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NEARBY



HC to resume physical hearing from Sept. 1

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Thursday said it will resume physical hearing initially with five Benches on a rotation basis from September 1. The court issued standard operating procedures for a phased reopening.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Rajasthan religious places to reopen from Sept. 7

JAIPUR
All religious places in Rajasthan that were closed during the COVID-19 lockdown will reopen for public from September 7 with precautionary measures in place. No crowding will be allowed during prayers at religious places, which will be sanitised at regular intervals.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 4

Back to the cities



Livelihood worries: Migrant workers, who left for Uttar Pradesh when the lockdown began, are returning to Delhi. A scene at the Anand Vihar Bus Terminal on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Restoration of peace on LAC key to ties: India

China urges focus on big picture

ANANTH KRISHNAN
CHENNAI

While China on Thursday asked India to keep in mind "the big picture" and put the border dispute in "an appropriate position", New Delhi said only the full restoration of peace and tranquility on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) would enable the development of bilateral relations.

The two separate statements underlined the difference in emphasis from both sides on the slow-moving disengagement process along the LAC.

In Beijing, PLA Senior Colonel Wu Qian, the spokesman

person of the Ministry of Defence, said he "expected that India could work with China towards the same goal, bearing in mind the big picture of bilateral ties and putting the border issue in an appropriate position, avoid misjudgment, keep divergences from escalating into disputes, and take concrete steps to bring the bilateral relations back to the right track."

In Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs made clear that both sides needed to take "reciprocal actions" to restore peace.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Delhi riots: Amnesty India demands probe into claims of rights violation

Report raises questions on police conduct as rioters ran amok

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Amnesty International India has demanded an independent investigation into all allegations of human rights violations by the police during the north-east Delhi riots.

The world's largest human rights NGO said it has documented several videos showing the Delhi police "pelting stones with the rioters, torturing people, dismantling protest sites and being mute bystanders" as rioters wreaked havoc in the Capital.

A 20-page "investigative brief", which was collated after the NGO interviewed

more than 50 riot survivors, lawyers, activists and retired police officers, found the conduct of policemen in many incidents during the violence "a cause for concern".

'Hate speeches'

In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly polls on February 8, several political leaders delivered "hate speeches" against the anti-CAA protesters, portraying them as "anti-nationals" and inciting violence against them. "To date, the Delhi police have not taken any action against the perpetrators leading to a climate of widespread impunity," Amnesty India said.

The NGO interviewed several survivors who claimed they witnessed the violence break out right after BJP leader Kapil Mishra's "ultimatum" speech. A majority of them claimed the police did not respond to multiple calls even as violence raged in the city from February 23 to 29, says the report.

Delhi Police PRO Eish Singh said all cases of Delhi riots have been investigated as per law and in a professional manner. "The cases are sub judice," he said.

'WHAT DID POLICE DO?' ▶ PAGE 2



Source of worry: The Great Andamanese tribe is among the five endangered groups in the Andamans. ■ AFP

Port Blair and Strait Island and a few do odd jobs in the city.

The Great Andamanese, who number just 74, speak Jaru among themselves. The

five PVTGs residing in Andamans are Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onge, Shompen and North Sentinelese. Meanwhile, the administration has also tested 35

5 members of Great Andaman tribe test positive

4 men and a woman from the group moved to COVID-19 isolation facility

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Five members of the Great Andamanese tribe, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group (PVTG), have tested positive for COVID-19. The Great Andamanese are one of five PVTGs that reside in the Andamans archipelago and this is one of the first cases of COVID-19 infection among the endangered PVTGs of the region.

"We have shifted all five to an isolation facility in Port Blair. Of these five persons, four are male and one fe-

male. They are all cooperating with us and are not showing any serious health complications," nodal officer for COVID-19 and Deputy Director (Health), Directorate of Health Services, Port Blair Avijit Roy told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

Dr. Roy said the infections were detected when the administration tested all members of the tribe last week. On the question of how the members of the tribe had contracted the infection, the health official said that some members travel between

members of the Onge tribe, who reside primarily on the Dugong Creek of the Little Andaman Island. "All the test reports are negative," Dr. Roy said.

Emphasising that the administration was taking all efforts to contain the spread of the virus among the PVTGs, he said the administration had shifted the Jarawas to the west coast of the Jarawa Tribal Reserve. The testing of the Jarawas will start on Friday, he said.

The Shompen and North Sentinelese, who live in isolation, are difficult to reach out to and contact.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

CMK

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2020



You won't be safe under Biden, Vice-President Pence tells U.S. voters
page 12



RBI has not exhausted its policy options, says Shaktikanta Das
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States can have sub-groups among SC/STs, says court

Order counters 2004 verdict; referred to seven-judge Bench

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court on Thursday held that States can sub-classify Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Central List to provide preferential treatment to the "weakest of the weak".

The Constitution Bench, led by Justice Arun Mishra, said reservation has created inequalities within the reserved castes itself.

'Struggle within castes'
There is a "caste struggle" within the reserved class as the benefits of reservation are being usurped by a few, the court pointed out.

"The million-dollar question is how to trickle down the benefit [of reservation] to the bottom rung... The State cannot be deprived of the power to take care of the qualitative and quantitative difference between different classes... to take ameliorative measures

JUSTICE ARUN MISHRA, Supreme Court

nahai judgment had held that allowing the States to unilaterally "make a class within a class of members of the Scheduled Castes" would amount to tinkering with the Presidential list.

Now with two numerically equal Benches of judges holding contrary viewpoints, the issue has been referred to a seven-judge Bench of the court.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Students want NEET, JEE, says Pokhriyal

Over 17 lakh downloaded admit cards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Thursday said students wanted the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE-Main) to be held as over 17 lakh candidates had downloaded their admit cards in 24 hours. The Minister said guidelines for safety during the pandemic would be followed for the exams and the students shouldn't be worried. He said the number of exam centres had been increased.

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 10

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Delhi, Centre spar over COVID-19 testing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday alleged that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs was pressuring officials to not increase the number

of COVID-19 tests in the city, a claim which was dismissed by the MHA as "false and baseless".

As Delhi has been witnessing an uptick in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said that the number of daily tests to detect the virus will be doubled - from 20,000 to 40,000 in a week.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

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CMK

A-NDE

EDMC moves to terminate Hussain's membership

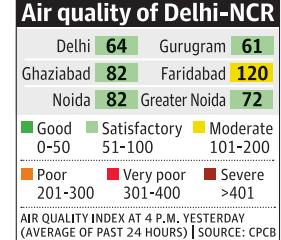
STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The East Delhi Municipal Corporation on Wednesday passed a resolution to terminate the membership of suspended Aam Aadmi Party Councillor Tahir Hussain, accused of involvement in the Delhi riots.

A senior EDMC official informed that according to Section 33 (2) of the Delhi Municipal Corporations Act, if a councillor is absent for all meetings of the corporation for three successive months without permission, the seat may be declared vacant. Officials also said that reason for his absence had not been informed to the corporation.

Mr. Hussain has been lodged in Tihar Jail for his alleged involvement in the riots, during which petrol bombs had reportedly been thrown from the roof of his house.

AAP had suspended the councillor from Nehru Vihar from the party when allegations against him had emerged. The move comes after a demand for his removal by the BJP recently.



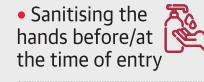
HC to resume physical hearing on rotation basis

Barring five, other Benches will hear matters via videoconference

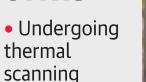
Mandatory norms



• Wearing mask all time



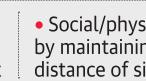
• Sanitising the hands before/at the time of entry



• Undergoing thermal scanning at the designated entry points



• Strict adherence to the norm of social distancing within the court complex



• Social/physical distancing by maintaining a minimum distance of six feet

day and party-in-person who is pursuing his/her case without any legal assistance.

Also, senior counsel engaged by any advocate, registered clerks for delivering bulky case files, and standing or nominated counsel for any of the party or entity whose cases are listed for physical hearing that day will be allowed to attend the physical hearing.

Only cases which are of urgent matters, or non-urgent matters filed during the lockdown, and regular matters, where the consent for the final hearing has been received from all parties involved in the cases, will be taken up either at the physical or video-conferencing hearing.

SOPs issued
As a precaution, entry into the High Court block for attending physical hearing shall be restricted to only one advocate per party whose case is listed that

mitted entry inside the court complex," the court stated.

QR code
For entry into the court blocks, the Information Technology branch of the High Court is developing e-solution of sending QR code to the advocate concerned through SMS or email so that they are permitted physical access on the given day through scanning of the code.

However, junior advocates, interns or law students will not be allowed to enter the court rooms. Even litigants who are represented by an advocate will not be permitted inside the court room unless specific direction is passed by the High Court.

The court has urged advocates, party-in-person, registered clerk above the age of 65 and suffering from co-morbidities to refrain from appearing in courts. "Persons displaying symptoms of flu, fever, cough etc. shall not be per-

mitted to enter the court complex," the court stated.

While dry snacks, coffee, tea, water bottle etc. will be available for sale from the kiosk and canteen, no sitting or consumption of it will be permitted inside the canteen.

Why did police fail to prevent Delhi riots?

Police have denied role despite multiple video evidence, says Amnesty report

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Amnesty International India, which has prepared a 20-page "investigative brief" on the north-east Delhi riots that broke out in February this year, has called for a fully independent and public inquiry to review the Delhi police's role in "failing to prevent and aiding the north-east Delhi riots".

'Police complicity'

In a video that went viral on social media, Delhi police officers can be seen kicking and hitting a group of five wounded men, poking them with rifles and asking them to sing the National Anthem on February 24.

"The video, however, does

not reveal any such threat that may authorise the ill treatment meted out to the men by the police officers," the organisation said.

One of the men in the video, Faizan, 26, was allegedly detained by the police for close to 36 hours without any charge. He was handed over to his mother at 1 a.m. on February 26 after his condition deteriorated.

The police allegedly refused to give any paperwork to the family to show that he had been detained. His family members later admitted him to the Lok Nayak Hospital where he died on the same night.

Amnesty International India said, "Despite multiple video evidence, the Delhi pol-

ice have denied that they tortured Faizan or unlawfully detained him."

In a second video that was shot on the Khajuri Khas-Wazirabad road, policemen can be seen standing shoulder to shoulder with the rioters and allegedly pelting stones and tear gas shells as smoke emerges from a building that is under attack.

'Harassment' after riots

"The riot survivors have also maintained that the Delhi police intimidated and harassed many by unlawfully detaining them and forcing them to sign on blank papers," the report said.

Lawyers representing the detainees have told Amnesty International India that the

Delhi police blatantly violated the fair trial procedures by arresting people without producing arrest warrants and restricting their access to legal aid, including during interrogation.

The NGO has also documented a "disturbing pattern of torture and other ill treatment meted out to the riot survivors and detainees in police custody". Most of them were Muslims, the NGO said.

"This ongoing state-sponsored impunity that the Delhi police enjoy sends across the message that the police can commit grave human rights violations and evade accountability," said Avinash Kumar, executive director of Amnesty International India.

Out on bail, riot accused try to start life anew

Families claim youths were called by police for questioning but arrested instead

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

It's been a month since Junaid Khan* – who was arrested for his alleged role in the communal riots that broke out here in February – was released on bail.

According to him, his future looks dark as he wanted to join the police force but won't be able to do so at the moment due to his criminal record.

The 22-year-old Delhi University graduate from Muzaffabad was arrested on April 19.

His father, Ameen*, told *The Hindu* that Junaid had lodged a complaint with the police about being attacked inside Farooqia Masjid in Brijpuri on February 25 and was called to the police station on the pretext of identifying the accused in the case but was arrested instead.

On July 26, he returned home after being released on bail. He said his life has been impacted in ways he had never imagined.

"I have just completed my graduation. I wanted to take examinations for government jobs. I wanted to join Delhi Police and had also done my research for the same. But my lawyer told me that I can't proceed with it



A fire in a scrap market in north-east Delhi's Gokulpuri during riots on February 26. ■ FILE PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

till I have this criminal record," he said.

Remains undeterred

However, his resolve to join the force is undeterred despite his experience. "I still want to join the police force. I will work hard once the case is resolved as I don't want something like this to happen to anyone else," he said.

Junaid draws inspiration from his brother, who works as an engineer with Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. "My brother always pushed me to study so that I can land up with a government job," he said.

He said the time spent in jail was difficult as he had

never stayed without his family. "I didn't even have a change of clothes. I washed my clothes daily. I used to do the cleaning also. The inmates used to abuse a lot. The food too was terrible," he said.

Back to work

Another youth, 22-year-old Amaan* from Old Muzaffabad, who was arrested on charges of rioting and mischief by fire, is also out on bail. He said he has now finally gathered the courage to return to work.

Amaan repairs refrigerators for a living. His father Imtiaz* said: "For a month, we did not let him go out because we were scared. About

10-15 days ago, he started working again." Mr. Imtiaz, a tailor in north Delhi, also said: "Doodh ka jala paani bhi phook phook ke peeta hai (Once bitten, twice shy.)"

Mr. Imtiaz said, his son was at work in a shop in Dilshad Garden on February 24 and he called him back as riots had broken out in the city. However, in April, the police allegedly called him for questioning, promising his father that he would be released in 10 minutes. However, he was arrested.

Mr. Imtiaz said he did not ask Amaan about his time in jail.

"He is moving on. He only told me that he was eating the kind of food that he never ate at home and that was enough for us to know what he could have gone through," he said.

However, Amaan's family said his friends and neighbours are treating him well. "We were really worried when he wasn't home. We didn't like to eat or sleep. His mother would spend innumerable sleepless nights. We knew that he did not do anything wrong and have faith in the judiciary," the father said.

(All names have been changed on request)

Police rescue woman after she e-mails U.K. PM

She was upset due to financial burden

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 43-year-old woman was rescued after she sent an email to the Prime Minister of United Kingdom stating that if she does not receive help within two hours, she would end her life, the police said on Thursday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) P.K. Mishra said the matter was reported at Aman Vihar police station. The woman did not write her full address in the mail but the police managed to locate her," Mr. Mishra said, adding that she refused to open the door. The door had to be broke open following which the officials rescued her.

Suicide prevention helpline: Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, 011-4076 9002, Monday-Saturday (10 a.m.-7.30 p.m.)

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Engineer (Co) / S.E.C. Railway, Nagpur acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tender for execution of work mentioned below:-

(1) Name of the work:

Provision of RD50 Type Height Gauge at LHS/LC No. GJ-1,

GJ-1A, GJ-36, GJ-37, GJ-14, GJ-16, GJ-32 and BK-10, BK-11, BK-27, BK-37, BK-57, BK-63, (13Nos) under the jurisdiction of ADEN / Naiapur;

Tender Notice No. N/18/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 1,18,27,523/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 2,09,100/-, Completion Period: 10 (Ten) Months.

(2) Name of the work:

Balance work like construction of Rest room for track machine staff at Garha,

Shikara and Ghunsora (Including Electrical work) Renewal of existing PSC sleeper (12000 Nos) between Guwahati - Garha - Kachhpura & Shikara - Sukrimangal stations, Shotcreting, drain, boulder pitching, retaining wall & cess work etc. under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Naiapur.

Tender Notice No. N/19/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 5,97,21,811/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 2,09,100/-, Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months.

(3) Name of the work:

(1) Rain water Harvesting near Mill hall and RPF Barrack at Gondia (2) Provision of pipe line

from water recycling plant to platform no. 1, 3 and 4 at Gondia (3) Ground water recharge by making pond and providing tube well at Gangajhari.

Tender Notice No. E/23/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 33,79,160/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 67,600/-, Completion Period: 06 (Six) Months.

(4) Name of the work:

Repairs to R.P.F. Barrack at Gondia.

Tender Notice No. E/24/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 11,45,588/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 22,900/-, Completion Period: 04 (Four) Months.

(5) Name of the work:

TTR (TWS+CMSC) 11 sets (1 in 12) and 22 sets (1 in 8) under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Gondia.

Tender Notice No. E/25/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 37,40,467/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 74,800/-, Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months.

(6) Name of the work:

Renovation of Traffic Training School & Hostel and Engineering School & Hostel at Dongargarh.

Tender Notice No. E/26/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 27,27,658/-, Earnest Money: ₹ 54,600/-, Completion Period: 08 (Eight) Months.

(7) Name of the work:

Provision of Ballast retaining wall, Inspection steps for Bridges under the jurisdiction of ADEN/DGG.

Tender Notice No. E/27/NGP/2020-21.

Approximate Tender Value: ₹ 54,600/-, Completion Period: 12 (Twelve) Months.

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Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders and any such manual offers received shall be rejected.

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GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHM

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, AUG. 28	
RISE 05:58	SET 18:47
RISE 15:31	SET 01:04
SATURDAY, AUG. 29	
RISE 05:58	SET 18:46
RISE 16:24	SET 01:59
SUNDAY, AUG. 30	
RISE 05:59	SET 18:45
RISE 17:13	SET 02:57

Delhi Weather

max min

Delhi City 36 26

Safdarjung 36 26

Palam 36 27

Delhi Palam Today

34°C Short spell of rain and

passing shower would occur

with cloudy sky and gusty

winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

34°C A spell of light rain with

cloudy sky likely. Comfortable

morning and warm day.

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IN BRIEF

BJP criticises AAP govt. over e-vehicle subsidy

NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta alleged that the AAP government had been announcing subsidy on purchase of electric vehicles for the last one year, but till date, no subsidy had been given. The government should implement its policy "honestly", he said.

Delhi government, Centre spar over increasing COVID-19 testing

'Union Home Ministry putting pressure on State govt. officials not to ramp up testing'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



The State government on Thursday alleged that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) was putting pressure on Delhi government officials to not increase the number of COVID-19 tests in the city, a claim which was rubbished by the MHA, which termed it as "false and baseless".

As Delhi has been witnessing an uptick in COVID-19 cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said that the number of daily tests to detect the virus will be doubled - from 20,000 to 40,000 - in a week.

On Thursday, in a letter written in Hindi to the MHA Secretary, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said, "Some [Delhi government] officials have said [Union] Home Ministry is putting pressure on them to not increase testing."

"Why is such anti-constitutional and illegal pressure being put on Delhi government officials? I request you to not put such pressure.

Responding to the allegation, the MHA spokesperson said in a series of tweets, "The allegation raised in the letter of the Health Minister of Delhi Govt dated August 27, 2020, which is addressed to Union Home Secretary, to the effect that MHA is putting pressure on Delhi Govt officers not to increase testing in Delhi is false and baseless [sic]."

"In this context, it may be recalled that it was after the

intervention of the Union Home Minister that the daily tests in Delhi, which were averaging around 4,000 per day till mid-June 2020, have gone up to around 18-20,000 per day in a calibrated manner [sic.]," the tweet said.

"I hope that the officers will comply with this message from MHA. I am sure that the officers, who were reluctant to increase testing today citing pressure from MHA, will immediately increase testing in Delhi," Mr. Jain responded to the MHA's tweets.

Mr. Jain had also said in the letter that he was annexing a note written by Principal Secretary (Health) of the Delhi government, which was prepared by officials under pressure from the Union Home Ministry.

Responding to this, the MHA said, "The letter of the Delhi Health Minister has annexed a note of the officers of the Delhi government. It may be noted that this note has made no mention whatsoever of any instruction of MHA on the matter of in-

crease in testing in Delhi."

The MHA spokesperson said that the note has only proposed that the views of an expert committee headed by Dr. V.K Paul may be taken on the proposed doubling of testing in Delhi, for technical guidance on various issues such as mix of RT-PCR and rapid antigen, categories of geographical areas and demographics etc.

Responding to the development, AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha said during a press conference: "The Central government has ordered not to increase the testing in the Capital in an unconstitutional way and by keeping the Delhi government in dark. This order is inexplicable, shocking and flabbergassing."

"I do hope that after this letter from Delhi's Health Minister, the Central government will realise and take back this illegal, unconstitutional order, which has a massive negative impact over the health situation of Delhi," he added.

When asked about the government's plan to double the number of COVID-19 tests in a week, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain told *The Hindu*, "We already have about 300 testing centres. Also, there are about 1,700 new cases every day and if 20 contacts of each positive case are tested,

Capital witnesses highest count of COVID-19 cases in over 45 days

No. of containment zones rises to 734; death toll touches 4,369

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

Delhi on Thursday witnessed the highest number of daily new COVID-19 cases in over 45 days with 1,840 cases having been reported in the past 24 hours, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The total number of cases stood at 1,67,604 as on Thursday.

The last time the number of cases were more than this was on July 10 when 2,089 cases were reported.

Also, 22 more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 4,369.

Of the total cases, 1,50,027 people have recovered and there are 13,208 active cases in the city at present.

When asked about the government's plan to double the number of COVID-19 tests in a week, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain told *The Hindu*, "We already have about 300 testing centres. Also, there are about 1,700 new cases every day and if 20 contacts of each positive case are tested,

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
1,67,604	4,369
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
1,840	22

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

more than that was on July 24 when the figure was 13,681.

COVID-19

The active cases, which were 27,007 on July 1, had fallen to 9,897 - below the 10,000 mark in months - on August 4, but since then it has remained above that mark.

A Delhi government official said that the government has already written to the ICMR for more testing kits and other equipment.

A Health Department official said that Delhi government will discuss the plan to increase the number of tests with the ICMR to make sure that the guidelines by the latter are adhered to.

The positivity was 8.7% on Thursday, which was higher than the levels recorded earlier this month.

The number of containment zones in the city increased to 734 on Thursday. The number of containment zones and especially smaller ones are likely to go up, according to officials.

Delhi Metro likely to restart services in phased manner after Centre's nod

It may be limited to govt. officials, essential service providers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is hoping for the resumption of Delhi Metro services in the first week of September and is likely to base its proposal related to their phased operation on recommendations already sent to the Prime Minister's Office in May, sources claim.

In mid-May, the Delhi government had sought clearance from the Centre to permit the Delhi Metro to restart operations, but limit its utilisation to government employees and those providing essential services with valid passes. Movement will be in separate time slots for both categories.

