



Lalu Prasad makes a comeback on RJD's 25th foundation day

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12 BJP MLAs suspended from Maharashtra Assembly for a year

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Over 1,000 Afghan troops flee Taliban into Tajikistan

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Barty beats Krejcikova, Jabeur stuns Swiatek; Djokovic advances

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## NEARBY



Sonia Gandhi to meet Amarinder Singh today

NEW DELHI  
Amid the ongoing political turmoil in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is likely to meet Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday to give a final shape to a compromise formula to end the bitter factionalism.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

## Delhi HC to hear U.P. govt. on conversion issue

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Monday extended the interim direction to Delhi Police to ensure the safety of a woman from Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh, who had converted to Islam of her own accord, till July 22. Justice Rekha Palli said she could not pass any direction in the case without first hearing the U.P. police.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## High Court refuses to hear Gulfisha's plea

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to hear student activist Gulfisha Fatima's plea against her alleged illegal detention in a north-east Delhi riots case after taking serious note of her advocate Mehmood Pracha's taking recourse to "heckling" during the hearing.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

# Tribal rights activist Father Stan Swamy dies in Mumbai hospital



Crusader for tribal rights: A file photo of civil rights activist Father Stan Swamy, who passed away on Monday. ■ PTI

84-year-old priest was accused in Bhima-Koregaon violence case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Tribal rights activist Father Stan Swamy, 84, who was an accused in the Bhima-Koregaon caste violence case, passed away on Monday afternoon, the Bombay High Court was told.

Dr. Ian D'souza, medical director of the Holy Family Hospital where Fr. Swamy was admitted on May 29 after having contracted COVID-19 while in Taloja jail, told a division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and N.J. Jamadar that he had pulmonary infection, post COVID-19 complications in the lungs and pneumonia. Dr. D'Souza said the Jesuit priest suffered cardiac arrest at 4.30 a.m. on July 4 and was put on ventilator. He never regained consciousness.

Senior advocate Mihir Desai, representing Fr. Swamy, said, "We have no grievance against the hospital. However, we cannot say the same thing about the National Investigation Agency [NIA] and State authorities. I am seeking a judicial probe into this as there was a delay of 10 days in taking him to the hospital from jail."

The Bench said, "...this is shocking news. We passed that order ... to take him to the hospital of his choice. We have no words to express our condolences."

Mr. Desai said the NIA did not seek his custody even for a day and he was sent to Taloja jail as soon as he was arrested from Ranchi on October 9, 2020. He requested the court to pass an order to hand over the social worker's body to Father Frazer, his friend and former principal of Xavier's college.

Mr. Desai sought the submission of all medical reports and the post-mortem report to the court.

Fr. Swamy was shifted to the private hospital from Taloja jail on May 29 after directions from the High Court. He tested positive for COVID-19 on May 30.

He also had lower back pain and bilateral hearing loss among other ailments, and was suffering from Parkinson's disease. His request for a sipper to drink water was turned down.

The Jesuit priest, through videoconferencing, told the court on May 21: "I am eating less and less and my co-accused are worried about me. I would prefer to suffer and die like this in Taloja jail than be admitted to J.J. Hospital. Only one thing that I would request the judiciary is to consider interim bail. That is the only request."

**MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9**

## Political leaders call for accountability

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Political leaders and activists on Monday called for accountability over the death in a Mumbai hospital of 84-year-old Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist Father Stan Swamy.

Father Swamy, who suffered from Parkinson's Disease, was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in October 2020 from Ranchi in connection with the Elgar Parishad case and lodged in Taloja jail. His health had been deteriorating since.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi offered his condolences, saying "he deserved justice and humaneness", in a tweet.

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh said in a tweet, "Who in the apparatus of the Indian state will be held responsible for this tragedy? Make no mistake - it is the Indian state that killed Fr. Stan Swamy, who was such a passionate crusader for social justice."

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

# CBSE to cut syllabus, hold board exams in Nov. & April

New assessment scheme for Classes 10 and 12 this year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With continuing school closures and examination disruptions due to COVID-19, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued a new assessment scheme for Class 10 and 12 students this year.

In 2021-22, it will reduce the syllabus, hold board examinations twice during the year in different formats, and ensure continuous recording of internal assessment scores in order to have a variety of options to calculate a final score at the end of the year, according to a notification issued on Monday night.

Father Swamy, who suffered from Parkinson's Disease, was arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in October 2020 from Ranchi in connection with the Elgar Parishad case and lodged in Taloja jail. His health had been deteriorating since.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi offered his condolences, saying "he deserved justice and humaneness", in a tweet.

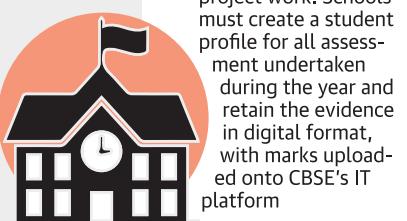
Congress MP Jairam Ramesh said in a tweet, "Who in the apparatus of the Indian state will be held responsible for this tragedy? Make no mistake - it is the Indian state that killed Fr. Stan Swamy, who was such a passionate crusader for social justice."

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

**Plan of action** | The CBSE has divided the academic year into two terms with 50% syllabus for Class 10 and 12, and exams at the end of each term

■ The first term exam will be held in November-December 2021 with a flexible schedule during a window of 4-8 weeks. It will be a 90-minute paper with multiple choice questions

■ The second term exam will be held in March-April 2022 and is likely to be a 2-hour paper with various question formats



■ The syllabus will be rationalised like last year, when it was reduced by 30%

■ Guidelines will be issued to ensure fair distribution of marks in internal assessments, practicals and project work. Schools must create a student profile for all assessments undertaken during the year and retain the evidence in digital format, with marks uploaded onto CBSE's IT platform

syllabus was reduced by 30%.

The CBSE has divided the 2021-22 academic year into two terms with 50% of the syllabus to be covered in each term, with board exams to be held at the end of each term, according to the notification.

The first term exam will be held on a flexible schedule between November-December 2021, with a window period of 4-8 weeks for schools situated in different parts of the country. It will be a 90-minute paper with various question formats only, likely to be conducted in schools with the supervision of external

superintendents. The second term exam will be held in March-April 2022 in examination centres, and is likely to be a two-hour exam with various question formats. In case the pandemic situation is not conducive for such a long, descriptive exam to be held, the second term exam will also be conducted with a multiple choice question format.

The CBSE will issue guidelines to make internal assessments, practicals and project work more credible and valid to ensure fair distribution of marks.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

# SC aghast that Section 66A of IT Act is still used

Provision was struck down 6 years ago

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday found it "distressing", "shocking" and "terrible" that people were still booked and tried under Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act even six years after it struck down the provision as unconstitutional and a violation of free speech.

Section 66A had prescribed three years' imprisonment if a social media message caused "annoyance" or was found "grossly offensive".

The court, in the Shreya Singhal judgment authored by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman in March 2015, had concluded that the provision was vague and worded arbitrarily.

On Monday, senior advocate Sanjay Parikh and advocate Aparna Bhat, for the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), said the number of cases registered under Section 66A had actually increased post the judgment.

"What is going on is terrible, distressing! We will issue notice," Justice Nariman, heading a three-judge Bench comprising Justices K.M. Joseph and B.R. Gavai, exclaimed.

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal pointed out that law books published post the verdict featured the non-existent Section 66A "in full". "The police officer, while registering a case, looks at only the Section in the main text... The fact that the Section has been struck down is given only as a footnote...", he submitted.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

# Disappointed with PM's meet: Gupkar alliance

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

The People's Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an amalgam of five political parties from Jammu and Kashmir, on Monday said it was disappointed with the outcome of the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 24.

"All the members of the

PAGD have expressed their disappointment, especially at the absence of any substantial confidence-building measures (CBMs), such as releasing political and other prisoners and taking concrete steps to end the atmosphere of suppression that has choked Jammu and Kashmir since 2019," alliance spokesman M.Y. Tarigami said.

"As far as the restoration of statehood is concerned, it has been BJP's commitment on the floor of Parliament and they must honour their word. So, any Assembly election must be held only after restoration of full statehood," Mr. Tarigami said.

**ALLIANCE VOWS TO REVERSE AUG. 2019 CHANGES ▶ PAGE 9**

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Worst over: Dismantling of beds and other facilities in progress at the Yamuna Sports Complex COVID Care Centre on Monday as positivity rate continues to decline in the Capital. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Twitter failed to comply with IT rules: Centre

Ministry files affidavit in Delhi HC

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday informed the Delhi High Court that micro-blogging site Twitter had failed to comply with India's law regulating tech companies, losing its immunity as "intermediaries".

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in an affidavit filed before the court, stated that despite three months time being granted to all Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMIs) to comply with the Information Technology (IT) Rules 2021, Twitter had failed to fully comply with the same.

Officer's resignation

Twitter, last week, had in-

formed the High Court that the interim Resident Grievance Officer and the interim Nodal Contact Person in India had resigned from their positions in June.

The tech giant stated that it was in the final stages of appointing replacements; meanwhile, "the grievances of Indian users are being addressed by the Grievance Officer".

The MeitY, however, pointed out that as per the details gleaned from Twitter's website, grievances from India were currently being handled by its personnel situated in the United States, "which amounts to non-compliance with the IT Rules 2021".

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

# Facial recognition used to verify jab beneficiaries: govt.

No legal order for use of the technology, says RTI response

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Even though the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) admitted in a recent RTI query response to the use of facial recognition technology (FRT) for online verification of beneficiaries at vaccination centres, it failed to provide any legislative or legal order that authorised the use of such technology.

The MoHFW also said no privacy impact assessment of the use of FRT was conducted prior to its deployment. "Facial recognition authentication is used as one of the methods for Aadhaar authentication for online verification of beneficiaries," the Ministry said in response to an RTI filed by the not-for-profit Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF).

ary prior to COVID-19 vaccination wherein facial template is captured and sent to UIDAI for verification of image of beneficiary," the Ministry said in response to an RTI filed by the not-for-profit Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF).

It also stated that no additional procurement had been made for the implementation of FRT-based verification, and a pilot project for such authentication is still under way.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**



A health worker administering vaccine to a beneficiary during a vaccination drive in Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

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# City's new skill university to incubate future job providers

Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University has launched admissions for first batch

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ  
NEW DELHI

Established in August 2020 by the Delhi government, the Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) seeks to bring about a paradigm shift in vocational higher education by making skill education aspirational.

It plans to equip students with the skills to be job-ready by offering courses that are in sync with the needs of the industry.

It has also been set up with a mandate to support and nurture entrepreneurs and provide quality mentorship to steer the entrepreneurial journeys of those interested by providing incubation and constant support so that they can become job providers instead of job-seekers.

**Need for the university**  
DSEU has been established to fill the gap between people, who graduate with degrees but do not find jobs and will have courses that provide the opportunity to students to earn a degree while learning a skill that

**Flagship courses of the university include e-commerce operations, data analytics, digital design and media, facilities among others**

will provide them employment.

Courses have been developed understanding the needs of the industry in the current scenario by keeping in mind the skills, attributes and need of those looking to hire students looking to enter the job market. Courses will be added and discontinued depending on demand from the industry and students will be given internships and on-the-job training during the course.

## Courses on offer

The university, which has launched the admission process for its first batch of students, will offer courses to people from all walks of life. It will empower the marginalised and minority groups. It is accepting appli-

cations for 15 diploma, 18 undergraduate and 2 post-graduate courses, to be offered across 13 campuses in Delhi.

## EXPLAINER

Flagship courses of the university include e-commerce operations, data analytics, digital design and media, facilities and hygiene management, and medical laboratory technology.

## How to apply

The entire admission process will be online through the centralised admission portal of the university – www.dseuonline.in. Applicants can call a toll free number for admissions-related queries and a separate helpline number (0114169950) for technical assistance in filling the form.

Admission counselling rooms will also be set up in all institutes along with a virtual walk-in help desk.

## Qualifications

Students enrolling for the UG programmes (except

B.Tech.) are required to take an interest profiling test developed by the university called the Personality, Entrepreneurial Mindset and General Ability Test, to help them choose the course they are most suited for. The university shall also provide multiple entry /exit options as per NEP, 2019 in all the courses.

## Scholarships

The university will support all deserving students through scholarships, free-ships and financial assistance for getting loans and support from the Delhi government schemes for higher education. A total of 85% of the seats will be reserved for residents of Delhi.

## Mergers with other existing institutes

The DSEU was merged with already existing government institutes and colleges such as GB Pant College of Engineering, 10 polytechnics of the Delhi government, six World Class Skill Centres and the Delhi Institute of Tool Engineering.

# Ambedkar University Delhi to begin admissions from July 12

It will launch 6 new programmes; PG entrance exam in Aug.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) on Monday announced that it was launching six new programmes while releasing the admission brochure for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes for the Academic session 2021-22.

The registration process for the UG programme of the university will begin on July 12.

For PG programme, the registrations will start from July end, the university said.



For PG programme, the registrations will start from July end, the university said.

PG programmes will be 1,953, including seats in new programme.

## New programmes

The new programmes are BA Hindi (Honours), Masters of Public Health, M Voc Tourism and Hospitality Management, MA in Archaeology and Heritage Management (MAHM), MA in Conservation, Preservation and Heritage Management (MCPHM), Integrated MA-PhD (IPHD) in Human Ecology.

Talking about the safety measures, Ms. Lather said that the university has spent ₹4.73 crore on fee waivers whereas expenditure on other support

(Scholarship/Student welfare fund/Earn While Learn/Internet reimbursement/Learning Enhancement/Participation in National, International Conference) is ₹1.43 crore.

The university this year has also shortlisted 64 foreign students for admission for the BA/MA/Ph.D programmes through ICCR process. Student from SAARC countries and African Countries (Tanzania, Ghana, Malawi, South Sudan, Botswana, Somalia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe & Zambia) have been shortlisted for admission for the BA/MA/Ph.D programmes.

AUD Registrar Nitin Malik said the Delhi Institute of Heritage and Management has been declared as a School of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi. Two programmes of School of Heritage Research and Management in MA in Archaeology and Heritage Management (MAHM) and MA in Conservation, Preservation and Heritage Management (MCPHM) will be offered from AUD.

Withdraw action against AUD student, says Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Monday directed the Principal Secretary of Higher Education to ensure that no disciplinary action is taken against the Ambedkar University student, on whom a fine of ₹5,000 was also imposed by the varsity.

Mr. Sisodia said the fine, imposed on the student by the university for allegedly disrupting a convocation ceremony, be cancelled.

Mr. Sisodia said: "Firstly, no action should be taken against any student for expressing a viewpoint that is different from the government or the university unless the statement damages the social fabric of our country or is against our constitutional values. Secondly, since the student was expressing her viewpoint against the government, as being reported in the media, the matter should have first be brought to our notice before initiating any action against her." AISA welcomed his intervention in the matter.

Monsoon likely to reach city by July 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The monsoon, which has currently stalled and is at the borders of Northwest India, is expected to revive over the weekend in Delhi, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday.

"The southwest monsoon is likely to advance over remaining parts of western Uttar Pradesh, some more parts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, and Delhi around July 10. The weather system is likely to cause increased rainfall activity over northwest and central India from July 10," said a notice.

This is predicated on a low-pressure area that is likely to form over the northwest Bay of Bengal off the north Andhra Pradesh-south Odisha coasts around July 11 in preparation of which rain-bearing winds are expected to establish from later this week.

**Delayed by over a week**

The normal date for the arrival of the monsoon over Delhi is June 30 with an error window of two weeks. However, the IMD had in early June said the monsoon could reach Delhi earlier by June 15 but this didn't happen.

Typically the monsoon covers the entire stretch of India by July 8.

Meteorologists have said the ongoing weak spell of monsoon started on June 19. Till then, the monsoon had made rapid progress since its advent over Kerala and progressed quickly, bringing in rain that was over 40% more than what is normal for the first fortnight of June. So far, India has got 20.7 cm of rainfall, slightly less than the 20.8 cm that is expected until the first week of July.

# HC declines to interfere with DU's exam decision

Matter pertains to Faculty of Law

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to interfere with DU's decision to conduct online open book exam for intermediate semesters of its law course, which could not be held last year due to COVID-19.

Justice Pratik Jalan said he was not going to allow students to dictate terms of examination of a professional course while hearing four petitions by students of second and final-year of Faculty of Law, Delhi University.

## Mode of exam

The Law Faculty Dean said the examination was likely to be conducted in July and another round of exams would be held in September for the benefit of students

who are unable to sit in the first round. DU's counsel said the mode of examination – whether online, offline, blended or assignment-based – was left to the discretion of the institute concerned by the Bar Council of India.

One of the final-year students had argued that online open book examination for last year's intermediate semesters semester II and IV was not in the interest of students.

The plea pressed for an assignment-based examination. The plea argued that the dates for the online open book examination might clash with the other entrance examinations that the final-year students might take for further studies.

# HC refuses to hear Gulfisha's plea against 'illegal detention'

Court unhappy with her counsel's conduct during hearing

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to hear student activist Gulfisha Fatima's plea against her alleged illegal detention in a Delhi riots case after taking serious note to her advocate Mehmmood Pracha's taking recourse to "heckling" during the hearing.

A Bench of Justice Siddharth Mridul and Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani ordered that Ms. Fatima's petition be placed before another Bench on Friday.

