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NEARBY



3 militants killed in encounter in Kashmir

SRINAGAR
Three unidentified militants were killed and three security personnel, including an Army Major, were injured in an encounter in north Kashmir's Baramulla on Friday. "A firefight started after the evacuation of civilians from the cordoned-off area in Patti. Three terrorists were killed. One officer was also injured during the operation and is stable," an Army spokesperson said.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 11

'Police following script in investigating riots case'

NEW DELHI
Nearly 1,000 people, including activists, filmmakers, former government officials and academics signed an open letter on Friday condemning the way the police has been investigating the riots in northeast Delhi in February. Activists hit out at the investigations, calling it a conspiracy instead of an attempt to probe a conspiracy.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Rajnath Singh meets Chinese counterpart Wei in Moscow

China had sought meeting on sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers conference



Defusing the crisis: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe in Moscow on Friday. ■ ANI

DINAKAR PERI
SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Moscow on Friday. Details of the meeting, however, were not known.

Mr. Singh and Mr. Wei met in Moscow at 9.30 p.m. India time, a defence source said. The Chinese side sought the meeting between Mr. Singh and their Minister on Thursday, a second source said.

In comments on Thursday, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also confirmed that he would meet his Chinese counterpart Wang Yitai at the SCO Foreign Ministers' meet in Moscow on September 10.

Three-day visit

Mr. Singh is on a three-day visit to Russia for the combined meeting of Defence Ministers of the SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Common-

wealth of Independent States (CIS) Member States in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War.

Earlier, he was in Russia in June to attend the Victory Day parade of the Second World War, which was also attended by Mr. Wei but there was no bilateral meeting then.

The meeting comes amid the ongoing four-month standoff in eastern Ladakh after the ingress of Chinese troops into Indian-held territory along the Line of Actual

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Situation tense on LAC: Army chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is slightly tense and the Army had undertaken precautionary deployments. Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane said on Friday, the second day of his visit to Ladakh.

"India is firmly committed to resolving the current situation along the LAC through engagement. We will continue to utilise all existing mechanisms to reduce tension and to ensure that status quo is not unilaterally changed," he observed. He added that troops were prepared for all contingencies.

At Chushul, the Brigadier-level talks continued for the fifth day on Friday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SC rejects appeal by 6 State Ministers against JEE, NEET

Bench finds no merit in plea to review August 17 order

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, dismissed a plea filed jointly by Ministers from six non-BJP-ruled States against the conduct of the JEE Main and the NEET-UG amid the pandemic.

The Bench, also comprising Justices B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murari, found no merit in the plea to review the top court's order on August 17 refusing to entertain a petition by students to postpone the NEET and the JEE.

'Careful study'

"We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers. We find no merit in the review petitions and the same are accordingly dismissed," the court said in a short order. The court similarly dismissed the review petitions filed by Puducherry MLA R.K.R. Anantharaman and N. Vinoba Bhoopathy.

The court decided the review petitions in chambers.

No postponement

With Friday's order, the JEE Main and the NEET-UG, which are conducted by the National Testing Agency, will go on as scheduled



Wait is over: Students queuing up to enter a JEE examination centre in Patna on Friday. ■ PTI

■ The JEE Main is already under way
■ 9.53 lakh students are writing the JEE, being conducted in over 660 centres

■ The NEET is scheduled for September 13
■ 15.97 lakh students will take the examination in 3,843 centres

MINISTERS' STAND

- The August 17 SC order fails to satisfy the safety and security concerns of students
- The mere fact that lakhs of students have registered is not indicative of their consent to attend physical exams

the JEE between September 1 to 9. The NEET for medical seats are scheduled for September 13. The JEE Main is slated to be conducted at over 660 exam centres, with 9.53 lakh students taking it. The NEET will see 15.97 lakh students in 3,843 centres across the country.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) had notified

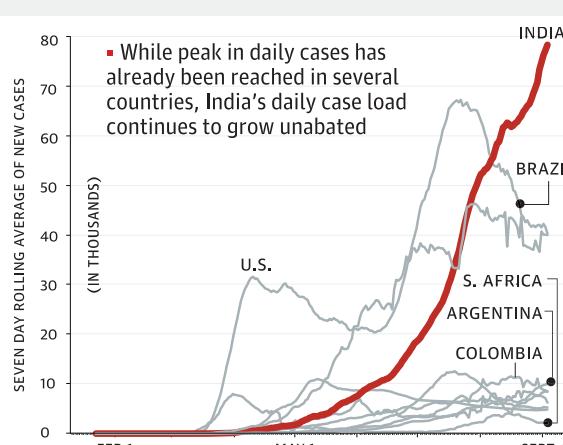
CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

India's COVID-19 cases cross 4 mn

Country recorded 28% of new infections in the world in the last five days

No fullstops in India

Since August 8, average new COVID-19 cases in India (red line) are growing at the fastest pace in the world. The chart shows the seven-day rolling average of new cases in the 10 countries with most cases



CASE PROGRESSION

■ While it took 169 days for COVID-19 cases in India to cross the 1 million mark, the last 1 million cases were recorded in only 13 days

■ Between August 28 and Sept. 3, India recorded 78,414 cases daily on average, the highest in the world

THE HINDU DATA TEAM

India became the third country with more than four million COVID-19 cases in the world on Friday, after the U.S. and Brazil with 6.253 million and 4.047 million cases respectively. The death toll in India reached 69,634, third behind the U.S.'s 1.898 lakh and Brazil's 1.247 lakh. Data was as of 10.20 p.m. based on reports from the State governments and the Johns Hopkins University COVID-19 tracker.

Friday saw 80,938 confirmed cases and 1,080 deaths registered till 10.20 p.m. with data yet to come from Assam, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. This marked the third straight day when more than 80,000 infections were identified.

India currently has both the highest daily case load and the highest registered

daily toll in the world if a seven-day rolling average is considered.

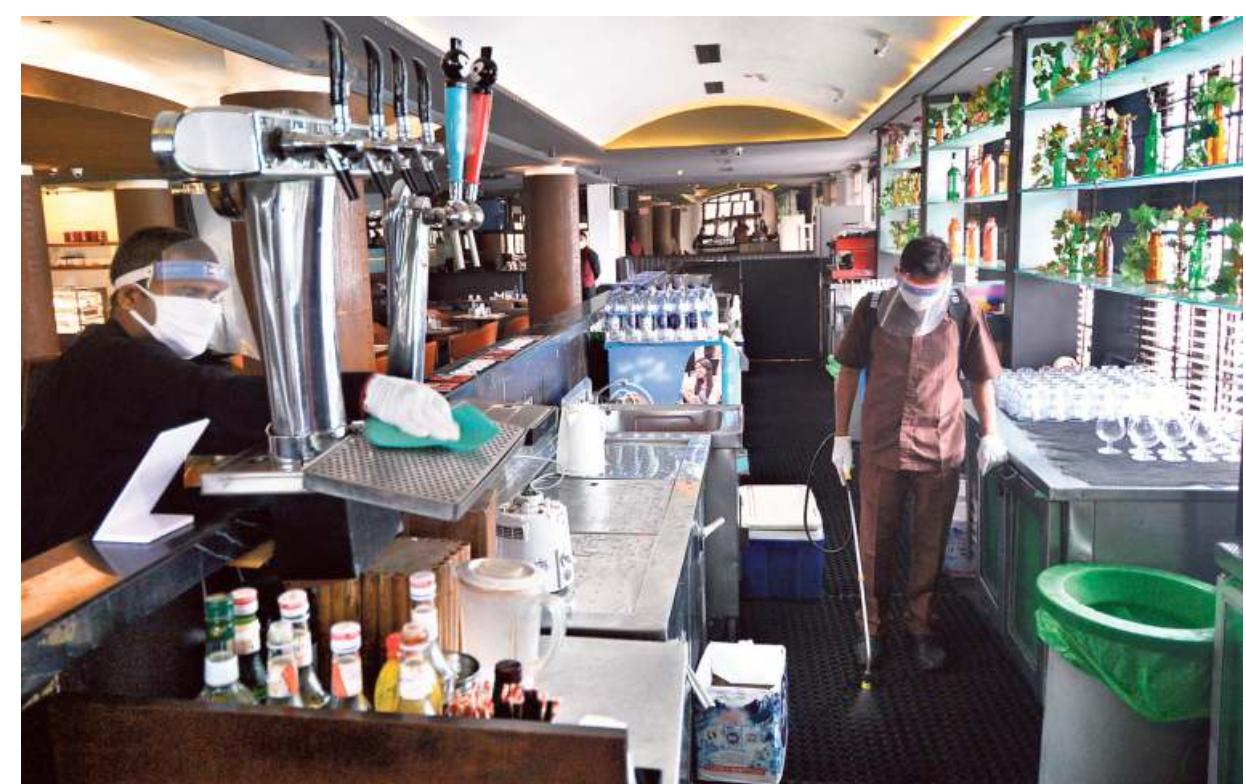
Testing rates up

One reason for the high case load has been that testing rates have gone up significantly with 11,69,765 samples tested in the last 24 hours. "With this steep exponential rise in daily testing, the cumulative tests were 4,66,79,145," said the Health Ministry in a release.

However, a look at the break-up of the tests available on the ICMR's website shows that only 38.65% of these were the more accurate RT-PCR tests, with the rest being the Rapid Antigen tests variety, which allow for quicker diagnosis but are known to have higher false negative rates.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
RUSSIA'S VACCINE SAFE,
SAYS STUDY ▶ PAGE 14

Happy hours ahead



Sprucing up: A worker sanitising the premises of a bar in Connaught Place on Friday. The Delhi government has allowed bars in hotels, restaurants and clubs to function on a trial basis from September 9 to 30. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Bihar elections, 65 bypolls around the same time: EC

Move prompted by law and order, logistics issues; schedule to be announced later

DEVESHKUMAR PANDEY

NEW DELHI
The Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to conduct 65 by-elections in various States along with the Bihar Assembly polls. The poll schedules would be announced at an appropriate time, it said. The decision was taken at an ECI meeting on Friday.

By-elections were due for 64 for Assembly constituencies and one parliamentary seat, said the ECI.

The Commission reviewed the reports and in-

puts from Chief Secretaries/Chief Electoral Officers of many of the States concerned, seeking deferment of bypolls in view of various factors, including extraordinarily heavy rains at some places and other constraints such as the pandemic.

Considering that the Bihar Assembly polls need to be completed before November 29, the ECI decided to hold the by-elections around the same time. "One of the major factors in clubbing them together is the relative ease of movement of Central Armed Police Forces/other law and order forces, and related logistics issues," it said.

Following a meeting on August 26 to assess the novel coronavirus situation in the city amid rising cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had announced that the number

of daily tests would be doubled from 20,000 to 40,000. Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal, too, at a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority on Wednesday, had directed that testing facilities be augmented at transit points and larger construction sites in the city. Go-

vernment sources said this is likely to be done over the next two to three days.

Increasing tests
The total number of tests, including both RT-PCR and rapid antigen, conducted in Delhi have been steadily rising since the beginning of

this month.

As many as 24,198 tests were conducted on September 1, followed by 28,935 on September 2, 32,834 on September 3 and 36,319 on September 4, a source said.

Testing facilities are currently available at 207 dispensaries and 38 city hospitals. These are also available at transit points including the New Delhi and Anand Vihar railway stations as well as court complexes including the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and Patiala House Courts.

Sources said over the next two to four days, COVID-19 testing camps and mobile units would be deployed at Central government offices located in Lutyens' Delhi.

**HIGHEST SINGLE-DAY SPIKE
IN 69 DAYS ▶ PAGE 3**

U.P. police arrest man for 'threatening' Adityanath

Team nabs accused from Odisha

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

The Uttar Pradesh police have picked up a 42-year-old trader from Odisha's Cuttack district for allegedly threatening Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on social media.

The man, identified as Sayed Hassan Ahmed from Kushambi village under Salepur police station limits, was produced before a local court in Cuttack on Friday. The U.P. police secured a four-day remand.

"A two-member U.P. police team with help of our police arrested Mr. Ahmed from Kushambi village in connection with a case filed in Singhbali police station in



Yogi Adityanath. ■ FILE PHOTO

U.P.'s Baghpat district," said Nihar Mohanty, in-charge of Salepur police station. He informed that the accused took to social media to threaten the PM and U.P. CM. "My son does not have any criminal antecedents. He has hardly used any provocative words [on social media]. We don't know how U.P. police from Baghpat district landed here," said the accused's father.

IN BRIEF

North Mayor to march to Secretariat to seek dues

NEW DELHI
North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash and other leaders of the civic body said they would march from the Civic Centre to the Delhi Secretariat on September 7 to demand dues from the Delhi government. The government is trying to cripple the municipality by not giving funds due to it, the Mayor said.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR			
	Delhi	Gurugram	78
Ghaziabad	90	Faridabad	89
Noida	79	Greater Noida	88
Good	51-100	Moderate	101-200
Poor	201-300	Very poor	>401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)	101-200		
SOURCE: CPCB			

Take possession of gram sabha land: BJP to DDA

NEW DELHI
Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, met DDA V-C Anurag Jain in Friday to demand that the land-owning agency take possession of gram sabha land in the villages declared as 'organised' as soon as possible. "These could host schools, colleges, hospitals, marriage halls and parks," Mr. Bidhuri said, adding that Mr. Jain had assured him that the DDA would take possession of these lands by September 30.

'Retail traders suffered loss of ₹19 lakh cr. in five months'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Friday said retail traders in India had faced losses of nearly ₹19 lakh crore during the past five months.

With low footfall, the business has been languishing and retail markets have been gripped in an acute financial crisis as payments for supplies made in November-December of 2019 have not been cleared till now. Estimates of loss to trade have been arrived at taking into consideration 20 cities across the country.

Unless immediate steps are taken to curb this downturn, nearly 20% of shops in India will have to down their shutters, leading to a further rise in unemployment, CAIT warned.

The group appealed to Central and State governments to take immediate cognisance of the current situation. Among suggestions, it called for banks to not charge interest or penalty from traders on loans for the time being.

Police following script in investigating riots case'

Activists sign open letter stating probe 'a facade to arrive at premeditated conclusion' that anti-CAA activists caused violence

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Nearly 1,000 people, including activists, filmmakers, former government officials and academics signed an open letter on Friday condemning the way the police has been investigating the riots that erupted in north-east Delhi in February.

Activists who are part of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests hit out at the investigations, calling it a conspiracy instead of an attempt to probe a conspiracy.

The Delhi police spokesperson refused to comment on the allegations.

Speaking at an online press conference, activists Umar Khalid, Kawalpreet Kaur, Apoorvanand, Harsh Mander and Yogendra Yadav argued that a narrative of the riots as a conspiracy hatched

by anti-CAA protesters had been set out by those close to the ruling dispensation before the start of the investigations and that the police was carrying out the probe along those lines.

All India Students' Association (AISA) activist Ms. Kaur pointed to an allegedly faulty fact-finding report by "RSS-backed persons" submitted to Home Minister Amit Shah on March 11.

She said the report pointed a finger at student groups such as AISA and Pinjra Tod, and alleged that the report was later used as a "script" for the police's probe.

Mr. Khalid questioned the legitimacy of 'information' tweeted by BJP social media head Amit Malviya that found its way into the police's FIR – attributed to a "secret informer".



Riot victims at a relief camp in north-east Delhi's Mustafabad.

* FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The signatories argued that by targeting activists, the police was trying to cover up the role of BJP members such as Kapil Mishra, Union Minister Anurag Thakur, and leaders such as Jagdish Pradhan and others in instigating communal violence.

They argued the police was going after "exactly those people against whom hate speeches were made".

The activists also questioned why the role of BJP men was not being probed despite reports surfacing on their conduct.

They highlighted a rally undertaken by Mr. Mishra in

central Delhi in December 2019, calling for the 'shooting of traitors' and other investigating statements reportedly caught on camera, near the site of the riots.

Premeditated conclusions

The activists poked holes in the police's probe, asking whether it was "a facade to arrive at premeditated conclusions already announced before the investigation had even commenced?", referring to statements made by Mr. Shah in Parliament.

They further questioned why shootings near Jamia Millia Islamia and Shaheen Bagh were not accounted for in the police's version.

They also questioned the police's inability to identify personnel involved in the assault of four men, who were made to sing the National

Anthem; the alleged custodial torture of Khalid Saifi; the lack of a probe into police involvement; the use of preventive detention acts against activists; among other parts of the investigation.

In the open letter, signatories such as filmmaker Aparna Sen; academics Ramchandra Guha, Zoya Hussain, Partha Chatterjee, Jayati Ghosh; former civil servants such as Wajahat Habibullah, Madhu Bhaduri; former chief of naval staff Admiral Ramdas, among several others demanded that "confessional statements not be coerced in order to manufacture evidence", that people not be falsely implicated in the riots, and to stop invoking the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to "give the colour of conspiracy against the State".

Online process

The trust said it had earlier set aside ₹2 crore towards the COVID-19 relief fund for its members, who are indigent and suffering from COVID-19. Mr. Jain said the money will be transferred through online mode and the process of inviting applications for the release of financial assistance would begin soon.

Taking note of the steps being taken by the trust, the court decided there was no need to further monitor the plea, by advocate Vaibhav Sharma, seeking ex gratia payment of ₹25,000 to each member of the trust, suffering financially due to the pandemic.

Alok Kumar Mishra, a Social Science teacher from Government Senior Secondary School in Mangolpur Khurd, said he has been serving at the quarantine center at Narela since March 30. "Working this way has given me a great deal of satisfaction as I am able to help my fellow citizens. I am very thankful to the government for giving me this opportunity to serve the country and society in a time of crisis," he said.

Raj Kumar Dhaliya, from Rashtriya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya in Rohini Sector 21, is the team leader at the store room of a quarantine Centre also at Narela.

"My task is to provide goods and services for daily use for people in quarantine. We are working 24 hours to provide them with food and snacks and cater to other requirements," Mr. Dhaliya said about his new role during the pandemic.

Gahlot meets DMRC officials over SOP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Friday met Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Transport Department officials to review the standard operating procedures in place for reopening of metro services in the Capital.

Metro operations in Delhi will resume in a phased manner, with staggered timings, from September 7 and will be fully operational by September 12.

Mr. Gahlot said: "We had a fruitful discussion on the SOP for graded reopening of metro services. As glad as I am that the metro will be resuming, I understand the threat any mismanagement could pose to the public of Delhi."

In this regard, we will ensure that we resume Delhi's transport lifeline only after putting in place all necessary precautions. I would also like to appeal to Delhites to travel only if it is absolutely necessary, and ensure strict compliance to COVID-19 protocols at a personal level."

Duo held for misbehaving with couple in west Delhi

Accused were inebriated, say police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men were arrested for allegedly misbehaving with a couple on Outer Ring Road in west Delhi in an inebriated condition, the police said on Friday.

The accused have been identified – Karan Chopra (36) and Satpreet Singh (35) – are both from Paschim Vihar. A video of the clip went viral on social media where two men can be seen drinking and misbehaving with the couple. "Based on the complainant, Akshit Nanda's statement, a case under sections 341 [punishment for wrongful restraint], 509 [word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman], 506 [punishment for criminal intimidation] and 34 [common intention] of the IPC was registered and investigation was taken up," a senior officer said.

Following investigation, the accused duo were arrested and their car was seized. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia tweeted: "Open liquor consumption is a crime in Delhi. Have directed 'Excise Commissioner' to take strict & exemplary action. Hope Delhi police would also take strict action. Let's establish that 'Car-o-bar' can result into 'behind bars' @CPDelhi [sic]."

The incident was captured by the couple on their mobile phones.

Will give relief in fixed power charges, says CM

Traders had been seeking intervention

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has met traders' and industrial associations and assured them that adequate steps will be taken to provide relief in relation to the fixed power charges that commercial and industrial units are obliged to pay, despite economic losses due to the pandemic.

During these meetings, Mr. Kejriwal clarified that the revenue situation has taken a hit owing to the

complete shutdown of businesses.

He said that while the decision to impose a complete lockdown then was essential, Delhi had now decided to lift it.

Stakeholders meet CM
Various stakeholders and representatives of these units have been meeting Mr. Kejriwal, requesting his intervention as most of the units have remained closed due to lockdown, the government said.

Centre wants review of HC order on EIA draft

Official documents are required to be published only in Hindi and English'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Central government has asked the Delhi High Court to review its direction to publish the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) in all the 22 languages in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution, saying that official documents are required to be published only in Hindi and English.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Praetek Jalan on Friday issued notice to environmentalist Vikrant Tongad, on whose plea the High Court had passed the direction.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma, representing the Environment Ministry, claimed that the court had been "misled" by the petitioner who stated that the government has in the past published its draft

notifications in several other languages apart from Hindi and English.

Administrative problems

The Centre does not have any obligation to publish the draft EIA notification in any language apart from Hindi and English, the Ministry said, adding that "trying to do the same would cause massive procedural and administrative

difficulties".

As on August 14, the Ministry has received over 19 lakh responses on the draft EIA from across the country.

"Issuance of notifications in multiple languages would in any case result in translation and interpretation issues resulting in the meaning of the words being obfuscated and often even lost," the Ministry has said.

Govt. praises teachers for bridging digital divide amid outbreak

They worked towards ensuring that none of their students missed out on online classes, says Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought along a lot of challenges for Delhi government school teachers, who had to quickly adapt and come up with out-of-the box ideas to ensure that learning continues and that none of their students are left behind, either due to the digital divide or financial issues.

Ahead of Teachers' Day, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia saluted the teachers who went above and beyond their call of duty during the pandemic and praised them for their contribution.

Many of the teachers who received praise from Mr. Sisodia worked towards ensuring that none of their students missed out on the online classes.

Ravinder Kaur, a science teacher from Kautilya Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, said she started taking video classes



A teacher conducts an online class. ■ PTI

much before online classes were announced by the government. Her students, studying in Class 10, were already done with six chapters when the material for online classes started coming in. But it was a challenge to keep them interested.