With most activities now having resumed, however, slight modifications to these were possible but these



Metro trains parked at a DMRC yard in New Delhi.

would be put in place depending on the Centre's go-ahead, sources said.

On Sunday, while interacting with market associations, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the government had sought from the Centre that the metro should be allowed in Delhi on a trial basis and in a phased manner.

In May, the Delhi government had suggested that ser-

vices of the Delhi Metro should be limited to government employees and functionaries and these too in cycles between 7.30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m., and then from 5.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Passengers with valid passes or those providing essential services should be allowed to use the metro between 10.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., the proposal had stated.

'Centre betraying States by not paying GST compensation'

The government should take a loan on our behalf: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said that the Central government's alleged refusal to pay GST compensation to States was the "biggest betrayal" in the history of federalism in India.

Shortfall in collection

Commenting on the alleged refusal to pay GST compensation by the Centre, he said, "In the last four months, we have collected ₹7,000 crore lesser tax. If we look at the entire year, we will have a shortfall of ₹21,000 crore. The Central government should take a loan on our behalf as we also need to pay salaries to our doctors, teachers, engineers, DTC, and other employees."



The Minister said when GST was rolled out, States were promised that they would be given compensation for the next five years with 14% growth. But now, the Central government has refused to pay. It said that as per the law, due to the ongoing situation created by the pandemic, the Central government is not liable to pay anything.

"Today when the revenue has started decreasing, they started asking A-G that whether they are liable to give this amount to States or not," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister said that in the first two years when the Central government earned an extra cess of ₹47,000 crore, which was supposed to be given as compensation, they kept it in their fund. "Today when the revenue has started decreasing, they started asking A-G that whether they are liable to give this amount to States or not," Mr. Sisodia said.

"Stop crying like a child and if you can pay salaries,

AAP avenging defeat in municipal polls, alleges BJP

'Delhi govt. financially starving civic bodies, leaving people to die during crisis'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

AAP was unable to forget its "crushing defeat" in the 2017 municipal elections and that was why it was taking revenge on the people of Delhi by allegedly starving the civic bodies financially, the BJP alleged here on Thursday.

Delhi BJP media head Ashok Goel alleged that the Delhi government was

not giving the share that has to be given to civic bodies based on the constitutional system every year.

Share being demanded "All the three civic bodies are continuously demanding their share from Delhi government according to the constitutional system, which is collected as a share of tax for civic bodies

dies from the people of Delhi," Mr. Goel alleged. "It is not hidden from anyone that ever since AAP lost the municipal elections, it has been maintaining a step-motherly behaviour with them," he also alleged.

The people of Delhi, Mr. Goel argued, had given the responsibility of Delhi to AAP-led government but they "left the pe-

ople of Delhi to die" when the cases of COVID-19 are on the rise.

Funds withheld "If AAP is claiming that the government will pay timely salaries to the civic bodies' employees on getting the command of the civic bodies, it is clear that they have intentionally withheld the funds," he also alleged.

He was then taken to Parliament Street police station for further investigation.

"He was questioned by the Delhi police and other intelligence agencies for verification. The two IDs - an Aadhaar card, belonging to him and a driving licence of his elder brother were found. After getting his verification done with the help of the Kashmir police, he was handed over to a local guardian," added the officer.

Helps poor families During questioning, he told the police that he lives in Jama Masjid area and works as a waiter in a hotel. He returned from his hometown in Kashmir around 25 days ago.

He used to help economically challenged families in holding marriages of their daughters in his village back in Kashmir. He was collecting Zakat (charity) by visit-

ing mosques in the city. To get more financial assistance, he went to Vijay Chowk, hoping to meet PM Narendra Modi or some senior Minister.

"It took time to release Manzoor because he was staying alone in the city. We called his distant relative, who arrived in Delhi on Thursday, and he was handed over to him," said the police officer.

For any query call 1800 313 444 222 & 1 phone number. 32 lines. 96 doctors. 24x7. Just a call away to answer any query related to Covid treatment.

Dial 033 2357 6001 (Direct Line)

Get Well Soon

Department of Health and Family Welfare,

Government of West Bengal

ICA-1000(18)/2020

mission by cab aggregators, and withdrawal of e-challans issued against their vehicles for speeding, said a pamphlet from the drivers.

"Our immediate fear is that most cabs have loans against them. The Centre's moratorium on EMI will end on August 31 and banks start seizing the vehicle for EMI defaults after that," Mr. Gill said.

The road tax payment relaxation should also be extended till December 31, he added.

The drivers have also demanded the cab aggregators raise the fare and commission and share taxes paid by them while travelling between Delhi and NCR.

The cab drivers have de-



manded the extension of the moratorium on loan EMI to December 31, fare hike and increase in com-

mission by cab aggregators, and withdrawal of e-challans issued against their vehicles for speeding, said a pamphlet from the drivers.

As per ICMR guidelines, after one week from the date of sample collection or detection of COVID-19 symptoms, if a patient does not have fever or other symptoms for another three days, then no further test will be

Pending bypoll about future of M.P., says Nath

Ex-CM exhorts voters to support truth

STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Thursday said the pending by-election to 27 Assembly seats was about the State's future which was tarnished by politics involving deals.

Speaking with reporters here, he exhorted voters not to support him or the Congress but the truth. "This government was formed through bidding. Will they tell voters they were involved in deals and that's why they resigned? Of course not, but they will instead say loans were not waived. We had waived loans of 26.5 lakh farmers," Mr. Nath said.

Taking a veiled dig at Raja Sabha MP Jyotirdaya Scindia, who quit the Congress along with 22 MLAs precipitating the fall of Mr. Nath's government in March, he said, "And those who themselves held programmes relating to waiving loans now say they left the



Ex-M.P. CM Kamal Nath

Congress because loans were not waived."

Further, Mr. Nath said he had devoted his past four months to strengthening the party organisation. "We know our contest is with the organisation of the BJP, not with their achievements. They don't have any," he claimed. The pending by-election, he said, wasn't a regular one. "This election is about the future of M.P. and my message to every voter is to see the picture of the State before them, that of 15 years and ours of 15 months, when we portrayed our policy and intention," he added.

Punjab House session today amid virus fears

29 Ministers, MLAs have tested positive for COVID-19 so far

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

With the one-day Punjab Assembly session slated for Friday, the Opposition parties have hit out at the ruling Congress for the short duration of the session and decided to corner the government on issues surrounding the recent hooch tragedy, prevailing agrarian crisis and deteriorating law and order situation.

Extension sought

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday met Assembly Speaker Rana K.P. Singh and demanded that the session be conducted for at least 15 days. "If the Assembly session could be convened for a day amid corona guidelines, why could it not be extended for 15 days," asked Harpal Singh Cheema, AAP MLA and Leader of the Opposition.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bharatiya Ja-



CM Amarinder Singh

nata Party (BJP) legislative members meanwhile have asked for a special discussion on the Punjab government's alleged failure to take action against distilleries whose collusion with the 'liquor mafia' resulted in the death of over a hundred people in the hooch tragedy.

Meanwhile, as the number of COVID-19 positive MLAs and Ministers rose to 29, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh appealed to all legislators who had come in

contact with them to avoid attending the one-day Assembly session.

Endangering lives

Capt. Amarinder said protests by AAP were endangering the lives of people, pointing to the party's 'dharnas' in various parts of the State since August 20. "With anything between 25 to 250 people present at each of these gatherings, they had become tinder boxes for sparking further spread of the pandemic," he said, urging the party to call off the protests.

The Chief Minister pointed out that of the eight AAP leaders, including MLAs who had spearheaded these 'dharnas' so far, two had already tested positive and each of them had come in contact with scores of other people till now.

In terms of MLAs, 4 from AAP were COVID-19 positive, he added.

Religious places in Rajasthan to reopen from September 7

Ten employees test positive at CM's residence and office

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

All religious places in Rajasthan that were closed during the COVID-19 lockdown, will reopen for public from September 7 with precautionary measures against the virus infection. No crowding will be allowed during prayers at religious places, which will be sanitised at regular intervals.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who announced the decision at a review meeting on Thursday, said he had cancelled meetings with visitors at his office and residence after 10 employees at the two places tested COVID-19 positive.

Mr. Gehlot requested those willing to meet him not to travel to Jaipur for the purpose. "Since the visitors come in contact with the security personnel and other employees at the Chief Minister's office and residence, all appointments have been cancelled," an of-



Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

ficial statement said.

Mr. Gehlot instructed officials to ensure compliance with health protocols at public places and restrict the number of people assembling at a single place. The Collectors and Superintendents of Police will visit the major religious places in all districts to take safety measures and ensure adherence to the social distancing norms.

As the number of infection deaths crossed the 1,000 mark on Thursday,

the State government ordered the purchase of Cobas-8800 machines to speed up testing. Medical and Health Minister Raghu Sharma said two machines from the U.S. would reach here this month-end and in October.

51,640 tests a day

The capacity to conduct 51,640 tests a day had been developed in the State and testing facilities would soon be available in all districts. The Cobas-8800 machines, which will allow both RNA extraction and RT-PCR tests to be performed simultaneously, are likely to increase the testing capacity to over 60,000 a day.

The Minister said a community health centre, equipped with all the facilities, would be opened in each Assembly constituency so that the residents of the area need not travel to cities for medical treatment.

Atul Bora re-elected AGP chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam's Agriculture and Veterinary Minister Atul Bora was on Thursday re-elected unopposed as the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) president, a post he has held since 2014.

His Cabinet colleague, Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta was elected as the party's working president.

The election was held during the 11th general council at the party's headquarters despite a stay order by a local court. "The council was held keeping COVID-19 precautions in mind," Mr. Bora said.

Arunachal House to push for Sixth Schedule status

Laws needed to safeguard tribal rights'

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

The 60-member Arunachal Pradesh Assembly on Thursday resolved to persuade the Centre for inclusion of the State under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to protect the rights of its indigenous communities.

Tribal areas of four north-eastern States - Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura - are under the Sixth Schedule.

Non-IAS as DCs
After Home Minister Bambang Felix moved the resolution, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said the State did not have adequate laws to safeguard tribal rights.

"We will place the resolution before the Centre explaining all the views expressed by the MLAs and the community-based organisations so that it can be taken up for discussion in both Houses of Parliament," Mr. Khandu said, adding that the "tough journey began today [Thursday]". The one-day session was earlier scheduled for three days.

Rural and local council elections held in Mizoram

Virus safety protocol followed: EC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI:

Elections to 558 village councils across nine districts and 83 local councils within the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) were held in Mizoram on Thursday amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mizoram State Election Commission (MSEC) officials said 45.79% of a total of 2,18,758 voters across the AMC local councils and 64.36% of a total of 4,55,706 voters across the village councils cast their votes when reports last came in.

"The final figure will be available by afternoon on Friday, the day of counting," an

MSEC official said.

State Election Commissioner Laima Chozah said the polling went peacefully and in adherence to the standard operating procedure and safety protocol for all voters and polling staff and the

"The term of the village

councils expired on May 7, but it was extended till September 7 due to the COVID-19 outbreak," he said.

"Thanking all the election officials and every part-taker for providing a safe platform to many voters in exercising our constitutional franchise amidst this pandemic," Chief Minister Zoramthanga tweeted after casting his vote.

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Restrict peace process to Nagaland: students' body

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) has toughened its stand on the Naga peace process, warning of "drastic movements" if the territorial integrity of the State is compromised for a final solution.

This is the second time in a little more than a fortnight that the apex students' body of the State has raised concern over the 23-year-old peace process.

The Centre and the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of

Nagaland, or NSCN(IM), had declared ceasefire in mid-1997. Rival factions and older armed groups joined the peace process later.

Several rounds of talks have been inclusive, although the Centre and NSCN (IM) had signed a Framework Agreement in August 2015.

"We welcome and appreciate the progress in restoring peace in Nagaland but the peace process should not come at the cost of our territorial integrity," AAPSU president Hawa Bagang said on Thursday.

11-year-old girl takes Class 12 exam in M.P.

Psychometric test puts her IQ at 150



May the blessings of mother Pitambara and Saraswati always be on you," he wrote on Twitter.

A psychometric test Ms. Gupta took in 2014 puts her intelligence quotient at nearly 150, classified as 'very superior', according to a report of Choithram Hospital, Indore. The psychologist advised she needed a structured and challenging environment where her "intelligence can be put to proper use". Because of the "superior intelligence" she doesn't find routine and mundane activities interesting and challenging and thus gets bored.

Pending bypoll about future of M.P., says Nath

Ex-CM exhorts voters to support truth

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Ex-M.P. CM Kamal Nath

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CM Amarinder Singh

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE



SMT KANNAMMA KRISHNASWAMY,
Wife of (Late)
Dr.K.Krishnaswamy

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Gujarat, west & east Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, Konkan & Goa and Telangana

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... - 35.5	26.4	24.0	Kozhikode	... - 31.8 ... - 25.2		
Ahmedabad	13.5 - 33.0	24.6	20.5	Kurnool	... - 31.5 ... - 25.0		
Aizawl	9 - 27.8	19.3	15.5	Lucknow	... - 33.2 ... - 25.2		
Allahabad	- 32.7	25.6	20.5	Madurai	5 - 37.4 ... - 23.7		
Bengaluru	... - 29.0	21.2	17.5	Mangaluru	... - 30.3 ... - 23.6		
Bhopal	... - 28.1	23.2	19.5	Mumbai	1.8 - 31.0 ... - 26.2		
Bhubaneswar	10.6 - 31.5	24.0	20.6	Mysuru	... - 31.5 ... - 20.6		
Chandigarh	... - 34.6	27.5	22.5	New Delhi	5.6 - 35.6 ... - 26.2		
Chennai	7.1 - 35.7	25.9	21.5	Patna	5.7 - 32.0 ... - 27.2		
Coimbatore	... - 33.7	23.4	19.5	Pond Blair	... - 32.7 ... - 25.6		
Dehradun	59 - 33.8	23.2	19.5	Puducherry	... - 35.1 ... - 24.4		
Gangtok	17.2 - 19.5	17.7	15.5	Pune	... - 29.4 ... - 21.7		
Goa	1.4 - 30.9	25.8	20.5	Raipur	... - 38 ... - 24.0		
Guwahati	... - 35.8	25.2	20.5	Ranchi	14 - 28.7 ... - 23.0		
Hubballi	... - 28.0	21.0	17.5	Shillong	... - 25.4 ... - 18.0		
Hyderabad	0.1 - 27.0	23.7	19.5	Shimla	9.5 - 21.0 ... - 17.0		
Imphal	4.4 - 30.7	21.6	17.5	Srinagar	21.3 - 23.5 ... - 17.3		
Jaipur	... - 33.3	25.2	20.5	Thiruvananthapuram	... - 32.4 ... - 24.7		
Kochi	31.4 - 24.0	20.5	17.5	Tiruchi	... - 37.0 ... - 25.0		
Kohima	... - 31.4	18.0	15.5	Vijayawada	31.6 - 26.0		
Kolkata	56.5 - 28.5	25.4	20.5	Vishakhapatnam	... - 31.2 ... - 27.0		

(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	17	32	22	... - 48	... - 58	GREEN
Bengaluru	13	26	34	... - 57	... - 74	GREEN
Chennai	5.5	26	46	... - 33	... - 49	GREEN
Delhi	19	19	4	54	102	RED
Hyderabad	15	24	11	59	75	GREEN
Kolkata	0.9	11	11	31	45	GREEN
Lucknow	9	25	27	57	58	GREEN
Mumbai	19	2	54	... - 10	25	GREEN
Pune	27	11	53	... - 26	26	GREEN
Vishakhapatnam	11	32	23	... - 72	... - 72	GREEN

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Faridabad, Haryana recorded a moderate quality index (AQI) score of 120 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 14

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

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

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

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

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

Mahad building survivors stare at uncertain future

Decision on compensation soon, says minister; agitation planned at collapse site

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

With nothing more than the clothes they are wearing, 87 residents of the Tarique Garden building in Mahad are still figuring out from where they can start their lives again. While they are hopeful that the Maharashtra government will extend a helping hand, they are yet to hear from authorities. "We had approached the local MLA when he visited us at the collapse site and requested him that the survivors needed help. He had assured full support but we are yet to hear from him," said Avesh Yakub Chichkar, a resident of fifth floor in wing of the building.

The five-storey building collapsed on Monday evening, killing 16 people and leaving nine injured.

State Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation Vijay Wadettiwar told *The Hindu* that at a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the issue of compensation for the survivors was discussed with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. "The CM was positive about it and a decision is expected within a few days."

He also said that at the meeting, it was decided to give a financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each to the families of the deceased and ₹50,000 each for the injured.

The minister further said that this particular building was legal. "It was constructed with all the permissions needed and was not an illegal one. Hence, compensation for the survivors is being considered."

Basheer Chichkar, a Shiv Sena leader from Mahad, said, "All the earnings of the residents were invested in



Residents looking for their belongings at the building collapse site in Mahad. ■ FILE PHOTO

Part of toilet collapses in Grant Road, 2 killed

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Two people died after part of a toilet collapsed at Mishra building in Grant Road of south Mumbai on Thursday evening. Aliya Riyasat Qureshi (12) and Noor Qureshi (70) were taken to JJ Hospital where there were declared brought dead.

Mumbai City Guardian Minister Aslam Shaikh has announced ₹5 lakh to the family of the deceased.

According to civic officials, the Mishra and Abdul Rahman buildings are adjacent to each other and fall in the ceded building category. The

their flats. Those who were tenants too had spent a considerable amount of money to purchase goods and furniture. Now they are left with nothing. It's the need of the

hour to do something for the survivors."

Meanwhile, the tenants and flat owners who have survived the collapse held a meeting on Thursday after-

Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) had approved the redevelopment of both the buildings, but it has been pending for more than three years. A total of 111 tenants are living in these two buildings.

Housing Minister Jitendra Awhad said that the MHADA had given the re-development work to Shirsiwala builder. "The builder did not work for three years. This is the very reason that we have brought an amendment to the Act where if a builder does not work for three years, then the MHADA will take over," he said.

Reacting to civic officials, the Mishra and Abdul Rahman buildings are adjacent to each other and fall in the ceded building category. The

charges levelled by Mr. Jadhav of neglecting the Sena in the district, miscreants attacked the NCP office on late Wednesday night. Parbhani Guardian Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik on Thursday held a meeting with Mr. Thackeray, and later with Mr. Jadhav. He is likely to withdraw his resignation.

In his letter to Mr. Thackeray, the Lok Sabha MP said that the NCP purposely ne-

glected the Sena nominations on the Jintur Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) and instead appointed only NCP members. "If, despite being in power, I cannot give justice to my workers, then what is the use of being an MP from Parbhani? Therefore, I am submitting my resignation and request you to accept it. I will continue working as a Sena worker," the letter said.

Reacting to Mr. Jadhav's

Fire in Mumbai building doused after six hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

A fire which broke out in a four-storey building in Fort area of south Mumbai was doused in the early hours of Thursday after hectic efforts for about six hours, a civic official said.

A 22-year-old man received burn injuries in the fire which erupted in Bahubali building on Kawasji Patel Road around 7.15 p.m. on Wednesday. It was initially tagged as a 'level-2', but escalated to 'level-3' (major) around 10.30 p.m.

Fire engines were rushed to the spot and firefighters doused the flames around 1.30 a.m. on Thursday.

noon and decided to hold a protest at the same place where the building stood.

"First thing we want is punishment for the wrong doers because of whom we are in this situation. Also, we want the government to hear us out," Avesh Chichkar, who had been staying in a rented flat since 2016 with his parents and two brothers, said.

Raigad Collector Nidhi Choudhary has made temporary stay arrangements for the survivors at Babasaheb Ambedkar Smarak Bhavan in Mahesh. "We have provided two big halls but most of them are still staying with their friends and relatives. Some of them have said that they will start shifting to the bhawan on Thursday evening," Ms. Choudhary said.

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An air-tight case

Further clarity emerges on the JeM's and Pakistan's role in the Pulwama attack

A year and a half after the dastardly terror attack on a Central Reserve Police Force convoy in Pulwama that killed 40 personnel, the National Investigation Agency has filed a chargesheet against 19 people including Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of the terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed, for planning the attack. Considering the difficulties in piecing together the minutiae in the case, the agency's painstaking effort must be acknowledged. The identity of the key perpetrators was never in doubt after the JeM claimed responsibility immediately after the attack in February 2019. The chargesheet details the role of the JeM's handlers and its local associates in Kashmir and how the attack was in the works since 2016. The JeM's role was in reconnaissance, training and indoctrination, but the group could not have procured and transported the high-intensity explosives without the involvement of the Pakistani security establishment. The chargesheet's investigation, based on forensic evidence – DNA analysis of the remains of the suicide bomber, IP address tracking of the video released by the JeM claiming responsibility, examination of the battered vehicle that carried the explosives, among others – therefore makes a thorough claim on JeM's and Pakistan's role in the attack. The Pulwama attack was followed by the bombing of a "terror training centre" in Balakot in Pakistan by the Indian Air Force and retaliatory air strikes by Pakistan. These have resulted in a breakdown of diplomatic ties and deterioration of every aspect of relations between the countries. But the Pulwama investigation could present an opportunity for Pakistan to initiate meaningful changes in its approach towards cross-border terror, if indeed the Imran Khan-led government is keen on reforming its deep State.

For the Indian government, the chargesheet presents a case not just for detailing the role of Pakistan and its proxy actors in Kashmir, but to re-evaluate its strategy. The involvement of a local Kashmiri youth in the attack as a suicide bomber, years after militancy had waned in the Valley, was also a warning about the alienation setting into the Valley. The hollowing out of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, the bifurcation of the State and the demotion of J&K as a Union Territory, the detention of scores of political leaders including mainstream actors; and the continuing restrictions on access to broadband Internet have deepened the alienation. The prevention of terror attacks will entail not only security and diplomatic measures to isolate and destroy terror outfits such as the JeM, but also addressing the roots of alienation that contribute recruits to the cause of terrorism.

