members of the Ministry, 48 are from non-upper caste backgrounds. This reshuffle represents the direction in which the Modi government will move the BJP in its social appeal as well, to try and break the public perception of its upper caste moorings. Political scientist Badri Narayan, author of a well-regarded biography of Bahujan Samaj Party founder Kanshi Ram, terms it, "The



New chapter: At the swearing-in ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

widening of the social pyramid via governance by bringing as many communities as possible into the orbit of democratic power."

The first test for it will be the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election in 2022. Currently, the government has 14 Ministers from the State and Wednesday's seven inclusions have three OBC Ministers, three Scheduled Castes and

only one Brahmin.

The Cabinet expansion also points to the large number of inclusions from the east and the northeast, with Ministers from Assam, Manipur and Tripura and four Ministers from West Bengal, sworn in on Wednesday, indicating that the region remains a major political project for the BJP in the coming years.

An interesting point in the

reshuffle are the inclusions from Maharashtra. The four additions from the State, including of powerful Maratha leader and former Chief Minister Narayan Rane, points to the fact that the loss of Maharashtra, of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory that happened subsequent to the 2019 Assembly election in the State, after the alliance with the Shiv Sena

broke, still rankles. It does not bode well for a peaceful relationship between the Centre and the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra.

Political scientist Rahul Verma says the axing of Ministers of the departments such as Social Justice and Empowerment, Health, Education, Labour, Information and Technology, and Envi-

ronment and Climate Change, and the bringing in of technocrats from among the political cohort group "points to the fact that these Ministries will be key in the government going forward".

The exclusions, according to sources, are a combination of a case of individual evaluation and finding the Ministers wanting in performance, but also the failure of these Ministers to explain the major controversies dogging these departments in a way that does not get the government deeper into the mess.

With the dropping of seven Cabinet Ministers, including Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar, only Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi remain flagbearers of the old National Democratic Alliance (NDA) that existed under former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. While much had already changed under Mr. Modi's leadership of the NDA, this rejig is a more comprehensive passing of an era.

A former CM loses a coveted post

B. S. SATISH KUMAR
BENGALURU

The dropping of senior Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda from the Union Ministry on Wednesday marks the constant decline in the political career of a veteran who was once the Chief Minister of Karnataka.

A much younger Shobha Karandlaje, who hails from his region and belongs to his community, has now been chosen to replace him. This is perhaps to send a message to the dominant Vokkaliga community that it has not been ignored.

The party has also accommodated three others from Karnataka – business tycoon-turned politician Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Dalit leader A. Narayanasamy and Bhagwanth Khuba, who belongs to the Lingayat community.

The party's efforts to project the veteran leader as its face of the dominant Vokkaliga community had not yielded the desired results despite his good image.

Exclusions and excuses aplenty

Babul Supriyo does a volte-face, Gangwar throws in a suspense

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Among the reasons that some of the 12 Ministers who resigned ahead of the Cabinet expansion on Wednesday cited for putting in their papers were health concerns as well as just "asked to do so".

Asked for the reason for his resignation, former Labour Minister Santos Kumar Gangwar told *The Hindu*: "Ask me in two days". Mr. Gangwar is an eight-time MP from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, where the Assembly election is expected in the first half of 2022. During the second wave of the pandemic in May, he wrote to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath about the poor response of State officials in handling the pandemic.

Former Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Babul Supriyo first said on social media that he had been asked to resign, but then issued a clarification. In a tweet, Mr. Supriyo said: "Yes, I have resigned from the Council Of Ministers (As I had framed it ear-

Out in the cold | Union Ministers Ravi Shankar Prasad, Prakash Javadekar were among those Council of Ministers who quit on Wednesday evening ahead of the Cabinet reshuffle. A look at all the ministers who resigned

Dr. Harsh Vardhan
■ Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of Science and Technology and Minister of Earth SciencesRavi Shankar Prasad
■ Minister of Law and Justice, Minister of Communications and Minister of Electronics and Information TechnologyPrakash Javadekar
■ Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Minister of Information and Broadcasting and Minister of Heavy Industries and Public EnterprisesD.V. Sadananda Gowda
■ Minister of Chemicals and FertilizersThaawarchand Gehlot
■ Minister of Social Justice and EmpowermentBabul Supriyo
■ Mos
■ Dhotre Sanjay Shamrao
■ Mos
■ Rattan Lal Kataria
■ MoS
■ Pratap Chandra Sari
■ Mos
■ Debasree Chaudhuri
■ Mos

lier, "Asked to resign" may not be the right way to put it...) He said he was "surely sad" for himself, but happy for his colleagues who would be sworn in.

Former Education Minis-

ter Ramesh Pokhray Nishank resigned citing health reasons. He was diagnosed with COVID-19 in May, and had been hospitalised with breathing difficulties and post-COVID complications

for much of last month. However, Ministry officials note that several key decisions in the recent past have been made by the Prime Minister's Office rather than the Education Minister.

Vardhan has become the fall guy for Centre's failures: Cong.

His resignation shows that govt. failed in managing COVID-19'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Wednesday that the resignation of Harsh Vardhan as the Health Minister during the Cabinet reshuffle was an admission that the Narendra Modi government had "utterly failed" in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministers must realise that if things go wrong they will be the fall guys, he said in a couple of tweets.

"The resignations of the Union Health Minister and the MoS Health is a candid confession that the Modi government has utterly failed in managing the pandemic. There is a lesson for Ministers in these resignations. If things go right the credit will go to the PM, if things go wrong the Minister will be the fall guy. That is the price a Minister pays for implicit obedience and unquestioning subservience," the former Finance Minister said on Twitter.



Harsh Vardhan and wife, Nutan Goel, getting the COVID-19 vaccine in March.

"distributing the spoils of power" and "defector adjustment programme". He said if performance and governance were the criteria, then Defence Minister Rajnath Singh should have been sacked, as the Chinese had occupied Indian territory and refused to vacate; Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman should have gone, as the economic growth was now minus-8%; and Home Minister Amit Shah should have stepped down as naxal attacks and mob lynchings continued "unabated".

"If performance and governance were the criteria, then the first person to be sacked should be the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, for he has brought the government to a standstill, progress, peace and harmony has been thrown in the dustbin of history and the present Prime Minister would be remembered as an autocrat," he added.

Placating Patidars before the 2022 poll

BJP braces for Gujarat election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

The elevation of two junior Ministers to the Cabinet rank and the induction of three MPs as junior Ministers from Gujarat in the Union government appears to be part of the ruling BJP's strategy to give representation to the Patidars and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) ahead of next year's Assembly election.

Mansukh Mandavia and Parshotam Rupala, both belonging to the powerful Patidar community, were sworn in as Cabinet Ministers.

Both are Rajya Sabha members and hail from the politically important Saurashtra region.

In fact, Mr. Mandavia is often seen as a chief ministerial contender if the party decides to replace Vijay Rupani. Both have been openly demanding that the next Chief Minister should be from the community.

Naresh Patel, another community leader with a substantial base, also demanded so. After his statement, several Patidar leaders have joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which wants to emerge as an alternative to the BJP.

In Surat, leading businessman and influential Pa-

Paras is not a member of LJP: Chirag

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The ousted president of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Chirag Paswan, on Wednesday registered his protest against the appointment of his uncle, Pashupati Nath Paras, in the Union Council of Ministers. He had also challenged in the Delhi High Court Mr. Paras's appointment as the parliamentary party leader by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

In a series of tweets, Mr. Paswan said Mr. Paras had already been removed from the LJP for anti-party activities. He said Mr. Paras might be a representative of the breakaway faction, but not of the LJP. "I fully respect the Prime Minister's right as to who he includes in his team and who he does not. But as far as the LJP is concerned, Mr. Paras is not a member of our party," he said.

Mr. Paswan has already moved an application seeking a review of Mr. Paras's appointment as the LJP parliamentary party leader with the Speaker. There has been no action on it yet. "The Lok Janshakti Party has filed a petition in the Delhi High Court against the decision of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha," he said.

The BJP picked up a senior tribal leader, Mangubhai Patel, as Governor of Madhya Pradesh. Mr. Mangubhai has been a six-time legislator and former Minister of Environment and Forest and Tribal Development in Gujarat.

Caste and regional balance decided nominees from U.P.

7 leaders from the State were inducted into the Ministry

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Seven leaders from Uttar Pradesh were inducted into the Union Ministry, reflecting the ruling BJP's focus on its targeted constituencies of non-Yadav Other Backward Class (OBC) and non-Jatav Dalits ahead of the 2022 Assembly election.

The seven who took oath as Ministers of State include Anupriya Patel, president of the Apna Dal (Sonelal), a key ally.

Ms. Patel, 40, is an MP from Mirzapur and hails from the Kurmi backward caste, one of the dominant non-Yadav OBCs traditionally associated with farming.

Apna Dal has nine MLAs and one MLC, her husband Ashish Patel. Mr. Patel was also Minister in the first Modi government.

Her induction, however, did not go well with the BJP's second ally, the Nishad party, which has for weeks been demanding a promotion in either the State government or the Central government. The Nishad Party claims to be the voice of the riverine OBC castes.

"Our people are already angry and it reflected in the recent panchayat polls result. Some infiltrators [in the



In with the new: President Ram Nath Kovind administering the oath of office to Anupriya Patel. ■ PTI

BJP] want Nishads to get enraged and the BJP's boat to sink," Nishad Party president Sanjay Nishad told *The Hindu*.

"Our community will be compelled to come out on the streets again in a democratic way," he said, adding that the negative reaction among the Nishads would prove to be a setback for the BJP in 2024.

The seven new Ministers reflected caste and regional necessities of the BJP, with the induction of a Brahmin from central-north U.P., two Kurmis from Purvanchal, one Lodh from Rohilkhand, one Kori from Bundelkhand, one Pasi from Awadh and one Dhangar from Braj.

Kaushal Kishor, a two-

West Bengal gets its highest share ever

State gets four slots in the Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The BJP has tried to cater to different regions and ethnicities of West Bengal while inducting four of its MPs in the Union Council of Ministers on Wednesday. This is the highest-ever representation from the State in any government of the BJP.

The four MPs who were sworn in as Union Ministers are: two from south Bengal, Santanu Thakur and Subhas Sarkar, and two from north Bengal, John Barla and Nitish Pramanik.

While Mr. Thakur, MP from Bongaon, is a leader of the Matua sect (Hindu refugees from Bangladesh settled along the bordering regions of the State), Mr. Barla, MP from Alipurduar, is a tribal leader with considerable influence over the tea gardens. A few days ago, he had highlighted the south-north divide by raising the demand of a separate State or Union Territory for north Bengal.

Mr. Pramanik, a young MP from Cooch Behar, represents the Rajbanshi community, while Mr. Sarkar, MP from Bankura and a trained medical practitioner, represents the tribal dominated Jangalmahal region in the southwestern part of the State.

Those inducted in the Union Cabinet from the State are MPs who have been elected for the first time in 2019. The BJP had done comparatively well in the regions represented by these MPs in the recent Assembly election. It won most of the Assembly seats in Cooch Behar and Alipurduar district. Compared to other regions of south Bengal, it won more seats in the Matua-dominated area of Bongaon subdivision and the Jangalmahal region. The regions represented by the four MPs are economically deprived areas.

Sources in the West Bengal BJP said the MPs had been given a chance where the party thinks its support base has remained intact and there was a likelihood of retaining the seats in 2024. "It is a part of the future planning of the BJP, where MPs representing different regions and ethnicities have been inducted in the Union Council of Ministers," Biswanath Chakraborty, a political observer, said.