"Instead of addressing us on merits, Mehmmood Pracha is taking recourse to heckling and seeking to take recourse to facts not in the pe-

tition. List before another Bench..," the court said.

"We refuse to be addressed by someone who does not know the basics of law," the HC remarked.

## Delhi riots case

The court was hearing a plea by Ms. Fatima seeking for a direction to release her in an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) case relating to alleged larger conspiracy that led to north-east Delhi riots in February last year. In the habeas corpus petition, Ms. Fatima claimed that her detention in judicial custody was illegal and invalid.

Mr. Pracha argued that Ms. Fatima was in continued

illegal detention and as per a Supreme Court decision, only a special court under the NIA Act, and not a Sessions court, had the power to extend remand. Mr. Pracha also claimed that as of date, there was no remand order in the present case.

As the HC said that the remand order was not part of the pleadings in the case, Mr. Pracha urged the Bench to take his statement on record. To this, the Bench said, "You are not addressing a rally. You are addressing a court. Show us from your pleadings.. File an affidavit to say there is no remand order today. You can't argue statement of facts at the Bar."

they wish to get new lawyers as they want the farmers punished; that they wish to teach these farmers a lesson," he also alleged.

## Valid request

Senior officers present in the meeting between the L-G and the Delhi Home Minister said that apart from the earlier disagreement on file, the L-G on July 1 expressed his disagreement at the Home Minister's turning down of the "valid request" of the Delhi police for the appointment of special pu-

# Lajpat Nagar market closed

Authorities cite 'gross violations' of COVID-19 guidelines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has closed the popular Lajpat Nagar market in south Delhi till further orders for violation of COVID-19 norms, officials said on Monday.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate, South East District, Padmaran Tripathi said an inspection was carried out by the COVID-19 appropriate behaviour enforcement teams at the Lajpat Nagar market wherein "gross violations" of guidelines were observed. "It is, hereby, directed that Lajpat Nagar Central Market is closed with immediate effect until further orders," the DDMA order said.

Representatives of various trader bodies claimed that crowding is mainly due to the presence of street vendors and it is up to the admini-



Security personnel patrol Lajpat Nagar Central Market on Monday. It is closed until further orders. • PTI

nistration to prevent it.

The DDMA directed the market association to show cause on Monday as to why action as per the DDMA Act and other applicable laws should not be taken against them. The order also asked municipal officials and the Delhi Police to ensure no street vendors or unauthorised shops are functional

within the market area.

The Capital on Monday recorded 54 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest since April 15 last year. The tally now stands at 14,34,608. Two more fatalities pushed the death toll to 24,997. The test positivity rate is 0.9% and there are 912 active cases in Delhi. On Sunday, 9,503 people were vaccinated.

High-security labels to check duty evasion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Special excise adhesive labels, inspection teams and a state-of-the-art lab are some of the steps planned by the Delhi government to regulate the conduct of retail liquor vends and check tax evasion and sale of spurious alcohol.

The new excise policy 2021-22, which was approved in June, was uploaded on the excise dept.'s website on Monday. According to the policy, the excise department has introduced Excise Adhesive Labels with high-end security features manufactured by Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited to avoid tax evasion and plug leakages in the supply chain.

Lawyer's licence suspended over 'forced conversion'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) on Monday temporarily suspended a lawyer's licence for allegedly forcibly converting a Hindu girl to Islam and performing nikah from his chamber at Karkardooma Court here.

The council said, "The alleged activities are not permissible nor are part of the professional activities of an advocate and his conduct in performing a nikah and is-

suance of certificate of conversion and Nikahnama/Marriage certificate is disgraceful and negates the dignity of the legal profession".

Taking serious note of the gravity of the allegations, senior advocate and Bar Council of Delhi chairman Ramesh Gupta ordered the constitution of a Special Disciplinary Committee to investigate the matter.

The BCD has asked the lawyer to appear before it on July 16.

# 'BJP is seeking revenge on farmers in agitation-related cases'

Central govt. is trying to replace Delhi-appointed lawyers: AAP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Terming it "vengeful", the AAP on Monday accused the BJP of "attempting to replace" Delhi government-appointed lawyers with "its own" to allegedly harass and defame innocent farmers in criminal cases filed in relation to the ongoing farm-

ers' agitation.

AAP national spokesperson Raghu Chadha alleged the BJP wanted to replace the Delhi government's lawyers not with the intention of bringing justice to the farmers but to "seek revenge". "A few days ago, a virtual meeting took place between the L-G and the Delhi Home Minister, wherein BJP's intentions became crystal clear," he alleged.

"The BJP's appointee, the Lieutenant-Governor, said they will remove Delhi go-

vernors' prosecutors.

Mr. Baijal, according to the officers concerned, then wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on the issue on July 2. The cases in question related to incidents on January 26 in which as many as 394 police officers were injured.

Keeping in view the enormity and sensitivity of the matter, I had called the relevant file from the Home Department on March 24. The police have already given a detailed justification for the appointment of special pu-

lic public prosecutors in these matters," Mr. Baijal stated.

"These cases require careful handling in a time-bound manner in view of the gravity of the offences and implications for law and order. Therefore, I see no reason why the proposal of the police should not be agreed to," Mr. Baijal stated. There was, he also stated, "no reason to suspect" that special public prosecutors wouldn't perform their duty fearlessly and impartially as officers of the court.

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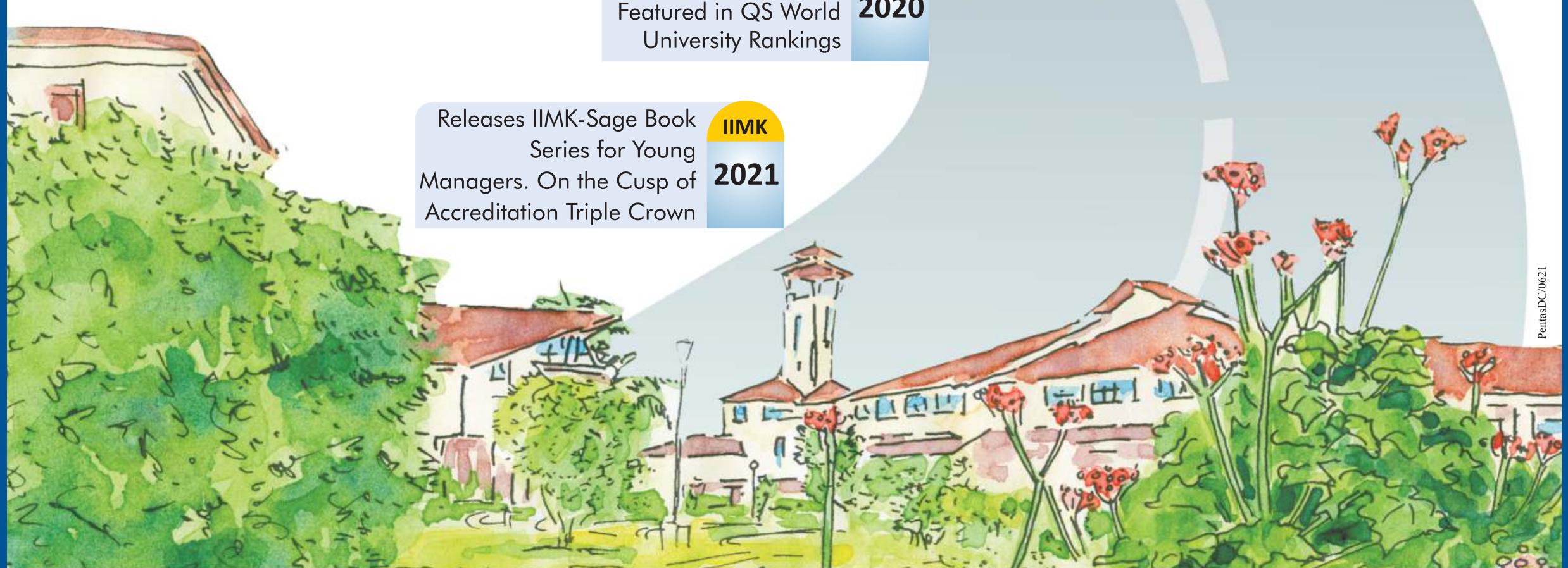
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Debashis Chatterjee

Prof. Debasish Chatterjee, Director, IIM Kozhikode

**Timings****DELHI**

TUESDAY, JUL. 06
RISE 05:30 SET 19:23
RISE 02:27 SET 16:20
WEDNESDAY, JUL. 07
RISE 05:30 SET 19:23
RISE 03:05 SET 17:16
THURSDAY, JUL. 08
RISE 05:31 SET 19:23
RISE 03:47 SET 18:10

**Delhi Weather**

max	min
Delhi City	40 28
Safdarjung	40 28
Palam	40 28

**Delhi Palam Today**

41°C Morning and evening would remain warm. A very hot day with partly cloudy sky. Thunderstorm may be a chance.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**

42°C Day remain hot with partly cloudy sky and light winds. Thunderclouds development at some places likely.

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**THE HINDU**

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**SP workers held****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

LUCKNOW

Five Samajwadi Party workers were on Monday arrested for allegedly indulging in indecent sloganising against Uttar Pradesh Sports Minister Upendra Tiwari, police said.

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

# Kejriwal making false promises on free power'

Punjab Chief Minister accuses the AAP government of failing the people of Delhi on all counts

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Captain (Retd.) Amarinder Singh on Monday accused Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of failing to provide free power to the farmers in the national capital.

He also accused the AAP supremo of making false promises on "free power" in Punjab with an eye on the 2022 Assembly polls.

The Kejriwal government has completely failed the people of Delhi on all counts, with no free power to the farmers in the villages located in the national capital and charging excessively high-power tariffs for the industry," said Captain Amarinder, asserting that the people of Punjab have already rejected



Punjab CM Amarinder Singh

the pathetic Delhi model of governance on all counts.

The Punjab Chief Minister termed the Delhi power tariff structure a case of organised loot by the AAP government, which was openly allowing private power distribution companies in Delhi, including the Reliance Group, to fill their pockets at the cost of the common man.

"While Delhi is charging



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal

₹9.80 per unit for industrial power, the Congress government in Punjab is levying a subsidised tariff of ₹5 per unit to attract industry, and the State has witnessed more than ₹85,000 crore worth of investment visible on the ground in the last 4 years. Subsidised power is being given to 1,43,812 industrial units with an annual subsidy of ₹2,226 crore," he said in state-

ment.

"In sharp contrast to Punjab, where my government was giving free power worth ₹6,735 crore to 13,721 farmers, the AAP government in Delhi had made no effort whatsoever to extend similar support to the agricultural community there," the Chief Minister said.

Capt. Amarinder said the Delhi government was befooling the people by putting a small amount into one pocket, by way of 200 units of free domestic power, and taking away a higher amount from the other pocket by way of high tariffs being paid by the shopkeepers, industry and farmers for commercial and agriculture power.

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Lok Sabha MP and

caption omitted

# Police foil BJYM march to Amarinder's residence

Teas gas used to disperse the protesters

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

CHANDIGARH

Police used tear gas and water canon on Tuesday to disperse the agitating workers and leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) – youth wing of the BJP – here, as they marched to 'gherao' the official residence of Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh against alleged 'failure' of the Congress government in curbing drug menace.

Capt. Amarinder said the

police said ahead of the 2022 elections, the AAP will come up with a road map for the people of Punjab so that the people would be economically prosperous and culturally rich.

they were stopped at the barricades by the police. The police said tear gas and water cannons were used after the protesters attempted to break the barricades. Many of them were detained and released later.

**'Drug trade flourishing'** Mr. Rana said the illegal drug trade was flourishing under the Congress regime and the youth were at the receiving end.

"In the run up to the 2017 Assembly polls, Amarinder Singh had promised to eradicate the menace within four weeks of assuming power. However, it's been four and half years and yet the illegal drug trade continues unabated," alleged Mr. Rana.

## 'Unsolicited sale' of his biography upsets Governor

He orders action against the 'guilty'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

JAIPUR

Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra on Monday ordered legal action against those involved in an alleged incident of "unsolicited sale" of his biography to Vice-Chancellors of universities on the Raj Bhawan premises.

The book, *Nimitt Maatra Hoon Main*, was released at a function in the Raj Bhawan here on July 1.

Mr. Mishra took cognizance of the reports about 19 copies of the biography and their bills being given to

## Farmers start for Delhi protest site

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

CHANDIGARH

Another batch of farmers under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) started its march from Punjab to the Delhi border to participate in the ongoing agitation against Centre's farm laws.

The farmers, in around 300 vehicles, started from Amritsar and will reach the Delhi border by July 6.

"Since the agitation started this is our 19th batch that is going for the protest," said Sarvan Singh Pandher, general secretary of KMSC.

## Bhagwat's outreach evokes mixed response

Thinkers see attempt at an image makeover amid changing global politics

**ANUJ KUMAR**

GHAZIABAD

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's outreach to Muslims evoked a mixed response from Muslim academics and activists. While some found it unprecedented, others termed it an old book in a new cover. However, most of them saw it as an attempt to reshape the RSS's image according to

negotiation between the two communities, there was nothing new in what Mr. Bhagwat said.

"RSS has been reiterating

that all Indians have the same DNA. It is their way to call everybody a Hindu. I want to know if they believe that the DNA of the Aryans and the Dravidians is the same," he said.

Reminding that RSS leaders often spoke with a forked tongue, Prof. Mohammad Sajjad, professor of History at AMU, underlined that Mr. Bhagwat's remarks will remain mere rhetoric unless the impact is seen on the ground.

**'Nothing new'**

Requesting anonymity, a senior faculty from Darul Uloom, Deoband, said, except for the call for starting

negotiation between the two communities, there was nothing new in what Mr. Bhagwat said.

"RSS has been reiterating

that all Indians have the same DNA. It is their way to call everybody a Hindu. I want to know if they believe that the DNA of the Aryans and the Dravidians is the same," he said.

On the negotiation part, he said Darul Uloom would soon come up with a response.

Md. Zaheeruddin, a senior social activist from Darsa in Ghaziabad, said the speech has come as a relief in the tense environment.

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SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE (CLOSING DATE (TIME))
1	UHBVN	LT PVCUN-ARMoured CABLE OF SIZE 4X16 SQ.MM AS PER NIGAM'S TECH. SPECIFICATION NO. C/T-1000/2019/PD/2020-21 AS PER IEC 60227-15 ALONGWITH ITS AMENDMENTS.	01.07.2021 22.07.2021
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : <a href="http://www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in">www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in</a> or <a href="http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in">www.etenders.hry.nic.in</a>			
SAMVAD- 13/2022/40/3592/I/199/7			

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA		CORRIGENDUM	
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM
1	UHBVN	35/PROJECTS/SCADA/2020	AMENDMENTS & DATE EXTENDED UPTO 20.07.2021
2	UHBVN	NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO. 06/ UHM/ME/XENP/IV/QH/II/2022 DATED 18.05.2021 2021_HBC_175181_1	DATE OF SUBMISSION EXTENDED UPTO 22.07.2021 (13.00 HRS.)
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : <a href="http://www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in">www.haryanaprocurement.gov.in</a> or <a href="http://www.etenders.hry.nic.in">www.etenders.hry.nic.in</a>			
SAMVAD- 13/2022/40/3593/I/199/7			

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF STUDY AND RESEARCH IN LAW, RANCHI**  
At Nagri, PO- Bukru, Kanke-Pithoria Road, Kanke, Ranchi 834006

Ref: NUSRL/ RNC/2021/ 110500

Date: 05/07/2021

Registrar Recruitment

NUSRL, Ranchi invites applications from eligible candidates having the qualifications listed in the Notification posted in University website: [www.nusrlranchi.ac.in](http://www.nusrlranchi.ac.in).

Pay band is as per UGC norms.

The last date for receiving applications is 26/07/2021, 5 pm

Sd/- Vice Chancellor

PR.NO.249126 Law(21-22):D

**GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUNASI DAM DIVISION, PUNASI CAMP DEOGHAR**  
e-Procurement Short Tender Notice

Re-Tender

e-Re- Tender Reference No. :- WRD/Punasi Dam Div., Punasi Camp Deoghar/SBD-IFB-01/2021-22 Dt : 02.07.2021

Construction of service road on the crest of Punasi dam, const. of parapet wall with lamp post and lighting arrangement on the crest of Punasi dam and const. of slope drain and berm drain in down stream of dam from chain 0.00 to 70.00

Rs. 10,18,24,992.22 (Rupees ten crore eighteen lakh twenty four thousand nine hundred ninety two and paise twenty two) only

360 days

14.07.2021

Up to 5:00 P.M.

08.07.2021

11:00 A.M.

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Executive Engineer

Punasi Dam Division, Punasi Camp - Deoghar

Contact no. of Procurement officer

09162968480

Helpline number of e-Procurement cell

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Further details can be seen on website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

Executive Engineer

Punasi Dam Division,

Punasi Camp - Deoghar

IN BRIEF



Swapna moves Kerala HC for bail in NIA case

KOCHI  
Swapna Suresh, an accused in the diplomatic gold smuggling case, approached the Kerala High Court on Monday seeking bail in a case registered by the National Investigation Agency against her. Swapna Suresh, in her appeal filed against the dismissal of her bail plea by the NIA court, said the chargesheet did not disclose the involvement of transnational forces and financing of terrorism as alleged by the NIA.

