



Nirav Modi's sister,
who turned approver,
returns ₹17.25 cr. to govt.
page 8



Defence service workers
barred from taking part
in any agitation
page 8



Former U.S. Defense
Secretary Donald
Rumsfeld dies at 88
page 11



Federer, Berrettini & Barty
ease into third round;
Svitolina bows out
page 13

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NEARBY



Anshu Prakash case: SC rejects Delhi Police plea

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declined a Delhi Police appeal against a High Court order, directing the force to share a witness's statement with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and other AAP MLAs in a case relating to the alleged assault on the then Delhi Chief Secretary, Anshu Prakash, in February 2018.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

CJI Ramana condemns attacks on doctors

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Thursday condemned the attacks on doctors who have stood like a rock between the COVID-19 virus and thousands of emotionally and physically vulnerable patients confined to isolation in hospital wards during the pandemic.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Colour-coded response system for the Capital

NEW DELHI

Delhi will soon get a colour-coded response system to fight COVID-19, with each colour representing a predefined degree of action that will kick in, a government source said. The response system has been divided into four types of alerts – yellow, amber, orange and red.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

In last academic year, only 22% schools had Internet

Less than 30% govt. schools had computers: report

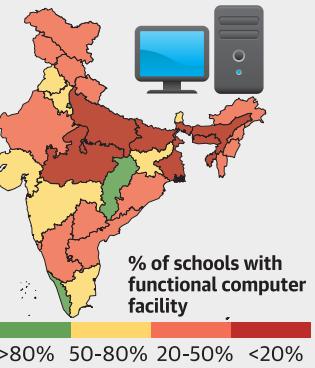
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In the academic year that ended with school closures due to COVID-19, only 22% of schools in India had Internet facilities, according to Education Ministry data released on Thursday.

Among government schools, less than 12% had Internet in 2019-20, while less than 30% had functional computer facilities. This affected the kind of digital education options available to schools during the pandemic, as well as plans for

Machine learning

Only about 37% of the schools in India had a functional computer facility on campus in 2019-20, according to the data published by UDISE. Among major States, only in Kerala, more than 90% of schools had this facility



hybrid learning in the days ahead.

The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report collates data from more than 15 lakh schools across the country.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8



MLA Akhil Gogoi after his release in Guwahati on Thursday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

Akhil Gogoi freed in CAA violence case

Court said govt. charges were bogus

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam MLA and Rajoor Dal president Akhil Gogoi walked out of jail on Thursday after a special court of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) acquitted him of all charges in the second of the two cases related to the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act violence in the State in December 2019.

The activist-turned-politician, who represents the Sib-

against me were bogus. This is a historic day for the Indian judiciary," Mr. Gogoi said.

The cases against Mr. Gogoi were registered on the basis of two FIRs lodged with the Chabua police station in Dibrugarh district and the Chandmari police station in Guwahati. The Chandmari case had the additional charge that he had links with a Maoist organisation.

The NIA had pursued the cases filed under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amend-

ment Act (UAPA) for alleged criminal conspiracy, sedition, promoting enmity between groups on grounds such as religion, race and language, assertions against national integrity, and support to a "terrorist organisation".

"A case was filed against me for my links with CPI [Maoist]. In another case, I was charged with inciting violence during the anti-CAA agitation. The court proved these were fake charges," Mr. Gogoi said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

HC gives a pat on the back for stray dogs

'They have a right to food and water'



A woman feeding stray dogs in New Delhi ■ FILE PHOTO

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed that every Resident Welfare Association (RWA) should form "Guard and Dog partnerships" in consultation with the Delhi Police Dog Squad, so that dogs can be trained to work as guard dogs and yet be friendly to residents of a colony.

Jitendra J.R. Midha issued a slew of directions on the contentious issue of feeding stray dogs. The High Court said stray or street dogs have the right to food and citizens have the right to feed them, but in exercising this right, care and caution should be taken to ensure that it does not impinge upon the rights of others.

'Duty to feed'
The High Court also ruled that it should be the duty and obligation of every RWA or municipal corporation (in case RWA is not available) to ensure that every community dog in every area has access to food and water in the absence of caregivers or community dog feeders".

Feeding of community dogs has to be done in areas designated by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) in consultation with RWA or municipal corporation.

While determining the "designated area", it has to

be kept in mind that "every dog is a territorial being, and therefore, the street dogs have to be fed and tended to at places within their territory which are not frequented, or less frequented, and sparingly used by the general public and residents", it said.

Stray dogs are protected under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, and rules enacted under Section 38 of the Act, particularly the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001, which makes it illegal for an individual, RWA or estate management to remove or relocate dogs.

A memorandum of the Central government carried specific rules against government servants who indulge in acts of cruelty to animals. The rules make the government servant liable for action under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

"Such acts of defiance be noted down in the ACR (annual confidential report) files of government employees. If any such complaint is received by AWBI, the same be sent to the office concerned for being placed in the ACR file of the government employee for necessary action as per CCS rules," the High Court ordered.

ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS
WELCOME HC RULING ▶ PAGE 2

Focus on planning vaccine drives, not creating panic: Harsh Vardhan

11.5 crore vaccine doses given in June, says Health Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday said "State leaders" should focus on planning COVID-19 vaccination drives, rather than "creating panic".

In a series of tweets, he said he had seen "irresponsible statements from various leaders regarding the largest vaccine drive". He said after the Centre started providing

75% of vaccines for free, vaccination picked up pace and 11.5 crore doses were given in June.

States had been informed in advance about the supplies for July, said the Minister. He said 12 crore doses would be supplied in July, not including private hospitals' supply.

"If there are issues in States, it shows that they need to better plan their vac-

cination drives. Intra-State planning & logistics are the responsibility of the States. I request these leaders to desist from their shameless urge to play politics even in the midst of a pandemic".

In another tweet, he said: "If these leaders are aware of these facts and are still giving such statements, I consider it most unfortunate. If they don't know, they need to focus on governance..."

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ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WELCOME HC RULING ▶ PAGE 2

9 European nations clear SII jab

EU starts 'Green Pass' travel facility for those who have taken authorised vaccines

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

Relief shot

Countries that have cleared Covishield for travellers

1. Austria
2. Germany
3. Slovenia
4. Greece
5. Iceland
6. Ireland
7. Spain
8. Estonia (has authorised all vaccines approved by Government of India)
9. Switzerland (Non-EU member)



1. Pfizer/BioNTech's Comirnaty
2. Moderna's Spikevax
3. Oxford-AstraZeneca's Vaxzevria
4. Johnson & Johnson's Janssen

ban in place for Indians as India has been recognised as a "virus variant country".

"This [confirmation] does nevertheless not modify existing travel or visa restrictions for travellers from areas of concern/virus variant areas," said Mr. Lindner.

The nine European countries' clearance, however, is unlikely to translate into an automatic clearance of Covishield as an equivalent to the "Green Pass" that recognises Pfizer/BioNTech's Comirnaty, Moderna's Spikevax, Oxford-AstraZeneca's Vaxzevria and Johnson & Johnson's Janssen.

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ZYDUS CADILA VACCINE ▶ PAGE 10
RELATED REPORTS ▶ PAGE 10

Won't allow any foreign force to bully China, says Xi

Strong warning comes on party anniversary

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China's ruling Communist Party on Thursday marked its centenary with a massive parade in Beijing and a warning from leader Xi Jinping to "any foreign forces" that China would not be "bullied".

In an hour-long speech to



a crowd of thousands at Tiananmen Square, Mr. Xi hailed China's "national rejuvenation" – a theme he has emphasised since taking

over in 2012 and found mention 24 times in his speech – and the leadership of the party, upon which, he said, China's "success hinges". He also delivered a strong warning. "We have never bullied, oppressed, or subjugated the people of any country, and we never will. By the same token, we will never allow any foreign force to bully or subjugate us."

His comments came after explosions last Sunday at the Jammu Air Force station.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 9

'Army working to deal with drone threat'

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

Army Chief Gen. Manoj Naravane on Thursday said that with easy availability of drones, they would be increasingly used in all sorts of combat, both by state and

non-state actors, and capabilities were being developed to deal with them.

On the Ladakh stand-off, he said the situation on the ground had been normal since February and talks were on with China at diffe-

rent levels that had helped build trust between the two sides.

His comments came after explosions last Sunday at the Jammu Air Force station.

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Teen shoots brother for slapping him during tiff

Victim disliked him talking to sister-in-law

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old boy has been apprehended for allegedly killing his elder brother for slapping him in north-east Delhi's Shiv Vihar.

A senior police officer said that the accused has been identified as Prashant, who works at a shop, and the victim is his 22-year-old brother Prem Shankar, who was studying in Delhi University's School of Open Learning.

The police said that Prem got married a little over a month ago. Prashant used to talk to Prem's wife's sister, which he objected to. "Prem never liked his brother talking to his sister-in-law and he had told Prashant about it. However, the latter never agreed. On June 26 night,

Prem found Prashant talking to her again to which he objected. It led to an argument," said the officer.

Prem allegedly slapped Prashant and in a fit of rage, the latter brought a gun and shot Prem. The victim died on the spot, the police said.

Kin try to cover up

The family decided not to report the matter to the police. They went to cremate the body but the priest saw the bullet wound and told them to first get a no objection certificate from the police. It was then that Prashant's father called the police. The body was taken for post-mortem and the accused was apprehended.

The police said that a case has been registered under various IPC Sections.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
e-Procurement Notice
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9, on behalf of Governor of H.P invites the online bids on item rate, in electronic tendering system, in Single /2 Cover System for the under mentioned work from the eligible and approved contractors/Firms. Eligible contractors registered with HPPWD in appropriate Class. The bidder shall have to fulfil the criteria as specified in Technical Qualification Criteria (TQC) in Form-8 available online in tender document.

Sr. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	EMD	Time:	Cost of Tender	Class of contractor Eligible
1.	C/I/O Health Institution Level-II at Nani Tehsil Ramshera Distr. Solan, H.P (SH:- Providing E.I therein).	Rs. 5,45,717/-	11000/-	One Year	350/-	B&C
2.	C / O Additional accommodation (Chemistry Lab) at Govt. Degree College Nalagarh Distr. Solan HP (SH:- Prov. E.I therein).	Rs. 9,11,968/-	18300/-	One Year	350/-	B&C
3.	Providing 125 KVA D.G set for Isolation ward in the Old Ayurvedic Hospital Building at Nahan Distt. Shimour (H.P).	Rs. 16,86,767/-	32800/-	Six Months	500/-	A&B
4.	Providing 62.5 KVA D.G set for PSA Plant in the Old Ayurvedic Hospital Building and Nahan Distt. Shimour (H.P).	Rs. 11,76,977/-	24200/-	Six Months	500/-	A&B
5.	C / O Rajiv Gandhi Multipurpose sports Stadium at Katasari District Shimla, H.P (SH:- Providing 1 No. 13 Passenger Electric Traction Elevator therein).	Rs. 25,02,578/-	45100/-	Six Months	1500/-	Others

2. **Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:** The Bid document is available online and bid should be submitted in online mode on website <https://htptenders.gov.in>. Bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPPWD may obtain the same from the website: <https://htptenders.gov.in>. Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

3. **Key Dates:**

1. Date of Online Publication	05/07/2021	5.00PM
2. Document Download Start and End Date	05/07/2021	5.30 PM 13/07/2021
3. Bid Submission Start and End Date	05/07/2021	5.30 PM 13/07/2021
4. Physical Submission of EMD and Cost of Tender Document	14/07/2021	11.00 AM
5. Date of Technical Bid opening, Evaluation of Technical Bid followed by Opening of Financial Bid.	14/07/2021	11.30 AM

4. **Tender details:**

The Tender Documents shall be uploaded online in 1 Cover/2 Cover :
(i) **Cover 1:** Shall contain scanned copies of all "Technical Document/Eligibility information"
ii) **Cover 2:** shall contain "BOQ/Financial Bid", where contractor will quote his offer or each item.

5. **Submission of original documents:** The bidders are required to submit (a) original demand draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security/Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and other Technical Documents in O/o Executive Engineer Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 as specified in Key dates under Sr. No. 3 on Tender Opening Date, failing which the bids will be declared non-responsive.

6. **Bid opening details:** The bids shall be opened on 14/07/2021 at 11:30 Hrs in the office Executive Engineer Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 by the authorised officer. In their interest the tenderers are advised to be present along with original documents at the time of opening of tenders.

7. If it happens to be holiday on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue and no separate notice will be given in this regard.

8. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than 90 days after the deadline date for bid submission.

9. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The officer inviting tender shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidder's responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

10. The competent authority on behalf of Governor of H.P reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders received without assigning any reason.

11. Registration with HP Sales Tax is essential. If the bidder has not registered and found to be the lowest bidder he is supposed to register him on award of work. He shall submit the sales tax paper to the employer, before any payment is made to him.

Executive Engineer,
Electrical Div No.-1,
HPPWD Shimla-9

(on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh)

HP / 2007/21-22 HIMSUCHAN AVAM JANSAPARK

HC ruling will ensure dog lovers are not harassed'

It comes at a time when crimes against animals are rising, say animal lovers, adding that it will ensure they are not ill-treated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prem found Prashant talking to her again to which he objected. It led to an argument," said the officer.

Prem allegedly slapped Prashant and in a fit of rage, the latter brought a gun and shot Prem. The victim died on the spot, the police said.

The family decided not to report the matter to the police. They went to cremate the body but the priest saw the bullet wound and told them to first get a no objection certificate from the police. It was then that Prashant's father called the police. The body was taken for post-mortem and the accused was apprehended.

The police said that a case has been registered under various IPC Sections.



Feeding stray dogs has been an issue that has polarised opinions in the city. ■ FILE PHOTO

By directing the police to ensure no animal feeder is prohibited by the RWA, this judgment would go a long way in aiding the animal feeders to ensure police action in case of any harassment

Gauri Puri
Animal activist and lawyer

harassment. It would be interesting to see how RWAs deal with this moral and social responsibility towards animal welfare," Ms. Puri said

Divya Puri, founder of Karan Puri Foundation that runs a community kitchen feeding 450 animals a day and works with municipal corporations for sterilisation and vaccination of animals, said that with the recent spike in cases of harassment and cruelty towards animals, the court order will make it easier to fight for the rights of our animals.

"Justice R. Midha gave an 86-page long judgment where he emphasised and reiterated on various guidelines issued by Animal Welfare Board of India for stray animals. Right to food, water and treatment, protection of caretakers and involvement of RWA/municipal body as a community to look after strays is a welcome step towards peaceful coexistence," she said.

Chinese 'manjha' seized during inspection in Central Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

"On seeing the officials, he ran away from the spot and could not be arrested. But he left the bag behind," said District Magistrate (Central) Akriti Sagar.

"Last year, a boy's throat got slit in west Delhi due to Chinese 'manjha'. We are carrying out inspections now as the kite flying season is about to begin and a lot of people fly kites on August 15 too. We will continue the inspections at least till August 15," Ms. Sagar said.

Similarly, Nazia Shakeel, a

and injuries, and people should be encouraged to opt to adopt a dog or cat in need from an animal shelter or the street.

Animal activist and lawyer Gauri Puri said that despite laws and guidelines protecting rights of community dogs in India, the implementation and enforcement is weak and often, efforts of animal activists to seek enforcement of

such laws have been rendered insignificant.

"The judgment sets a much-needed precedent that strikes a defined balance between the constitutional obligation of the statutory authorities to protect community animals vis-à-vis the fundamental duties, moral and social responsibility of RWAs to ensure that statutory protection is provided to communities."

area alleging that the stray dog was thrown from the third floor of a building in the colony, the police said.

According to police, the complainant who runs a pet clinic in her area, regularly visits Sadiq Nagar to feed stray dogs and during her visit on June 29, she spotted the dog in a pool of blood. In her complaint, the woman stated that she has been feeding dogs in Sadiq Nagar since the last one year and one of the dogs was found dead on June 29 around 2 a.m.

"It was allegedly thrown from the third floor by a resident living in Block-4A. Many cases like this have been observed. Earlier, a puppy was also thrown, which was rescued by

Stray dog found dead in Defence Colony

Preliminary probe suggests it died after falling from a height; case registered

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has registered a case after a stray dog was found dead under suspicious circumstances in South Delhi's Defence Colony on Thursday.

Preliminary investigation suggested that the dog died after falling from a height.

However, probe is under way to ascertain the exact cause of death, the police said.

Woman complained

The matter came to light after a complaint was received from a resident of Lajpat Nagar IV at Defence Colony police station against the Residents' Welfare Association of the

Youth stabbed in front of father over minor accident; 6 arrested

Argument broke out after victim's father hit a vehicle

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 20-year-old youth was stabbed to death in front of his father during a scuffle followed by a minor road accident in northwest Delhi's Azadpur, the police said on Thursday.

The deceased has been identified as Dev Priya, a resident of Burari. The

police said they have arrested six people in connection with the incident.