The BJP won 18 of the 42 seats in the 2019 general election.

The BJP has dropped Ministers of State Babul Supriyo and Debashree Chowdhury from the Council of Ministers.



Mughal-E-Azam (1943)



Naya Daur (1957)



Ram Aur Shyam (1967)



Devdas (1955)



Gunga Jumna (1961)



Azaad (1947)

Method actor with an understated elegance

The right blend of star and actor, Dilip Kumar set a template for many generations to come

ANUJ KUMAR
NEW DELHI

When Marlon Brando was struggling to find a footing in Hollywood, a shy Pathan boy from Peshawar was practising method acting in what was then the Bombay film industry, helping it come out of the Parsi theatre's influence. As Dilip Kumar transcends to a new stage, the pole star of the golden age of Hindi cinema would be remembered for setting a template of acting for generations to come.

A veritable cultural icon who inspired economist Meghnad Desai to draw parallels between his films and the newly independent India's tryst with socialism and capitalism in his seminal work, *Nehru's Hero: Dilip Kumar in the Life of India*, there is a bit of Dilip Kumar in everyone's life.

Discovered and later renamed by Devika Rani of the famed Bombay Talkies, Dilip Kumar, along with Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand, were part of the discovery of cinema in India as a means of mass communication as we see it today. They had had

few examples to follow and perhaps it worked to their advantage as each one carved out his own niche.

Naturalistic style

Out of the three, Dilip Kumar's naturalistic style never became stale or dated. The right blend of star and actor who could keep both the public and the purist engaged with his craft, he kept his performances subtle, understated but always believable.

Not just his younger contemporaries like Rajendra Kumar, Manoj Kumar and Dharmendra, generations of dependable actors, from Amitabh Bachchan to Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan to Irrfan, built edifices of their performances on the foundation laid by Dilip Kumar. Mr. Bachchan, who played Dilip Kumar's son in *Shakti*, once said there was such finality to Dilip sahib's performances that once he enacted a scene, there was no alternative to it.

Irrfan once told this journalist that he often wondered when trained actors like him found it difficult to deal with scars left by tragic

roles, how Dilip Kumar, who learned the craft on his own, came to terms with it. Well, he did approach doctors in London, who advised him to consider lighter roles.

Film historians often label the thespian as the tragedy king for his moving portrayal of a loner who loses everything in love in a series of films such as *Jugnu*, *Dee-*

I start identifying with the character. Often directors leave it to me to interpret the character

DILIP KUMAR IN A BBC INTERVIEW

dar and *Devdas*, but the eight-time Filmfare Award winner was equally compelling as a winsome romantic in *Shabnam*, *Azaad* and *Kohinoor*. Not to forget his intense performances as a revolutionary in *Shaheed* and a trade union leader in *Paigham*.

Be it the lawyer who rapes a village girl in Mehmood Khan's *Amar*, the journalist who becomes black-marketeer in Zia Sarhady's *Footpath*, the atheist in love with

a mendicant in Kidar Sharma's *Jogan* or the wheelchair-bound Raja Sahib in *Admi*, a role earlier essayed by Sivaji Ganesan, the Padma Vibhushan awardee constantly lunged for complex characters where he was expected to evoke multiple emotions in a single frame.

He experimented not just with characters but also directorial styles. Both *Amar* and *Footpath* deal with moral guilt but while Mehmood Khan visualised a mass entertainer, Zia's treatment was neorealist. With Tapan Sinha's *Sagina Mahto*, he ventured into parallel cinema and earned praise from his contemporaries.

At the time of *Mughal-e-Azam*, he was the top draw, but the narrative demanded Kumar to play second fiddle to Prithviraj Kapoor, a senior and a friend of his father. He delivered a restrained performance, a subtle counterpoint to the bombastic Kapoor that is etched in the minds of cinegoers.

Home production

The one that stands out and inspired many adaptations is

the dacoit in *Gunga Jumna*, his ambitious home production where the sophisticated Kumar transformed into an Awadhi-speaking rustic who is forced to pick up the gun. It is this constant urge for variety and chiselling of the craft that the megastar, despite the world at his feet, chose to do only around 60 films spanning over almost five decades.

He refused Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* for he found the character similar to *Devdas*. He said no to David Lean for *Lawrence of Arabia* as he was not keen to commit the amount of time that the director was asking from him.

In a BBC interview, he once said that when the director came to him with a 30-year-old character, he tried to find and build the first 29 years of his life from the script so that, "I start identifying with the character. Often directors leave it to me to interpret the character."

Known to help out his colleagues in finding a rhythm that suited the narrative, the actor is said to have ghost-di-



ILLUSTRATION: J.A.PREMKUMAR

A philanthropist who always stepped up

The thespian was among the earliest Indian actors to lend his star status to a cause

RAKHSHANDA JALIL

As tributes tumble out at the passing of Dilip Kumar – with Amitabh Bachchan going so far as to declare that when the history of Indian cinema will be written, it shall always be “before Dilip Kumar and after Dilip Kumar” – we shall leave it to the film critics and the serious student of Hindi cinema to assess his impact on the Hindi film industry. For now, let us see him as the man who always chose to step up and speak up. When the moment came to speak truth to power, here was a superstar who chose not to be content with his superstardom but to put it good use, as and when required.

TRIBUTE

Born as Mohammad Yusuf Khan in Peshawar in 1922 in the home of a fruit merchant, he went on to enjoy a career in the movies spanning five decades, blessed with a longevity enjoyed by few of his



Dilip Kumar before taking oath as Rajya Sabha MP on April 20, 2000.

morale-boosting interactions with jawans.

Gulzar also recalls Dilip Kumar stepping up for similar interactions for the benefit of the film industry, lending his moral gravitas and serving as a bridge between actors and producers-directors. At a seminal meeting of the Indian Motion Picture Association held at Dilip Kumar's home, several landmark decisions were taken to break the impasse that gripped the industry: actors, it was decided, would not take on more than three films (on the floors) at a time, and the directors-producers, on

their part, would prune the shift timings to more humane hours.

Appointed Sheriff of Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1980, he worked for the improvement of the city's infrastructure, giving it the iconic Jogs Park, where he himself went for his early morning walks in later years.

As a Member of Parliament from the Rajya Sabha, he ploughed the MPLAD (Members of Parliament Local Area Development) fund into improving the Bandstand Promenade and the Bandra Fort area.

However, it was the Bombay riots of 1992 that saw Dilip Kumar truly come into his own: turning his home into a command centre for relief work, rescuing those trapped in burning shanty towns, arranging police protection for the most vulnerable and organising food supplies for those who were going hungry for days as communal riots ravaged Bombay. He later mobilised

money and legal aid for those who were unfairly detained under the draconian Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. Of course he paid a price for this. When Pakistan honored him with its highest civilian award, the Nishan-i-Imtiaz in 1998, it was met with outrage in a cross-section of society, with not merely threats and abuses directed against the thespian, but regurgitation of the old “Pakistani spy” gossip by his old nemesis, the Shiv Seva.

Javed Akhtar puts it best when he says that there is a virtue that has become obsolete and that is dignity – Dilip Kumar was a personification of that virtue. “Eik tehzeeb thi jo kho gayii hai,” he says, ruing a lost culture. “To be cool, happening and contemporary are on the borderline of rudeness. Decency, reserve, measure, these have become un-cool and obsolete.”

(Rakshanda Jalil is a Delhi-based writer, translator and literary historian)

Summer of 1978: when the hero saw his epic

Dilip Kumar watched *Mughal-e-Azam* (1943) at FTII, Pune

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

The passing away of Bollywood film legend Dilip Kumar has opened a floodgate of reminiscences – both cinematic memories and private recollections – by people cutting across social, economic, political and national barriers.

Dilip Kumar saw a film a day at the main theatre and Saira Banu was by his side when he finally watched *Mughal-e-Azam* – which he had reportedly never seen since it took the country by storm in 1943. The incident bears an astonishing similarity with the experience of another legendary actor – Peter O’Toole, who reportedly viewed his greatest cinematic role, that of T.E. Lawrence in David Lean’s immortal *Lawrence of Arabia*, almost two decades after that film’s initial release in 1962.

lar and the driving force behind the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), who had arranged the screening of the films at the FTII main theatre. All films were chosen by his actress wife Saira Banu,” says current FTII Director Bhupendra Kaintholia.

In another visit to the FTII, the actor was chief guest at a convocation ceremony in December 1997. Also present were Mohan Agashe, then Director of the institute, and filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, who was then FTII Chairman.

Despite the occasion being somewhat marred by students who chose to air some of their complaints publicly, Dr. Agashe recalls how Dilip sahib’s magnificent dignity humbled all those present. “I had organised the convocation which was interrupted by students voicing their complaints. Mahesh Bhatt was very upset. But Dilip Kumar shone through it all with his tremendous and awesome dignity. He told the protesting students that the FTII was a temple and that they ought not to wash their dirty linen in public,” Dr. Agashe said.

SUDOKU

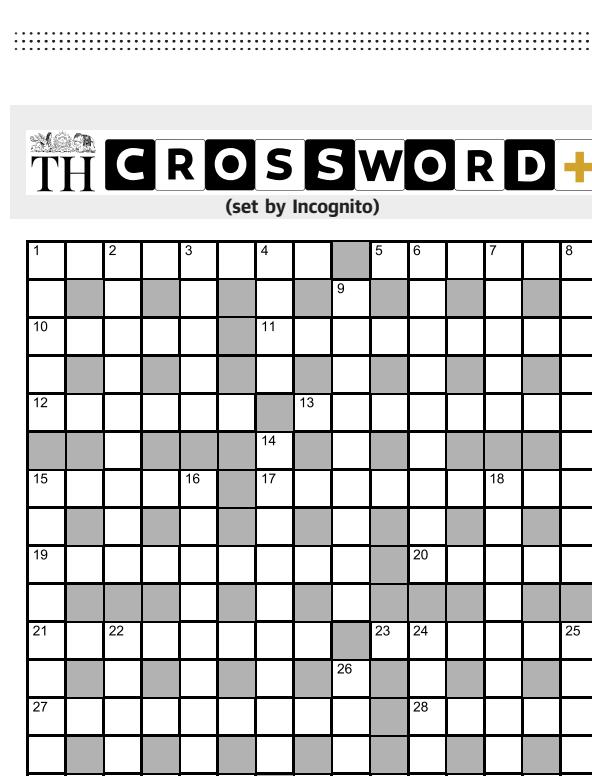
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13294

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M	C	K	O	O	E	E		
L	E	T	H	A	R			
F	I	L	M	S	T	A		
A	I	T	S	R	O	C	E	
E	N	T	E	D	W	I	N	E
M	A	A	I	E	N	E		
H	A	I	E	T				
G	O	L	G	T	H	A		
T	A	I	T	E	X	I		
O	B	L	V	E	R	S		
E	E	R	S	D	D			

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



ACROSS

- 1 Rescue rookie surrounded by uncultured people (8)
- 5 State loses right to make district (6)
- 10 Close second conceals and does not win (5)
- 11 Egyptian queen's chaotic palace rot (9)
- 12 Ancient person's father (3,3)
- 13 Arrange all pearl fragments in the form of an electrical circuit, perhaps (8)

14 Casualty count for estate tax? (5,4)

18 Build a finer ark for a descendant of a Dutch settler (9)

22 Later version you get when you upgrade and renew production (5)

24 Embarrass a graduate with a short request for silence (5)

25 Chart once again with average returns around opening of equity markets (5)

26 This is expressed in square units; even for circles (4)

FAITH

Ashtavakra, great scholar

Prakarana granthas are texts written by preceptors and gurus to introduce beginners to Vedanta study and to clarify Vedanta knowledge to those already familiar with it. For instance, Adi Sankara's Viveka Chudamani, Satasloki, come under this category. Likewise Ashtavakra Samhita, known as Ashtavakra Gita, attributed to one Ashtavakra, a sage with exceptional scholarship, is classified as a Prakarana grantha. This text presents an interesting exposition of self knowledge or atma tattva jnana, and is in the form of a dialogue between the young preceptor and king Janaka of Mithila, pointed out Sri R. Rajagopal Sarma in a discourse.

