



Environment Ministry officials dither on shutting Vizag plant  
page 8



Murmu resigns as L-G of J&K; likely to be appointed CAG  
page 10



Babar, Masood steady Pak. on rain-affected opening day  
page 16

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## NEARBY



It is criticism, not contempt, says Bhushan

NEW DELHI  
Noted civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan maintained in the Supreme Court that his tweets in June on a photo showing Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde astride a motorbike and the court's role in the past six years amounted to "criticism" and not contempt.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

Over 1,000 new cases in Delhi as testing increases

NEW DELHI  
As many as 1,076 new COVID-19 cases were reported in the national capital in the past 24 hours, taking the total to 1,40,232, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. The number of daily tests also picked up in the past 24 hours and it was 85.2% of the average daily tests conducted in July.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

12-year-old girl raped, stabbed in west Delhi

NEW DELHI  
A 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped and stabbed all over her body with a sharp weapon in the Paschim Vihar area of west Delhi, said a police officer. The incident was reported on Tuesday evening. The girl is admitted at AIIMS and her condition is said to be critical.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

## Modern symbol of Indian culture: Modi

PM launches construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya, says it is the beginning of a golden chapter

OMAR RASHID  
AVODHYA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday formally launched the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, saying it would serve as a "modern symbol of Indian culture" and with it, the country was creating a golden chapter for itself.

Ram Janmabhoomi, the birthplace of Lord Ram as believed by Hindus, had been liberated from the cycle of "breaking and rising up again" that had been going on for centuries, Mr. Modi said, terming it a "historic" moment.

"The centuries of wait is getting over today," he said after performing the *bhoomi pujan* for the temple here in a tightly-arranged event held amid COVID-19 pandemic.

A grand temple would be built for "our Ram Lalla", who had to live under a tent for years, the Prime Minister said, stressing that crores of people could hardly believe this was happening during their lifetime.

**Eternal faith'**  
Mr. Modi emphasised the word "modern," and said the Ram temple would become a symbol of "our eternal faith," national sentiments and collective willpower of crores of people.

"This temple will inspire the coming generations about faith, reverence and resolve," he said, adding that the temple would not only



Historic moment: Prime Minister Narendra Modi performing the ground-breaking ceremony for the temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat is at extreme right. ▶ AP

### A proud day, says Shah

"It is a historic and proud day," Home Minister Amit Shah said. The temple construction had become a reality because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "strong and decisive leadership". ▶ PAGE 9

augment the grandeur of Ayodhya but also change the economy of the entire region. New opportunities would emerge as people would come for a darshan of

### Ram cannot be in hatred: Rahul

Without mentioning the *bhoomi pujan*, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted on Wednesday: "Ram is love, he can never appear in hatred... Ram is justice, he can never appear in injustice." ▶ PAGE 9

Lord Ram and Mata Janaki from around the world, the Prime Minister said.

The formal start of the temple's construction comes almost 28 years after Babri



Modi performing the ground-breaking ceremony for the temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat is at extreme right. ▶ AP

### Pak. criticises ceremony

Criticising the event, the Pakistan Foreign Office said the extreme haste shown in starting work on the temple on the Babri Masjid site amid the pandemic showed how Muslims in India were being "marginalised". ▶ PTI

Masjid was demolished by a mob of 'kar sevaks' on December 6, 1992.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ▶ PAGE 9

I don't have any grievance, says litigant

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
AVODHYA

"Whatever [anguish] was there ended on November 9 [2019]. Now, I don't have any *shikwa* or *shikayat* [grievance or complaint]," said Iqbal Ansari, a little after 3 p.m. on Wednesday.

Having just arrived from the 'bhoomi pujan' for the Ram Mandir – he was the only prominent Muslim present – Mr. Ansari quietly entered his house in the Kaziana locality of Ayodhya.

Mr. Ansari is the son of Hashim Ansari, one of the most well-known litigants in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, who died in 2016. Since then, Mr. Iqbal Ansari carried the mantle till the Supreme Court verdict last November. Many Muslims say that the long-drawn issue, though leaving behind many scars, was settled with the court verdict.

"In these nine months, I have not submitted a single application. Now I don't have any legal case," he said. "Whatever they do or is happening is meaningless to me. It is fine they are building a temple."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

ON GROUND ZERO ▶ PAGE 9

## Kashmir under security blanket

Anniversary of Article 370 withdrawal



A year on: BJP leader Rumya Rafiq unfurling the Tricolour at Lal Chowk in Anantnag on Wednesday. ▶ NISSAR AHMAD

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Security was tightened across the Kashmir Valley on Wednesday to foil a scheduled meeting and protest marches by the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on the first anniversary of the withdrawal of J&K's special status.

NC president and Member of Parliament Farooq Abdullah had called a meeting of all regional parties on Wednesday at his residence on Gupkar Road "to chalk out the future course of action". The move apparently was to carry forward the Gupkar Declaration signed on August 4, 2019, by the regional parties, which called for a joint front to defend J&K's special status.

Sources said all those who were supposed to attend the meeting had been placed under house arrest.

lah's residence, and barricades put up. "Police vehicles are opposite our gates, concertina wire strung across the road at regular intervals and no vehicles allowed. My father had called a meeting of leaders of mainstream parties to deliberate on the current situation," said NC vice-president Omar Abdullah.

He said the scheduled meeting was not allowed to go ahead. "The BJP gets to announce a 15-day celebration to mark 5th Aug and a handful of us aren't allowed to meet on my father's lawn. So much for BJP national leaders wondering why there is no political activity," Mr. Abdullah tweeted.

Sources said all those who were supposed to attend the meeting had been placed under house arrest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

## Delhi HC asks lower court to decide on Brinda's plea on hate speeches

Petition seeks FIRs against Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Verma

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked a local court to decide CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat's petition seeking lodging of FIRs against BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma for their alleged hate speeches in connection with the anti-CAA protest at Shaheen Bagh.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan issued the direction af-

ter Ms. Karat's counsel sought permission to contest her case before the local court. The counsel said the magistrate court had reserved its order on her plea on February 26, but did not pronounce it as similar issues were pending in the High Court.

**Decide expeditiously'**  
The High Court asked the magistrate court to decide on Ms. Karat's application "in accordance with law, rules

and government policy applicable to the case, and as expeditiously as possible and practicable". The court, which was hearing a bunch of petitions in connection with the north-east Delhi riots, posted the other petitions for hearing on August 24.

Earlier, the Delhi police had stated that during their probe, "no actionable evidence has surfaced" against political leaders "instigating or participating in the riots".

## Centre nod to CBI probe in Sushant case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on Wednesday issued a notification allowing the transfer of Sushant Singh Rajput death case to the CBI on a reference from the Bihar government.

"The CBI has received the DoPT notification. Accordingly, the agency will take up the investigation," said an agency official.

The Bihar government had recommended the CBI probe amid allegations that a State police officer who had gone to Mumbai to supervise the investigation was deliberately quarantined there.

Rhea summoned by ED  
Bollywood actor Rhea Chakraborty, who is the main accused in the case alleging abetment to suicide, criminal conspiracy and cheating, has been summoned by the Enforcement Directorate to record her statement in Mumbai on Friday. Her chartered accountant is expected to appear again before the probe team on Thursday.

The ED on Wednesday recorded the statement of Samuel Miranda, the house manager for Sushant. It is alleged that Mr. Miranda was hired at the instance of Ms. Chakraborty.

Earlier in the day, the Centre informed the Supreme Court that it has agreed to accept the Bihar government's recommendation for CBI probe. The Maharashtra government countered the Centre before a Single Bench of Justice Hirshikesh Roy, saying the case is being used to score political brownie points.

Justice Roy told Maharashtra that quarantining the Bihar police team in Mumbai when all eyes are on the case "does not send a good message".

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## IN BRIEF

## Govt. begins trial of e-ticketing system

NEW DELHI The Transport Department on Wednesday began a three-day public trial of an e-ticketing system in all buses on route no. 473. The trial, the government said in a statement, would continue till August 7. The trial consists of utilisation of a mobile app to purchase a ticket for travel aboard cluster buses running on the route. Commuters can avail contactless ticketing facility by downloading a special app developed with the technical support of IIT Delhi for this project – Chartr.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi	67	Gurugram	57
Ghaziabad	77	Faridabad	60
Noida	83	Greater Noida	90
■ Good	■ Satisfactory	■ Moderate	■ Poor
0-50	51-100	101-200	201-300
■ Very Poor	■ Severe	>400	301-400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m., yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]			

Air Quality Index at 4 p.m., yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]

## DUTA writes to CM to release staffers' salaries

'Wages of 1,500 people due for 2 months'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI The Delhi University Teachers' Association on Wednesday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal requesting him to immediately release salaries of teachers and non-teaching staff of 12 government-funded colleges.

In its letter, the association said over 1,500 teachers and non-teaching staffers in colleges have gone without salaries and pension for the past two months or more and in most colleges, employees have not received salaries from May onwards.

"A large number of these employees, including ad hoc teachers and karamcharis working on contract basis, do not have ecosystems which can cushion them through such a crisis. Employees and their families are facing extreme hardship because of this inordinate delay in salaries," the DUTA said.

**Flimsy excuses**  
The teachers told Mr. Kejriwal that it was becoming ve-

## Police reply sought on activist Kalita's bail plea

HC issues notice to police, posts case for hearing on Aug. 14

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The High Court on Wednesday asked Delhi Police to reply to Pinjra Tod activist Devangana Kalita's plea seeking bail on a case related to the communal violence in north-east Delhi.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait issued notice to Delhi Police on Ms. Kalita's plea challenging a trial court's order, which had dismissed the bail application, and posted the case for further hearing on August 14.

On June 14, a trial court had dismissed Ms. Kalita's bail plea on the ground that there was no merit in the application and it was amply clear from the chargesheet that the investigation was



still pending. The trial court further said that considering the investigation so far and the nature of the offence and the role being ascribed to the accused, there was no reason at all to grant bail.

Ms. Kalita is currently facing four different FIRs connected with the anti-CAA protests in Jaffrabad, north-east Delhi riots and violence

in Daryaganj during a protest against the new citizenship law last year.

## First arrest on May 23

Ms. Kalita was first arrested on May 23, along with fellow JNU student Natasha Narwal in connection with an FIR registered on February 24 over the sit-in protest at Jaffrabad metro station against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Delhi Police has also invoked sections of the stringent anti-terror law – Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act – in a separate case related to the communal violence, against Ms. Kalita for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy" in the riots.

"We received a PCR call about the incident. A police team rushed to the spot and the victim was shifted to

## 12-year-old girl raped, stabbed

Victim battling for life, has stab injuries all over her body

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped and then stabbed all over her body with a sharp weapon in Paschim Vihar, said a police officer on Wednesday. She is admitted in AIIMS and her condition is said to be critical.

According to the police, the incident was reported on Tuesday evening. The girl was brutally stabbed inside the house. Bleeding profusely, she rushed out of the house for help and collapsed just outside the main gate. She was found unconscious, lying in a pool of blood.

Neighbours informed the police and her parents, who were at their workplace, and she was shifted to a hospital.

Delhi Police has also questioned neighbours and scanning CCTVs located in the vicinity to get any clue about the accused. "We have registered a case under POCO and attempt to murder at Paschim Vihar [West] police station. More than 50 people

have been questioned in the case. The accused will be arrested soon," added the officer.

A POLICE OFFICER

Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital where she was stated to be critical. After preliminary treatment, she was shifted to AIIMS. Doctors in AIIMS said that the girl has been shifted to ICU after her condition deteriorated. The stab wounds in head, stomach and private parts were caused by a sharp object like scissor," said a police officer.

He added that they are questioning neighbours and scanning CCTVs located in the vicinity to get any clue about the accused. "We have registered a case under POCO and attempt to murder at Paschim Vihar [West] police station. More than 50 people

have been questioned in the case. The accused will be arrested soon," added the officer.

## DCW reaction

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has issued notice to Delhi Police over the incident and sought a detailed action-taken report. "It is reported that she was attacked by blunt objects and has injuries all over the body. This is a very serious matter and in the light of the same please provide a copy of the FIR registered in the matter," read the letter to the police.

Directing authorities to respond by August 8, the women's panel said: "Please provide information on whether any accused have not been fired, he hit the official's head with the gun. Later, he was arrested" he added.

"The contractor came to the office regarding a complaint and started arguing with the official. He then pulled out a gun and tried to fire. As the shot could not be fired, he hit the official's head with the gun. Later, he was arrested" he added.

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

An executive engineer with South Delhi Municipal Corporation was attacked in his office in Hauz Khas on Wednesday afternoon. The accused has been arrested, the police said.

DCP (South) Atul Thakur said that a PCR call was received around 2.30 p.m. When the police reached the spot, they were allegedly informed by Executive Engineer Sunil Gehlot that a contractor, Manoj Mandal, attacked him.

"The contractor came to the office regarding a complaint and started arguing with the official. He then pulled out a gun and tried to fire. As the shot could not be fired, he hit the official's head with the gun. Later, he was arrested" he added.

## Police, Zee News reply sought on TMC MP's plea in defamation case

Mahua Moitra has challenged a trial court's orders in HC

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought response from Delhi Police and Zee News on Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra's plea challenging the summons and framing of charges against her in a defamation case.

Ms. Moitra has challenged a trial court's orders of September 25, 2019, and January 10, by which she was summoned as accused and charges were framed against her in the defamation case respectively.

On January 10, the trial court had framed charges against Ms. Moitra for the alleged offence of criminal defamation under the Indian Penal Code.

## Requisite intention

Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for Ms. Moitra,



Mahua Moitra

said that she was summoned without considering that the remarks were made by her without requisite intention.

The case relates to Ms. Moitra's June 25, 2019 speech in Parliament on the 'Seven Signs of Fascism' and a TV show run by the news channel.

Ms. Moitra has filed a criminal defamation complaint against Zee News and its editor Sudhir Chaudhary for alleging that her June 25 speech was plagiarised.

Subsequently, Zee News filed a defamation complaint against Ms. Moitra for allegedly making statements against them to the media.

The court also directed DU to also provide at least

two reading material or textbooks of each paper to the visually impaired students.

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday told the Delhi University to provide scribes for visually impaired students at common service centres (CSCs) for online Open Book Examinations (OBE) for final-year undergraduate courses.

**Reading material**  
A Bench of Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Subramoniam Prasad told DU to ensure that no such student is deprived of a scribe at the CSC if the varsity has been informed in advance.

The court also directed DU to also provide at least

DU is scheduled to hold final-year undergraduate on

line OBE from August 10-31 and the students who will be left out of online exams will be given an opportunity to appear in physical examinations, to be held sometime in September.

It also asked the varsity to ensure that digital certificates/ results are sent to students through email so that students need not go to the college.

The court was hearing pleas by law student Prateek Sharma and National Federation of Blind seeking to set up effective mechanisms for specially abled students so that educational instructions can be transmitted to them properly.

## Neighbour ends life after killing couple

Victim used to follow man's daughter'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A man stabbed a couple to death following a quarrel in outer Delhi's Narela, before ending his life by consuming poison, the police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place late on Tuesday night, they said. A quarrel broke out between the couple and their neighbour over some issue, following which the 50-year-old accused stabbed the couple with a knife. Later, he went to his house, changed his blood-stained clothes and then allegedly consumed poison.

## Frequent fights

Investigation revealed that the accused had fights in the past with the couple and other neighbours. The accused had a young daughter and was apparently not happy with the victim's dressing sense. The accused had earlier objected to his wearing

## Cool surprise



A fresh spell of rain drenched parts of the Capital on Wednesday, bringing relief from sultry weather. The Safdarjung Observatory recorded 12.6 mm rainfall. Only light rains are predicted over the next two to three days. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## One killed in robbery attempt

The accused are yet to be identified, say police

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man was killed and his friend sustained injuries in a robbery bid in West Delhi's Tilak Nagar on Tuesday night, the police said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Sameer Sharma said that the deceased has been identified as Ranjan, and the injured has been identified as Dheeraj. The accused are yet to be identified.

According to police, a PCR call was received at 11.29 p.m. regarding a robbery. When police reached the spot near a park in Tilak Nagar, a scooter was found and the injured had already been shifted to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital.

"During investigation, it was found that the victims were returning from work when three boys on a bike came and robbed the victims."

The victims were returning from work when three boys on a bike robbed them. When they tried to resist, the men attacked them and fled

SAMEER SHARMA  
Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West)

laptop, mobile and money. When they tried to resist, the men attacked them and fled the spot, the officer said, adding that a case under Section 302 (punishment for murder), 394 (causing hurt in committing robbery), 307 (attempt to murder) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered.

Mr. Sharma said, "Teams have been formed to work on the case," he said.

**Scribe murder case: last accused held**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GAZIABAD

The Ghaziabad police on Wednesday said they have arrested the last remaining accused in the journalist Vikram Joshi murder case.

Joshi, 35, was shot by goons near his home in Vijay Nagar on the night of July 20. He had succumbed to the injuries on July 22 while undergoing treatment, Senior Superintendent of Police, Ghaziabad, Kalanidhi Naithani said. "Nine of the accused were arrested immediately after the incident. One accused, Akash Bihari, was absconding and was arrested on Wednesday," he said.

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The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Arki invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work(s) through offline process:-					
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2.	Repair of Non Functional hand Pumps in Jal Shakti Division, Arki in Tehsil Arki, Distt. Solan H.P. (SH:- Repair of Non Functional 12 Nos. hand Pumps in Jal Shakti Sub Division, Subabu Section Kunihar).	170329/-	3410/-	15 days	250/-
3.	R/R of LWSS Multi NC/PC Area from Gamber Khan in Tehsil Kasauli, Distt. Solan (H.P) (SH:- Construction of RCC Storage tank 20000 liter capacity at Sard & Providing Laying and jointing of G.I. Pipe (Light Class) in distribution system (D.C.) system).	272048/-	5450/-	Three Months	250/-
4.	RIO (Repair of) Rain damages LWSS Bhumpti to Dhar Brahma in G.P. Bumpti in Tehsil Arki, Distt. Solan H.P. (SH:- Construction of RCC Storage tank 20000 liter capacity at Sard & Providing Laying and jointing of G.I. Pipe (Light Class) in distribution system (D.C.) system).	190729/-	3820/-	Three Months	250/-
5.	R/R of LWSS Gohri in Tehsil Arki, Distt. Solan (H.P) (SH:- Fixing of wire mesh panels around the pump house and treatment units RD 0 to 60 meters).	272843/-	5460/-	Three Months	250/-
6.	R/R of Sewage Scheme Kunihar under Jai Shakti Section Darighat under Jal Shakti Sub Division, Darighat in Tehsil Arki Distt. Solan (H.P) (Under Jal Jeevan Mission).	239365/-	4790/-	One Month	250/-
7.	Improvement & Retrofitting of various water supply schemes under Jal Shakti Section Subabu under Jal Shakti Sub Division, Subabu in Tehsil Kasauli Distt. Solan (H.P) (Under Jal Jeevan Mission) SH:- Providing Parallel distribution system for household connections).	364644/-	7300/-	Three Months	250/-
8.	Improvement & Retrofitting of various Water Supply Schemes under Jal Shakti Section Subabu under Jal Shakti Sub Division, Subabu in Tehsil Kasauli Distt. Solan (H.P) (Under Jal J				

Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, AUG. 06
RISE 05:46 SET 19:09
RISE 21:07 SET 07:58
FRIDAY, AUG. 07
RISE 05:47 SET 19:08
RISE 21:38 SET 08:52
SATURDAY, AUG. 08
RISE 05:47 SET 19:07
RISE 22:08 SET 09:45

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	35	28
Safdarjung	35	28
Palam	36	29

**Delhi Palam Today**  
36°C Moderate Easterly winds would prevail, day will be warm and humid with partly cloudy sky. Chances of light rain.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
35°C Warm and humid day with partly cloudy sky and moderate easterlies. Short spell light rain may occur.

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## Safety first



Seating arrangement at Red Fort in the Capital ahead of Independence Day. Seats have been placed in such a way to ensure social distancing. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## CM holds meet to discuss death rate in hospitals

Take steps for zero fatalities, says CM

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday convened a meeting with committees, which were constituted last month to inspect 10 city hospitals with the highest mortality rate and give hospital-wise recommendations on following standard operating procedures and protocols.

In the meeting, each of the four committees submitted their reports and presented recommendations to the Chief Minister to improve COVID-19 patient care services and reducing mortality in the hospitals.

"Mr. Kejriwal reiterated on Wednesday that all steps should be taken to bring deaths to zero. During the inspection by the committees, it was found that the death rate in all these hospitals has decreased as compared to earlier," the Delhi government said in a statement.