A no-win situation

Conducting JEE and NEET amid a pandemic is not easy, but options are limited

A pandemic and the resultant delay in commencing admission to professional courses have put the Union Education Ministry in an unenviable position. It is under compulsion to strike a balance between ensuring physical and emotional well-being of aspirants and sustaining a merit-based admission process, while seeking to limit the academic disruption. The NEET is the only gateway for MBBS/BDS admissions in the country. In respect of engineering admissions, the JEE is not mandatory for State government-run and private institutions. Citing the Supreme Court's recent order declining to interfere with the conduct of the two common entrance tests, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has contended that the issue is being politicised. His argument is that a "silent majority" favours the exams as an overwhelming number of registered candidates have downloaded their admit cards. From an academic perspective, the Supreme Court has rightly observed that the career of students "cannot be put in peril for long". Mr. Pokhriyal is apprehensive that further delay could lead to a "zero academic year", a concern shared by many academics.

Ground realities reflect the concerns from the other side. More than the fear of contracting COVID-19 from examination centres, aspirants face practical limitations. The NEET will be conducted in 3,843 centres across 155 cities, whereas the number of applicants is about 15.97 lakh. For an estimated 8.58 lakh aspirants, the JEE will be held in 660 centres in 12 shifts. With many States not resuming public transport services and hotels remaining closed, travel and accommodation for candidates from interior regions is a major challenge. Social and cultural pressures are such that girls from villages and tier-3 towns are likely to face hurdles as travelling alone would not be encouraged under these unusual circumstances. Even if hotels are opened at short notice, the fear of the pandemic might deter a section of aspirants from staying there. Delay in admission to the IITs and medical colleges would also have an adverse bearing on BE/BTech seats in leading institutions including deemed universities as eventually they may go vacant when students opt out. Given this background, the government must explore alternatives such as allowing States to conduct medical admissions based on Class XII Board marks using standard normalisation. NEET could be limited to central institutions. Likewise, instead of the JEE, a nationwide marks normalisation could be examined but IIT Directors have argued that doing away with JEE would dilute the quality of education. Extraordinary circumstances may require extraordinary solutions. Perhaps the examination slots could be staggered and the number of centres increased drastically. Pragmatic compromises are inevitable.

The participants we need in Phase 3 trials

Why it is a good idea for healthcare workers and vulnerable subjects to enrol in the COVID-19 Phase 3 trials



M.S. SESADRI & T. JACOB JOHN

While everyone else can avoid exposure to COVID-19, healthcare workers have to work in high-risk environments with repeated exposure to infection. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those with co-morbidities have five-fold to 15-fold greater mortality when they get COVID-19 than others. Therefore, healthcare workers and vulnerable groups need to be treated as priority categories for vaccination when the COVID-19 vaccine is available.

Protecting against COVID-19

Two COVID-19 vaccines have been accepted for Phase 3 trials after passing the Phase 1 trial for safety and the Phase 2 trial for both safety and the vaccine's ability to induce a virus-neutralising antibody with or without T-cell-mediated immunity. Vaccine-induced immunity has not yet been proven to protect against COVID-19, but the likelihood of protection is quite high for the following reasons.

Natural infection induces both a virus-neutralising antibody and T-cell-mediated immunity. Convincing reports of reinfection by the novel coronavirus in previously infected individuals are extremely rare, suggesting that natural infection is indeed protective in the vast majority. When a vaccine candidate produces similar immune responses, the probability of it being protective against the disease is high. A vaccine that has passed Phase 2 should therefore be assumed to be protective, unless

proved otherwise in a Phase 3 trial which will provide additional evidence of freedom from rare side-effects. Once cleared in Phase 3, the vaccine is registered by the drug regulatory agency and vaccination of the general public carried out as per national policy.

Interim reports on Phase 1 and Phase 2 vaccine trials from China, with an inactivated whole virus vaccine (using mercapto-ethanol instead of formalin to minimise immunological lung injury), have demonstrated immunogenicity and short-term safety. A Phase 3 trial is in progress. India is embarking on a Phase 3 trial with a similar vaccine.

The objective of vaccination is three-fold: in the short term, to protect vulnerable individuals from serious disease and death; to protect occupationally exposed individuals from acquiring and unwittingly transmitting infection to their patients and family; and, eventually, to eradicate the viral infection. The measure of effectiveness of a vaccine is how many infections and how many deaths it can prevent rather than how high the antibody titre will be, because antibodies are only surrogate markers of protection. To demonstrate that the vaccine achieves the short-term objectives, it is important that the vaccine trials include a good proportion of special groups of individuals. The twin clinical outcomes of reduced mortality in vaccinated vulnerable individuals and reduced infection rates among healthcare workers will quickly provide unequivocal clinical measures of vaccine efficacy. Under normal circumstances, Phase 3 vaccination trials include only healthy adult volunteers and once the vaccine is found to be safe and effective, small bridging studies are conducted among vul-

nerable subjects. However, in the pandemic situation, if vulnerable groups are deliberately included from the beginning in Phase 3 trials, using a special study design, when the trial is over we can proceed straightforwardly to immunising these subgroups.

The drug regulatory agency should recognise this risk-based categorisation of the public and help design the Phase 3 trial in which vulnerable people and healthcare workers are preferentially given an opportunity to register themselves as volunteers. Obtaining information on vaccine efficacy and safety from these subgroups is of paramount importance to facilitate prioritised vaccination of those who did not have an opportunity to enrol as volunteers for the trial and those who got placebo injection.

Why healthcare workers?

There are several reasons why healthcare workers, particularly those above age 55, should volunteer for and be included in Phase 3 trials. Historically, healthcare workers have often been the first to volunteer to participate in several physiological and pharmacological studies of an experimental nature. This attitude is more appropriate now than ever before in the context of COVID-19 vaccination trials. Participation of healthcare workers will motivate and enthuse members of the general

public to participate in the trial and make recruitment easier.

The loss of many colleagues, mandatory quarantining of increasing numbers of infected healthcare workers, the struggle to cope with the escalating number of cases in the face of workforce depletion, and the worries about risk to their immediate family have eroded the morale of all healthcare workers in India. Inclusion of healthcare workers in the Phase 3 vaccine trial may prove to be the silver lining and boost the sagging morale of healthcare workers.

Healthcare workers, in particular doctors and nurses, understand controlled clinical trials and the safety features in vaccine production and would be better able to provide informed consent. Further, they will clearly understand that half the enrolled subjects receive only a placebo and therefore no one will flout personal protection norms even after receiving the vaccine trial injection.

Information on side-effects, a vital deciding factor in vaccine acceptability, is easy to collect and document if healthcare workers are part of the trial. Self-reported adverse events with relevant details can be obtained on a mobile phone platform and maintained in a computerised database.

How do we mobilise healthcare workers to participate in the Phase 3 trial? In an astute move, the Duke Research Institute started HERO (Healthcare Worker Exposure Response and Outcomes) which encourages healthcare workers to participate in all COVID-19 clinical trials including vaccine trials. The Indian Medical Association and nursing and paramedical professional organisations, who have enrolled all members of the healthcare workforce, should come together on a

similar platform and encourage healthcare workers to enrol for the Phase 3 COVID-19 vaccination trials. If the vaccine is efficacious, at least half the trial participants will be protected (the other half will be in the placebo arm).

Conditions apply

Conditions apply for inclusion of healthcare workers in the trial. Those healthcare workers who have already contracted COVID-19 and who do not need the vaccine will be listed in the National Registry. Of those who have so far not been infected, IgG antibody testing will identify antibody positive subjects who do not need vaccination.

Sero-prevalence of IgG antibody in healthcare workers is likely to be 30-40% as is the case currently in our metros; only the remaining proportion of healthcare workers will still be susceptible. It should be possible to accommodate these eligible subjects into the Phase 3 trial protocol without much difficulty.

All round it would be a good idea for healthcare workers and vulnerable subjects to enrol in the COVID-19 vaccine Phase 3 trials in India. If this is to be done quickly, professional organisations, civil society, regulatory agency, the Indian Council of Medical Research and vaccine manufacturers should act immediately and allow and encourage enrolment of healthcare workers and vulnerable people in Phase 3 trials.

M.S. Seshadri is former Professor and Head, Department of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore, and currently Medical Director, Thirumalai Mission Hospital, Ranipet; T. Jacob John is former Head of the Departments of Clinical Virology and Microbiology at Christian Medical College, Vellore

Impartial, aloof and sober as a judge

Judges must ponder and pursue the old norms that earned them respect and public confidence



VIVEK KATJU

As I read media accounts about the Supreme Court decision convicting Prashant Bhushan of contempt of court, I was reminded of another case of alleged contempt which my father Brahma Nath Katju always recalled with a chuckle. It took place in the early 1950s when he was a junior lawyer in the Allahabad High Court. A villager from Uttar Pradesh had written postcards making allegations against a magistrate. The magistrate complained to the High Court. The court sent a number of notices to the villager to appear in court but he ignored them. Finally, non-bailable warrants were issued and the police produced the villager in court.

The Bench asked the villager why he had not responded to the notices. He said he could not afford the railway fare and as the police had brought him to court, he did not have to pay a paisa for the journey. The judges conferred with each other and decided that his allegations would not shake the administration of justice in the State; a warning would be sufficient. So, they warned him to not make such allegations and told him that he could go back home. "How will I go home? I have no money," the villager told the judges. That flummoxed them but they

quickly recovered and decided to personally pay the fare! A senior advocate who was there to assist the court offered to ensure that the villager was given a meal and dropped to the railway station.

Qualities of a judge

Now, the times are very different. A magistrate is a lowly cog in the great judicial machine and not a judge of a superior court. But the personal qualities that were then required of judges and shown by those two Allahabad High Court judges are no different from those expected of present-day judges. Apart from integrity, in all its aspects including intellectual, and impartiality, the one word which comes readily to mind on the qualities of judges is sobriety.

Indeed, sobriety in a judge is so significant that it is part of the simile "as sober as a judge". Sobriety is not greyness or humourless grimness but a characteristic that denotes balance and connotes a desire to shun the limelight. It is the opposite of flamboyance which is in itself not a negative personal attribute and perhaps even appropriate for some callings, but is it so in judges? Judges in the past and most now too avoid being flamboyant. Sobriety and flamboyance are relevant in the Prashant Bhushan case but have not received any focus. This is because the Supreme Court has avoided any comment on the Chief Justice of India (CJI)'s photograph which has been, in a manner, the origin of the present action.

In paragraph 62, the court in the Bhushan judgment notes:



"The first part of the first tweet states, that 'CJI rides a 50 lakh motorcycle belonging to a BJP leader at Raj Bhavan, Nagpur without a mask or helmet'. This part of the tweet can be said to be a criticism of the CJI as an individual and not against the CJI as CJI". It thereafter proceeds to mention the second part of the tweet where Mr. Bhushan says, "at a time when he keeps the SC in a lockdown mode denying citizens their fundamental rights to access justice". The court holds that the second part of the tweet was critical of the CJI as CJI and was contemptuous.

As the court has itself categorically opined that any comment on the photograph of the CJI cannot attract contempt, citizens are safe from being hauled up for contempt if they draw inferences as long as they do not make that a basis for making adverse comments about the CJI's role in the administration of justice in the country. This fortifies citizens to make observations on the photograph as well as the changing nature of conventions regarding the personal conduct of the judges of the superior courts so long as they do not imply any criticism of the judges' functioning as judges. There too the court has discussed at great

length how fair and constructive criticism of judicial functioning and of court judgments without attribution of motives is healthy for the functioning of Indian democracy.

A reputed wire service reported that people who were knowledgeable about the incident said that the CJI did not know who owned the motorcycle and that he merely wanted to get a feel of it. It also claimed that he wants to buy a motorcycle after his retirement. The fact is that the photograph was unique for never has a superior court judge, leave alone a CJI, been seen astride a motorcycle. The question is whether the CJI was wise to do so while occupying the august of office he does or whether he should have curbed his enthusiasm till he had retired. What would he feel if many judges and magistrates follow his example, and photographs of them getting a feel of objects of their enthusiasm – for example, sports cars – appear? This is a question only he can answer after giving it the thought it deserves. I will only add that he himself knows that many lawyers on elevation to the bench have to curb their enthusiasm, change some habits and become sober in their conduct.

Shunning the limelight
In the immediate aftermath of independence, judges also maintained a tradition of aloofness. They did not seek public attention; indeed, they avoided it. For instance, unlike politicians and officers of the executive branch, they moved without pilots and escorts

or sirens and red lights on their cars. It may now come as a surprise but it was only in the 1980s that High Court judges were provided with official cars. Till then, at least in the Allahabad High Court, many judges drove to the court themselves.

At some stage judges began to seek to be equated with executive officers and politicians in terms of some perks and privileges. This does not imply that the standards of judicial work were compromised but it did mean that they came more in the public eye. This led to a weakening of the strong norms of aloofness. The limelight was shunned. Official cars with sirens and red lights were symptomatic of the changing mores.

There was yet another tradition that most judges strictly adhered to. They mainly confined themselves to their judicial work and only spoke through their judgments. This does not mean that they did not pursue their hobbies and write on non-judicial subjects in which they had expertise but they avoided issues of public policy which may come before the courts. Certainly, they did not give their views on controversial political and social issues. Largely this tradition continues to be pursued.

All in all, judges of the superior courts must, even in these changing times, ponder deeply the old norms that earned them respect and public confidence, and pursue them. There is no surer foundation for the judicial branch of the state.

Vivek Katju is a former diplomat

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.

The exam conundrum

There is no knowing how long this pandemic will continue ("At Opposition meeting, CMS plan to move SC on JEE, NEET", August 27). Keeping the JEE, NEET exams in abeyance is not in the interest of lakhs of enrolled candidates. The National Testing Agency has said safety measures such as more testing centres, fewer students per room, and staggered entry and arrival will be put in place. Students study for months on end to write these exams; interminable delays blunt their preparedness. Neither is India going to

achieve herd immunity nor is it going to see a vaccine any time soon. By then the next batch will be ready to sit for these exams creating an untenable situation.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

Doing away with the JEE, NEET exams this year looks prudent. It is possible that many parents are discouraging their children from attending the exams due to fear of infection. In such a case, potential candidates may lose their chance of sitting for an exam that will enable them to pursue a professional

course. Authorities can consider admissions to medical and dental courses on the basis of marks scored by the students in their Class 12 exams.

V.N. SUBRAMANYAM,
Bengaluru

The pandemic has exposed the chinks in our public health infrastructure. Nothing can be more shortsighted than the willingness to disrupt medical education that feeds the reservoir of medical professionals. Testing of candidates seeking medical seats, however inequitable it may appear,

is unavoidable considering the disparity in the academic standards of various higher secondary streams and the demand-supply gap in seat availability. The Opposition parties can serve national interest better if they offer valuable suggestions to mitigate the difficulties of candidates living in hotspots and a roadmap to equip public schooling with the curricular and pedagogic wherewithal to level the playing field in accessing professional education.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

Each State has a different number of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Each State also has different health and infrastructural capacities. At this juncture, how can one justify conducting an entrance exam throughout the nation on the same day?

PREMUKUM THOMAS,
Thiruvananthapuram

Parshuram politics
The SP wants to build a statue of Parshuram in U.P., the BSP an even bigger one, and the Congress wants Parshuram Jayanti restored as a State holiday ("The battle for Parshuram", Aug. 27). Mayawati once said,

"We should not forget that we're a secular country". Akhilesh Yadav has spoken of fighting a "communal BJP". Now, they and the Congress, which also calls itself secular, are promising statues of Parshuram with an eye on electoral gains. What moral right do any of these parties have to claim that they are fighting for secularism? Secularism is one of the most misused words in Indian politics.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Ernakulam

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Can a digital ID aid India's primary health ecosystem?

PARLEY

Without strong health infrastructure, it could amount to putting the cart before the horse

Following a recent announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the creation of a digital health ID for every Indian, there has been a renewed debate on the need for a new digital identifier that centralises a citizen's health records. Two public health experts, Dr. Abhay Shukla and Dr. Suresh Munuswamy, discuss the issue in a conversation moderated by G. Ananthkrishnan. Edited excerpts:

What can a digital health ID do for people?



Dr. Abhay Shukla
is a public health physician and national co-convenor of Jan Swasthya Abhiyaan



Dr. Suresh Munuswamy
is head, Health Informatics and Technology Innovations at the Public Health Foundation of India



Scan the QR code to listen to the full interview online

Categorising activities in the context of the pandemic

The govt. should devise a simple behavioural model

ANAND DAMANI

In the initial days of COVID-19, towards the end of March 2020, India went into a lockdown. The number of daily new cases at that time was 87. But the fear of contracting the virus was very high. Now after five months, the number of daily new cases has crossed 75,000, but the fear of contracting the virus has reduced. Why do people misunderstand risk?

One reason is that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is not novel anymore. But more importantly, behavioural science studies show that numbers don't move people. When we read that three million people in India have contracted COVID-19, most people can't make much sense of it. But when someone close to us in proximity or relationship contracts COVID-19 or succumbs to it, the fear becomes tangible. People suddenly feel vulnerable. Otherwise, people feel invincible, even though the risk of contracting COVID-19 actually keeps increasing with daily cases increasing.

Guided by emotions

Emotions cause us to misunderstand risk. For example, flying is something that many people get scared of even though flying has become an extremely safe mode of transport. Zero people died in a plane crash last year in India, while over 1,50,000 people died in road accidents. Yet, people feel scared of flying, not of driving on Indian roads.

Flying evokes a powerful emotional response. You are literally up in the air, in the hands of a machine and two pilots. If something happens up there, there is nothing you can do about it. This makes flying feel unsafe even though it is among the safest modes of transport.

Likewise, some people believe that they should not step out of their homes because going out means that they will catch COVID-19. In reality, going for a walk in an uncrowded area with a mask on is relatively safe. Some of the same people believe that staying at home is far safer than stepping out. So, they have started keeping their househelps at home. This is relatively risky, because distancing

may not be possible within a typical home in urban India and droplets exhaled, sneezed or coughed out tend to stay in the air indoors for longer.

The risk of contracting COVID-19 in any given situation can be categorised as 'very high', 'high', 'medium', 'low' or 'very low'. Visiting a gym generally would fall under 'very high' risk, while playing tennis would generally fall under 'very low' risk, even though both activities are related to fitness.

However, since each situation demands assessing the risk of contracting COVID-19, it complicates people's decision-making.

Colour-coding different tasks

To simplify decisions, people rely on short-cuts. For example, if you stay at home, you are safe. If you believe in god, you are safe. If you are healthy, you are safe. If you have a particular deity at home, you are safe. Such simplifications, using which people assess the risk, make COVID-19 a dangerous pandemic.

To help people get a better understanding of risk, the government needs to devise a simple behavioural design. Just like a traffic signal communicates 'stop', 'ready' and 'go' with 'red', 'yellow' and 'green' colours respectively, our daily activities need to be categorised as 'red', 'orange' and 'green'.

Having outsiders visit your home would be 'red', visiting retail stores would be 'orange' and meeting a friend at an uncrowded park while keeping a safe distance and wearing a mask would be 'green'.

If people can't judge risks accurately, COVID-19 is likely to continue to spread like a raging fire in a forest.

Anand Damani is a behavioural scientist



the idea for preventive services in primary care?

AS: We need at least two or three important elements for building both a robust health system and an effective digital e-health system. The first is certain foundational policies which relate to the larger health system. The second is enabling strategies, which support an integrated information-based system. And then there are the actual e-health applications. So, a foundational change is on the public health Management Information System. We already have an MIS, but it is not functioning adequately. And there is a limited variety of data being received, but a lot of data, especially from the primary healthcare level, is inadequate.

The second is reporting by the private healthcare sector. There is gross under-reporting of any kind of notifiable disease. In areas like malaria, cases are something like 20 times higher than what is reported by the official system. If you want to have a robust digital e-health system, then we need private practitioners, smaller hospitals, larger private hospitals regularly reporting about their cases.

And that is linked to the regulation of the private sector. Information is not going to come in isolation. It has to be part of the Clinical Establishments Act and a regulatory framework. Without these, there is no meaning to the e-health platform. Perhaps it will just be limited to secondary and tertiary care and insurance companies. That is the sense that we are getting, that this digital e-health platform is mainly pushed by the providers rather than being pulled by the system.

What does our experience with digital systems tell about this ID plan?

Dr. Suresh Munuswamy (SM): As an idea it is great. All the issues are in the execution. You already have an ID, Aadhaar, and several other IDs – PAN card, bank cards, etc. Do they actually serve the purpose? Only with real-time authentication can that be achieved. That is a challenge with Aadhaar also. So, if I take this ID and go to a pharmacy, will it be authenticating me in real time? Is that even a possibility? So, we are just adding another ID.

There is also an ecosystem. If I again go to a pharmacy, buy medicines, is there a barcode on the medicine? How am I going to even connect the medicine that I'm getting

What potential is there to use

SM: If you really want to even pinpoint a specific area where the challenge is, it is in data collection or in writing and reporting. India has a population 10 times or 20 times that of a developed country. We have a shortage of healthcare facilities, shortage of staff.

Something as simple as identifying a house does not exist on the ground. If you ask the government, there are varying reports on how many houses are there even within a village without very clear data. We don't have a clear database on nutritional status. Every time I want to dispense medicine or give nutritional advice, I have to weigh a person, measure their height, and arrive at the BMI. These skills are not even-existent on the ground.

You need to have radical new technologies for nutrition, come up with a solution where you could make a simple image to give your height, weight and BMI automatically. Now, that way, you will be able to identify if a person is undernourished or normal. But these are experimental solutions.

Do we have any pilots conducted so far?

SM: In certain cases, small pilots are fairly successful. But the challenge is in interoperability or integration. Simply because I have one digital thermometer, I cannot transform healthcare. I need to have dozens of devices working in a rural environment, all trying to generate data in a meaningful, rapid way.

What potential is there to use

Health data is very sensitive. And we don't yet have a Data Protection Act in India

DR. ABHAY SHUKLA

And then I need to have a back-end platform to collect all the data, make sense of it.

I need a digital dentistry platform, digital blood screening platform, a digital stethoscope.

If this ID is going to be used to profile health status and the commercial risk that individuals carry and that is used to discriminate, would you say legal changes must precede anything else?