A senior officer at Adarsh Nagar police station said they received information about the incident near Kewal Park, Azadpur at 12.20 a.m. "It was found that the victim

was allegedly stabbed during a quarrel with the accused persons. He was rushed to Babu Jagdish Ram Memorial Hospital and later shifted to Fortis Hospital where he succumbed to injuries," DCP (North-West) Usha Rangnani said. A case has been registered, she said.

Jaipal (45), father of the victim, was coming home on his bike when it brushed past another vehicle following which an argument ensued between him and the other person.

Jaipal who was under the influence of alcohol, called his son to the spot

following which the scuffle was pacified.

Drunk men

There were a few other people sitting nearby who were drunk too. They came to the spot and an argument broke out between them and Jaipal. The accused persons stabbed his son and fled the spot, the police said.

Dev's brother said, "My father's bike hit a mini tempo and an argument broke out. He called us and we reached the spot. The accused started beating us and stabbed my brother."

Doctors hurt in scuffle with eatery owner

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Four people, including two doctors working at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, were injured during a scuffle with an eatery owner in South Delhi's Gautam Nagar, the police said on Thursday.

The police said that on Wednesday, a few doctors from AIIMS went to the eatery in Gautam Nagar and allegedly consumed alcohol there.

"A heated argument broke out between the doctors and the shopkeeper following which both sides allegedly assaulted each other," Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar Thakur said.

In a statement, it said that the work on the 1.8 km-long Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand section on the Grey Line is now almost complete, and with the completion of this section, this corridor will become 6.1-km-long with four stations. "This extension will immensely benefit the residents of the interior areas around Najafgarh. All efforts are being made to open the Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand section sometime later this month after complying with all statutory requirements," the DMRC said.

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The station, designed as a four-level underground structure will have a platform at the bottom (at an ap-

proximate depth of 18 metres) followed by the concourse and then an entire floor for parking above it with the roof level at the top (ground level). The DMRC said that the parking facility will be integrated with the main station area where vehicle users will be able to park their cars and two-wheelers and then proceed to the concourse of the station directly using lifts and escalators.

"The facility will have a parking



Commuters waiting outside a Delhi metro station. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

space for about 110 cars and 185 two-wheelers. There would be provision for property development activities at the ground level in the future. The parking facility can be considered a major design-based improvement since no other underground metro station in Delhi Metro's network has any such facility," the DMRC said.

Long queues

The DMRC also said that metro trains are running almost empty due to COVID-19 restrictions, trains are only 10%-15% of passenger capacity. It said that lockdown guidelines have been further eased by the authorities, enabling most of the economic activities to take place due to which, there has been continuous build up of the passenger crowd outside stations due to regulated entry resulting in inconvenience to them.

"The DMRC regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers due to these restrictions. It hopes that the situation shall improve once the restrictions are relaxed by the authorities," a spokesperson said.

Timings**DELHI**

FRIDAY, JUL. 02
RISE 05:28 SET 19:24
RISE 00:24 SET 12:46
SATURDAY, JUL. 03
RISE 05:28 SET 19:24
RISE 00:53 SET 13:40
SUNDAY, JUL. 04
RISE 05:29 SET 19:24
RISE 01:23 SET 14:32

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 43 32
Safdarjung 43 32
Palam 43 31**Delhi Palam Today**
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Lakha Sidhana joins R-Day violence probe**STAFF REPORTER****NEW DELHI**

Gangster-turned-activist Lakha Sidhana, who was wanted in Republic Day violence at Red Fort, has joined investigation on Thursday.

On Tuesday, a Delhi court granted interim protection from arrest till July 19 to Sidhana. A senior officer said Sidhana reached the office of Crime Branch at Prashant Vihar on Thursday afternoon. "He reached Delhi on Tuesday morning and was interrogated for more than four hours," said the officer.

The police had declared a reward of ₹1 lakh for information about Sidhana's whereabouts.

IGIA sees over 3 times jump in domestic fliers**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**
NEW DELHI

With fewer COVID cases and relaxation in lockdown restrictions in several States, the Delhi Airport saw a growth in domestic passengers from around 18,000/day in mid of May to over 62,000/day at the end of June in 2021.

A Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) spokesperson said according to a survey conducted by the Delhi Airport, 48% of those who flew in June were doing so to visit family and friends while the second most popular category was those going on a vacation, which was 25%. Those traveling on business accounted for 19%. This trend was different in June 2020 when the number of travellers going on vacation was only 2%. The spokesperson added that in June 2019, before the pandemic, around 44% of flyers were vacationers, while 41% were visiting family and friends.

Capital to soon get colour-coded response system to fight COVID

Govt. to take action based on TPR; yellow signifies lowest alert level while red highest

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Delhi will soon get a colour-coded response system to control and fight COVID-19 with each colour representing a pre-defined degree of action that needs to be taken, including lockdowns, a Delhi government source said.

The response system has been divided into four types of alerts – yellow, amber, orange, and red – each of which is based on test positivity rate, new cases, and bed occupancy. The government will take actions, including lockdowns of different intensity and ramping up of medical infrastructure, based on the alert level.

"Yellow is the lowest level of alert and red is the highest. So, if the alert is yellow, the measures are taken by the government, including restrictions or lockdowns, will be less severe compared to red, which will see more stringent



A girl getting inoculated at a government school in Vinod Nagar on Thursday. • R.V. MOORTHY

measures," the source said.

Plan awaits L-G nod

The plan is yet to be approved by the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) but it is expected to get his nod in a week's time, said officials. "As per the current plan, the yellow alert will kick in if the TPR [test positivity rate] is over 0.5% for two days in a row or average oxygen beds occupied is over 500 in a week or the cumulative new cases are

1,500 or more in a week," the source said.

Similarly, the red category will kick in if the TPR is more than 5% for two days in a row or if there are over 16,000 new cases in a week or if the oxygen beds occupied are over a particular level.

The plan was prepared by an expert committee formed by the Delhi government on May 27 to prepare for a possible third wave. During the second wave,

there was a shortage of beds and medical oxygen in the city. On many days, less than 20 ICU beds were available in the whole city and many people admitted to hospitals died as the hospitals ran out of medical oxygen.

Even as the second wave hit the city, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Health Minister Satyendar Jain were not in favour of imposing lockdowns.

On March 27, even as cases were rising, Mr. Jain said there is "no possibility of another lockdown". "For me, lockdown is no solution to COVID-19," Mr. Jain had said.

But the government had to impose a lockdown from the end of April to control the situation. The order issued on May 27 on the formation of the expert committee, specifically asked it to prepare "clear guidelines on when to announce lockdown and to what degree".

Any private person can arrest proclaimed offender, says HC

'Names and pictures of offenders should be made public'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Any private person can arrest a "proclaimed offender" and hand him over without unnecessary delay to a police officer or nearest police station, the Delhi High Court has ruled.

Justice J.R. Midha laid down the guidelines to be followed by the courts before declaring a person as a "proclaimed offender" and the follow-up action needed to be taken by the law enforcement agencies.

The High Court also directed the Delhi Police and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to create a Special Cell for tracing out the "proclaimed offenders" for attaching their movable or immovable properties and for their prosecution. This Special Cell will be created within a period of four weeks, the court ordered.

While the law with respect to the declaration of a person

close the matter after declaring a person as a "proclaimed offender". "Rather, the courts shall direct the police to file the status report with respect to the efforts made to trace the Proclaimed Persons/Offenders; efforts made to trace or attach their movable/immovable assets/properties and their prosecution in accordance with law," it said. The High Court added that the courts concerned have to monitor the action taken by the police. "Whoever knowingly harbours a Proclaimed Offender to prevent his apprehension is liable to be punished under Section 216 IPC with imprisonment up to 7 years in certain cases," the HC cautioned.

Justice Midha said the names, addresses and pictures of the "proclaimed offenders" be made public on different government websites such as Delhi Police, NCRB, CBI and other States Police.

City reports 93 fresh COVID cases

Spot registration for Sputnik V restricted at Indraprastha Apollo

STAFF REPORTER**NEW DELHI**

The city reported 93 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,34,281, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

Also, four deaths were reported in 24 hours and the total number of deaths stood at 24,981. A total of 76,468 tests were done in a day and the test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.12%. Of the total cases, 14,07,943 people have recovered and there are 1,357 active cases.

Vaccination update
A total of 1,46,225 doses of vaccines were administered in the city on Wednesday

People wait in queue to get vaccinated in Vinod Nagar on Thursday. • R.V. MOORTHY

and the city's vaccine stock will last for four days, as per a vaccination bulletin by the Delhi government.

Also, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital has started administering Sputnik V vaccine from Wednesday and about 1,000 people were administered with the vac-

cine on the first day, the hospital said. "Spot registration and walk-in facility for Sputnik V is currently restricted and we are encouraging beneficiaries to register and take appointments through the COWIN app," the hospital said in a statement.

Govt. enforces HC order on 15% fee deduction in city private schools

'School cannot strike off child's name if parents cannot pay fee'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Thursday enforced a High Court order that would lead to a 15% deduction in overall fees charged by private schools in the city for the academic year 2021-22. The deduction is in lieu of unutilised facilities.

"In order to clear the confusion and give much-needed relief to parents, Delhi government has issued an order to private schools to charge fees on monthly basis, under approved heads only but with a 15% deduction in the fees for the academic year 2020-21," the Delhi government said. It added that the school management shall not prevent the child from any ongoing activities or strike off the name of the student if the parents are unable to pay the fee due to the current hardship arising due to COVID-19.

The government said if the monthly fee of the school in

FY 2020-21 is ₹3,000, the schools are entitled to collect the fee at ₹2,550/month after a deduction of 15%.

If the school has collected the fee in excess of the direction referred above, the same shall be refunded to the parents or adjusted in the subsequent month of a fee to the parents, the govt. said.

An order by the Directorate of Education reiterated that no earmarked levies such as transportation charges will be charged during the period when the school remains closed. It added that in no case shall the school demand and collect fees from the parent/students on a quarterly basis.

Schools have also been directed to not stop the payment of monthly salary nor reduce the existing total emolument to the teaching and non-teaching staff in the name of non-availability of funds.

Implement health project by March 2022, CM tells officials

All Delhi residents to get health cards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday reviewed the progress of the Health Information Management System (HIMS) and directed officials to ensure the implementation of the project by March 2022.

The Delhi government said health cards will be issued in the names of all Delhi residents for which special surveys will be conducted by the government.

This will ensure the availability of the benefits of the government healthcare services to every resident of Delhi. Post the issuing, the e-health card will be integrated with the Health Information Management System. The project will also see the initiation of the Health Helpline system in Delhi," the government said.

Schools have also been directed to not stop the payment of monthly salary nor reduce the existing total emolument to the teaching and non-teaching staff in the name of non-availability of funds.

All the patient care servic-

es, hospital administration, budgeting and planning, supply chain management, and backend services and processes will be brought under the system and citizens will be able to avail themselves of information on a single platform, which will help them in emergency cases.

With the help of registered card numbers, the hospitals will be able to access the patients' health-related information and past registry, the government said.

It added that a centralized call centre will provide two levels of help – first where an operator will receive people's calls and messages and provide them with requisite information and second where doctors and experts will provide appointments based on the issue or immediately provide solutions for emergency cases.

IN BRIEF**Teenager stabbed to death in Mangolpuri**NEW DELHI
A 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death in Mangolpuri, the police said on Thursday. The deceased has been identified as Sujal from Mangolpuri.

"Information was received from Sanjay Gandhi Hospital on Wednesday at 9.29 p.m.," said DCP (Outer) Parviner Singh said, adding that a murder case has been registered and probe is on.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Industry body writes to PM, seeks de-sealing of Tikri border

Bahadurgarh Chamber of Commerce and Industry cites losses due to lockdown, farmers' agitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**GURUGRAM**

In Bahadurgarh, an industry body representing around 9,000 industrial units has sought the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to de-seal the Delhi-Haryana border at Tikri – the protest site of the ongoing farmers' agitation. It cited huge financial losses to businesses and inconvenience to employees.

In a two-page letter, Narinder Chhikara, vice-president of Bahadurgarh Chamber of



Farmers making langar at the Ghazipur protest site on Thursday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Commerce and Industry, has urged the Prime Minister to direct the Delhi Police to open

at least one carriage of the road connecting Delhi and Bahadurgarh for traffic to provide respite to the industry.

"This border sealing is done by Delhi Police and they have not opened the Tikri border yet. For the benefit of the industry, which is stressed and adversely affected first by Covid-19 and then by the protest, we humbly request you to kindly intervene in this matter," reads the letter.

Bahadurgarh, a major industrial town of Haryana, has

around 9,000 MSMEs, including footwear, automobile, spare parts, and industrial manufacturing units employing around 7.5 lakh people directly and indirectly. Mr. Chhikara, in the letter, said around 2,000 units falling in Part-B of Modern Industrial Estate in Bahadurgarh was either closed or on the verge of closure with the transportation of the raw material and finished products to and from Delhi hit due to farmers' agitation for the past 7 months. He claimed that the sealing

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PUBLIC NOTICE
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The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India is proposing to purchase 17.54 Ares of land belonging to Shri N.P. Shamshudin, Smt. K.P. Naseema, Anadian Marakar, Pichem Muttanangathodiy Aiysha, Anadian Abdul Gafoor, Rahmath Sharafudheen, Rasija Marakar Anadian Abdul and Faisal Anadian, bearing Sy.No. 685/9-3, 685/4, 685/9-4 and 685/4-2 at Ernakulam Village, Kannanur Taluk. The original of sale deed No. 3098/1999 of SRO Ernakulam relating to an extent of 1.52 Ares of land in SyNo.685/9 of Ernakulam Village owned by Shri N.P. Shamshudin and Smt. K.P. Naseema which forms part of the said 17.54 Ares of land is stated to be lost irrecoverably. Any person in custody or possession of the same and all persons claiming any right, title or interest to the lost or any persons claiming any right title or interest in the total land of 17.54 Ares as per the aforesaid survey numbers are hereby required to make the same known to The Acting Secretary, THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA, ICAI Bhawan, I.P. Marg, New Delhi-110 002 within 15 days from the date of the publication of this Notice, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons shall be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.

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NOTICE INVITING TENDERS
 Online tenders are invited for supply of Portable Cryocans & Bovine Frozen Semen Doses. Log on to <http://ssamtenders.gov.in> for participation. Last date of submission is 26/7/2021 (Portable Cryocans) & 27/7/2021 (Frozen Semen doses).
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 (Two Cover System) (Through e-Procurement Portal only)
 Bids are invited from the qualified bidders for the Design, Engineering, manufacture, quality surveillance, testing at supplier's works, Supply, transportation, delivery on FOR destination basis, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of Digital Governor cum Auto sequencer system including supply, laying, testing, termination of cables, networking, communication, dismantling of existing panels & cables, etc. for 2 MW Bhadra Left Bank Generating Unit. The details of NIT & brief bid notification can also be seen on Kpcl Website: www.karnatakapower.com & Tender documents may be downloaded from Gok e-procurement website: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. Further details can be obtained from the Chief Engineer (Electrical Designs), Kpcl, 3rd Floor, (Drugs Control Dept, Premises), Site No. 3, Survey No. 13/3, Palace Road, Bengaluru-560 001. Mob: 9141618109/9141607470. E-mail: cic@kpcl@gmail.com; ee4cecdkpc@gmail.com

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 102, द्वितीय तला, अभियंत्रण भवन, कचहरी रोड, रांची
शुद्धि पत्र

एवत् द्वारा सुचित किया जाता है कि ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमण्डल, सरायकला-खरसावां के ई-पुर्निविदा आंमंत्रण संख्या 14/R/1/2021-22/RWD/SERAIKELA दिनांक 29.06.2021 PR NO.-24879/6 के द्वारा प्रकाशित निविदा में NIT- के केंद्रिका के ३६३ एवं निविदा शुल्क झारखण्ड राज्य में अवस्थित भारतीय स्टेट बैंक/अन्य राज्यीय बैंक द्वारा निविदाकार के नाम/अकाउंट से ही निर्वात बैंक ड्राफ्ट के रूप में कार्यपालक अभियंता, ग्रामीण विकास विभाग (ग्रामीणमा), कार्य प्रमण्डल, सरायकला-खरसावां के पक्ष में एवं सरायकला-खरसावां में भूगतेय होगा जो लौटाया नहीं जाएगा।

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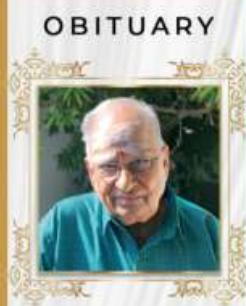
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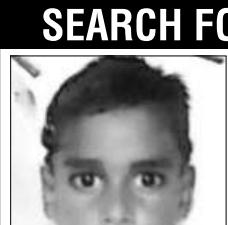
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NIT No.	CMG/ISRO-HQ/C/M/08/2021-22 Date: 01.07.2021
Estimated Cost	Rs. 6.25 lakhs
Period of Completion in months	01 (One) Month
Period during which the tender document can be downloaded	From 18:10 Hrs on 01.07.2021 To 23:59 Hrs on 07.07.2021
Last date and time for receipt of tenders	Up to 10:30 Hrs on 09.07.2021
Due date and time for opening of tenders	11:00 Hrs on 09.07.2021
Interested tenderers may please refer www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO Also detailed notice inviting tender (NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, can be downloaded from website www.isro.gov.in	
Sd/- Group Head CMG, ISRO HQ	

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Administrative Building, Sector - 6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)		
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S.No	Job no.	Name of Work
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The above tenders can be uploaded by date 16.07.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 19.07.2021 at 11.00 AM.		
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SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED BOY

Krishana
 General public is hereby informed that this boy namely Krishana S/o Laturi Shukla R/o Village Bamroli, P.S. Harpalpur, Distt. Hardoi, U.P. Age : About 10 years, Height : 2', Complexion : Wheatish, Face : Round, Build : Medium, has been kidnapped since 03.11.2016 from the jurisdiction of P.S. Gandhi Nagar, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 499/16 Dated 04.11.2016 u/s 363 IPC P.S. Gandhi Nagar, Delhi has been registered. Any person having information or clue about this kidnapped boy may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in SHO - P.S. Gandhi Nagar, Delhi, Tel. No. 011-22072761, 7065036024

DP/481/SHD/21

Director
Food & Consumer Protection Department
Government of Bihar

PR. 003100 (FOOD) 2021-22

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The details schedule is given below

Sl. No.	Activity
1.	Name of the Bidding Authority
2.	Date of Issue of EOI cum RFP Document
3.	Last date and time for bid Submission
4.	Date and time for opening of Bid
5.	Place of bid opening
6.	EMD (Earnest Money Deposit)
7.	Cost of RFP
8.	Contact Number for Queries
9.	Addressee and Address at which bids in response to RFP invitation are to be submitted

Director
Food & Consumer Protection Department
Government of Bihar

PR. 0031

IN BRIEF



Red sanders worth ₹10 cr. seized, 7 held

CHITTOOR
The Chittoor police on Thursday seized a red sanders dump of 10 tonnes worth more than ₹10 crore at a private retreat at Valarpuram in Kanchipuram district of Tamil Nadu after a flash raid. The police nabbed seven accused and seized four vehicles, including a mini lorry and three SUVs.