Karnataka govt. sets out criteria for PU students

BENGALURU  
The Karnataka government on Monday told the High Court that it would promote students of second year pre-university (PU) courses by giving 45% weightage for their marks in SSLC or equivalent board exams, 45% for 1st PU marks and 10% for their internal assessment marks of 1Ind PU given by their respective colleges. All repeaters of 1Ind PU exam will be given minimum pass marks along with 5% grace marks in their respective subjects.

Three teens found dead in lake in Telangana

HYDERABAD  
Three teenage girls were found dead in a lake on the outskirts of their village at Singanagao in Nirmal district, Telangana, on Monday. The victims were identified as Sunitha, 16, her sister Vaishali, 14, and their cousin Anjali, 15. Although evidence suggested it was a case of accidental drowning, the police would investigate all angles to rule out their suspicions. Ch. Praveen Kumar, Superintendent of Police, Nirmal district, told *The Hindu*.

# LDF leaders should face trial, says SC

Current Education Minister is among those facing charges for vandalism in Kerala Assembly in 2015

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it will not condone the behaviour of Kerala's Left Democratic Front (LDF) leaders, including the current Education Minister V. Sivankutty, who created a ruckus and indulged in vandalism on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, disrupting the presentation of the budget in 2015.

The televised images from the day of the incident, during the United Democratic Front government's tenure, show legislators coming to blows in the House and hurling chairs, computers and other public property, soon after the then Finance Minister K.M. Mani began his budget speech. The LDF MLAs were protesting against Mr. Mani, citing the corruption allegations against him.

The MLAs are facing



Court rap: V. Sivankutty trying to break the cordon in the Kerala Assembly on March 13, 2015. ■ FILE PHOTO

charges of criminal trespass, mischief and destruction of public property. The State government and the accused have separately appealed to the court for withdrawal of the case.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah, however, took a prima facie view against the conduct of the MLAs. Justice Chandrachud said legislators accused of destroying public

property should face trial or there would be "absolutely no deterrent to this kind of behaviour".

During the hearing, the court disagreed with the Kerala government's view that the then Opposition MLAs were only acting in "public interest" and exercising their "right to protest".

"What is the larger 'public interest' in obstructing the presentation of the State's financial budget? Prima facie, we have to take a very strict view of such behaviour. We will not condone such behaviour by MLAs – throwing mics, chairs on the floor of the House," Justice Chandrachud told senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, who appeared for the State.

Justice Shah wanted to know what "message" the MLAs had intended to give the public with their behaviour.

Justice Chandrachud said the case would be listed on July 15.

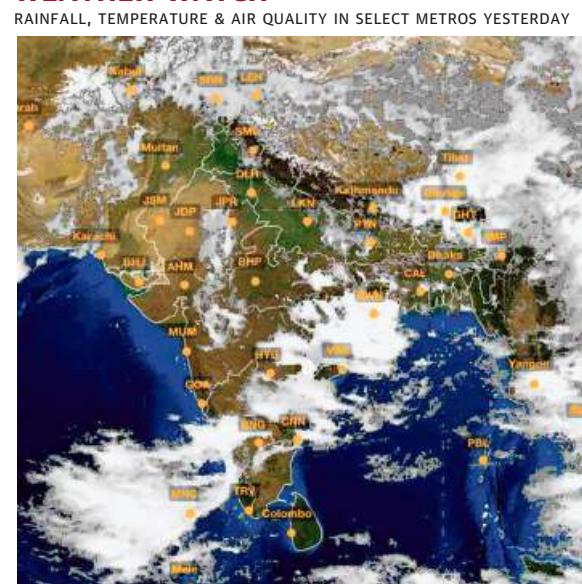
"These are people's representatives. What will the people think seeing their leaders behave like this on the floor of the House?" Justice Shah asked.

**Locus standi questioned**  
When Mr. Kumar said prior sanction of the Speaker was required before registration of criminal cases against the MLAs, Justice Shah questioned the State government's locus standi in seeking withdrawal of the case against the legislators.

"Why are you [the State] saying all this? It is for the accused to make the plea, and not for the State. The State cannot seek withdrawal of the case. That is the prerogative of the Public Prosecutor," Justice Shah repeatedly pointed out.

Justice Chandrachud said the case would be listed on July 15.

## WEATHER WATCH



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

**Forecast for Tuesday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Odisha, central Maharashtra, Karaikal and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	5...	34.4...	26.2	Kozhikode	...	32.4...	25.9
Ahmedabad	...	37.9...	28.1	Kurnool	...	31.5...	24.1
Aizawl	2...	27.0...	21.6	Lucknow	...	39.0...	27.5
Aligarh	...	39.3...	28.5	Madurai	...	37.0...	23.6
Bengaluru	46.6...	29.4...	20.1	Mangaluru	...	29.0...	24.6
Bhopal	...	35.9...	25.8	Mumbai	...	33.5...	28.2
Bhubaneswar	...	34.0...	25.2	Mysuru	20...	31.9...	20.4
Chandigarh	...	38.4...	28.8	New Delhi	...	39.5...	28.0
Chennai	...	36.0...	26.4	Patna	...	34.7...	28.4
Coimbatore	2.9...	33.2...	23.9	Port Blair	5...	33.8...	25.9
Dehradun	65...	34.5...	20.5	Puducherry	0.1...	34.1...	22.7
Gangtok	...	23.0...	17.5	Pune	...	34.1...	22.6
Goa	51...	30.6...	24.4	Raipur	75.6...	29.6...	24.4
Guwahati	0.2...	34.4...	26.0	Ranchi	8...	32.6...	23.6
Hubballi	...	29.0...	22.0	Shillong	8...	24.1...	17.5
Hyderabad	...	33.4...	25.6	Shimla	4...	25.7...	17.2
Imphal	...	31.8...	22.3	Srinagar	...	28.0...	18.3
Jaipur	3...	39.8...	24.6	Thiruvananthapuram	2...	32.9...	24.1
Kochi	0.6...	30.8...	24.6	Tiruchi	65...	36.1...	22.6
Kohima	4...	25.2...	18.4	Vijayawada	...	35.6...	26.2
Kolkata	17...	35.2...	27.5	Visakhapatnam	22...	35.0...	24.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	5...	16	108	.114	.118	...
Bengaluru	11...	.37	82	.41	.51	...
Chennai	8...	.5	44	.36	.67	...
Delhi	10...	103	.78	.258	.209	...
Hyderabad	.32...	.29	.20	.40	.80	...
Kolkata	.11...	.22	.21	.63	.59	...
Lucknow	.7...	.45	.59	.116	.124	...
Mumbai	103...	.11	.19	.32	.72	...
Pune	.6...	.19	.71	.96	.89	...
Visakhapatnam	.12...	.52	.31	.50	.85	...

Yesterday

In observation made at

4.00 p.m., Nanded, Gujarat recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 231 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gadag, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 12

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** 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<sub>2</sub>:** 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.

**PM2.5 & 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



H.D. Kumaraswamy

like her nor will get one like her in future," he said. Continuing his tirade against the independent MP, Mr. Kumaraswamy said: "She has been elected on sympathy. Let her work properly."

In response, Ms. Sumalatha said the remark displayed the mindset of the former Chief Minister.

Both States write to Central Ministries seeking action

B. CHANDRASHEKHAR  
HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have intensified the dispute of sharing of the Krishna waters – particularly in the wake of works on the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS) taken up by Andhra Pradesh and power generation at three inter-State projects by Telangana – by shooting letters to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, the Ministry of Environment and Forests and filing contempt plea in the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

In his letter to Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Mr. Reddy

sought notifying the jurisdiction of the KRMB covering all off-takes of irrigation and power on common reservoirs to stop indiscriminate drawal solely for power generation by Telangana.

Meanwhile, a few senior engineers in the Irrigation Department of Telangana, who spoke to *The Hindu*, said Mr. Reddy's letter to the MoEF amounted to openly influencing an independent committee [EAC] of MoEF and the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB).

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## Heavy weight

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is facing a crisis born out of his very success

The crisis in the Congress in Punjab has been smouldering beneath the surface for a long time, before the current eruption. Until a few months ago, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had appeared invincible and poised to lead the party to a second consecutive victory in the Assembly election due early next year. Rebel leader Navjot Singh Sidhu's relentless open battle against the Chief Minister has now cast a long shadow over the party's prospects. Mr. Sidhu, a party hopper driven by personal ambition, has by default become the champion of the resentment among party MLAs and workers against the Chief Minister's unilateralism. Mr. Singh was the sole architect of the Congress victory in 2017. After winning 77 of the State's 117 Assembly seats then, its victory march continued through the 2019 Lok Sabha and local body elections. But a streak of arrogance probably disconnected him from some sections of the party. His very strength – he is head and shoulders above any alternative, including Mr. Sidhu, within the Congress – seems to have opened up a weakness: so sure of his own indispensability, he had little time or patience for some of those in the lower rungs of the party. Congress MLAs complain of humiliation at the hand of bureaucrats and found their lives overshadowed by the giant figure of Mr. Singh.

Also, the performance of the Government is coming under scrutiny too. High power tariffs, power cuts, a high unemployment rate and unchecked drug trafficking have exposed the chinks in the armour of the Chief Minister. Faced with bad options, the Congress central leadership appointed a committee headed by Mallikarjun Kharge. It met with around 150 party leaders and submitted a report but that has only opened a Pandora's box. The Chief Minister took the committee deliberations as a slight, and his detractors, as an open season. Meanwhile, the unmistakable, though oblique, endorsement of Mr. Sidhu by the Gandhi family has complicated the scene further. The former cricketer is a recent entrant in Congress, after a cushy stopover in the BJP as Member of Parliament and contemplating a detour to the Aam Aadmi Party. As a life-long careerist with a reputation for a short temper, he is hardly the leader that critics of the Chief Minister yearn for. Punjab politics is in a churn due to the farmer agitation and an ongoing realignment of political forces. The SAD and BSP have formed a new alliance, and the BJP is left alone. Agitating farmers may have political plans in the coming months. The Congress central leadership and Mr. Singh must work together than at cross purposes to bring order within the party, so that the Government can steer the State's progress without the dramatic distractions.

## Trump again

The fraud charges are an opportunity for the GOP to find new leadership

The Trump Organization, the company owned by former U.S. President Donald Trump, has been charged by authorities in New York state on 15 felony counts including for committing a scheme to defraud, conspiracy, grand larceny, criminal tax fraud and falsifying business records. Prosecutors have also brought charges against a "sweeping and audacious" fraudulent scheme involving the firm's CFO taking more than \$1.7 million in undeclared remuneration from the company for personal expenses. While Mr. Trump has not been charged in this legal salvo, it is possible that that might happen in the future, should the investigation determine that he engaged in criminal conduct. Already, Mr. Trump's name was mentioned at several points in the indictment and the evidence at hand appeared to show that as the former CEO of the company, the 45th President of the U.S. had signed some of the illegal compensation cheques in the 15-year tax fraud scheme. There are also indications that the indictment might be the tip of the iceberg in relation to the extent of the New York District Attorney's investigation of the corporate practices of Mr. Trump and the Trump Organization. In May 2021, legal filings in New York revealed that the office of the DA, Cyrus Vance, was arguing in court that Mr. Trump's accountants were required to produce eight years of his personal and corporate tax returns in compliance with a grand jury subpoena. This hinted that what was originally suspected to be an inquiry into illicit payments made by Mr. Trump's associates, prior to the 2016 presidential election, to two women who said they had affairs with Mr. Trump, had expanded into a far-reaching investigation relating to bank and insurance fraud.

While Mr. Trump has characteristically attacked the ongoing indictment and broader case as a "political Witch Hunt by the Radical Left Democrats," there is no escaping the reality that if the charges stick and the investigation continues to broaden its scope, he will be hobbled by a political distraction should he attempt a second presidential run in 2024. There have been troubling questions about his business activities ever since he entered office, including, given that his real estate holdings were used for U.S. government activities, whether he was in violation of the Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The larger question, however, is the one facing the Republican Party as such: when the next presidential election rolls around, will it continue to place its faith in a man who despite claiming to be an outsider to Washington politics is evidently no different from any run-of-the-mill plutocrat or any networked member of corporate elite bent on maximising personal gain no matter the social cost? Should they do so for want of real leadership within their ranks, that would be a sad commentary on the state of and prospects for the conservative movement in the country.

# A virus, theories of origin, and a place for science

Polarisation on political lines will only create more hurdles in finding clear answers to the source of SARS-CoV-2



THOMAS ABRAHAM

**I**magine a town with a nuclear power plant close by. If its residents displayed signs of radiation sickness, the finger of suspicion will point towards the plant, however much the plant's operator might swear to its safety.

### Mirroring a scenario

Suppose the town was also home to a research centre where radioactive material was stored and used in experiments. The finger of suspicion would now waver between the nuclear plant and the research centre. To complicate matters, if nuclear waste from both the plant and the research centre was buried in an underground dump a fair distance away from the town, a third focus of suspicion would arise.

Public opinion would be divided. Those suspicious of the nuclear power industry would be convinced that the plant was the source of their pollution. Little bits of circumstantial evidence would begin to circulate on social media as well as in the opinion columns of newspapers pointing to the power plant.

The nuclear industry would fight back and accuse the research institute of causing a radiation leak. The scientific establishment would close ranks around the research lab and testify to safety standards in the laboratory as well as the quality of the researchers.

A third group of people would probably accuse both the power plant as well as the research institute of poisoning the world by using and storing toxic nuclear

waste.

Each of these groups would believe they had the truth and others were wrong. They would be critical of any investigation that did not agree with their beliefs.

### Hypothesis and evidence

The debate over the origins of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that has caused the COVID-19 pandemic, mirrors this scenario. One school of thought is convinced that the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a leading coronavirus research centre, is responsible for introducing a new coronavirus that it was secretly creating in its laboratories.

This hypothesis is driven by evidence ranging from reports of documents missing from the website of the Wuhan Institute, to the renaming or re-numbering of a virus originally discovered in a mine in 2012 that is the closest known ancestor to SARS-CoV-2, to reports of researchers mysteriously falling ill at the Wuhan Institute in late 2019, and other reports of a researcher who has reportedly gone missing.

The fact that the outbreak occurred in Wuhan, home to the institute, is seen as additional evidence of where the virus emerged from. This hypothesis is greatly favoured by those who believe China is responsible for the pandemic, but lacks evidence that would stand up to rigorous scientific scrutiny.

The second hypothesis is that the virus emerged through a natural "spillover" event, where a bat coronavirus jumped species and infected humans either directly or through intermediary animals that in turn passed it to humans. SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), the predecessor of this current pandemic, started similarly in late 2002 when a bat coronavirus probably infected animals and then humans in the markets of



Guangdong province in southern China. New viral infectious diseases, whether it is HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) or Nipah, have all arisen from spillovers of animal viruses to humans.

As with SARS, many of the early cases of COVID-19 were associated with animal markets, particularly the Huanan market in Wuhan, which sold a variety of live and frozen animal meat. This could be one route the SARS-CoV-2 virus took. But no evidence has been found so far to support this hypothesis either.

To find scientific proof of either hypothesis is a task as challenging as an archaeologist painstakingly digging through hundreds of metres of tightly packed layers of mud and stone and debris in the hope of recovering tiny clues to the existence of an ancient civilization.

For virologists and molecular epidemiologists, the challenge is not sifting through earth, but finding virus samples from the earliest stages of the outbreak in Wuhan, reconstructing their genetic sequences, and then fitting them to a family tree that will hopefully lead to the common ancestor of the diverse strains and variants of SARS-CoV-2 that have spread globally. This could also provide clues as to whether this ancestor emerged in wildlife, in farms and markets, or from a laboratory.

While this viral archaeology sounds simple, it is not straightfor-

ward. The earliest detected cases and the earliest viral samples came from those who were hospitalised in Wuhan in December 2019. But none of them is likely to have been patient zero, the first person to have been infected by the virus. Most people with COVID-19 display very mild or no symptoms, so for every hospitalised case, there are likely to have been many earlier cases that were not detected.

It is known that two strains, an A strain and a B strain, were circulating in Wuhan in the early stages of the outbreak. But most of the samples and cases were of the B strain, which caused the first recognised disease cluster in people associated with the Huanan market, while the A strain could have been an earlier strain. These earlier viral samples would have helped build a clearer picture of how the virus emerged. But these cases were never identified or sampled, and they will forever remain unknown.

The other source of evidence are samples from the live animals sold in all the markets in Wuhan in the last months of 2019; this too is also not available, since the animals have long been sold and slaughtered, and the markets more often than not sanitised. The samples that were collected in late December from the Huanan market did have the virus, but it is not clear whether the market was a source of the virus, or merely a place where it was amplified.

### The entry of politics

So where does one go from here? The scientific unearthing and classification of viral samples in humans and animals to see where they lead is the only way ahead. But science is being elbowed aside by politics. Those who believe in a Chinese conspiracy are convinced that the truth will only come out

after an investigation of the Wuhan laboratory and its staff by international investigators with a wide mandate to search the lab and question staff. This is not going to happen. China will no more allow this than India would allow international investigators to march through the National Institute of Virology in Pune or any other national laboratory in search of evidence of supposed wrongdoing.