AS: Yes, that is a big concern, because health data is very sensitive. And you see that the Aadhaar data has been hacked into. The NITI Aayog said that they will be making available some of the data, and even to private players. That is the front door, and the back door can be hacked into. So, imagine if this data becomes available to employers. That the following person has diabetes, they will not employ her. Or to insurers. They will either charge a much higher premium or on some pretext they will not insure. If a person has HIV, which is confidential, and that data becomes available to colleagues or people in the immediate environment, he may be stigmatised. We don't have a Data Protection Act yet in this country.

The other issue is about regulation. Today, we don't even know how many private hospitals are

there in a particular city. There is no reliable source of information on how many beds are available. The government is actually struggling in the COVID-19 epidemic to find out. We don't even have a comprehensive list of private practitioners. From that level, we're saying that we will digitise all the data. Regulation includes mandatory information, which needs to be accessed from private providers. Many States still don't have an effective Clinical Establishment Act.

Will the private tertiary care segment be happy with the idea of a digital ID?

AS: Definitely. It is my hunch that it is the insurance industry, along with segments of the IT industry, which are pushing this whole idea. The insurance industry wants to know the background, the previous illnesses and previous procedures, to improve its own business.

And, of course, private hospitals will also benefit to some extent. But, for patients, has to be linked with an assurance that the care being provided through such an integrated system is more rational, more standardised, and rate-regulated.

Similarly, rates. You've seen in the COVID-19 epidemic how patients have been grossly overcharged in certain private hospitals. So, you know, if it leads to standardisation, of quality of care or rationality of care, and regulation of rates, then that kind of digital health platform will be of some use to the patient. Whatever I have read about the digital health stack, which is a kind of precursor to this digital [move], these aspects do not seem to be very much fore-fronted. With a public health expenditure of 1.2% of the GDP, there is no way you can have a robust universal health system. So, just thinking about a digital platform is not really going to help.

Can some elements of personal identity be masked and health advice given to individuals using an ID?

AS: Anonymised data for public health surveillance may be of some use for certain kinds of illnesses, especially non-communicable diseases. Especially blood glucose levels and lipid profiles for population-based public health decision-making.

ing. But a large proportion of illnesses are communicable diseases, perinatal and maternal health conditions, where laboratory investigations are of limited value and a lot of clinical interaction is still required. What we need to do is strengthen front-line and primary health care workers.

A report on universal health coverage by the erstwhile Planning Commission said a small percentage of GDP can provide all citizens with free essential medicines. Can that be a demand with the digital ID?

AS: We already have the technology, we don't need a new ID for that. The Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation model, which has been replicated in Kerala and Rajasthan, has shown that essential medicines can be made available across the State in each healthcare facility, provided there is a demand-driven supply and a willingness to make the procurement and distribution system transparent, accountable and free of corruption. Of course, some more technology will help.

Should not a digital ID confer a right to medicines for all?

AS: It is not going to make a big difference. What we need first is an expansion of primary health services in the public sector through health centres. Then we need to engage local private practitioners and bring them into the system. Then, digital health will strengthen it, make information available, and deliver medicines. In chronic illnesses like diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and cardiac ailments, digital health platforms could make available regular, low cost, quality medicines, especially for elderly patients who cannot go to a health centre, in a regulated system.

SM: What the T.N. model said was, when you centralise purchases a lot of things can be taken care of. You have this efficient way of delivering medicines up to the primary health centre level. Again, the challenge is, you are only tracking the secondary packages. You don't know if the person is getting the medicines. You need to have the real time authentication of the person.



NOTEBOOK

May humour prevail

Judges with a funny bone are a rare species, but thankfully not yet extinct

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.

A court hall must be the last place where a layman can expect any humour but judges who crack jokes, take criticism sportively and keep the judicial proceedings lively are rare but not extinct. Ever since the Madras High Court began hearing cases only through video conference facility, thanks to COVID-19, humour in court has gone to a different level.

Recently, when an Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) asked a judge if she was audible enough, he replied: "Yes, yes. You are very much audible like Ceylon Radio." The APP, in turn, said: "I am unable to hear Your Lordship properly." And pat came the reply: "That is because I am sitting in my residence... Howsoever high a person may be, he must maintain silence when his wife is around." The judge had another witty repartee just a day earlier. When a lawyer

wanted to know if he was visible on screen, the judge said: "Yes, of course. You are visible in Eastman Colour." Suffering from technical issues, the advocate said: "Your Lordship is not visible to me," and the judge quipped: "That's because of my complexion. This is the maximum you can see of me."

Matrimonial disputes
Humour that extends beyond technical issues is also not uncommon as judges come across peculiar matrimonial disputes. Recently, there was one such dispute between an aged couple. The husband was living on the first floor of their house and the wife on the ground floor. When a judge tried persuading the old man to reside with his wife, he refused saying she irritates him. "What's wrong in it? Wives and husbands will feel content only if they irritate each other. That's part of married life," the judge remarked.

While hearing another

marital dispute between a young couple, the judge patiently heard a person who complained that his wife was harassing him but lodging false police complaints and picking up fights. "Shall I show something to Your Lordship? So far, I have not shown this to anyone," the husband asked.

The judge was not sure if the litigant should be permitted to show it on video, since it could turn out to be some objectionable material. Even before the judge could say anything, the husband pulled out a suicide note. "Look at this Lordship. I even wanted to commit suicide," he cried to the judge, who advised him to avoid such thoughts and instead live happily with his wife and child. In an attempt to ease the grim atmosphere, the judge said: "You are already married. You cannot commit suicide twice."

During the hearing of a bail petition before another judge, the petitioner's

counsel said his clients had been arrested for being in possession of pumpkins. Surprised, the judge asked the APP for the other side of the story. The APP said that the women were actually into distillation of illicit liquor using pumpkins and yeast. "So, you were trying to hide an entire pumpkin?" the judge asked the petitioner's counsel.

In yet another case seeking parole for a prisoner, his counsel told the court that the petitioner required just one day's leave to attend his son's birthday. Considering the request to be *prima facie* reasonable, the judge asked: "PP, what do you say?"

In reply, the APP informed the court that the petitioner was facing as many as 21 criminal cases booked for serious charges such as attempt to murder and house breaking.

Shocked to hear the antecedents of the petitioner, the judge told his counsel:

"Sorry, no parole for birthday parties!"

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 28, 1970

Cauvery: Mysore Inflexible

The Mysore Chief Minister, Mr. Veerendra Patil declared here [Bangalore] today [August 27] that he had his own reservations about the 1924 (Mysore-Madras) Cauvery agreement and he had at no time said that he had accepted the agreement. Talking to pressmen here today, Mr. Veerendra Patil declined to elaborate when asked whether in that event, Mysore would repudiate the 1924 agreement. The Chief Minister's attention was drawn by pressmen to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's reported insistence on Mysore's acceptance of the agreement in the context of the forthcoming Inter-State Cauvery Conference of Chief Ministers in Ooty. Mr. Patil said it was not the first time that he was attending a conference on the Cauvery waters. The views of the Mysore Government had been made known to the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala and also the Union Irrigation and Power Minister every time there was a conference on the Cauvery waters. It has been said on behalf of Mysore that the 1924 agreement has been heavily weighted in favour of Tamil Nadu and that Tamil Nadu had itself violated the agreement by constructing reservoirs across the Cauvery utilising the water far in excess of its entitlement.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 28, 1920

Not by Scott.

(From an editorial)
Admirers of Sir Walter Scott, whose number in India is legion, will learn with a pang that a beautiful quatrain famous in his name is now found to be of different authorship. The lines referred to occur as motto at the top of Chapter XIII Vol. 2 of "Old Mortality."

"Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
Throughout the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life,
Is worth an age without a name."

Scott wrote "Anonymous" underneath the lines, but he had a curious habit of inventing his mottoes and concealing their authorship by ascribing them as "Old play" and such like pious frauds. His biographer presumed the verse was Scott's unquestioned and ever since it has been attributed to him. It is now discovered that the stanza is one of the fourteen of a poem written by one Major Moranda and published in the Bee, an Edinburgh weekly, in 1791, about two and a half decades before Scott's novel came out. Scott quoted it with a slight modification. The credit for the discovery goes to Mr. James Raud of Galashiels.

FROM PAGE ONE

Borrow from RBI to bridge GST gap: Centre

Finance Ministers from Congress-ruled States, speaking to journalists after the meeting, said they were unhappy with the outcome, as the Centre was not honouring its commitment.

Alleging a "trust deficit" between the Centre and States, they asked why the former could not borrow money to compensate the States, adding that the proposed solution of borrowing by States should not be forced on them.

"This year, we are facing an extraordinary situation," said Ms. Sitharaman. "You are facing an act of God, which might even result in a contraction of the economy – to what per cent or whatever, I am not getting into."

The Minister added that

SC: States can have sub-groups among SC/ST

Justice Mishra's judgment is significant as it fully endorses the push to extend the creamy layer concept to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Central List do not constitute a "homogeneous group".

The Central List of Scheduled Castes and Tribes is notified by the President under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. The consent of the Parliament is required to exclude or include castes in the List. In short, States cannot unilaterally add or pull out castes from the List.

However, Justice Mishra disagreed. He reasoned that sub-classifications within the Presidential/Central List does not amount to "tinkering" with it. No caste is excluded from the list.

SC refuses to allow Muharram processions

The Chief Justice, flanked by Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian, said public festivities for Ganesh festival was not allowed in Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Laskar then referred to how the court had given access to Jain temples for the occasion of Paryushan.

The CJI replied, "That was specifically for three Jain temples in Mumbai. We only allowed five people at a

Restoration of peace on LAC key to ties, says India

Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said, "complete disengagement requires redeployment of troops by each side towards their regular posts on their respective sides of the LAC", adding that "it is important to bear in mind that achieving this requires agreed actions by both sides."

"The two sides had also agreed to continue their engagements – both through diplomatic and military channels," he added, quoting the recent remarks of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar that "finding a solution... must be predicated on honouring all agree-

ments and understandings... and not attempting to alter the status quo unilaterally".

In India's view, complete disengagement and a full restoration of the status quo prior to May's transgressions remains far off. Chinese troops still remain on India's side of the LAC at Pangong lake and are disrupting Indian patrols in the Dapsang plains, while a build-up of forces remains elsewhere along the LAC.

PLA Senior Colonel Wu said, "progress has been made in disengaging the frontline troops of both sides".

Five of Great Andaman tribe test positive

As per the health bulletin issued by Andaman and Nicobar Island, the total confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Islands as on August 26 was 3,000 and the number of deaths due to the viral infection was 42.

Commenting on the developments Director Anthropological Survey of India (ANSI) Vinay Kumar Srivastava said it was a welcome step that administration has reached out to the

members of PVTGs and tested them. "We have to take note that the PVTGs are not only vulnerable because of their limited population but the members of the communities are very close to each other. Therefore, isolation of individuals should be in a very humane manner and the other members of the communities need to be informed that isolation is a part of the treatment," he said.

Karnataka case spike of 9,386 sets new record

Bengaluru adds 3,357 cases; 2,795 test positive in Telangana; A.P. tally close to four lakh; Tamil Nadu crosses four lakh-mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

With 9,386 more COVID-19 cases on Thursday, Karnataka registered its highest single day spike, and the State's total cases went up to 3.09 lakh.

As many as 141 COVID-19 deaths were reported in the State, adding up to 5,232 fatalities. Bengaluru Urban had 3,357 positive cases and 59 deaths.

COVID-19

An upward trend in cases in Telangana was confirmed, with 2,795 persons testing positive on Wednesday. Eight people succumbed to the virus, taking total fatalities to 788.

Over 60,000 tests were done, taking the total to 11.42 lakh, and total cases stood at 14,483. Active cases were put at 27,600, with 20,866 in home/institutional isolation.

Samples tested per million population stood at 30,772.

The Health department said the Case Fatality Rate was lower at 0.68, compared to the national average of 1.84. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area contributed the maximum cases, with 449 testing positive on Wednesday.

The Andhra Pradesh tally inched closer to the four lakh-mark with 10,621 new infections on Thursday. The State also witnessed 92 fatalities. The new cases pushed the tally to 3,93,090, and active cases to 94,209. The toll climbed to 3,633, but mortality rate remained at 0.92%.

A total of 34.79 lakh samples were tested so far, including 61,300 tested in the previous 24 hours. The positivity rate in the previous 24 hours stood at 17.33%. Kurnool reported 13 new deaths, the highest, Nellore 11 and East Godavari 10. Chittoor re-

Back to roots

Hoping to enhance immunity amid the spread of COVID-19, many people have increased consumption of spices. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Spice route: Traders selling ginger and garlic at Osmangunj in Hyderabad on Thursday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

*Kerala has a mismatch of 64 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons. **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Wednesday

***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths

ported nine new deaths and topped with the highest toll of 369. West Godavari and Kadapa reported seven deaths each, Prakasam, Anantapur and Visakhapat-

nam six deaths each, Guntur five deaths and Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Krishna four new deaths each.

Kerala reported 2,406 new cases on Thursday, the total to 267. Four deaths were re-

ported from Thiruvananthapuram, three from Kannur and one each from Alappuzha, Thrissur and Kozhikode.

Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday that preparations had been made for the pandemic peak, and the health system could treat eight-fold patients from current levels.

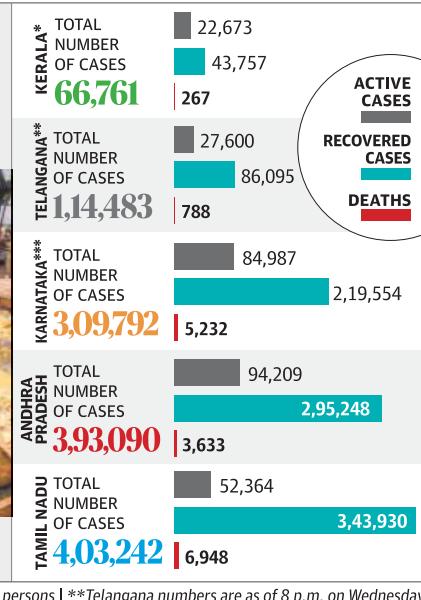
Tamil Nadu's overall COVID-19 tally breached the four lakh-mark on Thursday as another 5,981 persons tested positive.

The State's toll rose to 6,948 as another 109 persons succumbed to the infection.

The State added one lakh cases to its overall count in 17 days. It touched 3,02,815 cases on August 10.

The overall tally stood at 4,03,242.

(With inputs from Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram and Chennai bureaus)



Consider Opposition's concerns: Governor

Sends Chennithala's petition to CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Governor Arif Muhammed Khan on Thursday forwarded the concerns raised by Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala regarding the fire at the Government Secretariat to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

A Raj Bhavan official said Mr. Khan had passed on the petition submitted by Mr. Chennithala to Mr. Vijayan with the footnote for "appropriate consideration."

The government was likely to apprise Mr. Khan of the fire and its circumstances once the multiple investigations into the incident concluded.

Mr. Chennithala had told Mr. Khan that the fire at the General Administration Department (GAD) was an act of sabotage.

He said at least three Central agencies probing the UAE consulate-linked gold smuggling case had sought



Arif Muhammed Khan

records from the section to examine the role of the Chief Minister's Office in the economic offence.

Police probe

Meanwhile, the police team investigating the possible arson angle in the fire incident has declared the blaze site an active crime scene. It has walled off the area and posted armed sentries.

The police have prepared an inventory of records in the damaged section and appeared to have a fair idea of the damaged files.

He also denied media reports that he had earlier met her at a hotel.

Janam TV journalist interrogated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOCHI

Customs officials on Thursday interrogated Anil Nambari, a senior journalist of Janam TV, in connection with the diplomatic baggage gold smuggling case. Mr. Nambari reached the Kochi office of the investigation agency around 10.30 a.m.

The call data records of Swapna Suresh, an accused in the case, had revealed that Mr. Nambari had reportedly contacted her on the day on which the contraband was seized.

As the news of the telephone call surfaced, Mr. Nambari had clarified through his social media page that he called Swapna seeking the version of the UAE consulate regarding the smuggling case.

He also explained that Swapna had returned the call after an hour to provide the version of the consulate.

Following the leads, the agency intercepted a woman drug supplier and seized from her 270 MDMA pills from her house in Bengaluru's Dodgabbi. The three accused arrested in the operation were identified as M.

Drug syndicates unearthed, six arrested with ecstasy pills

Musicians, actors in Karnataka among clients

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Narcotics Control Bureau has unearthed three syndicates, including the one that supplied drugs to prominent musicians and actors in Karnataka. Six persons have been arrested with 4,317 MDMA pills, 180 LSD blots and over ₹2.20 lakh in cash.

On August 21, the NCB's Bengaluru zonal unit seized 145 MDMA pills, commonly known as ecstasy, and the cash at a hotel apartment in Kalyan Nagar. In the follow up action, the officials seized 96 more pills and 180 LSD blots from another location in the city.

He also explained that Swapna had returned the call after an hour to provide the version of the consulate.

Another case was reported on August 10, when the agency's Mumbai zone unit seized 3,010 of MDMA pills,

this. Acting on a tip-off, a police team tracked down the shipment and intercepted the truck near Devanhalli on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

The arrested [Sameer, 37, and Khaiser Pasha, 41, from Mysuru, and Ismail Shariff, 38, from Chickballapur] had allegedly concealed the marijuana in the truck.

sourced from Brussels. Subsequent action resulted in the seizure of 46 more tablets from the Navi Mumbai residence of a couple, who were arrested.

In the third case, the NCB's Bengaluru unit on July 31 seized 750 MDMA pills, which were sourced from Germany.

Further probe led to the arrest of one Rahman, K., who was to allegedly receive the parcel.

SC refuses to stay I-T criminal proceedings against Shivakumar

Case based on the charge of recovery of undisclosed wealth

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday once again refused to stay criminal proceedings initiated by the income-tax authorities against Karnataka Congress Committee president D.K. Shivakumar.

In the last hearing on July 20, the court issued notice to the authorities but refused to stay.

On Thursday, a Bench of Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde declined to agree with the pleas made by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for Mr. Shivakumar, that irreparable harm would be



D.K. Shivakumar

caused if an interim stay is not granted.

The case against Mr. Shivakumar is based on an alleged recovery of undisclosed wealth in a search and seizure operation con-

ducted on his premises in 2017.

In the last hearing, Mr. Rohatgi questioned the validity of the sanction (for prosecution) granted to prosecute his client. He argued that "no complaint [of undisclosed wealth] can be filed by the income-tax authorities on the basis of a raid in which time has not been given to file the returns for the year".

In his appeal, Mr. Shivakumar has challenged a November 2019 Karnataka High Court order, which upheld a lower court's decision to reject his plea to be discharged in the case.

"I don't know what statement Mr. Vishwanath has gi-

BJP to seek explanation from MLC for Tipu remark

He had called Sultan "son of the soil"

STAFF REPORTER KALABURAGI/BENGALURU

Taking exception to the remark made by newly nominated BJP MLC A.H. Vishwanath, hailing Tipu Sultan as a son of the soil, BJP State unit chief Nalin Kumar Kateel said he would seek an explanation from him.

In his brief interaction with mediapersons in Kalaburagi on Thursday, Mr. Kateel asserted his party's stand on the 18th century Mysuru ruler. He said his party was against honouring Tipu and it was committed to it.

"Party State spokesman Ganesh Karnik said that the BJP "cannot and will not" accept Tipu as a noble ruler. He said the party was of the unanimous view that he was a "bigot".

Vishwanath, formerly a JD(S) legislator, had defected to the BJP after rebelling against the Congress-JD(S) alliance last year.

ven, but it has appeared in the media and it is his personal opinion.

"The party has a clear stand on Tipu and we have been fighting for it. I will seek an explanation from him [Mr. Vishwanath]," Mr. Kateel said.

Party State spokesman Ganesh Karnik said that the BJP "cannot and will not" accept Tipu as a noble ruler. He said the party was of the unanimous view that he was a "bigot".

Vishwanath, formerly a JD(S) legislator, had defected to the BJP after rebelling against the Congress-JD(S) alliance last year.

PWD plans 25-floor twin towers in Bengaluru

Buildings will house govt. offices

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENGALURU

If things go according to the Public Works Department's plans, Bengaluru will have 25-floor twin towers near Anand Rao Circle to house various government offices that are presently working on rented premises.

Disclosing this to media persons after presiding over a meeting of PWD senior officials here on Thursday, Deputy Chief Minister

Pranab still
on ventilator
support

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Former President Pranab Mukherjee is being treated for lung and renal ailments and there was no change in his medical condition, the Army's Research and Referral (R&R) hospital said on Thursday.

"Pranab Mukherjee continues to be in deep coma and on ventilator support. He is being treated for lung infection and renal dysfunction. He is haemodynamically stable," the hospital said. On August 10, Mr. Mukherjee underwent an emergency surgery for a brain clot and has since been on ventilator support. He had also tested positive for COVID-19.

Sonia effects changes in parliamentary team

Move seen as targeted at dissenters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

In a sign that the power tussle in the Congress is far from over, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, on Thursday, reiterated the demand they had made in a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi that members of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and presidents of the State units should be elected.

In a related development, Ms. Gandhi announced important organisational changes by announcing two committees for the smooth functioning of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

But the move can be interpreted as one to dilute the powers of Mr. Azad and party Deputy Leader in the Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma, both of whom are signatories to the letter that questioned the style of Congress' functioning.

Call for elections

Mr. Azad, who is among the 23 dissenting leaders, told ANI that elected presidents of the PCCs and block Congress have the support of 51% of the workers while those who are appointed do not even enjoy 1% support. His comments came on a day when the entire letter, that stated that uncertainty over leadership had weakened workers' morale and the party, was uploaded on the NDTV website.

"An election has the benefit that when you fight elections, at least your party is 51% behind you. Right now, the person who becomes president might not even have 1% support.... If CWC members are elected then they cannot be removed. So what is the problem," Mr. Azad said.