"After a few classes, students lost interest in the subject and this made me think of new, innovative ideas to generate curiosity among them," Ms. Kaur

said, adding that during the lockdown, many of her students have developed a mindset to carefully observe the world around them and not rely only on textbooks.

Rajendra Prasad Sharma from Government Boys Senior Secondary School in Jharoda Kalan said he had to put in extra effort to ensure that no child is left behind due to not having access to a mobile phone.

"I started making audio notes and sending it to my students. For some of them that did not have access to mobile phones, I contacted their neighbours or relatives and ensured that they could access the notes or worksheets," Mr. Sharma said.

sending it to my students. For some of them that did not have access to mobile phones, I contacted their neighbours or relatives and ensured that they could access the notes or worksheets," he said.

Raj Kumar Dhaliya, from Rashtriya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya in Rohini Sector 21, is the team leader at the store room of a quarantine Centre also at Narela.

"My task is to provide goods and services for daily use for people in quarantine. We are working 24 hours to provide them with food and snacks and cater to other requirements," Mr. Dhaliya said about his new role during the pandemic.

22-year-old man arrested for killing sister's partner

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old youth and his friend have been arrested for allegedly killing a man – who was in a relationship with the former's sister – in Shahbad Dairy area, the police said on Friday.

The accused – have been identified as Armaan from Shahbad Dairy and his friend Karan Singh (28) from Rohini, they said. On Thursday at 4.56 p.m., the police received information regarding a body lying near Prahladpur, an officer said. "The

throat of the deceased was slit by a sharp weapon. He was identified as Dhamendra from JJ Colony," said DCP (Outer North) Gaurav Sharma.

A case was registered following which the accused were nabbed. Interrogation revealed that Armaan didn't like the fact that Dhamendra was in a relationship with his sister, said an officer. He asked Dhamendra to not be in contact with her but he did not pay any heed following which the accused hatched a plan to kill him.

PUBLIC NOTICE						
Sr. No.	Name of Department/Board/Corp./Auth	Name of Work/Notice/Tender	Opening Date/Closing Date (Time)	Amount / EMD (Approx.) In Rupees	Website of the Department	Nodal Officer/Contact Details/E-Mail
1	Uttar Pradesh Bill Vitan Nigam Limited	Bidding of Power during Nov 2020 to Sept 2021 wherein SPCL shall supply 500 MW RTC & 800 MW during 00:00 to 04:00 & 20:00 to 24:00 for any time slots for more than 6 hours or more per month for supply for the period 16.06.2021 to 30.09.2021. The return period shall be 01.05.2021 to 30.09.2021	Start Date 01-11-2020 at 10:00 Hrs</			

Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, SEP. 05	
RISE 06:02	SET 18:38
RISE 20:38	SET 08:29
SUNDAY, SEP. 06	
RISE 06:02	SET 18:37
RISE 21:08	SET 09:22
MONDAY, SEP. 07	
RISE 06:03	SET 18:36
RISE 21:40	SET 10:13

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	35 26
Safdarjung	35 26
Palam	33 27

Delhi Palam Today
34°C Comfortable morning with light winds. Day would be slight humid. Mainly dry weather.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C Light rain with partly cloudy to cloudy sky and light wind would affect the area.

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Highest single-day spike in 69 days

With 2,914 fresh COVID-19 cases, virus tally in Capital climbs to 1,85,220

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 2,914 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, taking the total number of cases to 1,85,220, stated a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

The spur witnessed on Friday was the highest single-day spike in 69 days.

With 13 new death cases and 1,751 recoveries total number of deaths has risen to 4,513 deaths and recoveries in the city to 1,61,865. There are 18,842 active cases in Delhi at present. The health bulletin shows that the number of test conducted has increased to 8488 RTPCR tests and 27,731 rapid antigen tests conducted in the past 24 hours.

There are 949 containment zones in the city and 9,822 patients are under



Healthcare workers in a mobile COVID-19 testing van collecting samples in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

home isolation now. Out of the 14,159 beds available in hospitals, 9,429 are vacant. Dedicated COVID care centres and dedicated COVID health centres that have a total of 10,143 and 601 beds have 6,354 and 209 beds vacant respectively. A source in the Delhi go-

vernment said that 33% of hospital beds available in Delhi are occupied by patients who do not belong to Delhi.

"Close to 70% beds in Delhi are still vacant. Only 3 out of the 131 COVID-19 hospitals [private and govt] are full. There is no shortage of beds

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 Cases	Total deaths
1,85,220	4,313
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
2,914	13

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

right now. However, increasing number of patients from outside Delhi is a cause of big concern," the source added.

The government had earlier requested that beds in Delhi government hospitals be reserved only for patients who are residents of the city, but the proposal was rejected by the Lieutenant-Governor. "ICU beds in only a few top private hospitals are fully occupied," the source added.

DIAL sets up COVID-19 testing facility at IGIA for international passengers

Fliers testing negative will be allowed to continue journey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) has set up an on-site COVID-19 testing lab at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) that will declare the results of samples of incoming international passengers within 4-6 hours so that they may continue their journey, if tested negative.



The test reports will be declared in 4-6 hours.

be declared within 4-6 hours to the incoming passengers.

Until the results are confirmed, passengers will be isolated at the waiting lounge or they may opt to stay in a hotel. In case of a positive result, the passenger will be processed in line with applicable Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) protocols by the State authorities and will be allowed for onward air journey.

orities," DIAL said. It added that as the Government of India is preparing to open the sky with rising air bubbles, the laboratory will be a key element in facilitating a safe journey for all the passengers.

Commenting on the development, Videh Kumar Jai-puriar, CEO of DIAL, said that the pilot initiative has been taken to ensure testing of all arriving international transfer passengers.

According to Ministry of Health & Family Welfare guidelines, international arriving passengers with RT-PCR negative certificate would be exempted from institutional quarantine granted by the State authorities and will be allowed for onward air journey.

Amrik Sukhdev dhaba sealed after 65 workers test positive

Eatery near Murthal shut for two days for sanitisation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

Sixty-five employees of the popular Amrik Sukhdev dhaba in Haryana's Sonipat have tested positive for COVID-19. The eatery, which is near Murthal, has been shut for two days for sanitisation.

Samples of around 350 employees at the eatery were taken on August 31 as part of a drive across Sonipat district to check prevalence of the infection at eateries along NH-44.

District Surveillance Officer (Sonipat) Dinesh Chilkar told *The Hindu* that reports of 65 of these samples came positive.

"Around a hundred workers from Bihar had come to the eatery for work four days before the samples were taken. The results came on Wednesday. All of those found positive are from this group. Senior Medical Officer, Gannur,



Policemen and health officials outside Amrik Sukhdev Dhaba in Sonipat, Haryana. ■ PTI

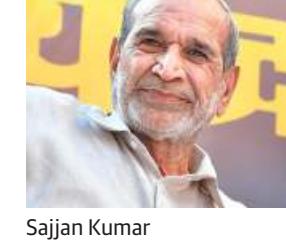
has been entrusted with contacts tracing. The authorities in Bihar have also been informed," said Dr. Chilkar.

Mr. Chilkar said though hundreds of guests visited the eatery every day, there are no record available.

"We, therefore, make an appeal to all those who have visited the eatery over the past one week to get tested for COVID-19 or to go for

self-isolation," he said, adding that it was not immediately known if those infected had joined duty at the eatery.

Meanwhile, two employees of Garam Dharam dhaba have also tested positive for the virus. However, test reports of samples collected from around 20 popular Murthal dhabs, including Gulshan and Pehalwan, are negative.



SC rejects Sajjan Kumar's bail plea

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday rejected a plea for bail by former Congress leader Sajjan Kumar, serving life imprisonment in an anti-Sikh riots case, on medical grounds.

"This is not a small case. Cannot grant you bail," a Bench led by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde remarked.

'A death penalty'
Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for Kumar, said his client has drastically lost weight during the 20 months he spent in jail. Mr. Singh said if something untoward happens, his client's life imprisonment would become a death penalty.

Senior advocate H.S. Phoolka, appearing for the victims, opposed the plea stating Kumar is getting adequate treatment.

"We are not treating the judgment [of the Delhi High Court which convicted and sentenced Kumar in the case] as faulty merely because it has reversed the earlier verdict. We will hear you finally someday," the court said.

Seventy-three-year-old Kumar was sentenced to life by the Delhi High Court for murder.

The case in which Kumar is convicted and sentenced relates to the killing of five Sikhs in Delhi Cantonment's Raj Nagar Part-I area of southwest Delhi on November 1 and 2, 1984, and the burning down of a Gurdwara in Raj Nagar Part-II.

The CBI had earlier described Kumar's role in the crime as that of a "kingpin". The riots broke out immediately after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by her two Sikh bodyguards.

formation, the government of Delhi has more than 50,000 flats available under the Rajiv Awas Yojana. The opinion of Delhi BJP is that these 50,000 flats should be allotted to slum dwellers living around the railway tracks," he wrote.

The apex court has ordered the removal of the slum clusters along railway tracks in Delhi, within three months.

He added that proper rehabilitation of slum dwellers be done immediately in a safe place, he wrote.

"Proper rehabilitation requires proper resources. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana could have been very helpful in this task, but it is regrettable that this scheme has not been implemented in Delhi," he said.

Allot Rajiv Awas Yojana flats to slum dwellers'

Delhi BJP chief pens letter to Kejriwal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP unit chief Adesh Gupta on Friday wrote to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal requesting the allotment of available and vacant Rajiv Awas Yojana flats with the Delhi government to the residents of about 48,000 slums to be removed from 'Railway Safety Zones' around the railway tracks on the directions of Supreme Court.

It was important that proper rehabilitation of slum dwellers be done immediately in a safe place, he wrote.

"Proper rehabilitation requires proper resources. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana could have been very helpful in this task, but it is regrettable that this scheme has not been implemented in Delhi," he said.

"Sir, according to our in-



The Supreme Court ordered removal of around 48,000 slums along railway tracks in Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

SBI	
Corporate Centre, Nariman Point, Madame Cama Road, Mumbai - 400 021.	
EMANELMENT OF TRAVEL AGENCIES FOR BOOKING OF AIR TICKETS	
TENDER FOR AVALING THE SERVICES OF TRAVEL AGENCIES TO PROVIDE THE SERVICE OF ONLINE BOOKING OF AIR TICKETS FOR OFFICERS OF THE BANK	
The State Bank of India, Corporate Centre, Mumbai invites sealed offers from eligible reputed companies/agencies for the purpose of booking of air tickets in online mode for Domestic/International sectors, for the officers of the Bank posted across India for a period of 03 years.	
The specific requirements of the Bank along with 'Terms & Conditions' of service, eligibility criteria for the purpose of empanelment/selection and the proforma for bid submission are available at the Bank's website: www.sbi.co.in , under the link Procurement News . The same may also be collected in person from Liaison Department, Mezzanine Floor, State Bank of India, State Bank Bhawan, Madame Cama Road, Mumbai - 400 021.	
Contact No.: 022 - 2274 0050 / 57.	Last Date for Submission of bids: 25 th September, 2020 (up to 17:00 hrs).
Place: Mumbai	Sd/- Chief Liaison Officer
Date: 05/09/2020	

DIAL sets up COVID-19 testing facility at IGIA for international passengers

Fliers testing negative will be allowed to continue journey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) has set up an on-site COVID-19 testing lab at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) that will declare the results of samples of incoming international passengers within 4-6 hours so that they may continue their journey, if tested negative.



The test reports will be declared in 4-6 hours.

be declared within 4-6 hours to the incoming passengers.

Until the results are confirmed, passengers will be isolated at the waiting lounge or they may opt to stay in a hotel. In case of a positive result, the passenger will be processed in line with applicable Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) protocols by the State authorities and will be allowed for onward air journey.

orities," DIAL said. It added that as the Government of India is preparing to open the sky with rising air bubbles, the laboratory will be a key element in facilitating a safe journey for all the passengers.

Commenting on the development, Videh Kumar Jai-puriar, CEO of DIAL, said that the pilot initiative has been taken to ensure testing of all arriving international transfer passengers.

According to Ministry of Health & Family Welfare guidelines, international arriving passengers with RT-PCR negative certificate would be exempted from institutional quarantine granted by the State authorities and will be allowed for onward air journey.

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- Never forward SMS sent by such callers to your telecom operator. That will deactivate your SIM and issue e-SIM to the fraudster.
- Never share your Bank or

49 virus deaths in Punjab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab recorded 1,498 new COVID-19 cases on Friday and reported 49 more deaths taking the toll to 1,739.

The number of positive cases have reached 60,013 in the State. In Haryana, 1,884 new cases surfaced. The State also reported 19 deaths.

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PERSONAL

LOST & FOUND

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has Lost her Original Certificate of her B.Com Degree issued to her by Sri Sathyai Sar Institute of Higher Learning. Whoever finds it is hereby requested to return the same to the undersigned and illegal possession of it and shall be liable for any misuse of the same. Name of the Candidate: Mrs Radhika Balan Address: 16A/5, Second Floor, W.E.A. Karol Bagh, New Delhi 110005. Phone No. 7838520499

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH
In the fond memory of our founding father,

Lt Col DD Sachdev (Retd)
22.08.1926 - 02.09.2020
We are saddened to inform the demise of
Lt Col DD Sachdev
on 02 Sep 20.
Sir, you will be remembered by all officers & men alike.
May your soul rest in peace.
All officers & men,
"The Big Guns Family".

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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl Namely: Hamraj Khatoon@Rani, D/o Alamgir, R/o: A-153, Pandav Nagar, Ranjeet Nagar, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from her house since 30.08.2020 at 02:00 pm from the area of P.S. Ranjit Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 320/2020 u/s 363 IPC, dated 30.08.2020 has been registered at P.S. Ranjit Nagar, New Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped girl is as under: Age: 14 years, Height: 5'4", Face: Long, Complexion: Wheatish, Hair: Long and black, Built: Medium, Wearing: Orange colour printed saree-blouse-sandal, golden colour kada in right hand and watch in left hand. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639 P.S. Ranjit Nagar, Delhi
DP/321/CD/2020 Ph.: 011- 25704008, 8750870436

Appeal for Identification

General Public is hereby informed that a male dead body Name: Vijay, S/o Rajesh, R/o: Unknown, Age: about 40 years, Height: 5'4", Complexion: Wheatish, Sex: Male, Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue Colour Shirt & Blue Colour Lower. was found dead at CM Road Opposite Mahalaxmi sweet shop, after treatment on Rajan Banu Kingsway Kamp TB Hospital, Delhi-06. In this regard, a DD No. 42-A, dated 31.08.2020 has been lodged at PS Lahori Gate, Delhi. The Dead Body of the deceased has been preserved in Subzi Mandi Mortuary for 72 Hours. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

SHO
P.S., Lahori Gate, Delhi
DP/525/N/2020 Ph. : 011-23953776, 8750870122

No posters outside houses of COVID-19 patients: Punjab CM

Aim is to mitigate stigma attached to the pandemic and negate the fear of testing'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Friday decided to rescind its earlier decision of putting posters outside the houses of COVID-19 patients under home isolation or quarantine to mitigate the stigma attached to the pandemic.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said the move was aimed at minimising the stigma resulting from the affixing of such posters at the front doors of such patients, thus also negating the fear of testing.

“The psychological trauma which patients were seen suffering as a result of these posters, which were meant to protect neighbours, was defeating the very purpose,” Capt. Singh said, adding that these posters were actually found scaring people away from testing.



CM Amarinder Singh

the people to continue taking all necessary precautions and follow all applicable guidelines for home isolation-quarantine notwithstanding the removal of the posters. Violation of these guidelines was a punishable offence under the Disaster Management Act, the Epidemic Diseases Act and the Indian Penal Code, he pointed out.

AAP criticised
Separately, Capt. Singh accused the AAP leaders in the State of putting their petty vested political interests above the security concerns of the State.

“On the one hand they (AAP leaders) talk of working together to fight the unprecedented crisis, and on the other, they are blatantly ignoring the persistent attempts by Pakistan to foment fresh trouble in our State by spreading

false propaganda over the pandemic,” said the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister said AAP leaders seemed more focused on launching a personal attack against him rather than on condemning the COVID disinformation campaign being spread by anti-social elements in the State’s villages.

“Not a word from AAP on the fake news videos, which appear to have emanated from Pakistan, to spread fear and disinformation among the people of Punjab on COVID-19. No reaction to the arrest of an AAP activist for disseminating such a video,” said the Chief Minister. “This clearly indicates that they do not want the people to become aware of the fabrication, but in fact want to leverage it to their political benefit,” he said.

Innovations ensure food supply to needy during pandemic

Free distribution has benefited 4.46 cr. people in Rajasthan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Innovations adopted by the Rajasthan government’s Food and Civil Supplies Department, accompanied by a record procurement of 22 lakh tonnes of wheat, have ensured food supply to the poor and needy people across the State during the COVID-19 pandemic. Free distribution of foodgrains has benefited 4.46 crore people registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSAs).

A review of the department has revealed that special efforts to feed the hungry have benefited those requiring direct help because of their inability to take care of

their food requirement, the NFSAs beneficiaries and those who could afford to buy raw materials. The strategies helped open up a supply chain without spreading the virus.

Distribution challenge
State Food and Civil Supplies Secretary Hemant Kumar Gera said here on Friday that the challenge of supplying foodgrains to the NFSAs beneficiaries through more than 25,000 public distribution system dealers had increased manifold following the announcement of an additional 5 kg wheat per person and 1 kg pulses per beneficiary family per month.

Among the innovations adopted by the department, nearly 50% of fair price shops provided door to door delivery of wheat and pulses and a dedicated control room working round the clock was established to monitor the grievance of the affected and stranded people.

The feedback obtained by the consumer helpline from the PDS beneficiaries and dealers, kirana shop owners and wholesalers was analysed daily and improvements made in the system. Mr. Gera said the department’s officers remained in touch on the social media platforms to ensure a smooth running of the entire system.

HC sore over counsels' online conduct

One tried to argue from moving car, other from garden of his house

PRADIP DAS
CUTTACK

Expressing shock and anguish over the conduct of some advocates during the online court proceedings, the Orissa High Court has sought the indulgence of the State Bar Council and the High Court Bar Association in instructing the advocates not to breach the decorum and decency of the

Court during the online proceedings.

Justice Biswanath Rath while adjudicating over a Civil Miscellaneous Petition (CMP) on August 31 learnt that a counsel was attempting to argue his case from a moving car.

'Wife in frame'
Justice Rath went on to share other horrible experiences the Court has

witnessed in recent days ever since the cases are being conducted through video conferences due to the pandemic situation. He said a counsel brought his wife into the frame of the video and even after requests when the position did not improve, the counsel's link was disconnected.

In another instance, a counsel tried to argue his

case from the garden lawn of his house on a false plea of poor network inside house. “He was requested not to repeat (it) in future”, Justice Rath said adding that the Court has also witnessed some counsels appear before the camera to argue their cases and start eating food during the course of the proceedings.

Punjab rice exporters demand clarity on agriculture ordinance

Fresh rice crop about to arrive in the market

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

With Punjab opposing the Centre’s agriculture-related ordinance, rice exporters in the State are in quandary as the fresh rice crop is about to arrive in the market but there is no clarity on issues surrounding the market fee and rural development fund (RDF), according to a trade association.

“We are in a total state of confusion. The Central government’s ordinance [Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance] has created a parallel system, allowing farmers to sell their produce directly to exporters, while the Punjab government has opposed the ordinance. The basmati growing

States, including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu-Kashmir (UT), have notified that they would be levying only 1% user charges on the produce brought to their mandi yards while adhering to the new norms under the ordinance.

“The Punjabi Rice Millers and Exporters Association has asked the State government to clarify its stand on the issue of levying fee as the neighbouring States have already accepted the new ordinance.

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

Forecast for Saturday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, east Rajasthan, central Maharashtra, Rayalseema, coastal & south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Karaikal, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-37.0	26.4	-	Kozhikode	...-32.6	25.0	-
Ahmedabad	0.2	35.3	26.4	Kurnool	...-36.1	26.1	-
Aizawl	...-30.3	21.0	-	Lucknow	6.9	33.2	24.4
Allahabad	...-36.2	25.3	-	Madurai	...-31.4	23.6	-
Bengaluru	9.6	29.2	21.0	Mangaluru	...-33.8	25.0	-
Bhopal	...-34.5	24.5	-	Mumbai	...-31.0	21.6	-
Bhubaneswar	...-35.1	26.0	-	Mysuru	...-35.0	26.3	-
Chandigarh	14.	35.5	26.7	Patna	...-35.5	28.9	-
Chennai	1.6	33.6	26.4	Pond Blair	3.6	31.6	25.1
Coimbatore	0.2	33.4	22.8	Puducherry	...-33.0	25.8	-
Dehradoon	...-32.4	24.3	-	Pune	...-33.4	21.2	-
Gangtok	0.7	23.3	18.5	Raipur	...-34.7	25.0	-
Goa	...-31.8	25.5	-	Ranchi	...-30.8	23.1	-
Guwahati	...-39.5	25.2	-	Shillong	20.9	24.0	16.2
Hubballi	...-29.0	22.0	-	Shimla	8.5	25.9	19.0
Hyderabad	...-32.2	23.9	-	Srinagar	2	21.0	17.5
Imphal	...-31.9	24.4	-	Thiruvananthapuram	2.4	32.0	25.2
Jaipur	0.2	31.2	25.0	Tiruchi	...-34.0	25.6	-
Kochi	...-31.4	25.0	-	Vijayawada	...-34.6	26.7	-
Kohima	...-28.2	18.2	-	Visakhapatnam	...-33.4	27.4	-
Kolkata	...-33.9	27.2	-				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	12	43	37	70	77	■■■■■
Bengaluru	6	13	57	52	72	■■■■■
Chennai	31	27	47	94	—	■■■■■
Delhi	—	165	58	135	—	■■■■■
Hyderabad	5	50	11	44	66	■■■■■
Kolkata	8.5	25	21	53	76	■■■■■
Lucknow	5	53	27	187	141	■■■■■
Mumbai	15	20	10	52	96	■■■■■
Pune	54	22	59	51	52	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	9	23	16	—	57	■■■■■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jorapak, Jharkhand recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 250 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kozhikode, Kerala recorded a healthy AQI score of 18

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

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

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

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

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

Pune firm's RT-PCR test kit gets nod for manufacture, sale in India

CDSCO gives approval to Bengaluru-based Achira Labs to make the kits

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

'CoViDx One', the COVID-19 reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test kit developed by Pune-based GenePath Diagnostics, has received approval for manufacture and sale in India from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). The approval was received on August 31, said a statement by the firm on Friday.