"Chief Minister is personally monitoring all critical

## Delhi's virus slump is no magic pill: experts

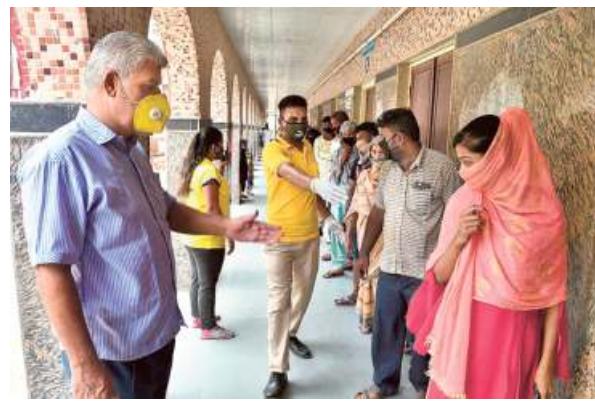
They attribute dip in cases to micro planning and sustained emphasis on testing, tracking and treating

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
NEW DELHI

With rapidly falling COVID-19 active case load, dipping fatality and positivity rate, and rising number of vacant beds, Delhi is currently among the handful of States/UTs in India that has managed to contain and reverse a growing pandemic load. Delhi has slipped from the top three red zones in the country to the ninth position.

While the Central government said it is ready to replicate lessons learnt here in other high burden States, those part of this move point out that Delhi's dipping COVID-19 numbers is "no magic pill".

Sample this: with a current recovery rate of 90%, Delhi's active case load at the end of June hovered around 27,847. It has now more than halved, at a little over 10,000 cases. Moreover, from June 22 to 28, the city recorded 448 deaths while this past week it has come down to 177. Delhi is among the 24 States/UTs that have better tests per million than the national average of 15,119. The Capital is clocking 57,855 tests per million, second to Goa which tests 84,927 per million.



Supervisors asking people to maintain social distancing at a testing centre in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

"This is a result of micro planning, scrupulous implementation, and sustained emphasis on testing, tracking and treating," said a senior Central government official.

### Relentless measures

"The trend runs parallel to overall improvement that the country has witnessed. There has been a 63.8% increase in recovered cases in the last 14 days, indicating that the COVID-19 response and management driven by the Centre's strategy is yielding desired results," noted the Union Health Ministry.

Speaking about the turnaround that the Capital has

made, Vice Chancellor of Indraprastha University Manesh Verma, who heads an expert committee of the Delhi government for COVID management, said: "A number of factors have helped Delhi. With the passage of time, the awareness about the disease has increased. Initially, there were a lot of grey areas. Testing, tracing and treating also improved over time. A lot of guidelines were updated as we gained more knowledge about the disease, which improved the situation. Home isolation and plasma therapy also helped. In Delhi, an advantage was that it was a joint effort of the State and Central governments, rail-

ways and others. Everyone brought in their expertise."

### Wary of complacency

However, Mr. Verma warned that Delhi should not become complacent. "There are reports of a second or third surge in other countries. For instance, Hong Kong is witnessing a third surge. We have to have our guards up," he said.

When asked whether parts of Delhi have attained herd immunity, Mr. Verma said: "The last sero survey showed that about 23% people have developed immunity against the disease and it was in June. When the results of the ongoing survey will be out it will be much clearer whether Delhi has attained herd immunity or we are moving towards it."

The Central government, on its part, had roped in senior experts, including member NITI Aayog V.K. Paul, All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) head Randeep Guleria, and Indian Council of Medical Research head Balaram Bhargava among others to prepare a blueprint for COVID-19 containment when the Capital was witnessing a surge in June.

"Testing, tracking and

treating were done in an extensive manner with the Capital ensuring that contact-tracing was done within 72 hours of case discovery. The contacts were up to 20-30 persons, which is among the highest in the country. The Central government team also ensured that the city reworked its containment zone planning, and strict measures were implemented not just in the zone perimeter but even within the containment zone," said a senior Central government official.

### Repeated survey

He added that other key measures included repeated house-to-house survey for people with symptoms, immediate physical isolation of people living in densely populated areas, enhanced testing within containment zones, ambulance management to ensure zero refusal rate, roping in private car companies to run as ambulances, ensuring that real time data of bed occupancy be made public along with better handling of mortuaries and asking hospitals to strictly comply with the Centre's treatment protocol. All these helped stabilise the situation.

## Over 1,000 new cases as testing picks up pace

Capital has 10,072 active cases at present

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

As many as 1,076 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Delhi in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 1,40,232, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

At the same time, 11 more deaths have been reported, taking the total number of deaths to 4,044.

Of the total cases, 1,26,116 people have recovered and there are 10,072 active cases at present.

### COVID-19

PCR tests.

The active cases have decreased from 27,007 on July 1 to 10,072 on Wednesday.

The number of people admitted to COVID-19 hospitals has also been decreasing. On July 1, a total of 5,892 beds in COVID-19 hospitals were occupied and it has decreased to 2,995 on Wednesday.

During the same period, the number of COVID-19 positive people in home isolation has also decreased from 16,703 to 5,227.

Also, the positivity rate, which is the percentage of people who test positive, has dropped from 12.2% to 6.4%.

The number of containment zones in the city is now 481.

## IN BRIEF

### Virtual education fair to begin from August 10

**GURUGRAM**  
An eight-week-long virtual education fair will be held by IDP Education, an international education services organisation, from August 10. Over 150 institutions from Australia, UK, US, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland are expected to participate in the fair to interact with Indian students and help them with their overseas education plan. It will help students make decision in view of the disruption of services caused by COVID-19.

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## DDC to carry out detailed study to improve govt's revenue base

Commission to suggest short- and long-term measures

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday directed the Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDC) to prepare a detailed study to improve the revenue base of the Delhi government.

Mr. Sisodia said that the DDC will suggest short and long-term measures to improve the revenue base.

"The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has put a huge strain on government revenues in the NCT of Delhi and therefore all out efforts need to be made towards revenue augmentation so that the government is able to undertake all necessary works and programmes for the welfare of people of Delhi," Mr. Sisodia said.

The Minister said that the DDC will carry out a detailed study on all contributing factors by analysing all relevant tax-related data of the Delhi government. He also directed the DDC to consult with leading experts of the field



Manish Sisodia ■

**Delhi** government's early call for opening the economy and a robust healthcare strategy has set the right conditions for an economic revival

JASMINE SHAH

DDC Vice-Chairman

and relevant organisations in public finance to present a holistic analysis of the current situation and improvement measures that hold the maximum potential.

He also asked the DDC to present its findings within two months.

Commenting on this development, DDC Vice-Chairman Jasmine Shah said: "Delhi government's early call for opening the economy and a robust healthcare strategy has set the right conditions for an economic revival. The DDC will perform a rigorous study on the improvement of the revenue base of Delhi. We will involve the field experts to perform this study. We are confident

that with time and a proper strategy, we will be able to overcome the revenue deficit too."

In a bid to improve Delhi's revenue deficit situation, the Trade and Taxes Department of Delhi government has also started analysing the return filing status of taxpayers registered under GST.

On Tuesday, the government had said that that around 15,000 taxpayers were analysed and nearly 970 of them have not filed returns for 2020-21 from January to March and nearly 10,800 companies paid lesser or zero tax during the same period.

## BJP holds events to mark Ram temple 'bhoomi pujan'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI



drain was found choked, processing capacity is just enough to cater to day to day processing and is unable to tackle legacy waste."

The green panel specified that recommendations made by the committee had to be followed including bio-remediation and that in case of non-compliance, a fine will be levied on the authorities.

The observations came when the Tribunal was hearing a plea, which alleged that illegal disposal of solid waste on the Yamuna floodplains in Vrindavan was affecting the environment adversely.

In addition to the proceedings of the ceremony featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi on LED screen installed at each of the 70 Assembly segments in the city, outreach programmes for other religious communities, distribution of traditional laddoos and lighting of earthen lamps were organised.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta watched the live telecast at Valmiki Mandir, Mandir Marg. National general secretary and MP Arun Singh, former Union Minister Vijay Goel and North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari among others watched it at 24, Mother Teresa, Crescent Road.

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# Book those directly involved in hooch tragedy for murder: CM

Shiromani Akali Dal to approach Governor for dismissal of Amarinder govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Wednesday directed the State police chief to book those directly involved in the hooch tragedy that has claimed 113 lives, for murder.

Promising justice for the victims of the case, which he termed as the biggest tragedy of recent times, the Chief Minister asserted that he will not tolerate any political interference in the case.

Capt. Amarinder also mooted enhancement of punishment for spurious or illicit liquor manufacturing and smuggling under the Excise Act, to ensure repeat offenders remain behind the bars and are not able to come out easily to indulge again in the crime.



CM Amarinder Singh

dra, to examine the provisions of the proposed law, to finalise and submit its report at the earliest.

He agreed with Sukhjinder Randhawa and other Ministers that PCOCA could help control hardcore criminals and act as a deterrent to gangsters, who continue to deal in organised crime even from prison, and had close connections with terrorists too, according to a government release here.

#### SIT teams formed

Punjab Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta on Wednesday ordered the constitution of two Special Investigation Teams (SITs) to fast-track investigations in all the FIRs registered in the hooch tragedy.

The Chief Minister asked the sub-committee, set up under Minister Brahm Mohin-

al of Police (Law & Order) Ishwar Singh will supervise both the SIT investigations.

Meanwhile, the Shiromani Akali Dal announced that the party would approach Punjab Governor V.P. Singh Badnore and demand an immediate dismissal of the Congress government in the State, which the party said was responsible for the hooch tragedy.

"The Akali Dal will subsequently hold a dharna outside the Governor's residence for four days from August 7. Also we have decided that in the second phase, the party would hold dharna outside the residence of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and demand that the Congress high command come clean on the issue," party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal said.

(With inputs from PTI)

During a Cabinet meeting, several Ministers agreed to Advocate General Atul Nanda's suggestion that a strict law like Punjab Control of Organised Crime Act (PCOCA) was needed to combat organised crime like illicit liquor smuggling.

The Chief Minister asked the sub-committee, set up under Minister Brahm Mohin-

## Bengal records 61 virus deaths, toll reaches 1,846

The State also saw 2,816 new cases

**SHIV SAHAY SINGH**  
KOLKATA

West Bengal on Wednesday recorded 61 deaths due to COVID-19, taking the toll to 1,846. The State also registered 2,816 new cases in the past 24 hours taking the total number to 83,800.

The active cases stands at 22,992 and the discharge rate remains at 70.36%. Of the 61 deaths, 25 were from Kolkata, 13 from North 24 Parganas and nine from Howrah district.

**Councillor dies**  
Meanwhile, a Trinamool Congress councillor from Biddhannagar Municipal Corporation died due to COVID-19 during the day. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

described Subhas Bose as "one of the many brave souls who risked their lives while working in the frontline".

A number of leaders of Communist Party of India (Marxist) including Polit Bureau member Mohd Salim have been hospitalised after getting infected. Other party leaders like Fuad Halim and State Secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions Anandi Sahu have also been hospitalized with COVID-19.

The State observed a complete lockdown on Wednesday. 561 people were prosecuted for violating the curbs and 271 were booked for not wearing face masks in Kolkata. 19 people were also booked for spitting on roads and public places.

The State observed a complete lockdown on Wednesday. 561 people were prosecuted for violating the curbs and 271 were booked for not wearing face masks in Kolkata. 19 people were also booked for spitting on roads and public places.

## Lalu shifted from ward over virus threat

Jharkhand Opposition cries foul, says he is getting 'preferential treatment'

AMARNATH TEWARY  
PATNA

Imprisoned Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad was on Wednesday shifted from the paying ward of the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi, Jharkhand, to the official residence of the hospital director located on the premises due to the fear of COVID-19 infection.

Opposition BJP leaders alleged that Mr. Lalu has been getting "preferential treatment" ever since the JMM-Congress-RJD *mahagathbandhan* government has come to power in Jharkhand.

"Mr. Lalu has often been seen using a mobile phone and holding meetings with RJD leaders at the hospital. Now he has been shifted to a bungalow to be protected from COVID-19 infection, while other patients are left at the hospital," said Jharkhand BJP leader Kumar Saangi. BJP State spokesman



RJD chief Lalu Prasad in Ranchi on Wednesday. •PTI

Pratul Shahdeo said, him to an isolated area.

The hospital authorities decided to shift Mr. Lalu to the official residence of the RIMS director. The residence, known as Kelly's Bungalow, has been vacant for some time after the former director, Dr. D.K. Singh, was relieved from his position. The British-era bunga-

low was considered suitable for security reasons as well. The Ranchi City Superintendent of Police had also made an inspection of the place.

"Lalu Prasad was on the first floor at RIMS where the second and third floors are being used to treat COVID-19 patients. Three of his caretakers tested positive, so I had suggested to move him," Dr. Umesh Prasad said in Ranchi. Dr. Prasad has been looking after the RJD leader's treatment at RIMS.

So far, Jharkhand has registered over 14,000 COVID-19 cases.

A photo of Mr. Lalu, talking to someone over phone, and a Jharkhand Minister sitting in hospital corridor had gone viral on social media. Mr. Lalu has been meeting people, including his family members, at his hospital ward every Saturday. He has also been attacking the Bihar government through tweets.

## Bihar flood situation worsens, 66 lakh hit

Overflowing rivers inundate new areas in the State; CM makes aerial survey



An aerial view of the flood-affected Darbhanga district of Bihar on Wednesday. •PTI

and 18.71 lakh affected people.

The Chief Minister visited a school in Makhnai village which has been converted to a relief camp-cum-community kitchen. He interacted with the inmates there and enquired about the facilities they were receiving.

Holding a tray full of biscuit packets, Mr. Kumar offered these to the children of the 15 families staying in the camp with his face, covered with a mask, betraying a broad smile.

**Social distancing**  
He expressed satisfaction upon being told by the District Magistrate concerned that social distancing and hand hygiene were being adequately taken care of at the camp.

## Four missing girls traced in Aligarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BULANDSHAHAR (U.P.)

Four minors girls – three of them from the same family and two of them toddlers – who had gone missing from Uttar Pradesh's Ahmadgarh town near here, were traced in Aligarh on Wednesday.

Bulandshahr's Senior Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Singh said the four had ventured out of their homes in Ahmadgarh on Tuesday afternoon to go to their maternal grandparents place in Aligarh.

The SSP said a 14-year-old girl started from Ahmadgarh for Aligarh, nearly 45 km away, along with her friend of the same age and her two toddler sister, aged around two and three.

The girls reached Aligarh but forgot the way to their grandparent's place and unable to reach their destination they began crying, attracting a passerby, Captain Khan's attention.

Mr. Khan consoled the girls and handed them over to police after feeding them at his home, the officer said.

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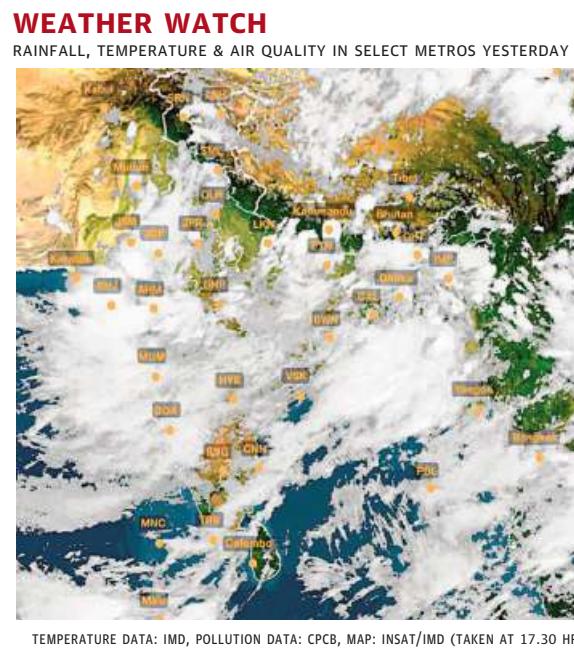
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Public Notice



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/MD (TAKEN AT 17.30 HRS)

**Forecast for Thursday:** Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, east Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, central Maharashtra, Marathwada, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe

(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	23	33	.43	.61	—	GREEN
Bengaluru	.9	.11	.39	.45	.42	GREEN
Chennai	.8	.7	.50	.56	.10	ORANGE
Delhi	12	47	.126	.81	.73	ORANGE
Hyderabad	.7	.46	.17	.8	.10	GREEN
Kolkata	.11	.17	.11	.28	.46	GREEN
Lucknow	.3	.21	.76	.62	.54	GREEN
Mumbai	.59	.13	.44	.17	.23	GREEN
Pune	.7	.3	.45	.7	.7	GREEN
Visakhapatnam	12	.33	.21	.29	.50	GREEN

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</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>x</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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Charkhi Dadri, Haryana, recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 164 indicating a moderate level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 8

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Maharashtra reported a massive surge of 10,309 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the State's total case tally to 4,68,265. It also recorded a high fatality surge of 334 deaths, taking the death toll to 16,476.

As opposed to the high number of recoveries outweighing the case surge in the last three days, only 6,165 patients were discharged today, taking the total recoveries to 3,05,521.

The number of active cases stood at 1,45,961 with a recovery rate of 65.25%, said State Health Department officials. "Till date, of 24,13,510 laboratory samples, 4,68,265 (19.40%) have tested positive with nearly 61,000 samples being tested across the State tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate, adding that case fatality rate stood at 3.52%.

**Surge continues in Pune**  
Pune district reported another big surge of over 2,000 new cases and a record-high fatality spike of 92 deaths as its case tally reached 1,01,262, while the death toll rose to 2,434. The district administration, however, said there were less than 27,000 active cases.

With 1,125 new cases reported today, Mumbai's total case tally reached has 1,19,240 of whom only 20,679 are active. With 42 new deaths, the city's death toll has risen to 6,591.

Kolhapur in western Maharashtra reported a high fatality surge of 12 deaths, taking its death toll to 177. The district also reported a surge of 400 fresh cases, taking its



**Venturing out:** People wearing masks are seen at a shopping mall, which reopened as part of Unlock 3, in Mumbai on Wednesday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

tally to 7,087 of which 4,179

ported huge case surges.

**Nashik's record-high**

Nashik recorded a record-high case surge of 705 new ones as its total tally rose to 17,239 of whom 5,843 are active. With 10 new fatalities, the district's death toll has reached 508.

In another alarming fatality spike, 18 deaths were reported from the Bhivandi-Nizampur civic body, taking its toll to 270. The rise in deaths was all the more worrying as the civic body reported only 18 new cases, taking its total case tally to 3,920. Thane district reported 13 fatalities, taking the total death toll to 1,114. It also saw a big spike of 513 new cases as the total case tally crossed 36,000.

After Pune district, Nashik and Jalgaon — major hotbeds in north Maharashtra — along with Ahmednagar, re-

ported 466 fresh cases, taking the tally to 12,551, of which 3,394 cases are active. With four new deaths, the district's toll has risen to 562.

Dr. Awate said 9,43,658 people across the State were in home quarantine and 36,466 were in institutional quarantine facilities.

## HC gives nod to cut 357 mangroves for Metro 4

MMRDA agrees to plant 4,444 saplings

SONAM SAIGAL  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday allowed the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) to cut 357 mangrove trees as part of the Metro 4 work.

The court said, "We are convinced beyond any doubt that the construction of Metro 4 is a project of immense importance from the point of view of public transport."

A Division Bench of Justices S.J. Kathawalla and R.I. Chagla was hearing a petition filed by the MMRDA seeking permission to go ahead with the construction of Metro 4, which will connect areas such as Wadala, Ghatkopar, Mulund, Thane and Kesarwadi.

However, 48 piers of the 1.2 km alignment at the proposed Bhakti Park station, and 0.1236 hectares of a

temporary approach road fall under the Coastal Regulation Zone II area.

The MMRDA had sent an online application to the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority seeking permission to axe 357 mangrove trees for the construction of the Metro piers and the approach road to Bhakti Park station.

On March 11, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in a letter to the Secretary (Forest), Maharashtra, granted "in-principle" sanction under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, for the diversion of 0.985 hectares of reserved forest land in favour of the MMRDA, subject to conditions.

In turn, the MMRDA has agreed to bear the cost of afforestation of 0.12 hectares of mangrove forest land, and plant 4,444 mangrove saplings.

## Young NCP, Congress leaders back Aaditya

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

A day after Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray slammed the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for playing dirty politics over the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, young leaders from the Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) have come out in support of Mr. Thackeray.

NCP MLA Rohit Pawar said while there was no doubt that the Rajput's family must get justice, it was evident that dirty politics is being played over his death by people within and outside the State. "The image of police is being maligned, hampering the morale of the force. We must stand with our police force challenging the politics of the Opposition. It is extremely wrong to target police instead of standing with them as a Marathi," he said.

Mr. Pawar said he agrees with the statement made by



Aaditya Thackeray

Mr Thackeray. "But I must say that the people of Maharashtra can see everything clearly and they have never entertained such petty politics," he said.

Maharashtra youth Congress president Satyajeet Tambe also came out in support of Mr. Thackeray. "Aaditya, you should not worry. The people are smart enough. Even a small boy can tell if the Mumbai Police is more efficient or the Bihar Police. This dirty politics is a result of people being unable to deal with the good work done by you," he said on Twitter.