A.P. CM launches 'YSR Bima' scheme

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday launched the 'YSR Bima' scheme, under which the government will directly pay insurance amounts to families of the deceased to make the claim settlement easier. In order to support 1.32 lakh families, the government allocated ₹750 crore for the year 2021-22.

Finance Minister visits bed facility at KPCL

BENGALURU
Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited Boeing India and the SELCO Foundation-funded 100 oxygenated bed facility at Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd. (KPCL), Yelahanka campus in the city. Boeing India and SELCO Foundation have jointly funded the hospital.

Tourists complain of sexual assault at Varkala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Three tourists complained to the Varkala police about the sexual harassment attempts they faced at the destination. While one person was arrested, a hunt is on for another. The tourists, who hail from France and the U.K., claimed a person misbehaved with them while they were on their way from the Thiruvambady beach to their homestay at Kurakkani.

Telugu States spar over water sharing

A.P. objects to power generation by Telangana; both States deploy police

STAFF REPORTER
NAGALANDA

Simmering tension over power generation by Telangana at Nagarjunasagar continued on the third day on Thursday, even as senior officials from Andhra Pradesh who crossed the border with a letter of protest returned 'unacknowledged' and disappointed. In addition to the Nagarjunasagar project, Telangana is generating power at the upstream Srisailam project and the downstream K.L. Rao Sagar Pulichintala project, joint multi-purpose projects between the Telugu States, amid maximum protection by police forces.

An official attempt, however, to protest Telangana's stand on water usage to generate power was made by A.P. irrigation and revenue officials late on Thursday. According to Superintending Engineer of NSP (Right Canal) Purushottama Ganga Raju, who entered Nagarjunasagar to register the protest with the NSP Chief Engineer, Telangana was setting aside irrigation responsibilities for power production and letting water go waste. "The dams are not even filled to capacities, and setting aside irrigation duty for power generation is not proper. We will be answerable to farmers," he said.

However, at the K.L. Rao

projects with police, also expressing readiness for any future action.

An official attempt, however, to protest Telangana's stand on water usage to generate power was made by A.P. irrigation and revenue officials late on Thursday. According to Superintending Engineer of NSP (Right Canal) Purushottama Ganga Raju, who entered Nagarjunasagar to register the protest with the NSP Chief Engineer, Telangana was setting aside irrigation responsibilities for power production and letting water go waste.

"The dams are not even filled to capacities, and setting aside irrigation duty for power generation is not proper. We will be answerable to farmers," he said.

However, at the K.L. Rao



In full force: Nalgonda SP A.V. Ranganath reviewing security measures near Nagarjunasagar Project.

Sagar Pulichintala project in Suryapet district limits, A.P. officials were successful in submitting their representation amid police security.

Police personnel from Guntur were deployed in large numbers at the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam in view of the tense situation. A large posse of police personnel from Telangana was also de-

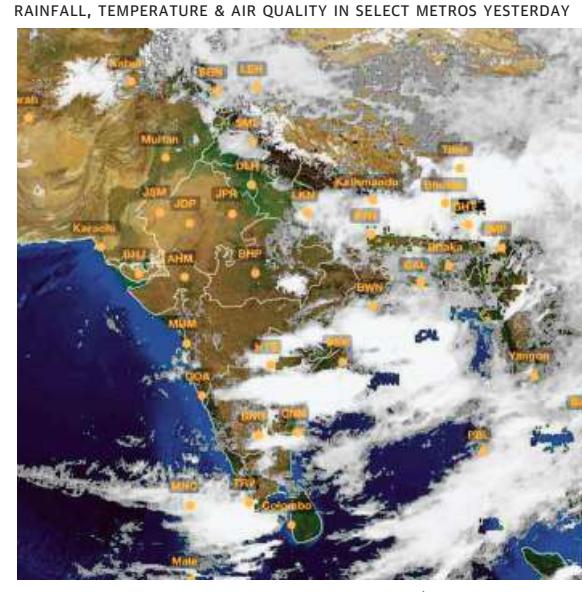
ployed. At the Srisailam dam, the Kurnool district police deployed security personnel to ensure the safety of the structure. Srisailam Circle Inspector B. Venkata Ramana said that on the A.P. side 10 police personnel had been deployed, and the strength would be increased from Friday. Telangana too had deployed police person-

(With inputs from Guntur and Anantapur)

Jagan writes to PM Modi against Telangana action

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a direction to Telangana to stop illegal withdrawal of water from the Krishna river for power generation without water release orders from the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). He also requested the takeover of all the oftakes of the common reservoirs.

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Thunderstorms with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Bihar, coastal Andhra Pradesh, south interior Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	114	...28.4	24.0	Kozhikode	...	33.2	26.4
Ahmedabad	...	37.3	27.6	Kurnool	...	34.4	27.4
Aizawl	6	...	21.7	Lucknow	...	40.0	30.3
Aligarh	...	36.9	28.4	Madurai	...	39.2	25.8
Bengaluru	2.6	...30.0	23.0	Mangaluru	1.1	31.2	25.4
Bhopal	...	26.2	26.2	Mumbai	5	32.8	26.2
Bhubaneswar	...	36.0	26.2	Mysuru	...	33.0	20.4
Chandigarh	...	40.8	28.4	New Delhi	...	43.1	31.7
Chennai	...	36.2	25.6	Patna	...	32.2	28.0
Coimbatore	...	35.0	24.4	Puducherry	9.9	33.2	22.1
Dehradun	...	36.4	25.0	Pune	...	30.4	22.9
Gangtok	62	19.0	17.9	Raipur	...	35.6	25.6
Goa	5	29.3	25.5	Ranchi	3	34.7	24.6
Guwahati	2	30.2	25.5	Shillong	1	24.5	18.2
Hubballi	...	29.0	22.0	Shimla	8	31.5	23.8
Hyderabad	...	31.8	25.2	Srinagar	...	31.0	18.6
Imphal	1	28.8	22.4	Thiruvananthapuram	...	32.3	25.8
Jaipur	...	40.5	30.0	Tiruchi	...	39.5	27.0
Kochi	0.8	30.2	26.0	Vijayawada	99	32.2	23.0
Kohima	2	26.4	18.0	Visakhapatnam	...	32.0	27.2
Kolkata	6	32.7	26.0				

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Yesterday

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.6	16	99	.87	.99	■■■
Bengaluru	.3	57	22	.32	.67	■■■
Chennai	.9	17	81	.26	.47	■■■
Delhi	14	29	21	100	.306	■■■
Hyderabad	.2	77	18	.22	.52	■■■
Kolkata	.8	24	23	.58	.84	■■■
Lucknow	10	17	66	.180	.206	■■■
Mumbai	12	25	16	.56	.121	■■■
Pune	...	30	90	.21	.36	■■■
Visakhapatnam	11	49	45	.47	.110	■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Kaithal, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 400, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizawl, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 11.

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.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

'Govt. has nothing to hide on COVID deaths'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Veena George

A government had not received any complaints so far regarding the non-inclusion of any COVID-19 deaths and if in case any death had been left out from the list, the government was willing to re-examine it.

Ms. George said the Ker-

Karnataka Minister's 'aide' detained

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

Sleuths from Central Crime Branch (CCB) detained Rajanna, who claims to be a personal assistant of Karnataka Social Welfare Minister B. Sriramulu, for allegedly cheating people and collecting money after promising to fix government contracts or jobs, misusing the name of Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa's son B.Y. Vijayendra.

He was detained for questioning based on a complaint by Mr. Vijayendra himself.

Rajanna, in his early forties, is known to be a long-term associate of Mr. Sriramulu and is said to be based out of Ballari.

According to him, the stamp duty for the transfer of an interest of the landed property had been drastically increased from 1% to 6% for females, 7% for a jointly owned property by male and female and 8% for others of the total valuation

HC stays stamp duty hike in Lakshadweep

Plea had challenged the drastic rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday stayed for three weeks the order of the Lakshadweep administration revising the stamp duty for transfer and registration of land on the islands.

Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan passed the interim order on a petition filed by P.M. Mohammed Salih, a resident of Amini island.

He reiterated that the administration was depriving the islanders of their ability to either purchase or transfer their property amongst the same community.

The rate was revised with an ulterior motive of depriving the inhabitants of their land. The revision of stamp duty by the District Collector of Lakshadweep was unconstitutional, he contend-

NORTH & WEST

Maharashtra will safeguard farmers' interests, says CM

'We will stand by them irrespective of the Centre's farm laws'

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday said irrespective of the Centre's farm laws, the State government will not take any decision to harm farmers' interests.

"The Centre can bring in laws as it may like. But we will ensure that the interests of the State farmers are not harmed," said Mr. Thackeray. He was speaking on the occasion of 'Krishi Diw' celebrated by the Agriculture Department on the birth anniversary of former Chief Minister Vasantrao Naik.

Mr. Thackeray said the farmers are the pride of Maharashtra and the State government is working on preserving that pride. "We understand the uncertainty in agriculture. There are nat-

ural calamities that strike and then there are issues of price. We as a government stand firmly with farmers."

Three days ago, a delegation of farmer leaders led by former Lok Sabha MP Raju Shetti, Medha Patkar and Subhash Lomte had met Mr. Thackeray, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar demanding to pass a resolution opposing the three farm laws in the monsoon session of the state legislature.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Pawar at a different programme said agriculture is the backbone of the economy. "If the agricultural growth and progress is evident, the situation of economy will automatically improve. Demand from consumers boosts an economy. With more than half of the population being part of agriculture in India, ensuring that their situation is improved would eventually boost demand and subsequently lead to improvement of economy," he said,

while virtually inaugurating the D Y Patil Agriculture and Technical University at Talsande in Kolhapur district.

It was during his welcome at the Ghazipur border that the clash broke out

Ghazipur clash: FIR filed against 200 BKU workers

Video footage being scrutinised: police

on Wednesday.

Dharmendra Malik, media in-charge of the BKU, said it was unfortunate no action was taken against those who attacked the farmers at the spot which has been their home for the last seven months.

Mr. Malik said the BJP was trying to make it a caste issue but the Valmiki community had shown solidarity with farmers by reaching Sisauli in large numbers.

He reiterated that farmers responded only after the BJP workers tried to seize control of the stage built on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway on Wednesday.



Relief and recompense

The judiciary did well to assert the rights of pandemic-hit workers and families

It is a matter of relief and satisfaction that the Supreme Court has prodded the Union government to perform its statutory duty of fixing a compensation for the families of those who lost their kin to the COVID-19 pandemic. The order comes close on the heels of a slew of directions on registering the country's vast unorganised workforce and its army of inter-State labourers on a national database and ensuring that none of them went hungry. On the issue of making an ex gratia payment to those affected by the pandemic, a notified disaster under the Disaster Management Act, the Centre initially took the untenable stand that it lacked the financial resources to compensate for every COVID-19 death. However, it later admitted that it was not the adequacy of resources that made it avoid any compensation, but rather its decision to prioritise expenditure in response to the pandemic. It is indeed true that unlike more frequent disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes and floods, a pandemic that has hit every country is not a one-time calamity, but an ongoing and prolonged phenomenon. However, the Court has rightly found that this was not reason enough for the Government to evade its duty to exclude ex gratia assistance on account of loss of life in its guidelines for "minimum standards of relief" to those hit by the disaster. The Court correctly did not fix a compensation amount for each death, leaving it to a policy decision by the National Disaster Management Authority and the Centre.

In an earlier order, the Court dealt with the need for comprehensive registration of all inter-State and unorganised workers in the country. It is unfortunate that it needed a pandemic, and the resulting humanitarian, social and economic crisis for millions of workers, to give an impetus to the process. The Supreme Court, while disposing of *suo motu* proceedings on the miseries of migrant labourers, has now fixed a deadline of December 31 this year for all States and Union Territories to complete the process. The Centre has been given a deadline of July 31 to make available a portal for its National Database for Unorganised Workers (NDUW) project so that it may be used for registering unorganised workers across the country. However, the Union government, which was directed to make such a common module available to the States as far back as in August 2018, claimed the work on developing the portal was affected due to the fallout of the pandemic. The Court has pulled up the Union Labour Ministry for its "apathy and lackadaisical attitude" and directed that the process of registration should begin by July 31. The verdicts open up the possibility that the inter-State and unorganised workers will at last be able to reap the benefits of welfare laws enacted for them. These interventions signify the rejuvenation and assertion of a court seen as somewhat reticent until recently.

Later than ever

Puducherry needs an efficient administration that is not immersed in political wrangles

The Union Territory of Puducherry has finally got a Council of Ministers. It has taken almost two months after the Assembly election results, and 50 days since the assumption of office by N. Rangasamy as Chief Minister, for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to get five nominees sworn in as Ministers, three from his party, the All India N.R. Congress (AINRC), and two from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). What makes Puducherry's first NDA Ministry stand out from the earlier coalition ministries is the inordinate delay in its formation despite there being a pre-poll alliance. The impact of the deadly second wave of the pandemic did not add any sense of urgency to the parties to thrash out their differences. But there could be more trouble to come. Portfolios have not been allocated to the five Ministers who were sworn in on Sunday. The Chief Minister's illness was not the only obvious reason for the delay in cabinet formation; there were also differences between the partners and within the BJP local unit. The central government too appeared to have supported the Chief Minister's not-so-enthusiastic response to the local BJP unit's demand for the post of Deputy Chief Minister as it did not create any such post. However, the BJP, which has nine MLAs in the Assembly, including three nominated legislators, is tasting power for the first time in the Union Territory; the party has also got the post of Assembly Speaker. For all the delay, those involved in the Cabinet formation, including Mr. Rangasamy, deserve credit for the social balance in the Council of Ministers, which has three former Ministers, two representatives of Scheduled Castes and a woman.

There is a strong possibility that the two parties would continue to have differences over the implementation of their manifestos, the key one being the AINRC's emphasis on Statehood which the national party is silent on. The territorial administration is not in the pink of health as far as its finances are concerned. According to the Budget for 2020-21, debt servicing accounts for about 18% of the revenue expenditure of the administration annually, in addition to salaries and pensions constituting around 35% and power purchase, 17%. Under such circumstances, it is not hard to guess how many of the goodies promised by the two parties would translate into reality. Instead of committing itself to many new measures, the Council of Ministers should ensure that existing welfare schemes, including social security pension to age group-wise beneficiaries, are well implemented. The Centre should also be empathetic and provide a package by waiving "legacy loans", those taken about 15 years ago. Mr. Rangasamy and Ministers should ensure corruption-free and quality administration, instead of engaging in political bickering.

Envisioning the post-pandemic smart city

It is clear that the pathway for 'smart cities', and also other towns not on the map, needs to change



G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

Six years ago, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government started a journey of urban development based on the belief that a select set of cities across the country could be 'transformed' and made smart, after they were chosen through a competition among the States. The Centre would support the chosen projects and others would learn from them.