The CDSCO has given approval to the Bengaluru-based Achira Labs to manufacture the kits. The kit was validated by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) in Hyderabad and approved by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) this year.

GenePath's Pune clinical laboratory earlier received approval from the National Accreditation Board of Laboratories (NABL) and the ICMR to carry out COVID-19 RT-PCR based testing in the country. This makes GenePath the first company in the country to run an NABL-ICMR approved COVID-19 testing lab and receive approval to manufacture its own RT-PCR test kit.

High quality, low price' Dr. Nickhil Jakatdar, CEO, GenePath Diagnostics, said: "As a kit manufacturer, our goal is to support every lab that wants to offer high quality tests at the lowest possible price, in order to make RT-PCR based testing more accessible and affordable to the common person. With that in mind, we went about developing our COVID-19 test kit in India by utilising



Staying safe: RT-PCR testing for COVID-19 in progress in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

our expertise in molecular diagnostics over the last decade and with an investment of ₹50 crore into this effort."

GenePath Diagnostics is a next-generation diagnostics company that operates Research and Development (R&D) facilities in Pune and at Michigan, U.S., as well as a state-of-the-art clinical diagnostics facility in the city.

Dr. Jakatdar said the company had tested its kit for 'clinical sensitivity' in labs across India as well as the United States. "The kits have shown excellent results when compared with the best FDA [Food and Drug Administration] approved kits in the U.S. Importantly, we have managed to keep costs low owing to local manufacturing," he said.

GenePath's clinical lab has processed more than 20,000 COVID-19 tests for patients in Pune, one of the worst-affected cities in the country. "We are happy to offer our RT-PCR tests at a

much more affordable price of just ₹1,500 per test at our [GenePath's] drive-up facility in the city's Wakdewadi area. This is much lower than the ₹2,200 per test mandated by the Maharashtra government. Likewise, with regard to home collections, our test kit has allowed us to drop our price from the government-mandated

₹2,500 per test to ₹2,200. Our hope is that the usage of our test kit will enable many more labs to drop their prices without compromising on the quality of their results," said Dr. Jakatdar.

Dr. Nikhil Phadke, founder and Chief Scientific Officer, GenePath Diagnostics, said the company's objective had been to create the "gold standard" of RT-PCR kits globally. "In fact, our test kit design is already being used by leading edge labs in America. Being a clinical lab ourselves, we understand the challenges and constraints faced by labs when deciding

the right kit to use. Now, with the manufacturing licence for our kit, we hope to turn the health and economic situation around in India," he said. The test kit was developed keeping in mind simplicity and convenience of usage and the cost to the lab, said Dr. Phadke.

"Our test kit is a single tube assay to maximise lab throughput capacity. We used three target genes and a human gene as our internal control in order to ensure a robust and accurate test," he explained. The kit has been tested on more than 4,000 clinical samples to ensure the highest level of clinical sensitivity and minimise the chances of false 'positives' and false 'negatives'.

Among fastest in industry' "Our PCR cycle run is amongst the fastest in the industry, thereby reducing the turn-around time from sample collection to declaring results," said Dr. Phadke.

BJP distances itself from Kangana's 'PoK' remark

Leaders of ruling parties lash out at actor

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday distanced itself from actor Kangana Ranaut's comment comparing Mumbai to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Ashish Shelar, the party's former Mumbai unit president, said, "The BJP does not agree with what Kangana Ranaut has said... about Maharashtra and Mumbai. Some people are working to divert the CBI investigation into the unfortunate death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput. Kangana Ranaut should not try to tell people of Mumbai or Maharashtra about anything."

Earlier, unfazed by the criticism, Ms. Ranaut continued her tirade against the Maharashtra government and the Shiv Sena. She tweeted, "I see many people are threatening me to not come back to Mumbai so I have now decided to travel to Mumbai this coming week on 9th September. I will post the time when I land at the Mumbai airport." She added, 'Kisi ke baap mein himmat hai rok le', daring detractors to try and stop here.

Throughout the day on Twitter, Ms. Ranaut indirectly targeted Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. She termed Bollywood a 'Islam-dominated industry' and referred to herself as someone who stood up to defend Maratha pride. He said, "Our leader Raj Thackeray has taught us how much importance should be given to a person. Posting a substandard post on social media to gain publicity is a disease. We have two demands: Kangana should go for psychiatric treatment and be booked for sedition for comparing Mumbai to PoK."

2,700 fined for not wearing masks: BMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Over 2,700 people have been fined ₹1,000 each in the last five months for stepping out in public without masks amid the COVID-19 pandemic, an official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said on Friday. As per the Union government's guidelines, the BMC made masks mandatory in public places since April 9.

The BMC has collected ₹24.8 lakh in fines from 2,798 residents between April 9 and August 31, the official said. A total of 9,954 people were issued warnings by the solid waste management department.

The BMC said ₹5.04 lakh was collected in fines in K West ward, which is the highest in the city. In R-South and C wards, ₹4.21 lakh and ₹4.08 lakh were collected respectively.

Judicial custody of Elgaar Parishad accused extended till September 18

HC issues notice to NIA, seeks its reply to Navlakha's appeal

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on Friday extended the judicial custody of professor Hany Babu, professor Anand Teltumbde and activist Gautam Navlakha, accused in the Elgar Parishad case, till September 18.

Special judge A.T. Wankhede allowed the judicial custody to be extended after special public prosecutor Prakash Shetty, appearing for the NIA, made the request citing investigation was still in progress in the case. On July 12, the court granted the NIA an extension of 90 days to file charge sheets against Mr. Teltumbde and Mr. Navlakha.

Mr. Babu, an associate professor at Delhi University's English department, was arrested by the NIA on

July 28. Earlier, while granting the NIA his custody, the court had said, "The investigating officer wants to confront him with the various facts established from the other accused. Looking at the nature of the offence and allegations levelled against the accused, the demand for custody is well-founded."

Mr. Teltumbde and Mr. Navlakha surrendered before the NIA on April 14. They were remanded in NIA custody and are now lodged at Taloja jail. Between August 29 and October 1, 2018, Mr. Navlakha was kept under house arrest.

File reply by Sept. 15' The Bombay High Court on Friday issued a notice to the NIA seeking its response to a criminal appeal filed by Mr. Navlakha. A Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and M.S. Kar-

ni directed the NIA to file its reply by September 15. The Bench was hearing a plea filed by Mr. Navlakha, challenging a special court order of July 12 that rejected his

plea for default bail.

The National Investigation Agency's (NIA) counsel Sandesh Patil filed an affidavit and said that Mr. Purohit's application was not maintainable. He said by no stretch of imagination the act committed by him could be termed as official duty.

Mr. Rohatgi sought time to file a rejoinder in the case.

Desperate plea



Taking to the streets: Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank depositors, struggling to get access to their money, protest outside the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) office in Bandra Kurla Complex on Friday. The RBI took control of the PMC Bank last year after it was accused of fraud and concealing non-performing loans. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Malegaon blast accused Purohit moves HC

Petition challenges sanction for his prosecution in the case; next hearing on Sept. 23

SONAM SAIGAL
MUMBAI

Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Purohit, an accused in the Malegaon blast in 2008 which killed six people and injured 101, on Friday filed a fresh petition before the Bombay High Court, challenging the sanction to prosecute him under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).



A new dimension

Militarisation of the Quad will not alleviate the territorial threat India faces from China

In what will be seen as a significant shift of the government's posture towards the India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quadrilateral (Quad), Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat stated on Thursday that India believes the Quad would be a "good mechanism" to "ensure Freedom of Navigation Operations" (FONOPS) in the Indian Ocean and surrounding oceans including the Indo-Pacific. Unless he misspoke, the suggestion is that India is now prepared to join Quad military patrols, which marks a departure from its earlier reticence and public statements by the leadership. The Indian Navy has not taken part in any joint patrols outside of the Indian Ocean, and even within it, held its first one, with France, only recently. In terms of the engagement with the Quad, India has not yet formally announced a decision to include Australia in the annual Malabar exercises with the U.S. and Japan, although it is expected to do so. However, the move from conducting exercises together to joint operations would take time, something that makes the CDS's assertion significant. It is easy to surmise that his contention that the Quad operations are needed to ensure there is no "fear of any other nation singularly trying to dominate the oceans", is a veiled reference to China. It is also clear that the LAC tensions and clashes, as well as the PLA's refusal to implement border agreements, have convinced New Delhi that new strategies will be required to deal with Beijing. While India continues to engage China diplomatically, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh have spoken of the importance of a resolution through talks, there is no doubt that an outcome of the tensions will be a strengthening of India's ties with global powers such as the U.S., as well as formations like the Quad. An indication of this is the government's plans to host a ministerial-level meeting of the Quad in the next month, possibly when the India-US "2+2" meet of Foreign and Defence Ministers is held.

While India considers its options, it is necessary to remember some of the reasons for its reticence in terms of militarising the Quad in any way. Prime Minister Modi said in 2018 that India sees the Indo-Pacific as a "geographical concept", not a "strategy or a club of limited members", and it would be important to know whether that formulation has changed. India is the only Quad member not already tied in a treaty alliance with the others, and Mr. Jaishankar's statement that India would never be part of any "alliance system" would run counter to what the CDS suggests. Finally, India is the only country in the Quad that shares a land boundary with China, and it is unclear how the militarisation of the Quad in Indo-Pacific waters would alleviate the territorial threat it faces. If, however, New Delhi's view of its Quad engagement has shifted, clarity and an expansion of Gen. Rawat's statement are essential.

Appropriate strategy

Whatever the threat from Chinese apps, India needs a better approach to tech regulation

The blocking of a hundred more Chinese mobile applications suggests that the Indian government, not for the first time in recent months, wants to make it amply clear that it will not shy away from leveraging its position as a massive market for technology in dealing with potentially dangerous geopolitical issues. Since June, when border tensions between India and China turned ugly, the government has till now stepped in thrice to block many Chinese applications in one go. In the latest such decision, on Wednesday, it blocked 118 apps, including the widely popular gaming app, PUBG, as well as WeChat Work and Baidu, owing to these being "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of State and public order". Over 200 Chinese apps, which were accessed by millions of Indian users, have been blocked in all till date. The decision has been taken based on several complaints, a press release said, of these apps "stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorized manner to servers which have locations outside India". It could be argued that loss of access to the Indian market will sharply affect the ambitions of the Internet giants emerging from China, but it remains to be seen if this tech-side intervention is effective as a counter in a geopolitical fight. Also, how far can India go to keep the Chinese players, who are well entrenched in the global tech supply chain, off the Indian market without prejudicing its own growth?

It is difficult to argue against decisions that are taken on the plank of national security, especially one arrived at by invoking the government's power under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, a section upheld by the courts previously. But it would be well argued that the Indian approach should have followed due process, where the focus was on ensuring compliance with the law. Instead, the Indian response to complaints has been to straight away block these apps en masse. Meanwhile, millions of Indians who were engaging with these platforms, some gainfully, have to scramble for alternatives. To add to this, the data protection law, a dire need in this age, is not yet there. All this does not bode well for a country with aspirations of global leadership of tech, an industry which thrives on global networks and rules. Ironically, China, which for years has unleashed widespread censorship of information and kept apps from outside off its Internet, has found a rare chance to take the moral high ground. It has criticised India's move, accusing it of "abusing the concept of national security". The last thing India needs is to be compared with China as far as its Internet regulation goes. It certainly needs a more considered approach to tech regulation.

Parliament stifled, business, and a word of advice

Despite the limited monsoon session and constraints, MPs must scrutinise the government's work and guide policy



M.R. MADHAVAN

The upcoming monsoon session of Parliament, from September 14, is emblematic of the issues faced by legislatures during the novel coronavirus pandemic. How do these bodies fulfil their central role in a democracy while maintaining health safety of legislators and the staff working in the legislatures? Several States have held very short sessions – some met just for a day – in which they ratified a number of ordinances, and hardly questioned any executive action over the last few months. Parliament will maintain physical distancing, has truncated the Zero Hour (in which members raise issues pertinent to their constituents and of wider public interest), and cancelled Question Hour (in which Ministers have to answer questions raised by members).

At the risk of stating the obvious, let us quickly recap the roles of the key organs of state. The government has the mandate to take decisions and perform various public tasks. It is accountable to the legislature which can question it, and, as an extreme step, even replace it. The legislature is accountable to citizens through regular elections and can be voted out if it is not perceived to be making laws and policies beneficial to the public. Finally, constitutional courts are expected to ensure that all actions are made within the boundaries of the Constitution and laws made by the legislature.

The case of contact tracing
Our Parliament has allowed its role to be diluted over the last few decades. It has not questioned and

monitored the activity of the executive.

One example will illustrate the contrast between the actions of the British Parliament and ours. When the idea of a contact tracing app was mooted, the United Kingdom's joint parliamentary committee on human rights examined the proposals. In a report, "Human Rights and the Government's Response to Covid-19: Digital Contact Tracing", published in early May (<https://bit.ly/35h51rB>), it recommended that an app could be used only if there was a specific primary legislation to enable it, and such legislation should ensure that data is collected only for the limited purpose of preventing the spread of COVID-19, prohibit sharing the data with third-parties, upload the data to a central database only if the person is tested or suspected to be positive, and limit the time for which any data was stored. The Minister would have to report every 21 days on the efficacy of contact tracing as well as data security and privacy. India, in contrast, rolled out Aarogya Setu through executive decision, and has created a grey zone on whether it is mandatory (for example, while flying, or on metro rail when operations resume next week). All this has been done without a specific legislation or any parliamentary oversight. In fact, parliamentary oversight has been largely absent through the last six months.

A slew of notifications

Parliament will be meeting after 175 days, the longest gap without intervening general elections and just short of the six-month constitutional limit. Parliamentary committees did not meet for about four months, and after that have had only in-person meetings, which have led to low attendance, given travel risks and restrictions. This is unlike many other countries where both the plenary and committees have adopted technol-



ogy to enable members to participate from home. In this period, over 900 central and nearly 6,000 State government notifications have been issued (<https://bit.ly/3bsLprq>) which are related to managing the pandemic. This is in addition to notifications on other subjects. The absence of a functioning Parliament or Committees implies that there has been no check or guidance on government action.

When it meets, Parliament should look at the government's response to the crisis. However, the function would become more of a post-mortem analysis rather than an ongoing guidance mechanism. Contrast this with a well-functioning committee system such as the British example of the contact tracing app which guides government action before the event. As an aside, this reminds me of the old stock market advice of "buy low, sell high", which while being a sound maxim does not guide anyone in making an investment decision. The only thing one can do later if things go wrong is to rue the loss.

Court interventions

The lack of parliamentary oversight has been compounded by judicial intervention in many policy issues. For example, the government's actions related to the lockdown and the hardships caused to migrants should have been questioned by Parliament. Discussions in parliamentary fo-

rums would have helped the government get feedback on the ground situation across the country and fine-tune its response. However, this was taken to the Supreme Court, which is not equipped (and dare I say, mandated) to balance policy options. Directions of the Court have to be followed which removes flexibility needed to tackle evolving issues with implementation. To take another example, the Court decided to limit the period in which telecom companies have to pay their dues to the government, and overruled a cabinet decision. This is a policy matter that balances interests of telecom companies, consumers (who suffer through price hikes or potential formation of a monopoly), and banks (which may face defaults by telecom companies). This issue is best judged by the government with oversight by Parliament. Of course, if there is illegality (say, corruption), then the matter should be judged by courts.

Short session, much business

Parliament should recover lost ground by fulfilling its constitutionally mandated role. It has a large number of issues to discuss in the short 18-day session. The fact that the two Houses are working in shifts to use the same physical space limits the scope of extended sittings on any day. In the period since the last session, the government has issued 11 ordinances. Five of these relate to the COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown: extending tax filing dates, moratorium on new insolvency cases, protection for health workers, and temporary cuts in salaries and allowances of Members of Parliament and Ministers. Of the other six, two relate to supersession of the Boards of the councils that regulate homoeopathy and Indian systems of medicine, one allows the Reserve Bank of India to regulate cooperative banks (similar Bill is pending in Parliament), and three relate to agricultural markets

(allowing contract farming and trading outside mandis). While the ordinances related to COVID-19 have a temporary application, Parliament should refer those with long-term implications (such as the farming and the banking ones) to the respective committees for detailed scrutiny.

Core issues

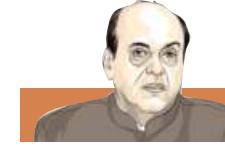
Several events have taken place over the last six months that need thorough discussion. This includes ways to tackle the spread of the novel coronavirus and limit mortality, and possible paths in the months ahead that could guide government action. Economic growth, which has been decreasing for the last couple of years, has had a sharp fall in the first quarter of this fiscal year. This has far-reaching implications for creating jobs, stability of the banking system, and government finances. The government is likely to bring in a supplementary budget; indeed, a fresh look at the Union Budget may be required given the changes in basic assumptions since January. The situation at the China border also needs to be discussed.

The absence of Question Hour and a shorter Zero Hour restricts the ability of Members of Parliament to hold the government accountable and represent public interest. That said, Members of Parliament must use other available interventions to ensure that new laws and expenditure proposals are passed only after detailed discussion. Parliamentarians have a duty towards Indian citizens to fulfil their role in scrutinising the work of the government and guiding policy. Despite the curtailed session and the constraints due to the coronavirus, they should make the best of the limited time to do so. They need to wrest back their rightful role in our democracy.

M.R. Madhavan is the President and co-founder of PRS Legislative Research

Dignity regained in a Calcutta oasis

Former West Bengal leader Jyoti Basu made a request to Mother Teresa, and several women inmates finally found peace



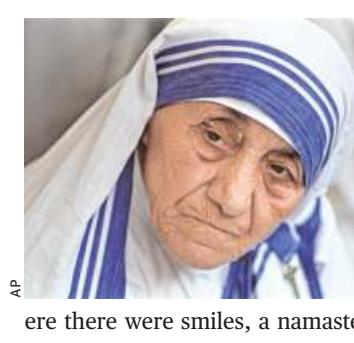
NAVIN B. CHAWLA

It was 1996. I was on one of my visits to Calcutta to spend a little time with Mother Teresa. She had been very unwell, in and out of hospital. I found her sitting in a wheelchair outside her small office. I presented her an updated Hindi edition of my biography of her. There was a queue of people waiting to meet her.

Giving shape to an idea
She introduced me to a few monks visiting from Japan. She then asked me if I had been to Shanti Dan where these monks from Japan had helped her. The story began, she said, when she responded to a request from the West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu (she always prefaced his name with the words "my friend"). "Mother, take care of some very unfortunate women, they have been long years under confinement in an institution attached to a Kolkata jail." When she went there she found

several hundred inmates, all women, in great distress. Some had been in confinement for 40 years. She agreed to do something. In her practical way, she asked the Chief Minister for land. She would create the institution herself. That was a few years ago.

Sister Bella took me around. There were three dormitories on two floors, a small recreational centre, a few small workshops. The rooms were bright and airy. Unlike the Sisters' rooms which were spartan on account of their vows of poverty, here there were bright and pleasant dormitories with ceiling fans and mosquito nets. Colourful bed covers had been specially woven by her leprosy community in Titagarh. There were real and paper flowers everywhere. Not a pin was out of place. The utensils in the kitchens were spotless. The women cooked their own meals and cleaned up after. There was no sign of any volunteers, who were a feature of her other homes. Here, Sister Bella encouraged them to keep themselves and their environment clean as a necessary part of occupational therapy. As I walked past groups of inmates in the grounds, I had expected to encounter sullenness or hostility. Instead, everywhere



there were smiles, a namaste or a wave.

A new life

"When they came here two years ago, they would not put on the clothes," said Sister Bella. "When we tried to go near them, they would cower with fear. Now they do most things themselves. Some of these women have been in jail wards for years on end. We have come very far in this time. It is only when they are really sick or feeling low that they go inside to lie down. Otherwise they tend the gardens or do simple work in the craft centre. See these dolls here, said the Sister pointing to the shelf. A benefactor gave us wool and items for embroidery. Another benefactor donated school exercise books, simple story books and items of stationery. Some teachers have volunteered to give

them lessons. They really look forward to the classes. Small things make them so happy," she added. I saw groups of them in clean saris, sitting under the shade of the fruit trees that they tended or in the gardens where they grew vegetables and flowers. In this oasis that Jyoti Basu and Mother created, these unfortunate souls had finally found some peace and dignity.

The next day I recounted my visit to Mother Teresa. She nodded, not particularly surprised. "You remember the Buddhist monks who came yesterday," she asked. They were part of a group from Japan who came to see me some years ago. I told them we have a practice that on Fridays none of us Sisters eat during the day. We forego one meal. With the money saved we buy food for the poor. When the group of Buddhist monks went back to Japan, they told other monks about our practice. Soon the word spread in Japan, and many people began to give up a meal a day and put money aside. They sent me the money I was able to build another dormitory building and to take 100 more women from the jail. Wonderful, no? In fact, 20 more are coming next week. God has such wonder-

ful ways of providing!"
In the course of my visits to Kolkata, I met Jyoti Basu a few times. I once asked him whether it was true that soon after he became Chief Minister, some of his party workers asked him to drive Mother Teresa out of Kolkata. She was converting people to Christianity. He asked them if they had ever seen her taking care of leprosy sufferers. The day they would clean the wounds of the leprosy affected, he would ask her to stop her work. That day never came.