AR. Lakshmanan, former SC judge, dead

He had also chaired the 18th Law Commission

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Justice AR. Lakshmanan, 78, a former judge of the Supreme Court and former Chairman of the Law Commission, died at a private hospital in Tiruchi on Thursday. His wife, Meenakshi Lakshmanan, had died on Tuesday.

Justice Lakshmanan is survived by his sons AR.L. Arunachalam, a businessman, and AR.L. Sundaresan, a designated senior counsel in the Madras High Court, and daughters Umayal and Swarnavalli.

Born at Devakottai in Sivaganga district on March 22, 1942, he obtained his degree in law from the Madras Law College in 1966 before enrolling with the Bar Council in 1968 and commencing his practice as a lawyer for 23 years.

In 1990, he was appointed judge of the Madras High Court and was elevated as Chief Justice

Centre is thrusting solutions on us, say several States

Congress accuses government of taking a 'majoritarian approach' on issues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Expressing dissatisfaction over the outcome of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting, the Congress on Thursday accused the Centre of thrusting "solutions on States by adopting a majoritarian approach".

Punjab's Finance Minister Manpreet Badal at a virtual press conference after the GST Council meeting.

Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy and Chhattisgarh Finance Minister T.S. Singh Deo were also a part of the joint press conference.

Mr. Narayanasamy, who also holds the finance portfolio, said it was unfortunate the Centre was not honouring its commitment to pay them GST compensation at 14% and helping the States starving for revenues.

'Producer States losing'

The Puducherry Chief Minister said there is a serious flaw in the GST Act as producer States are losing and consumer States are gaining un-



Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal of Punjab and T.M. Thomas Isaac of Kerala opposed the Centre's stand.

der the present GST regime, and asked the Centre to reconsider this aspect.

Mr. Singh Deo said the GST Council is increasingly adopting a majoritarianism approach instead of consensus, which was the practice earlier. In response to Union

to discuss the proposal with their respective Cabinets and legislatures.

Mr. Badal, who opened the discussions from the Congress side, asked the Centre to activate the disputes resolution mechanism in the Council as provided for in Article 279 of the Constitution. "I appeal to the Centre that if some States are not agreeable to their proposals, they should not force the solutions on States. The Centre should activate the dispute resolution mechanism in the GST Council, so that States have legal recourse to what they do not agree upon," Mr. Badal told reporters.

"We saw a trust deficit. The meeting did not progress in a very cordial atmosphere. The Attorney-

sals put forward will lead to financial loss for the State. The Centre is of the view that the State should be able to absorb the loss of income, Dr. Isaac said.

The Centre was delaying the compensation for the last six months, he pointed out. The State can be paid ₹2.5 lakh crore compensation as the Centre has provided ₹21 lakh crore for Atmanirbhar Bharat, the Finance Minister said.

Kerala objects

Kerala has reiterated that the Centre should take a loan and provide GST compensation to the States.

Instead of increasing the cess or extending the cess collection for a further period, Kerala is of the view that taking loans is the best option. But, the Centre should take loans instead of asking States to take loans to provide the compensation.

Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Kerala Finance Minister, T. M. Thomas Isaac said the propo-

New equations in Bengal, Kerala?

Sonia's meeting with Opposition CMs may reflect a shift in alliance strategy

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi's interaction with non-BJP Chief Ministers, including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on Wednesday can be a turning point in the party's alliance strategy ahead of next year's Assembly polls in West Bengal and Kerala.

Though the meeting was convened to forge a common stand on holding NEET-JEE in September and the Goods and Services Tax, it could set the stage for new political equations in the States.

The Congress chief's outreach to Ms. Banerjee may also act as a signal to 23 dissenting leaders who, in their letter, had pitched for leaders of Congress off-shoots coming on one platform to take on the Narendra Modi government. "Agree that we must work together and fight



Turning point: Congress chief Sonia Gandhi chairing a virtual meeting with seven CMs on Wednesday. ■ PTI

together," Ms. Gandhi said in response to Ms. Banerjee, who said that the Opposition parties "must raise issues in one voice or else, there will no other political party left and only one party will rule".

Chowdhury's stand

In Bengal, senior Congress leaders like Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury are keen to join hands with the CPI(M) and

other Left parties to take on the Mamata Banerjee government, while the Congress is the key challenger to the Pinarayi Vijayan-led CPI (M) government in Kerala.

NEWS ANALYSIS

"Mamata Banerjee may be wanting to seek help from Soniaji as she is losing ground to the BJP in Bengal and wants to consolidate the

anti-BJP and 'secular' votes. She appealed to the CPI(M) and Congress voters to support her as she is keen to avoid a triangular contest," Mr. Chowdhury told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

However, relations between the Congress and the Left are frosty in Kerala. After the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) unsuccessfully moved a no-confidence motion against the government over the gold smuggling case, the virtual meet of Chief Ministers left out Mr. Vijayan.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said, "On common issues, secular democratic parties, including the Trinamool and the Congress have been together nationally. But if specific political meanings are derived from yesterday's meet, then one has to wait and see the political implications".

Bihar parties plunge into poll work

Flurry of meetings held as they mull options for new alliances, more seats

AMARNATH TEWARY

PATNA

With the Assembly election in Bihar round the corner, political parties have plunged into preparation with meetings, mulling over options for more seats and new alliances.

While disgruntled *maha-gathbandhan* ally Hindustani Awami Morcha-Secular (HAM-S) leader and former chief minister Jitam Ram Manjhi on Thursday met Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president J.P. Nadda invited party MPs from Bihar to New Delhi for a meeting on August 29.

Mr. Manjhi refused to say anything on the meeting.



J.P. Nadda addressing a virtual meeting of the BJP, in New Delhi on August 23.

Party sources told *The Hindu* that this was the final meeting between the two leaders before Mr. Manjhi hops over to the National Democratic Alliance. A party leader hinted that the HAM (S) may contest seven to nine seats.

While the Congress

formed a screening committee for the selection of candidates, *Mahagathbandhan* partner Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) president Upendra Kushwaha said that he was ready to "sacrifice" seats to keep the "grand alliance" intact.

Meanwhile, efforts are on within the RJD to assure the feelings of senior party leader Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who was upset over the likely joining of an upper caste leader with a criminal past of his Parliamentary constituency Vaishali into the party.

The buzz in political circles is that Tej Pratap Yadav, son of RJD chief Lalu Prasad, may change his constituency

from Mahua in Vaishali district.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Left leaders in Bihar met State RJD president Jagdannath Singh. A senior party leader said it was likely that this time, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI leader Kanhaiya Kumar may share the stage for the poll campaign.

The Congress has appointed former party general secretary, Avinash Pandey, who was also party's in-charge of the Rajasthani poll, as chairman of the screening committee.

Prospective candidates have started submitting biodata to the respective party headquarters and senior leaders' residences.

Govt. reimposes curbs on religious events in Kashmir

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) administration re-imposed restrictions on religious gatherings in the Kashmir valley on Thursday, a day after a group of Shia mourners clashed with the police in central Kashmir's Budgam.

"In the wake of COVID-19, restrictions shall continue on all religious processions and gatherings in all districts," Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Pandurang K. Pole, said. An official spokesperson said senior Shia leaders attended a meeting organised by Mr. Pole to assess the situation.

Prominent Shia cleric Ruhullah Mehdi accused the administration of "provoking" the community. J&K Apni Party also condemned use of force on Shia mourners.

Meanwhile, police arrested scores of leaders and activists of the PDP in Srinagar during a street protest, the first such demonstration since August 5, 2019 when the Centre ended J&K's special status.

ODISHA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

19, Dr.P.K.Parija Road, Cuttack - 753001

NOTICE FOR REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

No. 4269 / PSC Dt. 26.08.2020

Odisha Public Service Commission invites sealed proposals from reputed bidders in respect of the 'Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of System Implementation Partner (SIP) for conducting Computer Based Recruitment Examinations (CBRE) for ODISHA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION'. For details, the bidders are requested to visit website of the Commission www.opsc.gov.in. The last date & time for receipt of Proposals is 22.09.2020, 03.00 PM. OPSC reserves the right to accept / reject any / all proposals / bids without assigning any reason thereof.

Secretary

OIPR-12002/11/0024/2021

D-46:

Government of Odisha, "e"- Procurement Notice

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. S.E.DKL(R&B) 04/2020-21

Letter No.1612 / Dt.26.08.2020

The Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in double cover system to be received in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Building, and Road works as detailed in the table below:

1. Name of the work	: Building and Road Work.
2. No of works	: 02 (Two) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost	: Rs.1,55,57,059/- to Rs.4,20,11,691/-
4. Cost of tender paper	: Rs.10,000.00
5. Class of contractor	: 'B', 'A' & "Special" Class
6. Period of Completion of work	: 09 (Nine) Calendar months
7. Date and time of availability of bid Document in the website	: From Dt.02.09.2020 to 16.00 hours of Dt.16.09.2020
8. Date of opening of bid	: Dt.18.09.2020 at 11.30 hours

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal : www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Superintending Engineer,

Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal.

OIPR-34132/11/0005/2021

B-214:

CMYK

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY - e-TENDER NOTICE

Tender No: 27/20-21SE/PHC/PKD KIFB-CWSS to Elappally, Nalleppilly, Perumatty and Pattanchery Panchayats in Palakkad district-Distribution system - Phase III, EMD : ₹500000/-, Tender fee : ₹16800.

Last Date for submitting Tender : 17.09.2020, 03:00pm. Phone : 0491-2544927.

Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in

Sd-
KWA-JB-GL-6-233-2020-21
Superintendent Engineer, PH Circle, Palakkad

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LIMITED</h

States asked to limit COVID-19 transmission

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Of the total deaths in the country in the past two weeks, 89% were reported from 10 States/UTs, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba said at a videoconference with Chief Secretaries and Health Secretaries on Thursday.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir have been advised to proactively take steps to reduce case fatality to less than 1% across all districts, focus on effective containment, contact tracing and surveillance, and ensure that all close contacts are traced and tested within 72 hours in at least 80% of the new positive cases.

No sign of an inclusive vaccine policy: Rahul

Congress leader says Union government is unprepared

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the Union government's lack of preparedness with regard to a COVID-19 vaccine distribution policy was alarming.

Taking to Twitter, Mr. Gandhi also tagged his August 14 tweet in which he had asked the government to come up with an "inclusive and equitable vaccine access policy".

'Alarming situation'

"A fair and inclusive Covid vaccine access strategy should have been in place by now. But there are still no signs of it. GOI's unprepa-

A fair and inclusive Covid vaccine access strategy should have been in place by now. But there are still no signs of it. GOI's unpreparedness is alarming

**RAHUL GANDHI
CONGRESS LEADER**



redness is alarming," Mr. Gandhi said on Twitter.

However, in his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made it clear that the Central government was pre-

pared to mass-produce and distribute the vaccines, three of which are under different stages of trials, once the scientists give the go-ahead.

'Road map'

"The road map for its production and distribution among Indians is also ready," the Prime Minister had said.

A day earlier, the former Congress president had tweeted, "India will be one of the COVID-19 vaccine-producing nations. It needs a clearly-defined, inclusive & equitable vaccine access strategy ensuring availability, affordability & fair distribution. GOI must do it now".

Experts widen list of COVID-19 symptoms

Involvement of other organs warrants that patients be closely followed up for any long-lasting impact

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

COVID-19, which was considered a viral pneumonia when it was first detected eight months ago, is now a multi-systemic disease with many extra-pulmonary manifestations, warn experts and senior doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

The medical experts added that the involvement of other organs due to COVID-19 warrants that patients be closely followed up for any long-lasting impact including on reproductive health in young patients.

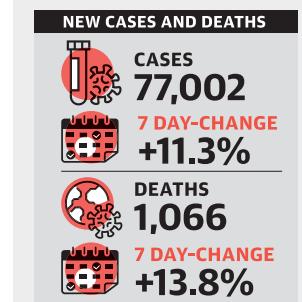
Beyond the lungs

"While pulmonary manifestation of COVID-19 is still dominant, we are now getting a significant number of patients who have other symptoms along with respiratory distress as well as those with no pulmonary manifestation," AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria said.

This, he added, would mean that seemingly asymptomatic people could be

Viral tracker

With 77,002 cases recorded on Thursday, India's COVID-19 tally rose to 33,84,716. As many as 1,066 new deaths were recorded, taking the toll to 61,715. The graphs depict new cases and deaths in the last 14 days across select States which are classified based on where cases or deaths are rising (red), falling (green) or showing a mixed trend (orange).



showing symptoms not commonly associated with COVID-19.

Dr. Guleria stressed that doctors need to be trained about a widening range of symptoms and use a high index of suspicion while isolat-

ing, suspecting and treating any patient.

He was speaking at the national Clinical Grand Round (CGR), organised by the AIIMS with the NITI Aayog to discuss the possible range of extra-pulmonary complica-

tions from COVID-19.

The National CGRs include presentation of clinical cases by physicians directly involved in their management.

V.K. Paul, NITI Aayog member and key member of

counsel for the Muslim bodies as to why they were not going before a regulatory body like the NBA.

"If there is one body which is dealing with the issue, then why cannot you go there. We are not opposing the action but there should be prior verification," the Bench observed.

The court deferred the hearing on the pleas.

'Vitals of Pune volunteers normal'

They have no pain, fever, side reaction or any systemic illness, says official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

Vital health parameters of the two volunteers who have been administered the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine candidate at a medical college here as part of the phase 2 clinical trial, are normal, a senior official from the medical facility said on Thursday.

Two men, aged 32 and 48, were given the first shot of the 'Covishield' vaccine, being manufactured by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), at Bharati Vidyapeeth's Medical College and Hospital on Wednesday. The dose will be repeated after one month, an official said.

'In touch with duo'

"Since yesterday, our medical team is in touch with the two volunteers and both are



One test at a time: COVID-19 samples being collected at a mobile unit in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

fine. They do not have any pain, fever, injection side reaction or systemic illness post-vaccination," Jitendra Oswal, the medical college and hospital's deputy medical director, said.

After the vaccine was administered on Wednesday, both the volunteers were observed for 30 minutes and later allowed to go home, he said.

"They have been given all the necessary emergency numbers [to contact in case of need] and our medical team is also conducting follow-ups with them," he added.

The vaccine dose would be repeated on both the vo-

unteers after one month, the hospital's medical director, Sanjay Lalwani, said on Wednesday.

More candidates

He said 25 candidates would be given the vaccine in the next seven days. Sonali Palkar, in charge of the medical college's research cell, said four or five persons were screened on Wednesday and a decision to administer the vaccine to them as part of the clinical trial was subject to their COVID-19 and antibody test reports.

The SII, the world's largest vaccine maker, has signed an agreement to manufacture the potential vaccine developed by the Jenner Institute of Oxford University, in collaboration with British-Swedish pharma company AstraZeneca.

Don't put off exams, say academicians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Over 150 academicians from various universities in India and abroad have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying delaying the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) any further will mean compromising the future of students.

Referring to the growing chorus against conducting these exams in September in view of the rising COVID-19 cases, the academicians said, "Some are trying to play with future of students to propel their own political agenda".

Like every year, this year too millions of students have passed their Class 12 exams and are now waiting at home to eagerly take the next step, the letter said.

"The government has announced the dates for JEE-Mains and NEET. Any further delay in conducting them will result in waste of precious year for students... However, some are trying to play with the future of our students simply to propel their own political agenda and oppose the government," it said.

The signatories include academicians from the Delhi University, IGNOU, JNU, BHU, IIT Delhi and Indian academicians from foreign universities such as University of London, University of California and Ben Gurion University, Israel, among others.

"We strongly believe that the Central government will successfully conduct the exams taking full precautions."

Why not go before the NBA in Tablighi Jamaat case, asks SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the complaints against a section of the media for allegedly spreading communal hatred over the Tablighi Jamaat event here should first go to a body like the National Broadcasting Association (NBA) for "preliminary determination".

The court had earlier sought reports from the NBA and the Press Council of India on the pleas of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and the Peace Party alleging that a section of the media was spreading communal hatred over the congregation in Delhi. A Bench comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian asked the

SC to deliver verdict today in UGC case

States cannot unilaterally cancel exams citing the pandemic, says Commission

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

ing, had argued that though its July 6 directive to conduct final year exams by the end of September was not a "diktat," States cannot unilaterally cancel the exams citing the pandemic.

If the State governments had an issue, they cannot change the exam schedule on their own. They should meet with the Centre and consult with the UGC about their apprehensions," Solici-

tor-General Tushar Mehta, for the UGC, had submitted.

Mr. Mehta said the guidelines for conducting the exams involved multiple options for students. "They can take the exams online, offline or hybrid [partly online and partly in the physical format]," he had said.

The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by over 30 students, represented by advocate Alakhi Alok Srivastava, questioning the validity of the UGC's directive.

for a later date. The UGC had questioned the logic of cancelling the final term exams for fear of COVID-19, but at the same time opening up varsities and educational institutions for the next academic session.

The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by over 30 students, represented by advocate Alakhi Alok Srivastava, questioning the validity of the UGC's directive.

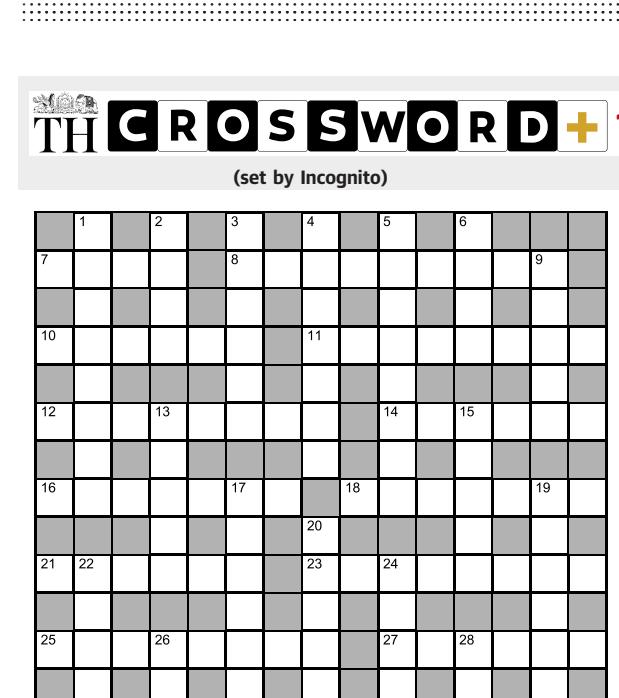
FAITH

Need for self-control

Sage Saunaka gives valuable advice to King Satyameva in response to the latter's queries. The sage's advice finds place in the work Vishnu Dharma. It has 109 chapters. He tells the king about everyday rituals, about the power of mantras etc. Everyone needs the strength which mantras confer on them. No one knows what karmas he has done in his previous births. It is only when negative consequences hit a person, that he wonders if this is a punishment for past deeds. This is where mantras can help.

While they cannot get rid of the effects of our deeds, for which we must pay, they can lessen the intensity of what we face. They are like a protective armour, which protects us from the unknown, said Velukkudi Krishnan, in a discourse. How does one learn these mantras? Mantras are to be learnt from Acharyas. He will test the suitability of a person to receive upadesa, before he teaches a mantra. He will check if the person who has come to him for mantrapaada, has samsa and dama. That means the Acharya will ensure if the person has learnt to control his senses and his mind.

This might seem very difficult for us to achieve. And if we cannot even reach the stage where we become fit to receive upadesa, then how can we learn mantras? But this is the sort of negative attitude which we must avoid. It is not as if we are totally incapable of self control. Do we not sit through a discourse without eating or drinking water during the lecture? Do we not go to work and concentrate on our work at the workplace? This may be for a few hours, but if we try to extend this self-control beyond a few hours, slowly but definitely we will reach a point where we can keep the mind and sense organs under control. And then we become fit to receive mantrapaada.



- ACROSS
- 7 Happy girl and boy (4)
- 8 Allow writer is English (9)
- 10 Afraid Edward is following second vehicle (6)
- 11 North European's rat is cooked for leading light (8)
- 12 Anil's ark is destroyed in Ceylon (3,5)
- 14 Drugs distributed around centre of Erode in vegetables (6)

- 16 Feeling sorry about journalist following small mediocre actor (7)
- 18 Extraordinary run (7)
- 21 Incarnation wildly aggravates, after losing scrambled eggs (6)
- 23 Itinerant assailant loses special German Shepherd (8)
- 25 Excited Asians encircle elite corps's killer (8)
- 27 Trot out around an estuary at first and turn (6)
- 29 A love-bird flies displaying uniform colour (5,4)
- 30 Hide and peilt (4)
- DOWN
- 1 Notices Chinese army identity documents (8)
- 2 Flower and ring for retiring communist (4)
- 3 Forgive mafia boss following father and mother at last (6)
- 4 Temporary post constructed next to pass (7)
- 5 A lion and hog disturbed gangster (8)
- 6 Peck's misplaced skis (4)
- 9 Icelandic captive animal (5)
- 13 Doctor eats little – possibly minimum (5)
- 15 Disturbed about teacups breaking in absence of air-conditioning (5)
- 17 Exits starting of exorcism with headless female monsters (8)
- 19 One flier ran riot in slaughterhouse (8)
- 20 Prohibiting persons' means of advertisement (7)
- 22 Place in Goa? Or in Nova Scotia? (5)
- 24 Initially, Senator Bush is worried about Central Park's plants (6)
- 26 Barbarian's song (4)
- 28 Try criminal leaving race, for example (4)

SUDOKU

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			1	9				
3	4	9			8			
6	8		1	5	2			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13025

P	G	A	J	M	A	N
B	B	D	R	A	S	H
A	I	O	I	G	T	S
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Russia for concluding fighter, helicopter deals by year-end

Delivery of S-400 long-range air defence systems to begin by end of 2021

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Russia is hopeful of concluding contracts for MiG-29 and SU-30MKI fighters jets and six Ka-31 helicopters by year-end, a representative of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) said at the ongoing Army 2020 expo in Russia. Deliveries of S-400 long-range air defence systems would begin by 2021-end and could not be accelerated further, she stated.