Janaka is a celebrated Raja rishi and in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna quotes him as one who is a realised soul and a jivanmukta who is also an example of a karma yogi. Many stories are quoted about Ashtavakra who hails from a family of Vedic scholars. He was born to Sujatha, the daughter of Uddalaka, the famed teacher in the Upanishads, and Kahola, a disciple of Uddalaka. By the age of twelve, he had completed Vedic studies. The name Ashtavakra refers to the crooked frame that he developed in his mother's womb owing to his sensitive reactions to the slips in his father's Veda chanting.

That he impressed people, including Janaka, with his satsra knowledge despite his crooked appearance and young age is evident from the incident at Janaka's court. Janaka, who was immersed in Vedantic thought, used to invite scholars and rishis to his court to engage in debates and discussions on many important and interesting esoteric ideas on Brahman, Self, the path to realisation, and so on. It is held that in one such debate, his father Kahola was defeated by another scholar named Vandi. So, Ashtavakra wished to give a fitting reply to Vandi and did so in a remarkable debate.

Srihari Nataraj and Sajan Prakash's 'A' cut Olympics qualification could herald a new era in Indian swimming

A watershed moment

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

A year-and-a-half ago, Sajan Prakash, 27, thought he would not make it to the Tokyo Olympics 2020. The swimmer suffered a slipped disc, which also hurt his neck. As he recovered, the pandemic forced pools to close in Thailand, where he was training at the Thanyapura Aquatic Centre in Phuket on a scholarship. Confined to his hostel, he contemplated returning to India. But the situation here was worse.

Then, last August, a reprieve came in the form of a 50-day camp in Dubai organised for top Indian swimmers with national coach Pradeep Kumar. After the camp, Sajan was in a quandary again. He wanted to stay back in Dubai, but that was going to be expensive. That is when coach Pradeep and his wife, Gowri, came to Sajan's rescue. The couple invited him to stay with them in Dubai and ensured he got better in the pool.

On June 26, Sajan clocked 1:56.38 seconds in the men's 200-metre butterfly event at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome. In doing so, he became the first Indian swimmer to make the Olympic Qualifying Time (also known as FINA 'A' cut), which ensures automatic qualification for the Olympics. Unable to



make the 'A' cut hitherto, Indian swimmers had to count on the Olympic Selection Time (also known as 'B' time) or the universality quota – less certain ways – to get to the Olympics.

Three days later, Sajan's compatriot Srihari Nataraj, 20, joined him in securing the 'A' cut after his time of 53.77s in a 100-metre backstroke time trial in the Rome event was ratified by international swimming's governing body, FINA.

Srihari, like Sajan, had to overcome obstacles before breaching the qualifying mark. For over six months, he could not swim due to the lockdown. Then, this January, his father passed away. It took about seven months of relentless training to shave half a second off, which de-

termined his entry to the Tokyo Games.

An Olympic medal still remains a distant dream for Indian swimming. But Sajan and Srihari's 'A' cuts could be a defining moment.

Long way to go

Ever since the 1951 Asian Games in which India won six swimming medals, including its only gold, there has been very little success. The country has added just three more medals at the Asian Games and one (in para-swimming) at the Commonwealth Games. In bigger meets – the World Aquatics Championships and the Olympics – qualification itself has been a big deal.

Can the medal drought be attributed to genes? Sports science expert Genadijus So-



kolovas, who has worked with the world's top swimmers like Michael Phelps, says, "Genes matter very little. If this is about size, then, the fastest fish is not the biggest." According to him, a swimmer's success depends on their training, technique and motivation. The US swimmers, he says, win medals because they have access to good coaches, excellent training facilities and a supportive ecosystem; not because they are superhumans.

Srihari and Sajan say they are happy with the coaching and training facilities. India's senior coaches Nihar Ameen and Pradeep are winners of

the Dronacharya award (given to honour sports coaches in India) and have decades of experience. The top Indian swimmers had the chance to interact with Sokolovas in February during a six-day workshop organised by the Swimming Federation of India (SFI). They also have access to world-class facilities at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence.

"A lot more professionals are involved now. In our days, we never had dieticians, biomechanics experts and physiotherapists at our disposal," says former Olympic swimmer Nisha Millet.

Things seem to be improving for Indian swimmers at

the elite level. The problem, Nisha points out, is at the grassroots. "Once you reach the top-level, you get support from the Government, federation and private institutions. But when you are lower down the rung, there is no one to guide you properly," she says.

Girls, for instance, have to deal with cultural taboo as some parents, Pradeep says, don't want them to wear swimsuits after puberty. And, according to

Nisha, they get fewer job opportunities through swimming than boys. These reasons probably explain why no Indian female swimmer since 2004 has made even the 'B' time; they have only gone to the Olympics via the universality quota. Coach Pradeep says the Government, private institutions and clubs should promote swimming.

The road ahead

Srihari and Sajan's 'A' cut is important because it has lifted a mental block among Indian swimmers. "We used to think 'A' cut was impossible. Now, two people have made it at the same event," says Srihari.

Pradeep believes this will trigger more 'A' cuts in the next Olympics. At the 2028 Games in Los Angeles, he says, India should aim for a podium finish. For these long-term goals to materialise, there is a lot to be done, says SFI's general secretary Monal Chokshi.

One of the immediate goals is to ensure each State has at least three swimming academies under the Khelo India programme. Indian swimming, he explains, follows a two-tier system. The top-tier swimmers have access to high-performance centres like the one in Bengaluru. The junior swimmers – about 130 ("a very small number" according to

Chokshi) – are supposed to make use of the Khelo India academies. These academies, however, are not easily accessible.

"Srihari's 53.77 would have won him a medal 15-20 years ago," says Sokolovas. "There will be a time, 10-20 years from now when Indian swimmers will be swimming faster than current world records. But we can try to do it much before that."



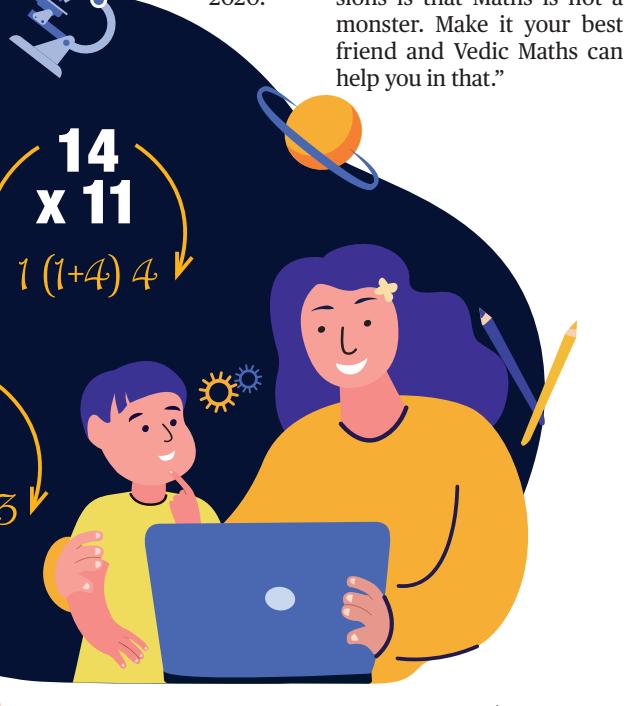
"While 50% of these trainers are Maths teachers, the rest comprise college students, retired professionals exploring new careers, women looking for flexible career options, parents, grandparents.... I have trained those in the age group of 23 to 78," says Vidhya.

She adds that but for the pandemic and the lockdown, she herself would not have explored online teaching. "When I had live classes, only Maths teachers attended the sessions, that too very few. Now I have a webinar-based training model, where I give a demonstration and take it to more people. Over 50,000 people have attended the webinars," she says.

A flipside is that those with elementary knowledge in Vedic Maths are also conducting classes. "Some of my students who have completed only their first-level sessions are now trainers. While I take ₹500 for 12 one-hour classes, they charge ₹2,000 or more," adds Ravi.

Meanwhile, mathematicians continue to be divided in their opinion over the origin and efficacy of Vedic Maths. However, according to Devaraj, "We never say that it is the only way to solve a problem. What we trainees stress on is that it is a creative, systematic way of approaching mathematics and not just a bag of tricks."

Nanditha seconds it, saying: "The first thing that we tell those who attend our sessions is that Maths is not a monster. Make it your best friend and Vedic Maths can help you in that."



Park here for dosas

The classic drive-in sees a revival as restaurants find creative ways to serve customers despite the pandemic, and associated lockdowns

ANASUYA MENON

Layers of flaky Kerala *parotta* soaked in spicy gravy are served in a *thooku paathram* (a traditional steel container with a handle) at Kaasa Kitchen.

The restaurant, serving fusion food in Fort Kochi, is determined not to let the pandemic affect business. A week ago, it launched an in-car dining service that has been drawing a steady stream of customers, all pulling up in front of the restaurant to enjoy their favourite dishes.

Kaasa is just one of a clutch of restaurants across the country that has formally launched an in-car dining service.

Informally, through the last lockdown especially, an increasing number of customers – eager for a drive, change of scene and freshly made food – started eating in their cars as restaurants could only do takeaway.

Even as restaurants reopen across the country, given the ongoing pandemic, some customers are likely to opt to continue to picnic in their cars, adding an interesting new twist to restaurant service.

Kaasa, for instance, has designed an entire ceremony around it – offering finger bowls and a temporary car fumigator to prevent the smell of food from lingering inside.

Food is served on specially-designed elongated trays, which fit in the car in such a way that allows

passengers to roll up the windows and switch on the AC. "They can vibe to the music of their choice as they dig into their meal," says Sharon Gafoor, the owner of Kaasa Kitchen.

Classic drive-in
With restrictions on dining-in still in effect, Kerala is reviving the age-old concept of the classic drive-in.

With the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) launching in-car dining services in restaurants operating under it across the State on June 30, the trend is catching on.

At KTDC restaurants set in scenic locations, the experience could



Picnic in the parking lot In-car dining at Kaasa Kitchen, Fort Kochi • THULASI KAKKAT

feel like a micro vacation, says an official, adding that it is especially appreciated by those travelling with elderly people and children. Currently operational at KTDC's restaurants at Kottarakkara, Kayamkulam, Alappuzha, Kuttippuram and Kannur from breakfast till dinner time, food is served on long trays that can be fitted across the front and back seats of the car.

While restaurateurs maintain that in-car dining has its challenges, it has been a great way to tide over the tough phase, keeping jobs and livelihoods.

Zaatar in Kochi, which serves typically Arabian fare, has also tweaked its menu to suit the car-dining experience.

"We cut down on our gravy-heavy Indian dishes and are focussing more on our traditional Arabic fare," says Mohammed Moosa, a founding member of the restaurant. "We cannot say that business is great, but it certainly has helped us stay afloat," he adds.

Parking facility

The availability of parking space has been a huge factor in deciding the trend, say restaurateurs. Most of the places offering in-car dining have the provision to park at least 10 to 15 cars at a time.

This could be a model to follow even in a post-COVID scenario, says Gunasekharan M, senior manager of TTDC Hotel on Azhagar Koil Road, Madurai.