The thread

In the course of writing my book, I needed to ask him what he, a Communist and atheist, could possibly have in common with a Catholic nun for whom god was everything. With a smile he replied, "We both have a love for the poor." Whenever she was hospitalised, he would visit the hospital for a few minutes almost each day. I met him there sometimes. And, in turn, when he was ill, she would visit his house with her Sisters and say a quiet prayer.

Navin B. Chawla, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, is Mother Teresa's biographer. September 5 marks her 23rd death anniversary

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.

Rice consumption

The report on white rice consumption (Inside pages, "Study links rice intake to diabetes", September 4) cites a study of 1.3 lakh individuals in 21 countries over 9.5 years*. The findings have long been obvious – that excessive consumption of such carbohydrates causes diabetes. But the report does not mention red rice with the bran, or at least partially red rice, as often eaten in Kerala and Karnataka. Brown rice is not so good as the bran falls off in cooking. Why throw the bran, the most nutritious part, to chickens? While whole grain wheat is widely eaten, in some areas, useless "refined" white flour foods are preferred. People used to eat so many other better nutritious foods, as millets, which used to be main foods. Twelve of them are grown in the South. I have

seen schoolchildren's meals as a great pile of white rice and a dash of dal, maybe not even vegetables (though masalas partly compensate, as they have the highest level of micronutrients by volume). All children should be educated that green and other coloured vegetables and fruits, beside whole grains, are the most important foods for health, and the fact that many also contain protein.

CLARENCE MALONEY,
Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu

■ Even a layman like me knows that excess starch consumption could lead to diabetes if the person leads a sedentary life. India now produces 98 million tonnes of paddy with roughly 130 million tonnes of straw, which means that a substantial portion of the population leans heavily toward farming for its

livelihood. We are an agricultural nation first and foremost. As Indians living in the tropics need rice to sustain their energy levels throughout the day, their consumption of proteins is considerably lower. Also, many of them people living south of the Vindhya range will not prefer wheat products. There is good advice in the report – to have white rice with other ingredients such as proteins, salads and vegetables. Cooked vegetables need to include pulses or lentils, oilseeds such as mustard seeds which also contain good percentage of fat and proteins, and coconut. As an avid reader (I am 73 now), I would like dietitians and nutrition experts to comment on the study. We should also note that Canada is a large wheat producing country, and as the report makes it clear, there are Canadian institutes associated with the study. So

why is there this sudden interest in rice?

SANKARAN SURESH SUNDARAM,
Chennai

■ Pranab Mukherjee
Former President of India
Pranab Mukherjee's knowledge on government matters, complex policy issues and his mastery over numbers made him the go-to man during any political or governance crisis. During meetings, he was known to cite figures from past Five Year Plans and other government data in a flash, leaving his colleagues stunned (OpEd page, 'Notebook', "Pranabda, the man with a remarkable memory", September 4). As Finance Minister, he was at his essential best, reeling off figures and the prices of commodities. In 1982, after he delivered one of the longest Budget speeches, that lasted 95 minutes, Indira Gandhi quipped, "The

shortest Finance Minister has given the longest Budget speech."

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

■ Supertanker blaze
The stand-alone picture, "Mid-sea disaster" (Inside pages, September 4), on the fire aboard the supertanker, *New Diamond*, and chartered by Indian Oil Corporation while on its way from Kuwait to Paradip, Odisha, is a grim reminder of the possible consequences of a major oil spill. Thursday's incident is just after a major oil spill from a Japanese ship when it ran aground on a reef in Mauritius recently. One wonders whether India and Sri Lanka are even prepared for such scenarios which would spell disaster for fishing and other maritime activities for almost the entire South India. Perhaps India and Sri Lanka should conduct disaster



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drills at regular intervals and test their preparedness. We cannot forget what happened in the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989.

ASHOK NAIR,
Chennai

■ New Chairman
As an avid reader of *The Hindu* from boyhood, I join readers in congratulating Mr. N. Ravi on his elevation as the Chairman of Kasturi & Sons, the holding company of *The Hindu* Group. The daily has had a galaxy of distinguished and eminent persons as its editors and managers. Its writings on diverse subjects have captivated countless readers. Critical journalism, especially in the present day, is a difficult task and one hopes the grand old newspaper follows this.

R. SAMPATH,
Chennai

Life and death in the spotlight

More than two months since actor Sushant Singh Rajput's body was found, three premier Central agencies are probing his death. **Alok Deshpande, Devesh Kumar Pandey and Sonam Saigal** piece together an account of the investigations under way even as rumours and accusations fly thick and fast

Last year, Sushant Singh Rajput shifted to the Mount Blanc apartment on Carter Road in Mumbai's tony neighbourhood, Bandra. The actor had always longed for a sea-facing apartment, and Mount Blanc overlooked the Arabian Sea.

The move was also important for other reasons. Bandra is where several top actors of India live. For Sushant it had been a long journey from growing up in a middle class family in Patna, Bihar, to this prime locality. Sushant was a brilliant student. He had a passion for science, especially astronomy. He was a voracious reader. He won the National Olympiad in Physics. He joined the Delhi College of Engineering to pursue mechanical engineering, but left the course midway to pursue his dream of becoming an actor.

Sushant tried his hand at theatre and then television. His career as an actor began with the popular television serial on Zee TV, *Pavitra Rishita*, produced by Ekta Kapoor. Then, a silver screen debut in Abhishek Kapoor's *Kai Po Che* gave him a much-needed foothold in the competitive Mumbai film industry. Sushant then slowly climbed up the ladder acting in popular commercial films such as *Shuddh Desi Romance* and *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* and critically acclaimed ones such as *Sonchirya* and *Chhichhore*. In an interview to this newspaper in 2017, Sushant said he was a very shy child, an introvert. He confessed that he constantly craved approval.

In another interview to this newspaper in 2016, when asked whether it was difficult for an outsider to make a name in the Mumbai film industry, Sushant said, "Of course, it is. Tomorrow, if two of my films do not do well consecutively, I may not get another chance. You have to be sure of what you want. You have to keep thinking that you will survive, no matter what."

Unfortunately, however, on June 14, Sushant was found dead in his home. His unexpected demise has not only overshadowed his struggle but has also led to an outpouring of emotions, pitted his loved ones against one another, led to a trial by sections of the media and triggered a political slugfest.

Investigation by three agencies

Public outrage over Sushant's death has dominated the social media space over the last few months, despite the pandemic. Grief and shock over the 34-year-old actor's sudden demise swiftly snowballed into a huge online campaign demanding an independent probe into his death. The case is now being pursued by three premier Central agencies: the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and the Narcotics Control Bureau.

The ED stepped in when allegations of large amounts of money being transferred into the accounts of Sushant's girlfriend, actor Rhea Chakraborty, surfaced. The ED has been sifting through piles of documents and questioning suspects, including Rhea, and witnesses over the last one month, to determine if there was any money laundering. The ED has scrutinised Sushant's bank accounts, investments, and the papers of three companies co-founded by him: Innsae Ventures Private Limited, set up in 2018; Vividrige Reality Private Limited, which was incorporated in September 2019; and Front India for World Foundation, a non-profit company dedicated to social service, set up in January 2020. The agency has also questioned Sushant's chartered accountant multiple times.

Meanwhile, a CBI team has surveyed the house where Sushant died, questioned Rhea and other accused, recorded witness statements, and is also taking the help of medical and forensic experts in a bid to reconstruct the sequence of events surrounding his death.

Based on *prima facie* evidence shared by the ED, in view of the allegations that Sushant was administered drugs illegally, the Narcotics Control Bureau also joined the investigation on August 26. It has arrested four people so far, including Rhea's brother Showik and Sushant's close aide Samuel Miranda.

While the scope of investigation has widened, the picture remains unclear. To make matters worse, video clips and photographs capturing Sushant's body, his post-mortem report, statements of his bank accounts, pages of his personal journal, and the call records of those under scrutiny have all been leaked to sections of the media, infringing the basic principles of investigation. Violating the code of ethics on confidentiality, a therapist has issued a statement making claims about the actor's mental health. "Any such leak weakens the case, as it gives an opportunity to the accused, if any, to prepare their defence. The element of surprise while confronting them with facts is also lost," said a retired CBI official.

Following his death, some claimed



Rhea Chakraborty's car is surrounded by mediapersons as she arrives for questioning by the CBI at the DRDO guest house in Mumbai on August 2. (Below): People take part in a campaign demanding a CBI inquiry into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, in Ranchi.



that "nepotism" in Bollywood claimed the actor's life; others said he suffered from depression. However, the Mumbai Police, which first investigated the case, said prime facie no foul play came to light.

It was in the midst of a stream of emotional statements and demands by the general public that the Mumbai Police started inquest proceedings under Section 174 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (police to enquire and report on suicide) to determine the apparent cause of Sushant's death. The post-mortem was conducted on June 14 night, and Sushant's body was cremated the next day in the presence of his father K.K. Singh, other family members, and friends.

The day Sushant died

As purportedly disclosed by those living with Sushant, two cooks – Neeraj Singh and Keshav Bachner – lived in the same house. Deepesh Sawant looked after the housekeeping work. Sushant's flatmate, Siddharth Pithani, stayed in another room. Rhea, who was staying with Sushant, left the house on the afternoon of June 8, after which the actor's sister, Meetu Singh, came to stay with him for about three days.

One version of what transpired on that fateful day is that Sushant woke up in the morning, drank some water and then some coconut water and fruit juice before locking himself up in his room. When Keshav went to ask him what he wanted for lunch, there was no reply. Keshav realised that something was amiss. The others in the house started looking for the key to the door. Finally, they called a locksmith, who disabled the lock. Siddharth reportedly opened the door and found Sushant lifeless.

Meetu, who had been alerted, reached the flat soon after, and the police were called in.

There are multiple witness accounts claiming that Sushant had not been keeping well since his Europe tour with Rhea last year and was on some medication.

As part of the inquest, the Mumbai Police recorded several statements, including those of Sushant's family members, his flatmates, friends, employees, Rhea, film critic Rajeev Masand, and Bollywood personalities including Mahesh Bhatt, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Mukesh Chhabra and Aditya Chopra. Filmmaker Shekhar Kapur also sent his statement through email.

"We spoke to around 40 people over

two months and recorded their statements," said an official from the Mumbai Police. The official refused to say anything more since the investigation has been taken over by the CBI. The Mumbai Police neither has jurisdiction over the case nor is it aware of new developments, he said.

From Mumbai to Patna

During the Mumbai Police investigation, things took a political turn. Representatives of all political parties in Bihar, where Assembly elections are due before November 29, started demanding a thorough investigation. The ruling coalition government in Maharashtra comprising the Shiv Sena, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress came under severe criticism.

On July 25, the Patna Police registered a case based on a complaint by K.K. Singh alleging abetment of suicide, criminal conspiracy, breach of trust, cheating, theft, wrongful restraint and confinement under the Indian Penal Code. Rhea, Showik, their parents Indrajit and Sandhya Chakraborty, Samuel Miranda, and Rhea's former manager Shruti Modi were named.

K.K. Singh, 74, alleged that Rhea, her family members, and associates entered Sushant's life to take advantage of his contacts in the film industry. His trusted employees were replaced, and in a short span of time, ₹15 crore was transferred from his account. His son was subjected to drug overdose, Singh claimed. Singh also claimed that Sushant wanted to leave Mumbai and do organic farming in Coorg in Karnataka, but Rhea opposed it and threatened that she would share his medical records with the media and declare him "mad".

Rhea left Sushant's house on June 8. The next day, when Sushant found out about the death of Disha Salian, his former manager who was allegedly hired by Rhea to work for him, he feared that attempts would be made to implicate him, said Singh.

After registering the FIR, a Patna Police team reached Mumbai on July 27 to pursue the leads. A few days later, claiming that the Mumbai Police were

not cooperating in the probe, the Bihar government told the Supreme Court that the CBI should probe the case. It said that on August 2, a Superintendent of Police Vinay Tiwari, who was sent to Mumbai from Bihar to supervise the probe, was "forcibly" quarantined. Meanwhile, Rhea, who had on July 16 taken to social media to request Home Minister Amit Shah to order a CBI probe, moved the Supreme Court seeking transfer of the case to Mumbai.

On July 31, the ED too initiated money laundering investigations based on the FIR and recorded the statements of Sushant's family members.

The CBI steps in

On August 4, the Bihar government recommended a CBI probe. Following intimation from the Department of Personnel and Training, the agency took over the case on August 6. The next day, the top trending hashtag, Warriors4SSR, generated 2.1 million messages from across India.

The CBI entrusted the probe to a Special Investigation Team (SIT) that has handled several high-profile cases. The team comprises Joint Director Manoj Shashidhar, Deputy Inspector General Gagandeep Gambhir, Additional Superintendent of Police Anil Yadav, and Superintendent of Police Nupur Prasad. "The experience of these IPS officers is crucial in such circumstances," said a retired officer who, while serving the CBI, was instrumental in cracking the case involving a legislator in north India in 1989.

The SIT head, Shashidhar, is a 1994-batch IPS officer of the Gujarat cadre. He held several key positions in the State, including as Police Commissioner of Vadodara and Deputy Commissioner of Police. He joined the CBI in February. Gambhir is a 2004-batch officer from the same cadre. She joined the Central agency in 2016 and has been part of teams probing important cases like the illegal mining scam in Uttar Pradesh, the Srijan scam in Bihar, the Vijay Mallya case, and the AgustaWestland scam. Yadav, a recipient of the Police Medal, was involved in the investigation of the Vyapam scam, the Commonwealth

Games scam, and the Shopian rape and murder case. Prasad, an officer from the 2007 batch, was earlier posted with the Delhi Police where she served as the Deputy Commissioner of Police of Shahdara. She has been involved in the investigation of many cases of heinous crimes and online financial frauds. She joined the CBI last year.

While Rhea's plea was sub judice, the CBI team started examining Sushant's family members. Following a go-ahead from the Supreme Court on August 19, the team reached Mumbai where the Defence Research and Development Organisation guest house became its workspace.

In its order, the Supreme Court observed that as both States were making allegations of political interference against each other, the legitimacy of the investigation had come under a cloud.

"These developments unfortunately have the propensity to delay and misdirect the investigation. In such a situation, there is reasonable apprehension of truth being a casualty and justice becoming a victim," it said. The CBI probe was approved by the Court to "ensure public confidence in the investigation and to do complete justice in the matter". Since then, the agency has questioned Rhea and several others multiple times to verify their claims.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh representing Sushant's family said, "It is definitely abetment of suicide. It could also be murder. We are not ruling out murder because the person who opened the room and claimed to have lowered the body, Siddharth, used to be Sushant's friend and he used to say Rhea spoilt Sushant's life. When the FIR was registered and he was not named as an accused, he started supporting Rhea. The way he has turned around, there are several aspects to it. The family was not present at the moment on June 14. Siddharth is a photographer. He could have taken a photograph on his phone of the body, of the lock-wala, but he didn't. Even before the FIR he would say Rhea made Sushant commit suicide. Such a person cannot be trusted. The whole story of what he saw is his version and there is no corroboration."

Advocate Satish Maneshinde appearing for Rhea said, "She has been charged with abetment of suicide. Proximate to the time, the factors that were there in the mind of the deceased are taken into consideration. Rhea was not in the house from June 8 to June 14, the day Sushant died. She cannot be considered a person proximate to the cause of death. Sushant's sister Meetu was there; she should come and explain. The ED has found nothing so far."

A political game

Sushant's father's claim that he suspects foul play in his son's death provided a much-needed opportunity for the Opposition party in Maharashtra, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), to attack the ruling government. Soon after Singh filed the complaint

THE STRATEGY WAS VERY CLEAR
Make the Shiv Sena uncomfortable. Keep on hinting at a Yuva leader. Create an atmosphere where the government looks weak and vulnerable. The BJP also wanted to create infighting within the government.

AMEY TIRODKAR
Senior journalist

with the Patna Police, NCP chief Sharad Pawar's grand-nephew Parth Pawar met the Maharashtra Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh, and handed him a letter seeking a CBI inquiry into the case. Until then, BJP leaders were making the same demand and indirectly claiming the involvement of a young leader.

In his letter, Parth said, "I join the youth of this nation in their collective mourning. I have received many emails, messages and phone calls from the youth of States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh seeking my intervention in this matter. I understand the youth of this nation demands a logical and fair closure of this case, so that justice is delivered to Sushant."

The letter made the coalition government look divided on this issue. NCP office-bearers immediately swung into damage control mode. Party spokesperson and the State Minority Affairs Minister, Nawab Malik, reiterated that the party stands with the Mumbai Police and the letter was Parth Pawar's personal opinion.

The letter gave the BJP an opportunity to jump into action. On July 30, senior leader and Bandra West MLA Ashish Shelar alleged that a "Yuva leader is pulling strings" in the investigation of the Mumbai Police.

Yuva Sena chief and State Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray is known for his close relations with personalities from Bollywood. Making an indirect reference to him, the BJP leadership alleged that there were inconsistencies in the police probe in the Sushant case.

"The strategy was very clear," said senior political journalist Amey Tirotkar. "Make the Shiv Sena uncomfortable. Keep on hinting at a Yuva leader. Create an atmosphere where the government looks weak and vulnerable. The NCP has been involved in the investigation of many cases of heinous crimes and online financial frauds. She joined the CBI last year."

While Rhea's plea was sub judice, the CBI team started examining Sushant's family members. Following a go-ahead from the Supreme Court on August 19, the team reached Mumbai where the Defence Research and Development Organisation guest house became its workspace.

As the Mumbai Police continued to delay filing an FIR in the case, they also failed to win the perception battle on the Internet, especially regarding claims of money laundering and the alleged involvement of a young Minister in the investigation. Their alleged non-cooperation with the Bihar Police team and the fact that they placed IPS officer Vinay Tiwari under quarantine raised suspicion, helping the BJP. "It is really strange why the Maharashtra government is coming under unnecessary suspicion by not allowing the Bihar Police to perform their duties," said Devendra Fadnavis, former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly.

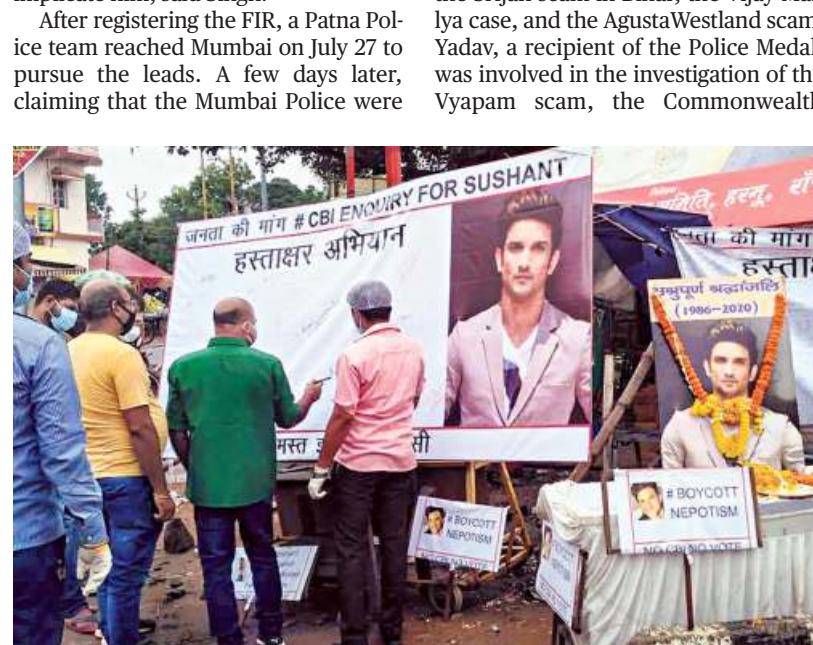
Mumbai Police Commissioner Parth Pawar clarified that the police found no money laundering in their probe. He said all possible assistance was extended to the Bihar Police, but public perception did not improve.

On August 12, NCP chief Sharad Pawar publicly slammed Parth Pawar and called him immature for seeking a CBI probe. He said, "There is no value to what he says. I have 100% trust in Maharashtra and the Mumbai Police. But if somebody wants to make a demand, then nobody can object." His statement reignited the speculation that all is not well within the Pawar family but the party downplayed the episode saying it was the family's internal matter.

Last week, however, the BJP found itself on the backfoot. Sandip Singh, who has been named in the drug cartel allegedly involved in the death of Sushant, was the producer of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's biopic and a beneficiary of the Vibrant Gujarat 2019 summit despite his company's poor balance sheets. Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said Singh was also accused of child sexual harassment in Mauritius. "Who helped him escape? He has made over 53 calls to a number saved as BJP Maharashtra in 2019. Who's his handler in the Maharashtra BJP," asked Sawant, demanding a CBI inquiry.

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said he has decided to forward the complaint demanding a probe into the relationship between Singh and the BJP to the CBI.

The agencies continue their probe into the death of Sushant amid immense social media pressure, endless debates on television, wild rumours, and a thicket of political allegations. Only a fair and thorough investigation will reveal the truth.



Soon after Singh filed the complaint

FROM PAGE ONE

Situation tense on LAC, says Army chief



Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane during his visit to review the security situation in Ladakh on Friday. ■ PTI

The talks aimed at de-escalating the situation on the South Bank, however, remained inconclusive as earlier days.

Gen. Naravane said the situation had been tense for the last three months but there had been continuous engagement with China both at the military and diplomatic levels.

Asked about his visit to Leh and forward areas, Gen. Naravane stated that he took a first-hand account of the situation on the ground and interacted with the personnel.