"We are aware that the Indian government has allocated additional funds for procurement of additional batches of Russian MiG-29 and SU-30 MKI jets and six Ka-31 choppers. We anticipate that the respective contracts can be signed before the end of 2020, if official requests come to us in due time," said Maria Vorobyeva, official representative of the



Frontline fighters: India is planning to buy more SU-30MKI fighters jets from Russia. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

FSMTC.

Russia has already made a commercial offer to India on the MiG-29s and a response is awaited.

DAC nod

On July 2, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved the procurement of 21 MiG-29s for the Indian Air Force (IAF) along with the upgrade of 59 MiG-29s estimated to cost ₹7,418 crore

dules to the earlier ones, when supplying the following batches of this equipment, can be discussed," Ms. Vorobyeva said.

FSMTC Director Dmitry Shugaev said there was a good order portfolio equal to about \$15 billion with India under way, and the deal for the production of AK-203 assault rifles through a joint venture was on. "I hope that in the near future, an agreement will be signed for the production and supply of Igla-S (air defence systems) in the interest of India, especially since we have won the tender unconditionally," he added.

The deals could see some progress during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India later this year for the annual bilateral summit, which also coincides with the 20th year of India-Russia strategic partnership.

India can be weapons supplier: PM

Modi highlights self-reliance in defence manufacturing, OFB corporatisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India has the capability to become a reliable weapons supplier to friendly nations and it will consolidate its position as the net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, highlighting *Atmanirbharta* in defence manufacturing, at a webinar.

"For the first time, 74% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in defence is allowed through the automatic route... We are going forward with the process of corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)," he said.

Indigenous tech

Listing a series of measures that were recently announced to boost domestic defence manufacturing, he said the aim was to develop new indigenous technologies. Several measures such as simplified licensing field, level playing field and simpli-



Narendra Modi

fying exports have been taken.

Mr. Modi pointed out that India had been a major defence importer for many years. Post-Independence, there was lot of capability for defence manufacturing but it was unfortunate that it did not get the attention it deserved.

"That situation is changing now," he noted.

Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Gen. Bipin Rawat said they had started receiving requests from various countries. For instance, radars

were very much in demand as well as artillery support systems.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the corporatisation of the OFB would be done within a year.

"We have earmarked a portion of our defence budget for procurement only from the domestic industry. For this year, it will be ₹52,000 crore," he added.

Draft policy

The government recently issued a draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020 for public feedback with the aim to achieve a manufacturing turnover of ₹25 bn or ₹1,75,000 crore, including exports of ₹5 bn in aerospace and defence goods and services by 2025.

Mr. Modi said the government had undertaken reforms in the toughest sectors like Intellectual Property (IP), taxation, insolvency and bankruptcy and even in space and atomic energy.

For foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) too, producing in India would be the best option.

On defence infrastructure, he said work was on in the two defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and a target of ₹20,000 crore investments had been set for the next five years.

On the 101 items' negative import list announced recently Mr. Modi stated that these items had been reserved for domestic industry and it will be expanded in future.

On this, Gen Rawat said that by early next year, they would come out with the second list, where there would be more technologically advanced items.

The number would be even more than this and the lists were also going to

"If the aerospace industry can find its feet in India, putting aerospace in the negative list will be a big achievement," he claimed.

SC reserves order on Mallya's plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its order on a review petition filed by fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya against a 2017 verdict of contempt against him.

The Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Ashok Bhushan on May 9, 2017, found him guilty of contempt for wilful disobedience of its order to come clean on his assets and not disclosing a sum of \$40 million (₹600 crore) he received from British liquor major Diageo Plc following his resignation as Chairman of United Spirits Limited in February 2016.

In 2017, Mr. Mallya informed the court that the ₹40 million was one among "thousands of transactions" he did and could not be counted as an asset. He said he had disbursed it among his three adult children.

Six terrorists on the run, says NIA

They have been named in the chargesheet filed in the Pulwama attack case

VIIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI:

Mohammad Ismail (25), Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar's relative from Pakistan, and Sameer Ahmad Dar (22), a Master's drop-out from south Kashmir's Pulwama, are among the six terrorists involved in the 2019 Pulwama terror attack who are on the run, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said in a chargesheet filed in a Jammu court this week. Another absconding accused Ashaq Ahmed Nengroo (23), a truck driver from south Kashmir's Pulwama, who helped Pakistani terrorists infiltrate into India, has moved to Pakistan, an NIA official said.

The other three absconding accused are Masood Azhar, his brother Rouf Asgar, and Ammar Alvi, all Pakistani nationals.

According to the NIA, Sameer Dar who was pursuing a Masters in Zoology, joined the terrorist group Jaish-e-



Path to justice: NIA officials carrying documents that are part of the chargesheet in the Pulwama case. ■ PTI

Mohammad in 2018 and was a neighbour of suicide bomber Adil Ahmad Dar.

Adil Dar rammed a car laden with 200 kilograms of explosives into a CRPF bus on the Jammu-Srinagar highway on February 14, 2019 when 40 personnel were killed.

Minutes after the terror strike, Jaish had released a video of Adil Dar's, claiming responsibility for the suicide bomb attack to several local media channels in Kashmir

valley. In the video, Adil Dar, sitting against the backdrop of a black and white flag is seen saying: "by the time the video is released, he would be in heaven."

The NIA has found that Sameer Dar tutored Adil Dar on how to pose in the video. "The voice in the video is not of Adil Dar but that of Sameer Dar. Adil Dar lip-synched," said an NIA official.

The NIA said that Ismail infiltrated from the Jammu border in May 2018 and he

brought around 12 kg of RDX with him to prepare the bombs for the Pulwama attack. One of the main accused, Umar Farooq, Azhar's nephew who was killed in an encounter on March 29, 2019 had trained at an Al Qaeda-Jaish camp in 2016. "He spoke Pashto, Urdu, Dardic and Multani dialects and played a key role in motivating Adil Dar. In the Afghanistan camp, he learnt how to assemble bombs and explode buildings," an NIA official said.

The findings are part of a 13,500 page charge-sheet filed by the NIA on Tuesday.

Before infiltrating India, Farooq and three other Pakistani did firing practice at a Pakistani village across the Jammu border. The NIA says this exercise could not have been held without the knowledge of the Pakistan Rangers. The official said that the investigations have revealed several tunnels along the International Border.

Pakistan providing shelter to Azhar is regrettable, says MEA

JeM had claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

It is "regrettable" that Masood Azhar continues to find shelter in Pakistan, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday after Pakistan rejected the charge-sheet of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) regarding the Pulwama terrorist attack.

The Official Spokesperson of the Ministry noted that Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed had claimed responsibility for the attack that killed at least 40 personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on 14 February, 2019.

"Jaish-e-Mohammed had claimed the responsibility of Pulwama attack. The organisation and its leadership is in Pakistan. It is regrettable that Masood Azhar, the first accused in the charge-sheet continues to find shelter in



Masood Azhar

Pakistan," said Anurag Srivastava, Official Spokesperson of the MEA, reminding Pakistan that Islamabad was yet to act on the 2008 Mumbai terror accused.

Pakistan had on Wednesday "categorically" rejected the charge-sheet by the NIA, calling the report as "fabrications" that were "designed to further the BJP's anti-Pakistan rhetoric and its narrow domestic political interests."

The Indian charge-sheet accused Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and his brother Abdul Rauf Asghar and their associates of carrying out the attack".

The Indian agency claimed explosives used in the attack came from Pakistan but Pakistan claimed the material was sourced from within the region of Jammu and Kashmir.

No credible action

"Pakistan has not yet taken any credible action against perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attack of 2008, which resulted in the loss of 165 innocent lives, including 25 foreign nationals," said the Indian Spokesperson.

Pakistan's continued denial about the presence of Dawood Ibrahim on its soil was indicative of Pakistan's insincerity, Mr. Srivastava said.

Action against travellers if WiFi rules are violated: DGCA

Draft rules govern use of electronic devices inside aircraft

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Air travellers could face punitive action from airlines if they do not follow rules on handling portable electronic devices such as smartphones and laptops, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation has proposed in its draft rules on implementation of in-flight WiFi connectivity.

The draft rules govern the use of portable electronic devices to access Internet during a flight.

The proposed rules state the electronic devices can only be used when an aircraft is at a height of 3,000 feet or above.

Mobile phones, tablets and laptops can only be used in flight mode, while all



Cabin crew will keep watch to ensure compliance with norms on the use of devices.

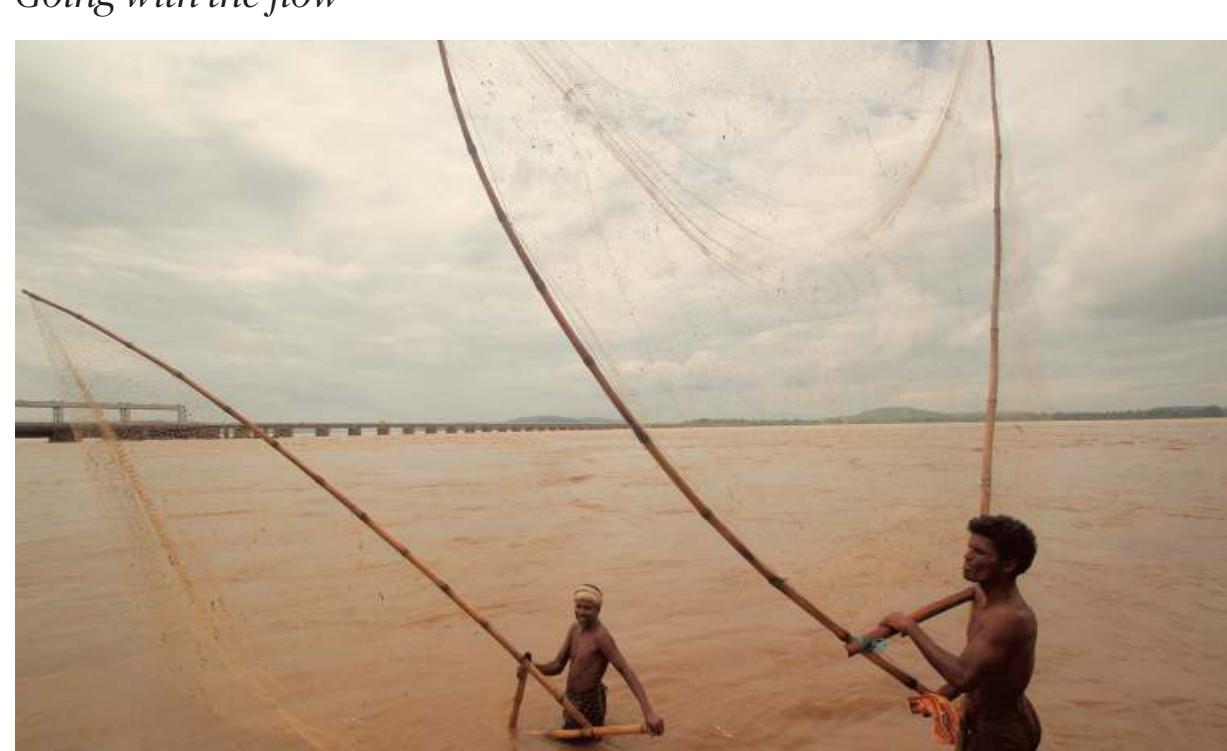
other gadgets such as portable voice recorders, electronic entertainment devices and electric shavers need to be stowed away. "Cabin crew, besides their other duties, during the flight shall

keep a watch on the passengers to ensure compliance of the above requirements. Any violation of these requirements during the flight should be brought to the notice of the Commander by the cabin crew and recorded in the flight report book for subsequent action by the operator against the defaulting person," according to the draft rules made public on Wednesday.

The DGCA has invited comments for a period of 30 days from all stakeholders before the proposal is finalised.

A senior DGCA official said that this was the first time the government has proposed detailed protocols for handling of portable electronic devices in-flight.

Going with the flow



For a good catch: Villagers casting fishing nets into the flood waters of the Mahanadi after barrage gates were opened at Mundali on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar on Thursday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

Energy think tank analyses finances, land prices

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The per unit cost of solar power in India, considered among the cheapest in the world, is unlikely to cost less than what it is in Gulf countries, according to an analysis by an energy think tank. This is primarily due to the lower cost of finance in the region along

with factors such as cheaper land prices.

Recent record-low tariffs in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the result of the lower cost of U.S. dollar-denominated, long-dated financing, with major tax concessions and other factors driving prices down in the region, according to the report's authors Vibhuti Garg, Energy Economist at IEEFA; Jyoti Gulia, JMK Research Founder; and Shilpi Jain, JMK Research Director.

The Gulf region has achieved tariffs in the range of U.S. cent 1.35-1.80/kWh, and (outside the Gulf region) Portugal was able to offer a record-low tariff discovery

cost of U.S. cent 1.32/kWh at a recent bid at a 700MW solar energy auction on August 24, 2020. (1 cent = ₹0.7 approx.)

Mathematical model

India's tariffs, some of the lowest in the world, are about twice that in the Gulf region or around U.S. cent 3.14-3.25/kWh, the report noted.

To arrive at their figures, the authors used mathematical modelling and compared two kinds of projects in India

that were typical of solar power installations in India and one project in Abu Dhabi as well as expert feedback from industry experts.

"We note the ongoing technological development of solar combined with ever larger factories driving economies of scale means solar tariffs will continue to see 5-10% annual declines over the coming decade, driving ever-stronger competitiveness against incumbent fossil fuel alternatives," the authors of the report underline.

India and other coun-

tries will struggle to secure the same low tariffs discovered in the Gulf auctions," the authors said in a statement.

"It would be extremely difficult for the Indian market to replicate the combination of factors leading to low solar tariffs in the Gulf region.

The Gulf region has achieved tariffs in the range of U.S. cent 1.35-1.80/kWh, and (outside the Gulf region) Portugal was able to offer a record-low tariff discovery

SC to study if UHBL assets can be used to settle debts

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to examine whether attached assets of fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya's United Breweries (Holding) Ltd. can be used to settle the debts owed to banks, including the State Bank of India.

A Bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and Vineet Saran was informed by senior advocate C.S. Vaidyanathan, ap-

pearing for the company, that firm's assets are much more than its liabilities. UHBL has challenged the March 6 order of the Karnataka High Court, which upheld the decision of a single judge to wind up the company. The discussion was on whether the company's properties attached by the Enforcement Directorate under the PMLA can be considered to pay off the debts.

The story featured Domari village, which has been adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Lok Sabha constituency. The court, however, said since the allegations against the journalists disclose commission of cognizable offence, their prayer to get the FIR against them quashed cannot be accepted.

A Division Bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Anil Kumar said the petitioners shall not be arrested in the case till submission of the police report under Section 173 (2) of the CrPC, provided they co-operate in the investigation.

The court took into consideration the submission made by the petitioners that they possessed photographs and audio recordings of the interview with the Dalit woman and that the publication was a true representation of what was stated in the interview.

The story was published in "public interest" to highlight the condition of certain persons, the counsel for the journalists added.

There is more to the payasam than milk, jaggery and sugar. This Onam, relish it with a twist



HARIKUMAR JS

For those nurturing a sweet tooth, tradition is taking a fruity turn this Onam. Of course, your all-season payasam favourites such as ada, semiya (vermicelli), paal (milk), ari (rice) and gothamb (wheat) varieties still hold pride of place on the sadhya line-up in many households, but make way for some trendy saccharine delights with a fruity twist. The classic long-established ingredients aside, an assortment of fruits are in vogue to lend novel notes to payasams.

Govind P, who runs Instagram page Kerala Foodie, with 2,32,000 followers, says payasam can be prepared from most things available in our backyard. "One variety that has been trending is karikku (tender coconut) payasam, which can be prepared with both jaggery-coconut milk and milk. Karikku paal payasam is more commonly seen in the Malabar region," he says. Govind adds that this trend is an extension of the tender coconut juices and shakes that have become popular over the last few years. A more surprising backyard trend is the treacly papaya pradhaman, he points out.

With the pandemic keeping many indoors, there's been ample time for home cooks to experiment as well. Food blogger at Thank God I'm Fat, Anjana Gopakumar is all set for a special carrot payasam this Thiruvonam. "Usually, my grandma takes charge. But she is stuck in Delhi and, hence, I will be playing a larger role in the kitchen. We typically make semiya or ada pradhaman," says Anjana. She was toying with the idea of making gajar (carrot) ka halwa recently, "then I wondered why not go for carrot payasam. The ingredients – chiefly milk, ghee and sugar – for both are similar anyway."

City-based home chef Swapna Rakesh does not let the pandemic curb her enthusiasm in making available her payasam specialities. Like in the past few years, on offer this time as well are her raw papaya-pineapple payasam and dates-cheriya ulli (shallot) payasam. "Another variety I'm bringing is caramel egg payasam, which in effect tastes like



Festive feast
(Clockwise from far left) Mango payasam; a traditional preparation on a festive scale, poppy payasam
■ S RAMESH KURUP AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Land a fruit punch on payasam

caramel custard pudding," she says.

Onam is a time when the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) organises its popular annual Payasam Mela (fest), bringing a mix of both traditional and not-so-regular varieties of payasam. It is no different this year and the pick of the bunch is the navarasa payasam, essentially condensing nine rasas (flavours) into one. It incorporates a mix of fresh and dry fruits. "Apart from four grains, our navarasa payasam has jackfruit, two varieties of banana, dates, pineapple and pomegranate as garnish," says KP Ramesh, Operations Manager, KTDC.

Catering to payasam lovers' hunt for

SWEET AND SOUR
In the UK and some of the Commonwealth countries, the word pudding can be used to describe both sweet and savoury dishes.



novel varieties of the dessert is Villa Maya with dates pradhaman and unniyappam pradhaman.

"Over the years, people have been looking at innovative varieties, which why we came up with some new ones this year," says Sashi Jacob of the Food & Beverages team of The Muthoot Skychef and Villa Maya, adding that new variants, though fun, will not really "kill the culture of traditional payasams".

Date pradhaman's key ingredients includes ghee and a proportionate mixture of common jaggery and palm jaggery "to lend a slight caramelised

flavour but at the same time not make it overly sweet", adds Sashi.

Spice of life

Suresh Pillai, culinary director of Raviz groups of hotels, observes that traditionally, Malayalis' love for the sweet treat can be categorised into two geographical groups. "In the southern parts of the State, roughly till Alappuzha, ada pradhaman (made with ada rice and palm jaggery) rules the roost, while upwards it is paalada (a creamy milk and ada-based payasam). However, there may be variations in the preparation method," he says.

The chef adds that when he had worked in London at the Michelin-starred restaurants Gymkhana, Trishna and Veerawamy, he made a variety of unusual payasams. "One is green chilli payasam, where the chillies are blanched and de-seeded before being made into a puree.

This is prepared in both milk-sugar and jaggery-coconut styles. Then there is garlic payasam, where garlic puree is used," he explains. He has even made a macaroni paal payasam, which he says was a hit on Instagram. Another off-centre experience he recounts is tasting mullapoo (jasmine) payasam during a food festival in Kerala.

During Onam cooking competitions heat up, according to cookery show host Raj Kalesh. "The most exotic payasams I have had are perhaps pavakka (bitter gourd) payasam and cheriyu ulli (shallot) payasam. This was during an Onam festival in Dubai a few years ago," he says. The shallots were mixed with sugar and mashed before jaggery and rice were added, with a bit of coconut milk. "Despite the exotic feel, it is pretty easy to make. The predominant after-taste is that of shallot," he says.

HORS D'OEUVRES

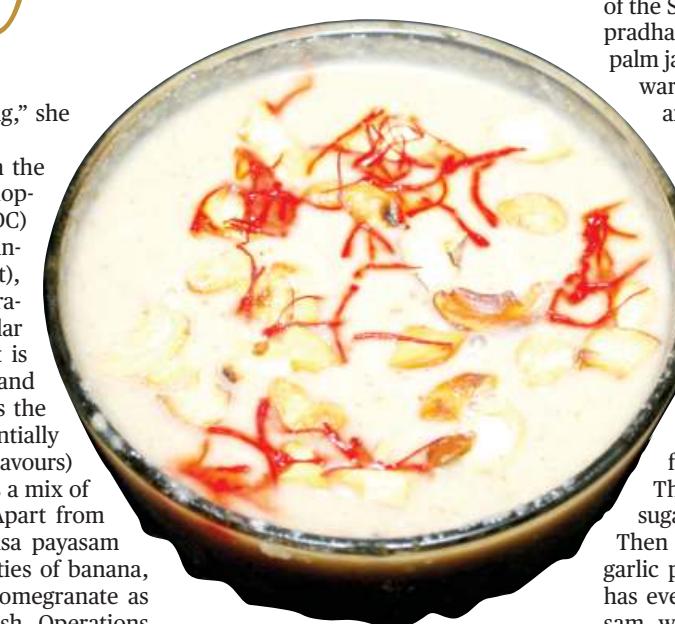
Desi croons

If the choice between a motichoor laddoo and a macaroon has you in a fix, then you will be pleased with this surprising new treat, that is made of both the sweets. It is a moticroon: motichoor-filling inside a macaroon. Hyderabad-based Enchante cafe gave the two different worlds of desserts a surprise twist during the lockdown. The confectioners say their moticroon is made to form a perfect balance of crunchiness and chewiness, with a right blend of Italian and Indian flavours. But they did not just stop at moticroon; there is also the katicroon and jamuncroon. The katicroon is made with kaju katli and jamuncroon comes with the juicy goodness of the gulab jamun.



Bring the party home

Presenting #SOCIALPartyStarter – a curated, at-home party experience that brings the SOCIAL experience home. The package (starting at six people, going all the way up to 50) includes food, drinks and the brand's popular cocktail mixers – for a fun house party with safety measures. You also get a mixologist from the SOCIAL crew with all bar paraphernalia, who will help whip cocktails following safety, hygiene and physical distancing norms. Customers can pick two items each for appetisers, main course, desserts, beverages, premixes and more. One can order alcohol at MRP as well. They have also curated a party playlist. The pack is currently available in Mumbai, and will soon expand to Delhi and other cities. The package starts at ₹9999++ per person. Call 7045797512 for details.