The idea of a transformation is indicated in BJP's manifesto for the 2014 election (<https://bit.ly/3waHAQO> and <https://bit.ly/3h80mln>), where, in a reference to the squalor that has traditionally marked cities and towns, the party declared that they should "no longer remain a reflection of poverty and bottlenecks. Rather they should become symbols of efficiency, speed and scale". This racy vision laid the foundation for a programme to create 100 smart cities.

The general concept

Globally, there is no uniform definition of smart cities, and the most common features of such urban spaces are derived from concepts in the global north. They generally have a technocentric vision, with sensors everywhere, smart homes, high levels of connectivity, massive and ubiquitous data collection by various agencies, and a continuous flow of useful information to citizens. All this, the reasoning goes, can help governments allocate resources optimally and take timely decisions to raise efficiency and improve standards of living.

India's cities have well-known infrastructure deficits, inadequate water supply, waste management, sewerage and transport arrangements, high levels of pollution

and, with climate change, frequent extremes of floods and drought. The answer to these, the Smart Cities Mission (<https://smartcities.gov.in/>), has been fashioned as an amalgam of upgraded civic services and expensive showpiece projects in the chosen cities, with the investments heavily influenced by the Centre.

Now, a health focus

Before a complete critique of the expensive programme could emerge, COVID-19 interrupted the lives of cities, confining people indoors for long periods, disrupting economic processes and paralysing vibrant urban life. As the pandemic peaked, thousands had to desperately look for emergency medical care in scarce health facilities, while the flashy smart developments built for leisure and shopping remained shuttered.

Unsurprisingly, when the Smart City Awards 2020 were declared recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs gave one component of the scheme, the Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), a health focus. These centres, of which 70 are operational, functioned as "war rooms" for COVID-19, and, combined with "other smart infrastructure developed under the mission, helped cities in fighting the pandemic through information dissemination, improving communication, predictive analysis and supporting effective management" (<https://bit.ly/3hmZZEO>), it said.

This is a remarkable image of efficiency, but it would seem incongruous with the lived reality in several States and the national capital during the second wave of the pandemic, as people struggled for information and access to medical care. Yet, one of the States that suffered severely, Uttar Pradesh, shot to the top for implementation metrics of the smart cities projects (<https://bit.ly/3yaBbFX>), apparently because it achieved more than what was envisaged in the centrally-supported schemes. It



VIBHUH added its own set of 'State smart cities'. The fact that U.P., a crucial BJP-ruled State scarred by the pandemic, is bound for elections next year must, of course, be treated as a coincidence. Indore and Surat jointly won top city-level awards, while Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu also won State awards.

Infrastructural convergence

Over the years, Smart Cities Mission projects converged with other infrastructure programmes such as AMRUT, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, the PMAY (Urban), the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, for housing. Some also get support from international agencies to adopt best practices on mobility and transport, energy and reducing carbon emissions. The latest official count shows that 5,924 Mission projects worth ₹1,78,500 crore have been tendered, indicating the scale of investments. This is in tune with some estimates that globally, 90% of urban development by mid-century will take place in developing countries.

A focus on basic urban infrastructure prioritised by elected representatives was part of national policy since the Third Plan period (1961-66), although the focus shifted to smaller towns away from Bombay and Calcutta in the Fourth Plan (1969-74). After decades of slow experiments, the post-COVID-19 era will sharpen the question of how cities must evolve.

The Danish urban design expert, Jan Gehl, who is averse to the idea of smart cities and "silly gimmicks", speaks of the universal va-

lues of a city as one that is a meeting place of people, inviting them to spend time, walk, bike, and roam around public, semi-public or private gardens. Pedestrianisation over motorisation is also a marker of a good city.

Although they try to accommodate some of these elements, India's smart city plans cannot really aspire for a structural shift, in which the movement of people gets priority over vehicles. In fact, extending the green logic would imply a freeze on all diversion of wetlands and commons for any other development, creating new urban gardens and water bodies, and doing a climate change audit for every piece of infrastructure planned. A green and blue city would mean less destructive flooding, more water to harvest and lower peak temperatures – all of it at very little expense.

Use for the commons

Cities could be elegant, healthy and smart after the pandemic if they apportion the available road space for bicycles, which exemplify safe travel and can complement expanded public transport when commuters return in big numbers to bus and urban rail. This is consistent with the pan-city goals of the Smart City Mission, but requires State governments to take resolute action. Bicycles represent the ideal urban travel bubble and must be moved from the margins to the centre of policy.

Pedestrianisation, biking and harmonious opportunities for street vending created by allocating more of the commons would also be fully democratic and address the criticism that smart city planning ignores the informality that marks India's urban spaces. This is valid for both cities being retrofitted with facilities and those being developed as greenfield sites. Can more of the commons be turned into farmers' markets, vending grounds and craft centres?

None of this detracts from essential modernisation, such as de-

ployment of multiple sensors to gauge air, noise and water pollution, provision of electronic delivery of citizen services, whether online or in a government office, intelligent public transport, expansion of renewable energy. Recovery of valuable materials from waste remains a lost opportunity even in the biggest cities. It would, however, mean a shift away from flyovers, underpasses and cheap parking lots that serve far fewer citizens.

For citizens, real time control rooms can be meaningful only if they can have a good public dashboard of information. In COVID-19 times, this means access to health alerts, vaccinations, hospital beds and topical advice, rounded off with data on pollution, rainfall, congestion and so on.

Democratising smart cities planning has to ensure every section of society has a voice in the process, and not merely those who have digital access. Pressure to frame projects, however, often cuts out many, and even elected representatives get short shrift.

The Housing Ministry said last year that it had no plan to issue a report card for the 100 chosen smart cities, but was using the Ease of Living Index measured through a public perception survey. Such measurements can be heavily biased if they are not broad based. Quite tellingly, out of 32.2 lakh citizens in 111 cities who participated in a survey, the online channel which could be accessed through a QR code or website attracted 31,05,481 items of feedback (<https://bit.ly/3xmS1QE> and <https://bit.ly/3hIVkSR>).

The pandemic has come as a remarkable opportunity to review the paradigm of smart cities, and to steer the course of hundreds of other towns that are not on the map. They should be helped to frame their plans around people and nature, to learn from mistakes and to avoid expensive technological solutionism.

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A bubble burst is no figment of the imagination

Economic parameters appear confused and investors should not be tempted to ignore macroeconomic factors



FURQAN QAMAR &
TAUFEQUE AHMAD SIDDIQUI

Y our investment would have doubled by now, had you invested in the stock market in March 2020! An assertion like this triggers an urgent rush to invest in the market and is akin to being under the influence of a "feel-good" hormone. This makes the expectation of 'winning big' feel better than 'just winning' leading to impulsive, even detrimental decisions, attributable to behaviour biases, to use the terminology of behavioural economists.

Perception versus reality Investors may not necessarily be always sensible or even capable of perceiving the larger picture. Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman argues that humans usually use the 'first system' of 'fast thinking' to hurriedly act and perceive their environment. Consequently, they are susceptible to the 'priming effect', 'framing bias', 'anchoring effect', 'overconfidence bias' and 'availability heuristic'.

These phenomena, thus, play their part in pervading optimistic market conditions. As a result, investors often end up ignoring or overlooking uncertainties and risks involved in their decision.

They get so enamoured with the idea of making a killing that they forget that in the month of March last year itself, the market had tanked a fourth of its capitalisation causing mayhem.

At the same time, investors' decision choices could be significantly influenced by 'nudging', a deliberate tactic and method of behaviour modification by which it is the 'choice architect' that decides who does what and who does so, as argued by the Nobel laureate, Richard H. Thaler. The present surge in the Indian stock market is indeed nudging individual investors to trade more. But who is playing the role of the choice architect and what their intentions are, remain the moot questions.

Focus on individual investor National Stock Exchange data indicate that the share of the non-institutional individual investors in equity trading volume has risen to one half of the total turnover in 2021 as compared to around a third in 2016. In contrast, the share of Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) in the total trading volume has shrunk to just about a tenth making it half of what it used to be in 2016. Trading in the stock market, the sudden rise, the intraday moves, etc., are, thus, attributable largely to individual traders now.

Their large trading volumes notwithstanding, individual investors have actually contracted their holding of the market capitalisa-

tion. Going by the floating stocks of the market collectively, the FIIs currently own around half of the free float of all Indian companies. Apparently, the retail investors have constantly sold their stake to end up holding less than 20% shares now. Trading, thus, seems to be the mainstay of retail investors and this is what makes them more vulnerable to the vagaries of the market.

The market today During the period under discussion, the fundamental, economic and environmental parameters look confused. GDP has shrunk by at least 7.5%, unemployment rate has been on the rise, and an overwhelming number of people are said to be sliding back into poverty or becoming poorer than a year before. At the same time, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd. data of the listed companies reveal a rise in their profit, due to rationalisation and cost-cutting.

Investors might be tempted to ignore macroeconomic factors and invest in such stock believing that it is the profit that impels the

stock prices. In reality, however, share price is expected to ascend if a company declares to cut its wage bill. This probably explains why stock markets around the world have been on the rise amidst the novel coronavirus pandemic; demand may have declined but profits have been least impacted. At the larger economic level, however, real wages have plunged. Clearly, the market has not entirely decoupled itself from the economic indicators.

Stimulus or profit or euphoria caused by happy hormones, whatever the reason apart, the stock market has been drawing available excess liquidity. Simultaneously, frequent trading has been propelling the stock market further up. But how long can this last? Established wisdom suggests that corporates cannot sustain contraction in the economy for long. Sustained decline in demand caused by waning disposable household income would catch them soon

A grey cloud Consequently, corporates would be saddled with unsold goods or services, leading to a drop in their prices, with a consequential effect on their revenue which would exert downward pressure on their stock prices. This is, however, not to deny that stock markets are always futuristic and stock prices imitate investors' expectations. But how long can expectation drive the market if the economy does not revive soon?

Robert J. Shiller, another Nobel laureate, attributes this phenomenon of creating a possible bubble to irrational exuberance. And bubbles are seldom long lasting and burst sooner rather than later. When bubbles burst, they cause a kind of financial earthquake, in turn destabilising public trust in the integrity of the financial system. Critically, as the past portends, individual investors, with all their vulnerabilities, suffer the most devastating consequences.

Retail investors are as well susceptible to overreaction when negative news hits the market. For example, a week of turbulence eroded market capitalisation of over ₹1-lakh crore in the case of just six listed companies of the Adani group (<https://bit.ly/2UWOJbM>). For an individual investor, who had purchased these shares during the last month, this means that he lost his entire investment. These companies are closely held, with promoters holding around 75% stake, but imagine the mayhem if this happens to a widely held company. A bubble burst is in the realm of recurrent reality and cannot be ignored as a figment of the imagination.

Furqan Qamar, a professor in finance at Jamia Millia Islamia, is a former Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and also a former Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Himachal Pradesh and the University of Rajasthan. Taufeeque Ahmad Siddiqui is an assistant professor in finance at Jamia Millia Islamia



The meeting between the Union Government and the Jammu and Kashmir leadership stands out for the meet's cordial atmosphere. Leaders with diverse backgrounds, and of different generations, sat for a few hours discussing contentious issues without acrimony, the sole focus being only the welfare of people of J&K and the integrity of the country. There is a message for the country. Those in public life who trade charges against each other, in language most foul, should learn from the J&K leadership that courtesy

begs courtesy.

V.J. RAJAGOPAL,
Jaipur, Rajasthan

Driving force
One recalls *The Hindu's* write-up on Sudarshana in its 'Friday Review' section (September 2020), commemorating its jubilee. Mr. Sampath Kumar carried forward his father's legacy in running the Sanskrit daily with grit in spite of a lack of patronage for the newspaper and for the Sanskrit media as a whole.

R. SIVAKUMAR,
Chennai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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What lies ahead for IBC and stressed assets resolution?

PARLEY

The size of the haircut should not be the gauge of the success of the IBC process

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), notified in 2016, has been the key mechanism for addressing corporate distress and the accumulation of bad loans in the financial sector since its implementation. Recent National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) rulings have also put the spotlight on the IBC. In a conversation moderated by Suresh Seshadri, Aparna Ravi and R.K. Bansal discuss questions about the effectiveness of the process and the road ahead. Edited excerpts:

It has been five years since the IBC came into force. How has it fared and what are its biggest challenges?

R.K. Bansal: One basic difference between us and other countries is that our companies are mainly promoter-owned and owners run the companies. In most of the developed countries, companies are run by professionals and the ownership is widely spread. Here, because it is owned and controlled as well as managed by mostly the same people, that creates a problem in taking over the asset.

I think, overall, over the last five years, it has done quite well. And Section 29A [of the IBC], which was introduced by the government later, also helped in resolving some of these problems.

I would say the recoveries and resolutions have been quite good, quite fast, compared to other measures available to the lenders. Today, on average, one can see maybe about three years [for recoveries and resolutions] as compared to an earlier timeline of five years, six years or more. But there are infrastructure issues. We need more NCLTs and we need more members. There are a lot of vacancies, a lot of delays in appointments, NCLAT [National Company Law Appellate Tribunal] benches are few. So, that is one area perhaps that we need to strengthen. The second issue is that a lot of these are very old cases – what we call stock of NPAs [Non-Performing Assets]. So, once this round is over, in future, perhaps, there will be fewer cases and we should be

able to take care. The Act will do better actually, if not many cases go to the NCLT. Because the fear of losing the company under Section 49A will push the promoters to find a resolution.

Aparna Ravi: The initial version of the IBC that came into effect in December 2016 is quite different from what we have today. But around this whole issue about the NCLT's functioning itself – I think there have been a lot of delays in implementation, whether it's in terms of approvals, having an application admitted itself. In some situations, an application is filed for admission and it takes almost a year to actually be admitted. And even things like the approval of a resolution plan... The resolution plan that was approved for Jet Airways recently was actually approved by the Creditors' Committee in October 2020. The NCLT has a very limited role; it just needs to approve the resolution plan based on whether the plan complies with applicable law. But it [resolution plan for Jet Airways] was only approved in June 2021. These kinds of delays are a significant issue with the implementation of the code, coupled with the fact that even though the Supreme Court has clarified a number of legal positions in the last few years around the IBC, it doesn't seem like in some situations the tribunals have laid to rest these positions. They still allow these same issues to be litigated again. This seems to me the biggest implementation challenge with the code itself.

There are concerns about the extent of haircuts that banks and financial creditors are having to take in order to achieve resolution. Are these concerns valid or misplaced?

RKB: I would not say they are misplaced, but I would say we need to understand the context. The haircut figure looks large in some cases because of many reasons. I remember the first case approved by the NCLT was Synergies-Dooray, where the haircut was 94%. But at that time this was not prominent as this was a



If the process itself is to improve, what we need to think about is how to attract more buyers or a more diverse range of strategic buyers to be willing to bid for assets, and submit resolution plans under the code.

APARNA RAVI

smaller case. Now, why does it happen? The claims filed are of three types: secured lenders, operational creditors, unsecured lenders, and then you have a lot of guarantee obligations of that company. Now, that guarantee obligation sometimes makes the dues multiple times that of a normal case. I have seen some cases where the total dues may be ₹500 crore, but because of the guarantee, the total dues claimed are from ₹6,000 crore to ₹7,000 crore. So, when the ₹500 crore company goes for resolution and you get a plan for ₹200 crore, it is 40%, so the haircut is 60%. But then if you compare this ₹200 crore figure with ₹7,000 crore-₹8,000 crore including guarantees, the haircut will look very large. And this happens typically in holding companies, which are the main companies and which have given the guarantees – whether it was OMML, Lanco Infra, or even recently Videocon, I mean those type of cases where there are a lot of assets, a lot of companies in the group, and guarantee has been given for many of these companies by this company. So, now, the question is haircut is relevant in the context of what is the asset, what are the debts, what are the guarantees, what are the other group assets. Now, out of the first 12 cases filed by the banks in 2017, even today, five got the resolution, which were steel cases because steel is a commodity sector and the assets are good. So, you got very good value in those. Out of five also their percentages are different, of course: Essar Steel or Bhushan Steel got quite a good value, then Bhushan Power and Steel somewhat lower, and Monnet was the least in those five cases. Then, you had a company called Binani Cement which was not out of the 12 but you got almost

more than 100% because the asset was good. Then you had two, three cases which are going into liquidation, so banks may not get much – the haircut could be as high as 99% or 95%. Like Lanco Infra, which was a holding company again, or an EPC [engineering procurement and construction] company like Era Infra or Jyoti Structures.

Finally, it depends on the company and its asset. You will get value if the asset is good. Some businesses would have failed, like many of the EPC companies, where haircuts are very high. Because basically in an EPC company there are hardly any assets, except some equipment. And some of them have diverted funds. Some of them lost money in contracts, government dues are there, government departments or entities actually withheld dues, levied a lot of penalties because of the delays. I think you need to understand that.

AR: I don't think the size of the haircut itself is really a measure of the success of IBC. If the process itself is to improve, what we need to think about is how to attract more buyers or a more diverse range of strategic buyers to be willing to bid for assets, and submit resolution plans under the code. And I think a big part of that is improving the process in

terms of minimising the delays, increasing the predictability. Those are issues that do need to be ironed out.