One of the first restaurants in Madurai to adapt to the COVID situation by offering in-car dining, Gunasekharan says the idea eliminates fear of the disease spreading in a closed, air-conditioned space. "Even after COVID passes, people may prefer to be cautious," he adds.

With dining in set to restart in Tamil Nadu, the restaurant will offer both regular dine-in along with in-car dining. Here, instead of one elongated tray, each passenger is given a tray that is fixed to the door. A large screen placed in the outdoor dining area provides entertainment, too.

Although the trend of in-car dining has not caught on formally in Chennai, despite the legacy of well-loved Woodlands Drive-In, over the past few months it became routine to see customers unfurling ghee roast dosas in the comfort of their cars.

Restaurant dining has restarted in Chennai this week, but we expect to continue to see kerbside pickups, followed by kerbside dining now that people have discovered the joys of filter coffee to go.

Not just a bag of tricks

Vedic Maths finds more takers during the lockdowns, among parents, children and teachers alike, as classes remain digital

ATHIRA M

Siblings Nanditha D, 15, and Niveditha D, 11, recently led online sessions on Vedic Maths for students of classes VI-X, of their school, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kottayam. Prior to it, they had presented a paper and held a workshop on the subject at an online conference organised by the Institute for the Advancement of Vedic Mathematics, based in the UK.

During lockdown in 2020, from March to May, they took classes via Skype for over 300 students. In 2021, around 1,000 students had registered for their online sessions. A month ago, they launched a YouTube channel, Maths Made Easy by Nanditha and Niveditha.

The inspiration came from their father, P Devaraj, an automobile engineer and Vedic Maths teacher. "When we started our sessions it was meant to help a few of our friends. We didn't expect it to go this far," says Nanditha.

Meanwhile, in Chennai, Muthuselvi Prabhu, "works round the clock", teaching Vedic Maths to students from the UK, the US, Australia, Canada and West Asia on a one-to-one basis; she also has training sessions for teachers in India.

Indore-based 50-year-old Ravi Asrani, is busy on weekends with students joining from across India and abroad for his Vedic Maths classes. Trainers such as Delhi-based Saurabh Jain and Kota-based Rekha Gupta too have many students attending their sessions these days.

Teachers are happy to observe that there has been an increase in the number of people learning Vedic Maths over the last few months. The subject got a boost when

learning went digital during the lockdown.

The subject consists of 16 *sutras* or formulae and 13 *sub-sutras* to solve mathematical problems. While some saw it as a new subject to explore while at home, for most, it was to get over the fear of mathematics. "It is an age-old fear! Several parents, on their part, make it worse by constantly reminding their children about it. So when you come across a technique that promises an easy way of doing calculations, it was natural for many people to try it. For parents, it was also about keeping their children engaged during the lockdown," says Devaraj.

Saurabh, who calls himself a "maths magician", points out that not many people were aware of Vedic Maths until schooling shifted to the digital mode. "Earlier there were live classes once a week and the fee was high. But that scenario has

changed now," says Saurabh, adding, "We try to make it entertaining." For instance, instead of paying ₹3,500 per month for just three or four classes, they need to pay between ₹100-₹500 per hour for an online class. Devaraj adds that he charges ₹1,800 for a three-week, 15-hour class.

Rekha takes classes for four or five batches with 12-15 students each on a daily basis. "I have been teaching Abacus and Vedic Maths for 15 years now. While online teaching may not give the desired result in the case of Abacus, it works in the case of Vedic Maths. That was probably one reason why many got hooked to it when learning became digital. It is all about making mathematics fun to learn, with what many call 'tricks,'" she says.

Muthuselvi says that the interest is more among students who live abroad. "Here, in India, we have mark-based evaluation and so we stick to the syllabus whereas in many countries all they look at is the students' understanding of the concepts of mathematics," she adds.

Student becomes master
There has also been a rise in the number of people training to become Vedic Maths teachers. Vidhya Vikram from Coimbatore, for instance, has trained over 3,200 people from across the country since September 2020.



• GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK



Uniform TALES

Akshay Kumar plays a special task officer in his OTT debut

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

This year marks the 20th anniversary of *Dil Chahta Hai*, a much-loved buddy movie that went on to become a cult classic in Hindi cinema. Among the many fine things in it, Akshay Kumar's portrayal of Sidharth Sinha – a sensitive, mild-mannered artist who falls in love with a divorcee much older than him – is especially endearing. Asked if it is one of his favourites, Kumar pauses for several seconds before saying yes.

There is already a ton of trivia, interviews and long-form pieces on *Dil Chahta Hai*. But are there any anecdotes that the world does not know yet? "You are asking the wrong person," he says, over a Zoom call from Mumbai,

"My memory is not that great. But I can tell you it was a very happy time in my life and a very happy shoot."

A lot might have changed in Kumar's career since the film's release but one thing that has not is his feeling of fun when it comes to cinema. "It has always been an enjoyable experience."

Kumar's filmography suggests he is genre-neutral. But he would have liked more action films. It is why he readily agreed to *State of Siege: Temple Attack*, in which he plays an NSG commando. The film, directed by Ken Ghosh, is inspired from the 2002 terrorist attack on Akshardham Temple in Gujarat.

This is not the first time he is playing a role where he is required to wear a uniform and

Guns and glory Akshay Kumar in *State of Siege: Temple Attack* • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

handle big guns. In his second film, *Border*, he was a second lieutenant. He later played a lieutenant in *LOC Kargil*.

So, what is the fascination for uniforms and guns? "It is just something that captures your imagination," he says, "Action movies are hugely popular all over the world. I love watching them repeatedly. Whether it is a police officer or an army officer or anyone in those kinds of professions are attractive on an aspirational level."

Kumar also likes films about real-life incidents. "It adds authenticity. When you're watching it, in the back of your mind, you know that it's something that has happened to real people," he says. But he adds that *State of Siege: Temple Attack* is different from some of his other based-on-real-life-incident films like *The Accidental Prime Minister* or *Gandhi, My Father*. "In this film, we are not claiming to recreate the actual incident. It is a dramatised, fictional account of what unfolded."

State of Siege: Temple Attack will stream on Zee5 from July 9.

FIST OF FURY

Filmmaker Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra talks about his upcoming boxing drama *Toofaan* and reuniting with Farhan Akhtar after eight years

Director's cut A still from *Toofaan*; (inset) Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



GAUTAM SUNDER

Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra is not a man in a hurry – he has made seven films in 20 years. His latest *Toofaan* is set for release next week; the same week which saw the release of his first directorial, *Aks*, two decades ago.

Today, the filmmaker occupies an important place in contemporary Indian cinema as a progressive policymaker – whether it is the jaunty socio-political highs of *Rang De Basanti* or the immersive adrenaline rushes of *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*.

A conversation with the 58-year-old is always fascinating; his answers measured, his tone nuanced, and one can even sense his thoughts as he explains what drew him to a boxing drama and casting Farhan Akhtar in it.

Excerpts from an interview:

Toofaan is a refreshing departure from the spate of 'sports biopics' we have had over the last decade. Is the script a totally fictional story?

Well, I have been blamed too for going the biopic route earlier, but *Toofaan* is a complete work of fiction indeed. However, it draws everything from real life, from anecdotes and people I have seen and heard about, from conflicts and struggles. It is a drama at a family and social level, and a lovely romance, set against the backdrop of boxing, a sport that has huge synergy with the protagonist.

Why did you pick

Tell us about your relationship with Farhan...was it like catching up with an old friend to work on this film?

Our relationship has evolved since *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. We have always had a sense of mutual respect, and when we came out of our first film together, we felt extremely embraced.

When you collaborate with someone like Farhan, the energy grows manifold. The important thing is the like-mindedness in what we are doing. When I heard *Toofaan* for the first time – it was narrated to me by writer Anjum Rajabali – I immediately understood its voice, and wanted to do it with Farhan.

I feel both of us have grown a lot since *Bhaag...* and it is exciting to tell a story that dwells deeper into human relationships. This film is not plot-driven, it is character-driven. Which is why I am sure audiences will see their own struggles on screen and be able to empathise.

Toofaan will stream on Amazon Prime from July 16.

PRYADARSHINI PAITANDY

What is your idea of an ideal first date? Martinis at a beach bar? Dinner and a movie? Game night?

Well, for some who just met their partners on dating apps, it is heading to the nearest vaccination centre and getting a jab together. #jabwem.

With new variants of COVID-19 rearing their ugly heads, an increasing number of people are opting for the vaccine. And, they want to ensure potential dates are vaccinated too. Now, dating apps are adding features that educate users, busting myths and allaying fears.

Popular sites like Tinder, OK Cupid and Woo allow users to display a badge (usually an image of a syringe or plaster) to state they are vaccinated. It does not matter if they have received just one shot or both.

Last November, when vaccines were on the verge of being launched, OK Cupid, a dating app that been in India since 2018 and has over a million members, introduced a set of questions to gauge the mood of users.

"Back then, a lot of them said they were not entirely sure if they would opt for it," says Sitara Menon, senior marketing manager, OK Cupid. She adds that, since then answers have changed to yes, with a substantial number opining that a non-vaccinated person is a deal breaker.

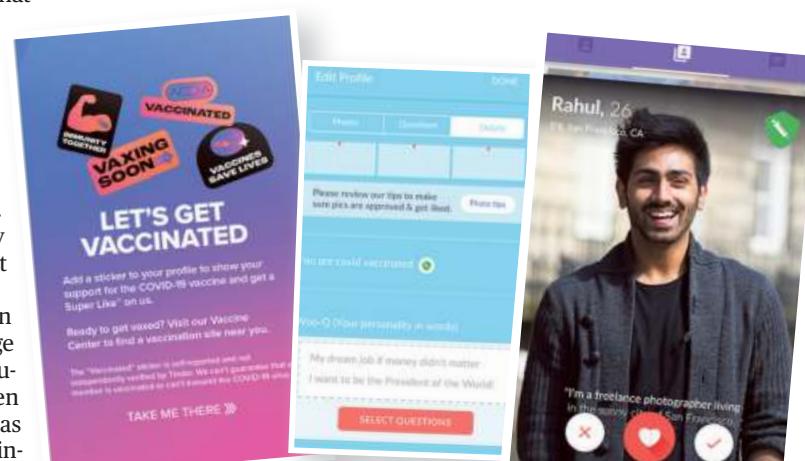
The pandemic has led to a change in conversation patterns.

New features, including stickers, are conversation starters, says Papri Dev, senior director, APAC communications, Tinder. She adds, "In May 2021 we noticed the reference to vaccines in bios went up by 42 times in members' profiles," she says. Sample this: 'Will you hold my hand while I take my vaccine?' Or, 'Let's get the COVID Vaccine together :)'.

When the pandemic began, the team at OK Cupid noticed the word COVID came up a lot in users' self summaries

Forget pictures. Show me your vaccine certificate

Whether or not you are vaccinated can decide your chances of getting a date, reveals research by Tinder, OkCupid, Woo and other popular dating apps in India



on the app.

Following that, over the last three months, 'vaccination' became the most used term. There has been a 763% increase in the mention of the word vaccine in bios," says Sitara.

She adds that Indians users now want to know if potential partners are vaccinated or want to get vaccinated. Badges on profiles help the others know if the person has taken their jab or not. "People who believe in vaccines, or got theirs, get 25% more

matches," she adds.

In a survey conducted in the major metros in the country, Woo, a home-grown dating app with more than 12 million users worldwide, found that 70% of its audience wants to meet people who are vaccinated.