### Chinese cooperation crucial

The only solution is to work with China. The World Health Organization investigation into the origins of the virus, though rightly criticised for dismissing the laboratory leak theory with little explanation, did unearth evidence on the early stages of the pandemic and suggested a number of studies for the next phase. One important step would be widespread sampling of animals in farms across China that supplied the markets in Wuhan in the search of ancestor viruses to SARS-CoV-2. Workers in farms need to be tested as well for exposure to SARS-CoV-2 or related viruses.

Another suggested step is for blood banks across China to test blood samples from 2019 to see whether they carried antibodies for SARS-CoV-2. This could provide a clue to how early the virus was circulating in human populations. None of this can happen without Chinese cooperation.

For this to happen, polarisation on political lines needs to be put aside, and space needs to be created for science to do its work.

Thomas Abraham is adjunct associate professor at the University of Hong Kong, and the author of *'Twenty-First Century Plague, the Story of SARS and Polio: The Odyssey of Eradication'*. He has been a communications adviser to the World Health Organization

## Gauging pandemic mortality with civil registration data

Underestimation is likely as the CRS is still an imperfect system, with potential sources of error



RUKMINI S.

**O**ver the last month, Indian journalists from across the country have accessed and reported on State-level all-cause mortality from the Civil Registration System (CRS), currently confidential and closed to the public. While India's official death toll from COVID-19 has been suspect from the very beginning – for reasons that are partly institutional and partly new and specific to the pandemic – it was the second wave that made the scale of devastation hard to ignore.

### States and data

Using the example set by those attempting to capture missed COVID-19 deaths in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Peru, journalists from a range of news organisations accessed all-cause mortality data from the CRS for Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, parts of Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and other States as well as for several Indian cities. This data has been able to show a large rise in excess mortality in the surge months of the second wave of April and May 2021 in particular, far in excess of the official COVID-19 toll for the same period. The increase in mortality ranges from reported deaths climbing to five times the usual monthly data in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra

### Undeniable undercounting

Even with the most conservative estimates, there was significant excess mortality in 2021, far in excess of the official COVID-19 toll

States	Modelled estimate for 2021*	Reported deaths in 2021	Excess	Official COVID-19 toll
Madhya Pradesh	2,30,628	3,48,708	1,18,080	4,461
Andhra Pradesh	1,46,046	2,72,910	1,26,864	3,822
Tamil Nadu	2,05,327	3,18,425	13,098	12,110
Kerala	1,01,160	1,15,471	14,312	5,743

\*Estimated deaths as of 2019 recalculated for five months  
Note: Bihar is excluded from this analysis as its level of registration is only 51%

Pradesh (between 30-40 times the official COVID-19 toll for the same period), to more modest increases in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

### Sources of error

While this data has added an important dimension to the question of undercounting of COVID-19 deaths in India and remains the best source of data on all-cause mortality, its continued use will require careful work on account of some known sources of error that exist with the data.

The first is that these numbers are underestimates of total mortality. The Union government last published annual Civil Registration System data for 2019. This data shows that India registered 92 of every 100 deaths as of 2019, but there was large variation between States. Bihar, for instance, registered just half of all deaths. Additionally, the data currently available on State-level CRS portals (behind a login) miss even more deaths. The CRS moved online re-

latively recently (between five and three years ago in most States), and State-level portals now display data for every day from January 1, 2018 to the present day. For all States for which data is available except Kerala, the online portals show lower numbers than what was published by the Union government for 2018 and 2019. What this implies is that the data currently being used for analyses are an underestimate of total deaths, but should not by itself cause an inflation of the excess mortality estimates for the pandemic (since the online portal's data was used for past and current years).

What could, however, alter the magnitude of calculated excess mortality would be a second possible source of error – if mortality was either naturally increasing over time, or if registration was getting better, or if both were taking place. If any of these three phenomena were taking place, the magnitude of excess mortality in 2020 and 2021 could be moderated by

the most conservative estimate, let us assume that Madhya Pradesh achieved 100% registration by May 2021 (although we know from State level data that this was far from the case). Given the flattening of mortality in the State, let us assume that the total mortality in 2021 in 'normal' times would have been about the same as the total estimated deaths for 2019 – 5.53 lakh deaths. Even

then, the numbers for Madhya Pradesh show over 1.18 lakh excess deaths in 2021, which is over 26 times the official COVID-19 death toll for the same period. The other States too show excess mortality in 2021 even assuming full registration.

Moreover, single-month spikes in months like the one seen in May 2021 cannot be explained away by the gradual increase in registrations alone. Nor are these deaths that occurred months before. From Andhra Pradesh, for instance, we know that 98% of the deaths registered in May 2021 took place within the previous 30 days.

### An imperfect resource

Taken together, these potential sources of error indicate that while the total number of deaths in India during the pandemic reported using Civil Registration System data might be an underestimate, a part of the increase in mortality can be explained by improved registration. However, the scale of excess mortality during the second wave in particular is undeniable, especially compared to the low number of COVID-19 deaths officially recorded in the same period.

The Civil Registration System is an imperfect system, yet one that journalists are having to turn to in the face of the continuing refusal of the Union government to engage with the issue of the true extent of mortality. Acknowledging the gaps in the system will help journalists, but does not minimise the magnitude of the crisis.

Rukmini S. is an independent journalist

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Afghan's descent

Afghanistan seems to be, ominously, on the brink of a dreadful civil war (Page 1, "Taliban capture several districts in Afghanistan", July 5). What is appalling is that in the ensuing power struggle between the Afghan security forces and the Taliban, the extremist, war-happy Taliban seems to be gaining an upper hand. With the embers of militancy and extremism flaring up, the beleaguered Afghan government is naturally feeling let down by the United States and its allies. Apparently, the remedy of the U.S. and its allies for peace in Afghanistan is worse than

the malady.

Unfortunately for India, which has contributed immensely in rebuilding the war-torn nation, the rise of the anti-India Taliban bodes ill, especially when China has been making inroads into Afghanistan. However, the biggest lesson the Afghan imbroglio has is for the U.S. Be it its interference in Vietnam, Iraq or now Afghanistan, it seems to have received a bloody nose by playing the global policeman. It should now realise that maintaining global peace is the prerogative of the UN.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

### The Rafale deal

With the war of words between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress getting uglier by the day over an investigation into the Rafale deal, citizens are not getting any wiser in the absence of any official response from the Government on the issue. The details of why the French agency is now reasonably satisfied about the need for a judicial investigation into the deal cannot be brushed aside. The Indian government can no longer be disingenuous about allegations of wrong-doing. The Opposition, and the Congress in particular, has

been vociferous in its demand to have a joint parliamentary committee to probe various questionable aspects of the deal including pricing; and this cannot be ignored (Page 1, "Cong. calls for probe into Rafale deal", July 5).

S.K. CHOUDHURY,  
Bengaluru

There is still a lingering suspicion that the deal was not entirely free from the taint of kickbacks or the underhand payment of 'hidden commission'. Sometimes 'influence peddlers', 'money launderers' and 'middlemen' masquerade as 'facilitators'</p

# Crafting a unique partnership with Africa

The future of India-Africa cooperation is agriculture, even as the China factor looms large



VEDA VAIDYANATHAN

"A historical solidarity is today a modern partnership," tweeted External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during his recent trip to Kenya. Critical to its foreign policy matrix, New Delhi's engagement with the African continent has been multifaceted, with projects implemented under Indian lines of credit, capacity-building initiatives, and cooperation in a range of sectors. As an importer of fruits, nuts, grains and pulses from the continent, Indian congruence with African countries in the agriculture sector is expanding. With 65% of the world's uncultivated arable land, employing over 60% of the workforce, and accounting for almost 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP, agriculture is critical to Africa's economy. The African Continental Free Trade Area agreement is expected to improve cost competitiveness by removing tariffs. As this relationship enters the post-pandemic world, it is vital to prioritise and channel resources into augmenting partnership in agriculture. This is crucial given its unexplored potential, centrality to global food security, business prospects and to provide credible alternatives to the increasing involvement of Chinese stakeholders in the sector.

#### Analysing Chinese engagement

Over the past few years, I have led and worked with different teams of experts from various African countries, conducting evidence-based studies at the grassroots level to demystify Chinese engagement in the region. Evaluating the approaches that Chinese corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs adopt has provided a layered perspective of the sociopolitical, economic and environmental impact of Chinese engagement.

Today, China is among Africa's largest trading partners. It is also Africa's single biggest creditor. Its corporations dominate the region's infrastructure market and are now entering the agri-infra sector. Increasingly critical to China's global aspirations, its engagement in African agriculture is taking on a strateg-



ic quality. Therefore, dismissing Beijing's engagement in African agriculture as inconsequential for New Delhi would be unwise.

While access to Africa's natural resources, its untapped markets and support for 'One China Policy' are primary drivers of Chinese engagement with the region, there are other factors at play. Chinese-built industrial parks and economic zones in Africa are attracting low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing units that are relocating from China. Chinese engineers interviewed spoke of how their operations in Africa are important to accumulate global experience in management, risk and capital investments. Not only are they willing to overlook short-term profits in order to build 'brand China', but they want to dominate the market in the long term, which includes pushing Chinese standards in host countries. Chinese tech companies are laying critical telecommunications infrastructure, venture capital funds are investing in African fintech firms, while other smaller enterprises are expanding across the region.

While many Chinese entities have been active in Africa's agricultural landscape for decades now, the nature, form and actors involved have undergone substantial change. In Zambia, Chinese firms are introducing agri-tech to combat traditional challenges, such as using drone technology to control the fall armyworm infestation. They have set up over 20 Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers (ATDCs) in the continent where Chinese agronomists work on developing new crop varieties and increasing crop yields. These ATDCs partner with local universities, conduct workshops and classes for officials and provide training and lease equipment to small holder farmers. Chinese companies with no prior experience in agriculture are setting out to build futuristic

ecological parks while others are purchasing large-scale commercial farms. Furthermore, African agriculture experts, officials and farmers are provided opportunities to augment skills and be trained in China.

The exponential growth in the China-Africa economic ties and the emergence of Beijing as an alternate to traditional western powers has motivated change in perceptions across groups. Governments and heads of state are recalibrating approaches, media houses are investing more resources for on-the-ground-reporting and artists like Michael Soi in Kenya are using satirical paintings to start a dialogue. Simultaneously, Africa-China relations are becoming complex with a growing, insular diaspora, lopsided trade, looming debt, competition with local businesses and a negative perception accompanied by greater political and socioeconomic interlinkages.

Examining Chinese interactions also provides cues on what not to do. The Chinese and African experts working in ATDCs seemingly operate in silos. On occasion, there seems to be a gap between skills transferred in China and the ground realities in Africa. In some cases, the technology taught in China is not available locally and in others, there is inability to implement lessons learnt due to the absence of supporting resources.

Larger commercial farms run by Mandarin-speaking managers and the presence of small-scale Chinese farmers in local markets aggravates socio-cultural stresses.

#### Takeaways for India

India-Africa agricultural cooperation currently includes institutional and individual capacity-building initiatives such as the India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural development in Malawi, extension of soft loans, supply of machinery, acquisition of farmlands and the presence

of Indian entrepreneurs in the African agricultural ecosystem. Indian farmers have purchased over 6,000,000 hectares of land for commercial farming in Africa. Sub-national actors are providing another model of cooperation in agriculture. Consider the case of the Kerala government trying to meet its steep requirement for raw cashew nuts amounting to 8 lakh tonnes a year with imports from countries in Africa to complement its production capacity currently limited to 0.83 lakh tonnes. There are also proposals to create a jointly-owned brand of Africa-Kollam cashews. Similar ideas could encourage State governments and civil society organisations to identify opportunities and invest directly.

There is also promise in incentivising Indian industries to tap into Africa's agri-business value chains and connecting Indian technology firms and startups with partners in Africa. The transformative power of innovative and disruptive technology has been evident in the African agri-tech sector as the startup ecosystem in the continent enjoyed a 110% growth between 2016 and 2018. In the past year, despite the pandemic, the sector witnessed a record increase in investments.

A thorough impact assessment needs to be conducted of the existing capacity-building initiatives in agriculture for India to stand in good stead. This could include detailed surveys of participants who have returned to their home countries. Country-specific and localised curriculum can be drawn up, making skill development demand-led.

While India's Africa strategy exists independently, it is important to be cognisant of China's increasing footprint in the region. Beijing's model, if successful here, could be heralded as a replica for the larger global south.

It is important to note, however, that prominent African voices have emphasised that their own agency is often overlooked in global discourse on the subject. In that sense India has consistently chosen well to underline the development partnership to be in line with African priorities. It is pertinent, therefore, that we collectively craft a unique modern partnership with Africa.

Veda Vaidyanathan is a Visiting Associate Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi and is currently based in New York

# Will a national judiciary work?

In the current context, the feasibility of the All India Judicial Service requires to be studied



RAJNISH PATHIYIL

The Union government appears to be steadfast in its resolve to implement reforms in recruitment and appointment to the subordinate judicial services. In 2019, it spearheaded a consultative process for the creation of the All India Judicial Service (AIJS). Initially, only four States and two High Courts supported the proposal. Eight States rejected it, five suggested changes, and 11 are yet to respond. Recently, the Centre took the ordinance route to effect changes in the appointment of members to various tribunals. In a single stroke, it abolished several tribunals. The manner of appointment of members to the remaining tribunals underwent a sea change. It is likely that the ordinance may not pass judicial scrutiny in light of the Supreme Court's judgment in *Royer Mathew v. South Indian Bank* (2019).

#### Constitutional perspective

Article 233(I) of the Constitution lays down that "appointments of persons to be, and the posting and promotion of, district judges in any State shall be made by the Governor of the State in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State".

The 42nd Constitutional amendment in 1976 amended Article 312 (I) empowering Parliament to make laws for the creation of one or more All-India Services, including an AIJS, common to the Union and the States. However, Clause 3 of Article 312 places a restriction that such a service shall not include a post inferior to that of a district judge. The amendment also brought about a significant change in the Seventh Schedule – Entry 3 of List II in its entirety was placed as Entry IIA in List III.

This paves the way for Parliament to enact laws with regard to 'Administration of Justice; constitution and organisation of all courts, except the Supreme Court and the High Courts'. Post-Emergency, amendment to Article 312 (I) has escaped parliamentary scrutiny. A dichotomy exists with regard to Articles 233 and 312. What was essentially intended to be the prerogative of the State will now be the prerogative of the Union. If the fundamental power of the States to make such rules and govern the appointment of district judges is taken away, it may be against the principle of federalism and the basic structure doctrine.

The First Law Commission deliberated upon this, but it was only in 1972 that the is-

sue gained momentum. The views of the Chief Justice of India and the Law Commission reports perhaps paved the way to bring in the 42nd constitutional amendment. It was only in 1986 that the Law Commission resurrected the issue and deliberated upon the objections. The primary fear was that promotional avenues of the subordinate judiciary would be severely curtailed. Fifty per cent of the posts of district judges are to be filled by promotion from the subordinate judicial service, thus leaving open the remaining for direct recruitment. Another fundamental concern was the language barrier.

The Union Law Minister has extolled AIJS to be an ideal solution for equal representation of the marginalised and deprived sections of society. Most States already have a reservation policy in force. Tamil Nadu provides for a roster-based reservation of 69%, of which 30% is for women. Uttar Pradesh merely provides 20% reservation for women and the AIJS may therefore benefit States like U.P. Arguments that the AIJS will reduce judicial delays do not hold water as the subordinate courts are the crucial point of delays owing to the existence of large vacancies.

In the early 1960s, the issue was debated during the Chief Justice Conference and was favoured by the eminent body, but many States and High Courts opposed it. The First National Judicial Pay Commission found that it would be in the interest and the health of the judiciary to form an AIJS. The report supported and reiterated the recommendations of the 14th Law Commission.

In the *All-India Judges* case in 1992 the apex court had opined that the recommendations of the Law Commission should be examined and implemented. The issue was again discussed in *All India Judges Association vs. Union of India* (2002). The court accepted most recommendations of the Shetty Commission and directed the government to implement the judgment.

Any groundbreaking reform is bound to receive criticism. The National Commission constituted for review of the Constitution headed by luminaries including Justice H.R. Khanna, Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy and K. Parasaran, the then Attorney General, had suggested a paradigm shift in the approach of the Union. The feasibility of the AIJS in the current context requires to be studied, especially when reliance is placed upon archaic reports of the Law Commission. It is for the Union to dispel doubts and at the same time give wings to the aspirations of all stakeholders when implementing the proposal. It, however, remains to be seen if the AIJS would be like the proverbial curate's egg.

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# Inadequate promises for Punjab

Kejriwal may have over-estimated the ability of doles to see the AAP through in the 2022 elections

TRIDIVESH SINGH MAINI

During his visit to Punjab on June 29, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that if the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is voted to power in the 2022 Assembly elections, it would provide 300 units free electricity for each family and waive previous power bills. He did clarify that while the promise of providing 24-hour electricity would take time, waiver on power bills would be immediate.

Days earlier, he had also said that AAP would project a Sikh as the chief ministerial face of his party. Not projecting a local Punjabi face was cited as one of the reasons for the party being unable to form the government in 2017, in spite of a groundswell of support.

While projecting a local face is imperative, Mr. Kejriwal may have over-estimated the ability of doles to see the AAP through in the 2022 elections. While populism has worked in the past, there are other issues which need to be addressed.