"They [personnel] are highly motivated. Their morale is high and they are fully prepared to deal with any situation that may arise," he asserted.

The Chief of the Army Staff urged all ranks to remain vigilant and maintain a high order of operational readiness, the Army said in

a statement. He was briefed by Lt. Gen. Y.K. Joshi, Northern Army Commander, and Lt. Gen. Harinder Singh, 14 Corps Commander, on the "state of operational preparedness and on the logistics arrangements for sustenance of forces in winters".

Army's pre-emptive step
Gen. Naravane's visit to Leh comes amid heightened tensions on the South Bank of Pangong Tso following "provocative movements" by Chinese troops, prompting the Indian Army to dominate some unoccupied heights in the Chushul sector as a pre-emptive measure.

India and China have deployed thousands of troops, tanks, artillery and fighter jets along the LAC since early May when Chinese troops moved into Indian side of the LAC and built defences at several locations.

Rajnath meets Chinese counterpart Wei

"I reaffirm today that India is committed to evolution of a global security architecture which will be open, transparent, inclusive, rules-based and anchored in international laws," Mr. Singh stated.

Engagement crucial
Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla meanwhile on Friday said there will be no compromise on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and asserted that it cannot be "business as usual" in bilateral ties unless there is peace in the border areas.

He also said it was important that even during the difficult moments of this "crisis" India has been communicating and engaging with China.

Speaking at an Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) webinar, Mr. Shringla said, "We remain firmly committed to making sure that we preserve our terri-

tory integrity... and we will not yield on that ground, we will remain firm and resolute. At the same time, we are open to resolving outstanding issues through dialogue."

"This [LAC situation] is one of the most serious challenges we have faced in many decades... we have not seen this magnitude of amassing of forces on the border also in recent years, is something that we have to take stock of," he said.

Naval exercise
In the Andaman Sea off the Strait of Malacca, Navies of India and Russia began the two day Indra 2020 war games on Friday. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Indra 2020 will be in a 'non-contact, at sea only' format, the Navy said.

"The primary aim of exercise Indra Navy-20 is to further consolidate interoperability," the Navy said.

(With inputs from PTI)

SC rejects State Ministers' plea against JEE, NEET

Ministers Moloy Ghatak of West Bengal, Dr. Rameshwar Oraon from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh's Amarjeet Bhagat, Maharashtra's Uday Ravindra Samant and Raghu Sharma and Balbir Singh Sidhu from Rajasthan and Punjab respectively had moved the Supreme Court through lawyer Sunil Fernandes.

The petition was filed shortly after a meeting was held among Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Chief Mi-

nisters of the six non-BJP-ruled States.

Dates fixed in hurry
The Ministers said the months from April to September 2020 were characterised by inaction, confusion, lethargy and inertia on the government's part. The Union government had suddenly woken up to hurriedly fix the exam dates.

"The remedy will prove to be worse than the disease itself," the petition had said.

India's COVID-19 cases cross 4 million

The Health Ministry's release pointed out that the daily COVID-19 positivity rate was just below 7.5% while cumulative positivity rate was less than 8.5%. The Ministry also told *The Hindu* that "those undertaking rapid antigen (are obviously those who have been exposed or showing symptoms etc.,) are followed up

even after they test negative and recommended RTPCR in case the physician sees a requirement for it."

The Ministry said that as per its data 2% of the COVID-19 cases are in ICUs and less than 3.5% of the active cases occupy oxygen supported beds currently.

(With inputs from Bindu Shajan Perappadan)

A.P. tally rises by over one lakh in just 10 days

Kerala cases register uptick after Onam; incidence in Telangana also rises; Karnataka shares trend of increase in cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With COVID-19 testing picking up in Kerala after the Onam lull, more new cases were also detected on Friday. The case graph, which had been on a steady climb in August had shown a dip during the Onam days, with case numbers down by about a thousand per day.

COVID-19

On Friday, with testing going up to 36,310, fresh cases reported also went up to 2,479.

The cumulative cases stood at 82,104, with more than half reported in August.

The official COVID-19 death toll went up to 326 on Friday, with the Health department confirming 11 more deaths. Three were in Thiruvananthapuram, two each in Malappuram, Thrissur and Kannur and one each at Kollam and Kasaragod.

In a complete inversion in

the infection pattern from early days, nearly 95% of new cases reported in the State had no travel history. Around 82% of deaths were also occurring among this category.

Andhra Pradesh marked the 10th successive day of over 10,000 new infections.

The tally increased by 1.04 lakh since August 26, representing 22% of the total. On Friday, 10,776 new infections and 76 new deaths were reported.

The positivity rate of tests was at 17.22% during the period, way higher than the State's overall positivity rate. Also 816 patients died in the past 10 days. With 59,919 tests conducted in the past day, the overall tests figure was 30,65,694.

East Godavari, Nellore and Prakasam reported more than a thousand infections.

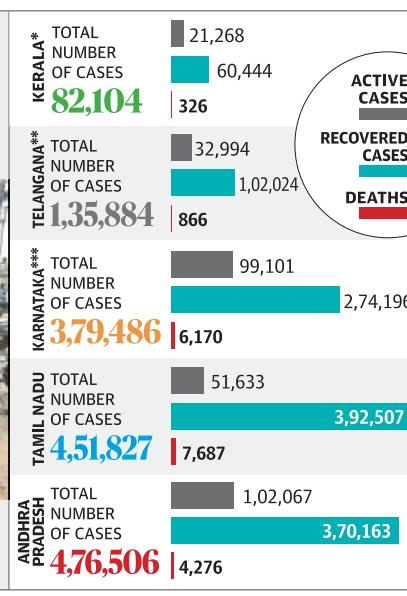
Telangana recorded a sharp rise in cases with 2,478 persons testing positive on Thursday. With this, the tally

Tough times

Festivals and weddings are becoming low-key affairs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



Few takers: Hindu priests waiting for people to engage their services at Chikkadpally in Hyderabad on Friday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL



*Kerala has a mismatch of 66 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons | **Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Thursday

***Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths

touched 1,35,884. Of the 2,478 cases reported, 247 were from Greater Hyderabad, while Rangareddy district recorded 171 cases, Nalgonda 135, Karimnagar 129 and Khammam 128 cases.

The Directorate of Public Health and Family Welfare

said 10 fatalities were reported on Thursday, taking the total to 866.

The bulletin said 62,543 samples were tested on Thursday and cumulative tests stood at 16,05,521.

There were 42,124 symptomatic cases and 93,760

asymptomatic cases.

Karnataka reported 9,280 cases on Friday, its tally going up to 3,79,486.

The death toll touched 6,170 on Friday with 116 more people dying. In the last one week alone, the State added 802 deaths to its

toll. Of the 99,101 active cases, 785 were being monitored in ICUs. Bengaluru Urban reported 2,963 cases and 25 deaths on Friday.

T.N. crosses 4.5 lakh cases

Tamil Nadu's overall tally of COVID-19 cases crossed 4.50 lakh with another 5,976 persons testing positive for the infection on Friday. Of the fresh cases, Chennai recorded 992 cases followed by Coimbatore with 595 cases and Cuddalore with 499 cases.

The State's overall tally was 4,51,827 of which 51,633 persons were under treatment, 3,92,507 discharged after treatment and 7,687 persons succumbed to the infection. On Friday, 6,334 persons were discharged. A total of 79 persons died in the State and this included 12 deaths in Chennai, six in Tiruvallur and five each in Salem and Villupuram.

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

Police arrest Kannada actor after searching her flat

She has been booked under various Sections of the NDPS Act; two others held for organising parties and dealing in drugs



In the net: Kannada film actress Ragini Dwivedi being brought to Central Crime Branch office on Friday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

After several hours of interrogation, the Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Friday arrested actor Ragini Dwivedi for her alleged involvement in a drug racket with links to the Kannada film industry. She has been charged under various Sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

Around 6.30 a.m., two police teams searched her flat in Yelahanka for three hours. They seized her phone, car keys and other material evidence.

The search was based on information gathered from Ravi Shankar, a second division assistant with the Jayanagar RTO, who was arrested on September 3 in connec-

tion with the case.

The CCB believes she destroyed evidence pertaining to the drug case and tried to hide her association with Ra-

vi. According to a CCB official, "Soon after the first notice was issued to Ragini to appear for questioning, she bought a new mobile phone and transferred all data, except WhatsApp messages. This was to destroy evidence comprising messages and other details."

According to the police, she had deleted details from her phone, including a WhatsApp phone call and conversation, which could have established her link with Ravi Shankar.

"We are trying to retrieve

the deleted data," said a senior police officer.

The actor's name cropped up during the course of the investigation into the involvement of actors and singers in a recent drug bust, which involved party drugs like ecstasy and LSD. The police had issued a notice to the ac-

tress to report for questioning on September 3, which she did not comply with.

"We obtained vital information and sought court permission to carry out the raid," the officer added.

The raid came a day after the police arrested Ravi Shankar, who is reportedly a close associate of Ragini.

The police also arrested

Drug link suspected in gold smuggling case

Close links between suspects: NCB

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Customs Department has moved court for permission to record the statements of the suspects in the diplomatic baggage gold smuggling case in connection with the recent high-profile drug bust in Karnataka.

Referring to the Health Minister's statement that the government would take over 50% of beds in private hospitals, the Bench remarked that no concrete steps seem to have been taken in that direction.

It was not sufficient to say that private hospitals had agreed to give beds; there should be clear understanding on such crucial decisions, the Bench said.

The bench directed Advocate General B.S. Prasad to give a report on the action taken by government on earlier directions of the HC on COVID-19-related petitions.

president K. Firoz charging that the name of Bineesh Kodiyeri, the son of Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, had figured in a court filing related to the case.

Mr. Firoz alleged that one of the suspects in the case was closely associated with Mr. Kodiyeri.

The politician's son later clarified that he did not know of the involvement of his friend in drug rackets.

The case took a turn with the NCB reportedly sharing third party information with the Customs Department. The NCB allegedly told the agency that some of the accused in the drug case had associated closely with persons named as suspects in the UAE Consulate-linked gold smuggling case.

The anti-drug investigation became a politically contentious topic in Kerala with Muslim Youth League

IN BRIEF



2 injured as crude bombs explode in Kannur

Two persons were injured when crude bombs exploded at Ponniam in Kathirur here in Kerala on Friday. The police suspect that the men were making the bombs when the blast occurred.

The condition of 27-year-old Rameesh is said to be critical.

Special virus norms for Kerala Assembly bypolls
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Steps will be taken for holding the byelections in Kerala's Kuttanad and Chavara Assembly constituencies in line with the special guidelines issued for conducting election during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Teeka Ram Meena said here on Friday.

2 quarry workers in A.P. killed as earth caves in Chittoor

Two workers of a stone quarry were killed on the spot when a huge mass of earth caved in near the Kurabakota mandal headquarters, 150 km from here, in Andhra Pradesh on Friday. The workers – Senthil, 35, of Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, and Chilli, 32, from Khurda Road in Odisha – were collecting granite chips when the accident happened.

Look into pricing of N95 masks: Karnataka HC
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Friday directed both the Union and State governments to examine the need to introduce a measure to regulate the price of N95 masks. It said that there was a need to ensure their availability even to common citizens as there was a steep rise in COVID-19 cases.

D.J. Halli riots were pre-planned, says fact-finding panel

Locals were involved in execution of the violence; prominent Hindus in the area were targeted'



Ground study: Members of the panel submitting the report to Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa in Bengaluru on Friday.

said, "The mob specifically targeted certain prominent Hindus in the area."

'Communally motivated'

After interacting with several victims, police personnel and prominent residents of the affected areas of D.J. Halli and K.G. Halli in Pulakeshinaagar constituency in Bengaluru, said the incidents were pre-planned and communally motivated.

Its members submitted the report to Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday.

In the violence that broke out on August 11, following an inflammatory Facebook post against Islam, Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivas Murthy's house was gutted and

INTERVIEW | VINAY SAHASRABUDDHE

'M.P. is known for a strong BJP base'

State cadre, new entrants recognise mutuality: party V-P

NISTULA HEBBAR

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) vice president (V-P) and Madhya Pradesh 'prabhati' (in charge) for the party, Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, speaks on the party's prospects in the State by-elections, which are crucial for the survival of the Chouhan government.

The Election Commission (EC) has said that it would be conducting by-polls to 65 Assembly and one Lok Sabha seat alongside the Bihar Assembly polls. What is the BJP's state of preparation for the 27 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh?

Well, our election preparation started from the day these seats became vacant. Madhya Pradesh is known for a very strong organisational base of the BJP for the last many decades and that continues.

Now that our government is well-settled in the saddle



C Kamal Nath was 'coterie Nath', Shivraj Singh Chouhan is people's Chief Minister

and days of crass injustice under the previous rule are over, party organisation is further galvanised and enthusiastic.

The party is facing an incongruous situation where workers will have to campaign for candidates who they campaigned against in 2018, as rebel Congressmen had shifted to the BJP in February. How is the party going to handle that?

Our party workers know that it was due to the new en-

trants that BJP rule was restored. On the other hand these new entrants – mostly the likely candidates – are well aware that their victory depends upon the proactive grassroots level work of basically the traditional BJP workers and supporters. This mutuality is now realised by one and all.

We are working to bridge the gaps, and cementing the ties. After all, when we meet Jyotiraditya-jji (former Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia), we recall Rajmataji (late Vijayaraje Scindia).

What will be the high points of the campaign considering the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country?

Three things – we have to convince people that we cannot sacrifice our democratic duties even when we face a dreaded disease. In a 'pandemic versus people' fight, people will have to win, and hence, while observing personal distance, we have to vote to ensure that people win.

Secondly, people have realised the difference that

the six-months rule of BJP has made. Kamal Nath was 'coterie Nath', Shivraj Singh Chouhan is people's Chief Minister.

Thirdly, after having taken the State out of the 'bimaru' [an acronym for the economically poor Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh] sphere, we have a duty to work to be a developed State, and for that, our plans are already being worked on. The new agriculture policy and new employment initiatives are a testimony to these.

Do you think that after Jyotiraditya Scindia's move to BJP from the Congress, the 'palace versus the rest' politics of the Gwalior-Chambal belt is over?

Firstly, what you are describing was a point in a perception war. It is now a thing of the past.

We always draw inspiration from Rajmataji, a founding member of the BJP, and currently we are working with Jyotiraditya-jji, and I am sure the future of this entire Gwalior-Chambal region is bright.

Massive efforts on to douse oil tanker blaze off Sri Lanka coast

India deploys vessels, two Dornier aircraft

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Naval vessels from India and Sri Lanka continued their efforts for the second day on Friday to douse the fire that broke out on a large oil tanker off Sri Lanka's east coast, amid fears of a possible oil spill. A Filipino crew member was killed in the fire, following an explosion in the engine room of MT New Diamond, while 23 others have been rescued, authorities said.

According to the Sri Lankan Navy, nine vessels from the two countries, including three tugboats, were engaged in the firefighting operation that had so far prevented the flames from spreading to the cargo onboard.

"It is currently parallel to the land. There are no naked flames, only white smoke. The Indian and Sri Lankan vessels are trying their best to contain the fire and tow the vessel further away from



Raging flames: An Indian Coast Guard ship battling the fire on the crude oil tanker, some 25 nautical miles off Sri Lanka's southeast coast, on Friday. ■ AFP

the coast," Navy spokesman Captain Indika de Silva told *The Hindu* on Friday.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said that its ship *Shau*-

rya was coordinating the fire-fighting and rescue operation with the master of the burning vessel. To augment the ongoing efforts, the ICG has deployed additional ships with pollution res-

ponse equipment.

"Under the inter-governmental, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, the ICG has taken the lead in the efforts," an official told *The Hindu*. Two Dornier aircraft have also been deployed from India to assist the efforts.

(With inputs from Dinakar Peri in New Delhi)

IN BRIEF

Dharavi's COVID-19 cases rise by 10 to touch 2,810

MUMBAI

Dharavi's COVID-19 tally rose to 2,810, with 10 new cases being recorded on Friday. "Of the total number of patients, 2,432 have recovered and were discharged from hospitals," an official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said. Dharavi now has 98 active cases. G North ward, which includes areas like Dadar and Mahim along with Dharavi, has so far reported 7,820 positive cases. Of them, 2,683 are from Dadar and 2,337 from Mahim, the official said.

291 ITBP personnel get DG rolls for gallantry

NEW DELHI

As many as 291 ITBP personnel were accorded the Director General (DG) commendation rolls and discs "for their gallant actions during the face-offs and border skirmishes that took place in May and June in Eastern Ladakh," the Central Armed Police Force deployed along the China border said in a statement on Friday.

Man shot dead outside bank, ₹1.15 cr. looted

IMPHAL

A man was shot dead and ₹1.15 crore looted in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Friday, police said. Arambam Ranjan Meitei, employed with an agency appointed by the State Bank of India to load cash in its ATMs, was shot dead outside the bank's main branch at 11 a.m., they said. The incident happened when he was on the way to load cash in 16 ATMs, police said. PTI

Women police can save J&K children: PM

They can stop them from taking the wrong path'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said women police officers could play a pivotal role in preventing children of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) from taking the 'wrong path'.

"We have to work towards stopping children from joining the wrong path. Women officers could counsel their mothers and bring back the children to mainstream. Women force can help in stopping children in their tracks," he stated.

Mr. Modi was addressing the 'Dikshant' ceremony or passing out parade of the Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNA) through videoconference.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Minister of State G. Kishan Reddy and Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla joined the event from Delhi.

131 officers pass out

In all, 131 IPS officers, including 28 women, concluded their two-year training on Friday. Mr. Modi interacted with some of the IPS probationers, and asked them about their background and education.

SC asks CBSE to file affidavit on compartment exams

COVID-19 safety measures are in place, says Board

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) on Friday asked the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to file an affidavit detailing its scheme for conducting compartment exams for Classes 10 and 12 by the end of September.

The Board assured a Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar that necessary precautions against the pandemic have been taken. The number of exam centres have been more than dou-



bled from 575 to 1,278. Only 12 students will be accommodated in an exam hall meant for 40. The Board said a notification would be out later in the day.

Nearly a lakh students for Class 10 and over 80,000 for Class 12 are expected to take these exams.

The court directed the CBSE to file its affidavit by

September 7. It listed the case for September 10. The Bench was dealing with a plea filed by Anika Samvedi to postpone the exams due to the health crisis.

The court, however, asked whether delaying the exams would help students in the long run. "Where do you stand without the exams? Is there any other methodology contemplated by the CBSE?" Justice Khanwilkar asked.

Nearly a lakh students for Class 10 and over 80,000 for Class 12 are expected to take these exams.

The court directed the CBSE to file its affidavit by

No action against judge accused of harassment

SC sees 'a practice' in levelling of charges

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Court had consented to an inquiry into the allegations by the Gender Sensitisation Internal Complaint Committee. The complaint dates back to March 2018.

"Despite a categorical finding of 'no evidence' and 'no material to proceed in the matter', the GSICC in an *volte face* action recommended disciplinary action against the petitioner as well as the complainant dehors the mandate of law contained in Sections 10, 11 and 13 of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013," said the plea filed by

the court.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde made the oral remarks while staying a disciplinary inquiry against a district judge who was accused of sexual harassment by a woman judicial officer in Madhya Pradesh.

The Bench also directed the Madhya Pradesh High Court Registrar General to file a response. The High

Kaziranga set to be expanded by 3,053 hectares

Assam govt. approves addition of areas straddling Nagaon and Sonitpur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has approved the addition of 30.53 sq. km (3,053 hectares) to the 884 sq. km Kaziranga National Park.

The additional areas straddling two districts – Nagaon and Sonitpur – would make the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) grow to 1,085.53 sq. km. The core area of the KNPTR is 430 sq. km.



Scaling up: The new areas include regions that are vulnerable to encroachment. ■ FILE PHOTO

A Forest Department spokesperson said preliminary notifications were issued for seventh, eighth and ninth additions on Thursday.

"The additions include

encroachment-evicted areas

and suitable wildlife habitat on river islands (sandbars) that are vulnerable to encroachment. It is a move to consolidate the wildlife areas

anticipating better wildlife

conservation and reduction in human-wildlife negative

interactions in the future," said KNPTR director P. Sivakumar.

He added that the three

additions are habitat corridors and would help provide connectivity to Orang and Nameri National Parks

and Biswanath districts.

"Of course, we will need more manpower to guard the additional areas," he said.

Wildlife activists appreciated the expansion but pointed out that the rhino habitat is yet to be handed over possession of 1,461.59 hectares of land comprising the second, third, fifth and sixth additions in Golaghat and Biswanath districts.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13032

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IN BRIEF

HC overturns ban on Assamese TV serial

GUWAHATI The Gauhati High Court on Thursday set aside a two-month ban on the telecast of Assamese serial *Begum Jaan* by the Assam police while advising the channel to delete before airing any content that may "harm the religious sentiment of any community". The Guwahati Commissioner of Police on August 24 suspended the serial following a series of complaints that it hurt religious sentiments.

Maharashtra varsities asked to submit exam plan by Sept. 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Friday asked the universities in the State to submit by September 7 their detailed plan of conducting final year examinations. State Minister for Higher and Technical Education Uday Samant said while universities were free to chalk out their own exam schedule, they have to announce the results by October 31.

"The State has asked the universities to submit by September 7 their detailed plan of conducting examinations. This would enable the government to hold a meeting with the disaster management committee to decide on the steps needed to be taken against the novel coronavirus spread during the exam," he said.

Considering the number of COVID-19 cases in the State, the government had sought cancellation of the final year exams.

"The students who are going abroad for higher studies will be getting provisional certificate from their respective colleges and institutes. Several colleges abroad have shown willingness to accept such provisional certificate as a document for confirming the admission," Mr. Samant said. Students are allowed to secure admission in a foreign institute of their choice first and submit their final year results later, the Minister added.