"The survey was based on answers given by 10,000 people in the 24-35 age group,

says Ritesh Bhatnagar, chief marketing officer-WOO. "That's why we decided to go on this route and incorporate vaccine-related features like badges on our app last week.

Tinder launched what they call a 'vaccine centre' last week, on the app. This is an educational resource with quizzes and questions, and we have a link to CoWin," says Papri. OK Cupid and Bumble will have similar features, with explainers and answers from science and healthcare officials.

Tinder has partnered with India

source

with CoWin, Bumble with

and Tinder with

and Bumble with

Haiti President Jovenel Moïse assassinated, First Lady injured

PM said some of the attackers spoke in Spanish but offered no further details

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PORT-AU-PRINCE

Gunmen assassinated Haitian President Jovenel Moïse and wounded his wife in their home early on Wednesday, inflicting more chaos on the Caribbean country that was already enduring gang violence, soaring inflation and protests by Opposition supporters who accused the leader of increasing authoritarianism.

Interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who confirmed the killing, said the police and the military were in control of security in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas where a history of dictatorship and political upheaval have long stymied the consolidation of democratic rule.

Despite Mr. Joseph's assurances that order would prevail, there was confusion about who should take control and widespread anxiety among Haitians. Authorities declared a "state of siege" in



Controversial reign: A file photo of Haiti President Jovenel Moïse with wife Martine. • AFP

the country and closed the international airport.

The normally bustling streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince, were empty and quiet on Wednesday. Sporadic gunshots were heard in the distance, public transportation was scarce, and some people searched for businesses that were open to buy food and water.

Foreign mercenaries'
Bocchit Edmond, the Haitian Ambassador to the United States, said the attack on the

sins could have escaped over the land border to the Dominican Republic or by sea.

Haiti appeared to be heading for fresh volatility ahead of general elections later this year. Mr. Moïse had been ruling by decree for more than a year after failing to hold elections, and the Opposition demanded that he step down in recent months, saying he was leading it toward yet another grim period of authoritarianism.

Mr. Joseph said the heavily armed gunmen spoke Spanish or English, but he gave no details on the attack.

The White House described the attack as "horrible" and "tragic", and said it was still gathering information to brief President Joe Biden, spokesperson Jen Psaki said.

"The message to the people of Haiti is this is a tragic tragedy," she said. "And we stand ready and stand by them to provide any assistance that's needed."

Trump files suits against FB, Twitter and Google

He challenges 'wrongful censorship'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has filed suits against three of the country's biggest tech companies, claiming he and other conservatives have been wrongfully censored.

Mr. Trump announced the action against Facebook, Twitter and Google's YouTube, along with the companies' CEOs, at a press conference in New Jersey on Wednesday. He was joined by other plaintiffs in the suits, which were filed in federal court in Miami.

"We're demanding an end to the shadow-banning, a stop to the silencing and a stop to the blacklisting, banning and cancelling that you know so well," he said.

Under Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, social media platforms are allowed to moderate their services by removing posts that, for instance, are obscene or violate the services' own standards, so long as they are



Donald Trump

acting in "good faith." The law also generally exempts Internet companies from liability for the material that users post.

But Mr. Trump and some other politicians have long argued that Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms have abused that protection and should lose their immunity – or at least have to earn it by satisfying requirements set by the government.

Mr. Trump was suspended from Twitter, Facebook and YouTube after his followers stormed the Capitol building on January 6. The companies cited concerns that he would incite further violence.

Taliban attack Afghan provincial capital

Fierce fighting in western city of Qala-i-Naw

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban launched a major assault on a provincial capital in Afghanistan on Wednesday, the first since the U.S. military began its final drawdown of troops from the country as insurgents press on with a blistering offensive.

Fierce fighting erupted in the western city of Qala-i-Naw, the capital of Badghis, with the militants seizing police headquarters and offices of the country's spy agency.

As news of the morning assault spread, social media was flooded with videos of clashes – with some showing armed Taliban fighters on motorbikes entering the city of about 75,000, as onlookers cheered. Afghanistan's Defence Minister Bismillah Mohammadi said government forces were in a "very sensitive military situation", adding that "the war is raging" with the Taliban.



Gun battle: A smoke plume rising from houses amid fighting between Afghan forces and Taliban fighters in Qala-i-Naw. • AFP

The onslaught came hours after Washington announced that U.S. forces had completed more than 90% of their withdrawal from Afghanistan. The militants have waged a dizzying campaign across Afghanistan since U.S. and NATO forces announced the final withdrawal from the country in early May, seizing dozens of districts and stirring fears that the government is in crisis.

"The enemy has entered the city, all the districts have fallen," Badghis Governor Hessamuddin Shams told reporters in a text message. He attempted to calm the residents in a video message, appearing with a rifle – with gunfire rattling in the distance. "I assure you that we will, all of us, together defend the city," he said.

The Defence Ministry later said its troops had cleared "most parts" of the city. "In the next few hours all parts of the city will be cleared," Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman tweeted.

Afghan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh tweeted that the bodies of "tens" of Taliban fighters were lying in the streets. "I demand the respected ICRC (Red Cross) and other organizations to transfer the bodies... The weather is hot, and we do not support disrespecting the bodies," he said.

Afghan govt. met Taliban in Tehran: Iran

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

An Afghan government delegation met Taliban representatives in Tehran on Wednesday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.

Deputy chief negotiator Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai headed the Taliban delegation while former Vice-President Younis Qanooni represented the government, the Iranian Ministry said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed Mr. Stanikzai's visit to Tehran to "discuss issues of mutual interest". But he made no reference to any Afghan government delegation, saying only that Mr. Stanikzai was holding talks with "some Afghan personalities". "They will discuss and exchange opinions on the current situation of the country and finding a solution through talks," he added.

Megaship heads out of Suez after Egypt deal

It had blocked the canal in March

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ISMAILIA

Egyptian authorities announced the release on Wednesday of a hulking shipping vessel that had blocked the Suez Canal for nearly a week in March after running aground.



The m.v. Ever Given left the canal's Great Bitter Lake, where it had been held for more than three months amid a financial dispute. The development came after its Japanese owner, Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd., reached a settlement with canal authorities over a compensation amount following weeks of negotiations and a court stand-off.

Officials did not reveal details on the terms of the settlement. At first, the Suez Canal Authority had demanded \$916 million in compensation, which was later lowered to \$550 million. In addition to the money, local reports said the canal would also receive a tugboat. The money, according to canal authorities, would cover the salvage operation, costs of stalled canal traffic, and lost transit fees for the six days the ship had blocked the crucial waterway.

ELSEWHERE



U.S. forces in Iraq, Syria come under attack

BAGHDAD

Rocket and drone attacks targeted bases in Iraq and Syria hosting U.S. forces. Fourteen rockets were fired at an air base hosting U.S. troops in Iraq's Anbar, causing minor injuries to two personnel. It was the latest in a spate of attacks on U.S. military and diplomatic facilities in Iraq, blamed on pro-Iranian armed groups within a state-sponsored paramilitary force. In Syria, Kurdish-led forces also reported attempted attacks near a coalition base. AFP

China fines Internet giants in anti-monopoly cases

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

Companies, including Internet giants Alibaba and Tencent, were fined on Wednesday by anti-monopoly regulators in a new move to tighten control over their fast-developing industries.

In 22 cases, companies were fined 5,00,000 yuan (\$75,000) each for actions, including acquiring stakes in other companies that might improperly increase their market power, the State Administration for Market Regulation announced. It said violators include six companies owned by Alibaba Group and five by Tencent Holding Ltd.

China's leaders worry

Fix anti-LGBT law, EU warns Hungary

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
STRASBOURG

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday warned Hungary to reverse course on its controversial LGBT law, as pressure mounts on Brussels to cut EU funding to Budapest.

Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban is facing a mounting chorus of protest over the law, which is due to go into effect on Thursday. Mr. Orban insists it is a measure to protect children, but critics say the law conflates paedophilia with homosexuality and generally stigmatizes support for the LGBT community.

China social media giant shuts LGBT accounts

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BANGKOK

China's most popular social media service has deleted accounts on LGBT topics run by university students and non-government groups, prompting concern that the ruling Communist Party is tightening control over gay and lesbian content.

WeChat sent account holders a notice that they violated rules but gave no details, according to the founder of an LGBT group.

It wasn't clear whether the step was ordered by Chinese authorities, but it comes as the ruling party tightens political controls and tries to silence groups that might criticize its rule.

E-mailID-sectorb_2006@yahoo.co.in ; Tel/Fax – 0671-2301751/2302751	
Government of Odisha	
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, CUTTACK (R&B) CIRCLE, CUTTACK	
(e – PROCUREMENT NOTICE)	
Bid Identification No. S.O.E.Ctc. (R&B)11/2021-22	
1. The Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Circle, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Road work as mentioned below.	
2. No. of work	: 1No.
3. Nature of work	: Road Work
4. Class of contractor	: Special Class & Super Class
5. Tender Paper Cost	: Rs.10000/- (Online)
6. Available of bid documents	: From 22.07.2021 to 16.00 Hours of 06.08.2021 in the web site
7. Date of opening of bid	: Dt. 09.08.2021 at 11.00 Hours.
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website https://tendersodisha.gov.in . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said web site.	
Sd/- T.P.Mishra	
Superintending Engineer, Cuttack (R&B) Circle	
OIPR-34012/11/0015/2122	

B2-12:

Lanka issues coin for CPC centenary

'China is one of our most sincere friends,' says PM Mahinda Rajapaksa

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

In a rare diplomatic gesture, Sri Lanka has issued a commemorative coin marking the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party. The country's Central Bank on Tuesday said it has minted two coins in gold and silver, in connection with the Party's 100th anniversary, and 65 years of Sri Lanka-China relations.



Token of appreciation: President Gotabaya Rajapaksa receiving the first coin from the CBSL Governor. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and year 2022 inscribed, according to the statement. Central Bank Governor W.D. Lakshman presented the first coin to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday.

Economic help
The apex bank's move comes amid substantial economic assistance from China to Sri Lanka. While Sri Lanka already owes China over \$5 billion from past loans, Beijing sanctioned an additional \$1 billion in loan and about \$1.5 billion in a currency swap to help Colombo combat its economic crisis since the pandemic hit the island

nation in March 2020.

Speaking in a virtual conference to commemorate the Chinese Communist Party's centenary, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Wednesday said China was one of Sri Lanka's "most sincere friends". "The Communist Party of China is currently the world's largest political party, which has delivered a very important message to the world on foreign relations for the past 70 years," he said, pointing to bilateral relations since 1957, and relations between the Communist parties of both countries since the 1940s.

"I am aware that it was the foreign policy positions of the CPC that elevated China on the global stage. However, China has never tried to impose its own political views on the world," PM Rajapaksa said. "China has also never felt the need to manipulate the affairs of other countries. China has helped the other countries, keeping them at the same level, which is a very important matter for a country's independence as well as its sovereignty," he said, even as sections within Sri Lanka, including political allies of the Rajapaksas, remain fiercely critical of Western and Indian "interference" that they see as a threat to the country's sovereignty.

Further, commanding China on its poverty eradication programme, Mr. Rajapaksa said China always believed that improving infrastructure would "provide new ways and new strengths for the people". "Therefore, we have constantly invited China to help develop the infrastructure," he said.



Gun battle: A smoke plume rising from houses amid fighting between Afghan forces and Taliban fighters in Qala-i-Naw. • AFP

gunfire rattling in the distance. "I assure you that we will, all of us, together defend the city," he said.