**Issues that need to be addressed**

First, while many people look at the Delhi AAP government's focus on health and education with interest, there is clear understanding that there are significant differences between Punjab and Delhi in terms of the economic landscape.

Second, there is a growing clamour for a government which gives primacy to the State's long-term interests. Over the past two decades, when it was in an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) had kept mum on important issues related to Centre-State relations. There has thus been a clear void as far as effective articulation of Punjab's regional aspirations and a number of Sikh issues is concerned. The Chief Minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, in spite of his proximity to the Congress high command, was perceived to be vocal in safeguarding the State's interests. His triumph in 2017 can be attributed to the same, though in his current tenure he has failed to live up to that reputation.

It is true that after breaking its alliance with the BJP after the passage

of three farm bills, SAD has been making the right noises on issues pertaining to federalism and also attempted to find common cause with other regional parties. But a large section of what comprised its core support base is still disenchanted due to the incidents of sacrifice of the Guru Granth Sahib and the killing of peaceful protesters during the tenure of the SAD government. While SAD has allied with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for the upcoming Assembly elections, there are murmurs that it could return to the BJP.

**Making inroads into Punjab**

If one were to look at the AAP, there is some interest in its governance model in Punjab. But there are concerns about its sidetracking of local leaders during the earlier election and its ambiguity on issues concerning Punjab, specifically on the river water issue. Apart from this, the high command culture of the party, like in other national parties, is not likely to go down well with voters.

Third, from a political standpoint, the AAP has little support in the Malwa region, but no support in Doaba or Majha. It may be able to make some inroads into these regions if it ties up with a breakaway group of the SAD, the SAD (Sanyukt). Also, if the AAP can draw a sizeable chunk of urban votes, which generally go to the BJP or Congress, it could be in a pole position. Finally, there is a growing awareness about the pitfalls of populism. While there has been opposition to the farm laws, the detrimental impact of the current wheat-paddy cycle which has caused the water levels to drop and impacted the environment has not gone unnoticed.

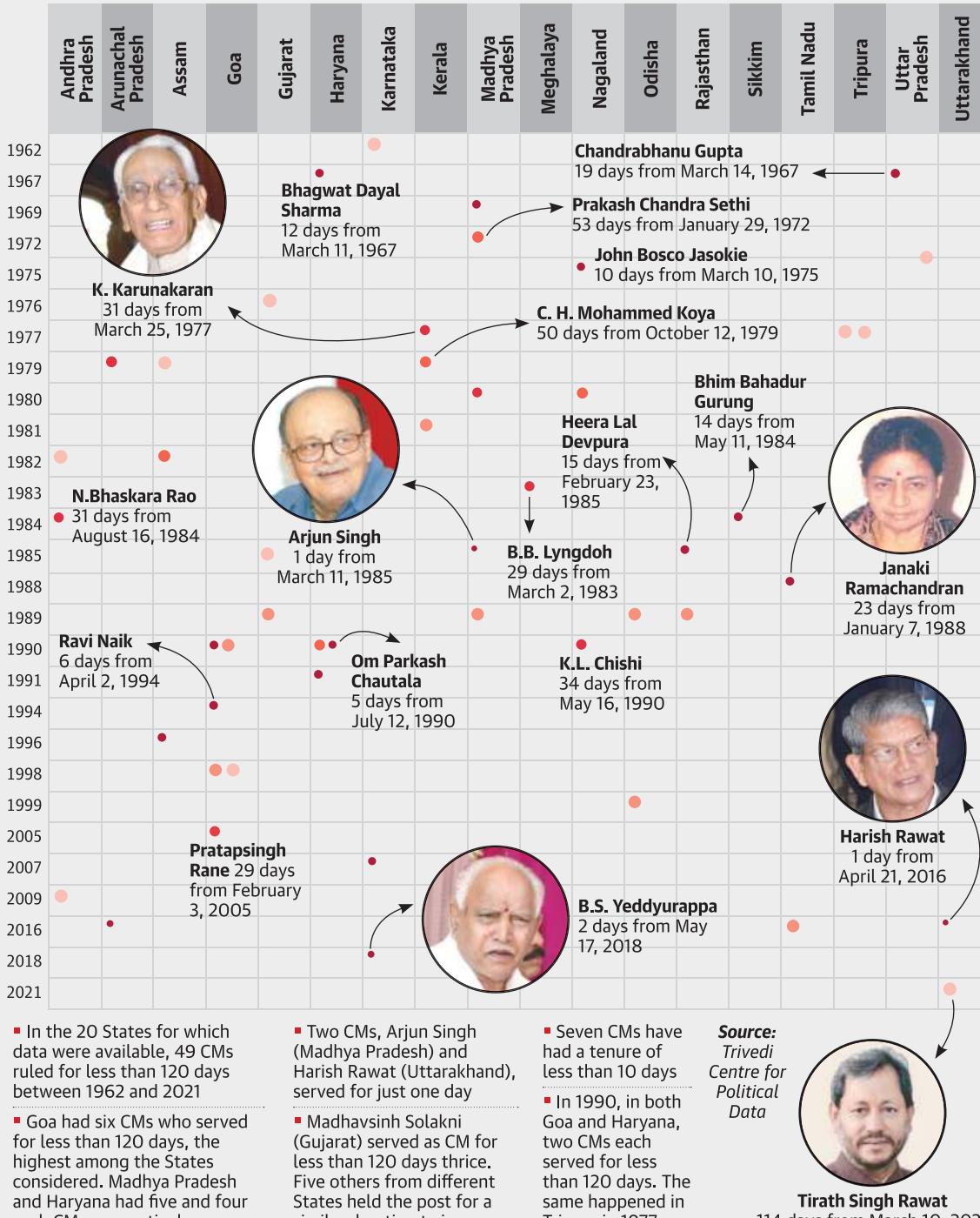
Punjab's political landscape is witnessing an interesting churn. There is a general consensus that a futuristic vision for Punjab which gives precedence to the State's interests is imperative. Unlike West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, the regional party of the State which is best placed to do that, the SAD, has failed in recent decades.

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#### DATA POINT

## Short stints at the top

Just 114 days after taking charge as the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, Tirath Singh Rawat resigned on July 2, as the six-month deadline for him to get elected to the Assembly was fast approaching. Due to the pandemic, the Election Commission has not yet decided to hold by-elections to various Rajya Sabha and Assembly seats vacant across the country. In at least 44 instances, Chief Ministers held the office for less than 114 days, an analysis of those who came to power between 1962 and 2021 across 20 States, shows. The graph depicts all the CMs who lasted less than 120 days. The smaller and darker the circle, the shorter the tenure. By The Hindu Data Team



#### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 6, 1971

Details on West Pakistanis

India is prepared to consider Pakistan's request for information on West Pakistanis who have taken shelter in India from East Bengal "on humanitarian grounds" if Pakistan will also act according to the norms of international law and procedure in regard to more than 250 Indians languishing in Pakistani jails, official sources said to-day [New Delhi, July 5]. The sources were commenting on the Pakistani Foreign Office statement on Friday alleging that India was holding back several Pakistani Government officials, businessmen and tea-estate owners who had sought shelter in India during the "disturbances in East Pakistan". The Pakistani newspapers, television and radio had played up this allegation and Mr. Aftab Ahmed Khan, Director-General in the Pakistani Foreign Office, had also spoken about this to India's acting High Commissioner in Islamabad. The Pakistani press had also reported that the Pakistani Government had approached the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, and "friendly governments to arrange relief and repatriation of the "East Pakistani nationals".

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 6, 1921

How to boycott foreign goods

Mr. M.K. Gandhi writes in the "Bombay Chronicle": It is needless to say at this time of the day that the proposed boycott of foreign cloth is not a vindictive process, but is as necessary for national existence as breath is to life. The quicker therefore it can be brought about the better for the country. Without it Swaraj cannot be established or retained after establishment. It is of the highest importance to know how it can be brought about even before the 1st day of August next. To arrive at the boycott quickly, it is necessary for (1) the mill-owners to regularise their profits and to manufacture principally for the Indian market; (2) for importers to cease to buy foreign goods. A beginning has already been made by three principal merchants; (3) for the consumers to refuse to buy any foreign cloth and to buy Khadi wherever possible; (4) for the consumers to wear only Khadi cloth, mill cloth being retained for the poor who do not know the distinction between Swadeshi and Pardesi; (5) for the consumers to use, till Swaraj is established and Khadi manufacture increased, Khadi just enough for covering the body...

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Political leaders call for accountability

General secretary of the Communist Party of India D. Raja said Fr. Swamy's death was an institutional murder. "Both the State machinery and the judiciary are responsible for his death. The State was not ready to give him even a straw... The judiciary's conduct is also questionable. On what grounds did they deny bail to a 84-year-old person who was suffering from multiple illness."

Kavita Krishnan, member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) politburo, hit out at the Central government as well as the judiciary over Fr. Swamy's death. "Modi & Shah have accomplished the custodial killing of the gentle Jesuit social worker Fr Stan Swamy,"

who spent his life serving the oppressed. I hope the judges who denied him bail never get to sleep at night: they have blood on their hands," she said in a tweet.

CPI (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said he was "deeply pained and outraged" at the death of Fr. Stan. "...A Jesuit priest & social activist he tirelessly helped the marginalised. Draconian UAPA custody, inhuman treatment since October 2020 with no charge established," he said in a tweet.

Dr. Stanislaus D'Souza S.J. of the Jesuit Provincial of India, said: "I express my deepest condolences to the family members, friends, lawyers, well-wishers and all those who stood by Stan."

## CBSE to cut syllabus, hold board exams in Nov., April

Schools must create a student profile for all assessment undertaken over the year and retain the evidence in digital format, with marks uploaded onto CBSE's IT platform, said the notification.

The CBSE has made provisions for different assessment scenarios depending on the pandemic situation.

If both term exams are held, the final theory marks will be equally split between the two. If the pandemic forces complete school closures in November and December, the first term exams will be conducted online or in homes, and would carry reduced weightage in the final results.

## SC aghast that Section 66A of IT Act is still used

"And not being Mr. Venugopal, he [police officer] does not read the footnote..." Justice Nariman said light-heartedly.

But Justice Nariman agreed with Mr. Parikh that the "state of affairs is shocking". He said the court had to intervene and work out a mechanism to disseminate the Shreya Singhal judgment to every police station and trial court in the country.

"Yes, we will work out something," Justice Nariman

assured. The government was given two weeks to file its reply and the PUCL was given a week to file its rejoinder.

The case would be listed for hearing after this.

The NGO wanted the Supreme Court to direct the government, through the National Crime Records Bureau or any other agency, to collect all the data/information regarding FIRs/investigations under Section 66A and pending cases in district and High Courts.

## Twitter failed to comply with IT Rules: Centre

In India, Section 79 of the IT Act shields social media platforms or intermediaries such as Twitter from liability for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by it in certain cases.

The Ministry said when an intermediary fails to observe the IT Rules, the intermediary could be liable for any punishment under any law for the time being in force in respect of the offending content.

The Ministry stated that the immunity conferred on

intermediaries is a "conditional immunity" subject to the intermediary satisfying the various conditions.

"The IT Rules, 2021 are the law of the land and Respondent No. 2 (Twitter) is mandatorily required to comply with the same," it added.

The Ministry's affidavit came in response to a petition by advocate Amit Acharya, seeking to appoint a Resident Grievance Officer under Rule 4 of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Ethics Code) Rules 2021.

## Facial recognition used to verify jab beneficiaries'

"However, MoHFW failed to specify any legislative or legal order that authorised the use of FRT nor could they provide copies of any relevant privacy impact assessment," the IFF said, adding that the reply stated that use of FRT for verification of the beneficiaries' data would be according to the terms furnished in the 'Verifier & Vaccinator Module User Manual' included in the CoWin portal. However, the

manual was not available on the CoWin portal or any open source webpage.

The IFF said the government was also unable to provide any information related to the accuracy of the FRT used, any third party assessments that may have been conducted and the exhaustive list of databases with which the facial recognition technology will be linked in order to identify individuals.

## 12 MLAs suspended for a year from Maharashtra Assembly

BJP MLAs were 'abusing' the presiding officer

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Twelve BJP MLAs have been suspended from the Maharashtra Assembly for one year for "abusing" and "misbehaving" with the presiding officer in chair, both inside and outside the Assembly. The Assembly also passed two resolutions asking the Union government to intervene in the issue of reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Maratha community.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anil Parab presented a resolution to suspend the MLAs and the House passed it on a majority vote. The BJP, while boycotting the House, termed it an act to suppress its voice and an attempt to bring down the number of the Opposition.

The MLAs – Sanjay Kute, Ashish Shelar, Abhimanyu Pawar, Girish Mahajan, Atul Bhathalkar, Harish Pimple, Jaikumar Rawal, Yogesh Sagar, Narayan Kuche, Bunty Bhangdiya, Parag Alvani and Ram Satpute – will be barred from entering the Assembly premises for the next 12 months.

The ruckus inside the Assem-

by took place as the tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government brought a resolution seeking empirical data on OBCs from the Union government.

Leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis raised a point of objection before senior Minister Chhagan Bhujbal presented the resolution, claiming that the State government did not follow the Supreme Court's directions for 15 months.

After allowing Mr. Fadnavis to speak, Shiv Sena MLA Bhaskar Jadhav, who was the presiding officer in the Speakers' chair, directed Mr. Bhujbal to read out the reply and present the resolution.

As he did



First day, first show: CM Uddhav Thackeray and other leaders on the first day of the monsoon session on Monday. ■ PTI

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# Fr. Swamy had a long list of ailments

He told Bombay High Court that his health completely deteriorated after being sent to Taloja prison

**SONAM SAIGAL**  
MUMBAI

Father Stan Swamy had told the Bombay High Court that he preferred to die in prison rather than get treated in any hospital.

On May 21, a committee of doctors, led by the dean of J.J. Hospital, examined Father Swamy. Their report said, "He has bilateral upper limb tremors, bilateral hearing loss, generalised weakness, occasional loose stools, and occasional lower back pain. He had tremors in both upper limbs and these tremors increased in action and in different postures. He had sluggish reflexes in lower limbs and normal reflexes in upper limbs. He had an imbalance of gait. His audiogram showed that he had moderately severe sensorineural hearing loss in the right ear and severe sensorineural hearing loss in the left." The committee advised that he should be provided with physical assistance, physical support in the form of a walking stick and a wheelchair as per requirement.

A Division Bench of Justic-

## Legal battle of an activist-priest

The long battle of Jesuit priest Stan Swamy ever since he was made an accused in the Bhima Koregaon violence that broke out on December 31, 2017:

**2018**

**August 22:** Pune police name Fr. Swamy as an accused in the FIR

**October 26:** HC grants protection against arrest

**December 14:** HC rejects his plea to quash FIR

**2020**

**October 8:** NIA arrests Fr. Swamy and takes him to Taloja Central Jail

**October 23:** Special NIA court rejects his interim medical bail

**November 6:** He moves court seeking permission to allow a straw and a sipper

**November 26:** NIA says it does not have a straw and a sipper

**December 4:** Fr. Swamy receives straw and sipper

**2021**

**March 22:** Special NIA court rejects medical bail

**April 26:** Fr. Swamy moves HC in appeal

**May 4:** Fr. Swamy suffers cardiac arrest and is put on ventilator

**July 5:** Fr. Swamy passes away at 1.24 p.m.

STAN SWAMY

**May 4:** HC orders Maharashtra government to file its medical report

**May 21:** Fr. Swamy tells HC that he can't walk or eat

**May 28:** Court directs that Fr. Swamy be shifted to a private hospital

**May 30:** Fr. Swamy tests positive for COVID-19

**June 17:** HC says he has critical medical issues and will remain in private hospital

**July 4:** Fr. Swamy suffers cardiac arrest and is put on ventilator

**July 5:** Fr. Swamy passes away at 1.24 p.m.

## Jailed on false charges, says UN official

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Father Stan Swamy was imprisoned on "false charges of terrorism", a top UN official said.

The concerns of Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, were shared by Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights, who said the EU had been "repeatedly" raising his case with India.

...  
ters IV [punishment for terrorist activities] and VI [terrorist organisations] of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against the applicant is *prima facie* true. Considering the express bar imposed by Section 43D(5) [no person accused with chapters IV and VI shall be released on bail], he cannot be released on bail."

...  
organisation, hatched a serious conspiracy to create unrest in the entire country and to overpower the government, politically and by using muscle power."

On March 22, 2021, judge D.E. Kothalikar said, "There are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation of commission of the offences punishable under chap-

...  
al health completely deteriorated after he was sent to Taloja prison and that there is a lot of give and take in the prison". He insisted that he should get interim bail.

While rejecting Father Swamy's medical bail, the special NIA court said, "*Prima facie* it can be gathered that Fr. Stan, along with other members of the banned

...  
organisation, hatched a serious conspiracy to create unrest in the entire country and to overpower the government, politically and by using muscle power."

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# He fought tirelessly for *jal*, jungle and *zameen* for tribals

A caged bird can still sing, he had said in prison

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

Father Stanislaus LourduSwamy, who was popularly known as Father Stan Swamy, was born in Tiruchirappalli in the then Madras Presidency on April 26, 1937. He had been a priest for 51 years and fought tirelessly for *jal* (water), jungle (forest) and *zameen* (land) for the tribal people.