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Date pradhaman's key ingredients includes ghee and a proportionate mixture of common jaggery and palm jaggery "to lend a slight caramelised



MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

Even those who know nothing about the durian, know about its smell. The fruit, an inherent part of many Southeast Asian cuisines, is synonymous with a strong pungency that has notoriously been mistaken for gas leaks and caused evacuation of buildings. So how do you conduct a masterclass about the famous fruit over the Internet, where its signature scent would be missing? For Chef Chung Deming's online masterclass this past weekend, it was barely an issue – he had much more to share with the audience.

"They can be sweet, bitter or bittersweet. Their meat comes in different colours: it can be red, yellow-ish or very white-ish. There are many characteristics you can tell from their colour – something on the orange side tends to be sweeter, something white tends to be more bitter. Over the long and complex cycle in which they are harvested, different flavour profiles are also developed. You get

The dry wine for durian

The Singapore Food Festival has gone virtual this year, reaching out to global tourists in their homes instead of drawing visitors in

stronger flavours the longer the fruit stays after harvest; some varieties can also be slightly alcoholic, and others can have a milky texture." All this weighs into how the fruit can be eaten and – more interestingly – what wine to pair it with. "Dry whites like a Riesling go best. Avoid the reds; anything with tannins will not go well with a durian," says the chef.

Chef Deming's online masterclass, which covered the intriguing fruit's journey from farm

plate "and everything people might not have known while shipping the fruit to their part of the world", was one of dozens of sessions focussing on the food of Singapore over two consecutive weekends. The festival also includes – and will include in the coming weekend – virtual food tours of streetfood hubs and upscale dining destinations, sessions with bartenders and pastry chefs from many of Singapore's Michelin star restaurants like Burnt Ends and

Make your own ada

How to prepare the Onam mainstay of classic *ada pradhaman*, fresh from the kitchen



Pride of palate Ada pradhaman ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

HARIKUMAR JS

jaggery was predominantly used for its purity and minimal salt content," she points out.

Latha observes that ada payasams became more regular when "instant ada" entered the market.

Undoubtedly, it is ada pradhaman's unique jaggery-saturated flavour that wins it many admirers, like Suresh Ambi Swami of the famous Thrissur-based caterers known for their payasams. "Ada pradhaman is a personal favourite of mine as well. Its flavour is quite pleasant, especially due to the way it is prepared today with the addition of spices such as cardamom, which was not the case in old times," he explains.

DO IT YOURSELF

Anoop explains the process thus: Soak raw rice (ideally *pachari*, which has not been cooked or *unakkalari*, that is parboiled rice) well and grind to a consistency thinner than dosa batter. Add a bit of ghee. Using your five fingers, scoop and drip the batter in long stripes/lines on tempered plantain leaves. Fold and tightly wrap, preferably with thread. Boil water in a large vessel and drop the plantain wraps in them. After the water cools, unwrap and (the batter would have become more solid) cut to strips of required size. Dip the thin ada strips in water in room temperature for a wash. Strain the ada and roast with a bit of ghee and jaggery.

Masters at work (Left) A session by Colin Chia and Charmaine Thio of Nutmeg & Clove, ranked #32 in Asia's 50 Best Bars 2020; (below) Durian with yellow meat ■ GETTY IMAGES/STOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



the speakeasy bar Nutmeg & Clove, and a deep look at Singapore's many, long-lasting culinary influences, including Indian expatriate food cultures and the rich natural ingredients of the Straits.

Says Lim Si Ting, area director of Singapore Tourism Board India,

"This remains the only food festival in Singapore that focusses on local cuisine. Being on

ground was an important part of the festival, with visitors trying out the different cuisines and interacting with experts. But the virtual edition has given us the opportunity to reach out to people we would otherwise not

have access to; like working adults around the world who do not travel overseas very often."

Imagine, for instance, virtually following a guide into Tan Hock Seng, an 89-year-old iconic bakery

taurants harking back to the 1960s. There are sessions that focus on the Indian spice route; on bite-sized, brightly coloured desserts called kuehs; comfort foods of the Peranakan ethnic group ...

The scope for culinary discoveries is not just restricted to curious minds abroad. "We tend to focus on international tourists, to showcase Singapore as a

culinary destination. Now we are focussing on local visitors, too. Internal travel will pick up before international, and there is a lot for Singaporeans to explore about their own land and food," adds Lim Si Ting.

There is no denying that the festival is a key push for tourism, even in a year when actual, physical visits are difficult. "It is a part of our SingaporeDiscover campaign, under which we have categorised our visitors based on their interests. This festival, of course, caters to the foodie category," says Lim Si Ting, adding, "The schedule is much more packed this year than before. We are excited."

The final sessions are spread over August 28, 29 and 30. For details, visit singaporefoodfestival.sg

Book Masala, Bengaluru

When author Milan Vohra moved to Bengaluru in the late '90s, she, in the pursuit of like-minded people, joined one book club after another. She kept switching because "The person who helmed the club would make all the decisions. I wanted to be with a club in which everyone had a say." So, she created one in 2012 with her friends. They had brainstormed the idea over a meal at a cafe – hence the 'Masala' in the name. The club meets once every month to discuss a book its members – aged from the 20s to 50s – have chosen via a poll.

In the last eight years, several long-time members of the club had to move out of Bengaluru. "The pandemic forced us to go online. All those who moved to other cities also could join us now," says Milan. "We are thinking of having them on video call even after we start meeting in person again."

How to join: Message the club's founder, Milan Vohra, on Facebook.



Kochi Reading Group, Kochi

For book clubs, meeting online is not an entirely unfavourable option. It cuts down travel time and effort. In some cases, members who have moved to other cities can join the meetups too. Joe Cleetus of Kochi Reading Group, however, says, "No. We'd gladly make the extra effort to get out of our houses and congregate in a physical space, for, besides reading, there are friendships to nurture, and that requires the warmth of human contact." The group, which now has 14 members, was formed in 2006. The members meet once a month, usually for about two hours on Friday evenings at the Cochin Yacht Club.

"We read a novel or poems. Each one reads a passage from the novel and we discuss; or a poem or two by a poet of their choice," says Joe. He misses celebrating birthdays of the group members, embracing each other and "the pandemonium of occasional simultaneous conversations in smaller groups". But Joe says that the members look forward to the online meetings they have now as it gives them the feeling of togetherness.

How to join: On invitation only. For more details, visit their blog kochiread.blogspot.com



Pages on a screen

How book clubs across India have transitioned online during the pandemic

PRAVEEN SUDEVAN

Despite the many portrayals of bibliophiles as loners, reading can be social endeavour. Abigail Williams, in her book *The Social Life of Books*, writes about the prevalence of communal reading in 18th Century England. Reading together was necessary then, for two reasons: In the absence of modern printing technologies, not everyone owned a book; and it was the only way people with poor sight could consume a book as ophthalmology was underdeveloped and bulbs didn't exist. In the following centuries, technologies progressed, eyesight got better, books were aplenty, reading became more solitary. Yet the inherent need to share stories never changed. Book discussions are now more interpersonal and unorganised, but there have been manifestations of the 18th Century reading groups in the form of book clubs. A book club can connect a doctor, an entrepreneur, a homemaker and a college student through their shared love for reading. The pandemic, however, halted most clubs' regular get-togethers. Here's how they have kept the conversations going online.

Last Sunday, the members of Books N Conversations created art with crayons and watercolours, listening to music and instructions from a psychologist. With their regular monthly meetups halted, the two-year-old, all-women book club decided to come together online for an art therapy session. "It was an enriching experience," says Sammy Sahni, who founded the club with Uzma Hyder. "The theme of the session was emotional boundaries. So, we drew and discussed people in our lives and the emotional boundaries we have for each of them."

The club longs for its pre-pandemic routine of exploring the cafes of Hyderabad and discussing books in person. The club members vote to pick the 'book of the month'. The genre changes every month. But since the pandemic, Sammy says, the club has been discussing books related to personal growth. "It's heartening to see people turning up for meetings even during this time."

How to join: Women can message the Instagram page, BooksNConversations.

■ ILLUSTRATION:
M ARIVARASU

Books N Conversations, Hyderabad



Book Cellar, Chennai

Shvetha Jaishankar, a former beauty queen and author, left Chennai as a 17-year-old who had just started modelling. Upon moving back after a decade in 2010, she wanted to make new friends. The following year, she started Book Cellar with two of her friends. The club slowly grew. But the members never exceeded 15 as she wanted the group to be close-knit.

"We meet once every month at a cafe or one of our houses and discuss everything under the sun, along with the book," says Shvetha. "Considering that our club was built on the idea of establishing social connections, it's interesting and different to meet online now."

How to join: On invitation only



These blue polypropylene objects typifying the pandemic have made their way into a creative project by graphic designer Philip K Joseph

Masking for a friend

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

A bulging belly. A hammock. An ocean wave. Believe it or not, those everyday surgical masks can be artistically moulded into these fun shapes, as shown by Dubai-based graphic designer Philip K Joseph in his Mask Series on Instagram.

An art director at Huawei with

almost 18 years of experience with graphic design, Philip was always on the lookout for something new and exciting to do, especially with the stress and boredom imbibed by the global lockdowns.

He explains that he had long been interested in caricatures, cartoons and doodles as creative outlets working in his field. He started

with object art, but eventually, the appeal fizzled out.

Fascinated with the mask as an object during lockdowns, he wanted to do something creative with it; but not object art. "The mask is so symbolic of the times we are in," he explains, "and everybody can connect with it and its current meaning, wherever they are."



Symbolic of our times Philip (above) decided to go with the blue polypropylene surgical mask for its universal look and its malleability

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Philip decided to go with the blue polypropylene surgical mask for its universal look and its malleability, thanks to the pleats. "I took the art to a new level by using Photoshop. Usually, with object art, you don't change the object, you work around it. But with these works, I took the creative license to use graphic design to draw underneath it, and also to reshape the mask itself."

However, the surrounding artwork is intentionally minimal to train focus on the mask itself, as that is the connector for viewers, for Philip and the series. The series kicked off on January 31 and, so far, there have been 14 artworks.

Keep it simple

The artist is quick to point out that object manipulation has to be realistic and not so morphed. "The balance has to be just right," he elaborates,

and it has to be seamless while connecting to a person with a message. For example, the bulging belly work reminds us of the constant snacking we've been doing during the lockdown.

The shopping bag post is all about the grocery stock ups we have to do. It should look natural and still look like a mask. It's instinctive, at this point for me, to know when it becomes too much."

Philip feels no pressure to make a task of Mask Series. "I put out posts every two weeks, only when I feel totally happy with it. My wife, who is a calligrapher, offers her honest feedback and many less-than-perfect designs end up not making it to the final series. There are dozens of unseen works," he laughs.

Check out Philip K Joseph's Mask Series at [@philkjoe](https://www.instagram.com/philkjoe/) on Instagram.

POOCH CAFE



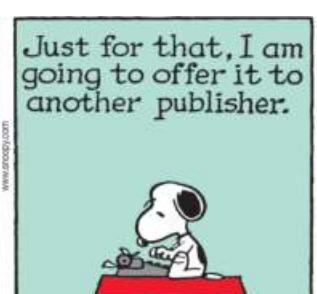
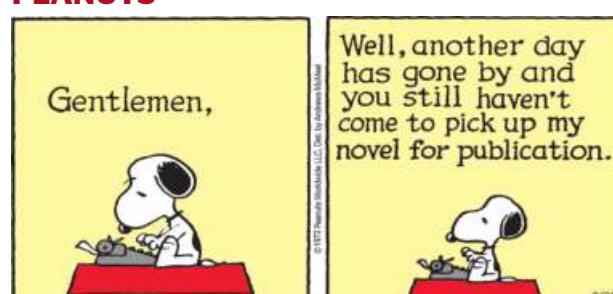
HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



TIGER



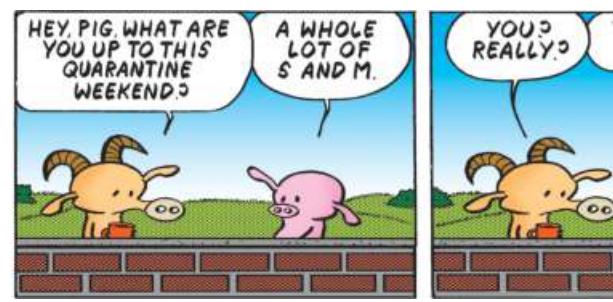
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



ELSEWHERE



Ed Davey is U.K.'s Liberal Democrat party leader

LONDON
Britain's Liberal Democrats announced former Cabinet Minister Ed Davey as the party's new leader on Thursday, in hopes that he could turn its fortunes around after a series of poor election results. Mr. Davey, the party's acting leader, said in a brief speech that he wanted to rebuild the party "to national relevance". The Liberal Democrats won just 11 seats in Parliament in last year's election. "We have to wake up and smell the coffee," he said. AP

TikTok chief Kevin Mayer quits company

LOS ANGELES
TikTok CEO Kevin Mayer said on Wednesday he has quit the company as tensions soar between Washington and Beijing over the Chinese-owned video platform. Mr. Mayer's resignation comes days after TikTok filed a suit challenging a crackdown by the U.S. government over claims that the app can be used to spy on Americans. TikTok argued that the order was a misuse of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. AFP

China fires missiles into South China Sea

They were launched a day after the U.S. flew spy-planes through areas where drills were being held

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China on Wednesday fired at least two missiles into the South China Sea in what Chinese media described as a warning to the U.S., amid escalating tensions between the countries over Chinese maritime claims and the military exercises being conducted in disputed waters by China.

The missiles were fired into waters between Hainan province and the Paracel Islands in an area that China had previously notified would be off-limits because of planned drills, also expected to include missile tests.

Chinese media reported the missiles were fired a day after the U.S. flew spy-planes through at least two areas where drills were being held.

Aircraft carrier-killer

The Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* said a DF-26B missile was launched from the northwestern Qinghai province, while the DF-21, an anti-ship ballistic missile dubbed an "aircraft carrier-killer", was launched from the eastern coastal Zhejiang province.

China has been conducting military exercises simul-



Warning shots: Chinese frigate Yuncheng launching an anti-ship missile during a military exercise in the waters near Hainan Island and Paracel Islands, in this file photo. AP

taneously in four seas – the Bohai Sea in the north, the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and the South China Sea. Beijing said an American Lockheed U-2 aircraft had flown through what it had notified as a northern no-fly zone as part of a live-fire drill on Tuesday, while a Boeing RC-135S reconnaissance aircraft had flown over the South China Sea drills the following day.

The aircraft "approached near an ongoing PLA [People's Liberation Army] exerc-

cise in waters off Hainan Island's southeast coast", said the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative (SCSPD), a Chinese think-tank.

"It is possible that the U.S. believes the PLA would launch anti-ship ballistic missiles like the DF-21D or the DF-26 in the drills, so it sent the RC-135S to gather intelligence, a Chinese military expert who wasn't named told the Communist Party-run *Global Times*.

China's Foreign Ministry

spokesperson Zhao Lijian hit out at the "incursion" by American aircraft as "a blatant, provocative act that could have easily caused misunderstanding and misjudgment, and even triggered an air and maritime accident".

Sanctions slammed

He also slammed U.S. moves announced on Wednesday to sanction 24 Chinese companies, which the Department of Commerce said had been added to the entity list "for

their role in helping the Chinese military construct and militarise the internationally condemned artificial islands in the South China Sea."

The companies included the China Communications Construction Company and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation (CETC), both prominent State-run companies that are involved in many overseas projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

As the sentence was read out, there was jubilation outside the courtroom, with crowds cheering and singing the national anthem – "God Defend New Zealand".

Judge Cameron Mander said Tarrant's "warped" ideology and "base hatred" led the Australian white supremacist to murder defenceless men, women and children last year in New Zealand's worst terror attack.

"The participation of Chinese companies and individuals in domestic construction activities is legitimate, lawful and beyond reproach. It is unjustified for the U.S. to impose sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals for their involvement in relevant construction activities in their own country. The move by the U.S. side grossly interferes in China's internal affairs and violates international law and basic norms governing international relations. It is hegemonic logic and power politics that are at play here."



Brenton Tarrant

Gamal Fouda, the imam of Al Noor mosque – one of those targeted by Tarrant – said the sentence was what the Muslim community had hoped for. "But no punishment is going to bring our loved ones back and our sadness will continue for the rest of our lives," he said.

PM welcomes sentence

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who was praised for her decisive response to the shootings, also welcomed the sentence. "The trauma of March 15 is not easily healed but today I hope is the last where we have any cause to hear or utter the name of the terrorist behind it," she said. "His deserves to be a lifetime of complete and utter silence."

As New Zealand reeled from the shootings, Ms. Ardern immediately moved to tighten gun laws and pressure social media giants to curb online extremism. Ms. Ardern's Australian counterpart Scott Morrison echoed the sentiment, condemning Tarrant's "cowardly and horrific" crimes.

Tarrant sparked global revulsion when he rampaged through two Christchurch mosques for 20 minutes during Friday prayers. He had admitted 51 charges of murder, 40 of attempted murder and one of terrorism over the attacks.

Turkey says it will hold military drills in east Mediterranean

REUTERS
ISTANBUL/ATHENS

Turkey said on Thursday it will hold firing exercises in the eastern Mediterranean on September 1-2, the latest in a series of military drills which have fuelled tensions with Greece.

The announcement came hours before Parliament in Greece is expected to ratify an agreement with Egypt, which defines maritime

boundaries between the two countries, a step which Turkey considers an affront.

Greece and Turkey, both members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, have been locked in a dispute over control of eastern Mediterranean waters, which escalated after Ankara sent a seismic survey vessel to the disputed region this month in a move which Athens called illegal.

They are at odds over the rights to potential hydrocarbon resources, based on conflicting claims over the extent of their continental shelves. The Turkish navy issued the latest advisory, known as a Navtex, on Thursday saying it will hold the shooting exercises in the eastern Mediterranean off the coast of Iskenderun, northeast of Cyprus. It also extended the seismic work of

its Oruc Reis survey vessel, southwest of Cyprus, until September 1. As the dispute widened, France said on Wednesday it was joining military exercises with Italy, Greece and Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said the deployment of French military aircraft in Cyprus violated treaties regarding the control of the island after

independence from Britain in 1960.

Mr. Aksoy said that France's stance was dangerously encouraging Greece and Cyprus to further escalate tensions in the region.

Cyprus was divided in 1974 following a Turkish invasion triggered by a Greek-inspired coup. Turkey recognises the Turkish-populated north of Cyprus as a state, which is not recognised by

other countries.

Parliament in Greece is expected to ratify an accord defining its sea boundaries with Egypt, having ratified a similar deal with Italy. Greece now plans to extend its territorial waters in the Ionian Sea to 12 nautical miles from its coast, from six nautical miles. Turkey has warned that a similar move by Athens in waters east of Greece would be a cause for war.

Russia opens preliminary probe into Navalny's illness

'Unfounded charges are unacceptable'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW

Russian police on Thursday announced a preliminary probe into the circumstances of the sudden illness of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who fell into a coma last week following a suspected poisoning and amid growing pressure from Western officials to investigate.

According to a statement released on Thursday by a Siberian branch of Russia's Interior Ministry, investigators have been working on "establishing all the circumstances of the incident," conducting forensic studies and collecting items "that may have probative value."

Mr. Navalny, an opposition politician and corruption investigator who is one of President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critics, fell ill on a flight back to Moscow from Siberia last Thursday and was taken to a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk after the plane made an emergency landing.

Over the weekend, he was transferred to the Charité hospital in Berlin, where doctors found indications of "cholinesterase inhibitors" in his system. But the hospital in the German capital hasn't yet identified a specific substance.

Found in some drugs, pesticides and chemical nerve agents, cholinesterase inhibitors act by blocking the breakdown of a key chemical in the body, acetylcholine, which transmits signals between nerve cells.

'No criminal probe'
Mr. Navalny's team submitted a request to Russia's Investigative Committee, demanding authorities launch a criminal probe on charges of an attempt on the life of a public figure, last week, but officials appeared reluctant to start an investigation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday

Alexei Navalny
he saw no grounds for a criminal case until the cause of the politician's condition was fully established.

The Interior Ministry's statement on Thursday didn't clarify when the preliminary probe – an inquiry to determine whether a criminal investigation should be launched – had started.

Mr. Navalny's ally Ivan Zhdanov said that the probe should have been launched August 20, right after the politician's team submitted a request. "Open a criminal case," Mr. Zhdanov said in a tweet on Thursday.

International pressure

The announcement about the inquiry comes after multiple Western and European officials – including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo – called upon Russia to start a full and transparent investigation into Navalny's condition.

On Wednesday night, the politician's illness was discussed in a phone conversation between Putin and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte.

According to the Kremlin's readout of the call, Mr. Putin pointed out that "premature and unfounded accusations" were unacceptable and underscored Russia's "interest in a thorough and objective investigation of all the circumstances of the incident."

Pence warns against Biden win

The hard truth is, you won't be safe in Joe Biden's America, he tells supporters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BALTIMORE

U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence took center stage at the Republican convention on Wednesday to warn voters they "won't be safe in Joe Biden's America" – casting President Donald Trump as their protector against the "radical" left.

Speakers at the convention spoke of dark forces intent on ending the American dream, and said losing to their Democratic rivals is not an option.

"Law and order is on the ballot," Mr. Pence stressed on the third night of a convention overshadowed by violent unrest in Wisconsin and the approach of Hurricane Laura to the southern U.S. coast.

He addressed the event from Fort McHenry in Baltimore, the site of an 1814 British bombardment that inspired the poem later turned into the U.S. national an-



Sharp attacks: Donald Trump and Mike Pence, right, at the Republican National Convention in Baltimore. AP

them, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

With that backdrop, Mr. Pence made the patriotic case for Mr. Trump getting a second term instead of allowing the nation to be "fundamentally transformed" by a Biden administration he warned would take an uncharted path towards socialism and mob rule. "The hard truth is, you won't be safe in Joe Biden's America," said the 61-year-old Republican.

Mr. Pence's address came amid a new flare-up of racial tensions in the U.S., with protests spreading over the latest police shooting of an African-American man, Jacob Blake, in Kenosha.