Is there something, especially from the legal side, that can be done to improve the process?

AR: One thing is, of course, adherence to the timelines by all the stakeholders. The other area, from a legal point of view, is around who can submit a resolution plan itself. And I think on that Mr. Bansal too had a number of views on Section 29A that prevents promoters, in a lot of cases, from submitting resolution plans. I understand the rationale behind this, and there are some restrictions under Section 29A that make a lot of sense – for example, a wilful defaulter probably should not be allowed to submit a resolution plan under the IBC. But some of the other restrictions such as one on [a promoter] who has had NPAs for over a year, or who's had a personal guarantee that has been invoked... in those cases I think that would result in a lot of the promoters of most companies not being able to submit resolution plans. There has been a relaxation which allows MSMEs to have greater flexibility in terms of promoters being able to submit resolution plans for these companies.

This is something that can be considered just to lay the floor open to a larger number of resolution plans. Of course, nobody is required to accept a resolution plan. There needs to be a fair process where many of the processes are open to a number of people. Allowing certain relaxations to Section 29A could be helpful.

Do you see a larger role for the proposed national ARC in stressed assets resolution?

RKB: The national ARC (Asset Reconstruction Company), or so-called 'bad bank', should help. It's a good thing because it's a one-time exercise, a good clean-up exercise. Because a lot of these cases don't have a great resolution plan or they don't have great value left. So, many of these cases perhaps need to be warehoused for some time. If I try to sell a power plant today in thermal power, we may get a value of only ₹2

crore per megawatt, while the country will still need power and a power plant requires ₹5 crore-₹6 crore per megawatt just to build up because there is excess capacity, because there is a problem in the thermal power sector. The other point is that there are not many strategic investors. An asset will have interest or value only if there are more people who are ready to buy, like the steel cases, where there were a number of suitors. But today in power, there's hardly one or two people in India who will be interested in buying power assets, and typically foreign players don't buy thermal power because of the coal issue and social issues. So, what happens is, today you need to wait for some time for some of these assets. You have to work along, then your recovery will be far, far better. A national ARC will give the time to the banks to resolve these cases over a period of time.

Besides strengthening the IBC infrastructure, how else could resolution be expedited?

AR: What we do see is that sometimes there isn't an appointment made for these benches for some time... there's one judicial member who is in charge of two benches. Some of those NCLT benches only function on certain days of the week because that's when the judicial member or the technical member are both available, so definitely there needs to be capacity building in terms of NCLT. It's also worth considering that the IBC cases are not the only mandate of the NCLT. They also consider various cases under the Companies Act such as mergers or oppression and mismanagement cases. A different point is also to remember that the IBC is not the only solution for resolving stress. It's important to look at a range of different options both within and outside the IBC for resolving distress, and especially through these pre-IBC mechanisms, one-time settlements, restructuring packages. It's important to look at them all as part of the spectrum. Especially in cases where there is some consensus with the debtor and the debtor and the creditors, these pre-IBC resolutions may work very well as well.



R. K. Bansal,
MD & CEO of
Edelweiss Asset
Reconstruction Co.,
is a former banker



Aparna Ravi,
a partner at
Samvad Partners,
was a member of
the Bankruptcy
Law Reform
Committee

Delhi's lame duck Assembly

The GNCTD (Amendment) Act prohibits the exercise of free speech in the Assembly and its committees

SHOURYA DASGUPTA

The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD)(Amendment) Act, 2021 has been extensively criticised as a retrograde law that turns the clock back on representative democracy. The bulk of criticism has been focused on the reduced autonomy of the elected government and the consequent vesting of several crucial powers in the unelected Lieutenant Governor, who is the representative of the Union government. This is largely attributable to public consciousness of the regular skirmishes between the elected government and the Lieutenant Governor. However, what deserves equal condemnation is the Act's assault on the functioning of Delhi's Legislative Assembly, which has been sought to be reduced to a lame duck.

A delicate balance

When the GNCTD Act was enacted in 1992, the Legislative Assembly was given the power to regulate its own procedure, as well as the conduct of its business. This was subject to very limited exceptions concerning financial matters and scrutiny over the Lieutenant Governor's discretionary role. This sought to realise a delicate balance reflecting Delhi's unique constitutional position: neither full state nor a centrally governed Union Territory. However, the Amendment Act drives a coach and horses through this scheme. Now, Delhi's Assembly has no more functional independence worth its name. Its standards of procedure and conduct of business have been firmly tethered to that of the Lok Sabha, depriving Delhi's elected MLAs of an effective say in how their Assembly should be run. Even more insidiously, the Amending Act prohibits the Assembly from making any rule enabling either itself or its committees to consider any issue concerned with "the day-to-day administration of the capital" or "conduct inquiries in relation to administrative decisions". This is rounded off by providing that any rule made before the Amendment Act came into effect that runs counter to this formulation shall be void.

This clinical purge of its critical legislative functions has rendered the Delhi Assembly a 'legislature' in name only, unable both to articulate the concerns of the electorate and hold the political executive to account. Surely, Delhi's voters deserve better than that.

Impact on committees
A note of alarm must also be sounded for the effect on the functioning of the Assembly's committees. These committees are usually insured from the sound and fury of political theatre that pervade sittings of the whole Assembly. Away from the glare of cameras, cooler heads usually prevail and important work gets done.

Inquiries are conducted, witnesses and documents are examined, and reports on relevant issues are written. The deliberations and inputs of committees often pave the way for intelligent legislative action. In a way, they act as the eyes and ears for the whole House, which has neither the time nor the expertise to scrutinise issues in depth. It would be impossible for committees to perform this function without the power to conduct inquiries. It is true that many of these inquiries are bound to be broad-based and roving in nature, and may even lead to legislative dead ends. But to pre-emptively injunct a committee from conducting an inquiry "in relation to the administrative decisions" (an extremely broad exception) completely negates the ability of committees to function effectively as the Assembly's advisors and agents. The quality of legislative work emanating from the Assembly is thus ultimately bound to suffer.

This clinical purge of its critical legislative functions has rendered the Delhi Assembly a 'legislature' in name only, unable both to articulate the concerns of the electorate and hold the political executive to account. Surely, Delhi's voters deserve better than that.

Shourya Dasgupta is an advocate practising in Delhi



NOTEBOOK

Tracking down meetings behind the scenes

Reporting on back-channel talks is a large part of covering diplomacy

SUHASINI HAIDAR

News is a chase, I remember thinking, as we sped down that long, dimly lit road in Sharm El Sheikh, trying to keep up with the Pakistani Foreign Secretary's car. We had spied him leaving the hotel where the Indian delegation was staying and went in pursuit of the car, hoping to doorstep him into telling us where India-Pakistan negotiations, on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement meet being held at the Egyptian resort town in 2009, were headed. Much of diplomatic coverage means tracking down such meetings behind the scenes and back-channel contacts between governments of countries that aren't otherwise willing to speak about their bilateral dialogue. Eventually, the Pakistani diplomat rewarded our persistence with an interview, but that was a rare moment of luck. Journalists trying to cover such awkward tête-à-têtes normally find themselves dealing with aggressive security guards, hostile offi-

cials, and official denials for their stories.

In 2002, I was accosted by an irate posse of Indian officials in Kathmandu for reporting that a meeting had been planned between then Foreign Ministers Jaswant Singh and Sartaj Aziz, on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in progress. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had just exchanged an unexpected but frosty handshake with Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf who had walked up to him on stage and practically forced him into the gesture. The event came a month after the Parliament attack, and Indian and Pakistani troops had begun their massive buildup (Op Parakram) at the Line of Control. The officials who met me angrily denied our story and wanted us to retract it. Fortunately we were saved from the dire consequences they threatened us with, when an intrepid Nepali photographer released a photo of the two Foreign Ministers engaged in talks inside the conference hall and even exchanging what appeared

to be handwritten notes.

The truth is that such contacts are discovered or reported only a fraction of the time they occur: given security restrictions and shrinking access to official events, journalists have to be very lucky or well sourced to even know that these meetings are taking place. A few years ago, some of the most senior Indian and Pakistani journalists were at a conference in Bangkok, and had no idea that just a few hotels away, National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and senior Indian officials were meeting with Pakistani NSA Nasir Janjua and their counterparts. At other times, the chase has been made impossible by logistics: at the SAARC summit in the Maldives, the organisers ensured total privacy by housing all official delegations on a completely different island from the journalists. No boats were made available for us to travel across. Travel restrictions that have followed the COVID-19 pandemic are making the situation more difficult, as reporters cover

the recent back-channel contacts between India and Pakistan and India and the Taliban have found out, as despite various officials confirming the meetings, there are no eyewitness accounts of them.

Perhaps the most legendary dodge by interlocutors came about 50 years ago, when U.S. presidential adviser Henry Kissinger went on his secret visit to Beijing to negotiate the opening of U.S.-China diplomatic relations. He went first to Islamabad, just so that he could shake all journalists off his trail, with help from the Pakistani government. During a dinner hosted by President Yahya Khan, Kissinger feigned an illness "due to the heat" and was "invited" to spend a few days in the hill station at Nathia Gali outside Islamabad. Once he was away from the prying eyes of the media, and even his own State Department officials, Kissinger was driven to the tarmac where a Pakistani plane was waiting to fly him to his secret meeting. Operation Marco Polo had just begun.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 2, 1971

Nixon aide to visit India, Islamabad

Washington, July 1: President Nixon's foreign policy advisor, Mr. Henry Kissinger, who will be visiting Delhi and Islamabad shortly, in the course of a much broader and separate assignment dealing with Vietnam, is understood to have undertaken this side-trip to gauge the reaction of the two countries to the stance the U.S. has taken on East Bengal so far. The visit was arranged on the U.S.'s initiative and sources here said that Mr. Kissinger rather than Secretary of State Rogers was chosen for the purpose because President Nixon wanted to give the mission a White House rather than a State Department stamp. Sources here cautioned against reading too much into Mr. Kissinger's trip to India – they suggested that his mission was primarily connected with the Vietnam war and discussions in that regard in Saigon. The sources added that while in Delhi, Mr. Kissinger will in all probability try to cool the tempers there – tempers which have been frayed considerably by the continued supply of American war material to the Pakistan army. Mr. Kissinger would in this connection urge India to continue to follow a policy of "restraint". In Islamabad, Mr. Kissinger, the sources said, would once again try to nudge Yahya Khan to move a "little more rapidly" towards a restoration of normalcy in East Bengal.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 2, 1911

The disappearance of colds

The Medical Correspondent of the "Times" writes in its Trade Supplement: - Few more astonishing examples of the inter-relationship of health and work have ever been afforded than the gradual clearing away of smoke which has taken place in the atmospheres of all our great cities during the present crisis. It is a tragic spectacle enough; but if the lessons which it teaches are learned, we may yet be able to reap some advantage from it. The first of these lessons is evidently purely commercial. It is the sheer, the absurd, waste represented by all this unburnt and half-burnt fuel which ten thousand chimneys belch into our air. This lesson does not concern health except in so far as it indicates in what way man may cheat himself of the fruit of his labour and so remain a poorer individual than he need – and hence a less healthy one. The second lesson concerns us all. For this coal dust, so freely driven into our air, is an irritant. It is moreover a screen shutting out that portion of the sunlight which acts as a cleanser and a killer of bacteria.

FROM PAGE ONE

Nine European nations clear SII jab

The European Medicines Agency (EMA), which created the authorised list, is yet to include Covishield, which is based on AstraZeneca's formula, as an acceptable vaccine. The nine countries' move showed that some EU member-states are making individual policies that are suitable to their health and international requirements.

Air France has declared that Indian passengers who have taken doses cleared by the EMA are required to undergo seven days of "mandatory quarantine".

"These passengers must present a COVID-19 vaccination certificate demonstrating that at least four weeks have elapsed since the first dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine, or two weeks have elapsed since the second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca or Moderna vaccine, or since the first dose of these vaccines if the passenger holds proof that they previously have been infected with COVID-19," said Air France, laying down the domestic requirement, which places additional conditions on even those Indian passengers who have taken doses of the vaccines meant for the "Green Pass".

In last academic year, 22% schools had Internet

The vast majority of the country's 26 crore schoolchildren have not set foot in a school since then, depending instead on various forms of distance education.

The availability of digital education – whether via live, synchronous teaching on apps like Zoom, or through recorded lectures, emails, WhatsApp or educational apps – was largely dependent on whether schools, teachers and parents had access to the necessary infrastructure. In many States, teachers came to school and taught in their own empty classrooms, using their blackboards and lab facilities, while facing a computer screen that communicated the lessons to their students at home.

However, the UDISE data makes clear the digital divide, which made this a viable option only in some States.

In many Union Territories, as well as in the State of Kerala, more than 90% of schools, both government and private, had access to working computers.

In States such as Chhattisgarh (83%) and Jharkhand (73%), installation of computer facilities in most government schools paid off, while in others such as Tamil Nadu (77%), Gujarat (74%) and Maharashtra (71%), private schools had higher levels of computer availability than government schools.

However, in States such as Assam (13%), Madhya Pradesh (13%), Bihar (14%), West Bengal (14%), Tripura

(15%) and Uttar Pradesh (18%), less than one in five schools had working computers. The situation is worse in government schools, with less than 5% of Uttar Pradesh's government schools having the facility.

The connectivity divide is even starker. Only three States – Kerala (88%), Delhi (86%) and Gujarat (71%) – have Internet facilities in more than half their schools. This will make it hard for most schools to implement the options for hybrid learning as schools try to re-open with staggered attendance post the pandemic.

More encouragingly, 90% of schools across the country have facilities for hand-washing, which will gain added importance as they implement COVID-19 safety protocols while reopening. More than 80% of schools conducted medical check-ups during the year before the pandemic. Temperature testing and monitoring of symptoms need to become a daily activity, according to the Centre's health protocol for schools wishing to reopen.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved in 2019-20, with 98% of students in Classes I-8 attending school, though the GER for secondary and senior secondary students stood at 78% and 51% respectively.

The dropout rate at secondary level was 17% in 2019-20, with experts warning that dropouts are likely to surge due to the pandemic.

Akhil Gogoi freed in CAA violence case

He had spent the last few months in the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital due to ailments. He slammed the BJP-led State government for "misusing" the UAPA and the NIA. The court's judgment would influence future cases, he stated.

Soon after his release, Mr. Gogoi visited the house of Sam Stafford, a school student who was among the five persons killed in the anti-CAA violence in Guwahati. He expressed solidarity with the parents of the boy who died in police firing.

Mr. Gogoi's advocate Shantanu Borthakur said three others – Dharjya Konwar, Manas Konwar and Bittu Sonowal – who were arrested with him were also discharged on Thursday. The three, members of var-

ious wings of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, Mr. Gogoi had founded, had been out on bail.

"The court's ruling has exposed the State government's attempts to target our party president," Bhasco de Saikia, Rajor Dal working president, said.

The NIA court last week granted two days' parole to Mr. Gogoi to meet members of his family in Guwahati and eastern Assam's Jorhat. His 84-year-old mother Priyada Gogoi is ailing. She had campaigned for her son in the May 27 Assembly elections.

"My focus will be on working for the development of my constituency besides opposing any anti-people policy the government tries to impose," Mr. Gogoi said.

Talks between Lanka and India are necessary

STAFF REPORTER

SALEM
Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is of the view that talks between India and Sri Lanka are necessary to find a permanent solution to the attacks on Tamil Nadu's fishermen

by the Sri Lankan Navy, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Minister Anitha R. Radhakrishnan said.

"Whenever such incidents occur, he immediately contacts the Prime Minister and the Home Minister," he said.

Normal rainfall likely in July

But IMD says the monsoon will recover only after the second week of the month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said the monsoon is unlikely to recover significantly until the second week of July.

Currently, it is stalled and has not progressed into much of northwest India in spite of a very strong start in June.

This hiatus could affect sowing in northwest India.

In a monthly update, the IMD on Thursday forecast rainfall for July over the country as a whole to "most likely be normal" (defined as being 96 to 104% of the historical average). July and August are the rainiest monsoon months, contributing over two-thirds of the rainfall and, therefore, critical to kharif crop sowing in most of the country.

Until June 19, monsoon rainfall was exceptionally high, with the average rainfall exceeding 40% of what is



Worrying break: Last year, too, the monsoon had a strong start but faltered in July. ■ H. VIBHU

normal, and since then, rainfall has been declining.

6% more than normal

In June, India normally gets 17.5 cm of rainfall, but this year, it has been 18.7 cm, or 6% more than normal.

The IMD said the monsoon had covered most of the country except parts of Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana, and this was unlikely to happen until July se-

cond week. The key reasons for that were neutral El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions that were likely to continue over the equatorial Pacific Ocean and that there was a enhanced possibility of development of negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions over the Indian Ocean during July-September.

Historically, the monsoon covered the entire country by July 8, and within that, there was a week's buffer, he added.

vourable to abetting the monsoon progress.

Last year, too, the monsoon had a strong start but faltered in July, leading to one of the driest in the last five years. However, this was followed by excessive rains in August and September.