However, 48 piers of the 1.2 km alignment at the proposed Bhakti Park station, and 0.1236 hectares of a

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In turn, the MMRDA has agreed to bear the cost of afforestation of 0.12 hectares of mangrove forest land, and plant 4,444 mangrove saplings.

the forefront of the State's development and progress of the Marathwada region".

Mr. Patil Nilangekar had remained a popular man of the masses. "As a distinguished member of Maharashtra State Legislature for several terms and later as Chief Minister, he made invaluable contributions to the progress and development of the State," the Governor said.

Condolences flowed in across the political spectrum, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray along with senior Congress leaders paying tributes.

Mr. Thackeray said Mr. Nilangekar Patil was a freedom fighter with "commitment and firm views, who was at

the forefront of the State's development and progress of the Marathwada region".

Before its delimitation in 2008, Mr. Patil Nilangekar won the Nilanga Assembly constituency in consecutive Assembly elections from 1962 to 1980, and then held the 'pocket borough' again in the 1990, 1999 and 2004 Assembly polls.

His daughter-in-law Rupatai Patil Nilangekar, who is with the BJP, was Latur MP between 2004 and 2009 while his grandson Sambhaji Patil Nilangekar was a minister in the former Devendra Fadnavis-led BJP government in Maharashtra.

He is survived by his wife, three sons, a daughter and grandchildren. His last rites were performed in Nilanga.

Shri Shivajirao Patil Nilangekar Ji was a stalwart of

the Marathwada region. He was a committed Congressman's vir-

tal fiefdom with the Nilangekar family a dominant force in the politics of Latur and the Marathwada region.

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## Delayed start

The IPL remains a big draw, but it should not put public health at risk

The Indian Premier League (IPL) marches to a beat of its own. It may lack the enduring international appeal of the World Cup, the Ashes or tussles featuring India and Pakistan, yet for a domestic cricket league that blends the local with the global, the IPL has commercial heft and guarantees annual thrills. Since its launch on an April night at Bengaluru in 2008, the league gained traction and also suffered controversies. The 2013 spot-fixing crisis forced a cleansing exercise within the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) but the tournament continued unhindered. Even two general elections could not stop the IPL as South Africa conducted the event in 2009 while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) staged the first half during 2014. But the current year, wilting under a raging pandemic, has altered life and routines. The IPL, slotted for the summer, was postponed. For a sporting brand valued at ₹47,500 crore and head-lined by blue chip cricketers, the stakes are high and the BCCI scouted for a window to prop up the league. Opportunity arose when Australia shelved the ICC Twenty20 World Cup from October 18 to November 15. With India still grappling with coronavirus, the UAE stepped in and the IPL will be held there from September 19 to November 10, subject to the central government's approval, now deemed a formality.

Essentially a recreational activity, sport is also considered as war minus the shooting and even the IPL is not immune to the resultant pressures. Once the league's governing council mentioned over the weekend that Vivo, the cellphone company with Chinese roots, will continue to be the title sponsor, all hell broke loose. The border stand-off on the icy Himalayas was bound to have its economic repercussions in an atmosphere rippling with nationalistic fervour. For now both Vivo and the BCCI have blinked, a separation is certain, and the hunt for a lead sponsor is on. If commerce is one headache to be dealt with, the bigger migraine is the absolute importance that has to be given to conducting the tournament in bio-secure bubbles at Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. With eight squads and 60 games spread over 53 days, the organisers cannot afford any slip even if spectators are kept at bay. Recently, England speedster Jofra Archer reacted to a basic human urge – the need to go home, but in these fraught times, his move almost put the entire England-West Indies series in peril as he had breached medical protocols. West Asia with its Indian diaspora has its distractions and the IPL officials have to ensure that while cricket prosters on the turf, the larger picture of health is not ignored. The virus remains a threat, and the thirst for profit should not override public health concerns.

## Beirut battered

Blast worsens Lebanon's situation as it fights political, economic, and health emergencies

The devastating blast in central Beirut on Tuesday that killed 135 people and wounded 4,000 has once again turned the spotlight on a city that had in the past survived civil wars, sectarian violence, foreign interventions and terrorist attacks. While there is no dearth of conspiracy theories, the initial assessment of the government is that the blast was caused by the detonation of more than 2,700 tonnes of ammonium nitrate that had been stored in a warehouse at the Beirut port after it was confiscated from a cargo ship six years ago. Officials say the initial explosion ignited a fire, while the second one was more devastating with a mushroom cloud of smoke and fire enveloping the capital's skyline and its shock waves battering buildings across the city and wounding thousands. Officials have said they would investigate any potential terror angle, while Prime Minister Hassan Diab has promised to bring "all those responsible for this catastrophe" to justice. U.S. President Donald Trump has called it an attack. The magnitude of the blast and the level of the destruction it caused in one of the busiest areas of the capital city suggest that the casualties could be higher. Beirut's health-care system, struggling to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, is already stretched. Coping with the aftermath of the blast itself would be an uphill task for the country's beleaguered government.

The blast could not have come at a worse time for Lebanon. In recent years, it has been battling with one crisis or another – be it political instability, a crumbling economy or the pandemic. Massive street protests that broke out in Beirut and elsewhere last year against corruption and the government's inability to provide even basic services to citizens, paralysed governance further, leading to Prime Minister Saad Hariri's resignation. The new government's immediate priority was to fix the economy. But the economy is still in free fall. Prices of essential goods are high, foreign currency is scarce and the GDP is expected to contract 12% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund. Residents of Beirut are also struggling with long power outages, which are delaying even the rescue efforts after the blast. On the southern border, tensions between Israel and Hezbollah are on the rise, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warning of military action. If Lebanon was already on its knees, amidst all these crises, the blast would most likely break its back. It has rendered hundreds of thousands homeless and would deepen the country's economic woes as one of its main ports has been destroyed. The immediate focus should be on rescuing the wounded and getting the city back on its feet. All stakeholders, from the Sunni parties to Shia Hezbollah, should work together. Other countries in the region as well as international institutions should offer help to Beirut to withstand this moment of catastrophe.

# The urban migrant and the 'ritual' tug of home

When faced with an imminent threat to life, family is much stronger for migrant labour than an urban occupation



DIPANKAR GUPTA

**D**id our urban, means-ends rationality get it wrong again? Was it lockdown-related job loss that poisoned the well and led migrant workers, mostly single men, to head for their villages? Or, was there something non-economic, not quite this-worldly either, that turned their stomachs?

The migrant worker, when in crisis, is not seeking material help from his family in the village; they are, anyway, much poorer than he is. What disturbs him profoundly at such times is the fear of dying alone with nobody to perform the rites for him.

In nearly every religion, the family plays a central role in the observance of mortuary rituals. Not just that, these have to be performed correctly so that the departed soul can easily negotiate the afterlife.

**Unemployment as part of life**  
It is considerations of this kind, more than financial hardship, that prompt single migrant workers to leave for their rural homes. The Indian labouring classes are much less rattled by joblessness as unemployment is a frequent, if unwelcome, visitor at their door.

This is clearly an outcome of the fact that 93% of our economy is informal. Ironically, the Industrial Disputes Act encourages this trend. It mandates employers to pay severance wages, and other benefits, only if workers are hired,

and on the rolls, continuously for over 248 days.

This law has had the unintended consequence of making it attractive for management to periodically flip labour around. As a result, only a minuscule minority stays employed for long.

Most other workers suffer joblessness for long periods in the bear pit called the city. Yet, it took just two days of the lockdown for a large number of male workers to start the trudge to their respective villages.

**Forget the industrial glue**  
When faced with an imminent threat to life, the tug of home and family is much stronger for the migrant worker than the industrial glue that comes with an urban occupation. This job could be well paid and the worker may have even held it for some time.

There are no laboratory conditions to settle this issue, but a comparative approach might help. In Surat in 1979, when there was a widespread fear that a satellite was going to fall smack in the city centre, causing untold deaths, a large number of migrants left for their villages.

Again, in Surat, in 1994, the plague scare prompted over 6,00,000 to leave their work stations for the railway station. In both these instances, jobs were not threatened, but there was this perceived fear of death.

On the other hand, when demonetisation happened in 2016, only a few migrant workers left because this distress was primarily economic, without a threat to life. Later, in 2020, when COVID-19 started killing wantonly, there was a radical shift; now, men without families went home because they did not want to die alone.



ROHIT JAIN PARAS

We missed paying attention to this fact in the latest pandemic exodus because it was accompanied by an economic downturn. It also satisfied our middle-class mentality because, from our angle of vision, economic lenses provide the right focal point.

For the better off, even a temporary job loss can be traumatic. Besides a bruised self-esteem, there are also equated monthly instalments, or EMIs and mortgages to be paid. It is not uncommon, under these conditions, for a middle class person to turn to the family, as the first port of call.

**Data from survey**  
A 2018 CBRE survey shows that 80% of young Indian millennials live with their parents. Further, a YouGov-Mint-CPR Millennial Survey conducted in 2020 tells us that they depend on their parents' real estate property and savings to give them a start.

No wonder, Census figures show that joint families are growing, albeit slowly, in urban India, but declining in the villages. But the short, bullet point is that unemployment does not send migrant workers to their villages because their families there are in no position to help them financially.

What brings them home is the

dread of dying on alien soil without the necessary prayers.

### Rituals and customs

Among Muslims, washing of the body as well as the lowering of the shrouded corpse are important aspects of death rituals and ought to be performed by the immediate family. Despite regional variations, certain aspects of Islamic mortuary customs are constant.

Death rituals vary among Hindus too. There is no consensus, for instance, on how many days must elapse before major mourning rituals such as *chaithra* and *shradha* can commence. Also, most Hindus are cremated, but some are buried too.

Only the family would know the minutiae of these details. Further, among Hindus, male blood kin alone can perform the *pind daan* and the ritual erasure of debts, or (*rin*), of the dead relative.

If these, and other rules, are not followed correctly, the soul of the dead person could suffer perpetual torment in the other world. It will take more than a job somewhere to overcome the fear of dying anonymously, without proper ceremonies being performed.

Forced by poverty, workers can take economic hardship on their chin and stomach at the same time. They may have a face for radio and a voice for silent films, but in the theatre of survival, they move adeptly, playing their part.

It is in the theatre of death that they need their families to provide the props. If about 90% of slum dwellers in Dharavi stayed put, post lockdown, it was because most of them lived with their wives and children and did not fear a death without rituals.

Newspapers were quick to notice that it was mostly men walking

on highways, or leaving from train stations and bus stands. Though the image of vulnerable women and children in the midst of all this is much more wrenching, their numbers were not that many.

### Gender factor

This is not a trivial observation because women actually form 55% (or, the majority) of rural migrants to urban India. If there were fewer of them on highways it was because arranged marriages have brought most of them to the city, not a flimsy job prospect.

This makes their transition more permanent because they now generally have properly anchored urban husbands. These women, in the fullness of time, make a home, birth a family and nobody in that unit need any longer fear dying alone and un-prayed.

On the other hand, rural men migrate with tentative employment prospects and it will be a long time before they can, if at all, imagine getting their families over. Of course, a stable job, with entitlements, would let them live that dream. Till then, the thought of death and a frantic bus ticket home will always be paired.

Even so, despite economic uncertainties, and underemployment, about 72% of slum dwellings are owned, not rented. This shows the overwhelming preference the poor have for family life, only if they could afford one.

When urban workers rush to their rural homes, it is because they fear a death where nobody prays for them more than a life where nobody pays them.

Dipankar Gupta is Retired Professor of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## Secular fundamentalism in a time of 'bhoomi pujan'

The Congress would be better advised to fight for its own principled 'Idea of a secular India', whatever the electoral cost



MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

I joined the Congress party when Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister. The party then was in steep decline. As expected, he was defeated. My political life began when future prospects for the Congress were bleak. Why then did I join? Principally because the Congress alone was the contemporary embodiment of the Idea of India bequeathed to us by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and exemplified by the opening lines of the Prime Minister in a debate he had himself initiated in the Lok Sabha: "A secular India alone is an India that can survive. Perhaps an India that is not secular does not deserve to survive." That is the most serious challenge mounted till then to secularism as we had understood it for four decades. I wanted to be part of the response.

**A missing word**  
Yet today, when more than ever before in independent India's history, it is necessary to reiterate our unflinching commitment to secularism, the word that is absent from the party's vocabulary. We are falling over ourselves celebrating the event, pushing to one side the fact that the *bhoomi pujan* ceremony at Ayodhya was conducted at the site of the sacrifice committed in destroying a place of worship of the minority community. And we are afraid of raising our voice, as a secular party, against this bla-



VIVEK BENDE

tantly partisan sectarian act. Indeed, we have not even suggested that Gandhiji's favourite *Ram dhun* be sung on the occasion, "*Ishwar Allah tero naam/sabko sanmati de Bhagwan*". Let us also remember that at the height of the rioting in Delhi, Gandhiji insisted that all occupied masjids be returned to the Muslim community. We have drifted so far from what we believed in because we seem no longer to believe in it.

We now have Congress leaders boasting that Rajiv Gandhi opened the locks of the Masjid at Ayodhya. He did not. This was done by sleight of hand without his knowledge by leaning on the local judiciary to pass an order that was implemented with undue haste within half-an-hour of the order being passed. The Prime Minister was informed only when it was already a judicially ordained *fait accompli*. His main concern was to put a *status quo* in place and ensure that the monument was protected from vandalism. I was with him when during the Lok Sabha campaign, he urged Congress candidates in the vicinity of Ayodhya to bus leaders of the Muslim community to Ayodhya to see for themselves that – notwithstanding the ill-advised *shilanyas* – the

Masjid was still standing. The only one to do so was Kalpanth Rai. He was also the only Congressman to win between Amethi and Calcutta.

**What the top court also said**  
To respect the Supreme Court's judgment does not mean to celebrate the outrage of the Masjid's destruction. We must also remind everyone that the same Supreme Court urged the expeditious completion of the trial of those indicted for that destruction by, among others, the Liberhan Commission. We must also ask whether the Prime Minister will demonstrate the nation's secular belief in *sarva dharma sambava* by attending the foundation stone laying ceremony of the masjid that has been decreed by the Supreme Court. Thus far, he has delighted in being photographed in every conceivable headgear – except the Muslim skullcap that he declined to wear even at an *Eid milan*.

As Congressmen and women, we must also remind all concerned that Rajiv Gandhi permitted the *shilanyas* only in what he had been assured was undisputed territory. What was being celebrated at the *bhoomi pujan* is the construction of a temple at the site of the demolished mosque. Moreover, we appear to have forgotten that a Congress Prime Minister, on the morrow of the demolition, had promised a mosque at the demolished site to replace the demolished one. These are the issues we should be raising, not joining the sectarian chorus that rises from the throats that have cried out: "*Ek dhakka aur do/Babri Masjid thod do*".

The Muslim community is quiescent but concerned. As far as

it is concerned, the Congress as a party has long lost its secular credentials for fear of being labelled "apeasers". We hesitate to affirm what Jawaharlal Nehru had no hesitation in affirming when we were in the throes of the Partition trauma and on the eve of the first-ever elections with full adult franchise in a nation that had just emerged from the furnace of vicious communal violence. Nehru said categorically that whatever the electoral consequences, win or lose, he was not going to let the Congress join the communal madness. On Gandhi Jayanti in 1951, he proclaimed at a public rally on the Ram Lila grounds: "If any man raises his hand against another in the name of religion, I shall fight him till the last breath of my life, whether from inside the government or outside." He also held consistently that "majority communalism is worse than minority communalism".

**Taking a stand**  
That is what we should be telling the saffron brotherhood today rather than competing with them to determine who is more Hindu – the Congress or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? We should be asking instead: who is more secular, the Congress or the BJP? We are trying to usurp their space. We would be better advised to fight for our own principled 'Idea of a secular India', whatever the perceived electoral cost. We can only justify our existence in the eyes of the nation as an alternative to the BJP, not as a pale imitation.

Mani Shankar Aiyar is a member of the Congress party

## 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.

### Ayodhya ceremony

Japan will shortly remember the dropping of "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" on two of its cities by American forces. The country pledges to make the world free of nuclear weapons and never undergo the horror of another nuclear event. Who better than Japan to understand the severity of a nuclear event? Japan never tried to undo history nor did it try to persuade the U.S. to apologise for its tragic actions. We in India are celebrating the *bhoomi pujan* event to construct a Ram temple at Ayodhya, which will be remembered for two reasons. Lord Ram

represents reason, right action and desirable virtues, and also as a happening of mass assertion of a religion and political mobilisation by a national party. The point is this. Like Japan, why cannot we accept history as it is, learn lessons and move on? Let the construction of the Ram Mandir be the last and the intelligentsia from both the communities must ensure this. Politicians from both communities who thrive on the conflict must be stopped.

KAMAL NATH JHA,  
Patna, Bihar

■ Equating the construction of a temple with the revival

of Indian nationalism is insulting both to the deity and Indian nationalism. The political class must remember that construction of a religious centre with sectarian motives might not have the approval of the deity! On the other hand, Indian nationalism is inherent in its diversity – in appreciating cultural values and accepting opinions to widen its base. Trying to muddy this by trying to plant a new idea of 'one country one lord' may fetch political dividends only for a while.

TANMOY CHAKRABORTY,  
Siliguri, West Bengal

■ August 5, 2020 will be a historic day. But our political

leaders must note that the Ramayana was also a way of life for every one; it was also about goodwill, love and respect. As the Prime Minister has taken part in this function, he should spare some effort to attend the programme when the masjid is built. Thus the garland of unity will be complete, spreading the fragrance of love and unity in diversity across India. It is regrettable that even now there are some, which includes a section of the media, still continuing to debate the issue. They must instead ensure more unity in India, irrespective of faith and religion.

J.P. REDDY,  
Nalgonda, Telangana

■ Playing a role

It is interesting that the State topper (Tamil Nadu) in the

■

It was disappointing to have the Prime Minister of India laying the foundation stone. The overall harmony of India cannot be forgotten by the top leader at all times, even if the temple concept paved the way for the political victory of the ruling party. Perhaps the temple can be transformed, among other things, into a centre of excellence which also creates the right awareness on the need to shun religious hatred and accept cultural differences. Or is this just a Utopian thought?

VIMAL PHILO ANAND,  
Chandigarh

civil services examination 2019 (Tamil Nadu, "Civil services exam: IFS is State topper's choice", August 5) has acknowledged that *The Hindu* played a stellar role in its success in cracking the competitive and coveted examination. It is proof that the daily is not just a mere newspaper but a treasure trove, honing talent and kindling one's appetite for knowledge. One does not need any further explanation why the paper stands out among other newspapers, why it is a household name, and why it is inseparable from many readers.

V.S. JAYARAMAN,  
Chennai

# Taking nuclear vulnerabilities seriously

All nuclear weapon states have admitted to the possibility that deterrence could fail



BENOÎT PELOPIDAS  
& M.V. RAMANA



The Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima. The dome was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996 to call for a non-nuclear world. • AP

Seventy-five years ago, the Japanese city of Hiroshima was destroyed by one single atomic bomb. Three days later, a second bomb destroyed Nagasaki. Those two bombs killed over 2,00,000 people, some of them instantaneously, and others within five months. Another 2,00,000 people or more who survived the bombings of these two cities, most of them injured, have been called the *hibakusha*. Because of the long-lasting effects of radiation exposure as well as the mental trauma they underwent, the plight of these survivors has been difficult. As Akihiro Takahashi, a *hibakusha*, testified: "I've been living on dragging my body full of sickness and from time to time I question myself. I wonder if it is worth living in such hardship and pain." But Takahashi and other *hibakusha* lived on and talked about their experiences in the hope that their plight would never befall anyone else.

While Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been the last two cities to be destroyed by nuclear weapons, we cannot be sure that they will be the last. Since 1945, the United States, the Soviet Union/Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea have armed themselves with nuclear weapons that have much more destructive power in comparison to those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**Damage and vulnerability**  
Over 1,26,000 nuclear weapons have been built since the beginning of the atomic age. Over 2,000 of them have been used in nuclear tests, above and below the ground, to demonstrate their explosive power, causing grave and long-lasting damage to the environment and public health. But this damage is nothing compared to what might happen if some of the existing weapons are used against civilian populations.

An appreciation of the scale of the potential damage and a realisation

that nuclear weapons could be launched at any moment against any target around the world should instil a sense of vulnerability in all of us.

To appreciate why we are vulnerable, we should start by realising that there is no realistic way to protect ourselves against nuclear weapons, whether they are used deliberately, inadvertently, or accidentally. The invention of ballistic missiles at the end of the 1950s, with their great speed of delivery, has made it impossible to intercept nuclear weapons once they are launched. Neither fallout shelters nor ballistic missile defence systems have succeeded in negating this vulnerability. Nuclear weapon states are targets of other nuclear weapon states, of course, but non-nuclear weapon states are vulnerable as well.