The Defence Ministry later said its troops had cleared "most parts" of the city. "In the next few hours all parts of the city will be cleared," Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman tweeted.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed Mr. Stanikzai's visit to Tehran to "discuss issues of mutual interest". But he made no reference to any Afghan government delegation, saying only that Mr. Stanikzai was holding talks with "some Afghan personalities". "They will discuss and exchange opinions on the current situation of the country and finding a solution through talks," he added.

The selected candidates would also be entitled to all the allowances as applicable to Central Government Employees.

Complete details regarding the Sports disciplines earmarked for recruitment, educational qualifications, other eligibility conditions along with the terms and conditions and instructions to the candidates are available on the Department's website www.incometaxmumbai.gov.in. The application form available on the website www.incometaxmumbai.gov.in or <https://www.incometaxmumbai.in> should be submitted online. Incomplete applications will be rejected summarily. The last date for online submission of application is **25.08.2021** by **23:59 hrs**.

Sd/-
(Karl Sareea, I.R.S.)
Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (HQ)
Personnel, Mumbai

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS:TIRUPATI

Office of the Chief Engineer e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Adv.No.17/D3/CE/TTD/2021-22 05/07/2021

e-tenders invited on e-procurement for the following works of TTD Engineering Dept.

Sl. No.	NIT No.	Name of the work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakh & Time for Completion	Schedule Download Start Date	Download End Date & Last Date for bid Submission
1	31/ SE-I/ TTD/ 2021-22	Construction of additional floors over existing Harihareshwar Hostel Block and Conversion of rooms in Srinivasa and Gandhi Hostels at Tirupati.	1990.00	08-07-2021 5.00 p.m.	1.00 p.m. & 3.00 p.m.
2	32/ SE-I/ TTD/ 2021-22	Construction of School Building in S.V.Oriental High School & S.V.Elementary School at Tirupati,	760.00	09-07-2021 5.00 p.m.	1.00 p.m. & 3.00

MARKET WATCH

	07-07-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	53,055	-0.37
US Dollar	74.62	-0.09
Gold	46,903	-1.77
Brent oil	73.13	-2.79

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	720.10	+7.40
Asian Paints	3040.10	+37.60
Axis Bank	762.90	+4.55
Bajaj Auto	4188.25	+7.15
Bajaj Finserv	12374.15	+283.35
Bajaj Finance	6198.60	+3.80
Bharti Airtel	529.60	+3.50
BPCL	460.50	+2.45
Britannia Ind	3521.35	+2.35
Cipla	965.20	+3.90
Coal India	1475.55	+0.05
Divis Labs	4552.55	+28.35
Eicher Motors	2710.85	+0.30
Grafix Ind	1493.85	+3.40
HCL Tech	975.35	+3.30
HDFC	2529.20	+32.80
HDFC Bank	1539.50	+4.80
HDFC Life	685.20	+5.15
Hero MotoCorp	2913.35	+5.90
Hindalco	393.65	+8.30
Hind Unilever	2481.65	+9.15
ICICI Bank	654.00	+3.70
IndusInd Bank	1044.90	+13.85
Infosys	1564.60	+2.40
Indian Oil Corp	107.95	+0.45
ITC	203.75	+1.25
JSW Steel	690.40	+17.25
Kotak Bank	1761.80	+6.45
L&T	1516.45	+10.95
M&B	778.90	+3.00
Maruti Suzuki	7449.40	+65.55
Nestle India Ltd.	17716.95	+246.85
NTPC	117.45	+0.20
ONGC	119.90	+1.60
PowerGrid Corp	230.95	+2.15
Reliance Ind	2110.05	+14.75
SBI Life	1014.40	+8.75
State Bank	432.85	+3.10
Shree Cement	27540.25	+222.10
Sun Pharma	680.10	+6.85
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	763.05	+0.45
Tata Motors	137.10	+0.20
Tata Steel	1218.65	+51.40
TCS	3274.95	+12.65
Tech Mahindra	1045.90	+3.65
Titan	1727.25	+35.55
UltraTech Cement	6925.10	+7.95
UPL	816.90	+13.60
Wipro	532.15	+0.45

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 07
CURRENCY TT BUV TT SELL
US Dollar 74.42 74.74
Euro 87.95 88.33
British Pound 102.85 103.29
Japanese Yen (100) 67.18 67.49
Chinese Yuan 11.52 11.57
Swiss Franc 80.52 80.91
Singapore Dollar 55.24 55.48
Canadian Dollar 59.83 60.12
Malaysian Ringgit 17.88 17.96

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Vistara introduces Delhi-Tokyo flights

NEW DELHI Vistara inaugurated non-stop flights between Delhi and Tokyo Haneda. Under the air bubble agreement between India and Japan, Vistara will fly once a week between the two cities using its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner.

PNB asks arm to pull rejigging Carlyle deal

NEW DELHI PNB Housing Finance on Wednesday said its promoter Punjab National Bank has asked it to consider restructuring the proposed ₹4,000-crore capital infusion deal by Carlyle group. The housing financier also said it would await the Securities Appellate Tribunal's order before taking a final decision. It said it received a letter from PNB on July 4. The state-owned lender took a legal opinion and deliberated the matter in its board meeting. PTI

Auto segments set for double-digit growth: SCL

'Firm well-placed to leverage opportunity'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI Auto components manufacturer Sundaram-Clayton Ltd. (SCL) has said that all automotive segments are expected to return to strong double-digit growth in the short to mid term on account of low base.

"Increase in industrial activity, need for personal mobility [and] improved availability of funds, will drive the growth of the domestic auto industry," chairman Venu Srinivasan said in the annual report.

In the long term, he said, due to stringent emission norms, fuel economy regulations and adoption of alternative drive-train technologies, the thrust towards 'light-weighting' was bound to increase, leading to high-

Fitch cuts GDP growth estimate to 10% on slower recovery

'Disruption in key centres hit expectations of a rebound to pre-pandemic levels'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI Fitch Ratings has cut its projection for India's real GDP growth in 2021-22 to 10%, from 12.8%, citing a slower recovery due to renewed COVID-19 restrictions and warned that medium-term growth hopes of about 6.5% could suffer if business and consumer activity were scarred from the pandemic.

The ratings agency also warned that banks' asset quality challenges have increased and will remain under threat due to mobility restrictions, medical exigencies and rising job losses, with MSME and retail loans to low- and moderate-in-



Not so fast: Fitch pared its earlier estimate of 12.8% growth citing curbs that have damped resumption of activity. ■PTI

come borrowers most likely at risk.

"Localised lockdowns during the second wave kept economic activity from stalling to levels similar to those

pre-pandemic levels by 2021-22," the agency said in a note on Indian banks. "Our moderately worse 2021 outlook for Indian banks factors in muted prospects for new business due to our expectation of weak corporate and consumer confidence, banks' continuing high-risk aversion and below-trend credit demand," it added.

"Fitch expects banks' exposure to stressed MSME and retail borrowers to rise further with the increasing relief outlay.... [and] impaired loans to peak after 2022-23 since stress is likely to manifest from this pool over a fairly protracted time frame," the agency stressed.

M&M recasts business in Turkey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) announced that its subsidiary Erekunt Traktor Sanayi A.S. will acquire the Agriculture Machinery business from its subsidiary Hisarlar Makina Sanayi ve Ticaret Anonim Şirketi, as part of its restructuring of business in Turkey.

Also, in a reverse deal, Mahindra Overseas Investment Company (Mauritius) Ltd. (MOICML), a wholly owned subsidiary of M&M, and Erekunt, have agreed to sell their entire stake of 94.3% in Hisarlar, for an aggregate consideration of Turkish Lira 6.6 million (about ₹5.6 crore).

'Second wave to retard rural FMCG growth'

E-com share rising: Wipro Consumer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting (WCCL) on Wednesday said the second COVID wave is expected to slow down growth in the rural FMCG market in the current fiscal and that the situation was challenging for the business in the June quarter.

The company expects growth to be almost equal in both rural and urban markets for FMCG products this fiscal unlike last financial year when the rural markets recorded higher growth.

WCCL is not anticipating any further increase in the price of Santoor soaps, as prices of palm oil have

cooled down. Palm oil is a key ingredient for making soaps. The company also said about 14% of India sales now come via e-commerce.

"The e-com portion of sales is on the rise. However, this would exclude Santoor, which was mostly a rural-focussed brand," said CEO Vineet Agrawal.

In seating and office portfolio, e-com share was zero until April 2020, but this year 20% of our sales from the segment are coming via e-commerce. We also see 8% of sales coming online for lighting in the domestic market," he added.

(With inputs from Mini Tejaswi in Bengaluru)

'Airbus liable for 18% GST on service abroad'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Airbus India's technical advisory and procurement services for its France-based holding company are 'intermediary services' and liable to 18% Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Authority for Advance Ruling has said.

Airbus Group India had approached the Karnataka bench of the AAR, seeking a ruling on whether the services rendered by it to its holding company Airbus Invest SAS, France, would qualify as 'export of service' under the Goods and Services Tax law and hence construed as a 'zero-rated supply'.

Bank NNPAs to fall in FY22 on recoveries'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The banking system's gross non-performing assets are set to decline to at least 7.1% by March 2022, from 7.6% at FY21-end, a domestic ratings agency said on Wednesday.

The NPPAs will go lower on higher recoveries and upgrades, and also faster credit growth, ICRA said.

Fresh accretion to the NPPAs will be higher in FY22 due to the absence of any regulatory dispensations such as moratoriums, the agency said.

The Reserve Bank's financial stability report had said GNPsAs as at March 2021 were 7.6% and estimated they would rise to 9.8% by FY22-end under its base-case assumptions.

IMF chief warns of U.S. inflation risk

Fund sees response spurring outflows

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

The International Monetary Fund on Wednesday said further fiscal support in the United States could fuel inflationary pressures and warned that the risk of a sustained rise in prices could require raising interest rates earlier-than-expected.

Ms. Georgieva said an accelerated recovery from the pandemic in the U.S., where growth is seen reaching 7% in 2021, would benefit many countries through increased trade, but rising inflation could be more sustained than expected.

Higher U.S. interest rates could lead to a sharp tightening of global financial conditions and significant capital outflows from emerging and developing economies, IMF MD Kristalina Georgieva said in a blog published Wednesday.

The IMF's assessment of U.S. inflation risks comes amid sharp criticism by Republican lawmakers of Pre-

sident Joe Biden's multi-trillion-dollar plans to boost spending on infrastructure, child care, community college tuition and expanded coverage of home care for the elderly and disabled.

Ms. Georgieva said an accelerated recovery from the pandemic in the U.S., where growth is seen reaching 7% in 2021, would benefit many countries through increased trade, but rising inflation could be more sustained than expected.

Other countries face rising commodity and food prices, which are now at their highest level since 2014, putting millions of people at risk of food insecurity, the IMF said in its report.

Natco slumps 6.7% after U.S. firm gets relief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Natco Pharma shares fell 6.7% to ₹1,087.30 on the BSE on Wednesday, after the company said the Delhi High Court had allowed an application of U.S.-based FMC Corp, challenging the use of the insect control active ingredient chlorantraniliprole (CTPR).

While Natco signalled it would review all options, the U.S. firm said the interim injunction restrains Natco from manufacturing, using, distributing or selling any product that contains CTPR.

FMC had filed the lawsuit for potential infringement of patents on CTPR.

EU forecasts higher growth in eurozone

Commission flags risk of virus variants

REUTERS

BRUSSELS

The eurozone economy will grow faster than previously thought both this year and next, the European Commission said on Wednesday, despite rising concerns the fast-spreading Delta variant could lead to new curbs.