In June, the IMD said monsoon rains would be 101% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 88 cm.

Note to agriculturists

IMD Director-General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said, "Agriculturists carrying out rice transplanting in northwest India should be careful as no significant monsoon rain is expected this week. There are also no convective systems forming in the Bay of Bengal and this is unlikely until July second week".

Historically, the monsoon covered the entire country by July 8, and within that, there was a week's buffer, he added.

Nirav's sister transfers ₹17.25 cr. to govt. account

She was made an approver in January

DEVESHE K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

Purvi Modi, who turned an approver in the money laundering case against her brother Nirav Modi and others, remitted \$23,16,889.03 to the Union government's account.

The amount, equivalent to about ₹17.25 crore, was parked in a London bank account opened in her name at the instance of her brother.

Full disclosure

In January this year, Ms. Modi and her husband, Maank Mehta, were allowed by a special court to become approvers in the case on the condition that they would make a full and true disclosure. The agency had earlier filed a chargesheet each in the case in May 2018 and February 2019, in which Ms. Modi and her husband were listed as accused.

On June 24, she informed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) that she had come to know about the London account opened in her name and that the funds did not belong to her.

"As Purvi Modi was allowed tender of pardon on conditions of making full and true disclosure, Ms. Modi remitted an amount of \$23,16,889.03 from her U.K. bank account to the bank account of the Government of India, Enforcement Directorate," said an official.

IN BRIEF



Oil well blowout: SC stays order on panel

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a National Green Tribunal (NGT) verdict appointing the managing director of the company behind the blowout at Well No. 5 in the Baghjan Oilfield operated by Oil India Limited (OIL), as a member of its committee assigned to determine the responsibility and compensation for the restoration of the Dibrugarh Saikhowa National Park in Assam, which was severely damaged in the event in May 2020. The court decided to list the case after three weeks.

Gulshan case: HC upholds life term for assailant
MUMBAI
The Bombay High Court on Thursday upheld the life imprisonment of Abdul Rauf Dawood Merchant for the murder of Gulshan Kumar, founder of the T-Series music label, on August 12, 1997. It upheld the acquittal of film producer Ramesh Taurani in the case. A Division Bench of Justices Sadhana Jadhav and N.R. Borkar overruled the acquittal of Abdul Rashid Dawood Merchant in the case and convicted him. The Bench said, "The appellant [Abdul Rauf] has criminal antecedents and is not entitled for remission as he absconded right after his arrest. Hence, in the interest of justice at large, appellant does not deserve any leniency."

Deshmukh's staff admits he had role in postings
MUMBAI
Maharashtra's former Home Minister and Nationalist Congress Party leader Anil Deshmukh's private secretary Sanjeev Palande has admitted that Mr. Deshmukh had a role in the transfer posting of police officers, especially in the posting of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers. The special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court on Thursday had extended the Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody given to Mr.

Deshmukh's aides – his personal assistant Kundan Shinde, and Mr. Palande – till July 6. They were arrested on June 26.

'Ensure free and fair zilla panchayat chief polls'
LUCKNOW
The Allahabad High Court on Thursday directed the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections to the posts of zilla panchayat president in Uttar Pradesh amid allegations that pressure was being created on candidates so as to influence the polls in favour of the BJP candidates.

A Division Bench of Justices Rajan Roy and Saurabh Lavania on July 1 passed the order on a writ petition filed by an election candidate of the Samajwadi Party from Sitapur.

New deputy chiefs for Army and Air Force

V.R. Chaudhari, S.K. Sharma take charge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Vivek Ram Chaudhari

took over as the new AOC-in-C of the Western Air Command and Air Marshal P.M. Sinha assumed office as DG, Air Operations.

The Deputy Chief (Strategy), a third and a new vertical created for overseeing the Army's operations and intelligence directorates, among other important branches, was one of the most crucial appointments in the Army, said an officer.

Lt. Gen. Sharma was the Director General of Military Intelligence prior to the new appointment.

He was commissioned into the Rajputana Rifles in December 1983.

Anshu Prakash case: SC rejects Delhi Police plea

'An investigating agency has to abide by the duty to be fair'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Anshu Prakash

Aman Lekhi, appearing for the police.

V.K. Jain statement

Mr. Lekhi said the statement of V.K. Jain, who claimed to have attended the 2018 meeting, was part of the case diary and need not be shared.

"The statement was only reflected in the case diary," Justice Shah said, stressing that Mr. Jain's written statement had an existence independent of the case diary.

Justice Chandrachud asked Additional Solicitor-General

ing "technical" grounds and should rely on common sense to give the accused a copy of the statement in order to fulfil the objective of a fair trial. The High Court decision had upheld an accused's right to fair trial. "For you, this may be a political hot potato, but it is nothing for us legally... This is not worth it," he orally observed.

Mr. Kejriwal, in his plea before the High Court, accused the prosecution of withholding the statement of Mr. Jain because it did not suit the prosecution case.

Mr. Jain, in the 2018 statement, stated that the meeting between the AAP leaders and Mr. Prakash was on the issue of the "doorstep delivery of ration, advertisement funds release and the slow processing of files". During the meeting, Mr. Jain stated that he went to the washroom and upon returning, saw Mr. Prakash leaving.

Defence service workers barred from strike

Ordinance notifies prison term and fines for inciting strikes declared as illegal



Dissent not allowed: A protest in Jabalpur against the move to privatise 41 ordnance factories. ■ FILE PHOTO

The Union Law Ministry late on Wednesday notified an Ordinance that prohibited employees engaged in essential defence services from taking part in any agitation or strike.

The Essential Defence Services Ordinance, 2021, comes in the backdrop of major federations affiliated with the 76,000 employees of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) making an announcement that they would go on indefinite strike from July 26 in protest against the government's decision to corporatise the OFB.

The notification stated that President Ram Nath Kovind "is satisfied that circumstance exists for the Ordinance as Parliament is not in session".

The gazette notification said employees involved in the production of defence equipment, services and op-

erations, or maintenance of any industrial establishment connected with the military, as well as those employed in the repair and maintenance of defence products, would come under the purview of the Ordinance. Following the Cabinet decision, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said there would be no change in the service conditions of employees of the OFB, and the decision was aimed at boosting India's defence manufacturing sector.

On June 16, the Union Cabinet approved a long-pending proposal to restructure the nearly 200-year-old Ordinance Factory Board – operating 41 ammunition and military equipment production facilities – into seven State-owned corporations to improve its accountability, efficiency and competitiveness.

The notification added

Cannot fix time limit in deflection pleas, says SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday put on hold a petition to fix time limits by which the Speakers of Parliament and the Assemblies should decide deflection petitions against MLAs.

A Bench led by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana *prima facie* said the court cannot let legislative. "It is the prerogative of the House... We cannot

fix time limits," the Bench said.

The Bench, however, gave the lawyer for the petitioner, Ranajit Mukherjee, time to study a judgment of the Supreme Court in the Karnataka MLAs' case on the point.

The Karnataka judgment of 2019 had said Speakers who cannot veer away from their constitutional duty to remain neutral do not deserve the chair.

The party, in a statement

Withdraw 'draconian' Ordinance, says CPI

It bans strikes in ordnance factories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Scribes must not dramatise incidents: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

A journalist is not expected to dramatise a sensational and horrifying incident and make news by putting the subject in a pitiable condition and in danger of death, the Allahabad High Court has said.

The court made the observation while rejecting a bail plea of a journalist in Lucknow, who is co-accused of abetting a person's suicide and filming it outside the U.P. Vidhan Sabha last year. "The journalist keeps an eye on anticipated or sudden events happening in society and brings them to the information of all the people through various news media without any tampering, this is his business," the court said on June 21.

Journalists Shamim Ahmad and Naushad Ahmad allegedly contacted a man who was facing eviction from his house and induced him to set himself ablaze in front of the Assembly so that they may film the incident and telecast it. The journalists allegedly surmised that if the tenant did as they suggested, no one would be able to evict him from the house.

The person died in a hospital on October 24, 2020.

Justice Vikas Kunvar Srivastav said that from the details and statements recorded in the case, it was *prima facie* established that accused Shamim Ahmad tempted the deceased that if he attempted to take his own life in front of the Assembly, the video-filmed act would prevent him from being evicted.

'Army working to deal with drone threat'

General Naravane says talks are on with China at various levels, which has helped build trust

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Army chief Gen. Manoj Naravane on Thursday said that with the easy availability of drones, they would be increasingly used in all sorts of combat, both by state and non-state actors, and capabilities were being developed to deal with them.

On the Ladakh stand-off, he said the situation on the ground had been normal since February and talks were on with China at different levels that had helped build trust between the two sides.

His comments came after explosions last Sunday at the Jammu Air Force station, which were believed to have been carried out using drones, the first such attack in the country. "We are seized of this problem. We have put in place certain



Keeping watch: Security personnel standing guard outside the IAF station in Jammu on Tuesday. ■ PTI

measures. All our troops on the ground have been sensitised for this evolving threat and we are developing capabilities to deal with that, whether by state-sponsored or by states themselves. We are developing capabilities to deal with the drone threat both in the kinetic and non-kinetic realm," Gen. Naravane said at a webinar organised by Global Counter-Terrorism Council in association with the Department of Defence Production.

He stated that they were catering to both the offensive use of drones and defensive measures or the counter-drone systems to prevent attacks on any critical instal-

lations whether by state or non-state actors.

On the stand-off in Eastern Ladakh, he noted that the situation had been normal since the disengagement in February from the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso (lake) as well as the Kailash ranges. "Since then, both sides have strictly adhered in letter and spirit to the disengagement that was agreed upon," he observed.

Loc situation
The two sides were engaged at different levels – political, diplomatic and military. "This has helped build trust between the two sides and going ahead we are sure we will be able to resolve all the remaining issues," he said.

On the situation along the Line of Control (LoC), he said that since the ceasefire

understanding between the Directors-General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan in February, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir had seen improvement. There had been little to no infiltration, he said.

Stressing the need to incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI)-related technologies, he stated that this would require simplified procedures. "Unfortunately, this has been one of our biggest stumbling blocks. The transition to the digital age is contrarian to Defence Procurement Procedure and Defence Procurement Manual mindsets." In order to harness technologies like AI, exploit the depth in IT and realise the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, we need to shed old mindsets and make our procedures more flexible and adaptive, he added.

Senior Congress leaders, too, maintained that the "current political atmosphere does not allow political pleasantries between the two parties".

Left parties greet CPC; BJP, Congress silent

Sitaram Yechury writes to Xi Jinping



A ceremony at Tiananmen Square in Beijing marking 100 years of the CPC.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress avoided sending any congratulatory message to the Communist Party of China (CPC) that marked its centennial foundation day on Thursday, but the Left parties sent their greetings.

Following last year's violent clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at Galwan Valley, political relations between the two national parties and the CPC have taken a hit.

While the BJP had sent its greetings to the Vietnamese Communist Party on its 13th party Congress this February, it did not do so for the centenary celebrations of the Communist Party of China.

Senior Congress leaders, too, maintained that the "current political atmosphere does not allow political pleasantries between the two parties".

However, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury wrote to Xi Jinping, the Chinese Premier and general secretary of the CPC, in which he said that the history of the last century holds testimony to the manner in which China has evolved its policies, often identifying and correcting its mistakes.

"The CPI(M) continues to underline that Marxism-Leninism is a creative science. It is supremely anti-dogmatic. It can never be reduced to a set of formulae," Mr. Yechury wrote.

He also applauded China for its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, the CPI(M) leader

said, came at a time when the global economy was already slowing down and moving towards recession. "International finance capital-led imperialist neoliberal globalisation is showing its total bankruptcy in providing any solution," Mr. Yechury wrote.

CPI general secretary D. Raja also commended Chinese President Xi Jinping for leading China to become a major economic power, to intervene and cooperate on any international development.

He also applauded China for its handling of the pandemic and extending help to other countries.

While appreciating the all-round development of China, Mr. Raja, however, sounded a word of caution on the current strained Indo-China relationship.

The border dispute that had been going on since India's Independence needed to be solved, Mr. Raja said.

"We do believe we have to solve this problem now through peaceful means so that our both countries can play a meaningful role to realise the peace and stability in the region and work together for the establishment of an equitable global order in international relations."

Won't link J&K polls with statehood: Lone

His party has come under fire for not raising Article 370 with the PM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

People's Conference (PC) chairman Sajad Lone said that he would not link elections with the restoration of statehood, reflecting a willingness to follow the Centre's timeline of holding elections after the delimitation process in Jammu and Kashmir and restoring statehood later.

"I would say that the statehood should be restored now. Not as a matter of charity, but as a matter of right. I wouldn't link elections with statehood," Mr. Lone said.



Sajad Lone

Unlike National Conference's Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party's Mehbooba Mufti, who have decided not to contest elections in the Union Territory but only in the State of J&K, Mr. Lone said, "I will not say that I will myself boycott the long process."

Mr. Lone, who quit the Gupkar Alliance earlier this year, said he was ready to be part of the delimitation process if invited.

elections and the party will contest. We all are equal."

On the all-party meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 24, Mr. Lone said: "There are no winners and losers. It is a long process."

Mr. Lone's party has come under criticism from Gupkar Alliance leaders for failing to raise the issue of Article 370 with the PM and describing it as *sub judice*.

Mr. Lone, who quit the Gupkar Alliance earlier this year, said he was ready to be part of the delimitation process if invited.

Increasing void

At a separate meeting, Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari also demanded early elections without any rider of statehood.

"The void between the people and government institutions is increasing exponentially in the absence of an elected government ... People are being pushed from pillar to post, while their pressing issues go unnoticed.

The only panacea to end their sufferings at the grassroots level is to give them a representative form of government," he said.

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI**

A delegation of leaders from Kargil on Thursday attended a meeting hosted by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy.

"We had two clear agendas – restoration of Article 370 and 35A and full-fledged statehood for Ladakh ... More meetings are to be followed to discuss this," Asgar Ali Karbalai, leader of Congress and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), told mediapersons.

(With agency inputs)

CJI condemns attacks on doctors

+ 'They have stood like a rock between COVID-19 and thousands of patients'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Thursday condemned the brutal attacks on doctors who have stood like a rock between the COVID-19 virus and thousands of emotionally and physically vulnerable patients confined to isolation in hospital wards during the pandemic.

"Why is it that the medical professionals are at the receiving end for someone else's failure? Issues such as insufficient number of medical professionals, infrastructure, medicines, outdated technologies, and government not giving priority to medical sector are issues of immediate concern



N.V. RAMANA Chief Justice of India

medical sector are issues of immediate concern," Chief Justice Ramana said in his speech on Doctors' Day at the launch of Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India's 'Defeat Diabetes Campaign'.

cally and emotionally vulnerable patients stood isolated in their hospital wards, it was the doctors who kept hope alive even in times of despair," he said, adding that it was disheartening to find many qualified doctors struggling to earn a decent salary after years of hard work. Yet, doctors are blamed for the profiteering streak of corporates.

"The medical bodies and agencies concerned in the government have to put their heads together to address these concerns. Only then can we sincerely greet the doctors on the first of July every year," the CJI said.

The CJI highlighted the Indian Medical Association's data that over 798 doctors died in the second wave.

"This decade is defined by the healing touch and the sacrifices made by our doctors ... When thousands of physi-

cians and emotionally vulnerable patients stood isolated in their hospital wards, it was the doctors who kept hope alive even in times of despair," he said, adding that it was disheartening to find many qualified doctors struggling to earn a decent salary after years of hard work. Yet, doctors are blamed for the profiteering streak of corporates.

"The medical bodies and agencies concerned in the government have to put their heads together to address these concerns. Only then can we sincerely greet the doctors on the first of July every year," the CJI said.

changed her name to Ayesha Alvi, which was published in some newspapers. Ms. Alvi, a resident of Tihar and working in Delhi, alleged that mediapersons came to her place and took photographs and videos without her permission. One mediaperson allegedly demanded money while threatening to publish the news about her conversion.

"On June 26, 2021, the petitioner has been informed that her father has been taken away by officials of the Uttar Pradesh police and they are coming to Delhi and would take her back to Uttar Pradesh where she would be forced to file false complaint/FIR," the plea said. The petition further stated that Ms. Alvi was "under immediate threat of being taken away by force or coercion to the State of Uttar Pradesh by the agencies of the State or any other person".

The PIL said, "The inter-departmental committee that will be formed is not an independent agency and it consists of representatives from government of India. The Rules give power to the said committee to issue orders for warning/censoring/taking down/requiring apology/editing/deleting content on the first instance."

DIPR/C/6178/2021

PIL in HC challenges new IT rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Journalist Nikhil Wagle filed a plea before the Bombay High Court challenging the new IT rules and stating that they violate the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The PIL against the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, says they are arbitrary, illegal, irrational and unreasonable and contrary to the provisions of law, including Article 14 (equality before the law), Articles 19 (I) (a) (right to freedom of speech and expression), 19 (I) (g) (right to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business).

The PIL said, "The inter-departmental committee that will be formed is not an independent agency and it consists of representatives from government of India. The Rules give power to the said committee to issue orders for warning/censoring/taking down/requiring apology/editing/deleting content on the first instance."