**The problems of deterrence**  
Nuclear weapon states have reacted to this vulnerability by coming up with a comforting idea: that the use of nuclear weapons is impossible because of deterrence. Nuclear weapons are so destructive that no country would use them, because such use would invite retaliation in kind, and no political leader would be willing to risk the possible death of millions of their citizens. That was the idea of deterrence.

Deterrence enthusiasts claim that nuclear weapons do not just protect countries against use of nuclear weapons by others, but even prevent war

and promote stability. These claims do not hold up to evidence. Nuclear threats have not always produced fear and, in turn, fear has not always induced caution. To the contrary, nuclear threats in some cases have produced anger, and anger can trigger a drive to escalate, as was the case with Fidel Castro during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Moreover, the apparent efficacy of deterrence in some cases may have been due to the more credible prospect of retaliation with conventional weapons. Countries with nuclear weapons have in fact gone to war quite often, even with other countries with nuclear weapons, albeit in a limited fashion or through proxies. Countries, however, might not always show such restraint.

Nor should nuclear deterrence be considered stable. Strategic planners routinely use worst-case assumptions about the intentions and capabilities of other countries to argue for the acquisition of greater destructive capabilities, driving endless upgrades of nuclear arsenals, and offering a rationale for new countries to acquire nuclear weapons.

Implicitly, however, all nuclear weapon states have admitted to the possibility that deterrence could fail: they have made plans for using nuclear weapons, in effect, preparing to fight nuclear war. The disjunction between the ideal of possessing nuclear weapons for deterrence and

the practical reality of keeping these weapons primed for use has been eloquently clarified by General Lee Butler, former Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command. After years of having the top operational responsibility for all U.S. strategic nuclear forces, he observed: "The goal – the wish, really – might be to prevent nuclear war, but the operational plan had to be to wage war." It is thus an illusion to think that nuclear war is impossible.

## The illusion of control

A related illusion concerns the controllability of nuclear weapons. In the real world, it is not possible for planners to have complete control. However, the desire to believe in the perfect controllability and safety of nuclear weapons creates overconfidence, which is dangerous. Overconfidence, as many scholars studying safety will testify, is more likely to lead to accidents and possibly to the use of nuclear weapons.

In several historical instances, what prevented the use of nuclear weapons was not control practices but either their failure or factors outside institutional control. The most famous of these cases is the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. There are likely many more cases during which the world came close to nuclear war but because of the secrecy that surrounds nuclear weapons, we might never know.

If deterrence has not prevented nuclear war so far, what has? While a comprehensive answer to this question will necessarily involve diverse and contingent factors, one essential element in key episodes is just plain luck. This is, again, best illustrated by the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, where nearly four decades of scholarship attest to the crucial role of luck. The consequences of bad luck, then or later, could make the COVID-19 pandemic seem benign by comparison.

While humanity has luckily survived 75 years without experiencing nuclear war, can one expect luck to last indefinitely?

*Benoit Peleopidas is the founder of the Nuclear Knowledge program at the Center for International Studies, Sciences Po, Paris. M.V. Ramana is the Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and Director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia*

# Books, not bullets in J&K

The Centre's focus on quality education and the NEP 2020 will help young minds in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh



RAMESH POKHRiyAL 'NISHANK'

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has witnessed more than three decades of proxy war and violence. The most adversely affected among all sections of society have been the children and youth of the region. Young minds which were supposed to be aspirational, educated, skilled and equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century were instead initiated into violence, terrorism, indoctrination and anti-national sentiments.

But on the historic day of August 5, 2019, there came a paradigm shift in the history of J&K. The newly-carved-out Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh opened new avenues and created a plethora of opportunities for the people. Before August 5, 2019, the burning of schools and educational institutions was a ritual and a matter of pride. In the last year, it has been heartening to find that news of the burning of educational institutions has just evaporated. Children, teachers and Education Departments are ecstatic to shoulder new responsibilities. The education ecosystem in the State has changed and the Centre has taken up the key challenges of ensuring quality, equity and access in education to the last child.

## Welcoming change

Within a few weeks of the Union Territory being formed, I had an opportunity as the Union Minister of Education to interact with more than 1,500 teachers and educationists. People of the Valley were very warm and welcoming and reposed their utmost faith in the government's policies. It is the sheer commitment of teachers, the Education Department and the administrative machinery of the Union Territories that ensured that the academic year was not wasted despite the inevitable lockdown and demographic challenges. During my interaction with Vice-Chancellors, heads of educational institutions, teachers and parents, a point that emerged was "enough is enough". There was unanimity about getting into the mainstream and moving onto the developmental path, discarding decades-old outdated, orthodox and regressive ideologies.

In the last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reviewed several projects at regular intervals in the newly formed Union Territories. Approval for a Central University in Ladakh has been granted in tune with the

commitment made to the people of the hilly region. This university will be a landmark in providing quality education to students of not only the Ladakh region but also the border districts of Himachal Pradesh. The university campus will also have a Centre for Buddhist studies, fulfilling a demand of local populace. To ensure universalisation of education, the Right to Education Act 2009 being extended to J&K is in the final stage. Capacity building of the education infrastructure in the Jammu-Kashmir region is another focus area along with large-scale curriculum reforms, teachers' training, infrastructure upgradation and integration of education technology.

## A range of projects

The upgradation is being undertaken on a war footing. The government is committed to the welfare of the people of the region, and all possible measures are being taken to ensure that no child is left out. In addition, 23,405 children with special needs have been identified and are being enrolled in school. Also 1,417 seasonal centres for learning have been set up to provide training to children of Gujarati and Bakkarwal communities owing to their unique migrant lifestyle. Further, 88 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas along with hostels for girls are being made functional. Fifty new government degree colleges in J&K have been sanctioned and made operational. Nineteen new modern schools (on the pattern of Kendriya Vidyalayas) will be developed in the next three years. Upgradation of smart/IT-enabled classrooms to deliver e-content will bridge the gap in the post-COVID-19 scenario. A Jammu and Kashmir Education Investment Policy 2020 has been framed and finalised. Projects worth ₹327 crore for a hi-tech education city and colleges/universities have been received by the Administration. It is indeed a new beginning in the history of the violence-torn region.

With the arrival of NEP 2020, the Union Ministry of Education is committed to make India a global knowledge centre at a fast pace with a focus on basic literacy, numeracy, vocational skills. With the Prime Minister's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the government is fully committed to ensuring that the developmental agenda in both Union Territories is not derailed. I firmly believe that education is the best gift we can give to our generations. Quality education is the best investment which will pay us dividends in the years ahead. The NEP 2020 is only the beginning of this transformation.

*Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank is Union Minister for Education, Government of India*

## How to pay for the stimulus

Money financing is a viable route to take us back to pre-COVID-19 levels of output

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and his Congress party colleague Praveen Chakravarty have, in these pages, written on the appropriate policy response to the currently depressed state of the economy. Given Dr. Singh's deep understanding of the subject, this is in the nature of invaluable counsel. Unlike the dispensation in power, he and his colleague are for government intervention to revive the economy. They present greater public spending as the *sine qua non* of such a revival, and they are absolutely correct in this diagnosis. They also present the options available and rank them, in the sense of recommending the order in which they ought to be considered for use.

Three more issues are relevant when considering borrowing from the World Bank and the IMF. First, there is the issue of conditionalities. There is no reason to oppose conditionalities on principle but it is not obvious what conditionalities will come along with the loan. Second, a loan is bound to take some time to be negotiated, taxing the energies of a government that ought to be engaged in the day to day battle with COVID-19. Third, external debt is truly national which, arguably, government bonds held by the country's private sector are not.

### A taboo subject

When money financing is proposed, it elicits a negative response from some quarters with something akin to a taboo being invoked against the idea. But invoking taboo is not serious economics which would require that a good reason be given for opposing the use of money financing to expand public spending at present. Dr. Singh and Mr. Chakravarty speak of "high intangible and institutional costs" associated with it but do not expand on this. The standard economic argument against money financing is that it is inflationary. However, whether a fiscal expansion is inflationary or not is related more to the state of the economy than the medium of its financing. When resources are unemployed, output may be expected to expand without inflation. As COVID-19 has shocked output downwards, unemployed resources must now exist. There is no reasoned case for denying ourselves the option of money financing to take us back to pre-COVID-19 levels of output and employment.

**Debt vs. money financing**

So, what are the options? They are: issuing debt to the public, and borrowing from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), termed "money financing" as it increases the money supply. Dr. Singh and Mr. Chakravarty plump for increased debt. While they do not rule out of court money financing, they suggest that it may be imprudent to do so. Instead, they recommend borrowing from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, it is not clear that this is a superior strategy.

The media has recently reported some economists responding to the suggestion of money financing with the Friedman-esque quip "there ain't no free lunch". But it may be mentioned that there is no free lunch in the case of debt financing either. Not only have the moneys to be repaid, they will have to be paid back in hard currency. This would involve India having to earn hard currency by step-

ping up exports. If a stimulus of approximately 10% of the GDP is envisaged, with exports at 25% of the GDP, it would imply stepping up exports by close to 50%. This would be a herculean task under present circumstances. Indian exports have been faring poorly since 2014. Since then, there have been multiple shocks to global output and trade.

Greater public spending will increase the fiscal deficit and this expansion has to be financed. Theoretically it can be financed by higher taxes. However, when the economy is in a recession, this is usually not in the reckoning even though the balanced-budget multiplier is one, i.e., output expands by exactly the same amount as the increase in government spending.

### Debt vs. money financing

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## DATA POINT

### Rapid but flawed

With seroprevalence surveys - done in Delhi and Mumbai - suggesting a much higher rate of COVID-19 infections than what were recorded in those cities so far, States have tried to ramp up testing levels to detect more infections. But most new tests have been through the Rapid Antigen Detection (RADT) method, which is not as reliable as RT-PCR\* tests because of the "false negatives" problem. Some States have also limited RT-PCR tests despite having the capacity to conduct more. By **The Hindu Data Team**

#### 1. Actual vs detected

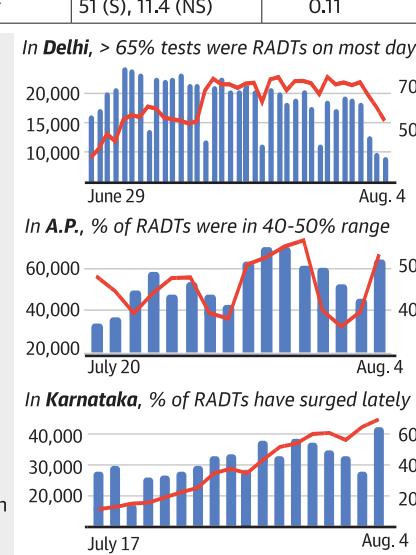
June 27-July 10 in Delhi found that 22.86% of Delhi's population had been exposed to the virus. But by July 10, COVID-19 tests had recorded only 1,09,410 infections, equivalent to 0.59% of the population. Similar surveys in three Mumbai wards (slums - S, non-slums - NS) also found that much fewer cases had been recorded compared to the numbers who had been exposed to the virus

Reference date	Place/wards in Mumbai	Prevalence according to survey (%)	% positives detected in pop.
July 10	Across Delhi	22.86	0.59
June 2	Matunga	57.8 (S), 17.4 (NS)	0.52
June 2	Chembur West	56.7 (S), 15.6 (NS)	0.35
June 2	Dahisar	51 (S), 11.4 (NS)	0.11

#### 2. Two tests

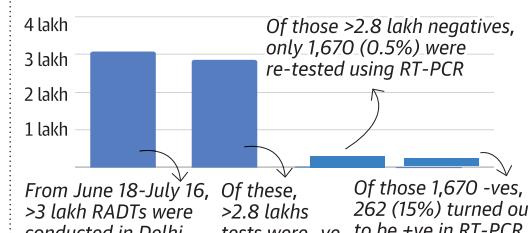
States have ramped up RADTs instead of RT-PCR tests in order to capture the positive cases more quickly. RADTs register a high rate of false negatives. Graphs show total tests (bars, left-axis) and % of RADTs (line, right axis) in select States for whom data were available

\*Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction

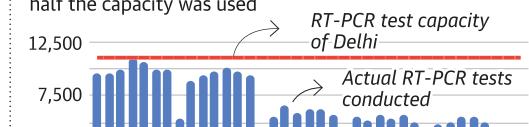


#### 3. Accuracy vs speed

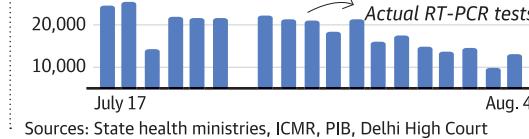
| The RADTs can register as many as 50% "false negatives" - i.e. not detecting infections who may be COVID-19 positive. RT-PCR is more accurate. ICMR had directed that those tested as negative by RADT should be re-tested using RT-PCR. Data from Delhi shows very few have been re-tested



From June 18-July 16, >3 lakh RADTs were conducted in Delhi. Of these, >2.8 lakhs tests were -ve. Of those 1,670 -ve, 262 (15%) turned out to be +ve in RT-PCR



Actual RT-PCR tests conducted in Delhi | RT-PCR test capacity of Delhi



In Karnataka, the RT-PCR capacity is not known but such tests have halved in August compared to July

It is difficult to believe that so responsible a body as the Executive Council of the Indore University should have decided that students copying answer papers or resorting to other unfair means should not be suspended but merely fined Rs. 50 and allowed to appear for the same examination soon after. It is scarcely necessary to labour the point that, if cheating is tolerated, condoned or treated as a minor offence, the value of the public examination disappears as an objective test of merit. In fact, two alternatives have been suggested which merit consideration. One is the American semester system in which class tests take the place of long drawn out public examinations. In this system, the responsibility for judging the performance of the pupil is placed on the local professor and the college. The other alternative is to allow the use of books and reference material in the examination hall, the questions being so framed that an intelligent use of material is needed to answer them. But neither of these systems envisages the copying of answers by one student from another or assistance by teachers to students during the examinations.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO** AUGUST 6, 1920

## Attitude of civil servants

(From an editorial)

FROM PAGE ONE

## Modern symbol of Indian Culture: Modi

Following a protracted legal dispute and aggressive Hindutva politics over it in the last three decades, the Supreme Court last November permitted the construction of a Ram temple at the site, where the Mughal-era mosque stood for four centuries and where Hindus believe Lord Ram was born. The Ram temple has long been a poll promise of the BJP which claimed power in Uttar Pradesh and at the Centre following the temple agitation since mid-1980s.

**'History repeats'**  
"With this temple, not only is new history being scripted, history is repeating itself," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Modi, who visited Ayodhya town for the first time since becoming Prime Minister, started his speech with the chants of 'Jai Siyaram' and 'Siyaram Ram Chandra ki Jai', in sync with the local tradition and departure from the 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans popularised by advocates of the Ram temple movement, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad since the 1990s.

Just like August 15 was commemorated as the day of sacrifice and the will to be

free displayed by many generations of Indians during the Independence struggle, the start of the Ram temple construction on August 5, 2020 was a "symbol of penance, sacrifice and resolve" of many generations that struggled for it for centuries, he said.

Mr. Modi said Lord Ram was "embedded in our hearts" despite attempts to wipe out his legacy. "Buildings were destroyed. What happened? All attempts were made to wipe out the existence. But Ram is still in our hearts. Ram is the basis of our culture," the Prime Minister said.

After landing in Ayodhya, Mr. Modi first offered prayers at the Hanumangarhi temple before paying his obeisance and offering aarti before the idol of Ram Lalla at the Ram Janmabhoomi site, the first Prime Minister to do so. He also planted a 'Parijat' tree at the site and released a postage stamp on the temple.

"This day is testimony to the truth of the crores of Ram bhakts. This day is an incomparable gift of truth, non-violence, faith and sacrifice to peace-loving India," he said.

## Kashmir comes under a security blanket

"The government claimed that a political process has started in Kashmir, but not a single leader was allowed to reach my residence," Dr. Abdullah told reporters.

Leaders of the PDP, the Peoples Conference, the J&K Peoples Movement, the Awami National Conference, the CPI(M) and the Congress were invited by Dr. Abdullah for the meeting.

Dozens of PDP leaders, including former legislator Firdous Tak from Kishtwar, were taken into preventive custody. The PDP had asked

its members to observe the day as 'black day' and organise protests.

"A year ago we witnessed how a majoritarian government mutilated and robbed J&K in broad daylight. Seasons may have changed but the betrayal will never be forgiven or forgotten. Prolonged enforced silence won't suppress emotions forever," tweeted Iltija Mufti, daughter of incarcerated PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti.

CPI(M) leader M.Y. Tarigami said the police did not allow him to leave his house.

## Amid steady rise in cases, 5 States log 309 deaths

One-day mortality at 100 in Karnataka; 77 in Andhra Pradesh; 112 in Tamil Nadu; antigen tests overtake RT-PCR in Karnataka

STAFF REPORTER  
HYDERABAD

There were 2,012 new COVID-19 cases in Telangana on Tuesday, and the State's overall figure stood at 70,958. Earlier, on July 31, 2,083 new cases were added.

Over six days (July 30-August 4), 10,241 cases were recorded, and 1,05,941 tests were performed. The 2,012 new cases reported on Wednesday included 532 from

### COVID-19

Greater Hyderabad, 198 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 188 from Rangareddy and 127 from Warangal Urban. While 21,118 tests were conducted on Tuesday, 1,167 reports were awaited. The death toll was 576 as 13 more patients died, official data said.

Of 70,958 cases till August 4, active cases stood at 19,568 and 576 died. The total for tests stood at 5,22,143.

and cumulative Test Positivity Rate was 13.58%.

In Kerala, 1,195 new cases were reported on Wednesday. The cumulative case burden was 29,151, while patients under treatment in hospitals were put at 11,492.

Seven more deaths - three in Kozhikode and one each in Kollam, Kannur, Kasaragod and Ernakulam - took the State's toll to 94.

New cases in the districts were in Malappuram (167), Kasaragod (128), Ernakulam (120), Alapuzha (108), Thrissur (86), Kannur (61), Kottayam (51), Kozhikode (39), Palakkad (41), Idukki (39), Pathanamthitta (37), Kollam (30) and Wayanad (14). The State tested 25,096 samples in 24 hours.

In Andhra Pradesh, the death toll at 77 was the highest for a day, and new infections were 10,128 on Wednesday. The overall death toll rose to 1,681 and the case tally to 1,86,461.

### Survival strategy

Many people across the country lost their jobs due to the lockdown, even as some switched professions to make a living. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the Southern States

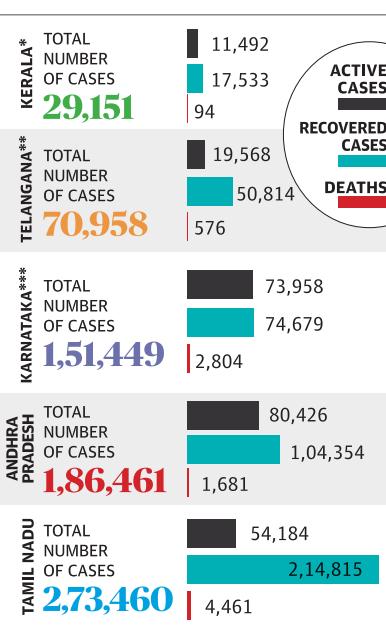


Smart move: A cab driver, who turned his vehicle into a mobile vegetable shop, catering to customers in Hyderabad on Wednesday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

\*Kerala has a mismatch of 32 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons

\*\*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Tuesday

\*\*\*Karnataka has 8 non-COVID deaths



and 29 of the 100 deaths. Karnataka conducted 27,734 rapid antigen tests as against 15,904 RT-PCR tests on Wednesday.

Tamil Nadu reported another 5,175 COVID-19 cases and 112 deaths, including that of a four-day-old baby on Wednesday.

Of the fresh cases, Chennai along with other northern districts accounted for nearly 3,000 cases.

The total number of cases increased to 2,73,460. While active cases stood at 54,184, the number of persons discharged rose to 2,14,815, of whom 6,031 were discharged on Wednesday.

For the third consecutive day, the Health department declared more than 100 deaths. Of this, Chennai reported 25 deaths, taking the city's toll to 2,227.

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

reported 16 deaths.

Dr. Sudhir Bhargava Reddy of Narasaraopet became the first plasma donor in the State, in Vijayawada.

Karnataka recorded a total case load of over 1.5 lakh on

Wednesday. There were 73,958 active cases. With 5,619 new cases, positive cases touched 1,51,449.

The toll was 2,804 with 100 new fatalities. Bengaluru Urban reported 1,848 cases

## Environment Ministry dithered on decision to close LG plant

Documents accessed via RTI show Section 5 of the Environment Protection Act was cited for closure of the factory

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) decided against closing down operations of the LG Polymers plant in Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, from where styrene gas leaked, killing at least 12 and causing 4,000 to take ill on May 7. This, even though a senior official in the Ministry recommended that the plant be closed citing Section 5 of the Environment Protection Act that allows the Centre to shut down industrial units that grossly violate the law.