Father Swamy, who passed away at 1.24 p.m. on Monday, was arrested on October 8, 2020, by the National Investigation Agency from Bagachia in Ranchi, where he lived.

Father Tony, who lived with Father Swamy at Bagachia for several years, said, "His life was very inspiring to me personally. He always stood up for those who were denied justice, especially the Adivasis. He was moved by how they were denied the fundamental rights and always tried to work for them. He always stood up for those displaced and constantly wrote about their rights. It

always inspired me."

Advocate Peter Martin, who filed the public interest litigation petition on behalf of Father Swamy before the Jharkhand High Court, said, "The irony is that he was so engaged in the work for the under-trial people implicated in false cases and he died as an under-trial."

Activist Siraj Datta, who worked with him on several issues for close to a decade, said, "He was a wonderful human being. He was extremely committed to working for the voiceless people and helped them get their due."

N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu* and Director, THG Publishing Private Ltd.; former Supreme Court Judge Justice Madan Lokur, and writer Nayantara Sahgal spoke at an online condolence meeting for Father Swamy.

**Very courageous:** N. Ram Mr. Ram recollects his time with Jesuits in college and their commitment towards

the marginalised and the poor. He said, "Father Stan was very courageous and stoic and was on a mission to work for the tribals. I would like to call attention to the authoritarian and communal trends that we see around us with a number of injustices, human rights violations of law."

Mr. Ram also spoke about co-accused Sudha Bharadwaj in the case.

"Let us not forget Sudha Bharadwaj, who has been languishing in Byculla jail for two-and-a-half years. This just shows a very poor commentary on courts for not acting in time. The way institutions are being manipulated to obey the diktats coming from above. We have to bring more solidarity in our polity," he said.

Mr. Lokur observed, "I am disappointed with the courts and prosecution in this case. This is 'inhuman'."

While in prison, Father Swamy had said, "We will still sing in chorus. A caged bird can still sing."

# Union Cabinet likely to be expanded this week

24 slots vacant, with Ministers holding multiple portfolios

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

The long-anticipated reshuffle and expansion of the Union Cabinet is likely to take place this week, according to highly placed sources.

The expansion, with 24 slots to fill and multiple Ministries held by single Ministers to be decoupled, has been talked about for a while now. The possibility of it happening either on July 7 or 9 is now being talked about with more certainty.

Several shoo-ins in the Union Cabinet, including a leader from north-central India who is owed a ministerial berth as a political *quid pro quo* and a leader from eastern India, have cancelled their travel plans and have been asked to be in Delhi on those dates.

**Party appointments**  
Sources in the BJP said the Cabinet expansion will also affect the organisational appointments in the party as a senior general secretary of the BJP is expected to get a Cabinet berth.



Jyotiraditya Scindia is likely to be included.

Government sources were largely mum but did say that the inductions would take into account the needs of the States going to the polls next year, including Uttar Pradesh, from where Anupriya Patel of NDA ally Apna Dal is likely to be inducted. "Multiple Ministries are currently being handled by one Minister or other – there are four such clusters of Ministries that need to be redistributed and the Cabinet reshuffle exercise is likely to address that issue," said a source.

According to the Constitu-

# Sonia to meet Amarinder today

Formula likely to end tussle with Sidhu

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing political turmoil in Punjab, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is likely to meet Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday to give a final shape to a compromise formula to end the bitter factionalism.

The party had announced that by the first week of July, it hoped to put the infighting behind it.

For the past several weeks now, the State has witnessed a very public feud between the Chief Minister and cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu. Last week, Mr. Sidhu had an hour-long meeting with former party chief Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra where his role in the Punjab Congress is said to have been discussed.

Prior to that, Mr. Sidhu and Captain Amarinder had separately met the three-member All India Congress Committee (AICC) that had been set up to resolve the issue.

The AICC panel – comprising Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Malli-



Sonia Gandhi

CYK

# Alliance vows to reverse changes of Aug. 2019

Parties to decide on delimitation panel

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR

The five-party People's Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) in Jammu and Kashmir, which held a series of meetings on Sunday, reiterated that all parties would "fight together to reverse the unconstitutional and unacceptable changes foisted on the people of J&K on August 5, 2019 using all constitutional, legal and political means at its disposal".

"The PAGD's struggle for undoing these changes will continue as long as it takes while striving to achieve this objective as early as possible," it said.

The alliance's stand assumes significance as it comes a day ahead of the visit of the J&K Delimitation Commission to hold meetings with political parties, civil society groups and the officials.

PAGD vice-chairperson Mehbooba Mufti of the Peoples Democratic Party, M.Y. Tarigami of the CPI(M), Justice Hasnain Masoodi (retd.) of the National Conference, Javed Mustafa Mir of the J&K Peoples Movement and Muzaffar Ahmed Shah of the Awami National Conference

The struggle for undoing these changes will continue as long as it takes while striving to achieve this objective as early as possible

met on Sunday under the chairmanship of Farooq Abdullah at his residence in Srinagar.

"It was called to discuss the recent meeting chaired by the Prime Minister in Delhi on June 24," Mr. Tarigami, who is the alliance spokesman, said.

**Party-level decision**  
He said the political parties associated with the alliance "will take a decision about meeting the delimitation panel at the party level".

The Commission, which is arriving on July 6 for a four-day visit, has invited the political parties in the Union Territory, besides the five members – two MPs from the BJP and three from the NC.

It has sought suggestions before redrawing the boundaries of seven new constituencies.

# Alliance vows to reverse changes of Aug. 2019

Parties to decide on delimitation panel

**PEERZADA ASHIQ**  
SRINAGAR

Bids are invited from eligible architects for Providing Design/Architectural Consultancy Services for Construction of PGIMER Satellite Centre, Una, Himachal Pradesh, a 300 Bedded Hospital with allied services and facilities to be executed on EPC basis.

**Estimated Cost** **Cost of RFP/ Bid Document** **Last Date to submit Bids**

Rs. 283 Cr. Rs. 5,600/- inclusive of GST 26.07.2021 up to 15:00 hrs

For details, please visit CPP portal [www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in). Amendments, if any, will be notified on the portal only.

Vice President (ID), HITES Sd/- Managing Director

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Ref: PR/MC1/D156/E Tender/2021

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Breaking his silence over reports of his removal as the leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Monday said none from the party had informed him about any such change. Mr. Chowdhury, however, said he was a foot soldier of the party and would follow the leadership's instructions.

"I have no information about it as none from the party has informed me so far," Mr. Chowdhury, a five-time Lok Sabha member, told *The Hindu* over phone from his constituency, Berhampur in West Bengal.

"Whatever responsibility is given to me by leadership, it becomes my *dharma* [duty] to carry on," he added.

On Sunday, reacting to a report that Mr. Chowdhury was being removed as the Lok Sabha leader, official sources of the party called it "premature and unfounded". However, there was no categorical denial as Mr. Chowdhury is likely to lose one of his posts: either his position as the West Bengal Congress chief or Lok Sabha leader. And it will be timed with other changes in the All India Congress Committee.

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Tender No.: KIIDC/Retender/369-2/2021-22 dt:29.06.2021

KIIDC invites offers through e-Tender system for Supply of 28mm neck size Bottle Caps for Bottled drinking water plant at Aruvikkara in Thiruvananthapuram district and Malankara in Idukki district". Last date: 13.07.2021 up to 11:00 hrs. Details available in tenders, [kerala.gov.in](http://kerala.gov.in) and [kiddc.kerala.gov.in](http://kiddc.kerala.gov.in). Tender ID: 2021\_KIIDC\_427873\_1

Sd/- Managing Director

Detailed terms and conditions, Specifications, Quantity, Tender fee, EMD are available in the tender document at our websites : [www.tnpl.com](http://www.tnpl.com) / [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in).

Visit [www.etenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.etenders.kerala.gov.in) and [www.kseb.in](http://www.kseb.in)

## Educational institutions to open in Bihar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

The Bihar government announced on Monday that all educational institutions and offices in the State will reopen on July 6.

Classe XI and Class XII in schools, colleges, universities and technical institution will open with 50% attendance, it said after a meeting of the crisis management group to review the COVID-19 situation.

All government and private offices will be open during the normal working hours.

After a review of COVID-19 situation, a decision has been taken to reopen all government and private offices normally. Only vaccinated people can enter the offices," tweeted Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"Special arrangements will be made to vaccinate all adult students, teachers and employees of educational institutions," he said.

"Restaurants and other eateries will function with 50% seating capacity," Mr. Kumar said. The overall recovery rate in Bihar from COVID-19 is 98.47%

## CoWin made open source: PM

The tech-enabled platform will be available as a free public good to all countries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The CoWin platform is being made open source and it will be available to all countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the CoWin Global Conclave here on Monday.

He said that with nearly 200 million users, the Aarogya Setu app was a readily available package for developers.

"There is no parallel to such a pandemic in hundred years and no nation, however powerful, can solve a challenge like this in isolation," Mr. Modi said, and added that all had to work together.

"Guided by the approach of 'One Earth, One Health', humanity will certainly overcome this pandemic," he said.

**Trustworthy proof**  
Stating that India has adopted a completely digital approach while planning its vaccination strategy, the Prime Minister said a secure and trustworthy proof helped people establish when, where and by whom they had been vaccinated.

"Digital approach also



**Winding down:** Bedding and equipment being removed from the COVID Care Centre at the Yamuna Sports Complex in New Delhi on Monday as cases are on the decline. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

helps in tracking the usage of vaccination and minimises wastage," he said.

"Furthermore, vaccinated people do not need to carry around fragile pieces of paper to prove anything. It is all available in digital format," the Prime Minister said. He also highlighted the customisability of the software to the local requirements of the countries interested in it.

Speaking about the CoWIN Global Outreach Programme, R.S. Sharma, CEO

of the National Health Authority, said India endeavoured to share this tech-enabled vaccination platform as a free public good with the world.

"It is a known fact that nations across the world are endeavouring for universal vaccination amidst the steepest timelines," said Dr. Sharma, adding that "it's clear that as we thrive in the age of digital in the 21st century, we can't rely on methodologies from a century ago

of achieving herd immunity by letting a pandemic leave the society devastated, like the Spanish Flu did."

"Persistent immunisation is going to be, by far, the most effective means to keep our people safe, globally," he said. Dr. Sharma said that CoWIN has become the fastest tech platform in the world to amass over 200 million registrations in a record four months, and then 300 million registrations in a mere five months.

## Cities along rivers urged to include conservation plans

Policy document from Clean Ganga mission sets out norms

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

Cities situated on river banks will have to incorporate river conservation plans when they prepare their Master Plans, says a policy document from the National Mission for Clean Ganga.

The guide document, while spelling out provisions in the National Water Policy that emphasise the need for such plans, also says that these "river-sensitive" plans must be practical and consider questions of encroachment and land ownership.

"There is a need for a systematic rehabilitation plan for such encroaching entities that emphasises on alternative livelihood options in addition to a relocation strategy. Planners should make every attempt to engage with such entities during the preparation of the Master Plan in order to develop empathetic and humane solutions," the document notes.

The recommendations are currently for towns that are on the main stem of the



Towns along the main stem of the Ganga are in focus.

maximum permissible heights of buildings. "Asserting the land ownership in these areas is, therefore, important to avoid legal complications while the Plan is being implemented," says the document.

The Master Plan should not mandate specific technologies, but it can "create an environment" for facilitating the use of state-of-the-art technologies for river management. These include satellite-based monitoring of water quality; artificial intelligence for riverine biodiversity mapping; big data and citizen science for river health monitoring; and unmanned aerial vehicles for floodplain mapping. These were being used across the world successfully.

Cities with an ongoing Master Plan tenure ought to be conducting an "immediate analysis" of the extent to which these river guidelines could have been adopted and this "will help" in incorporating the appropriate revisions when the current plan is reviewed.

## Survey of Class 3 students to set baseline for literacy goals

Mission calls for use of mother tongue in early education

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre's NIPUN Bharat Mission has set a goal that by 2026-27, every Class 3 child should be able to read with understanding at the rate of at least 60 words per minute, be able to read and write numbers up to 9,999 and solve simple multiplication problems.

For this purpose, ₹2,688 crore has been set aside under the existing Samagra Shiksha scheme for 2021-22, said Education Minister Ramesh Pokhrayan Nishank at the launch of the mission on Monday.

A National Achievement Survey of Class 3 students to be conducted this November will set a baseline to track future progress. "Until grade 3, children are expected to 'learn to read' and acquire basic skills. After grade 3 children are expected to be able to 'read to learn'. If this does not happen, the learning gap continues to widen from that point, as the texts in the language textbooks and mathematical concepts become more complex and abstract in later grades," said the NIPUN Bharat guidelines. "Thus, grade 3 is the inflection point and this is where children who have not made it, get left behind."

Apart from reading with



**Solid foundation:** The NIPUN Bharat Mission aims to improve competency in basic reading and math skills. ■ FILE PHOTO

comprehension, a child of 8 or 9 years should be able to write grammatically correct sentences, and converse with clarity using suitable vocabulary in the home or school languages. Together with simple number problems and the ability to identify shapes, time and date, fractions, and measurements in real-life situations, these goals are collectively being called the foundational literacy and numeracy skills every child should possess.

**Stage-wise targets**  
Similar stage-wise targets are being set in a continuum from the pre-primary or balvati classes. The NIPUN Bharat strategy includes changes in curriculum and teaching methods to include more activity, art and storytelling, creation of print-rich

materials and resources, teacher training, and stress-free assessment methods in order to reach these goals.

NIPUN Bharat also emphasises the importance of using a child's mother tongue in teaching, a principle of the National Education Policy 2020, which received some criticism. "The mother tongue of the child must be the language of communication [if not the medium of instruction] with the child in school in the formative years, so that the child does not suffer any confusion in understanding the transactions and is able to grow with free expression," said the guidelines.

It noted that most children, given sufficient instruction, can learn to read in their own home language within 4-6 months if there is oral comprehension.

Delhi Police directed to ensure safety of woman

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday extended the interim direction to the Delhi Police to ensure the safety of a woman from Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh, who had converted from Hinduism to Islam on her own accord, till July 22. The next hearing has been scheduled for that day.

Justice Rekha Palli said she could not pass any direction in relation to the case without first hearing the Uttar Pradesh police.

As no counsel for the police was present during the videoconferencing hearing, Justice Palli ordered that a copy of the woman's petition be served to standing coun-

sel of Uttar Pradesh in the Supreme Court.

"Before any orders are passed, against Respondents 4 [U.P. police] and 5 [U.P. government], which is situated beyond the territorial jurisdiction of this court, it is deemed appropriate to hear Respondents 4 and 5," the High Court said.

On July 1, the court directed the Delhi Police to take adequate steps to protect the life and safety of the 29-year-old woman, she said.

Renu Gangwar, in her petition, said she converted from Hinduism to Islam on May 27 of her "own free will and without any threat or coercion from anyone". Following this, she changed her name to Ayesha Alvi, which was published in newspapers.

Ms. Alvi, who is a resident of Tilhar, Shahjahanpur, and working in Delhi, allegedly started getting calls from dif-



ferent reporters requesting a meeting.

However, even after her refusal, a reporter allegedly came to her place in Tilhar and took photographs and videos without her permission, she said.

"The petitioner [Ms. Alvi] is facing extreme threat to her life and that of her immediate family members who are being witch-hunted by the officials of the Uttar Pradesh police as also by the

media and the vigilante groups," she stated in her plea.

One reporter allegedly demanded money while threatening to publish the news of her conversion.

"When she refused, he made threats again. Thereafter, he took ₹20,000 from her," the petition, filed through advocate Kamlesh Kumar Mishra and Nitin Kumar Nayak, said.

Ms. Alvi said she was "an adult and protected by the Constitution to choose her own faith and she cannot be targeted and harassed for the choice she makes with regard to the religion she follows".

She urged the Delhi High Court to protect her from being taken away from its jurisdiction "by force or coercion and/or by way of any other illegal means by the agencies of the State or any other person".

## Gomti project: CBI searches 40 locations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Monday searched over 40 locations in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal in a corruption case against 17 officials of Uttar Pradesh Irrigation Department and 172 others, including companies and their owners, for alleged irregularities in the execution of the Gomti River Front Project during 2014-17.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav was the Chief Minister when the project was implemented.

The accused in the ranks of junior assistant, principal assistant, assistant engineer, executive engineer, superintending engineer and chief engineer had employed three methods to indulge in corruption.

In many cases, the notices inviting tenders were not published in newspapers as required.

Tenders were awarded by officials on the recommendation of tender committees headed by themselves.

To establish that procedures were followed in awarding the tenders to the lowest bidders, forged documents were submitted to show some companies as competitive bidders. The FIR is an offshoot of a preliminary inquiry instituted on November 30, 2017.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday reminded a person who took offence to a "Congress toolkit" that India is a democracy where he can choose to ignore something he does not like or agree with.

The petitioner, Shashank Shekhar Jha, wanted a National Investigation Agency

probe into the toolkit which allegedly dealt with the government's handling of COVID.

Justice Chandrachud said parties engage in political propaganda, and it was left to each individual to engage with or ignore them.

Mr. Jha, however, referred to how Singapore had objected to "propaganda".