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ

(An Organisation of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500030

NIRD&PR is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India, proposes to engage the following project positions for its Communication Resource Unit (CRU) sponsored by UNICEF at NIRD&PR, Hyderabad, for a period of one year (July 2021-June 2022) on contractual basis:

- 1) CRU SBCC Co-ordinator (1No.)
(Planning & Co-ordination with SRIDs) -Rs. 90,000 p.m
- 2) CRU SBCC Co-ordinator (1No.)
(Training & Knowledge Management) -Rs. 80,000 p.m
- 3) CRU Graphic Designer (1No) -Rs. 55,000 p.m
- 4) Administrative Assistant (1No.) -Rs. 36,300 p.m
- 5) Office Assistant (1No.) -Rs. 13,750 p.m

For Job Profiles, Eligibility Criteria, Remuneration and submission of online application, Please visit: <http://career.nirdpr.in/>

Last date for submission of online application is 23-07-2021

Advt.No. 10/2021 Sd/- Assistant Registrar (E)

VISVESVARAYA JALA NIGAMA LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)

Executive Engineer Office, Visvesvaraya Jala Nigam Limited, Upper Bhadrav Project, Division No.5, Chitradurga.

Phone No. 08194-230102 E-mail: eeupb.5cta@gmail.com

No.EE/VJNL/UBP-Dv-5/CTA/JBC/Drip/P-2/Corrigendum-2/2021-22/28/2021 Date:25.06.2021

Sd/- Executive Engineer

Qualification and Experience:

PROFESSOR: Ph.D. in respective branch with 10 Years of teaching experience

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR: Ph.D. in respective branch with 5 Years of teaching exp.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR: First Class in M.Tech/M.Pharmacy.

WALK-IN INTERVIEW

SHADAN & Dr. V.R.K. GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS

6-2-978, Khairatabad, Hyderabad. Ph: 040-66669914, 9030627863, Fax: 040-66669915, Email: pcmb.recruitments@gmail.com

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

Date : 02-07-2021, Timings: 10 am to 1 pm

Venue : 1st Floor, Head Office, Shadan Educational Complex, Khairatabad, Hyderabad.

Eligible candidates for the post of PRINCIPAL, PROFESSORS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS and ASST. PROFESSORS may attend the interview alongwith Original Certificates, PAN Card, Aadhar Card, Photograph for our following Colleges,

- 1) Shadan Women's College

HC stays order to hand over rape victim to accused's kin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has stayed an order a lower court in Arunachal Pradesh had passed to hand over a minor rape victim to a relative of the accused.

In a letter to the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Secretary, the Director-General of Police and other officials concerned on June 30, the Additional Advocate General of the State said the High Court's Chief Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia had taken suo motu cognisance of the case related to the custody of the minor girl.

The High Court accordingly stayed the June 3 order of the sessions court at Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh's Lohit district asking the Child Care Institute (CCI) in Roing to hand over the girl to the sister-in-law of the accused person for safety.

Roing is the headquarters of Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley district. The girl was brought from Nepal and was working as a domestic help.

Trial data sought for Sputnik Light vaccine

'No need for a separate study in India'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

A Subject Expert Committee that advises the Drugs Controller General of India has asked Dr. Reddy's Laboratories to submit data from Phase III clinical trial of Sputnik Light being carried out in Russia for grant of Marketing Authorisation (MA) of the single dose vaccine against COVID-19.

The panel said there was no need for a separate Phase III trial of Sputnik Light in India since the safety and immunogenicity data has been generated during the two-dose Sputnik V trial in India. Sputnik Light is the first component of Sputnik V and its efficacy is said to be 79.4%.

DCGI nod sought for ZyCoV-D

It will be the world's first plasmid DNA vaccine for COVID-19, says Zydus Cadila

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Zydus Cadila said it has applied to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) seeking Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) for ZyCoV-D, its plasmid DNA vaccine to counter COVID-19.

It will be the world's first plasmid DNA vaccine for COVID-19, the company said.

The company had conducted clinical trials at over 50 centres in India, it said. Phase III clinical trials had been conducted on over 28,000 volunteers. This was the first time that any COVID-19 vaccine had been tested in the adolescent population in the age group of 12-18 years in India.

"Around 1,000 subjects were enrolled in this age group and the vaccine was found to be safe and very well tolerated. The tolerability profile was similar to that seen in the adult population," said Sharvil Patel, managing director, Cadila Healthcare Ltd, at a briefing.

"Our vaccine has attained primary efficacy of 66.6% for symptomatic RT-PCR positive cases in the interim ana-



Fresh contender: Zydus Cadila said that Phase 3 clinical trials had been conducted on over 28,000 volunteers. ■ AFP

lysis. No moderate case of COVID-19 disease was observed post administration of the third dose, which suggests 100% efficacy for moderate disease."

He said no severe cases or deaths had been reported after administration of the second dose of the vaccine.

"ZyCoV-D had already exhibited a robust immunogenicity, tolerability and safety profile in the adaptive Phase I/II clinical trials carried out earlier. Both the Phase I/II and Phase III clinical trials have been monitored by an independent Da-

ta Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB)," Mr. Patel said.

"The plug and play technology on which the plasmid DNA platform is based is ideally suited for dealing with COVID-19, as it can easily be adapted to deal with mutations in the virus, such as those already occurring," he said.

"This breakthrough marks a key milestone in scientific innovation and advancement in technology. As the first ever plasmid DNA vaccine for human use, ZyCoV-D has proven its safety and efficacy profile in our

fight against COVID-19. The vaccine, when approved, will help not only adults but also adolescents in the 12 to 18 years age group," he said.

The company said it had also evaluated a two-dose regimen for ZyCoV-D vaccine using a 3 mg dose per visit, and the immunogenicity results had been found to be equivalent to the current three-dose regimen.

Needle-free applicator

The vaccine will come with Pharmajet, a needle-free applicator that will ensure painless intradermal vaccine delivery. This would cost extra.

If the company has not revealed the price of the vaccine or the applicator.

Mr. Patel said the company had made an investment of ₹500 crore for this project, including the manufacturing unit, and it planned to make 10-12 crore doses annually.

In December, it targeted to produce 5 lakh doses, with a run rate of 1 crore doses per month from August. The gap between first and second dose is 28 days.

All WHO-approved jabs must be recognised for travel: UN

Vaccine divide should not widen, says global health agency

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

The World Health Organization said Thursday that any COVID-19 vaccines it has authorised for emergency use should be recognised by countries as they open up their borders to inoculated travellers.



said on Thursday. "It would negatively impact the growth of economies that are already suffering the most."

Reduces risk

The WHO said such moves are "undermining confidence in life-saving vaccines that have already been shown to be safe and effective." In its reviews of the two Chinese vaccines, the UN health agency said both were found to significantly reduce the risk of hospitalisations and deaths.

The two Chinese shots are "inactivated" vaccines, made with killed coronavirus, whereas the Western-made shots are made with newer technologies that instead target the "spike" protein that coats the surface of the coronavirus. Though Western countries have largely relied on vaccines made in the U.S. and Europe, such as Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca, many developing countries have used the Chinese-made shots.

"Any measure that only allows people protected by a subset of WHO-approved vaccines to benefit from the reopening of travel ... would effectively create a two-tier system, further widening the global vaccine divide and exacerbating the inequities we have already seen in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines," a WHO statement

Trial data sought for Sputnik Light vaccine

'No need for a separate study in India'

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"The firm should present the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy data of Phase III clinical trial of Sputnik Light that is being carried out in Russia for considering the proposal for grant of MA in the country," the SEC meeting on Wednesday recommended to Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. The pharma major had presented the Phase III clinical trial protocol as well as the interim safety and efficacy data generated from Phase I/II clinical trial in Russia while seeking the MA.

"Sputnik Light is same as component-I of Sputnik V. The firm has already generated safety and immunogenicity of component-I in the country," the SEC said.

New glow



No stopping: A health worker administering a COVID-19 vaccine under an emergency lamp during a power cut at a mega inoculation drive in Bhopal on Thursday. ■ A.M. FARUQI

Delta variant to become dominant strain: WHO

96 countries have reported cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the Delta variant of COVID-19 is now present in nearly 100 countries as per conservative estimates, and warned that in the coming months, it will become the dominant variant globally.

In its COVID-19 weekly epidemiological update, the WHO said as of June 29, 2021, "96 countries have reported cases of the Delta variant, though this is likely an underestimate as sequencing capacities needed to identify variants are limited. A number of these countries are attributing surges in infections and hospitalisations to this variant."

Given the increase in transmissibility, the WHO warned that the Delta variant is "expected to rapidly outcompete other variants and become the dominant variant over the coming months."

For the first time in several weeks, the highest numbers of new COVID-19 cases were not reported from India. The update noted that at 5,21,298, the highest numbers of new cases were reported from Brazil during the June 21-27 week, followed by India (3,51,218 new cases, a 12% increase over the previous week), Colombia (2,04,132 new cases, 5% increase) and Russia (1,34,465 new cases, 24% increase).

U.P. govt. told to reply on plea to free 13 prisoners

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday sought the Uttar Pradesh government's response on a plea to release 13 prisoners who have languished in Agra Jail over two decades despite proving their juvenility at the time of commission of the crime.

A Bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and V. Ramasubramanian issued notice and

asked the State to respond by July 8 on the petition filed through advocate Rishi Malhotra.

According to the petition, there were "clear and unchallenged rulings" from the Juvenile Justice Board declaring the 13 prisoners as juveniles at the time of commission of their crime.

A juvenile can be punished only for a maximum period of three years.

Tidal wave washes away portion of Odisha village

Ramayapalli has been facing threat since last 14 years

STAFF REPORTER
Bhubaneswar

Panic gripped the fisherfolk of Ramayapalli village in Odisha's Ganjam district after portions of houses were washed away by a tidal wave.

Ramayapalli has been fac-



Vanishing village: The sea surge has resulted in submergence of the beach in Ramayapalli. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing the threat of tidal surge

for the last 14 years, with the Bay of Bengal menacingly marching towards the

mainland.

"This week, a tidal surge washed away one concrete house, while the road was damaged beyond repair. We

are spending sleepless nights," said K. Dilesh of Ramayapalli.

In the past one decade, the

sea surge has resulted in sub-

mergence of the beach and is a few feet away from erasing the village from the map.

A few years ago, the Ganjam district administration facilitated the rehabilitation of villagers about 500 metre into the mainland. While a majority of them opted to move away, some continued to stay back for fishing.

Mr. Dilesh alleged that though the government had promised to come up with a guard wall to prevent erosion of Ramayapalli, it was yet to see the light of day.

IGNCA temporarily shifts to Janpath Hotel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Culture Ministry on Thursday inaugurated the new premises of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) at the refurbished Janpath Hotel, where it was expected to stay till at least 2023 while its permanent campus was constructed.

The IGNCA was shifted from its existing premises

on Janpath as part of the Central Vista redevelopment project as three of the 10 new Central Secretariat buildings are proposed to be built at the site. Culture Minister Prahla Singh Patel and Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri participated in a pared-down inaugural ceremony due to COVID-19 curbs. The temporary quarters will open to the public soon.

CROSSWORD
(set by Arden)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10				11				
12					13			
14			15	16	17			
18	19			20		21		
22		23	24	25				
26				27				
28								

ACROSS

- 1 Cheese sandwiches – admit marks as award for good deeds (7,6)
- 10 Ultimate plan – I feel it should be reviewed partly (5)
- 11 First America, then China gets limited approval rating (9)
- 12 I've it, rate variation can be done over and over again (9)
- 13 Children taking ordinary drugs (5)
- 14 Rates as one of 16 is laid low (7)

- Display keystrokes of genius.
Type your answers into our online grids.
<https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>
- 16 Overtime rates disheartened these beasts of burden (7)
18 Does after they're dead, say (7)
20 One maybe insecure, get nicely covered up (7)
22 Openers often score centuries and regularly get award (5)
24 Rock singer's over aged, making fusion (9)
26 Never agree to give up a hybrid plant (9)
27 Not even once speech was curtailed on a numerical system (5)
28 I hear "freeze" – that means, having some doubts (13)
- DOWN
- 2 Substitutes some plants (7)
 - 3 Women followed by all the children – not bad start for these Australian residents (9)
 - 4 National freedom fighters quit at regular intervals (5)
 - 5 Wrong apperception, shunning cat food (9)
 - 6 Some start panicking while climbing, that's not right (5)
 - 7 So angry, remove hard material (7)
 - 8 Flower's Victorian, leaf may be different (7,6)
 - 9 Students grapple with lesson in political science (5,8)
 - 15 Makes sense, change comes with aging (9)
 - 17 Set thermostat right away to maximum (2,3,4)
 - 19 New cryptic clue on some small matter (7)
 - 21 Corn – leave the outer part, it's tough to chew (7)
 - 23 Force to stop a rake and villain (5)
 - 25 Italian set it over a verandah (5)

SUDOKU

8				5	7			
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7				6		1	5	
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13288

S	Y	M	D	P	L	O

MARKET WATCH

	01-07-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,319	-0.31
US Dollar	74.55	-0.31
Gold	46,310	1.15
Brent oil	75.61	0.75

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	703.10	-0.60
Asian Paints	3021.60	28.90
Axis Bank	746.45	-1.85
Bajaj Auto	4204.55	70.70
Bajaj Finserv	11816.45	-292.60
Bajaj Finance	5967.15	-48.70
Bharti Airtel	522.65	-3.00
BPLC	462.75	-5.35
Britannia Ind	3595.80	-53.85
Cipla	978.10	6.20
Coal India	145.65	-1.00
Divis Lab	4435.70	27.45
Dr Reddys Lab	5558.50	135.45
Eicher Motors	2675.30	4.15
Grafix Ind	1500.30	1.55
HCL Tech	985.50	2.00
HDPC	2459.40	-15.85
HDFC Bank	1486.75	-11.15
HDFC Life	685.75	-0.55
Hero MotoCorp	2922.50	19.90
Hindalco	379.40	7.35
Hind Unilever	2478.00	6.70
ICICI Bank	630.85	-0.05
IndusInd Bank	1007.70	-8.65
Infosys	1560.40	-20.40
Indian Oil Corp	107.55	-0.35
ITC	203.00	0.30
JSW Steel	680.55	-3.35
Kotak Bank	1716.10	10.25
L&T	1492.30	-8.25
M&M	779.45	1.75
Maruti Suzuki	7584.40	68.50
Nestle India Ltd.	17646.20	13.20
NTPC	117.35	0.95
ONGC	118.85	1.15
PowerGrid Corp	230.80	-1.60
Reliance Ind	2097.95	-12.70
SBI Life	1006.90	-1.25
State Bank	420.40	1.20
Shree Cement	27059.95	-444.65
Sun Pharma	684.15	8.70
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	756.05	1.65
Tata Motors	344.25	4.65
Tata Steel	1163.55	-3.05
TCS	3341.50	-4.25
Tech Mahindra	1085.15	-10.30
Titan	1740.30	7.80
UltraTech Cement	6707.25	-68.75
UPL	701.55	-1.35
Wipro	539.35	-6.30

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.36	74.68
Euro	88.17	88.55
British Pound	102.41	102.86
Japanese Yen (100)	66.66	66.95
Chinese Yuan	11.50	11.55
Swiss Franc	80.35	80.70
Singapore Dollar	55.20	55.44
Canadian Dollar	59.93	60.19
Malaysian Ringgit	17.88	17.96

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Fuel demand rebounds in June as curbs lifted

NEW DELHI

India's fuel demand rebounded in June as easing of COVID-19 curbs accelerated petrol sales to 90% of pre-pandemic levels. Petrol sale rose 5.5% y-o-y to 2.12 MT in June. It was up 29.35% from May, but 10.4% lower than in June 2019, data showed. Diesel sales rose 18.5% from May to 5.35 million tonnes, but was down 1.84% from June 2020 and 18.8% from June 2019. PTI

Assystem acquires 99% stake in STUP

MUMBAI

Assystem S.A., an international player in engineering, has announced completion of its acquisition of 99% of share capital of STUP Consultants, a full-service engineering project delivery consultancy. The company plans to set up a nuclear engineering knowledge centre in India with the objective of becoming a leading player in the sector.

'Govt. must act to relieve telecom stress'

Bharti's Mittal says authorities must ensure survival of at least three operators

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel Chairman Sunil Mittal on Thursday said the telecom industry was under severe stress and added that the onus was on the government to ensure that at least three operators survived.

Mr. Mittal's remarks assume significance amid reports that cash-strapped Vodafone Idea, which posted a loss of about ₹7,000 crore in the March quarter, has sought a moratorium on the payment of its dues to the telecom department.

"To say the telecom industry is in a bit of trouble is actually an understatement," Mr. Mittal said. "It is in tremendous amount of stress. I hope the Government, the authorities and the telecom department, all focus on this issue and ensure India's digital dream remains intact through the provision of at least three operators."