After the disaster, documents accessed via the Right to Information Act (RTI) show the MoEFCC convened a National Crisis Group with members from several Ministries and sought responses from the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) and State

authorities.

The Environment Ministry also noted the previous history of the company. The chemical factory had been working since 1997 without appropriate clearances and had applied for clearance, in 2018, under rules made by the MoEFCC itself. These rules allow industrial projects in violation of environmental laws to apply to a special panel of experts called the 'Violations Committee' of the MoEFCC and - provided they meet certain criteria and make appropriate modifications - become compliant operations. LG Polymers had applied to this committee and its case was under consideration.

On May 18, according to the records accessed by environmental activist Vikrant Tongad and viewed by *The Hindu*, Geeta Menon, Joint Secretary, MoEFCC, issued two drafts. One, that sought



A file photo of smoke rising from LG Polymers plant in Vishakapatnam. ■ AP

updated information from multiple agencies such as the Central Pollution Control Board, APPCB and the Chief Inspector of Factories on actions taken and whether the company had abided by the MoEFCC's Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals (MSIHC) Rules, 1989.

The second draft was os-

tensibly to shut the unit down in lieu of its violations and the damage it had caused. *The Hindu* could not access the full text of this draft but a note by Ms. Menon says: "The Company's case is at present being considered by the Violation EAC in the ministry. In view of the magnitude of the accident and the clear responsibility

of the company, directions to the company for closure under Section 5 of the Environment Protection Act is placed alongside for approval."

A decision on the matter was to be taken by the Secretary C.K. Mishra. He was due to retire on May 31 and left the decision to "his successor", records of the meeting show. The matter then landed on the table of R.P. Gupta, the incumbent.

However, on June 18, another officer of the Ministry noted that the matter was "discussed" with the Secretary (Mr. Gupta) and the final decision was to only seek a status report on the compliance with the MSIHC Rules. The reason proffered was that the APPCB had withdrawn the unit's "consent to operate" and that the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which had imposed a ₹50 crore fine, was oversee-

ing the process.

In view of the above, it is noted that the objectives desired through the set of proposed directions under Section 5 are already addressed by the actions initiated by APPCB and Hon'ble NGT. Therefore, Ministry may proceed only with the aspect of seeking status of compliance of MSIHC Rules," according to the file-notings.

"It's clear that the Environment Ministry, even though it has the necessary powers, doesn't want to involve itself in shutting down the company," Mr. Tongad told *The Hindu*.

On May 19, the MoEFCC-appointed 'Violations Committee' had deferred a decision on the company's application on the grounds it would wait for final decisions by the NGT and other expert committees monitoring the aftermath of the industrial disaster.

## IUML treads cautiously on Ayodhya

National leadership terms Priyanka Gandhi's statement on temple out of place

ABDUL LATHEEF NAHA

MALAPPURAM

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) has responded cautiously to Congress leaders' stand on the beginning of Ram Temple construction at the disputed site at Ayodhya.

Even while expressing disagreement with Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's statement welcoming the Ram Temple construction, the IUML has said it does not want to raise a discussion on the matter.

A meeting of the national leadership of the party on Wednesday, anchored from Panakkad, near here, adopted a resolution terming Ms.



Taking stock: IUML leaders briefing the press at Panakkad on Wednesday. ■ SAKEER HUSSAIN

Vadra's statement out of place. "We express our disagreement on the statement issued by Priyanka Gandhi on the construction of a temple at Ayodhya and her statement is very much out of place," said the one-sen-

Court. We don't want to open any further discussion on it because it will not be good for the country," IUML organising secretary E.T. Mohammed Basheer, MP, told *The Hindu*.

The party leadership shared the opinion that the "constructive stand" it took in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, had immensely benefited Kerala society. "Many had tried to provoke us in the wake of the razing of the Babri Masjid. But we stood by our constructive and responsible stand. And time proved that the party stance benefited our society," said Mr. Basheer.

## EIA: Centre restrained from publishing final notification

Time given till next date of hearing on PIL petition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday restrained the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) from publishing the final notification based on the draft notification of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)-2020

till the next date of hearing on a PIL petition filed by a Bengaluru-based welfare trust, seeking a stay on the draft EIA-2020 ex-

cept issuing final notification, and the Ministry could move the court for vacating the order against publishing the final notification if reasonable time to file objections and suggestions were provided after publicising draft EIA-2020 in the Kannada language.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Ashok S. Kinagi passed the interim order on the petition filed by a Bengaluru-based welfare trust, seeking a stay on the draft EIA-2020 complaining that notification in Kannada language.

was not published in Kannada language.

The draft EIA-2020, dated March 23, 2020, gave 60 days as per the law for public and other stakeholders to submit objections and suggestions.

Later, taking note of COVID-19 lockdown, the last date to respond was initially extended till June 30, and again extended till August 11. The Bench noted that many people, not knowing English and Hindi languages, could not have responded in view of the lockdown and non-availability of notification in Kannada.

## ED gets custody of three in gold smuggling case

It will probe money laundering angle

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday got the custody of three key accused persons in the gold smuggling case in Kerala.

"We have taken the custody of accused Sarith P.S., Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair for questioning in connection with large-scale smuggling of gold through air cargo shipments addressed to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) consulate in Thiruvananthapuram," said an agency official.

The ED is probing the money laundering angle to the case, whereas the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has been pursuing the

## Police arrest treasury scam accused from lawyer's office

Taken away as he was interacting with the media

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The government accountant accused of having siphoned off at least ₹2 crore from the State treasury appeared to have invested substantial amounts of money in real estate and jewellery, according to police investigators.

A team of plainclothes officers dramatically arrested the suspect, M.R. Bijulal, senior accountant, government sub-treasury, Vanchiyoor, when he was interacting with television channel reporters at the of-

fice of his lawyer Poothura Soman. The officers in mufi entered the office, detained Bijulal and hustled him away to the nearby police station in an unmarked van at 11.20 a.m.

Mr. Bijulal had protested his innocence earlier and claimed that some persons had framed him. He had also moved the District Court here for anticipatory bail.

The police had been



**Field day:** (from left) BJP workers in New Delhi celebrating the Ram temple *bhoomi pujan* ceremony on Wednesday; BJP legislator T. Raja and Vishwa Hindu Parishad members distributing sweets at Akashpuri Hanuman Mandir in Hyderabad; artistes dressed as Lord Ram, Lakshman and Hanuman in Bengaluru; and people lighting earthen lamps on the banks of the Sarayu in Ayodhya. • SANDEEP SAXENA, NAGARA GOPAL, V. SREENIVASA MURTHY & AP

## IN BRIEF



## PM has violated oath of office, says Owaisi

HYDERABAD  
All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday said the Ram temple *bhoomi pujan* marks the day of 'victory of Hindutva and the defeat of secularism'. Addressing the media, he said, "Today Narendra Modi, as Prime Minister, by attending the *bhoomi pujan*, has violated the oath of office, and he has violated the basic structure of secularism of the Constitution."

## Legacy of India is unity in diversity, says Mamata

KOLKATA  
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the legacy of the country is unity in diversity and that we must preserve this "to our last breath". "Hindu Muslim Sikh Isai Apas mein hain Bhai Bhai! Mera Bharat Mahaan, Mahaan Hamara Hindustan (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian, all are brothers. My India is great)," she added. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar also organised a ceremony at Raj Bhavan, Kolkata, and described the construction of the temple as "a dream realised".

## 'Long-cherished' desire of every Indian: Punjab CM

CHANDIGARH  
Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh congratulated the people of the country on the foundation laying of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, saying it fulfills the "long cherished desire" of every Indian. "Lord Ram's universal message of Dharma remains the guiding light not just for India but for the world," he tweeted. PTI

## Day will be written in golden letters: Rupani

AHMEDABAD  
Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Wednesday said a struggle of several years had materialised with the *bhoomi pujan* of the Ram temple, and the day would be written in golden letters in history books. The beginning of the construction of a grand temple of Lord Ram proves that the BJP always fulfills its commitments, he said. PTI

## At ground zero, a spectrum of emotions

While it is jubilation for some, it is reconciliation with reality for others in the temple town

OMAR RASHID  
AYODHYA

Iqbal Ansari, a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, on Wednesday hoped the Ram temple construction would mark the end of any dispute. "I believe in the Constitution and the law. Muslims all over accepted the verdict. There is no more dispute," he said.

While he says he felt honoured being invited to attend the *bhoomi pujan*, Mr. Ansari is reluctant to offer a glorified picture of Ayodhya once the temple is built. When asked if the temple would accelerate development, he said: "Ayodhya has 10,000 temples, Sarayu river and Hanumanji's mandir. Now another big temple will come up. It's a good thing. What objection will Muslims have?"

## No celebrations here

In contrast to the main road which was decorated with yellow paint on building facades, triangular saffron flags and floral designs, amid a commentary on the *bhoomi pujan* event played out

through loudspeakers, Mr. Ansari's locality in Ayodhya was quiet. Mumtaz Ali, who runs a furniture shop, was among those ambling out of a bylane. He had little to comment on the event. But when pushed, he said, "The final outcome is not just." While he has reconciled with the decision, he says the is-

sue triggers anything but calm. "Both mosque and temple should have been built, given the circumstances," he said.

However, Hindus in the town rejoiced over the event. Some distributed sweets to bystanders, while others shouted slogans. Many watched the event, including

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *pujas* and speech, on their televisions, cramped up inside homes or small shops. Many youngsters like Ram Avtar and Shiv Karan, both carpenters in their twenties, followed it on their smartphones. "The temple should be built swiftly. It is our prabhu Ram's birth-



**Religious fervour:** Devotees gather to attend the foundation laying ceremony for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. • PTI

## A long-running dispute

The Babri Masjid dispute stretched over centuries with the case passing through various courts

**1885:** Mahant Raghubir Das files a plea in the Faizabad district court seeking permission to build a canopy outside the disputed structure. Court rejects it

**August 14, 1989:** The Allahabad High Court orders status quo on the disputed structure

**May 9, 2011:** The Supreme Court stays the verdict

**August 7:** The court constitutes a three-judge Bench to hear pleas challenging the 1994 verdict of the Allahabad High Court

**September 27:** It declines to refer the case to a five-judge Constitution Bench

**October 29:** It fixes the case for the first week of January before an appropriate Bench, which decides the schedule of hearing

**April 3, 1993:** 'Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act' passed for acquiring land by the Centre in the disputed area

**• The Supreme Court, exercising its jurisdiction under Article 139 A of the Constitution, transfers various writ petitions pending in the Allahabad High Court**

**October 24, 1994:** The Supreme Court says, in the historic Ismail Faruqui case, that a mosque is not integral to Islam

**April 2002:** The Allahabad HC begins hearing on determining who owns the disputed site

**September 30, 2010:** The High Court, in a 2:1 majority, rules a three-way division of the disputed area between the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla

**January 8, 2019:** The court sets up a five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by **Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi**, to hear the case

**February 5, 2020:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces in Parliament a 15-member Trust for the Ram Temple

**August 5:** Mr. Modi conducts 'bhoomi pujan' at Ayodhya



**December 6, 1992:** Babri Masjid demolished

**Ram Nath Kovind**  
PRESIDENT

**1949:** Idols of Ram Lalla placed under the central dome outside the disputed structure

**1950:** Gopal Simla Visarhad files a suit in the district court for right to worship the idols

**• Paramahansa Ramachandra Das files a suit for continuation of worship and keeping the idols**

**1959:** Nirmohi Akhara files a suit seeking possession of the site

**1961:** Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board files a suit for possession

**February 1, 1986:** The court orders the government to open the site for Hindu devotees

**April 3, 1993:** 'Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act' passed for acquiring land by the Centre in the disputed area

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**August 5:** Mr. Modi conducts 'bhoomi pujan' at Ayodhya

**February 26:** The court favours mediation, fixes March 5 for order on whether to refer matter to the court-appointed mediator

**August 2:** It decides to conduct day-to-day hearing from August 6 as mediation fails

**October 16:** It concludes hearing, reserves order

**November 9:** The court grants entire 2.77 acres of disputed land to deity Ram Lalla, possession of land will remain with Union government receiver. It directs the Centre and the U.P. government to allot five acres of land to build a mosque

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PRESIDENT

**1949:** Idols of Ram Lalla placed under the central dome outside the disputed structure

**1950:** Gopal Simla Visarhad files a suit in the district court for right to worship the idols

**• Paramahansa Ramachandra Das files a suit for continuation of worship and keeping the idols**

**1959:** Nirmohi Akhara files a suit seeking possession of the site

**1961:** Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board files a suit for possession

**February 1, 1986:** The court orders the government to open the site for Hindu devotees

**April 3, 1993:** 'Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act' passed for acquiring land by the Centre in the disputed area

**• The Supreme Court, exercising its jurisdiction under Article 139 A of the Constitution, transfers various writ petitions pending in the Allahabad High Court**

**October 24, 1994:** The Supreme Court says, in the historic Ismail Faruqui case, that a mosque is not integral to Islam

**April 2002:** The Allahabad HC begins hearing on determining who owns the disputed site

**September 30, 2010:** The High Court, in a 2:1 majority, rules a three-way division of the disputed area between the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla

**January 8, 2019:** The court sets up a five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by **Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi**, to hear the case

**February 5, 2020:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces in Parliament a 15-member Trust for the Ram Temple

**August 5:** Mr. Modi conducts 'bhoomi pujan' at Ayodhya

**February 26:** The court favours mediation, fixes March 5 for order on whether to refer matter to the court-appointed mediator

**August 7:** The court constitutes a three-judge Bench to hear pleas challenging the 1994 verdict of the Allahabad High Court

**September 27:** It declines to refer the case to a five-judge Constitution Bench

**October 29:** It fixes the case for the first week of January before an appropriate Bench, which decides the schedule of hearing

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## IN BRIEF



M.P. CM Shivraj Chouhan discharged from hospital

BHOPAL  
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was discharged from a private hospital here on Wednesday after 12 days of being treated for COVID-19. Doctors have advised Mr. Chouhan to stay in home quarantine and monitor his health for a week. He was asymptomatic for the last 10 days and was examined in the morning by treating physicians who found all clinical parameters within normal limits, said Ajay Goenka of Chirayu Medical College and Hospital.

## EC seeks suggestions on poll campaigning

NEW DELHI  
The Election Commission has extended the deadline for political parties to submit suggestions on what campaigning will look like during the COVID-19 pandemic after many parties failed to do so by July 31. The EC wrote to all recognised national and State-level parties on Tuesday, giving them time till August 11 to send in their responses.

## Five drown as boat capsizes in U.P.'s Mausam

GORAKHPUR  
Three children and two women drowned when their boat capsized in the swollen Saryu (Gaghra) river in Uttar Pradesh's Mausam district on Wednesday evening, officials said. Eleven people have been rescued but a 15-year-old girl is missing, they said. The deceased have been identified as Savita (48), Sarita (42), Karan (10), Kishan (7) and Arjun (5). PTI

## U.P. Law Minister tests positive for COVID-19

LUCKNOW  
Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Brajesh Pathak on Wednesday said he has tested positive for COVID-19. "After symptoms of coronavirus, I got tested on advice of doctors. I tested positive for COVID-19. Those who came in contact with me in past few days are requested to follow government guidelines and quarantine themselves and get themselves tested," he said in a tweet. PTI

## HC dismisses plea against ban on social media

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed the plea of a senior Army officer, challenging the Army's recent directive banning armed forces personnel from using social networking platforms like Facebook. A Bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon declined the plea of Lieutenant Colonel P.K. Choudhary, saying the policy was an outcome of constantly evolving intelligence on security threats.

# India's move on Article 370 is 'illegal and invalid', says China

New Delhi tells Beijing not to comment on the internal affairs of other countries

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
SUHASINI HAIDER  
CHENNAI/NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday told China "not to comment on the internal affairs" of other countries, in response to Beijing describing the dilution of Article 370, on the one-year anniversary of the move, as being "illegal and invalid".

China had "no locus standi" on the matter, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

In a statement in Beijing, in response to a question from the Pakistani media, the Chinese Foreign Ministry repeated its opposition to "any unilateral change to the status quo" in Jammu and Kashmir, echoing its statements on the issue last year.

"China follows closely the situation in the Kashmir region," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday. "Our po-

Peaceful coexistence serves the fundamental interests of both [India and Pakistan] and the common aspiration of the international community  
— WANG WENBIN  
SPOKESPERSON, FOREIGN MINISTRY

sition is consistent and clear. This issue is a dispute left over from history between Pakistan and India. That is an objective fact established by the UN Charter, UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements between Pakistan and India. Any unilateral change to the status quo is illegal and invalid."

MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said India had "noted the comments of the Chinese MFA spokesperson on the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir".

"The Chinese side has no locus standi whatsoever on this matter and is advised

not to comment on the internal affairs of other nations," he said.

Last year, Beijing had particularly voiced its opposition to the creation of a Union Territory in Ladakh, which included within its boundaries the Aksai Chin region, now occupied by China, although India had pointed out to China that the change had not altered India's external boundaries or its territorial claims in any way. Wednesday's statement from Beijing did not mention Ladakh.

Mr. Wang said the Kashmir issue "should be proper-

ly resolved peacefully through dialogue and consultation between the parties concerned".

"Pakistan and India are neighbours that cannot be moved away," he said. "Peaceful coexistence serves the fundamental interests of both and the common aspiration of the international community. China hopes that they can properly handle the differences through dialogue, improve relations, and jointly safeguard peace, stability and development of both countries and the wider region."

The Foreign Ministry did not, however, respond to a question on a new map issued by Pakistan on Tuesday and refrained from criticising the move. "I have already stated China's position on the Kashmir issue," Mr. Wang said, adding he would not repeat the statement.

Murmu resigns as L-G of Jammu and Kashmir

He is likely to be appointed CAG

MAHESH LANGA  
SUHASINI HAIDER  
AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI



G.C. Murmu

had recommended against it.

In another instance of disagreement, the Election Commission pulled him up for saying that polls in the UT would follow the delimitation exercise as this was the EC's mandate. In a strongly worded press release, the EC stated that it was not the domain of L-G to comment on the schedule of holding polls in the UT.

Mr. Murmu is a 1985 batch Gujarat cadre IAS officer who worked closely with PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah in Gandhinagar as well as in Delhi.

According to top sources, Mr. Murmu will replace Rajiv Mehrishi as CAG and his appointment notification is likely to be issued on a day or two.

Sources told *The Hindu* that Mr. Murmu left Srinagar on Wednesday afternoon and proceeded to Jammu. He is expected to be in Delhi on Thursday.

In recent weeks, Mr. Murmu has been involved in some controversies over apparent disagreements with the Centre. Most notably, his comments suggesting 4G Internet should be restored in the Valley ran into trouble with security agencies who

accused him of being pro-Kashmir.

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Mr. Vij said that about 248 samples were collected by Food and Drug Administration of Haryana, out of which reports of 123 samples have been received.

"Out of the received reports, 109 samples have been passed, while 14 samples have been failed. Among these, nine brands were found substandard, while five brands were found with excessive quantity of methanol present in it, which acts as a toxin," he said.

He added that instructions have been given to recover the entire stock of failed brand sanitiser back from the market so that people do not suffer any kind of loss.

Complaints received

Mr. Vij said that at the initial stage of the coronavirus pandemic outbreak, a complaint of selling of fake sanitisers in the market was received, due to which

the Food and Drug Administration was instructed to conduct raids in the entire Haryana.

Punjab reports 29 COVID-19 deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 894 fresh COVID-19 cases on Wednesday and reported 29 more deaths taking the tally to 491, according to an official statement.

The number of positive cases has reached 19,856. The major chunk of new cases, 303 and 185, were reported from Ludhiana and Patiala districts respectively.

The Health department said the active cases are 6,422 and 12,943 patients have so far recovered.

FIRs lodged

Meanwhile, Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij said that FIRs have been registered against 11 sanitiser brands due to failure of samples collected across the State.

A notice has also been issued to cancel or suspend the licence of the brands, Mr. Vij said.

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## Highest one-day recoveries: Centre

Collaboration for diagnostic solution successfully going on, says Israel Embassy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry on Wednesday said India recorded the highest single-day recoveries in 24 hours.

"With a sharp increase of 51,706 COVID-19 patients recovering, the rate has reached a new high of 67.19% and continues to improve every day. The recoveries till now total up to 12,82,215, more than twice the active cases" it said.

A release issued by the Israel Embassy said the India-Israel collaboration on finding an effective diagnostic solution to tackle COVID-19 has been "successfully going on for nine days with mass testing and collection of thousands of samples for the trials of new technologies for rapid, non-invasive testing".

You are both mother and father to a 100 crore people! You are their parents... You alone can do something for the people," Mr. Dave asked.

Driven by anguish' He said Mr. Bhushan's tweets were driven by anguish. He referred to how some sections of the media generated hate against the members of the Tablighi Jamaat who got sick. He submitted that some recent cases required a timely healing touch from the Supreme Court.

You are both mother and father to a 100 crore people! You are their parents... You alone can do something for the people," Mr. Dave submitted in court.