MPs can enter House only with COVID-19 negative certificate

Norms issued by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariat; test needs to be done 72 hours before session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All Members of Parliament should have a COVID-19 negative certificate to enter the premises during the monsoon session that begins on September 14.

A set of guidelines have been issued by both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Secretariat with the recommendations of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Health Ministry.

This test needs to be done 72 hours before the session

Kerala tops in care for children

Report brought out by non-governmental organisation measures health, nutrition

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Kerala, Goa, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Mizoram are among the top five States for well-being of children, according to a report brought out by non-governmental organisation Mobile Creches and launched by Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on Friday.

The young child outcomes index measures health, nutrition and cognitive growth with the help of indicators such as infant mortality rate, stunting and net attendance at the primary school level. It identifies eight States that have scores below the country's average: they are Assam, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The index is part of the 'State of the Young Child' in India report released the 50-year-old NGO, which works in the field of early childhood care and development by ensuring creche services at construction sites and

No kidding!

The index score was computed using indicators such as poverty rate, immunisation coverage, female literacy, sex ratio and percentage of households with protected water supply. India's average score was **0.585**.

Best-performing States		Worst-performing States	
State	Index score (2015-16)	State	Index score (2015-16)
Kerala	0.858	Bihar	0.452
Goa	0.817	Uttar Pradesh	0.46
Tripura	0.761	Jharkhand	0.5
Tamil Nadu	0.731	Madhya Pradesh	0.526
Mizoram	0.719	Chhattisgarh	0.555

slum settlements across several cities. The index has been constructed for two time periods (2005-2006 and 2015-2016) to enable inter-State comparisons as well as provide an idea of change over time.

The report also developed another index called the young child environment index to understand the policy and environment enablers that influence a child's well-being. According to the environment index,

Kerala, Goa, Sikkim, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh secured the top five positions. It uses five policy enablers that influence child well-being outcomes, including poverty alleviation, strengthening primary healthcare, improving education levels, safe water supply and promotion of gender equity.

The environment index was constructed for 2015-2016 only due to limitations of data availability. The eight States that have a below av-

erage score on the outcomes index also fared poorly on this one.

Public spending

The report calls for an increase in public spending on children. According to its analysis on expenses towards child nutrition, healthcare, education and other necessary protection services, India spent ₹1,723 per child in 2018-2019, an amount that is insufficient and fails to reach the entire eligible population.

The report points out that while the budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Women and Child Development has seen a year-on-year increase, all the additional funds have been allocated towards nutrition delivery under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). While the population of children under six years of age is 158.8 million, the ICDS covers only 71.9 million children as calculated from the total number of beneficiaries across States.

Doctor, aide arrested for giving forged test reports

Police act on complaint from lab

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 34-year-old doctor and his associate have been arrested for allegedly preparing forged COVID-19 test reports, police said on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Thakur said the accused had been identified as Dr. Kush Bihari Parashar and his associate Amit Singh. They had forged at least 75 reports.

Police said they received a complaint on August 30 from a noted testing lab in Hauz Khas regarding forgery of a COVID-19 report with their centre's name on it. Based on the complaint, a case on charges of cheating, forgery and fraud was registered.

Police said a person who ran a business of providing nursing staff to people asked Dr. Parashar for COVID-19 tests of his two nurses before they were hired. The doctor sent the reports to the person on WhatsApp in PDF format who further

sent the reports to his client who wanted to hire the nurse.

The client spotted a mistake in the name and contacted the testing lab straight for her query on the name and asked them to send a new report with corrected name. The lab stated that they had no record of testing the nurse.

During investigation, it was found that the doctor would recommend people for COVID-19 testing after which he would collect the sample himself or his associate Amit would. The duo wouldn't send the samples for testing and make forged test reports of centres which the patients desired, police said.

Police said a person who ran a business of providing nursing staff to people asked Dr. Parashar for COVID-19 tests of his two nurses before they were hired. The doctor sent the reports to the person on WhatsApp in PDF format who further

SC nod for clubbing U.P. Tablighi cases

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to the consolidation of multiple cases being heard against foreign Tablighi Jamaat members across Uttar Pradesh.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar asked the State government to approach the Allahabad High Court for a decision to specify the number of courts which can hear the trial. Right now, the trials are spread across various judicial zones in the State.

'Identify trial courts' The Bench also asked the High Court to identify the trial courts within a week. Once identified, the trials should be completed expeditiously within eight weeks, the Bench said.

The court was considering the pleas made by foreign nationals facing trials across U.P. A similar plea for consolidation made by members in Bihar was allowed by the apex court.



Under scanner: Rhea Chakraborty's brother Showik leaves after questioning by the CBI in Mumbai. ■ PTI

Zaid disclosed that he ran an eatery shop in Bandra, which was not doing well since the lockdown. He then got into peddling drugs

NCB OFFICIAL

an alleged drug peddler. "Zaid disclosed that he ran an eatery shop in Bandra, which was not doing well since the lockdown. He then got into peddling drugs, particularly bud, through which he earned a substantial amount of money," an NCB official had said.

Drug dealer's link

Based on Mr. Vilatra's purported disclosures, the NCB arrested Mr. Parihar and found that he was allegedly linked to the case registered on the basis of information received from the Enforcement

ment Directorate (ED). The NCB will also examine Ms. Chakraborty.

During the money laundering probe into the Sushant case, ED officials retrieved several mobile chats indicating procurement, transportation and consumption of banned drugs by some suspects.

The CBI, which is probing the allegations of abetment of suicide, conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust, theft, wrongful restraint and confinement, on Friday again examined the chief executive officer of a talent management company, in which Disha Salian worked.

Disha was allegedly hired for Sushant through Ms. Chakraborty. She fell from a 14-floor flat in Malad and died on June 8, following which the actor expressed a fear that he might be framed, as alleged.



Caught in crossfire: Civilians moving to safety during the encounter in Baramulla district on Friday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

3 militants killed in encounter in Kashmir

Three security personnel injured

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Three unidentified militants were killed and three security personnel, including an Army Major, were injured in an encounter in north Kashmir's Baramulla on Friday.

"A fire fight started after the evacuation of civilians from the cordoned off area in Patti. Three terrorists were killed in the operation.

"One officer was also injured during the operation and is stable," a Srinagar-based Army spokesperson said.

The injured officer is of the Major rank. Two personnel of the police's Special Operation Group (SOG) were also injured during the encounter in Yadipora village of Baramulla's Patti area. The gunfight had erupted earlier on Friday morning when a search party of the security forces was fired upon by militants hiding in the area.

In south Kashmir, a gunfight between militants and security forces was reported in Pulwama district. "The firing took place during a search operation in Babhaura village of Pulwama. The

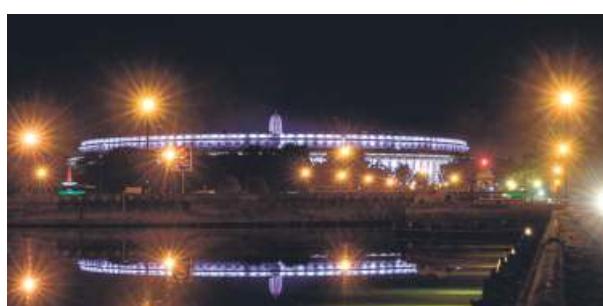
hiding militants fired indiscriminately," an official said.

The police also busted a hideout of the Jaish-e-Mohammed in the Buccho-Kamla forests of Tral area in Pulwama. "Incriminating materials, including IED [improvised explosive device] material, were recovered," the police said.

Srinagar attack: 5 held

The police have arrested five people and seized four vehicles, including ambulances used by militants, to carry out an attack in the Pandach area near Srinagar on May 20, which left two Border Security Force jawans dead. "Four vehicles, including two private ambulances, a bike and a Scooty, were seized. The ambulance was used to transport the militants from Bijbehara to Pandach, Srinagar, while the two-wheelers were used to carry out the attack and escape after looting weapons from the injured jawans," the police said.

The police said all militants involved in the attack have been killed in different operations in the Valley.



All set: The new norms were issued after consultations between the RS Chairman and the LS Speaker ■ PTI

Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

They individually also met senior officials from the Home Ministry, the Health Ministry and the ICMR. The members will have to wear masks at all times, even while participating in a debate.

"MPs would be encouraged to avoid going out of Parliament in the course of a day's proceedings unless necessary to avoid contracting infection externally," the guidelines say.

Hard copies of parliamentary papers such as list of business, copies of bills, ordinances and other documents also have been discontinued. The copies of these documents will be sent electronically.

MPs have been requested to avoid calling any visitors to Parliament unless absolutely necessary. In the pre-pandemic times, the MPs used to arrange huge groups from their constituency to visit and school children also were routinely brought around for a tour of Parliament.

The Parliament canteen will offer only packed meals, tea and coffee during the course of the session. This, too, will be given in disposable containers.

The loudspeakers broadcast educational modules every morning in 50 schools in Sehore district



Learning for all: School students listening to a radio programme in Sehore district. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor batted for an extension of the terms of the present committees.

"The committees appointed last September were essentially unable to function normally from the third week of March and have not been able to do a meaningful year's work. I would certainly suggest that it is worth considering extending their tenures to compensate for this lost time especially since by convention, the Committee chairs tend to serve for the entire life of Parliament," he said.

Many panels have not been able to complete reports on the subjects they were working on.

Every morning, the entire Dhaba village of Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district transforms into a classroom for an hour. Parents and children study together — sitting cross-legged in their courtyards or engaged in chores every morning, while listening attentively to English lessons and stories broadcast on a loudspeaker.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools shut, hobbling the learning of students. But that of residents, including primary and middle school students from close to nearly 50 schools of the Nasrullaganj block, has been democratised — all one needs is to pay attention and listen. "Education is first about listening and broadcasting lessons publicly to

bolstering the skill among everyone," said 40-year-old Santosh Dhanware, Block Academic Coordinator.

About 70% of the around 25,000 primary and middle school students in the block don't have access to smartphones, in vogue as a medium for e-learning as schools remain shut. Instead, educational modules on radio from 11 a.m. to noon broadcast through loudspeakers is helping students stay home during the pandemic and continue learning, besides widening the net to cover even elders, said Mr. Dhanware.

"Teachers can't visit

schools every day now, so the role of guardians assumes greater significance," he explained. And most parents in the block have never stepped inside a school, nor

can they read. "Several students are first generation learners in schools, so education of parents along with them is important as well. They could guide them."

An elderly man in the vil-

lage said through English lessons he had learnt the meaning of 'thank you' and 'sit down'. "I once visited my manager, who said — 'sit down'. I thought he was asking me to come later," the man said.

The radio modules also include moral stories, which adults particularly enjoy, said Mr. Dhanware. "Folklore and stories have been part of the tribal culture here, and it's easier to make

Tharoor bats for term extension to make up for time lost

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha Secretariat is mulling over changing the rules governing the standing committees' tenure to make it two years from the present one so that the panels have enough time to work on the subjects selected by them.

The tenure of all standing committees end on September 11, and they can't hold deliberations till new panels are formed.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu, sources said, was keen on amending the rules to give a fixed two-year tenure. However, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has to agree to it.

Two options are being looked at: one, to extend the



Venkaiah Naidu
term of the panels for a year, and second, to form new committees with a fixed tenure of two years.



Instapick

Big Butterfly Month: This September, expect your timelines to be filled with Indian butterflies. Cartoonist and illustrator Rohan Chakravarty (@green_humour) created a comic to mark the return migration of the Blue Tiger. Follow @bigbutterflymonth on Instagram, upload butterfly sightings on ifoundbutterflies.org, and join butterfly walks with @bombaynaturalhistorysociety.



Talking point

PUBG Ban: Following TikTok, the next Gen Z group to be affected is the mobile gaming community in India, as the government has included PUBG in a list of 118 banned Chinese apps. The multiplayer game was developed by Bluehole, a South Korean firm, but was made popular on mobile by Chinese tech giant Tencent. All eyes are now on an Indian alternative, Scarfall – but will it be a lost battle?

Pick of the week

Concerts, pop-ups and other events you just can't miss.



Right at home

Popular décor store **The Purple Turtles** has moved to the **Amethyst** premises on Whites Road, Chennai, with their sister brands Oorja (lighting) and Beruru (garden accessories). The Bengaluru-based firm is offering a flat 20% discount till September 15. From 11 am to 7 pm. #9811103775. For international shopping, **ThaiGroove**, Thailand's first virtual multi-brand show, brings together 100 vendors on one platform. Shop food, well-being, furniture, fashion and more. From September 15 to 17 on thaigroove.com.

Fashion and a cause

Multi-brand designer boutique **Collage** is showcasing Paradisa, a collection of floral *kurtas* and *shararas* by designer **Gopi Vaid**. In a bright colour palette, the line features simple silhouettes with embellished embroidery, shell and sequin details. Till September end. #28291443. **DesignOne Online**, a flagship initiative of Sahachari Foundation, puts high-end homeware brands and NGOs on the same platform. An extension of their not-for-profit designer shopping event, designonebysfe.com launches on October 19.

House of fans

How well do you know your favourite celebrity? Find out on **TrueFan**, a newly-launched platform that allows fans to connect with A-listers from Bollywood, including Ranveer Singh, Tiger Shroff, Kareena Kapoor and Hritik Roshan. For a minimal fee of ₹50, users can answer a series of fun questions around the life of their preferred star, and the winner stands a chance to win a personal interaction or personalised video message from them, while other participants get cashbacks. Details: truefan.in.

Art from the heart

Did you know that Arshad Warsi, Sonu Sood and Chitrangada Singh had an artistic streak? Smile Foundation, with Lay's, has launched **Artwork for Heartwork**, bringing together these celebrities as well as leading artists such as Aniruddh Mehta, Sabeena Karnik and Srishita Gupta Roy. The aim is to generate funds for hygiene kits for farmers, shopkeepers, truck drivers and daily wagers. So far, close to 35,000 kits have been distributed. Artwork for sale on artandfound.co. Details on theheartwork.support.

LFW calls eco-warriors

The second edition of **Lakmé Fashion Week's Circular Changemakers** is calling for applications from start-ups working with sustainable and alternative materials. Six applicants will be part of a bootcamp led by industry experts, and will focus on giving them visibility and teaching them how to raise capital and create a viable business model. And on **Sustainable Fashion Day** at LFW, they will pitch to a panel of investors. Last date for entries is September 15. Details: circulatdesignchallenge.net.

Learning to film

The third edition of **Chennai Photo Biennale**, which was slated to take place this year, has been officially moved to December 2021. The theme and the first list of artists for CPB3 will be announced on December 9, 2020, via a virtual event. Meanwhile, 14- to 18-year-olds with an interest in filmmaking can sign up for **#TeenFilmAcademy**, a five-week online filmmaking workshop. From September 8 to October 9, on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4.30 pm to 6 pm. Details: chennaiphotobiennale.com

Watch with Weekend

Watch the video interviews of this week's cover stars, **Abhay Deol** and **Dulquer Salmaan**. Deol was in conversation with film journalist Karishma Upadhyay on his upcoming OTT show, why Bollywood loves to hate him and his new-found love for painting. Actor, and now producer, Salmaan spoke to *The Hindu*'s Praveen Sudwan about his upcoming movies, working from home in the film industry and his lockdown life. Catch both interviews on *weekend.thehindu.com* and on *IGTV @thehinduweekend*.

E-STORE EDIT

Camphor chests and DIY jackets

Post-pandemic retail means more e-commerce platforms. This week, we review three newly launched fashion and design stores

valaya.com



JJ Valaya was possibly one of the first Indian designers with a website back in the day. So the relaunch of his e-commerce platform last week brought with it high expectations. For now, these are met with gorgeous photographs (mostly by Valaya) and memories with a three-decade timeline. And the option of stocking up soon on luxury interiors – tapestry, carpets, furniture and designer tiles. But first, there are his couture lehangas (price on request) and sherwanis as well as gilets, jackets and the new Valaya Phoenix belts (₹9,900). Valaya regulars will be happy to take stock of the Tabriz collection, which celebrates mystical Persia. And his saris (₹1,24,500) and dresses with the trademark black and white chevron print borrowed from Rajasthani architecture. Jhalamand House, his cotton and linen menswear collection

comes just in time for post-pandemic weddings. And Couture Week (September 18), where Valaya will be participating as usual.

Up next: The launch of the pret version of Valaya's popular saris ('made to order') Alika jacket. IKA is reversible and offers a choice of colour, print, embroidery and piping. Clients can book 30-minute online appointments for customisation.

evoluzionestyle.com

SUSANNA MYRTLE LAZARUS

"When the lockdown was first announced, everything we knew about retail was turned on its head," says Ahaanaa Malhotra. The 22-year-old daughter of Atul and Tina Malhotra of multi-brand designer boutique Evoluzione spearheaded their e-commerce move, joining brother Arnav (who curated a menswear edit last year) and sister Ananya (a jewellery designer) in the family business. The result is a minimalist site that went live in late August.

Evoluzione is the latest multi-brand fashion store to go online during the pandemic, following Le Mill and Ensemble. Known for their bespoke and bridal wear, the Evo Edits reflect those categories. Featured designers include IRL bestsellers like Anamika Khanna, Sabyasachi and Rohit Gandhi + Rahul Khanna with brands like Bodice, Lovebirds and Kshitij Jalori for everyday wear. Sneha Arora and Koai have entry-level options in the ₹5,700 to ₹7,500 range. While the 'price on request' format continues for some occasion wear, the selection is wide ranging, from saris to co-ord sets. The menswear section has considerably fewer designers, but the usual suspects like Rajesh Pratap Singh and Rohit Bal share space with young brands like Countrymade.

Interestingly, a tidy collection of wellness products, like Indian borage honey from Pahadi Local or a spiced candle from Bombay Perfumery, have been added to the list. And styling gets a fillip with jewellery from Out



House and Isharya, and men's oxfords from Bridlen. The site may have a few niggles – the designers' names for the garments are not immediately visible, for example – but Ahaanaa explains that it is a precursor of a "more modern, sophisticated site that will be launched at the end of the year". And when you do fill up your shopping cart, you will be happy to know that payment options include current favourites like Paytm and UPI.

Up next: Athleisure and loungewear brands will be added to the site, and the online pantry will soon be stocked with gourmet brands.

baromarket.in

SURYA PRAPHULLA KUMAR
Srla Chatterjee, co-founder of now defunct Mumbai lifestyle store, Baro, has a large camphor chest in her home. "Friends and family call it my present box. They often raid it because I store all the things I bought that I thought were lovely [but not necessarily needed]," she says.

Her week-old online venture, Baro Market, is an extension of this present box. The site is simple, laid out in a grid format that is easy to navigate. As we scroll through the brands – 58 vendors (a mix of designers and craftspeople) showcasing everything from clothing and home décor to edibles – there are plenty of discoveries. A pen and quill brooch by Ab-synthe Design shares space with upcycled cushion covers and crop tops from Kolkata-based Sienna. Other pages reveal handmade soaps by Kaisori (with packaging featuring original artwork by miniature artists inspired by the Chitrashala in Ajmer's Bundi Fort), Shola art from West Bengal, pickles from Shillar House (that empowers women from the local community), and much more.

With each item chosen by Chatterjee, 56 – who enjoys "working with small designers who believe in small-batch, unique things" – the virtual mar-

ketplace's USP is its sensible pricing and the stories behind the products. "I believe if there aren't stories attached to things, they don't mean anything," says Chatterjee, who used to run the production house, High-light Films, before opening Baro in 2017. They are also working on small videos, where customers can watch the artisans in conversation.

Up next: A special bazaar with Goa-based Rangeela's home products. "We will also launch Padukas, who work with Maharashtra's Worli tribe to make products out of scrap fabric, such as toys and jackets."

Soaps at ₹300 and artwork



WOLF
Yellow Mask : CUSTOM
SHIPPING ONLY
Rs. 16,800.00



Affrodite
Shadow Box: Girl of twin beliefs : CUSTOM
SHIPPING ONLY
Rs. 35,000.00



White Hill Studio
Midnight in Marshobia
Raka Dinner Plates (Set of 6)
Rs. 6,600.00



Sienna
Funnel Galash
Rs. 400.00

YARN IT!

Breaking news! Or broken?

TV news channels work overtime to give 2020 a glow up it does not deserve

JANE DE SUZA

Good morning from today's news bulletin of calamity and catastrophe. And if there isn't any, don't worry, we will create some.

Breaking news! The biggest reveal, sensational in-depth reportage, absolutely never-seen-before footage of – WhatsApp messages. For the first time ever: WhatsApp messages! Remember, you see them only on our channel. Some of the latest messages are over three years old! Watch carefully while we build them into a government-toppling political scam. Politicians who have no connection to any persons in this case are demanding that the other apologises, resigns, names, shames, sanitises... We can see the devious hand of China in this. Or the head of Trump. If nothing else, rest assured, we can link it back to Nehru.

In other news, fires rage, causing grievous harm to... Next story please. Shift to our reporter who is in a flood-ravaged village, dangling

every 10 minutes. Rare footage of a finger.

In other news, Covid cases are spiralling... blah blah... Riots in the BLM movement. Lebanon explosion. Yawn. The economy is diving... Time for a commercial break!

Back to Belarus, JEE, potential vaccines blah, blah – Yesssss! Finally... A world-changing scoop, only on this channel. Someone visited this building that evening. In confidence, at risk to life and limb, from the heat of action, our repor-

ter reports it was a boy. Who came to retrieve his cricket ball. Oh! Or was he a drug dealer with Dubai mafia connections? Don't leave, viewers, we will be right back with more sensational reveals, created especially for you, right after these ads.

And that brings us to the end of this bulletin. Stay tuned. We will investigate, pursue every message, expose every finger, plug our own

political agenda non-stop, hold panels to shout over all our expert guests, storm people's privacy, conduct trials of our own, reach conclusions, hurl accusations, prove guilt and – all throughout – punish. We've solved it, the CBI should thank us for doing it all.