The EU's executive arm

also expected higher inflation this year for the 19-nation bloc than previously forecast, but estimated growth in consumer prices would slow next year.

The EU arm predicted the eurozone will grow by 4.8%

this year, much faster than the 4.3% expansion it had forecast in May.

JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH

(An Institution of National Importance Under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare)

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

धन्वंतरि नगर

Hurkacz torpedoes Federer's quest for a ninth title at SW19

The Pole blows away the off-colour Swiss in straight sets, including a bagel in the third; Shapovalov edges Khachanov in an engrossing battle

WIMBLEDON

AGENCIES
LONDON

Eight-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer lost 6-3, 7-6(4), 6-0 to 14th-seeded Hubert Hurkacz of Poland in the quarterfinals at the All England Club on Wednesday, a surprisingly lopsided finish to his 22nd appearance in the tournament.

Federer was given an ovation, but none quite like this one, which felt more like a "Thank you" or – just in case – a "Goodbye." As he stepped up to the baseline to serve in the last game, he needed to wait while fans in the full-to-capacity stands applauded and cheered.

Soon enough, it was over, only the third 6-0 set lost by Federer in his Grand Slam career and his 14th defeat in 119 matches at Wimbledon.

"I don't know what to say," Hurkacz said. "It's super special for me. Playing on this special court against Roger – it's always, when you're a kid, it's like a dream come true to play him."

This was not the Federer the world was used to watching. He simply never was able to summon the serving and shot-making that have carried him to 20 Grand Slam titles overall, tied with

C I don't know. I really don't know. I've got to regroup. My goal was always to try & play another Wimbledon. I was able to make it this year, which I'm really happy about. Everything that comes after we'll have to sit down and talk about it

FEDERER on whether this is his last Wimbledon

Nadal for the men's record.

"I barely made it for this year," Federer said later. "It was a long hard road, but I actually kind of enjoyed it. It was always uphill, as slow as it was, but it was always moving forward."

"I did not have any setbacks, but clearly there are things missing in my game," the Swiss added.

Quick off the blocks

Hurkacz, boosted by having defeated World No.2 Daniil Medvedev in five sets in the last 16, was quickly up a break on a sluggish-looking Federer in the sixth game of the opening set and took it with ease.

The Swiss star, who underwent two knee surgeries in 2020 and was bidding to be the oldest man in the Wimbledon last-four in over a half a century, carved out a break for 2-0 in the second set.

Whilst Khachanov was content to largely stay at the back, playing some delightful groundstrokes, especially on his backhand, Shapovalov varied his game more, with

Federer appeared flat and was quickly down 0-2 in the third set before Hurkacz wrapped up the decider in just 29 minutes in front of a stunned Centre Court.

Earlier in the day, Canada's Denis Shapovalov reached his first Wimbledon semifinal on Wednesday beating Russia's Karen Khachanov 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-1, 6-4 in an engrossing tussle that lasted 3 hours and 26 minutes.

Shapovalov will next play defending champion Novak Djokovic after the World No.1 made short work of Hungarian Marton Fucsovics 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 on Centre Court.

The 22-year-old Shapovalov took the first set afterlov took the first set after breaking Khachanov at 4-4. The latter, like Shapovalov appearing in his first Wimbledon quarterfinal, hit back by taking the next two sets.

Whilst Khachanov was content to largely stay at the back, playing some delightful groundstrokes, especially on his backhand, Shapovalov varied his game more, with

his drop shots highly effective.

However, it was the Russian who wilted as Shapovalov romped through the fourth to take it into the deciding set. The decider looked tight affair but in reality Khachanov was hanging on, saving his service on a couple of occasions.

Finally, the Russian, who had been involved in a record 13 breaks of serve in the fifth set of Monday's win over Sebastian Korda, was broken in the ninth game and Shapovalov served out the match with aplomb.

THE RESULTS

Quarterfinals: Men: 1-Djokovic (SRB) bt Fucsovics (HUN) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4; 14-Hurkacz (POL) bt Federer (SUI) 6-3, 7-6(4), 6-0; 10-Shapovalov (CAN) bt 25-Khachanov (RUS) 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-1, 6-4

■ Matteo Berrettini reached his second Major singles semifinal with a 6-3, 5-7, 7-5, 6-3 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime. The Italian will play Hurkacz next

Women's semifinals

■ 1-Barty vs 25-Kerber

■ 2-Sabalenka vs 8-Pliskova

6 p.m. IST

THE HIGHLIGHTS

1 Maiden Slam semifinal for Hurkacz. He is also the second Polish man in history to do so after Janowicz (2013 Wimbledon)

1 First Major semifinal for Shapovalov. He is also the third Canadian man after Raonic (2014) and Robert Powell (1908) to enter the singles last four at Wimbledon

3 Only the third time Federer has lost in straight sets at Wimbledon. Previous: vs Aincic, first round, 2002 and vs Kafelnikov, first round, 2000

5 Only the fifth time in his Tour career, and third time at Slams, that Federer has lost a set 6-0. Previously at Slams: vs Nadal (2008 French Open final) & vs Rafter (1999 French Open first round)

19 Djokovic's current streak on grass, starting from Wimbledon 2018, the longest of his career. Previous best: 16, across three editions of Wimbledon from 2014 to 2016

100 Djokovic has now won 100 matches on grass and is only the third active men's player after Federer and Murray to record 100 wins each on Hard, Grass and Clay



Sania-Bopanna lose a marathon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Rohan Bopanna was solid with his serve and net play as usual, but Sania Mirza's serve was consistently put under pressure as the Indian pair bowed out of The Championships with a three-set defeat in the third round of the mixed doubles event on Wednesday.

The match resumed with the 14th seeds, Jean-Julien-Roger and Andreja Klepac, having a one-set lead and they finished on the right side of the result with a 6-3, 3-6, 11-9 scoreline.

Sania has not played much competitive tennis post her comeback and is struggling to get her serve right.

It was Sania's last tournament before the Tokyo Games where she will compete in the women's doubles with Ankita Raina.

Thakur replaces Rijiju as Sports Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Anurag Thakur replaced Kiren Rijiju as the country's sports minister with just over two weeks left for the Tokyo Olympics.

The 46-year-old former BCCI president was given charge of sports along with the IB ministry after he took oath as a cabinet minister.

Mixed day for Anand

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
KOZHIKODE

Viswanathan Anand had a mixed day on his return to competitive chess on Wednesday.

He defeated Jorden Van Foreest of the Netherlands in the opening round of the Croatia Grand Chess Tour at Zagreb before going down to Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the second. Anand then drew with Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi.

The standings (after three rounds): 1. Nepomniachtchi (Rus) 2.5 points; 2-8. Alexander Grischuk (Rus), Anton Korobov (Ukr), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol), Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Aze), Anand, Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) and Ivan Saric (Cro) 1.5; 9-10. Anish Giri (Ned) and Van Foreest (Ned) 1.

SHORT PASSES



We will be back, says Busquets

LONDON
Spain captain Sergio Busquets said the team will return stronger after gaining vital experience during its run to the Euro 2020 semifinals. "It's a shame, we would have liked for our tournament not to end today but that's football," Busquets told *Radio Marca*. "With lots of young players it will serve to give them confidence. This team will be back," said Busquets. AFP



Spain game hardest of my career: Bonucci

LONDON
Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci said Spain gave him the hardest challenge of his career in the semifinal on Tuesday night. "It was the toughest game I have ever played. I congratulate Spain for what they showed, but once again this Italy showed heart, determination and the ability to push through difficult moments," Bonucci said. "Now there is one more centimetre to go." REUTERS



UEFA invites Eriksen to Euro 2020 final

COPENHAGEN
UEFA has invited Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen to the European Championship final along with the medics who helped to save his life. Eriksen collapsed on the field during his team's opening match against Finland on June 12 after suffering a cardiac arrest. He had to be resuscitated with a defibrillator. The final is scheduled for Sunday. AP

Liton revives Bangladesh innings

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HARARE

Liton Das struck a Test career-best 95 on Wednesday to play a pivotal role in Bangladesh reaching 294 for eight on the first day of the one-off Test against Zimbabwe on Wednesday.

With their team struggling at 132 for six, Liton and Mahmudullah added 138 for the seventh wicket. Liton's previous highest was the 94 against Sri Lanka at Chattogram in 2018.

The scores: Bangladesh 294-8 in 83 overs (Mominul Haque 70, Liton Das 95, Mahmudullah 54 batting, Blessing Muzarabani 3-48) vs Zimbabwe. **Toss:** Bangladesh.

Mathews opts out of series against India

INDIA IN LANKA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan all-rounder Angelo Mathews on Wednesday pulled out of the upcoming limited-overs series against India citing personal reasons, as Sri Lanka Cricket announced that 29 of the 30 players shortlisted for the assignment have signed their contracts.

The 34-year-old Mathews was not part of the squad that toured England recently and last played the Test series against Bangladesh in April.

The India series compris-



Angelo Mathews. ■ FILE PHOTO

ing three ODIs and as many T20s begins here on July 13.

"Mathews requested SLC to relieve him from National duty, owing to personal reasons, until further notice," a statement from SLC said.

The India series compris-

Mace to tour New Zealand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AUCKLAND

The victorious Black Caps squad will carry its ICC World Test Championship Mace on a week-long, nationwide tour of the country, starting July 26, New Zealand Cricket (NZC) said on Wednesday.

Kane Williamson's men won the inaugural WTC, beating India by eight wickets in Southampton.

The tour is set to start in Whangarei on July 26 and will cover Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton, New Plymouth, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill so that members of the public have an opportunity to be



Victory parade: The Mace tour will involve selected players and staff assembling at each of the cities on the route. ■ AFP

photographed with the unique trophy and collect autographs and a team poster.

"It's quickly become apparent that Kiwis want an opportunity to be part of, and to share in this historic achievement," NZC chief executive David White said. "We've been inundated with requests to do something so that New Zealanders can join in with the team and share in the moment."

on stage one from the

Atlantic port city of Brest.

Wednesday's stage saw the Jumbo rider fall into a ditch just outside the Provence town of Sorgues, shortly after the departure for a double ascent of the Tour's most famous climb, the Mont Ventoux.

Martin was also hurt on stage 1 and was vocal in calls for the hapless roadside fan that day to be severely punished, not for causing the crash, but for failing to stick around and help.

Martin was the rider who collided with a roadside fan brandishing a sign last week that caused a spectacular mass pile-up

van Aert wins 11th stage

TOUR DE FRANCE

REUTERS
MALAUCENE

Belgian Wout van Aert won the 11th stage of the Tour de France on Wednesday, a 198.9-km mountain trek featuring a double ascent of the Mont Ventoux.

The Jumbo-Visa rider went solo from the day's breakaway 11 kilometres from the top of the second climb of the famed Ventoux, and never looked back. Trek-Segafredo teammates Kenny Elissonde and Bauke

Mollema completed the top-three. Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, who was fourth, retained the yellow jersey.

Tony Martin out of Tour after second crash

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MALAUCENE (FRANCE)

German rider Tony Martin exited the Tour de France by ambulance early on stage 11 on Wednesday after suffering face and leg injuries when tumbling into a deep roadside ditch, having been at the centre of a crash-marred opening day that saw a fan knock half the peloton down.

Martin was the rider who collided with a roadside fan brandishing a sign last week that caused a spectacular mass pile-up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

India off-spinner R. Ashwin could play a First Class game for Surrey as early as July 11 ahead of next month's Test series against England.

If he is able to get a work visa in time for Surrey's game against Somerset, Ashwin will get valuable match practice before the five-Test series against England starting August 4.