He referred to the judgments in the Rafale and Ayodhya title dispute cases. He recalled how a Supreme Court judge had sat in his own cause on a Saturday. He wondered when the Justice A.K. Patnaik report on the "larger conspiracy" against judiciary would come out.

A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, said the primary question for the Constitution Bench to decide is whether

### Viral tracker

With 50,326 COVID-19 cases recorded on Wednesday, India's tally stood at 19,56,889. As many as 901 deaths were added, taking the toll to 40,735. As of August 4, a total of 2.14 crore samples had been tested in the country, according to the ICMR

#### NEW CASES AND DEATHS

MAHARASHTRA CASES 10,309 DEATHS 334  
UTTAR PRADESH CASES 4,078 DEATHS 40  
TELANGANA CASES 2,012 DEATHS 13  
ANDHRA PRADESH CASES 7,233 DEATHS 77  
WEST BENGAL CASES 2,816 DEATHS 61  
TAMIL NADU CASES 5,175 DEATHS 112  
BIHAR CASES 100 DEATHS 20  
DELHI CASES 1,076 DEATHS 11

The graphs depict the new cases and deaths in the last 14 days in select States. If average cases/deaths in the last seven days are higher than the previous seven days, then the cases/deaths are rising; if they are lower, then dropping; if they are similar, then cases/deaths are flattening in that State.

FIGURES IN THE GRAPHS DEPICT NEW CASES AND DEATHS  
RECORDED ON WEDNESDAY, DATA AS OF 10:30 P.M.

## EWS quota challenge referred to Constitution Bench

It will decide whether 'economic backwardness' can be the sole criterion for granting quota

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday referred to a five-judge Bench the "substantial question of law" whether grant of 10% reservation to economically weaker sections of the society is unconstitutional and violates the 50% ceiling cap on quota declared by the court itself.

The three-judge Bench had refused to stay the implementation of the Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, which provides the 10% quota, when it had reserved for orders a year ago. Several petitioners, including Janhit Abhiyan and Kerala Munnoor

"economic backwardness" can be the sole criterion for granting quota in government jobs and educational institutions for those who would otherwise have to compete in the general category.

The economic reservation was introduced in the Constitution by amending Articles 15 and 16 and adding clauses empowering the State governments to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness.

ka Samudaya Aikya Munni, the latter represented by advocate V.K. Biju, had challenged the validity of the Constitutional Amendment, saying the 50% quota limit was part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

The economic reservation was introduced in the Constitution by amending Articles 15 and 16 and adding clauses empowering the State governments to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness.

"It is the case of the petitioners that the very amendments run contrary to the Constitutional scheme, and no segment of available seats/posts can be reserved only on the basis of economic criterion. As such, we are of the view that such questions do constitute substantial questions of law to be considered by a Bench of five judges," the judgment said.

The Centre had argued that it was every State's prerogative to provide 10% economic reservation in State government jobs and admissions in State-run education institutions.

"Whether or not to provide reservation to the economically weaker section (EWS) of the society for appointment in State government jobs and for admission to State government educational institutions, as per provisions of the newly inserted Articles 15(6) and 16(6) of the Constitution, is to be decided by the State government concerned," a seven-page affidavit filed by the Central government had said.

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# COVID-19 hits medical tech firms

Industry association says that sales dropped by 50% in April-June

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN

NEW DELHI

The medical technology industry has suffered a 50-85% drop in revenue during April-June which saw a surge in COVID-19 pandemic across the world with suppliers to the cardiology, orthopaedic, ophthalmology and critical care sectors being the worst hit, noted an internal assessment by the Medical Technology Association of India (MTA), representing leading research-based medical technology companies.

#### Revenue loss

It said the industry suffered an estimated revenue down-fall in the cardiology category of up to 60% in the first quarter of the financial year, while the orthopaedic industry devices encountered an even bigger fall up to 85% and the ophthalmology sector 75%. Even the critical



Sales down: Elective surgeries such as laser vision correction drive a large part of demand for medical devices. ■ FILE PHOTO

care device segment fell to nearly half.

"Numerous financial and operational challenges in the

wake of the pandemic has hit the industry hard," it said.

The Association said as India started recording surge

in the infection, elective procedures were postponed. "Elective surgeries drive a large part of the demand for medical devices and the postponement has severely impacted the revenue streams of the medtech industry. The COVID-19 has accentuated the problems of the sector that was already reeling with the impact of price control. The pandemic disrupted the global supply chains, while the cost of freight movement increased by 5-7 folds. These challenges have been compounded by the falling rupee value, high basic customs duty rate and the health cess on imported medical devices which has been imposed since February 2020," said Pavan Choudary, chairman MTA.

The sector is now seeking immediate intervention of the Central government to help them recover.

## Protests in Assam over 'lack of care'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Congress and local organisations have been protesting the deaths of COVID-19 positive and negative patients due to alleged non-treatment in eastern Assam's Jorhat.

The protests peaked on Tuesday when the State recorded 2,886 cases of infection, the most in a day.

Former Congress MLA Rana Goswami led a team that protested at the Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) for alleged mismanagement of the medical system.

Organisations such as the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chhatra Parishad had staged protests against the "medical negligence in the name of COVID-19" earlier.

"At least four persons who were taken to the JMCH in serious condition died because doctors reportedly did not attend to them in time. They waited two-three days for COVID-19 test results to come by which time the patients have expired," said Mr. Goswami, also secretary of the All India Congress Committee.

**Officials deny charge**  
Health officials denied any negligence on the part of the doctors or paramedical staff.

Till Wednesday, Assam had recorded 48,161 positive cases with 115 of them having died and 33,428 discharged. Health officials said they have been constantly increasing the number of people being tested daily – 59,064 during the 24 hours ending Tuesday night.

"What is encouraging is that the positivity rate came down to 4.86% after hovering around the 6% mark for a long time," a senior health official said, declining to be named.

## Amnesty urges NHRC, NCW to open J&K offices

Human rights organisation calls for release of political leaders, restoration of 4G in Union Territory

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

An Amnesty International India report on Wednesday urged the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women to set up offices in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the people there had not had any redressal of their rights violations after the closure of the State Commissions a year ago.

Marking the first anniversary of the revocation of J&K's special status under Article 370 and splitting the State into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019, the organisation also called on the government to release all political leaders, journalists and activists from detention;

restore 4G mobile Internet; de-congest prisons and start an independent investigation into attacks on journalists.

**Panels wrapped up**  
In a report on the situation a year after Article 370 was read down, Amnesty noted that seven State-level Commissions, including the human rights panel, had been wrapped up.

"Given the chronic history of human rights abuses in the past in the region, Amnesty International India recommends that the NHRC set up a branch office for Jammu and Kashmir to facilitate easy access to the complaint filing process for the local people," the report

said. Amnesty also asked the NHRC to appoint a special monitor for the region and to take up cases pending with the erstwhile State Commission. It also recommended that the NCW set up a JK cell for addressing problems faced by women.

A CRPF soldier standing guard on an empty street in Srinagar on Wednesday.

In a statement, Amnesty International India executive director Avinash Kumar said: "Over the last one year, the Government of India has been systematically dismantling all avenues for justice for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. With zero representation, protracted Internet restrictions, arbitrary use of some of India's most stringent laws, verbal orders of detention and crippling of the local media – most of this disproportionately higher in Kashmir – it's been a complete year since we have heard the people of Jammu and Kashmir speak."

It said while it acknowledged that there may be security concerns that merit

restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, the curbs should be for a limited timeframe and as per the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights "to which India is a state party". "However, in an absolute violation of India's international obligations, the entire population of Kashmir has been deprived of their right to freedom of expression and opinion through protracted communication restrictions since the last one year. This has been compounded by a censored media, continuing detention of political leaders, arbitrary restrictions due to the pandemic with little to no redressal," the Amnesty statement said.

## Punjab to give smartphones to students

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Cabinet on Wednesday paved the way for distribution, by November, of 1,73,823 smartphones to students of government schools preparing to take their Class XII Board exams over the coming academic year through online education amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Distribution of the first batch of 50,000 phones, which has already been received by the State government, will begin shortly. The phones will be equipped with pre-loaded government applications like the 'e-Sewa App' with e-content related to Class XI and Class XII," said a statement. The Cabinet also gave its nod for the ₹501.07 crore expenditure incurred so far by the State to fight the pandemic.



Golden grain: India exports basmati to the tune of ₹33,000 crore every year. ■ FILE PHOTO

## M.P. should not get GI tag for basmati rice'

Punjab CM writes to Prime Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Amid Madhya Pradesh government's push for the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for basmati rice, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his personal intervention against allowing this in the larger interest of Punjab and other States which are already basmati GI tagged.

the authorities not to disturb the status quo in this matter, the Chief Minister said this was essential for safeguarding the interests of farmers and basmati exporters of India.

#### Place of origin

"As per the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 a geographical indication tag can be issued for agricultural goods that are originating in the territory of a country, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristics of such goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. GI tag for basmati has been given on the basis of the traditionally grown areas of basmati due to special aroma, quality and taste of the grain, which is indigenous to the region below the foothills of Himalayas in the Indo-Gangetic Plains and basmati of this area has distinct recognition across the world," the Chief Minister has pointed out.

Capt. Singh said Madhya Pradesh did not fall under the specialised zone for basmati cultivation. "It was for this reason that the State was not included in the indigenous area of basmati cultivation in India."

## Maximum drenching



It's pouring: People wading through a flooded road at Byculla in Mumbai on Wednesday. Heavy rain lashed various parts of Mumbai. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

## M.P.'s online classes not reaching majority of students

Just 30% could access home-based learning programme

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

Just 30% of secondary and senior secondary students in government schools of Madhya Pradesh have been regularly reached through a home-based learning programme which began after schools shut in view of COVID-19 pandemic, said the State Department of School Education.

The department under the 'Humara Ghar, Humara Vidyalaya' programme planned to reach 22 lakh students from classes 9 to 12, but just around 6,60,000 – 20% through TV and 10%

through WhatsApp – were reached from July 18, when the programme began, to July 25.

Families of 30% of the students don't possess TVs or smartphones having Internet connection to avail of the study material, said Kamma Acharya, Additional Director, Directorate of Public Instruction. "The remaining students didn't avail themselves of modules regularly," she said.

"When smartphones with internet connections are there, parents often take them to work. It is a huge challenge to

regular curriculum," added Ms. Acharya. Reaching to students in the 89 tribal dominated blocks in districts such as Alirajpur, Barwani and Jhabua was a task. After teachers' workshop, said an order issued by the Directorate's Commissioner Jayshree Kiyawat on July 13, students had to be divided into various groups.

The one having mobile phones, wherein if a family has one phone it could be used by all its children. Those having TV, who must watch the telecast during fixed time slots on Doordarshan.

## ₹42 lakh loss as some trains ran empty: Maharashtra

State govt. tells HC that the Shramik Specials arranged to transport workers were not fully utilised

SONAM SAIGAL

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Wednesday told the Bombay High Court that it incurred a loss of nearly ₹42 lakh due to the under utilisation of Shramik Special trains which were arranged to ferry migrant workers to their respective States following the lockdown induced by COVID-19.

Advocate General (AG) Ashutosh Kumbhakoni told a Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice A.S. Gadkari that this loss was because not enough workers availed the trains to return home. He said in fact now workers want to either stay in Maharashtra or re-

turn. Last month, the State government arranged trains to ferry thousands of migrant workers, but only 3,551 people used the trains, he added.

Mr. Kumbhakoni said a

train was arranged from Pune to ferry 383 people to their native State, but on the day of the departure, only 49 people boarded the 24-coach train.

The court was hearing a

public interest litigation (PIL) filed by Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and raised issues related to migrant workers stranded due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Advocate Ronita Bhattacharya Bector, representing CITU, told the court that there were several migrant workers waiting to return to their homes in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.

The Bench directed the AG to file an affidavit on the number of trains run and expenditure incurred by the State. It also directed the petitioner to file a rejoinder on how many workers were waiting to go back and to which State. In the previous hearing, Ms. Bector had told the court that in June there were 52,000 migrant workers in the State, 30,000 of whom were ready to return to their native places.



Going home: Shramik Special trains were run to help stranded migrant workers. ■ FILE PHOTO

How the pandemic, along with an invasion of locusts, pushed the drone industry to innovate

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Between COVID-19 and swarms of locusts that found their way into India, the drones have emerged winners.

"The situation has put us in the forefront and not just spiked the interest of the general public but stakeholders too," says Smit Shah of the Drone Federation of India, a non-Government, not-for-profit, industry-led body that promotes and strives towards building a safer and scalable unmanned aviation industry.

Recent work put in by these electronic flying devices – in surveillance, to check if people are adhering to the lockdown, as well as disinfecting and sanitising – has brought them visibility. In fact, the pandemic and pestilence have pushed this sector to further innovate.

Prof Senthil Kumar, director, Dr Kalaim Advanced UAV Research Centre, MIT, Anna University, is now working on flying a swarm of 20 drones with a single operator. "In the case of disinfecting during the pandemic, if you programme the swarm, then each drone can spread out to different streets and get the job done at the same time," explains Kumar.

He adds that drones are useful in fighting locusts, with pesticides. "If lakhs of locusts come in, one drone may not be enough. But a swarm can effectively fight them."

#### Driving innovation

Drones are primarily battery-operated, but Kumar designed a dual-powered drone (petrol and battery-operated) in 2018. This year, these hybrid



# Shepherd in the SKY



## Seasons in the sun

In *A Song of India*, the fourth book in his memoir series, Ruskin Bond looks back on the year he went away to the UK at 16 to find himself, as a writer

DEEPA ALEXANDER

The landline rings a couple of times before it is answered; it is not often that you have a Mr Bond say that he was expecting your call. It is a Landour kind of day – brilliant sunshine filters through the dancing keyholes of the deodar's dark-green, needle-shaped leaves. After a night of lashing rain, the room on the roof has flooded and the morning has been spent mopping up, I am told.

Ruskin Bond, 86, has spent nearly 70 years wielding his pen. He is one of India's most prolific writers, a staple for children, a recipient of Sahitya Akademi, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awards, a mascot for nostalgia.

"There's quite a bit of traffic on the road below. But the valley's landscape is unchanged and the mornings are still full of birdsong," says Bond, of the view from his window.

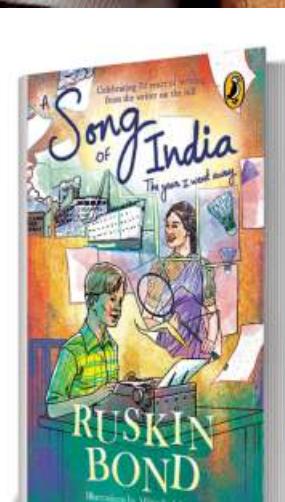
It is this hypnotic appeal of re-casting life for today's reader even while looking back with love, of painting a picture of clouds boiling up from the valley even as cars fishtail up the steep hills, that has ensured Bond has survived the tidal shifts of Indian writing in English.

#### Revisiting boyhood

In *A Song Of India* (published by Penguin) which comes after *Looking For The Rainbow*, *Till The Clouds Roll By* and *Coming Round The Mountain* – all beautifully illustrated by Mihir Joglekar – Bond, who is of British descent, travels the arc of his boyhood. The separation of his parents; a magical year with his father in Delhi; his schooldays at Bishop Cotton, Shimla, where he was part of a mischievous gang of boys called the Fearsome



**Notes from a sepia world**  
Ruskin Bond; (right) the book cover • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



a different milieu when my mother married a Punjabi Hindu. After Partition, my Muslim friends left and Sikh friends took their place. I settled here in 1964 and the years have merged. But

my boyhood stands apart."

*A Song of India* that follows is a tribute that is warm with detail without being overwhelming. It is also a lilting love song to the country that has been the love of his life. It is this sense of belonging, a necessary quality for a writer, that makes Bond still relevant. "Strangely enough, kids are still interested in stories set half a century ago, even ghost stories, though it takes a lot to scare them these days. Many write to ask about the girl at Deoli station, a bittersweet story written in 1956."

Falling in love is a constant theme, even if the love never comes to fruition. "I was very vulnerable," says Bond. "It didn't take long for me to fall in love, even if sometimes it was a one-way thing. With Raj [from *A Song of India*] whose *parathas* he devoured earning him the moniker Paratha Bond; it was more a friendship. I lost touch with her when I left for England."

In the UK, Bond worked four jobs, which he "never saw as careers, although I did consider becoming a tap dancer or a botanist". He wrote in the evenings and watched Jean Renoir's *The River* to tide over homesickness.

His debut *Room On The Roof* won the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957 and paid for his passage home. "The book would make a fine film," says Bond, who writes in long-hand almost every morning and is reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

"But for how long can you get pleasure in biting a lady in the neck?" he laughs.

Looking back at how his writing really began, Bond says, "Sixteen is an important year for all of us. Perhaps that's why it stands out."

drones were deployed, for the first time, to battle locusts in Rajasthan. A few were also used by the Tamil Nadu Police, on a trial basis, for surveillance and making announcements in containment zones.

Battery-powered drones are not suitable for bigger payloads: in the case of tackling locusts they need to carry 15 litres of pesticides, says Kumar. Then there are safety issues: if the battery blasts when the drone is mid-air, it will crash.

"Keeping these factors in mind, we designed these hybrid drones, after researching for five years," he adds. These machines carry 16 to 18 litres of pesticide for spraying. Plus, each can hold three-and-a-half litres of petrol and the overall weight of the drone at full capacity is 45 kilograms. It can fly for 40 minutes.

In another positive development, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has recently sanctioned engine-operated drones to fly at night. This permission is specifically to deal with locusts. "In Bikaner (Rajasthan) our three drones are working at night, spraying chemicals to tackle locusts," says Kumar, who has 50-plus drones.

"The Ministry of Civil Aviation has been working effectively during this COVID-19 period. They have taken a lot of effort with regard to drones and this will result in many players coming into this segment," says Kumar, adding, "Big industries will join too, especially if the agriculture field is open. It will create a lot of employment opportunity."

Lately, the involvement of the drones in relief work, says Smit, has made securing permissions from the Government a little easier. A case in point is the GARUD portal (Government Authorisation for Relief Using Drones) that was recently set up to fast track large scale, quick permissions for COVID-19-related drone op-

erations, says Smit. He also lists the DigitalSky Platform – by the Ministry of Civil Aviation – a single window clearance platform for all drone related registration, permission and other regulatory services.

#### Branching out

It has been established that drones can be used for a lot more than just shooting weddings and films. "Today, we have 38 different solutions that they offer. These include mosquito repellents, locusts, mapping, electricity wire survey, sanitisation..." says Agnishwar Jayaprakash who started Chennai-based Garuda Aerospace in 2015.

His company is now almost a veteran in the sanitisation scene. It has worked in around 16 cities across India, spraying disinfectants and covered nearly 25,000 acres.

"We began in March, with the Health Ministry of Tamil Nadu giving us an order for the Rajiv Gandhi Government Hospital in Chennai," says Agnishwar, whose drones then subsequently worked in Varanasi, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Rourkela, Ranchi, Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh, Nirmal in Telangana, and Mumbai.

"Now the Government understands that automation and drone technology can serve as replacement for on-ground health and sanitation workers," says Agni, whose company was also roped in to tackle locusts by the Department of Agriculture in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.



"We were one of the first responders to use this technology to kill locusts," Agnishwar says, explaining that they have two methods. One to spray a night before the locusts arrive and the second is to target them from above when they are foraging. "We have a 70-75% hit ratio," he adds. These drones, each weighing 25 kilograms, carry 15 to 20 kilograms of liquid solution provided by the Government.

Looking forward, Agnishwar's company has now developed a drone delivery platform for food and e-commerce. It's called IPPO (meaning 'now' in Tamil) and is in talks with service providers like Zomato, Flipkart and Amazon among others.

"Whenever the Government regulations open up (air traffic rules for drones), we will be the first in the country to do this," he says. With this service, even a 20-kilometre radius can be covered in 15 minutes. He also plans to have his own cloud kitchens.

With increasing dependence on drones, Agnishwar says, "Today, the drone industry is where the e-commerce industry was in 2009. Over the next couple of years, we will grow."

Today, we have 38 different solutions that drones offer. These include mosquito repellents, mapping, electricity wire survey...

AGNISHWAR JAYAPRAKASH

**Buzz word** (Top) Drone pilots training people and drones in action • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



## Going once, going twice

Chennai-based The Artist Project holds affordable auctions of artwork on Instagram to help rural artisans

SWETA AKUNDI

On an Instagram post by The Artist Project, featuring a circular acrylic painting of seagulls, a bidding war has ensued in the comments. "4000" comments one user, "4500" says another. "5000" says the third, outbidding the others.

In the next three days of posting that painting, it is sold to the highest bidder.

Since June, many such paintings have been auctioned from this Instagram account, for this is how Chennai-based architect Abhinaya Rangarajan, founder of the not-for-profit, is raising funds for rural artisans.