Our TRP is through the roof. Advertising money is pouring in. People are watching our news more than the matchmaking series. Team, take a bow. 2020's the best year ever.

Where Jane De Suza, author of *Flyaway Boy*, pokes her nose into our perfect lives.



■ SREEJITH R KUMAR

Demanding your attention



The actor-producer from a star family, with a strong social media presence, has the drive to experiment, and is now tackling the digital frontier

KARISHMA UPADHYAY

Unconventional. Original. Individualistic.

Conversations with actor and producer Abhay Deol are liberally peppered with these adjectives and it is no surprise for anyone familiar with his filmography. His next release, Sony LIV's *JL50* is a series based on a plane crash that's discovered decades after it went down.

The whodunit that also stars Pankaj Kapur and Piyush Mishra has elements of time travel. While the show is the 44-year-old's first attempt at serialised storytelling ("though it was shot like a film"), it is experimental and high-concept enough to fit right in with his past work. "It doesn't pander to the mainstream or a formula. It has got its own originality," is how he describes the show on a Zoom call from his home in Los Angeles.

No labels

In the early noughties, the buzzword in Bollywood was 'multiplex films' and Deol was the undisputed poster child of the indie film world. He might have debuted with Imtiaz Ali's sweet but predictable rom-com *Socha Na Tha* (2005), but his choices after that were anything but.

He played a North Indian migrant in Mumbai who misses the last train home in Sanjay Khanduri's black comedy *Ek Chalis Ki Last Local*; a government engineer and wannabe writer in Navdeep Singh's neo-noir film *Manorama: Six Feet Under* (2007); and a West Delhi con man in Dibakar Banerjee's *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye* (2008). In Anurag Kashyap's retelling of the age-old tale of tragic defeatism *Dev D* (2009), his performance as the scumbag Dev only cemented his position.

With Zoya Akhtar's *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011) and Banerjee's *Shanghai* (2012), he continued to cock a snook at the Bollywood establishment who couldn't figure out how to peg the youngest Deol in the business (Dharmendra is his uncle, and Sunny and Bobby his cousins).

MIA in Bollywood

In the last decade, however, though Deol tasted commercial success with *Raanjhanaa* (2013) and *Happy Bhag Jayegi* (2016), he took a wrong turn and has been mostly missing from our screens. The few releases – such as *Nanu Ki Jaan* (2016), *Chopsticks* (2018) – were duds. His reputation of being "painfully difficult to work with" could have contributed to his stumbling in showbiz. Navdeep Singh reminisced with HuffPost India recently about how the actor had "wanted to do artistic movies but also wanted the mainstream benefits... of being a 'Deol'". He would stay in a five-star hotel while the entire crew stayed in Paharganj for a film that was made on a very tight budget. [It is] also the reason a lot of his directors went away from him."

But Deol explains his absence as a function of industry mechanics. "My career really picked up when multiplexes were brand new. Just for a brief moment, there was more exhibition space and fewer products." As the advent of OTT has brought about another paradigm shift in the industry, he believes the tide is in favour of those like him who want to continue pushing the envelope. "OTT, unlike multiplexes, is an endless exhibition space. And they'll experiment more than what traditional Bollywood producers would do," he adds.

In the last few years, he's been trying to get his career back on track. He's turned producer (with films like Netflix's 2020 release *What Are the Odds?*) and now divides his time between Mumbai, Goa and LA. "I have executive produced a horror movie. It is an American film that releases at the end of the year. There's a project I'm working on as an actor as well, which

will be announced by the studio. I'm also developing an Indo-American film where the script's already been written, and I produce and act. I'm just having fun," he says.

The disruptor

The last 15 years might have been a rollercoaster, but Deol is not sure if he'd want to change anything if he gets a do-over. "Maybe five years ago I'd have considered it. Today I don't because of the freedom I have. I don't have the pressure of being in the Top 5. A lot of being a star is just holding on to that," he explains. This freedom has meant that he has never been afraid to stand up to the powers-that-be. Even if it has meant that people in the industry became wary of working with him. "If you want to continuously work in this business, then you should be friendly and approachable; you shouldn't come across as somebody with too many strong opinions because it is just going to be seen as arrogance," he says. In the past he has been vocal about issues like the wage gap, sexism, patriarchy and colourism. Last month, he addressed nepotism on Instagram (where he has over 7 lakh followers), stating how it is prevalent everywhere and "we need a cultural revolution". Most recently he shared a fan's observation that his film *Raanjhanaa* glorified sexual harassment, writing, "History will not look kindly at this film for its regressive message".

He's also carried the freedom, and his penchant for going against the grain, into his work as a producer – working with newcomers when even "big name directors rarely work with newcomers [except star kids]". His Netflix film, *What Are the Odds?*, starred newbie Karanvir Malhotra who recalls Deol having a "very mentor kind of vibe".

Whether it is on- or off-screen, Deol isn't afraid of challenging his audience. "They need to be led towards spaces that they've never seen before because film is a form of art and art can be provocative very easily. As a culture, we have the ability to be as provocative as anybody else in the world. But we are limited by the powers around us. I don't have to censor myself as much on OTT platforms as I would have had to in theatricals. At the same time, I still feel like if I would have pushed 70% provocation with a theatrical, with OTT it might be 80%. It is never a 100%. That would be too scandalous," he says, signing out with a laugh.

JL50 is now streaming on Sony LIV.

FOOD SPOT

The short menu at Dhar's, run by a homemaker, brings back memories of Kashmir and its landscape, as any good food does

The rustle of the Chinars in a dish



RAHUL VERMA

A foodie friend who is quite an expert on Kashmiri cuisine sent me a message a few days ago. It was about a new Kashmiri food delivery service. I went through the menu and was happy to note that it was not elaborate. A restricted menu in a small enterprise usually means good food. So I went through the list and decided that we'd have a Kashmiri meal one evening.

The delivery outfit is called Dhar's, and is run by a homemaker called Sunita Dhar. The vegetarian section has four dishes: *rajma*, *dum aloo*, *nadru yakni* and yellow *paneer*. The non-veg menu includes the region's much-loved *kabargah*, *rogan josh*, *kofta*, and *yakhni*.

The menu seemed good, as did the fact that it had two serving sizes – half and full plates – for most dishes. Half plates had four pieces of meat; the full plates had eight. We asked for a half plate of chicken *rogan josh* (₹260), a half plate of mutton *yakhni* (₹345), half plate of mutton *kofta* (₹375), half plate of *nadru yakni* (₹235) and a plate of *rajma* (₹215). I'd requested that the food be dropped at 7.30 pm, and it came almost on time, brought over by a genial gentleman.

We had a very nice dinner, indeed. I think I enjoyed the meat



At home Chicken rogan josh, mutton korma, rajma ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ta (not rounded pieces, as you'd expect in a *kofta* curry, but somewhat oblong, which is how the Kashmiris make it) had a bit too much salt in it. The *rajma* was, well, as *rajma* is – thick and creamy, but nothing to go ecstatic over. I enjoyed the *nadru* (lotus stem) *yakhni*, too. The *nadru* was fibrous, but the gravy again was delectable.

I enjoy Kashmiri food, and have fond memories of the delightful meals that I had in the Valley (especially the *rishtha* and duck with plum sauce that we'd had in a houseboat, cooked by a master chef). Kashmiri gravies are superb, flavoured as they are with dry ginger, fennel and Kashmiri red chillies. I also like the subtle difference between the Hindu and Muslim cuisine of the region. The latter uses garlic, while the former focuses on *hing*.

I also like the *kabargah* (₹375 for four mutton ribs), which the Muslims call *tabakmaaz*. This is a dish of ribs cooked in milk and spices – tender within and crisp outside. The chefs had told me that they boiled the meat first, and then fried it.

Dhar's food service – which started on August 27 – reaches most parts of the city. Place your order a day in advance (7042447677 and 9873782403); the payment must be done through online transfers.

The food brought back fond memories of happy times in a picturesque valley. I could almost see the Chinars trees.

The writer is a seasoned food critic.



HOUSEPROUD IN 5
Curves reign, with lamps inspired by tantric traditions and photo frames that sport the Taj dome

Lingams in the house

Bringing back that monogrammed bathrobe or fancy linen from your luxury hotel suite is frowned upon. But with Taj Hotels sharing some of their products, as part of their new online retail venture, here's your chance to stock up. We also have a bit of tantra, a hint of the wild and some architectural inspiration in our décor pick this week.

Compiled by Surya Praphulla Kumar



Quirk Box
Animal Kingdom Wallpaper
The fashion brand co-founded by creative entrepreneur Jayesh Sachdev is now bringing more design options under its umbrella – from branding to décor. While the art prints are noteworthy (Indian interpretations of iconic figures, such as 'Frida Devi'), we pick this fun wallpaper. Designed for kids' rooms, the whimsical print sports both barnyard and wild animals against an urban backdrop. On order, on thequirkbox.com

Ashiesh Shah

Kantilo Console

Here's another take on the *lingam*. The Mumbai-based architect-designer was inspired by Anish Kapoor's Taratantara (a site-specific work in the UK, where the sculptor incorporated a flour mill into his artwork) to create this hand-moulded console. "Two lingams sit inversely... separated by a form that is bulbous at the edges and lean at the centre, appearing as protruding ears or *kaan*," says Shah. The insides of the 'ears' are painted gold, offering a contrast to the monotone of the hand-beaten exterior. ₹4,50,000, on ashieshshah.com



Nitin Kohli Home

Stone Top Table

A modernist at heart, Nitin Kohli explores clean lines and contrasting materials in this sleek coffee table. With a stone top complimented by a piece of petrified wood and brushed brass legs, the Delhi-based designer plays with textures here to great effect. ₹2,12,400. Details: nkh.kd@gmail.com

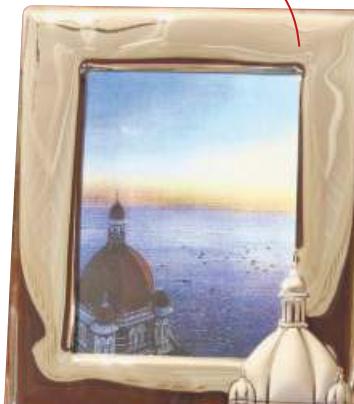


Paul Matter

Monolith Lamps

Ever since founder Nikhil Paul read *The Art of Tantra*, by late British artist Philip Rawson, a couple of years ago, he's been exploring the esoteric traditions.

After launching the God and Goddess series of lights, he's now experimenting with a symbolic line inspired by the *lingam*. Made from a single spun-metal dome – available in brass, copper and bronze – he is also planning a line in terracotta soon. From ₹60,000, on paulmatter.com



CM YK

AN-ND-E

Russia's COVID-19 vaccine is safe: study

'It generated a strong immune response and didn't produce serious adverse reactions during the trial'

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The two-shot vaccine being developed by Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute generated a strong immune response and didn't produce serious adverse reactions in the 76 volunteers who were inoculated in a trial, according to results of a study reported online in *The Lancet* on Friday.

This is the first time that details of the early human studies – or Phase-1/2 trials, to check the vaccine's safety and ability to generate an immune response – of the vaccines have been reported in a peer-reviewed journal.

Two components

The vaccine consists of two components, a recombinant adenovirus type 26 (rAd26) vector and a recombinant adenovirus type 5 (rAd5) vector, both carrying the gene for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) spike glycoprotein (rAd26-S and rAd5-S).

Adenoviruses commonly affect humans and primates and have emerged as a sought-after platform to develop a vaccine against CO-



Promising results: A staffer at Gamaleya Research Institute displaying a vaccine vial. ■ REUTERS

VID-19. The ChAdOx1 vaccine candidate developed by Oxford University is based on a chimpanzee adenovirus vector platform and the Beijing Institute of Biotechnology and CanSino Biologics Inc. of China too are developing a vaccine on an adenovirus platform.

Last month, Russian scientists said they had begun Phase-3 trials of their vaccine in 40,000 volunteers, results of which are likely to be publicly known by November.

In *The Lancet*, the scientists said the vaccines were given to the selected volunteers 21 days apart – the spacing meant to generate a boosted response – and checked for whether it induced protective antibodies as well as if it managed to stimulate the body's cells into producing a class of cells that can destroy viral cells, a process known as a 'humoral response.' Both of these happened, the scientists claim, and no "serious adverse events" were reported.

However, between 28% and 50% of the volunteers reported pain at injection site, hyperthermia, head-

dache, asthenia and muscle and joint pain. "Most adverse events were mild and no serious adverse events were detected," the authors note.

Shahid Jameel, virologist and CEO, DBT-Welcome Trust, who read *The Lancet* study, told *The Hindu* that these were typical responses when vaccines were administered and based on what was reported, the vaccine candidates looked encouraging enough to be tested in large populations or a Phase-3 trial. "I would have liked to see a bigger number

of volunteers in the Phase-2 component, at least in the hundreds, to capture the variety of population who are likely to get the vaccine. However the results look promising enough to progress to a Phase-3," he said in a phone interview.

In comparison, the ChAdOx1 vaccine candidate has been tested in 1,100 volunteers under Phase-2 trials.

Experimental studies

"We are in close dialogue, agreements with certain companies in India. We appreciate that they didn't 'attack' the vaccine but carefully sought to understand its mechanism of action. We are very grateful to India for the openness shown," Kirill Dmitriev, CEO of Russian Direct Investment Fund, said in response to questions at a press briefing on Friday. The RDIF is in collaboration with the Gamaleya Institute to develop and market the vaccine.

So far, adenoviral vector vaccines have never been tested in commercial human vaccines except for a rabies vaccine but have been tested on people as part of experimental studies.

UN experts voice concerns over Hong Kong security law

In an open letter, they say it infringes on fundamental rights

REUTERS
GENEVA

UN human rights experts have told China a new security law for Hong Kong "infringes on certain fundamental rights" and voiced concerns that it could be used to prosecute political activists in the former British colony.

In a rare joint letter made public on Friday, 48 hours after it was sent to the Chinese government, they also said provisions of the new law appear to undermine the independence of Hong Kong's judges and lawyers, and the right to freedom of expression.

"This is the first comprehensive UN assessment of the law," Fionnuala Ni Aolain, UN special rapporteur on protecting human rights while countering terrorism, told Reuters.



Extreme measures: Hong Kong's national security law could be used to prosecute political activists, say UN experts. ■ AP

further erodes the wide-ranging freedoms promised to Hong Kong on its return to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" agreement.

At that time, China agreed to uphold the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in Hong Kong – a landmark treaty that it has signed but has not ratified for the mainland.

China hits back
"A person might not know if an action that they take would put them into the category of being subversive," Ms. Ni Aolain said.

In customarily strong language, China's Foreign Ministry was swift to strike down the allegations, saying the law "punishes an extremely small number and protects the absolute majority" in the financial hub.

"Some people disregard the facts and maliciously slander China's human rights situation... and crudely interfere in China's internal affairs," ministry spokeswoman Hu Chunying told reporters.

"Stop meddling in Hong Kong affairs and China's affairs in any way."

Trump calls marines killed in First World War 'losers'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump referred to U.S. marines buried in a First World War cemetery in France as "losers" and "suckers" for getting killed in action, according to a report on Thursday in the *Atlantic* magazine.

The report, penned by the magazine's editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, said Mr. Trump had refused to visit

the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery near Paris in 2018 because "he feared his hair would become dishevelled in the rain," although the official explanation offered by aides was that the helicopter due to take him there could not fly due to weather.

"In a conversation with senior staff members on the morning of the scheduled visit, Mr. Trump said, 'Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers,'" the article said.

"In a separate conversation on the same trip, Mr. Trump referred to the more than 1,800 marines who lost their lives at Belleau Wood as 'suckers' for getting killed," the *Atlantic* added, citing four unnamed people who had firsthand knowledge of the discussions.

Mr. Trump slammed the report on Thursday. "Somebody makes up this horrible story that I didn't want to go," he told reporters after returning from a rally.

Allegations denied

"If they really exist, if people really exist that would have said that, they're low lifes and they're liars. And I would be willing to swear on anything that I never said that about our fallen heroes," he said. "No animal,

nobody, what animal would say such a thing?"

However, some critics pointed to Mr. Trump's denigrating comments about late Senator John McCain, who was captured in Vietnam and was regarded as a war hero. Mr. Trump said in the run-up to the 2016 election: "He's not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured."

The law allows for anything China views as subversive or secessionist or as terrorism or collusion with foreign forces to be punished with up to life in prison. Authorities in Beijing and the financial centre have said the law is necessary to ensure Hong Kong's stability and prosperity. Critics say the legislation

Macron defends blasphemy, decries 'Islamic separatism'

'The right to caricature is an essential part of being French'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron criticised on Friday what he called "Islamic separatism" in his country and those who seek French citizenship without accepting France's "right to commit blasphemy."

Mr. Macron defended satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, which published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that helped inspire two French-born Islamic extremists to mount a deadly January 2015 attack on the newspaper's newsroom.

The weekly republished the images this week as the trial began of 14 people over the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and on a kosher supermarket.

Speaking at a ceremony



Emmanuel Macron

on Friday celebrating France's democratic history and naturalising new citizens, the French President said, "You don't choose one part of France. You choose France... The Republic will never allow any separatist adventure."

Freedom in France, Mr. Macron said, includes "the freedom to believe or not to

believe. But this is inseparable from the freedom of expression up to the right to blasphemy."

Noting the trial that opened on Wednesday, he said, "To be French is to defend the right to make people laugh, to criticise, to mock, to caricature."

The 2015 attacks killed 17 people and marked the beginning of a wave of violence by the Islamic State group in Europe.

Mr. Macron's centrist government has promised a law in the coming months against "Islamic separatism" but it is not clear yet exactly what it would police. Some critics fear it could unfairly stigmatise France's largely moderate Muslim population, the largest in western Europe.

Greece rejects NATO mediation

It says 'de-escalation' only after Turkey withdraws vessels from Greek waters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ATHENS

Turkey on Friday accused Greece of shunning dialogue and lying after Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said NATO-brokered talks to reduce tension in the eastern Mediterranean could only be held if Ankara stopped making "threats".

"Greece showed once more than it's not in favour of dialogue," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg on Thursday said Greek and Turkish leaders "agreed to enter into technical talks at NATO to establish mechanisms for military de-confliction to reduce the risk of incidents and accidents".

But Athens said it had never agreed to the technical talks, which in any case did not constitute dialogue with



Crisis at sea: Tensions are running high over Turkey's drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean. ■ AP

Turkey. "Published information claiming Greece and Turkey have agreed to hold so-called 'technical talks' on de-escalating tensions in the eastern Mediterranean do not correspond to reality," Greece's Foreign Ministry said.

Greek government spokesman Stelios Petetas on Friday said Mr. Stoltenberg's initiative "is very far from

being termed an agreement to restart dialogue."

The Greek Foreign Ministry stressed that "de-escalation will only take place with the immediate withdrawal of all Turkish vessels from the Greek continental shelf".

Stop making threats'
"Let threats go away so that the contacts can begin," PM Mitsotakis said on Friday as

he met a visiting senior member of the Chinese Communist party.

In Ankara, Mr. Cavusoglu said Greece did in fact agree to the proposal when it was made.

"Greece denied the secretary general's remarks but the one lying here is not the NATO secretary general, it's Greece itself," Mr. Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara.

Greek media on Friday said Mr. Stoltenberg had handed a "single-sheet document" outlining his thoughts to the military representatives of Greece and Turkey in a five-minute meeting".

The document was forwarded to Athens for deliberation, the reports said.

Tensions are running high over Turkey's drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean which Greece and Cyprus say violate their sovereignty.

ELSEWHERE



Israel flights to UAE can fly over Bahrain

DUBAI
Bahrain said on Thursday it will allow UAE flights to and from Israel to overfly the kingdom, a day after a similar decision was announced by Saudi Arabia. Bahrain, has no official diplomatic relations with Israel, but its decision to allow overflights marks a sign of cooperation with the Jewish state. ■ AFP

IAEA inspectors to access one of two Iran sites

VIENNA
The UN's nuclear watchdog said on Friday that Iran had granted its inspectors access to one of two sites where undeclared nuclear activity may have taken place in the early 2000s. "Iran provided Agency access to the location to take environmental samples," it said. ■ AFP

U.S. newspaper says staffer held in China

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING

An American newspaper has said that one of its journalists was detained and then expelled from China's Inner Mongolia region while covering tensions over a new policy that reduces the use of the Mongolian language in education.

The *Los Angeles Times* said in a story published online on Thursday that the reporter was interrogated at a police station, grabbed by the throat and pushed into a cell and held for more than four hours before being forced to leave the northern Chinese region.

The story did not identify the journalist, but the paper's Beijing bureau chief, Alice Su, confirmed that it was her.

She declined further comment.

Film questions Sri Lankan society's 'silence' on past brutalities

Sinhala film *Paangshu* zooms into the trauma of enforced disappearances by foregrounding the struggle of a missing person's family

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Like many Sri Lankans, academic and filmmaker Visakesha Chandrasekaram has been struggling to come to terms with the civil war's gory end in 2009. The graphic visuals of the bloodshed, which some "shared like trophies", made him question what he'd thought were basic human norms.

When he decided to give it creative expression, he chose to tell the story of a mother's quest for justice, after her son was forcibly disappeared by soldiers. Except, the story is not from the war zone where armed forces fought the LTTE for three decades. It is from an earlier chapter of brutal violence and state repression in Sri Lankan history.

Mr. Chandrasekaram's recently-released Sinhala film *Paangshu*, or Earth, zooms



into the agony of dealing with an enforced disappearance of a loved one. It follows an aged mother from the marginal dhobi caste group in the island's Sinhala-majority south, looking for her son, who, like scores of rural Sinhala youth, is drawn to the leftist-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led armed insurrection in the late 1980s.