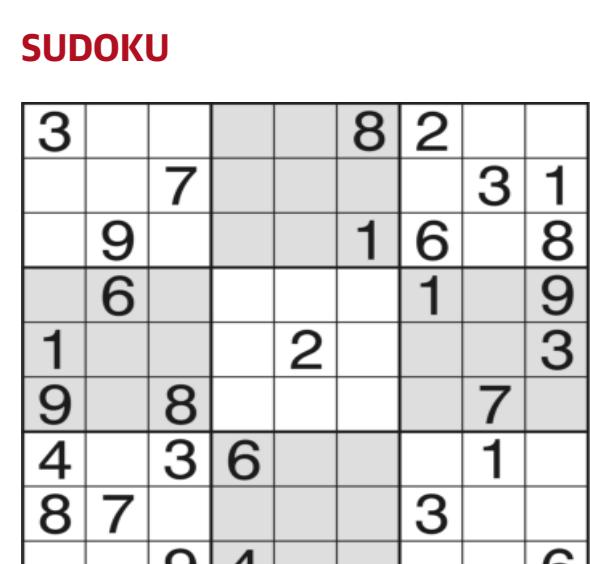
"Oh... India is a democracy, you know," Justice Chandrachud replied.

Mr. Jha had even suggested a preliminary inquiry into the toolkit to see if any offences under sedition law or the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act were made out.

The time of the Supreme Court is taken up by such frivolous petitions," Justice Chandrachud said.

The court allowed the petitioner to withdraw his petition.

## SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13291      Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

M	A	G	I	C	B	U	L	L	E	T	M	O	B
A	L	A	N	E	I	I	A						
H	O	I	S	U	N	A	L	T	R	E	D		
O	T	E	S	T	H	A	G						
G	O	T	R	H	U	G	E	A	L	E			
A	E	A	E	B	E	R							
N	A	R	W	H	A	L	R	O	A	N			
Y	Y	A	R	I	L	P	A	N	A	C	S		
R	I	L	L	P	A	N	A	C	S				
E	A	L	A	A	H	R							
L	U	M	P	S	T	O	R	E	N	A			
J	U	T	T	M	A	A	N						
C	A	I	L	O	S	T	K	A	P	A			
T	E	N	C	R	E	P	D						
T	I	T	E	M	E	R	A	D	I	S			

## FAITH

### Avoid attachment

Many philosophical and psychological insights pertinent to an individual's worldly existence can be drawn from the skillful depiction of the Jambabhara episode by Vyasa in the Bhagavata Purana, pointed out Sri R. Krishnamurthy Sastrigal in a discourse. King Bharata had been a righteous ruler and duly fulfilled all the duties devolved on him. At one stage in his life, he gave up all this and chose to lead an austere life in the Himalayas to seek liberation. His life as a hermit is described as exemplary in the Bhagavata Purana. Yet, he slipped from his aim of salvation at the end of his life owing to the attachment and concern he developed towards a motherless young deer. He began to believe that the deer too endeared itself to him and derived much comfort from this thought.

Once, when the deer was missing, he became greatly agitated and worried. His mind imagined all the likely dangers that the deer might have met with. The more he thought of all these, the more he longed for its presence as he believed that it will be safe only in the ashram. He would ruminate thus: Will the deer come back before the sun sets and sit on my lap once again and remove my distress? He even forgot the austerities he had been practising all these years and concentrated only on the deer.

# Over 1,000 Afghan troops flee to Tajikistan

With supply lines strained, Afghan forces have been crumbling in the face of the Taliban onslaught

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

More than 1,000 Afghan troops fled into neighbouring Tajikistan on Monday following clashes with the Taliban, as the insurgents amassed momentum on the battlefield.

The exodus of troops followed another weekend of fighting across much of the northern countryside where the Taliban have overrun dozens of districts, spurring fears that Afghan forces are in crisis.

"They did not want to surrender. They had asked for reinforcements but their call was ignored," said Abdul Basir, a soldier based with a battalion in Badakhshan province that had members flee over the border.

The U.S. announced on Friday that it had handed over Bagram Air Base – the centre of its operations – to Afghan security forces, effectively wrapping up operations in the country following nearly two decades of fighting.

Tajikistan's national se-



**Tight spot:** Afghan commandos arriving in Faizabad, the capital of Badakhshan province, on Sunday. ■ REUTERS

curity committee said 1,037 Afghan government troops had fled into the ex-Soviet country "to save their lives" after clashes with the Taliban during the night.

#### Counter-attack

"Taking into account the principle of good neighbourliness and adhering to the position of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, the military personnel of the Afghan government forces were allowed to enter Tajik territory," said the statement, published by Tajikistan's state information agency.

Afghan troops had already crossed into Tajikistan following earlier clashes that saw the Taliban take control of a major border crossing between the countries. The Afghan government has vowed to launch a counteroffensive in the north. Hamdullah Mohib, the country's National Security Advisor, told Russia's RIA

news agency that an operation was "absolutely" in the works. Already thinly stretched with supply lines strained, Afghan security forces have been crumbling in the face of the Taliban onslaught, with several bases and outposts surrendering to the insurgents without firing a shot. "Afghan forces have lost their morale," said analyst Atta Noori in Kabul.

"They are confused – in almost every district that the Taliban capture, they send a team of elders to talk to the soldiers and get them to surrender."

"It is an emergency situation for the Afghan government. They need to step up their counteroffensive as soon as possible," he added.

With vital air cover from the Americans massively curtailed by the closure of the Bagram base, the Taliban pressed on with their offensive across the north over the weekend, seizing most of Badakhshan and Takhar provinces with government forces holding little more than the provincial capitals.

The speed and ease of the Taliban's effective takeover of the provinces represent a massive psychological blow to the Afghan government.

Both provinces had once served as the strongholds for the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance during the gruesome civil war in the 1990s and were never routed by the militants.

The dire situation in the north was accompanied by reports that the Taliban were also inching closer to the provincial capitals in their southern strongholds of Kandahar and Helmand, with key districts on the outskirts of both cities taken by the group.

"We are so tired of this war. At least today the right thing was done, and one side should take control," said Shir Mohammad Barekzai, a resident of Helmand's Nawa district that was seized by the Taliban early on Monday. Since May 1 when the U.S. military began its final withdrawal, Afghan troops and the Taliban have clashed fiercely across the rugged countryside.

# Armed men kidnap 140 school students in Nigeria

Police say they rescued 26 people, including a woman

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KADUNA

Heavily-armed men kidnapped 140 students from a boarding school in northwestern Nigeria on Monday, a school official said, the latest in a wave of mass abductions targeting schoolchildren and students.

Criminal gangs often attack villages to loot, steal cattle and abduct for ransom in northwest and central Nigeria, but since the start of the year they have increasingly targeted schools and colleges.

The attackers opened fire and overpowered security guards after storming the Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna state in the early hours of Monday, abducting most of the 165 pupils boarding there overnight.

"The kidnappers took away 140 students, only 25 students escaped. We still have no idea where the students were taken," Emmanuel Paul, a teacher at the



**Prime targets:** Schoolboys being escorted after their release by abductors in Katsina, Nigeria, in this file photo. ■ AP

students stay in dormitories and security is light, allowing them to easily transport large numbers of victims to forest hideouts to negotiate ransoms.

The kidnapping of Nigerian schoolchildren first made international headlines in 2014 when jihadist group Boko Haram snatched nearly 300 schoolgirls from a rural school in Chibok. Monday's attack was the fourth mass school kidnapping in Kaduna state since December.

#### ELSEWHERE



#### Amazon's Bezos hands over reins to Andy Jassy

NEW YORK

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos stepped down as CEO on Monday, handing over the reins to Andy Jassy (in picture), who ran Amazon's cloud-computing business. Mr. Bezos, Amazon's biggest shareholder with a stake worth about \$180 billion, will still hold sway over the company he started out of his Seattle garage in 1995. He takes over the role of executive chair, with plans to focus on new initiatives. ■ AP

#### Rest of Florida condo razed ahead of storm

SURFSIDE

The partially collapsed Miami-area condo where 24 people are confirmed dead was demolished on Sunday night, ahead of the possible arrival of Tropical Storm Elsa. Search-and-rescue efforts for 121 people missing have been suspended. Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said on Sunday that rescue efforts would resume after the demolition, noting it was 11 days since the collapse. ■ REUTERS

#### Pope in 'good' condition after colon surgery

ROME

Pope Francis was doing well on Monday after surgery for an inflamed large colon, but the 84-year-old was expected to spend around seven days recovering in hospital, the Vatican said. The pontiff was admitted to Gemelli hospital on Sunday for an operation under general anaesthetic for symptomatic diverticular stenosis of the colon. Pope "is in good general condition, alert and breathing spontaneously", spokesman Matteo Bruni said. ■ AFP

## China wants to expand ties with Europe, Xi tells Macron, Merkel

Beijing seeks an 'unbiased environment for Chinese firms'

REUTERS

BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday told French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel he hoped China and Europe would expand cooperation to better respond to global challenges, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Ms. Merkel's office confirmed that the three leaders exchanged views on European Union-China relations.

"They also discussed international trade, climate

protection and biodiversity," her office added in a statement.

"The conversation also revolved around cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, global vaccine supply, and international and regional issues."

In May, the European Parliament halted ratification of a new investment pact with China until Beijing lifts sanctions on EU politicians.

## Learn to live with virus, Johnson tells Britons

U.K. plans to lift curbs from July 19

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson confirmed on Monday that his government plans to scrap laws requiring face masks and social distancing later this month, though he acknowledged that lifting the restrictions will drive surging coronavirus cases even higher.

Mr. Johnson said legal controls will be replaced by "personal responsibility" when the country moves to the final stage of its lockdown-lifting roadmap. That is scheduled to happen on July 19, though he said a final decision would come on July 12.

This means people can throw away masks after months of enforced face-covering, though businesses and transit operators may still require them, and they will still be recommended in some enclosed spaces.



Boris Johnson

Mr. Johnson said he would set out how the country would "learn to live with this virus" – a major shift in tone from a leader who has previously painted COVID-19 as an enemy to be vanquished.

"I want to stress from the outset that this pandemic is far from over," he said, predicting that cases could hit 50,000 a day by July 19. "We must reconcile ourselves, sadly, to more deaths from COVID."

## Indonesia faces oxygen shortage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA

Parts of Indonesia lack oxygen supplies as the number of critically ill COVID-19 patients who need it increases, the nation's pandemic response leader said on Monday, after dozens of sick people died at a public hospital that ran out of its central supply.

"Due to an increase of three to four times the amount (of oxygen) needed, the distribution has been hampered," said Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investment Minister. The government is asking oxygen producers to dedicate their full supply to medical needs and will import it if needed, he said.

At least 63 COVID-19 patients died at Dr. Sardjito General Hospital in Yogyakarta city since Saturday, hospital spokesman Banu Hermawan said.

somware" attack – a form of digital hostage-taking where hackers encrypt victims' data and then demand money for restored access – is so large that it may be "unable to respond to each victim individually".

Researchers believe more than 1,000 companies could have been affected by the attack on Miami-based firm Kaseya, which provides IT services to some 40,000 businesses around the world.

The FBI warned on Sunday that the scale of the "ran-

group, claimed responsibility for the attack and said it had infected "more than a million systems".

The FBI believes that REvil, also known as Sodinokibi, was behind a attack last month on global meat-processing giant JBS, which ended up paying \$1 million in bitcoin to the hackers.

The blog post said the hackers would post a decryption tool online "so everyone will be able to recover from attack in less than an hour" – if they were handed \$70 million in bitcoin.

We are still in the middle of a war. Not the kind that is fought with guns and bombs, but one that has claimed many lives nonetheless. In a time like this, it is important to stay brave and not lose strength. And few events represent human perseverance better than the Olympics.

**THE LAST TIME PEOPLE HAD TO WAIT FOR MORE THAN 4 YEARS FOR THE OLYMPICS, THE WORLD WAS AT WAR.**



## Boat sinks off Tunisia, 21 migrants dead

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TUNIS

Coastguards in Tunisia have retrieved the bodies of 21 sub-Saharan migrants and rescued 50 after their boat sank off the port city of Sfax, authorities said on Monday.

"Twenty-one bodies of migrants were recovered after their boat was shipwrecked on July 4, and 50 were rescued," National Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli said.

He said the migrants, all from sub-Saharan Africa, had been trying to reach Europe.

The spokesman said four boatloads of migrants had sunk since June 26 after setting off from Sfax.

## Israel looks to renew law that keeps out Palestinian spouses

Critics call it a racist measure against the Arab minority

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM

Israel's Parliament is set to vote on Monday on whether to renew a temporary law first enacted in 2003 that bars Arab citizens of Israel from extending citizenship or even residency to spouses from the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

Critics, including many left-wing and Arab lawmakers, say it's a racist measure aimed at restricting the growth of Israel's Arab minority, while supporters say it's needed for security purposes and to preserve Israel's Jewish character.

The law creates an array

of difficulties for Palestinian

settlers that span the drawn and largely invisible frontiers separating Israel from east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, territories it seized in the 1967 war that the Palestinians want for a future state.

"You want your security, it's no problem, you can check each case by itself," said Taiseer Khatib. His wife of more than 15 years, from the West Bank city of Jenin, must regularly apply for permits to live with him and their three children in Israel.

"There's no need for this collective punishment just because you are Palesti-

nian," he said. Israel's dominant right-wing parties strongly support the law, and it has been renewed every year since being enacted. But Israel's new government includes opponents of the measure, and the right-wing opposition led by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned it won't provide the votes needed to renew the law.

Ahead of the vote, PM Naftali Bennett called on Mr. Netanyahu to join him in renewing the law. "Harming state security for a quarter of a political point is not the right thing to do," he said.

As the games kick off in Tokyo this month, 5 special issues of Sportstar will bring you stories from the greatest arena of them all. Through the eyes of a dedicated bunch of journalists, you will see extraordinary people performing extraordinary feats. You will see odds being met and defied. Above all, you will see the true potential of the human spirit.

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AND-NDE

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	52,880	0.75
US Dollar	74.31	-0.57
Gold	46,408	-0.44
Brent oil	76.11	-0.38

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	710.05	-0.35
Asian Paints	3014.80	9.80
Axys Bank	760.35	9.70
Bajaj Auto	4201.50	26.15
Bajaj Finserv	11923.10	172.65
Bajaj Finance	6072.70	74.95
Bharti Airtel	523.95	-1.05
BPCL	459.70	-3.05
Britannia Ind	3523.55	-21.75
Cipla	974.70	-4.50
Coal India	149.90	2.25
Divis Lab	4559.95	40.30
Dr Reddys Lab	5537.90	-37.80
Eicher Motors	2701.05	40.05
Grafix Ind	1489.70	-0.05
HCL Tech	979.75	-4.90
HDFC	2494.90	19.20
HDFC Bank	1495.45	15.05
HDFC Life	677.90	-9.60
Hero MotoCorp	2938.05	18.20
Hindalco	389.55	13.50
Hind Unilever	2499.05	11.75
ICICI Bank	647.85	7.60
IndusInd Bank	1020.55	10.90
Infosys	1578.95	11.15
Indian Oil Corp	108.80	0.35
ITC	203.65	1.25
JSW Steel	672.75	1.45
Kotak Bank	1731.10	15.95
L&T	1507.95	22.30
M&M	791.75	9.15
Maruti Suzuki	7599.45	25.60
Nestle India Ltd.	17641.35	39.35
NTPC	118.60	1.10
ONGC	120.95	2.50
PowerGrid Corp	230.30	2.35
Reliance Ind	2150.20	21.15
SBI Life	1009.85	2.65
State Bank	432.65	8.25
Shree Cement	26987.60	-27.30
Sun Pharma	680.20	-1.05
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	766.30	2.70
Tata Motors	346.10	1.20
Tata Steel	1156.85	20.85
TCS	3321.00	-4.45
Tech Mahindra	1074.65	-14.75
Titan	1749.90	-4.85
UltraTech Cement	6719.85	-0.05
UPL	807.60	8.25
Wipro	536.35	-2.25

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 05

## CURRENCY

TT BUY TT SELL

US Dollar..... 74.10 74.42

Euro..... 88.00 88.38

British Pound..... 102.69 103.14

Japanese Yen (100)..... 66.87 67.16

Chinese Yuan..... 11.47 11.52

Swiss Franc..... 80.46 80.85

Singapore Dollar..... 55.10 55.35

Canadian Dollar..... 60.00 60.27

Malaysian Ringgit..... 17.82 17.91

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## I-T pushes filing deadline for foreign remittances

NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department on Monday extended the deadline till July 15 for manual filing of forms related to foreign remittances. The CBDT has also advised authorised dealers to accept such manual forms till July 15. PTI

## Zomato gets SEBI nod to float ₹8,250-cr. IPO

NEW DELHI

Food delivery platform Zomato has received markets regulator SEBI's go-ahead to raise ₹8,250 crore through an initial share-sale. The initial public offer (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth ₹7,500 crore and an offer-for-sale to the tune of ₹750 crore by Info Edge (India) Ltd., according to the draft red herring prospectus. PTI

# 'Services shrink most since July'

Survey-based June PMI for sector shows second successive contraction at 41.2

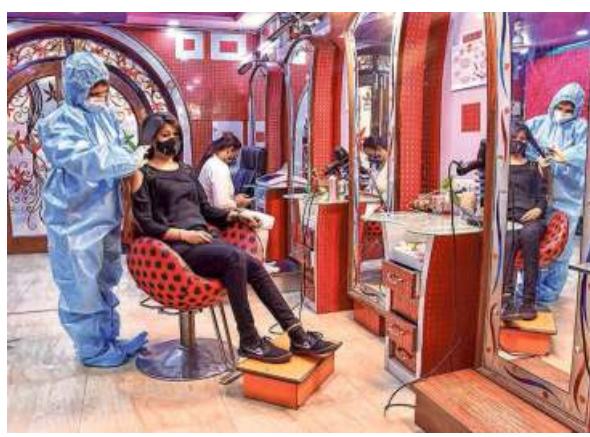
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's services sector shrank the most last month since July 2020, with the survey-based IHS Markit Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for services at 41.2, reflecting a second successive monthly contraction in new business and increased job shedding by firms.