"The Artist Project was started as an initiative where we work with rural artisans who do not have the access or means to put their work online. Their work may even sell internationally, but it is often the middlemen who earn the most. So we reach out to them, give their work more visibility online, and get them orders

so they have a steady source of revenue," explains Abhinaya.

The account had not been very active since mid-2018, until the pandemic hit. "We started receiving requests from the artists we work with, asking us if we could help sell their products," she adds.

Abhinaya says they currently have 10-15 artists in their roster, from across the country: Puducherry, interior parts of Andhra Pradesh, a couple of villages near Jaipur, in the Kutch region



**Go local** Abhinaya R; (top) art by Gopal Lal • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and in West Bengal. "Some of them are a lot more active than the rest, and once they manage to sustain their business without our help, we let them be and take on another artist on board."

With the pandemic, says Abhinaya, the hardest hit artists "are those that run small businesses, who sell out of pushcarts or tiny stores. They depend on the workshops provided to them by the Government, and rely completely on footfall".

One such artist on board with them is Puducherry-based Muthulakshmi, who does crochet. At 35, Muthulakshmi, who had been trained by a French national in her hometown, started Gokulam Crafts, and now works out of a Government workshop. Through its various auctions so far, The Artist Project raised close to ₹22,000 for Muthulakshmi and her family.

"Apart from the auctions, we also promote our artists' works on our account. They are priced between ₹300 and a maximum of ₹3,000. We realised that fundraising through auctions would be more immediate and effective for now," she says.

For the auctions, many up-and-coming artists have volunteered their work, from Goa-based photographer and painter, Richa Kashlekar to Hyderabad-based Malvika Jey, and Abhinaya herself. "We put up a post of the painting with its details and opening bid, and invite people to bid in the comments for three days," she explains the process. Sometimes, bidding happens privately. "We then DM to check if it is a legitimate bid."

This week, pottery by Gopal Lal from Kotjevar, Jaipur has been featured. Gopal, who runs a fourth-generation institution that crafts Jaipur-style blue earthenware, has coached and upskilled most of his village. His handpainted animal motif plates are now up for sale.

Works featured on The Artist Project ship throughout South India. Contact mail@theartistproject@gmail.com or visit @theartistprojectindia.

IN OUR BACKYARD

ABHISHEK GULSHAN

There are creepy-crawlies everywhere, despite the monsoon's start-stop appearance. One of the most common ones are long, elongated cylindrical multiple-legged creatures that appear even in potted plants: millipedes, also called diplopods. Their study is called diplopodology!

They do favour moist conditions and are burrowers, however, they venture out in heavy rains, may be due to the excessive water in the ground. As a result, millipedes often end up being inside houses as well. Going by the same logic, even extreme dry outside conditions may lead them straight at your doorstep and inside.

Belonging to the group arthropods, they are invertebrates (animals with no back bone) that have an exoskeleton, a pair of antenna, and a segmented body (with various segments) with two pairs of jointed legs per body segment. A layperson may think both millipedes and centipedes look very similar. However, it may help to know the difference as centipedes are mildly venomous (being carnivores, venom is injected to subdue their prey), and their bite can be quite painful and cause mild swelling. While millipedes have two pairs of jointed legs per segment, centipedes have one.

The term millipede has been derived from the Latin word *millipeda*, literally translating to a thousand legs. Contrary to its name, no millipede known (yet) to science has a thousand legs!

They come in a variety of shapes



• WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/  
PERIASAMY ALAGESAN AND  
BALUCHAMY RAMANATHAN

## Curiouser and curioser!

We take them for granted during the rains, but millipedes have inspired the bodies of robots

and sizes. A city like Delhi sees the usual brown or black ones (like *Spinotarsus colosseus* and a few others), whereas a few of them might exhibit aposematism by being bright in colour, sending warning signals to predators that it may be toxic and unpalatable. It seems that a lot of predators like birds and lizards wait for the rains to have a diverse diet.

Millipedes are often referred to as detritivores that feed on decaying organic matter like leaves and other dead plant matter, thus contributing towards decomposition,

cycling nutrients back into the soil, thus aiding in the well-being of an ecosystem.

These arthropods are perhaps one of the oldest known land animals from the Silurian times (from the Paleozoic Era) – we know this from fossil evidence.

The inability to bite or sting, and its slow-moving nature are reasons for their struggle against predators. Even though this does not leave them with much latitude to protect themselves, there are certain mechanisms that assist them in survival. Its primary defence

mechanism is to curl into a tight coil, thereby protecting their legs and other vital delicate areas on the body behind a hard exoskeleton.

A few species may emit foul-smelling chemicals to ward off predators. Certain chemicals may even contain toxins that can hurt any potential threat nearby. For instance, the benzoquinone dispensed, is an insect-repellent and monkeys are known to nibble on these millipedes and rub them on their bodies (for the chemical) to evade mosquitoes.

These creatures are an integral part of folklore and traditional medicine across the world. Not surprisingly, a few cultures associate them with the onset of the rains. Their intriguing appearance has inspired scientific research, from being model organisms to study arthropods to robotics.

*The writer is the founder of NINOX - Owl About Nature, a nature-awareness initiative. He is the Delhi-NCR reviewer for Ebird, a Cornell University initiative, monitoring rare sightings of birds. He formerly led a programme of WWF India.*

nai, that captures the 'new normal' through an amalgam of art and poetry, online

The digital exhibit, uploaded in four instalments, presents an interesting marriage of genres that encapsulate the responses of four artists: visual artist and poet Annanya Dasgupta, poet Geetanjali Rajan, visual artist and poet Parvathi Nayar, and poet K Srilata.

Comprising poemages, photopoetry, photo art and words, the ongoing project relies heavily on collaboration.

Though the first few days were

spent grappling with the changing situation, Paravathi Nayar says, "Later, I was literally found lingering near windows and looking out; becoming conscious of this position of

being on a threshold, a windowsill

of time." Through the window, she could see the playground, once filled with children's laughter, was now empty: "The playground seemed like a large sundial, marking the moving time. And, I started taking photographs." Her photo poem, Five Windows, took form; this was also the seed of the collaboration.

Ahead of the lockdown, Srilata went on a birdwatching trip. "Everything seemed so normal. It painted a picture that said, 'everything's going to be okay with this world!'. For me, the shift was very dramatic." Her poem Our Days Would Catch on the Cruelest Thorns encapsulates the response to the shift.

*View Held – The Lockdown in Words and Images on Projectheld.in*

## In continuum

The amalgam of art and poetry in this exhibit, captures the lockdown and its emotions

GOWRI S

The lockdown and its companion, isolation, mean different things to different people. For creatives, this situation has triggered responses that vary across genres, much like any crisis in history. Artistic language has seen a slow shift to a vocabulary that has never existed before: Held – The Lockdown in Words and Images is one such compendium presented by Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Chen-

nai, that captures the 'new normal' through an amalgam of art and poetry, online

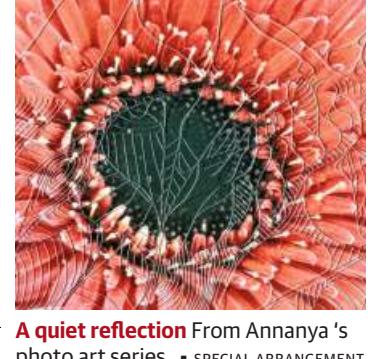
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A quiet reflection From Annanya's photo art series • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## POOCHE CAFE



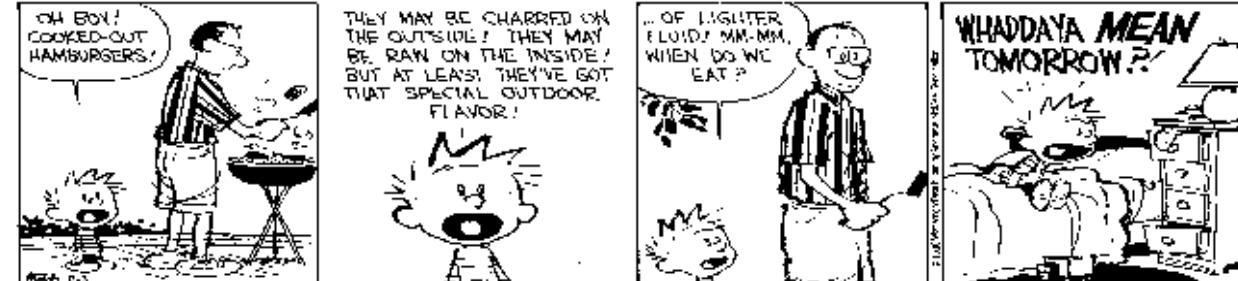
## PEANUTS



## HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



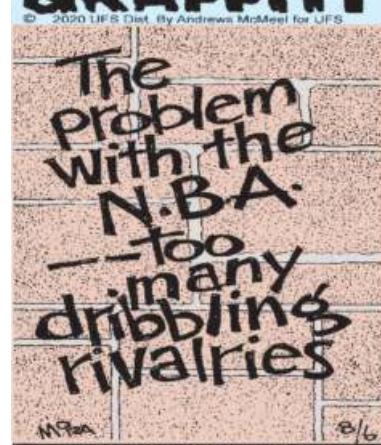
## CALVIN AND HOBBES



## TIGER



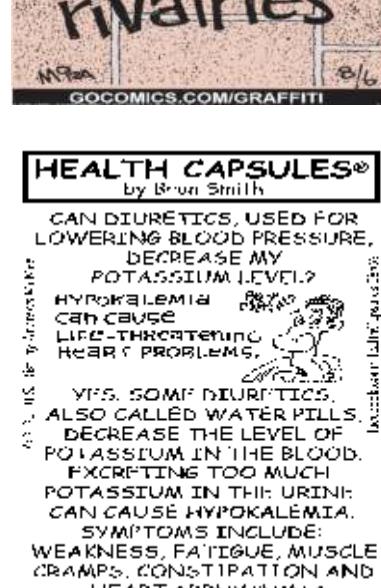
## GRAFFITI



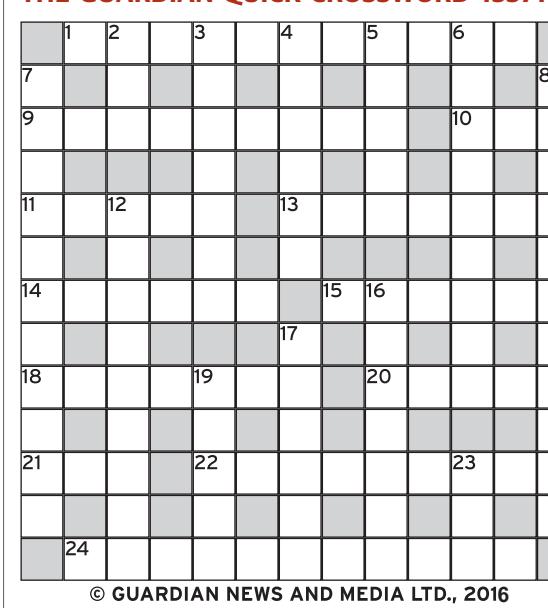
## WUMO



## HEALTH CAPSULES



## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13371



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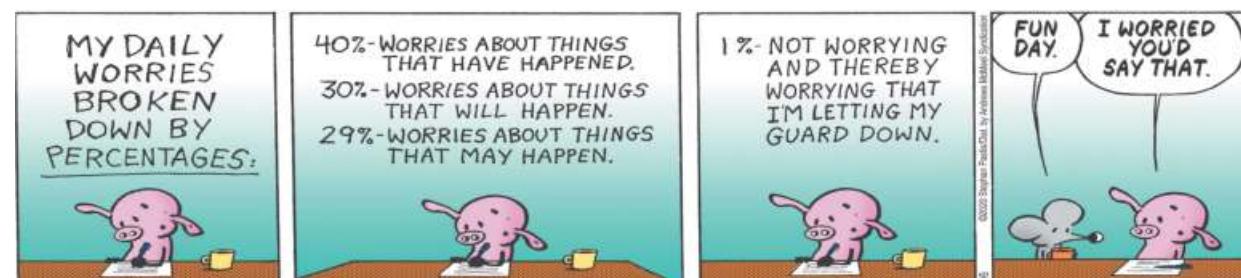
To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 6 Liveliness (9)
- 7 Quickly (2,3,6)
- 8 Aggressive (11)
- 12 Bedtime command (6,3)
- 16 Bishop's jurisdiction (7)
- 17 Hold in high regard (6)
- 19 Wall painting (5)
- 23 Do something (3)

The solution will appear on August 13, 2020.

Solution No. 13370

## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



21 Name taken by 13 popes, the last dying in 1903 aged 93 (3)

22 Make a lot of trouble (5,4)

24 Regardless of what may have happened (2,3,6)

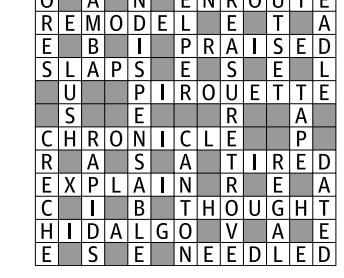
14 Take in (6)

15 Spending time doing nothing (6)

18 Wild (7)

20 Person with legal title to something (5)

5 Tear to pieces (5)



CM YK

**After the apocalypse**

A massive warehouse explosion on Tuesday sent a devastating blast wave across Beirut city, killing at least 135 people and injuring nearly 5,000.

Facades of central Beirut buildings were ripped off, furniture was sucked onto streets and roads were strewn with glass and debris. Cars near the port were flipped over.

**2,750 tonnes** of ammonium nitrate, used in fertilizers and bombs, had been stored for six years at the port without safety measures.

**3 lakh** people have temporarily been made homeless by the blast.

**\$3 billion** is estimated to be the cost of the damage.

**Killer blow:** A view of damaged grain silos at Beirut harbour, a day after an explosion tore through Lebanon's capital. AFP

**ECONOMIC WOES**

- Much of the port district is flattened, disabling the main route for imports in Lebanon, which is already struggling to house and feed hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria
- It defaulted on sovereign debt earlier this year
- A crippling devaluation has sent poverty levels soaring to an estimated 50% of the population of more than 6 million people
- Severe economic crisis has ignited mass protests in recent months

**POOR GOVERNANCE**

- Many Lebanese blamed the blast on decades of corruption and poor governance by the entrenched political class
- The health system is confronting a coronavirus surge, and there were concerns the virus could spread as people flooded hospitals. Saint George University Hospital was out of commission after suffering major damage

**HARIRI VERDICT AWAITED**

Govt. is determined to hold the responsible and the negligent accountable, and to sanction them with the most severe punishment

- MICHEL AOUN, PRESIDENT

a verdict in the trial of four suspects from Hezbollah over a 2005 bombing that killed former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and 21 others

Hariri was killed by a huge truck bomb on another part of the Beirut waterfront, about 2 km from the port



SOURCE: AGENCIES

## Lebanon explosion toll climbs to 135

Govt. vows justice, orders port staff detained; Beirut Mayor says Lebanon in the grip of a catastrophe

REUTERS  
BEIRUT

Lebanese rescue workers searched for survivors in the mangled wreckage of buildings and investigators blamed negligence for a massive warehouse explosion that sent a devastating blast wave across Beirut, killing at least 135 people.

Nearly 5,000 people were injured in Tuesday's explosion at Beirut port and tens of thousands were left without homes fit to live in after shockwaves smashed building facades, sucked furniture out into streets and shattered glass miles inland.

The death toll was expected to rise from the blast that officials blamed on a huge stockpile of highly explosive material stored for years in unsafe conditions at the port.

The explosion was the most powerful ever to rip



**Rescue mission:** A survivor is taken out of rubble on Wednesday after a massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon. ■ AP

through Beirut, a city still scarred by civil war that ended three decades ago and reeling from an economic meltdown and a surge in coronavirus infections. The blast rattled buildings on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, about 160 km away.

President Michel Aoun said 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, used in fertilizers and bombs, had been stored for six years at the port without safety measures, after it was seized. He said in a national address the government was "determined to investigate and expose what happened as soon as possible, to hold the responsible and the negligent accountable."

An official source familiar with preliminary investigations blamed the incident on "inaction and negligence," saying "nothing was done"

by committees and judges involved in the matter to order the removal of hazardous material.

**House arrest**

The Cabinet ordered port officials involved in storing or guarding the material since 2014 to be put under house arrest, ministerial sources told Reuters. The cabinet also announced a two-week state of emergency in Beirut.

"This is a catastrophe for Beirut and Lebanon," Beirut's Mayor, Jamal Itani, told Reuters while inspecting damage estimated ran into billions of dollars.

The Health Minister said the death toll had climbed to 113, as the search for victims continued after shockwaves from the blast hurled some of the victims into the sea. The Red Cross was coordinating with the Health Ministry to set up morgues as hos-

pitals were overwhelmed.

Beirut's Clemenceau Medical Center was "like a slaughterhouse, blood covering the corridors and the lifts," said Sara, one of its nurses. "This is the killer blow for Beirut, we are a disaster zone," said Bilal, a man in his 60s, in the downtown area, who blamed the political elite, calling them "thieves and looters".

Offers of international support poured in. Gulf Arab states, who in the past were major financial supporters of Lebanon but recently stepped back because of what they say is Iranian meddling, sent planes with medical equipment and other supplies. Iran offered food and a field hospital, ISNA news agency said.

Germany, the Netherlands and Cyprus offered specialised search and rescue teams.

## Sri Lanka sees 71% polling

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Polling for Sri Lanka's parliamentary election concluded on Wednesday with a voter turnout of 71%. The results will be released on Thursday, the Election Commission said.

After postponing the elections twice in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Sri Lanka became the first South Asian country to hold election months after COVID-19 struck, claiming 11 lives in the island. However, the country's public health sector managed to contain the numbers – 286 active cases as of Wednesday – with support from the Army, drawing international praise, including from the World Health Organization.

Following health guide-

lines stipulated by the Election Commission, masked voters queued up in polling stations that were equipped with hand washing facilities. They maintained physical distancing with fellow voters, as they elected representatives to the new Parliament, in which the ruling Rajapaksa administration is seeking a two-thirds majority.

The race includes two past Presidents – Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is Prime Minister in the current caretaker government, and Maithripala Sirisena – former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and his United National Party's former deputy leader Sajith Premadasa, who now leads a breakaway alliance. The Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna

There were no major incidents of violence reported on polling day. "No violence, only violations," chairman of Election Commission Mahinda Deshapriya told a media conference Wednesday evening.

## 17 killed as boat capsizes in Bangladesh

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DHAKA

A passenger boat carrying more than 40 people capsized on Wednesday at a marshy wetland in Netrakona district of northern Bangladesh, killing at least 17 people, an official said.

Nearly 50 people were on board the boat and about 30 swam to safety, a government official said, adding that the cause of the accident was not immediately known.

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**CORRIGENDUM**

Tender No.	Description	Existing Due Date	Amended Due Date
202113 001863	Endpoint protection and Email security solution with 3 years subscription	07.08.2020	14.08.2020

Revised Pre Qualification Criteria, Technical Specifications, Scope of supply / work and revised tender document will be available at websites: [www.tnpl.com](http://www.tnpl.com) / [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in)

All other terms and conditions as per earlier Advertisement dated 24.07.2020 DIPR/2960/Tender/2020

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**TENDER CANCELLATION NOTICE**

TNPL Cancel the Tender for the following:

Tender No.	Material Description
2021230 00637	This is reference to the tender notice published on July 24 <sup>th</sup> 2020 in THE HINDU & TIMES BUSINESS for Cationic Starch (Maize Based) for TNPL Unit-II, it has been decided to cancel the tender due to administrative reasons.

DIPR/2959/Tender/2020

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**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT**

Madurai Highways, (Construction and Maintenance) Circle

**TENDER NOTICE**

T.N.NO.14/2020-21/HDO.DATED:05.08.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received upto 25.08.2020, 14.00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Madurai Circle under CRIDP 2020-21, (Package No.98) pertaining Madurai (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 07.08.2020 onwards in the Government website <http://tnhighways.gov.in>. If any Changes/Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

Superintending Engineer (H),

C&M, Madurai Circle.

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

PENNAIYAR BASIN CIRCLE, TIRUVANNAMALAI-606 603.

**FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMPSUM - ITEM RATE CONTRACT**

**TENDER NOTICE (TWO COVER SYSTEM)**

TENDER NOTICE NO.: 06/ PBC / T.V.Malai / 2020 - 2021 / F. 33 / JDO.2 DATED:05.08.2020

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamilnadu, the Superintending

Engineer, WRD., Pennaiyar Basin Circle, Tiruvannamalai 606 603,

invites tender in Two cover system from eligible tenderers for the works

of (1) "Construction of a Bed dam across the Pennaiyar river near

Agaram - Maruderi Bridge in Maruderi Village of Pochampalli

Taluk in Krishnagiri District," (Value of work : Rs. 1,067.50 Lakh

including GST) (2) "Rehabilitation and Improvements to the

Chinniyampettai Anicut Supply Channel, Balance portion of the

Thanipadi Anicut Supply Channel and the Mud Kondam across

the Pambar River in Thanipadi Village in Thandarampattal Taluk of

Tiruvannamalai District" (Value of work : Rs. 486.00 Lakh

including GST) at his office upto 03.00 P.M. on 09.09.2020 in sealed

cover. The tender will be opened at 03.30 P.M. at his chamber on the

same day.