The period connotes the second JVP uprising – the first was in 1971 – against the widening inequality in the decade after economic liberalisation in Sri Lanka, mass youth unemployment, widespread state repression and Indian "expansionism", at the time of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 and intervention of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

Having drawn acclaim at many international film festivals, *Paangshu*, or Earth, zooms

an estimated 60,000 to 1,00,000 alleged disappearances.

"The trauma of 2009 is engraved in my mind. But there is a silence in Sri Lanka around the 2009 massacre, in which scores of civilians died. It is as if the country is in denial. There is mass amnesia. I thought about it and felt may be a country that was silent in one instance, cannot break it in another," says Mr. Chandrasekaram, speaking to *The Hindu*. He turned the spotlight on the 1980s, as there was a "similar refusal" to talk about what happened at the time.

"First, the J.R. Jayewardene government turned its guns southward, against the insurgent youth, and when the Indian Army left the country in 1989, the government [subsequently led by R. Premadasa] turned its guns 180 degrees against rebels in

the north. Much of the Sinhalese society was silent all through."

All the same, an ethnically charged narrative didn't speak to him. Raised by a Sinhalese mother and Tamil father, and having spent 17 years in Australia before returning to Colombo two years ago, the filmmaker saw how any conversation about the country's turbulent past tended to further polarise people on ethnic lines. His work as a human rights lawyer took him closer to the vulnerable stories of the most

grave rights abuses – are back in power, with a super majority in Parliament. "I worry that the current context is not too different to those that sparked past conflicts. I am not predicting another armed struggle, but knowing the government's authoritarian tendencies, I am very concerned about those on the margins of our society and the minorities," says Mr. Chandrasekaram.

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	38,357	-1.63
US Dollar	73.14	0.45
Gold	51,770	-0.03
Brent oil	43.26	-1.23

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	353.00	-13.00
Asian Paints	1956.35	-21.65
Axis Bank	455.20	-19.75
Bajaj Auto	2883.20	-13.20
Bajaj Finserv	6277.20	-78.35
Bajaj Finance	3596.80	-22.90
Bharti Airtel	523.15	-14.85
BPCL	403.35	-10.05
Britannia Ind	3705.85	-41.00
Cipla	724.60	-14.00
Coal India	132.45	-3.25
Dr Reddy's Lab	4322.50	-110.65
Eicher Motors	2180.85	-50.30
GAIL (India)	98.05	-0.05
Grasim Ind	706.50	-18.25
HCL Tech.	700.80	-5.95
HDFC	1769.70	-39.05
HDFC Bank	1119.30	-11.60
HDFC Life	574.65	-7.55
Hero MotoCorp	2915.20	-26.20
Hindustan	188.30	-3.70
Hind Unilever	2124.65	-14.50
ICICI Bank	372.55	-10.20
IndusInd Bank	616.15	-15.70
Bharti Infratel	214.85	-3.65
Infosys	919.15	-16.40
Indian Oil Corp	83.90	-1.20
ITC	186.70	-4.90
JSW Steel	282.35	-11.05
Kotak Bank	1380.05	-16.65
L&T	942.50	-18.65
M&M	632.00	-12.65
Maruti Suzuki	7190.10	117.50
Nestle India Ltd.	16322.60	-161.15
NTPC	94.70	-3.00
ONGC	77.90	-1.15
PowerGrid Corp	175.05	-3.45
Reliance Ind	2077.25	-34.85
State Bank	206.60	-6.55
Shree Cement	20025.30	-403.70
Sun Pharma	512.45	-11.00
Tata Motors	147.80	-4.05
Tata Steel	421.30	-16.80
TCS	2288.80	-10.70
Tech Mahindra	748.20	-11.35
Titan	1159.25	-26.05
UltraTech Cement	3916.10	-32.90
UPL	508.45	-13.40
Wipro	276.00	-6.85
Zee Entertainment	220.40	-0.15

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.94	73.26
Euro	86.45	86.83
British Pound	97.03	97.50
Japanese Yen (100)	68.67	68.99
Chinese Yuan	10.67	10.71
Swiss Franc	80.13	80.50
Singapore Dollar	53.46	53.71
Canadian Dollar	55.68	55.95
Malaysian Ringgit	17.57	17.66
Australian Dollar	53.15	53.42

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Vodafone-Idea gets nod for raising ₹25,000 cr.

Vodafone Idea said its board of directors has approved plans to raise up to ₹25,000 crore. The crucial decision comes just days after the Supreme Court directed all telecom operators to pay 10% of total adjusted gross revenue (AGR)-related dues this year. The fund-raising will throw a potential lifeline to the cash-strapped telco facing outstanding AGR dues of about ₹50,000 crore. PTI

Govt. starts probe into vitamin C from China

HYDERABAD
India has started an anti-dumping investigation into imports of vitamin C from China in the wake of the domestic manufacturers making a case for imposition of the levy. The investigation is being initiated following Bajaj Healthcare alleging that the domestic industry is getting impacted due to 'dumped imports' of vitamin C from China, a notification on Friday said.

L&T arm bags contract from Ministry of Defence

MUMBAI
The defence arm of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has announced receiving a 'significant' contract from the Indian Ministry of Defence for the supply of four regiments of Pinaka Weapon Systems. The contract involves supply of Pinaka launchers, battery command posts and associated engineering support package. L&T, however, did not quantify the value of the contract.

Root Mobile unveils ₹600-crore IPO

MUMBAI
Route Mobile Ltd., an omni-channel cloud communication service provider, said its initial public offering (IPO) will open on September 9 to raise ₹600 crore. The price band is between ₹345-₹350 per equity share. The issue will close on September 11. The offer comprises a fresh issue of up to ₹240 crore and an offer for sale of up to ₹360 crore, the company said.

Firms raise \$31 bn in shrinking economy

Indian companies have raised record equity capital, tapping surplus cash from a \$15-trn global stimulus

REUTERS

HONG KONG/BENGALURU

Indian companies have raised a record \$31 billion in equity capital in 2020, Refinitiv data showed, as banks strengthen their balance sheets to prepare for future economic uncertainty and corporates tap into the elevated global liquidity levels.

The record raising comes despite India's economy contracting 23.9% in the June-quarter, year-on-year, which puts it on track for the first annual contraction since 1980.

IPOS drop

The rush of deals though has not been extended to initial public offerings (IPOS), which have fallen to a five-year low to be worth just \$1.5 billion, in the eight months year-to-date, the data



Silver lining: The fund raising comes despite India's economy contracting almost 24% y-o-y in the June quarter. ■PTI

showed. Banks have been the most active issuers, raising \$13.68 billion, followed by the energy and power sector with \$7.05 billion, and

consumer products with \$3.41 billion.

Reliance Industries' \$7-billion raising in June was the country's largest, the data

showed, as the company turned net debt-free and is now looking to expand its consumer business by acquiring Future Group's retail arm.

Real estate companies were identified by corporate advisors as the most likely candidates to tap the markets further in 2020 as property demand is expected to return after the disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

Surging cash levels helped by \$15 trillion of stimulus made available for economies to withstand the fallout of the pandemic was primarily responsible for the raising rush, advisors said.

"We expect issuance to expand further to growth capital in the coming weeks and months, and the pipeline is developing across sectors,"

said Citigroup's India head of banking and capital markets Ravi Kapoor.

EY India partner Sandip Khetan said the banks' raisings helped created 'a cushion to the potential losses on account of credit losses' that could occur in the future.

Foreign appetite

Foreign appetite to buy Indian equities has risen sharply, with investors outside India buying \$10.3 billion of new shares in the three months to August, the Refinitiv data showed.

"The interest from foreign investors has been very strong and that reflects the fact that the quality of issuers that have come to market have been from the Top 100 companies," said Morgan Stanley's executive director Samarth Jagnani.



Kenichi Ayukawa

expenditure on the scrappage scheme and GST reduction," Mr. Ayukawa, who will take over from Mr. Wadhera as the president of the industry body, said.

Replies to queries at the session, Mr. Javadekar added that the proposal for the auto scrappage policy was ready and all stakeholders had provided inputs; therefore its announcement was likely "very soon".

On the possibility of a GST rate cut, he said the details of proposals are being worked out by the Finance Ministry. "... in a logical sequence... two-wheelers, three-wheelers, public transport vehicles, then four-wheelers... in that order, it should come," the Minister said.

FTAs playing havoc'

Pawan Goenka, MD and CEO, M&M, speaking at a session attended by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, pointed out that unfavourable FTAs were impacting competitiveness of India's automobiles and component exports.

"...unfavourable FTAs are playing havoc on our competitiveness... we request you [the Centre] to keep this high on the agenda as you negotiate trade agreements."

Moody's cuts ratings on BoB, Canara, two others

Review flags risks to asset quality

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Moody's Investors Service has downgraded the long-term local and foreign currency deposit ratings of four public sector banks – Bank of Baroda (BoB), Bank of India, Canara Bank and Union Bank of India (UBI) – to Ba1 from Baa3 and their baseline credit assessments (BCAS) to b1 from ba3.

"The outlook on the ratings of the four banks is negative," Moody's said on Friday.

However, the ratings agency affirmed Punjab National Bank's (PNB) long-term local and foreign currency deposit ratings at Ba1 and its BCA at b1. But PNB's

ratings outlook has been changed to negative from stable.

It said the BCA downgrades take into consideration rising risks to the banks' asset quality as a result of the severe economic contraction, which will result in an increase in credit costs.

On the affirmation of PNB's Ba1 long-term local and foreign currency deposit ratings, which incorporates a three notch uplift for government support from its b1 BCA, Moody's said this reflected its expectation that deteriorating asset quality and profitability would weigh on its capitalisation.

RBI alters priority sector norms to help start-ups, farmers avail loans

Assigns higher weightage to areas with low credit flow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday released revised priority sector lending guidelines to augment funding to segments including start-ups and agriculture.

Bank finance of up to ₹50 crore to start-ups, loans to farmers both for installation of solar power plants for solarisation of grid-connected agriculture pumps, and for setting up compressed biogas (CBG) plants have been included as fresh categories

'identified districts' where priority sector credit flow is comparatively low.

The targets prescribed for 'small and marginal farmers' and 'weaker sections' are being increased in a phased manner and higher credit limit has been specified for

farmer producer organisations (FPOs)/farmers' producers companies (FPCs) undertaking farming with assured marketing of their produce at a pre-determined price.

Besides, loan limits for renewable energy have been doubled. Commercial banks have been instructed to adhere to the revised guidelines.

"The RBI's revision in PSL guidelines will incentivise credit flow to specific segments like clean energy, weaker sections, health infrastructure and credit deficient geographies," commented Krishnan Sitaraman, senior director, CRISIL Ratings.

Future Retail logs Q4 loss of ₹477.6 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Future Retail Ltd. (FRL) reported a consolidated net loss of ₹477.6 crore for the quarter ended March.

The company, which owns brands like Big Bazaar, fbb, Foodhall, Easyday and Nilgiris, had posted a net profit of ₹199.3 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago.

Reliance Industries recently acquired Future Group's retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing businesses for ₹24,713 crore. FRL's revenue from operations was down 17.8% to ₹4,492.4 crore against ₹5,462.2 crore. Total expenses were ₹5,006.5 crore, down 5%. For the fiscal year 2019-20, FRL's net profit was down 98.4% to ₹11.3 crore. Revenue from operation was flat at ₹20,331.7 crore.

A good harvest and forecast of a normal monsoon rain "augur well for the rural economy," said N. Srinivasan, vice chairman and MD, The India Cements Ltd., in a shareholders note.

He said there were also reports of green shoots in terms of certain indicators in some sectors reflecting eco-

Goyal: exports, imports show positive trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The country's exports as well as imports are showing positive trends as the outbound shipments are approaching last year's levels, after making a sharp dip in April this year due to the COVID-19, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

The parties had agreed on a purchase price that values Eastern Condiments at ₹2,000 crore, on a debt and cash-free basis.

On Friday, Orkla, through its wholly owned subsidiary MTR Foods, signed agreements to buy a 41.8% stake in Eastern from members of the Meenan family, and to acquire the entire ownership stake held by McCormick Ingredients SE Asia PTE. Ltd, which will give Orkla 67.8% ownership stake after completion of the transactions.

TV PICKS

US Open: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 8.30 p.m.; SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m.
Italian Grand Prix: Qualifying, SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.20 p.m.
Nations League: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m. & 9.30 p.m.; Sony Ten 1, 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)
NBA: Sony Six (SD & HD), 8.30 a.m. & 4 a.m. (Sunday)
PGA Tour: Eurosport (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.
Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 5 p.m.

IN BRIEF



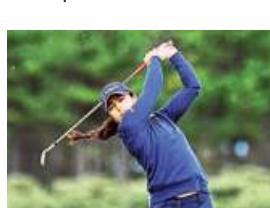
Anunoby steps up to put Raptors back on track

MIAMI Oguagua Anunoby drained a buzzer-beating three-pointer as Toronto Raptors resuscitated its NBA title defence on Thursday with a 104-103 victory over Boston Celtics. The Raptors avoided a 0-3 hole – from which no NBA team has come back to win a post-season series.

The results (semifinals): EC: Toronto Raptors 104 (Lowry 31, VanVleet 25) bt Boston Celtics 103 (Walker 29)
Celtics 2-1; WC: LA Clippers 120 (Leonard 29) bt Denver Nuggets 97 **Clippers 1-0.** AFP

BTC gets permission for closed-door racing

BENGALURU The State government has granted permission to the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) to conduct closed-door racing without spectators. The approval was accorded in a letter from the additional chief secretary to Government (Finance Department) to the BTC Chairman. BTC officials are expected to meet and announce the date of resumption of races.



Tvesa makes solid start, Diksha tied 28th

FLUMSERBERG (SWITZERLAND) Tvesa Malik opened with a solid three-under 69 in the first round of the Flumserberg Ladies Open here. Coming off two weeks of links golf and a top-20 finish, Tvesa had four birdies against one bogey for a tied fifth position. Diksha Dagar, meanwhile, shot one-over 73 and is tied 28th. Norwegian Stina Resen, with a seven-under 65, has a three-shot lead over Stefania Avanzo, Emma Spitz and Aneila Carnet. PTI

WBBL to be played entirely in Sydney

SYDNEY Australia's T20 Women's Big Bash League was on Friday shifted entirely to Sydney as coronavirus travel restrictions forced drastic venue and schedule changes. The eight-team tournament will now start on October 24. AFP

CSK's Harbhajan Singh opts out

Cites personal reasons for pulling out of the tournament beginning on Sept. 19

IPL 2020

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings suffered another blow on Friday when senior off-spinner Harbhajan Singh pulled out of IPL 2020 for personal reasons.

This follows the COVID positive tests of Deepak Chahar and Ruturaj Gaikwad and the pulling out of the influential Suresh Raina.

The vastly experienced

40-year-old Harbhajan has 417 Test wickets, 269 ODI scalps and 235 victims in the Twenty20 format. Also, he has kept himself fit. Last season he had picked up 16 wickets in 11 matches at 7.09. He has been with CSK for the past two years.

Harbhajan said on Twitter: "Dear friends, I will not be playing in IPL this year due to personal reasons. These are difficult times and I would expect some privacy as I spend time with my family."

ly. @Chennai IPL CSK management has been extremely supportive and I wish them a great IPL. Stay safe and Jai Hind."

Talking to *The Hindu* from Dubai, CSK CEO K.S. Viswanathan said, "Yes, he has pulled out. He informed us on Friday. He said his mother was old and he had personal reasons for not taking part." Harbhajan was expected to join the squad on September 1 – the rest of the team reached Dubai on Au-

gust 21. Viswanathan said he would discuss with captain M.S. Dhoni about seeking a replacement for Harbhajan.

CSK does not have another off-spinner in the squad, but according to Viswanathan, "Kedar Jadhav (essential a batsman) can chip in with a few overs of off-spin."

On the positive side, CSK players – apart from Chahar and Gaikwad – tested negative in their second and final COVID test and began practice on Friday under lights.



Harbhajan Singh.
■ FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

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Frames from the desert



Clicked! A look at the happenings in the lead-up to IPL 2020. ■ TWITTER

Auger-Aliassime shows Murray the door

US OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

Andy Murray crashed out of the US Open second round in straight sets to 15th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime on Thursday. The former World No. 1 was demolished by the 20-year-old Canadian 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 in 2 hours 8 minutes.

Meanwhile, Serena Williams, Victoria Azarenka and Tsvetana Pironkova made up a 'Band of Mothers' who marched into the third round. The three were part

Thiem proves a step too steep for Nagal

Indian calls the match an 'eye-opener', feels he will get better with experience

N. SUDARSHAN

Dominic Thiem may have brought a high-flying Sumit Nagal quickly down to earth, beating him 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 in the second round of the US Open on Thursday, but the India No. 1 called the match an 'eye-opener.'

Nagal, who this week became the first Indian in seven years to win a Grand Slam singles match, did well to stay with the second seed early on, even coming back from a 0-3 deficit in the opening set. But hopes of him matching his feat from last year, when he took a set off Roger Federer at the same Arthur Ashe Stadium, quickly dissipated once the World No. 3 found his groove.

Too many errors

"It told me how far I am from someone who I want to play like," Nagal said later. "He has more experience and knows how to play better on courts like this. I was always trying to chase him and made too many errors."

The mistakes that will rattle him the most came in his service games. Like in the first-round win, Nagal continued to land a high percentage of his first serves (71%). Disappointingly, he won just 56% of those points. Thiem, in contrast, got 64% of first

serves in, but won three-fourths of the points.

It wouldn't have helped even if he had ramped up the serve speed, the 23-year-old felt.

Where his average first serve was 160kmph,

Thiem's was 182. "If I want to, I can hit 200[kmph]."

The plan was to play with a high percentage of first serves. But I gave away too many free points."

"I think I will get better with experience," Nagal ad-

ded. "The more matches I play, the more I will learn to be disciplined, stick to a game-plan and not get carried away."

Educative

Regardless of the defeat, the World No. 124 said the last few weeks were educative. Prior to New York, at the ATP Challenger in Prague, he stretched three-time Major champion Stan Wawrinka to three sets before losing.

"The experience will help. You don't get to play against such big players and Slam champions often. They are so consistent at what they do. I need to include that in my game: how to start and finish with good focus, energy and discipline."

If Nagal can put these lessons into practice at his next tournament – the French Open qualifiers in less than three weeks' time – it will be a job well done.



Learning curve: Sumit Nagal felt that he was always trying to chase Dominic Thiem and made too many errors. ■ AP

Messi decides to stay on at Barcelona

Criticising Bartomeu, says he will never take the 'club of his life' to court

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Lionel Messi said on Friday he will stay at Barcelona, insisting he could never go to court against "the club of his life".

But he launched a stinging attack on Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu, whom he accused of going back on an agreement to let him leave for free at the end of last season.

Not keeping his word

"The president always said that at the end of the season I could decide if I wanted to go or if I wanted to stay and in the end he didn't end up keeping his word," Messi said in an interview with *Goal.com*, released on June 10.

"I thought and we were sure that I was free...now they hold on to the fact that I did not say it before June 10,



Frank and forthright: Lionel Messi launched a stinging attack on the Barcelona president during his interview with *Goal.com*'s Ruben Uría. ■ TWITTER/GOAL

when it turns out that on June 10 we were competing for the league in the middle of this disease that altered all the dates.

"And this is the reason why I am going to continue in the club... because the president told me that the only way to leave was to pay

the €700 million release clause. "This is impossible, and then the other way was to go to trial."

"I would never go to court against Barca because it is the club that I love, that gave me everything since I arrived, it is the club of my life, I have made my life here."

"My attitude is not going to change, no matter how much I have wanted to go. I will do my best. I always want to win, I am competitive and I don't like to lose ever."

Gaya gives Spain last-gasp draw with Germany

NATIONS LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
STUTTGART

Jose Luis Gaya snatched a late point for Spain in its UEFA Nations League match against Germany on Thursday.

Germany was seconds away from victory in the League A, Group 4 clash after Chelsea's new signing Timo Werner gave the host a second-half lead, only for Gaya to tap home a Rodrigo Moreno header in the sixth minute of added time.

The results: League A: Group

4: At Stuttgart: Germany 1 (Kraev 56) drew with Spain 1 (Duffy 90+3). At Helsinki: Finland 0 lost to Wales 1 (Moore 68).

League C: Group 3: At Parma (Italy): Moldova 1 (Nicolaeacu 20) drew with Kosovo 1 (Kololli 71). At Ljubljana: Slovenia 0 drew with Greece 0.

League D: Group 1: At Riga (Latvia): Andorra 0 drew with Serbia 1 (A.



Gaya is congratulated by Mikel Merino. ■ AP

Mitrovic 78).

Group 4: At Sofia: Bulgaria 1 (Kraev 56) drew with Spain 1 (Duffy 90+3). At Helsinki: Finland 0 lost to Wales 1 (Moore 68).

League C: Group 3: At Parma (Italy): Moldova 1 (Nicolaeacu 20) drew with Kosovo 1 (Kololli 71). At Ljubljana: Slovenia 0 drew with Greece 0.

League D: Group 1: At Riga (Latvia): Andorra 0 drew with Serbia 1 (A.

Wout Van Aert wins another stage

TOUR DE FRANCE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LAVAUR

Wout Van Aert picked up a second win of the 2020 Tour de France on Friday as aggressive tactics and crosswinds combined to produce an enthralling race that claimed several victims.

British rider Adam Yates retained the yellow jersey while Peter Sagan took the green points jersey after his Bora team led a carefully plotted and brilliantly executed attack to drop his sprint rivals.

The plot unfolded from 150km as Bora launched an unexpected assault, cranking up the pace with attacks which succeeded in exploiting the crosswinds, splitting the pack and shedding Sagan's rivals in the points classification, Irishman Sam Bennett who started the day



Wout Van Aert. ■ REUTERS

in green, and Australian Caleb Ewan.

Saturday's run from Cazeres-Sur-Garonne to Loudeave features two category one mountains and one beyond-category climb.