International demand for Indian services deteriorated further with new export orders falling for the sixteenth straight month. The sharp contraction in the June Services PMI, followed May's 46.4. A reading above 50 denotes expansion and one below it signifies a contraction in business activity.

"Business activity and new orders decreased in four out of the five broad areas of the service econo-



No takers: 'Four of the five broad service areas shrank, with consumer services contracting quickest'. ■ PTI

my, with the fastest rates of contraction registered in consumer services," IHS Markit said in a statement. "Transport and storage was the only segment to post growth," the firm added.

Jobs fell in tandem with

new orders. "The fall in employment was the seventh in consecutive months and the fastest over this period. The decline in jobs was widespread across the five monitored sub-sectors, and led by consumer services," it noted.

"The overall level of business sentiment was down for the third month in a row in June, reaching its lowest mark since last August," IHS Markit added, with the COVID-19 pandemic seen as the main threat to the outlook.

## Uncertainty weighs

"Uncertainty about the path of the pandemic restricted business confidence among services firms, who were generally neutral in their forecasts for output in the year ahead," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.

June's manufacturing PMI had earlier slid to 48.4, and with services activity also retreating, the Composite PMI Output Index declined from 48.1 in May to 43.1, again registering the sharpest contraction since July 2020.

## Policy black holes spook space investors

Investors cite possible conflict of interest at Department of Space as a concern

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

Potential foreign investors in India's space sector are unsure if their licence applications would get a 'fair consideration' and are wary of a possible conflict of interest given that the Department of Space is both the sectoral regulator and a service provider by way of its role overseeing the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

The ONDC would promote open networks developed on open-sourced methodology and using protocols independent of any specific platform in order to digitise the entire value chain, derive logistics efficiencies and enhance value for consumers, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said.



to the procedures.

Foreign Direct Investment up to 100% has been allowed under the government route in satellite-establishment and operation, subject to the sectoral guidelines of the Department of Space and ISRO. The processes for authorisation to launch a satellite, the frequency allocation mechanism and even the details of different agencies in-

volved in these clearances were not clear, the Council said, calling for the regulatory structure to be refined.

"Today, the Department of Space acts as the regulator, but since it is a major service provider through ISRO, there is scope for a conflict of interest," the UKIBC said. "Service delivery and decision making are critical challenges. ISRO is a party involved in both, thus creating doubt in the mind of investors, if their licence applications will receive fair consideration," it added.

Emphasising that the private sector was concerned about sharing its intellectual property with the government, the business group said: "If ISRO is serious about partnering with the

private sector, policymakers will have to view the industry as more than just a collection of manufacturers or service providers."

Global investors are also keenly tracking developments over the scrapped Antrix-Devas deal in the wake of the Indian government losing an international arbitration and Devas eyeing judicial enforcement of the arbitral award in overseas jurisdictions.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE), a newly created regulatory body, has received at least 26 applications from Indian and foreign firms that include proposals to set up ground stations and make and launch satellites.

## Tata Motors to raise PV prices as costs soar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Tata Motors said it plans to increase the prices of its passenger-vehicle (PV) range due to an increase in input costs.

The auto major did not share details on the time frame of the intended price hike but noted that would happen 'shortly.'

The company intends to shortly mark an appropriate increase in prices of its range of cars and SUVs, Tata Motors said.

The steep climb in input costs, especially of essential raw materials, necessitates a transfer of at least some part of this increase to end customers, it added.

## Concerned about global operations: TVS Motor

CMD cites container scarcity, 2nd wave

N. ANAND

CHENNAI

TVS Motor Company Ltd. (TVSML), a leading two-and-three wheeler maker, has raised concerns about its international operations following shortage of containers and the rapid spread of COVID-19 during the second wave in the company's target markets.

He also said that some of the company's target markets/countries might witness a 'rapid spread of COVID-19' second wave thereby lowering economic activity. A sustained drop in commodity prices and exports could reduce foreign exchange income in some of the export countries.

On the shortfall in semiconductors, he said it was likely to continue and pose a risk to meeting demand.

Increased exports from India, is posing further shortage of space availability or availability at higher costs. This situation is expected to result in delayed supplies to global customers."

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## RBI to buy ₹20,000-cr. G-secs July 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Monday said the first purchase of government securities for an aggregate amount of ₹20,000 crore under the G-sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP 2.0) will be conducted on July 8.

On June 4, RBI Shaktikanta Das had announced that the central bank will conduct open market purchase of government securities of ₹1.2 lakh crore under the G-SAP 2.0 in Q2 of FY22 to support the market. On Thursday, the RBI will buy five government securities of different maturities via a multi-security auction.

The shortfalls in government securities supply, due to the impact of the second wave of COVID-19, have led to a significant increase in yields, which has impacted the yield curve.

The auction will be conducted on July 8.

## Centre to sell ₹3,621-crore stake in NMDC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

The Centre proposes to sell more than 11.72 crore shares, or 4% of the equity, in mining major NMDC at a floor price of ₹165 each through an offer-for-sale to (OFS) non-retail investors. The OFS opens on Tuesday.

Under the green-shoe option, it intends to sell 10.22 crore more shares, corresponding to 3.49% of equity, to retail investors as well as those non-retail investors who choose to carry forward their unallotted bid.

From the proposed sale of 7.49% equity, the government stands to mobilise over ₹3,621 crore. On Monday, NMDC shares closed 4.13% lower at ₹175.30 each on the BSE.

## Global investors flag some AatmaNirbhar reforms

'Plan holds negative consequences'



chains, which will mean importing as well as exporting. If tariffs make manufacturing in India too expensive, investors will go elsewhere," the report noted. Even if India chooses tariffs as a policy tool, it should signal how import duties will rise over the coming years so investors get an incentive and the time to create domestic supply chains, it added.

"It has to be recognised that certain aspects of the initiative have the potential to curtail international trade and investment, such as increased tariffs, non-tariff restrictions on imports, and import substitution," it emphasised. The ban on the sale of items such as Scotch Whisky in the CSD canteens sends a wrong signal, the Council said, stressing that some products simply cannot be produced in India. Attempts to renegotiate power purchase agreements and ad-hoc policy shifts are also unnerving for infrastructure investors, it indicated.

While the campaign has opened up several sectors for foreign investors, including defence, atomic energy, agriculture, insurance, healthcare and civil aviation, the UKIBC has outlined concerns and challenges across sectors in its report titled 'Road to a UK-India Free Trade Agreement: Enhancing the Partnership and Achieving Self-reliance'.

## Rise in tea imports is worrying, says UPASI

Jan.-March flows more than double'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

COIMBATORE

Tamil



## TV PICKS

**Wimbledon 2021:** SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.  
**Tour de France:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 4.30 p.m.  
**Euro 2020:** Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)  
**Copa America 2021:** Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

## IN BRIEF



Davis wins in play-off;  
Lahiri ends tied 52nd

**DETROIT**  
Cam Davis won the Rocket Mortgage Classic for his first PGA Tour title when Troy Merritt missed a six-foot putt on the fifth play-off hole here on Sunday. Anirban Lahiri shot a four-under 68 to finish tied 52nd. PTI

**Ko wins VoA title;**  
Aditi finishes T-47

**DALLAS**  
Ko Jin-Young of South Korea carded two-under 69 and finished 16-under 268 for her eighth career LPGA victory at the Volunteers of America Classic here on Sunday. India's Aditi Ashok signed off tied 47th at one-under 284. PTI

**Herbert tops; Bhullar,**  
Shubhankar way down

**KILKENNY**  
Australia's Lucas Herbert won his second European Tour title here on Sunday with a 19-under 269 at the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open. India's Shubhankar Sharma finished tied 56th, while Gaganjeet Bhullar fell from T-21 overnight to T-66. PTI

**CAS upholds high jumper**  
Lysenko's ban

**PARIS**  
The CAS on Monday upheld a ban on Russian high jumper Daniil Lysenko for multiple breaches of anti-doping rules. Lysenko, who was 2017 world silver medallist and won the world indoor title in 2018, will be ineligible until August 3, 2022. AFP

# Mary Kom, Manpreet Singh to be flagbearers at opening ceremony

Bajrang Punia to do the honours at the closing ceremony

## TOKYO OLYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI



M.C. Mary Kom. • FILE PHOTO



Manpreet Singh. • FILE PHOTO

Boxer M.C. Mary Kom and men's hockey team skipper Manpreet Singh will be flag-bearers for India at the opening ceremony of Tokyo Olympics, scheduled to get underway on July 23.

Wrestler Bajrang Punia will be the flagbearer at the closing ceremony on August 8.

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has communicated the decision in this regard to the Organising Committee of the Games.

"It would be a huge moment for me given that it

is my last Olympics. Who knows I might even get emotionally overwhelmed," said Mary Kom.

**'Amazing'**

"This is amazing, and I am speechless. I think it's a huge

honour to be named the flag-bearer for the opening ceremony alongside the incredible Mary Kom," Manpreet was quoted as saying in a Hockey India release.

The country's lone individual Olympic gold-medallist

Abhinav Bindra was the flag-bearer at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.

**Gender parity**

At its executive board meeting last year, the International Olympic Committee had made provisions for flag-bearers from both genders at the opening ceremony.

"The IOC Executive Board also decided that there should be – for the first time ever – at least one female and one male athlete in every one of the 206 teams and the IOC Refugee Olympic Team participating at the Games of the Olympiad," IOC chief Thomas Bach had said.

**Harika primed for World Cup in Russia**  
Says she is glad to have done well in Speed Chess

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

I was a profitable month of working from home for Dronavalli Harika. Finishing runner-up at the Women's Speed Chess Championship on Saturday made her richer by ₹9.28 lakh.

The superb performance has come as a huge morale-booster ahead of the World Cup, starting in Sochi, Russia, on July 10.

"I am glad I could do well in a strong tournament like Speed Chess, in which most of the best players took part," Harika told *The Hindu* over phone on Monday.

"It is disappointing that I lost in the final to Hou Yifan, but it felt nice that I could put up a strong fight."

She certainly did! Her Chinese opponent is the world's second-strongest woman player of all time.

She went into the lead,



D. Harika. • FILE PHOTO

fell behind considerably towards the end, but staged a splendid fightback.

**Technical issues**

Harika was troubled by technical issues during the final.

"I lost internet connectivity for a brief while following a power failure and that cost me a game. But, in online tournaments, one should be

prepared for such problems," said the World No. 9.

"It was an excellent tournament for me, as I was able to defeat some strong players like World blitz champion Kateryn Lagno and former World champion Alexandra Kosteniuk," she said.

Looking ahead to the World Cup, she said she was just happy that she would be able to get back into a tournament hall once again.

"It is great to see that chess and the rest of the sporting world is returning to normalcy," she said.

"My last tournament was in Switzerland in March last year. I got home just before the entire world went into lockdown."

"The last one year has not been easy, as I realised that chess need not always be the priority in life."

## Title against the odds for Mercedes'

Toto Wolff admits his team is fighting a tough battle

## FORMULA ONE

REUTERS  
LONDON



Toto Wolff. • GETTY IMAGES

Formula One champion Mercedes is fighting against the odds now in its title battle with Red Bull, team boss Toto Wolff said after Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix dealt a fifth successive defeat.

Once-dominant Mercedes started the season chasing its eighth consecutive constructors' championship and with Lewis Hamilton seeking an unprecedented eighth drivers' title.

Hamilton is now 32 points behind Red Bull's Dutch youngster Max Verstappen, who has won five of nine races including the last three, and Mercedes is 44 points adrift of its Honda-powered rival.

"We are fighting a tough battle at the moment, against all odds as it stands," Wolff told reporters at the Red Bull Ring.

"It is against the odds for us now, and that's clear because they have an overall performance advantage.

"All these years I tried to

keep our feet on the ground by not being carried away with performance and now I need to do the opposite."

**Optimistic**  
Wolff recognised the momentum was going in the wrong direction but said Mercedes would fight to the end and needed to stay optimistic.

"There are 13 or 14 races to go, we are one DNF (retirement) away from Red Bull, no more, and we've lost more points than we should have lost to our own mistakes. We need to just get our act together overall."

"This is so far from over we just need to up our game, make less mistakes and continue to understand the car better and then we are still massively and absolutely in the hunt."

## Geetha relives Olympics experience

She represented India in the relay event of the 2004 and 2008 Games

## ATHLETICS

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD



**Memorable day:** S. Geetha receives the Dhyani Chand Lifetime Achievement Award from Pranab Mukherjee, the then President of India. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

right time from so many officials at APSS and I am thankful to many including PET Pradeep sir, SAI athletics coaches M. Ranga Rao and N. Ramesh and the Director Dr. N. Parameeswara Ram," she said in a chat with *The Hindu*, tracing her journey.

"I got the support at the

Olympics in Athens itself was a huge honour for me. I was informed just after the warm-up that I would be competing in the 4x400m relay and we finished eighth in the finals," said Geetha, who is married to former player and now secretary of Andhra Hockey Association

G. Harshavardhan.

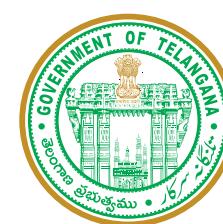
"I was nervous and unprepared for the biggest experience of my career. But, somehow I could focus, tried to give my best when I ran the first lap," recalled the 2006 Asian Games gold medallist in 4x400m relay.

"In the 2008 Beijing Olympics, I was relatively relaxed but was disappointed finishing fourth in the semifinals (4x400m)," she said.

**Bright chance**

Geetha feels the current Indian athletes have very bright chance of winning medals.

"Thanks to the exposure and the wonderful support from the federation, government and SAI, they have been doing really well and I am sure they are going to win some unexpected medals in athletics," she said.



## GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA PROVIDES A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO OWN AN ENCUMBRANCE FREE LAND IN THE MOST PRIME AREA OF HYDERABAD

Become A Partner In Development and Let's Grow Together

## HMDA NEOPOLIS @ KOKAPET

S.No	Plot Details	Area (Acres)
1	Plot No. 1	7.72
2	Plot No. 2	7.75
3	Plot No. 3	7.73
4	Plot No. 12	7.56
5	Plot No. 4	8.94
6	Plot No. 13	7.57
7	Plot A on Road No.7 on southern side of Neopolis layout	1.00

## TSIIC Plots @ KHANAMET

S.No	Plot Details	Area (Acres)
1	Plot No. 4	3.15
2	Plot No. 6	3.15
3	Plot No. 12	3.69
4	Plot No. 14	2.92
5	Plot No. 17	2.10
<b>Total</b>		<b>15.01</b>



## GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA AUCTIONS 13 PRIME PLOTS FOR A TOTAL AREA OF 64.93 ACRES

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- 100% clear assured title of the Govt. land with no encumbrances
- Absolute ownership of land
- Time bound fast track approvals in single window
- Unlimited FSI\*  
\*Subject to abutting road width and maximum height permissible by AAI
- Multiple use zone for office space, IT, Residential, Institutional, Commercial, Mixed Use.

## FEATURES

- Adjacent to Outer Ring Road
- Surrounded by commercial hubs, recreational zones and transportation facilities
- Excellent Social Infrastructure
- Very near to - Hotels, Hospitals, Housing & Institutions
- Both sites in heart of CBD (Central Business District)

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO BID

- Any individual or group of individuals (Citizen of India above the age of 18 years), Company (Private/ Public/ Limited Liability Partnership), Proprietary Firms, Partnership Firms/ LLP, Trusts, Registered Societies, Financial Institutions, Banks, NBFC, Real Estate Funds, Public & Semi-public Undertakings of State Govt. or Central Govt., Govt. Departments, Joint Venture Consortium.
  - The bidder must be eligible to build/ own commercial/ multi-purpose properties in India and must be competent to enter into contract.
  - FDI upto 100% is permitted on automatic route as per DIP- GoI.
  - Foreign companies which have established a branch office or other place of business in India, in accordance with RBI, GoI / FEMA / FERA regulations, can acquire any immovable property in India, which is necessary for or incidental to carrying on such activity\*
- \*<https://www.meia.gov.in/images/pdf/acquisition-and-transfer-of-immovable-property-in-india.pdf>

## E-AUCTION SCHEDULE

Notification	15-06-2021
Pre-Bid Meeting	25-06-2021
Last date for registration	13-07-2021 till 5.00 PM
Last Date for EMD Payment	14-07-2021 upto 5.00 PM
Date of e-Auction	15-07-2021 From 9.00 AM to 12.00 Noon & 2.00 PM to 5.00 PM



Notification	15-06-2021
Pre-Bid Meeting	26-06-2021
Last date for registration	13-07-2021 till 5.00 PM