Ashwin could play for Surrey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and all-rounder Sneh Rana were on Wednesday nominated for the ICC women's 'Player of the Month' award for June following their standout performances in the ongoing series against England.

Besides the Indian duo, England's left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone has also been nominated for the honour in the women's category.

Shafali and Sneh nominated for ICC 'Player of the month'



Shafali Verma. ■ GETTY IMAGES

man and fourth from any country to score half-centuries in both innings of a de-

Olympic great Keshav Datt, 95, passes away

The two-time gold medallist was the last surviving member of the historic 1948 London Games team

HOCKEY

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Two-time Olympics gold medallist Keshav Chandra Datt, the last surviving member of the Indian hockey team in the historic 1948 London Games, passed away here early on Wednesday, according to a Hockey Bengal (HB) statement. He was 95.

An HB official said Datt's last rites would be performed after the arrival of his daughter Anjali from abroad in a few days' time.

A product of the famous Government College, Lahore – which also produced Olympians like Syed Jaffar, Commander Nandy Singh and Munir Dar – Datt, born in Lahore on December 29, 1925, participated in the 1948 London and 1952 Helsinki Games respectively.

Some claim that he could not take part in his third Olympics, in Melbourne in 1956, due to "professional commitments with Brooke Bond".

Datt – who migrated to India after the partition and played in Bombay and then in Bengal – was part of the Dhyān Chand-led Indian squad that toured East Africa in 1947. As a half-back, he played in 22 matches and scored two goals.

In 1949, Datt had the honour of playing against hockey wizard Dhyān Chand, who led the Rest of India squad, in two exhibition matches here.

First, Datt was part of the



Impact player: Keshav Datt was rated as one of the finest half-backs of his time by Dhyān Chand. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

1948 Olympics squad and in the second he was a member of the Bengal team.

In his autobiography *Goal*, Dhyān Chand rated Datt as one of the finest half-backs of that time.

Best moments

Defeating host Great Britain 4-0 in the final at the Empire Stadium, Wembley, London,

to win Independent India's first gold in 1948 on the British soil and then thrashing the Netherlands 6-1 four years later in Helsinki to bag the second consecutive Olympic Games title were the finest moments of Datt's career.

By the age of 26, he had the prized possession of two Olympic gold medals.

He was my hero, says Gurbux

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Hockey Olympians recalled their association with two-time gold medallist Keshav Datt.

Gurbux Singh, an Olympics gold medallist in 1964 and who was close to Datt, remembered the legend.

"When I began my career in hockey, Datt was my hero. I came to Bengal in 1956 and was fortunate to see him turn out for Mohun Bagan. I played briefly against him as he was on the last leg of his career.

"He was a tall and handsome person and had a simple game. He used to pass the ball to others or hit it hard. He did not dribble too much," Gurbux told *The Hindu*.



Keshav Datt. ■ FILE PHOTO

He fondly remembered Lahore-born Datt's insistence on writing his surname correctly. "He loved to speak in Punjabi or Hindi. He was very particular in writing Datt as his surname. If you wrote Dutt, he used to get annoyed and said, 'No, I am Datt'."

Bir Bahadur Chettri, a

1980 Olympics hockey gold medallist from Bengal, said Datt was a fine gentleman. "We used to call him Guruji. And he used to treat us like his children. He was a very friendly person and a thorough gentleman who never used any foul language. During my playing days, he used to encourage us and his words inspired us."

Datt never found fault with anyone. He used to say, 'mistakes happen. Just keep working hard', said Chettri.

Mamata's tribute
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a tweet, paid tributes to Datt, describing him as one of the "true legends" of hockey.

Ganga bhi, Jamuna bhi, Aadmi bhi, Vidhaata bhi, Har Andaz ka Leader



daCunha/AB750

Paul shines as the Suns draw first blood

Antetokounmpo's return boosts Bucks



Shining brightly: Chris Paul, left, led the way for Phoenix Suns with a game-high 32 points on Tuesday. ■ AP

NBA FINALS

REUTERS
PHOENIX

Chris Paul scored 32 points, Devin Booker 27, and Deandre Ayton 22 as the Phoenix Suns defeated the Milwaukee Bucks 118-105 in Game One of the NBA Finals on Tuesday.

The Suns got contributions up and down the lineup, with six players scoring in double figures, and made 25 of their 26 free-throw attempts while the Bucks connected on just nine of 16.

Bucks' forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was playing his first game since hyperextending his left knee

in the previous series, did not appear to be suffering any lingering issues from the injury. However, the Suns' defence stood tall to limit the two-time league MVP to 20 points in his 35 minutes of action.

Booker notched 16 points to help the Suns to a 57-49 lead at the half, and while an Antetokounmpo layup shaved the Suns' lead to seven in the second half, the Bucks did not threaten again.

The result:

Semifinal: Argentina 1 (Lautaro Martinez 7) drew with Colombia 1 (Diaz 61) (Argentina won 3-2 on penalties).

Japan considers ban on all spectators

REUTERS
TOKYO

Japan is considering banning all spectators from the Olympic Games, several sources told *Reuters* on Wednesday, as officials weigh extending novel coronavirus restrictions to contain infections just over two weeks before Games begin.

The Tokyo 2020 organising committee said restrictions on spectators would be based on the content of Japan's coronavirus status of emergency, or other relevant measures.

Toshiro Muto, the chief executive of the organising

committee, said on Wednesday the Games are striving to ensure safety for all participants by taking effective public health measures against COVID-19.

The issue of spectators is due to be decided at five-way talks on Thursday, which will include the Tokyo governor and International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach.

In another blow to the Games, organisers had announced on Tuesday they would ask the public not to gather on the streets to watch the marathon.

Emiliano Martínez does the star turn for Argentina

Goalkeeper excels against Colombia in penalty shootout with three crucial saves

COPA AMERICA

REUTERS
BRASILIA

Emiliano Martínez was the hero for Argentina as he saved three times in a shootout to take his team into a Copa America final against Brazil after Tuesday's semifinal against Colombia finished 1-1 after 90 minutes.

Martínez, who tried to distract Colombia's players in the shootout with a barrage of trash talk, saved from Davinson Sanchez, Yerry Mina and Edwin Cardona.

Lionel Messi, Leandro Paredes and Lautaro Martínez scored for Argentina.

"I'm speechless," said Argentine keeper Martínez. "They took us to penalties and that's a question of luck, today it was my turn for glory."

Intense match

Both sides had chances to win in an intense, end-to-end match punctuated by 46 fouls and 10 yellow cards.

Argentina is seeking to win its first major international title since lifting the



Flying across: Emiliano Martínez guesses correctly and dives perfectly to stop Davinson Sanchez's attempt. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The shootout

	COLOMBIA	ARGENTINA
Cuadrado	✓	1-1
Sanchez	✗	1-1
Mina	✗	1-2
Borja	✓	2-3
Cordona	✗	2-3

Copa America in 1993 and once again Lionel Messi was the star man, notching up his fifth assist of the tourna-

ment to add to his four goals.

Taking a superb pass from Giovani Lo Celso after six minutes, Messi rolled the ball to

Lautaro Martínez to fire home a low shot and give Argentina the lead.

Colombia found its feet soon after and hit the woodwork twice in a minute towards the end of the first half when Wilmar Barrios' deflected shot struck the post and then Mina watched his header hit the bar from the resulting corner.

Tight angle

Its equaliser came on the hour mark when Luis Diaz

It hasn't yet sunk in fully, says Udayan Mane

His PGTI performances came to the player's rescue as regards making the cut



Clear thinking: Udayan Mane says he will not let the scale of the Olympics affect him but focus on the preparation. ■ FILE PHOTO

and qualifying for the Olympics," said Mane, a member of Indian team in the 2014 Asian Games at Incheon, South Korea.

Looking back, the Official World Golf Rankings (OWGR) Board's decision to consider the PGTI performances for world rankings in 2019, came to Mane's rescue. Winner of two titles in 2019 and three in succession during the 2020-21 season,

saw Mane earn valuable OWGR points.

Bonding with Lahiri

Mane, 30, joined his friend Anirban Lahiri as the last two players among the qualifiers. Interestingly, they share the same coach, Vijay Divecha. Both grew up training under Divecha at the Egleton Golf Resort, Bengaluru.

"Anirban is not only a

good friend but also a great golfer and a role-model. More than that, he is an amazing human being. He teaches us on and off the golf course. He's the best person to emulate," said Mane.

Chennai-born Mane, who grew up in Bengaluru and now resides in Pune, has a connection with Japan, too.

"I had played in Japan during the 2014 Eisenhower Trophy when I shot a 14-under for the week and finished 13th at the event. Until 2018 that was the best finish and score by an Indian at the event," recalled Mane.

Talking of his approach in Tokyo, Mane said, "It will be that I'm playing just another golf course. The key is not to let the scale of the event bother me but instead focus on how I prepare to do my best. I'm sure the Olympics are unique. So it'll be something for me to experience first-hand and something that is well beyond my imagination."

Playing for an Olympic medal is part of my priorities: Lahiri

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Anirban Lahiri opted for Olympics instead of looking for points to stay inside the top-125 of the FedExCup standing on the PGA Tour and retain his full playing rights for the next season.

Lahiri revealed this while addressing a virtual press conference on the eve of the \$6.20 million John Deere Classic on Wednesday.

"It was a difficult decision and an easy one, too. I know it sounds contradictory but that's the truth."

"When I saw my name among the qualifiers, I was excited. But a decision had to be made. I sat with myself and asked, 'Why do I play the game?' I saw that among my priorities is playing for a medal in the Olympics. I could not let go of this opportunity."

In 2016, when golf returned to the Olympic Games, Lahiri and S.S.P. Chowrasia represented India.



Anirban Lahiri. ■ AFP

dia. This year, Lahiri will be in the company of Udayan Mane.

In the current PGA Tour season, Lahiri has made nine 'cuts' from 18 appearances.

He has two top-10 finishes and four times ended in the top-25 bracket. With earnings of \$706,101 this season,

Lahiri is currently placed 119 in the FedExCup standings.

Key differences

Asked about the difference between playing in the Olympics and pro events, Lahiri said, "In Olympics, you have a smaller field with no 'cut' involved. You usually play on a course which you are not familiar with. On the Tour, if you come fourth it is a very good result and you draw confidence from it for the next week. Even a top-25 finish is considered a decent result. In the Olympics, coming fourth means nothing. In short, it is all or nothing. You play only to reach the podium."

Lahiri, who made a comeback on the PGA Tour in early May following a bout of Covid, revealed that Bengaluru-based golfer S. Chikkarangappa would caddie for him in Tokyo. "Chikkal is a very good friend and knows what I do when I play well," said Lahiri.

Sumit Nagal crashes out

SPORTS BUREAU
BRAUNSCHWEIG (GERMANY)

Seventh seed Sumit Nagal was beaten 6-3, 1-6, 6-2 by wild card Marvin Moeller of Germany in the pre-quarterfinals of the €66,640 Challenger tennis tournament here on Wednesday. **The results:** €66,640 Challenger, Braunschweig, Germany; Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Igor Sijsling & Glenn Smits (Ned) bt Teymuraz Gabashvili (Rus) & Arjun Kadhe 6-4, 7-5; Sandro Ehrat (Sui) & Lucas Gerch (Ger) bt Luca Margaroli (Sui) & Sriram Balaji 6-4, 7-6(7).

\$15,000 ITF men, Almada, Portugal: First round: Simon Carr (Irl) bt Terence Das 6-3, 6-1.

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Ayumi Koshiishi & Michika Ozeki (Jpn) bt Emma Van Poppel (Ned) & Humera Bahamur 6-1, 6-1.

CM