'Violence must stop'
Mr. Trump announced he is sending in additional federal forces to quell unrest in the Midwestern city, where two people were shot dead during anti-police protests Tues-

day. A 17-year-old has been arrested on murder charges.

Addressing the latest unrest, Mr. Pence struck a tough tone. "Let me be clear. The violence must stop whether in Minneapolis, Portland or Kenosha," he said. "We will have law and order on the streets of this country for every American."

Touting Mr. Trump's strong economic record before the COVID-19 epidemic struck and his ongoing efforts to revive it – Mr. Pence urged voters to ask themselves "who do you trust to rebuild this economy?"

A former Governor of Indiana, the evangelical Christian Pence has taken on the role of calm counterweight to Mr. Trump's constant drama.

Mr. Pence seeks to reassure old-school Republicans, while also praising the new generation of Trump loyalists – a balancing act.

Teen held after 2 killed during unrest in Kenosha

Additional troops deployed to U.S. city

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KENOSHA

of 1,00,000 midway between Milwaukee and Chicago. The Governor's office said he is working with other States to bring in additional National Guard members and law officers. Authorities also announced a 7 p.m. curfew, though protesters ignored it again on Wednesday.

As of early Thursday, the protests were mostly peaceful, in contrast to the violent clashes that marked earlier nights of protests.

According to witness accounts and video footage, police apparently let the gunman leave the scene with a rifle over his shoulder and his hands in the air as members of the crowd were yelling for him to be arrested because he had shot people. Sheriff David Beth said it was a chaotic, high-stress scene – conditions he said can cause "tunnel vision" among law officers.

Putin vows military aid for Lukashenko

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed military support for embattled Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday, while urging a peaceful resolution to unrest and demonstrations that erupted after a disputed election.

European Union Ambassadors in Minsk on Thursday denounced a crack-down on the opposition.

Mr. Putin on Thursday promised military backing for Belarus and said Russia had set up a reserve group of law enforcement officers to deploy if the post-vote situation deteriorated. "It won't be used unless the situation starts to get out of control," Mr. Putin said.

American, Russian vehicles collide in Syria

Some U.S. soldiers were injured in the skirmish, videos of which have emerged on Twitter

ERIC SCHMITT
WASHINGTON

Friction point: A file photo of a convoy of U.S. forces near Yalani, on the outskirts of the Syrian city of Manbij. AP

A small number of U.S. troops were injured this week during a skirmish with Russian forces in northeastern Syria, American officials said on Wednesday, underscoring the risk of simmering tensions between the two rival powers in a hotly contested part of the country.

Two U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss operational details, said the injuries were a result of a collision between Russian and American vehicles, and not any exchange of fire. The officials said four troops were showing mild concussion-like symptoms and were receiving medical attention at their base in Syria.

before a Turkish cross-border offensive last fall.

Russian military personnel have increasingly had run-ins with U.S. troops on highways in the region, breaking agreements between the two countries to steer clear of each other, American officials say.

The clash with the Russians comes just a week after a U.S.-led convoy returned fire after it came under attack near a checkpoint manned by forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who are backed by Russia.

A day later, on August 18, three small Katyusha rockets landed near the American military's Conoco base in northeastern Syria. The rockets, which American officials said were fired from areas

controlled by the Syrian government, did not cause any casualties or damage.

Constant challenges

American officials say these actions by Russian personnel and their Syrian allies are devised to present a constant set of challenges, probes and encroachments, and apparently designed to slowly create new facts on the ground and make the U.S. military presence there more tenuous.

Last October, President Donald Trump abruptly ordered a complete withdrawal of the 1,000 American troops helping Syrian Kurdish forces combat pockets of Islamic State fighters, opening the way to a bloody Turkish cross-border offensive.

A NDE

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	% CHANGE
Sensex	39,113	0.10
US Dollar	73.82	0.65
Gold	52,508	1.05
Brent oil	44.88	-2.18

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	% CHANGE
Adani Ports	350.55	-3.70
Asian Paints	1982.50	11.10
Axis Bank	473.05	9.70
Bajaj Auto	3043.00	-39.20
Bajaj Finserv	6530.75	-33.65
Bajaj Finance	3632.50	-13.05
Bharti Airtel	511.15	-3.35
BPCL	412.95	2.85
Britannia Ind	3816.60	-12.65
Cipla	756.20	8.20
Coal India	140.55	-1.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4437.00	2.25
Eicher Motors	2236.35	-12.50
GAIL (India)	99.20	-0.65
Grasim Ind	685.05	17.85
HCL Tech	710.15	-2.65
HDFC	1864.10	48.10
HDFC Bank	1112.10	-6.35
HDFC Life	596.05	4.00
Hero MotoCorp	3141.75	-19.00
Hindalco	194.90	1.40
Hind Unilever	2171.25	-11.55
ICICI Bank	392.20	2.85
IndusInd Bank	605.85	38.20
Bharti Infralet	199.90	-0.60
Infosys	947.05	-3.75
Indian Oil Corp	87.20	-0.70
ITC	194.25	-0.70
JSW Steel	289.30	3.10
Kotak Bank	1420.00	-16.70
L&T	975.60	6.65
M&B	636.75	23.40
Maruti Suzuki	7098.00	89.35
Nestle India Ltd.	16113.70	-76.35
NTPC	102.60	-0.20
ONGC	80.15	-1.25
PowerGrid Corp	185.20	-0.15
Reliance Ind	2110.60	-26.70
State Bank	215.65	5.80
Shree Cement	21528.00	-182.65
Sun Pharma	532.25	7.10
Tata Motors	144.25	6.35
Tata Steel	426.85	1.85
TCS	2248.40	-5.10
Tech Mahindra	735.60	2.75
Titan	1137.65	3.45
UltraTech Cement	4047.15	-32.50
UPL	496.75	3.20
Wipro	272.35	0.30
Wipro Entertainment	209.55	0.95

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.61	73.93
Euro	87.08	87.49
British Pound	97.25	97.68
Japanese Yen (100)	69.43	69.73
Chinese Yuan	10.69	10.74
Swiss Franc	81.01	81.40
Singapore Dollar	53.89	54.14
Canadian Dollar	55.94	56.21
Malaysian Ringgit	17.62	17.72
Australian Dollar	53.35	53.59

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



BBB to hold interviews for SBI chairman's post

NEW DELHI
The Banks Board Bureau (BBB) is scheduled to hold interviews for the post of chairman of the State Bank of India on Friday, sources said. There are seven items on the agenda for the meeting of BBB, including the upcoming "vacancy" of the chairman post at SBI, as per the sources. The meeting will be held via video conferencing. PTI

Luxury carmaker Audi unveils RS Q8 at ₹2.07 cr.
NEW DELHI
German luxury car maker Audi on Thursday introduced the all-new Audi RS Q8 in India at a price tag of ₹2.07 crore. "It's an all-in-one model that is at home in the rough as it is on the race track. Its massive twin-turbo V8 with 600hp and 800 Nm of torque propels the car to 100kph from standstill in under four seconds," Babbir Singh Dhillon, head, Audi India, said.

Honda unveils bike in 180-200 cc segment
NEW DELHI
Honda Motorcycles and Scooter India (HMSI) on Thursday announced entry into the 180 cc-200 cc motorcycle segment with the unveiling of Hornet 2.0, priced at ₹1.26 lakh (ex-showroom Gurgaon). "It is the beginning of Honda's new era of portfolio expansion catering to a wide range of customers in India," the company's MD, president and CEO Atsushi Ogata said.

DXC Technology hires 500 women in one day
BENGALURU
DXC Technology has hired approximately 5,000 graduates from various campuses this year and 50% of them were women. The company has also onboarded 500 women freshers in a single day in India. "Bringing on board 500 skilled women colleagues in a single day reinforces our belief in the value of diversity," said Nachiket Sukhtankar, MD, India, DXC.

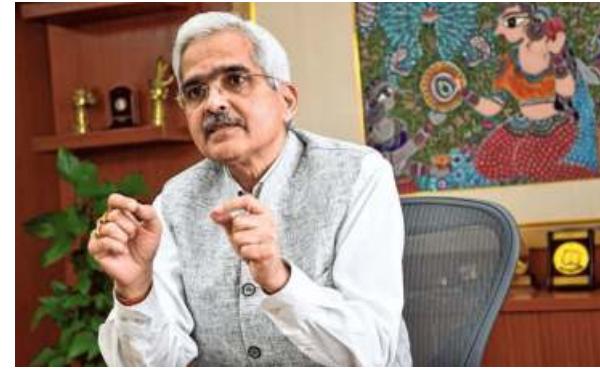
Haven't exhausted policy options: Das

Governor says RBI has instruments to aid pandemic-hit economy, urges banks to shed risk aversion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Notwithstanding the rate cuts made since February, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) still has the headroom to take more policy decisions to deal with the adverse impact of COVID-19, its chief



Strong defence: It is not correct to say that RBI's rate cuts have not worked, Mr. Das asserted. ■ PRASHANT NAKWE

"We have not exhausted our policy options with respect to rates cut or repo rate or any other aspect of the central bank," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said at the *Business Standard* BFSI online summit on Thursday. "We have not exhausted our instruments or ammunition," he added.

"It is not correct to say that RBI's rate cuts have not worked," Mr. Das asserted.

He said the RBI had been monitoring the situation and was "very, very careful and

watchful of the emerging developments in the domestic economy, the global economy and in the financial sector and money market".

The RBI would take proactive decisions to deal with emerging situations and challenges, he said, adding "so it's never a dull moment

at the central bank and more so in times like this". Stating that the Indian economy had already been "fragile" before the pandemic, he said certain areas though were far stronger as compared to the situation during the global financial crisis.

The RBI Governor said

Commenting on the RBI's resolution plan, he said while the moratorium on loans was a temporary solution in the context of the lockdown, the resolution framework was expected to give durable relief to borrowers facing COVID-19-related stress.

Mr. Das added that while recent measures taken by the RBI would not be done

away with immediately, post the containment of COVID-19, a very careful trajectory would be followed for orderly unwinding of the various counter-cyclical measures.

"The financial sector should return to normal functioning without relying on the regulatory relaxations and other measures as the new norm," he cautioned.

Highlighting that there would be newer risks, he said banks remaining overly risk-averse may seem to be a measure of self-immunisation, but would be self-defeating as it would affect the bottom lines adversely.

He also flagged banks' inability to manage operational risks, particularly controlling the incidence of frauds, both cyber-related and otherwise as an area of concern.

sider putting in place a mechanism for monitoring the cases which may require initiation of individual insolvency process before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) against personal guarantors to corporate debtors.

"Banks may also consider setting up IT system to collate data regarding personal guarantors to corporate debtors in all such cases for the requisite follow up and consequential action," it said.

The rule governing initiation of insolvency process against the personal guarantor to corporate borrowers came into effect from December. It empowers creditors to file insolvency applications against personal guarantors under the IBC.

Govt. moots action against personal guarantors

PSBs asked to mull insolvency move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The finance ministry has asked public sector banks (PSBs) to monitor cases where insolvency proceedings could be initiated against individuals who are guarantors of corporate debtors that have defaulted on loans.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) provides for a time-bound and market-linked resolution of stressed assets. The Code also provides for initiation of insolvency proceedings against personal guarantors of corporate debtors, even though the provision has not been used much by lenders to recover dues.

In an advisory, the Department of Financial Services has asked PSBs to con-

Fed adopts average inflation target, elevates focus on jobs

To use 'full range of tools' to achieve strong labour market

REUTERS

The Federal Reserve on Thursday rolled out an aggressive new strategy to restore the U.S. to full employment and lift inflation back to healthier levels in a world where weak inflation, low interest rates, and slow growth appear here to stay.

Under the new approach, laid out in a fresh statement on the Fed's longer-run goals and monetary policy strategy approved by all 17 of its policymakers, the U.S. central bank will seek to achieve inflation averaging 2% over time, offsetting below-2% periods with higher inflation "for some time." The new

statement also pledges to make sure employment doesn't fall short of a "broad-based and inclusive goal" of maximum employment, a nod to racial equity and its role in promoting economic growth.

The changes also acknow-

ledge, the Fed said, that "downward risks to employment and inflation have increased," and include a new promise to use the central bank's "full range of tools" to achieve its goals of stable prices and a strong labour market.

"Our revised statement reflects our appreciation for the benefits of a strong labour market, particularly for many in low- and moderate-income communities, and that a robust job market can be sustained without causing an unwelcome increase in inflation," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said in a speech explaining the changes.

A bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rajnish Bhattacharya, while putting on hold the IRP under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), also restrained Mr. Ambani from "transferring, alienating, encumbering or disposing of his assets or legal rights and interests therein till the next date of

HC stays insolvency action against Ambani

Court to hear RCom chief's plea Oct. 6

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday stayed the insolvency resolution process (IRP) proceedings against Reliance Communications (RCom) Chairman Anil Ambani in relation to recovery of ₹1,200 crore of loans given by the State Bank of India to two of his group firms.

A bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rajnish Bhattacharya, while putting on hold the IRP under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), also restrained Mr. Ambani from "transferring, alienating, encumbering or disposing of his assets or legal rights and interests therein till the next date of

hearing" on October 6. RCom and Reliance Infra Limited (RITL) had availed of credit facilities amounting to ₹565 crore and ₹635 crore, respectively, from the State Bank of India (SBI) with Mr. Ambani as the personal guarantor for the corporate loans.

There had been a loss of about 18.23 lakh tonne (LT) of production and 23.94 LT of sales. This resulted in an estimated loss in sales revenue of ₹737 crore and profit before tax of ₹317 crore.

The guidelines issued by the regulator on August 3 were supposed to come into force from September 1.

Proxy advisers advise shareholders on corporate governance issues and assist them with voting recommendations.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India said the timeline was extended "after taking into consideration requests received from registered proxy advisers, and... business and market conditions due to COVID-19 pandemic."

The provisions of circular shall be applicable with effect from January 1, 2021.

Women entrepreneurs saw big revenue drop in lockdown

Centre urged to formulate packages for women owners

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



Women entrepreneurs experienced significant reduction in sales and revenues amid the COVID-19 lockdown, according to a survey report.

The report also said that these entrepreneurs were looking to the government for support.

The Consortium of Indian Associations, a forum representing more than 30 associations in India – including the all-India level women trade bodies such as the Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs, All India Hair and Beauty Association, Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India and ITF-Industry and Trade Forum – said it had requested Mala Sarat Chandra, an expert with a passion for empo-

they could not easily avail themselves of government or public-assistance programmes. Transport restrictions had disrupted receipt of input material and delivery of products; women faced increased responsibility for domestic care, increased social pressures and limited family support, it said.

The report urged the government to bring access to finance for women entrepreneurs under priority sector lending and also enable loans at concessional rates, grant tax holidays, create a mentor network and enable them to be vendor to public sector units and government departments.

It also sought the creation of a separate industrial estate for them.

India R&D unit to be OnePlus's largest by 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Rahane ready to bat down the order

Delhi Capitals' new signing awaits training sessions and clarity on his role in the team

IPL 2020

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Ajinkya Rahane is already in the process of making 'adjustments'. Out of the comfort zone of Rajasthan Royals, for whom he played 100 matches (24 as captain), Rahane finds himself in new surroundings.

Now with Delhi Capitals in Dubai, where the team ends its period of quarantine on August 28, Rahane is awaiting the training sessions ahead of Indian Premier League.

Given the presence of Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw, there hangs a question mark over Rahane's role as



Options aplenty: Delhi Capitals have quite a few players who can open the batting, including Shaw and Rahane. ■ PTI

an opener.

"What role I'm going to play, I don't know. When we start our practice session, then only will we have that communication. We are still in quarantine. We are still

stuck in our rooms as of now," said Rahane in a virtual press conference.

"I'm always open to whatever the team asks me to do. Having said that, I always opened throughout my ca-

reer. It is completely up to the team management what role they want me to play. If they want me to bat 5 or 6, I will definitely accept it. It will be an opportunity for me to explore something new about my game."

Elaborating on why the top-order batsmen contribute more to the aggregate in T20, Rahane said, "When opening, you know there are just two fielders outside the ring and you have the freedom to express yourself. Whereas in the middle order – 4, 5, 6 – you have to grind. You know the field is spread. The boundary options are fewer."

When asked about what he thought during the 2019 World Cup when India was desperately looking for a No. 4 batsman, Rahane admitted, "I was actually thinking I will be there in the World Cup batting at No. 4, but it is gone now. I was playing county cricket when the World Cup was happening. Everyone wants to be a part of the World Cup team, especially when you have worked really hard and your record was really good."

Sams replaces Roy
Meanwhile, England opener Jason Roy has pulled out of the IPL with a side strain and will be replaced by Australian left-arm pacer Daniel Sams. In the last Big Bash League, Sydney Thunder's Sams was the highest wicket-taker with 30 scalps.

Osaka changes her mind

Had earlier pulled out of the W&S Open

REUTERS
NEW YORK

Naomi Osaka has decided to play her semifinal at the Western & Southern Open in New York after previously saying she would withdraw from the match to protest the killing of a Black man in Wisconsin.

The 22-year-old Japanese was scheduled to play her semifinal on Thursday, but the organisers decided to postpone all the last-four matches to Friday.

"As you know, I pulled out of the tournament yesterday [Wednesday] in support of racial injustice and continued police violence."

"I was (and am) ready and prepared to concede the match to my opponent," Osaka said.

"However, after my announcement and lengthy consultation with the WTA and USTA, I agreed to play on Friday after their request.

"They offered to postpone



Naomi Osaka. ■ AP

all matches until Friday and, in my mind, that brings more attention to the movement."

The results (quarterfinals):

Men: Novak Djokovic bt Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-1; Robert Bautista Agut bt Daniil Medvedev 1-6, 6-4, 6-3; Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Reilly Opelka 5-6 (rtd).

Women: Elise Mertens bt Jessica Pegula 6-1, 6-3; Naomi Osaka bt Anett Kontaveit 4-6, 6-2, 7-5; Victoria Azarenka bt Ons Jabeur 7-6(9), 6-2; Johanna Konta bt Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-3.

Capitals coach Ricky Ponting checks in



Ricky Ponting.
■ TWITTER/ DELHICAPITALS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Delhi Capitals head coach and former Australia captain Ricky Ponting landed here on Thursday and went into the mandatory six-day quarantine at his hotel.

"My view for the next 6 days, hotel quarantine is officially underway," Ponting tweeted from his hotel room after landing here.

Delhi Capitals' Indian players and support staff had already reached here on August 23.

Pogba tests positive

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba was omitted from the France squad announced Thursday for next month's Nations League matches against Sweden and Croatia after testing positive for COVID-19, coach Didier Deschamps said.

World Cup winner Pogba has been replaced by teenager Eduardo Camavinga, who was called up for the first time alongside Lyon midfielder Houssem Aouar and RB Leipzig defender Dayot Upamecano.

IN BRIEF

Satwiksairaj tests COVID-19 positive

NEW DELHI

Set to be conferred the Arjuna award on Saturday, Indian badminton player Satwiksairaj Rankireddy has tested positive for COVID-19 and been in home quarantine for nearly a week. The 20-year-old men's doubles player said he is yet to develop any symptoms of the infection. The national awards will be given away in a virtual ceremony on Saturday due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Nishikori tests negative, but pulls out of US Open

NEW YORK Japan's Kei Nishikori withdrew from the US Open on Wednesday and announced he had tested negative for COVID-19 after two positive tests forced him out of a tune-up event. AFP

NBA players decide to continue playoff season



sin on Sunday. The NBA later postponed the entire slate of Wednesday fixtures.

At a players meeting late on Wednesday, LA Lakers and LA Clippers voted to abandon the season. The Lakers' LeBron James and Clippers star Kawhi Leonard both spoke in favour of ending the playoffs.

BWF reschedules events

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has decided to scrap the already-announced events on the World Tour and hold just two events each on the yet-to-be-finalised dates in Europe and Asia.

As per a BWF announcement on Thursday, the Thomas and Uber Cup team

events will go on as scheduled from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

In the following two weeks, the players will play Denmark Open 1 and Denmark Open 2 in Odense.

After a two-week break, Asia Open 1 and Asia Open 2 will be held in successive weeks followed by the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals.

Djokovic begins against Dzumhur

Serena, going for Slam No. 24, is in a tough quarter

N. SUDARSHAN
Top seed Novak Djokovic will open against Bosnian Damir Dzumhur in the opening round of the US Open starting on Monday.

In the draws unveiled on Thursday, it also emerged that women's top seed Karolina Pliskova will meet Anhelina Kalinina.

World No. 1 Djokovic is in the same quarter as seventh

seed David Goffin, with No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas a potential semifinal opponent. Alexander Zverev, the fifth seed, is also in the top half, and will clash with 2017 finalist Kevin Anderson first up.

Serena Williams, who is going for a record-equalling 24th Major, will take on United States' Kristie Ahn in the first round. Pliskova's potential last-four opponent in the

Bryans by the numbers

A look at the career of Bob and Mike Bryan, who announced their retirement on Wednesday



ATP titles: 119
Grand Slam crowns: 16
(Australian Open 6, French Open 2, Wimbledon 3, US Open 5)
Davis Cup: 2007
Olympics medals: 2012 (gold), 2008 (bronze)
Masters 1000 titles: 39
ATP Finals triumphs: 4
Weeks at No. 1: 438
Year-end top ranking: 10 years
Overall W-L record: 1,108-359

*Record pertains to the duo playing together

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ROHAN MOTORS
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NEVA IMT MANESAR
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NEVA SEC 14
PREM MOTORS
PH: 124-4460000, 7065074501

NEVA MG ROAD
PASCO AUTOMOBILES
PH: 9711290001

NEVA SOHNA
PASCO AUTOMOBILES
PH: 9899961000

NEVA DWARKA SECTOR 9
MAHIMA MOTORS
PH: 7290055667

NEVA GREEN PARK
TR SAWHNEY AUTOMOBILES
PH: 7290099520

NEVA NIT
BDA AUTO
PH: 124-4460000, 7065074502

NEVA DELHI ROAD
DINCO 4 WHEELS LLP
PH: 708210