Other information as details of Work, Value, EMD, Cost of Tender schedule, Qualification details etc., will be available in the Government website [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in). Any Corrections or Modifications will be published on web site only.

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, WRD.,

PENNAIYAR BASIN CIRCLE, TIRUVANNAMALAI - 606 603.

DIPR/2941/TENDER/2020

PENNAIYAR BASIN CIRCLE, TIRUVANNAMALAI - 606 603.

DIPR/2941/TENDER/2020

DIPR/2941

**MARKET WATCH**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	37,663	-0.07
US Dollar	74.94	0.13
Gold	56,181	2.46
Brent oil	46	3.56

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	327.10	12.15
Asian Paints	1716.30	2.35
Axis Bank	434.95	5.80
Bajaj Auto	3009.00	39.05
Bajaj Finance	6242.05	80.05
Bajaj Finance	3262.15	26.55
Bharti Airtel	558.95	9.95
BPCL	410.45	1.90
Britannia Ind	3849.95	32.35
Cipla	722.15	8.30
Coal India	128.45	-0.30
Dr Reddy's Lab	4600.95	-33.90
Eicher Motors	21958.75	943.10
GAIL (India)	93.30	0.15
Grasim Ind	633.45	8.80
HCL Tech	688.40	-4.25
HDFC	1776.70	-4.40
HDFC Bank	1027.55	-14.10
HDFC Life	605.00	-9.15
Hero MotoCorp	2695.75	-10.35
Hindalco	175.75	13.40
Hind Unilever	2194.55	-3.25
ICICI Bank	352.20	1.20
IndusInd Bank	492.75	0.15
Bharti Infratel	191.05	-0.30
Infosys	944.70	-5.15
Indian Oil Corp	86.60	-0.35
ITC	192.80	-0.85
JSW Steel	235.15	7.05
Kotak Bank	1334.20	10.25
L&T	925.75	1.50
M&M	614.25	11.65
Maruti Suzuki	6526.25	167.30
Nestle India Ltd.	16503.35	76.65
NTPC	85.90	0.30
ONGC	76.95	0.85
PowerGrid Corp	175.95	-2.30
Reliance Ind	2126.45	-24.15
State Bank	191.45	-0.15
Shree Cement	22103.90	510.15
Sun Pharma	528.85	-0.10
Tata Motors	115.40	3.95
Tata Steel	395.80	23.55
TCS	2259.50	9.80
Tech Mahindra	648.55	-4.10
Titan	1105.45	30.25
UltraTech Cement	4041.05	36.75
UPL	453.60	-8.10
Wipro	278.20	-2.85
Zee Entertainment	145.55	2.20

**EXCHANGE RATES**

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

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.74	75.06
Euro	88.53	88.92
British Pound	98.06	98.52
Japanese Yen (100)	70.64	70.97
Chinese Yuan	10.77	10.81
Swiss Franc	82.10	82.49
Singapore Dollar	54.56	54.81
Canadian Dollar	56.35	56.59
Malaysian Ringgit	17.82	17.91
Australian Dollar	53.88	54.12

Source: Indian Bank

# Centre formulating R&D policy to bolster drug discovery

Blueprint to cover medical devices, include incentives for scientists, says official

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD

The Centre will soon unveil a new Research & Development (R&D) policy to boost drug discovery and the manufacture of medical devices in the country.

Alongside, numerous production-linked incentives are also on the anvil, including to the scientists involved in the process, P.D. Vaghela, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, said on Wednesday.

The government proposes to set up three major manufacturing parks including one in Hyderabad, with an investment of ₹1,000 crore each to help drive import substitution of basic raw ma-



**Local cure:** The central government has so far received 13 requests for setting up bulk drug parks. ■ REUTERS

terials, active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and the making of medical devices, Mr. Vaghela said.

Addressing a webinar to commemorate the 77th anniversary of CSIR-Indian Insti-

tute of Chemical Technology (IIT), the Secretary said there had to be renewed focus on bringing together re-

search institutions, academia and the industry to identify new chemicals, up-

date processes and discover new drug delivery systems.

**'Become millionaires'**

He said current approval processes were archaic and that there was a dire need to strengthen institutions and recognise scientists' role in new discoveries, and to help them commercialise the projects so they too can 'become millionaires'.

The Centre has so far re-

ceived 13 requests for setting

up the bulk drug parks.

CSIR-DG Shekhar C. Mande said about 53 APIs had been identified for manufac-

ture, of which 26 were

being processed on a war

footing, with results expect-

ed in 2-3 years.

The floor price for the QIP issue has been fixed at ₹1,838.94 per equity share

share

to "consider and determine the price to be [determined] by way of the issue to the qualified institutional buyers," the financier said in a filing with the stock exchanges.

The floor price for the is-  
sue has been fixed at ₹1,838.94 per equity share, as per the formula set down by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

As per the regulations, HDFC may offer a discount of 5% to the floor price, which will be based on its sole discretion, it said.

The Committee of Directors will meet on August 10 to "consider and determine the price to be [determined] by way of the issue to the qualified institutional buyers," the financier said in a filing with the stock exchanges.

Services sector activity shrinks for fifth month

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

India's services sector activity remained in a deep slump in July as COVID-19-induced restrictions stifled demand and forced companies to cease operations and further reduce staff numbers, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The IHS Markit India Services Business Activity Index stood at 34.2 in July, slightly higher than 33.7 in June. Services sector activity contracted for the fifth successive month in July. A print above 50 means ex-

pansion and a score below that denotes contraction.

"With... a prolonged and significant downturn, any substantial recovery will take many months, if not years," said Lewis Cooper, Economist, IHS Markit.

## HP opens Chennai plant for desktops, workstations

Facility enjoys locational advantage'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI

HP has commissioned a new manufacturing plant at Flex Ltd.'s unit in Sriperumbudur, near Chennai, to serve its sales partners and customers better.

The plant will make desktops and workstations. HP chose Flex's facility due to its proximity to seaports in Chennai and HP's spare parts facility in Bengaluru which, in turn, would enable it to procure materials from other parts of India and from Asia more quickly and efficiently, it said.

"With the inauguration of this new facility, we aim to strengthen our commitment to India and support



the growth of the local manufacturing ecosystem," said Ketan Patel, MD, HP Greater India.

Mr. Patel, who was recently appointed in the role, is responsible for the company's business in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

## SEBI's Tyagi gets 18-month extension

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Ajay Tyagi was on Wednesday given an 18-month extension, till February 2022, as the chairman of markets regulator SEBI, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

This is the second extension given to Mr. Tyagi. It comes at a time when the economy and capital markets are staring at uncertainties due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved extension of Mr. Tyagi's term for 18 months, with effect from September 1, 2020, the order said.

Airtel said it currently serves more than 2,500 large enterprises and more than a million emerging businesses with its product portfolio, including Airtel Cloud, a multi-cloud product and solutions business. Airtel Cloud will build an AWS Cloud Practice support

## Bharti to widen cloud services for enterprises with AWS pact

Telco eyes larger pie of \$3.5 bn public cloud services market

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel Ltd. and Amazon Web Services (AWS) will join forces to develop the Indian telecoms firm's cloud business, allowing it to offer a wider range of products to its enterprise clients, the two companies said on Wednesday.

Bharti said it currently serves more than 2,500 large enterprises and more than a million emerging businesses with its product portfolio, including Airtel Cloud, a multi-cloud product and solutions business. Airtel Cloud will build an AWS Cloud Practice support

ed by AWS Professional Services, as well as develop 'differentiated' Airtel Cloud products and capabilities leveraging AWS services,

Airtel's data centre capabilities, and Airtel's network and telecoms offerings, the company said. "Airtel customers will benefit from an integrated sales, consulting, and support approach from both companies, and improved security, scalability, and cloud management capabilities," it added.

The public cloud services market in India is expected to be worth \$7.1 billion in 2024, up from \$3.4 billion this year, according to International Data Corp.

Airtel customers will get sales and support from both companies.

(With Reuters inputs)

## Canara Bank Q1 profit rises 24% to ₹406 cr.

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

Canara Bank reported a 24% rise in standalone net profit to ₹406 crore for June quarter 2020-21.

The public sector lender had logged a net profit of ₹329 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year.

Canara Bank, which amalgamated Syndicate Bank into itself with effect from April 1, however, said the figures are not comparable as these are related to standalone financials for pre-amalgamation period.

Total income in April-June 2020-21 increased to ₹20,686 crore from ₹14,062 crore, Canara Bank said in a regulatory filing.

## + Uber to hire 140 engineers in India

Firm building 'cutting-edge' products

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Ride-hailing company Uber on Wednesday said it is hiring 140 engineers for its technology teams in Bengaluru and Hyderabad to build products in various areas such as rider and driver growth, delivery, marketplace, customer service, digital payments, risk and compliance, safety, and finance technology," it said.

These plans are in line with its vision to make mobility and delivery more accessible, and become the backbone of transportation in thousands of cities across the globe, it added.

Uber has started reaching out to prospective candidates for building new teams and adding to existing ones, it said in a statement.

Formulations maker Zenara Pharma said it would be selling the product under the brand name Favizen. The tablets are being manufactured at its USFDA-approved facility in Hyderabad. The company is expected to announce the price of the product shortly. BDR Pharmaceuticals said it had received DCGI approval to manufacture Favipiravir to treat mild to moderate patient with COVID-19 symptoms under the brand name BDFAVI. BDFAVI tablets will be priced at ₹63 each, sources said.

Rane Brake Lining Ltd., a leading manufacturer of brake linings, disc pads and clutch facings, reported a net loss of ₹6.9 crore during the first quarter ended June 2020 due to truncated period of operations. The company posted a net profit of ₹7.3 crore registered in the corresponding year-earlier period.

During the period under review, a large portion of working days was lost due to the lockdown. As such, the results for Q1 FY21 are not comparable with the corresponding

# Babar on song

Steadies Pakistan in Masood's company



**Classy:** Babar Azam was at his fluent best while running up a half-century. ■ GETTY IMAGES

## PAKISTAN IN ENG

**REUTERS**  
MANCHESTER  
Babar Azam struck a fluent unbeaten half-century as Pakistan moved to 121 for two at tea, following a session cut short by rain, on day one of the first Test against England at a gloomy Old Trafford on Wednesday.

It was a profitable period before the break for the tourists as an imperious Babar (52 batting) and opener Shan Masood (45 batting) sought to make a big total after Pakistan elected to bat.

In the first session, the England bowlers beat the

## SCOREBOARD

**Pakistan — 1st innings:** Shan Masood (batting) 45, Abid Ali b Archer 16, Azhar Ali lbw b Woakes 0, Babar Azam (batting) 52; Extras (1-b, 1b-6, nb-1); 8; Total (for two wkts. in 41.1 overs, at tea): 121.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-36, 2-43.

**England bowling:** Anderson 8-2-32-0, Broad 11-4-24-0, Woakes 8-2-14-1, Archer 9.1-3-22-1, Bess 5-1-22-0.

**Toss:** Pakistan.

bat at will and picked up the wickets of Abid Ali (16) and Azhar Ali (0). The former was bowled by Jofra Archer while the latter was trapped in front by Chris Woakes.



■ FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI



■ FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI



■ FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI



■ FILE PHOTO: K. PICHUMANI

## TV PICKS

**Europa League:** Sony Ten 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 10.45 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Thursday)  
**NBA:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. & 4 a.m. (Thursday)  
**England vs Pakistan:** Sony Six (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.  
**LPGA Marathon Classic:** Eurosport (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



**Doncic triple gets Mavericks off the mark**

**ORLANDO**  
Luka Doncic delivered a monster triple-double (34 points, 20 rebounds, 12 assists) as Dallas Mavericks beat Sacramento Kings 114-110 in overtime to bag its first win of the NBA's re-launched season on Tuesday.

**The results:** Brooklyn 119 bt Milwaukee 116, Dallas 114 bt Sacramento 110 (OT), Phoenix 117 bt LA Clippers 115, Indiana 120 bt Orlando 109, Miami 112 bt Boston 106, Portland 110 bt Houston 102.

**Fulham wins playoff final, makes PL**

**LONDON**  
Fulham beat Brentford 2-1 in the Championship play-off final on Tuesday to return to the Premier League after a single season in the English second tier. Defender Joe Bryan struck twice in extra time after the two London sides were locked at 0-0 at the end of 90 minutes at Wembley. Henrik Dalsgaard scored a late consolation for Brentford. AFP

# Nadal skips US Open

Plans to play in the French Open

**AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE**  
NEW YORK

Defending champion Rafael Nadal said on Tuesday he will not play the US Open, citing concerns over the coronavirus and terming tennis's schedule "barbaric."

"After many thoughts I have decided not to play this year's US Open," Nadal said on Twitter.

"The situation is very complicated worldwide, the COVID-19 cases are increasing, it looks like we still don't have control of it."

"This is a decision I never wanted to take but I have decided to follow my heart this time and for the time being I rather not travel."

However, the Spaniard

## Key facts

- The last Major to not feature either Federer or Nadal was the 1999 US Open
- Gael Monfils (No. 9) and 2016 champion Stan Wawrinka (No. 17) will also not play in this edition
- Ranked 129th, Andy Murray, the 2012 champion, is the first alternate in the entry list
- From the WTA top-25, World No. 1 Ash Barty will be the lone absentee

said he still intends to play at the French Open next month, and remains hopeful that the third Grand Slam of 2020 will go ahead.

This time around, there will neither be Federer nor the boisterous crowd, but for Nadal, who at World No. 127 is the last direct entrant into the main draw, the allure of the Major remains.

India's best-ranked singles player could still choose to remain in Europe - his current training base - and play on his beloved clay until the French Open in late September. But after starting at the

ATP Challenger in Prague in two weeks' time, he is set to cross the Atlantic, even as COVID-19 shows no signs of abating in the United States.

"I looked into that [staying in Europe], but when you make it into the main draw of a Slam, you don't want to

miss out," Nadal told *The Hindu*. "It's going to be different [without fans]. But a Slam is a Slam and if I win a round it will be a huge achievement because I haven't done it before."

The near-five-month break had prepared him well, the

22-year-old felt. "For the first time in a long time I had so much time to practise. I have worked a lot on my serve and focused on those areas where I had injuries in the past. [It was] more like a 'pre-hab' than rehab."

"And then, when you find out that the tour is restarting and you are going to be competing soon, it gives you energy, a bit of adrenaline. So I have been very motivated in the last few weeks."

But Nadal isn't aiming for the sky.

"I have no expectations. It's not going to be easy for anyone [because of the break]. I am starting on clay and will be focusing more on that surface. But once I am in New York, I am going to compete freely. I have nothing to lose."

**Prajnesh is fifth on alternate list**

**S. DIPAK RAGAV**  
CHENNAI

Even as Sumit Nagal sealed the last main draw spot for the US Open, Prajnesh Guneswaran is fifth on the alternate list and could make it if there are pull outs.

Prajnesh, who has played in the last five Slams, told *The Hindu*:

"Over the next few weeks, I will wait and watch before taking a call on whether to travel to the US for the Open. For now, I intend to find out what permissions I need and be prepared to fly out at short notice."

The 30-year-old is ranked 132nd in the world.

# Pokkali rice seedlings travel from Kerala to the Sunderbans

Saltwater resistant variety may help farmers tide over saltwater incursion caused by cyclone Amphan

**K.A. MARTIN**  
KOCHI

Two farmers in South 24 Paraganas district in West Bengal are betting on the pokkali variety of rice from Kerala to tide over a crisis-like situation created by severe seawater incursion into paddy fields in vast areas of the Sundarbans after cyclone Amphan hit West Bengal on May 20.

The pokkali variety, known for its saltwater resistance, flourishes in the paddy fields of coastal Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. The uniqueness of the rice has brought it the Geographical Indication (GI) tag and is the subject of continuing research.



A farmer sowing the pokkali seeds. ■

Ramkumar Mandal and Khudiram Halder, who have brought about 30 cents of land under pokkali sowing on an experimental basis,

the season. She finished fourth in Beijing.

## Second Indian woman

The World Cup gold medals in women's air rifle by Apurvi only the second Indian woman after Anjali Bhagwat's success in 2003. Incidentally, Anjali is the only Indian woman shooter to have won the Khel Ratna.

The 27-year-old from Jaipur, who was nominated by the State, holds the final world record in women's air rifle. She shot 252.9 for the gold in the World Cup in Munich, her second gold, following the one at home in the Delhi World Cup last year.

Interestingly, Apurvi's record is better than Yu Haonan of China's world record for the men's event by 0.1 point. She had top scores in all the four World Cups of

in Palembang. "It is every player's dream to be honoured with the prestigious Khel Ratna, as it is the highest sporting honour," said Apurvi.

## Back from injury

She is pleased with her recovery to top level performance after the Rio Olympics, in which she was not at her best due to an injury.

Apurvi made her mark in the World Championship in 2018 in which she was placed fourth in clinching the Olympic quota along with silver medallist Anjum Moudgil. The two were also part of the silver winning team.

Anjum, who won two mixed gold last year in World Cups, and double trap world champion Ankur Mittal, are also in the race for the Khel Ratna.

## Apurvi Chandela

Apurvi Chandela had a brilliant 2019, and believes that she has a strong case for the Khel Ratna.

## Back from injury

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## Apurvi Chandela

Apurvi, who won two mixed gold last year in World Cups, and double trap world champion Ankur Mittal, are also in the race for the Khel Ratna.

the Sundarbans farmers and it was decided that pokkali seeds could be tried out as saltwater incursion had been quite serious in vast areas of the Sundarbans.

Mr. Mandal said that about 80% of the rice paddies in the Sundarbans faced the problem of saltwater incursion and if the pokkali experiment succeeded, it would be a good step to turn around the fortunes of the farmers. He said that the seedlings were doing well so far.

## Vytilla-11 variety

Five kilos of Vytilla-11 variety of pokkali seedlings were sent by post by Francis Kalathungal, who is part of the Pokkali Samrakshana Sa-

# Stirling and Balbirnie script a famous win

Their centuries help Ireland chase down a big target against England

## IRELAND IN ENG

**REUTERS**  
SOUTHAMPTON

Ireland's Paul Stirling and captain Andy Balbirnie struck superb centuries as the tourist chased down a daunting target of 329 to stun World champion England in the third and final ODI on Tuesday.

Ireland never looked intimidated in its chase as Stirling smashed 142 (128b, 9x4, 6x6) and Balbirnie 113 (112b, 12x4), with their 214-run association for the second wicket helping the team reach the target with one delivery to spare. Ireland raced along in its reply, aided by a

poor length from the home bowlers, with Stirling reaching his ninth ODI century and Balbirnie his sixth.

Ireland's only other victory over England had come at the 2011 World Cup when it scored 329 for seven with Kevin O'Brien making a century. He was at the crease to hit the winning runs in this latest victory.

**The scores:** England 328 in 49.5 overs lost to Ireland 329 for three in 49.5 overs (Paul Stirling 142, Andy Balbirnie 113, Harry Tector 29 n.o.).

**Man-of-the-match:** Paul Stirling; **Man-of-the-series:** David Willey.

**England won the three-match series 2-1.**



**Heroes!** Andy Balbirnie, right, and Paul Stirling's mammoth stand put Ireland on the path to victory. ■ AFP

# Koepka confident of a three-peat at PGA C'ship

Cool weather could affect Woods

**REUTERS**  
SAN FRANCISCO

A confident Brooks Koepka said on Tuesday he had ironed out the kinks that hindered his game earlier this year and added that he will claim a third consecutive PGA Championship this week if he plays at the level he is capable of.

"I feel very confident in myself," he told reporters at TPC Harding Park. "I don't put any expectations on myself. Just go out and play golf exactly like I know how and, if I do that, then yeah I probably should win."

The four-time Major winner and former World No. 1 said he was more comfort-

able playing on the sport's biggest stages because he thrives under pressure.

"The way the golf course sets up eliminates pretty much half the guys, and then from there half of those guys probably won't play well. Then from there I feel like mentally I can beat them, the other half, so you've probably got ten guys. That's the way I see it."

Tiger Woods, grouped with Rory McIlroy and World No. 1 Justin Thomas, is seeking his 16th Major and fifth PGA Championship title, but is an underdog given the concerns about how his surgically-repaired back will react to the cool weather.



## All set for tee off

- TPC Harding Park (San Francisco) will host its first Major
- A field of 156 players will vie for the Wanamaker Trophy
- The total purse is \$11 million and the winner will be richer by \$1.98 million
- Koepka aims to become the first modern-era golfer to win three straight PGA Championships
- Newly crowned World No. 1 Thomas is seeking his second Major
- Woods will be looking for his fifth PGA Championship crown

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