'GNPA ratio may rise up to 11.2% in FY22'

RBI sees banks' gross NPA ratio climbing to 9.8% under baseline scenario, from 7.48% in March 2021

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The gross non-performing asset ratio (GNPA) of India's scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) may climb by the end of the current fiscal year to as much as 11.2% under a severe stress scenario, from 7.48% in March 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its Financial Stability Report on Thursday.

"Macro stress tests indicate that the GNPA ratio of SCBs may increase... to 9.8% by March 2022 under the baseline scenario; and to 11.22% under a severe stress scenario, although SCBs have sufficient capital, both at the aggregate and individual level, even under stress," the RBI said.

"The capital to risk-weighted assets ratio of SCBs increased to 16.03% and the



Build buffers: Banks need to shore up capital and liquidity to face any balance-sheet stress, says the RBI. ■ S.GOPAKUMAR

provisioning coverage ratio stood at 68.86% in March 2021," the central bank said.

Going forward, as banks respond to credit demand in a recovering economy, "they will need to reinforce their capital and liquidity positions to fortify themselves

against potential balance sheet stress," it added.

Sustained policy support, benign financial conditions and the gathering momentum of vaccinations were nurturing an uneven global recovery, the RBI noted.

"Policy support has

helped in shoring up financial positions of banks, containing non-performing loans and maintaining solvency and liquidity globally," the central bank said.

"On the domestic front, the ferocity of the second wave of COVID-19 has dented economic activity, but monetary, regulatory and fiscal policy measures have helped curtail the solvency risk of financial entities, stabilise markets, and maintain financial stability," it added.

Less-than-expected dent

"The dent on balance sheets and performance of financial institutions in India has been much less than what was projected earlier, although a clearer picture will emerge as the effects of regulatory reliefs fully work their way through," Governor Shakti-

kanta Das wrote in his foreword to the report.

"Yet, capital and liquidity buffers are reasonably resilient to withstand future shocks, as the stress tests presented in this report demonstrate," he added.

Mr. Das observed that even as the recovery was underway, new risks had emerged including "the still nascent and mending state of the upturn, vulnerable as it is to shocks and future waves of the pandemic; international commodity prices and inflationary pressures; global spillovers amid high uncertainty; and rising incidence of data breaches and cyberattacks".

Sustained policy support and simultaneous increased fortification of capital and liquidity buffers by financial entities was therefore vital.

PMI survey shows manufacturing shrank in June

IHS Markit's index declined to 48.1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing output shrank in June with the survey-based IHS Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) sliding to 48.1, from 50.8 in May, marking the industry's first contraction since July 2020.

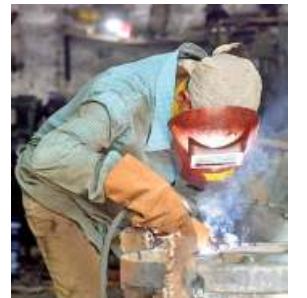
Companies were at their least optimistic for almost a year and jobs continued to be shed for the 15th month in a row, IHS Markit said in a statement. Buying levels fell at a pace that was among the fastest seen since PMI data collection started in March 2005, as weak demand and a reduction in production requirements led firms to restrict input purchases last month.

COVID-19 restrictions also curtailed international demand for Indian goods, and new export orders decreased for the first time in 10 months, albeit modestly, the firm said. The strict containment measures to cope with the second wave of COVID-19 negatively impacted demand and led to renewed contractions in factory orders, production, exports and quantities of purchases.

Capital goods worst hit

"Companies became increasingly worried about when the pandemic will end, which resulted in downward revisions to output growth projections," said Polyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit. "As a result of subdued optimism, jobs were shed again in June."

Nevertheless, the reports augur well for the closely-watched employment report for June, due to be released on Friday.



worst-affected area in June. Output here declined at a steep rate due to a sharp fall in sales. The sector also saw the fastest contraction in buying levels," she added.

While pre-production as well as post-production inventories declined at manufacturing units, pre-production stocks contracted for the first time in 10 months.

Falling new orders, business closures and the COVID-19 crisis triggered a reduction in output among Indian manufacturers. The decline was moderate relative to those seen in the first half of 2020, but ended a ten-month sequence of growth," IHS Markit said.

The intensification of the COVID-19 crisis... had a detrimental impact on the manufacturing economy. Growth of new orders, production, exports and input purchasing was interrupted in June as containment measures aimed at bringing the pandemic under control restrained demand. In all cases, however, rates of contraction were softer than during the first lockdown," Ms. De Lima said.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said the June PMI, however, was at odds with available high frequency data including GST e-way bills and electricity demand.

Auto dispatches jump on easing curbs

Maruti, Tata Motors PV wholesales double in June; July may see better volumes'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Auto manufacturers registered a significant increase in vehicle dispatches to dealers in June, following the gradual easing of COVID-19 related restrictions, and helped by last year's low base. Vehicle makers said they were seeing some early signs of positive consumer sentiment; however, issues such as the global semiconductor shortage and rising commodity prices continued to impact production.

India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki posted domestic passenger vehicle (PV) wholesales of more than 1.24 lakh units in June compared with 51,274 units a year earlier. "Sales in Quarter 1 of both FY21 and FY22 have



been far from normal owing to COVID-19 related lockdowns and disruptions and hence any comparison would not be very meaningful," the company said.

Rival Hyundai Motor India said domestic sales stood at 40,496 units (21,320). Tata Motors' reported domestic sales of 43,704 units (19,387).

The company clocked PV sales of 24,110 units (11,419) delivered

more than 4.38 lakh two-wheelers in the domestic market (4.3 lakh).

"The expected surge in personal mobility, forecast of a normal monsoon in several parts of the country and the improving rural sentiment are expected to lead to a swift revival in sales," the firm said.

TVS Motor saw domestic two-wheeler wholesales exceed 1.45 lakh units in June.

Ashok Leyland said it dispatched 5,851 CVs in the domestic market (2,132).

"CV sales continue to face challenges due to slow economic recovery," said Mital Shah, head of research, Reliance Securities.

"We expect sales volume for July '21 to be much superior with healthy MoM and YoY improvement," he added.

Nevertheless, the reports augur well for the closely-watched employment report for June, due to be released on Friday.

Need to formalise 'large underbelly' of economy: FM

Revenue generation now will help should third wave arrive'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



India needs to formalise 'a large underbelly' of businesses operating outside the system to widen the tax base and make its finances more resilient, Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Thursday.

Stating that she was

Clinical wins for Federer and Berrettini

Medvedev, Zverev ease through; Svitolna, Azarenka join the list of casualties; Barty advances

WIMBLEDON

AGENCIES

Roger Federer became the oldest man to reach the third round at Wimbledon in 46 years, following a 7-6 (1), 6-1, 6-4 victory over Frenchman Richard Gasquet at the Centre Court on Thursday.

Australia's Ken Rosewall was 40 when he made the third round at the All-England Club in 1975.

After a tight first set, it was one-way traffic as Federer, 39, beat Gasquet for the 19th time in 21 meetings.

"I'm happy with my performance," Federer said. "A tough first set, I was happy with the second and I was better in the third."

The Centre Court crowd may have split loyalties when he next faces 25-year-old Cameron Norrie of Britain. "Cam is a good guy and is having a wonderful year. He has done well here but it's time for him to go out!" Federer said with a laugh.

Second seed Matteo Berrettini was equally impressive in his 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4) victory over Botic Van de Zandschulp.

The Italian, winner at Queen's Club last month, fired 20 aces and advanced in two hours and 17 minutes to extend his record on grass to 7-0 this year.

Russian second seed Daniil Medvedev reached the Wimbledon last 32 for the third time with a straight-set win over Spanish wildcard Carlos Alcaraz.

Medvedev, fresh from his first grass-court title in Majorca last weekend, eased to a 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 win over 18-year-old Alcaraz, the youngest player in the draw.

Fourth seed Alexander Zverev hit 13 aces, lost only 12 points on his serve and advanced to the third round by

THE HIGHLIGHTS

1 The singles third round at Wimbledon will feature at least one of Serena and Venus for the first time since they started playing in the late 1990s

1 Murray has won back-to-back singles matches at a Major for the first time since 2017 Wimbledon

2 There are two Indian women (Sania and Ankita) in the main draw of a Grand Slam, a first for the country

2 After 14 straight losses to top-10 players, Linette has now overcome two in a row — Barty at French Open and Svitolna at Wimbledon

19 Berrettini has won 19 of his 21 matches on grass since the start of 2019

I have been on the Tour for years now and been through different kinds of situations. But right now I wouldn't say it's very smooth times in my career

SVTOLINA after her second-round loss

beating Tennys Sandgren 7-5, 6-2, 6-3.

More carnage

Top-ranked Ash Barty advanced to the third round by beating Anna Blinkova 6-4, 6-3, even as third seed Elina Svitolina and 12th seed Victoria Azarenka became the latest upset victims. Eight of the top 11 WTA players are now out of the tournament due to defeat, withdrawal or injury.

Barty avoided an exit by overcoming an uncharacteristically unreliable serve. She committed nine double-faults, including three in the first game, and was broken three times. But she also hit 33 winners to 12 for Blinkova.

Svitolina lost to Magda Linette of Poland 6-3, 6-4, while Sorana Cirstea of Romania outlasted Azarenka 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-4.

Linette, ranked 44th, had 28 winners to just eight for Svitolina, a semifinalist at Wimbledon two years ago.

French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková extended her winning streak to 14 matches by beating Andrea Petković 7-5, 6-4. A former Wimbledon doubles champion, Krejčíková is making her main draw debut in singles.

Murray fights on

On Wednesday, Andy Murray appeared down and out before roaring to a 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 second-round win over German qualifier Oscar Otte. Murray has never lost a Grand Slam match to a



THE RESULTS

Second round: Men: 6-Federer (Sui) bt Gasquet (Fra) 7-6(1), 6-1, 6-4; 6-Bublik (Kaz) bt 18-Dimitrov (Bul) 6-4, 7-6(6), 7-6(4); 2-Medvedev (Rus) bt Alcaraz (Esp) 6-4, 6-1, 6-2; 7-Berrettini (Ita) bt van de Zandschulp (Ned) 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4); Martinez (Esp) bt 13-Monfils (Fra) 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 7-6(5); 17-Garin (Chi) bt Polmans (Aus) 7-6(3), 6-2, 6-2, 7-6(5); 8-Bautista Agut (Esp) bt Kecmanovic (Srb) 6-3, 6-3, 6-7(3), 3-6, 6-3; Bedene (Slo) bt Nishioka (Jpn) 6-1, 6-0, 6-2; 4-Zverev (Ger) bt Sandgren (USA) 7-5, 6-2, 6-3; 29-Norrie (GBr) bt Bolt (Aus) 6-3, 6-1, 6-2; 23-Sonego (Ita) bt Elahi Galan (Col) 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(3), 6-1; 14-Hurkacz (Pol) bt Gibson (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 6-4; 31-Fritz (USA) bt Johnson (USA) 6-4, 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-7(4), 6-4; Kyrgios (Aus) bt Mager (Ita) 7-6(7), 6-4, 6-4.

Women: 1-Barty (Aus) bt Blinova (Rus) 6-4, 6-3; Cirstea (Rou) bt 12-Azarenka (Blr) 7-6(5), 3-6, 6-4; 20-Gauff (USA) bt Vesnina (Rus) 6-4, 6-3; 14-Krejčíková (Cze) bt Petković (Ger) 7-5, 6-4; Linette (Pol) bt 3-Svitolina (Ukr) 6-3, 6-4; 30-Badosa (Esp) bt Putintseva (Kaz) 6-4, 6-1; 16-Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt Kristyna Plisková (Cze) 6-3, 6-3; 19-Muchova (Cze) bt Giorgi (Ita) 6-3, 5-7, 6-3; Rogers (USA) bt 15-Sakkari (Gre) 7-5, 6-4; Ostapenko (Lat) bt 31-Kasatkina (Rus) 6-1, 3-6, 8-6; 25-Kerber (Ger) bt Sorribes Tormo (Esp) 7-5, 5-7, 6-4; Tomljanović (Aus) bt Cornet (Fra) 6-4, 0-6, 6-3.

Men: 1-Djokovic vs Kudla
5-Rublev vs 26-Fognini
10-Shapovalov vs Murray

Women: 2-Sabalenka vs Osorio Serrano
7-Swiatek vs Begu
11-Muguruza vs 21-Jabeur

player ranked as low as Otte (151).

Elsewhere, Ons Jabeur, the first Arab woman to win a WTA tournament, reached the third round of Wimbledon for the first time on Wednesday, beating five-time champion Venus Williams 7-5, 6-0. Venus will next play with Nick Kyrgios in the mixed doubles.

Friday's picks

Men

1-Djokovic vs Kudla
5-Rublev vs 26-Fognini
10-Shapovalov vs Murray

Women

2-Sabalenka vs Osorio Serrano
7-Swiatek vs Begu
11-Muguruza vs 21-Jabeur

On Wednesday:

Men: Murray (GBR) bt Otte (Ger) 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-4; 9-Schwartzman (Arg) bt Broadby (GBR) 6-4, 6-2, 6-1, 6-4.

Women: 21-Jabeur (Tun) bt Venus Williams (USA) 7-5, 6-0.

Fallen seeds

Men

13-Monfils, 18-Dimitrov

Women

3-Svitolina, 12-Azarenka, 15-Sakkari, 31-Kasatkina

Stunning start for Sania & Mattek-Sands

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

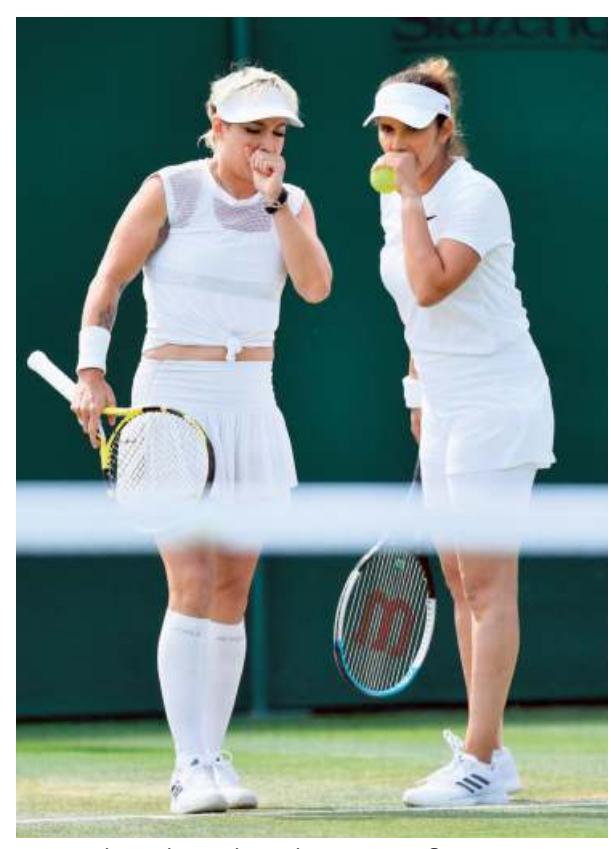
Sania Mirza and her American partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands knocked out sixth seeds Desirae Krawczyk and Alexa Guarachi to move into the second round on Thursday.

Sania and Mattek-Sands were a bit rusty at the start but once they got their rhythm, they dominated the match and won 7-5, 6-3 against the American-Chilean combination in one hour and 27 minutes.

The third game had seven deuce points before Mattek-Sands held serve. Sania and Mattek-Sands too had two opportunities to break their rivals, but the American fluffed a volley before Desirae produced a good serve.

Guarachi hit a forehand wide at 15-30 to hand two set points in the 12th game. The Indo-American combination did not squander it this time, Sania sealing the set with an overhead smash. In the second, Sania and Mattek-Sands opened up a 3-1 lead and went on to win 6-3.

However, Ankita Raina and Lauren Davis of USA crashed out in the opening



Sania, right, and Mattek-Sands... causing a flutter. ■ AFP

round, losing 3-6, 2-6 to 14th seeds Asia Muhammad and Jessica Pegula in a one hour 10 minute contest.

In men's doubles, Rohan

Bopanna and Divij Sharan suffered a 6-7(6), 4-6 loss against the 11th-seeded pair of Henri Kontinen and Edouard Roger-Vasselin.

Djokovic, Federer in Olympics list

Barty and Osaka to headline women's field in Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON

Serbia's Novak Djokovic, Switzerland's Roger Federer, Japan's Naomi Osaka and Australia's Ashleigh Barty are on the entry lists for the Tokyo Olympics that were announced on Thursday by the International Tennis Federation. Federer has said he would wait until Wimbledon ends to decide whether he will head to Japan.

Eligibility is based on the rankings of June 14, the day after the French Open ended. Seven of the Top 10

players in both the WTA and ATP rankings currently are on Thursday's lists.

For the women, that's No. 1 Barty, No. 2 Osaka, No. 4 Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus), No. 5 Elina Svitolina (Ukraine), No. 7 Bianca Andreescu (Canada), No. 9 Iga Swiatek (Poland) and No. 10 Petra Kvitová (Czech Republic). Stars missing are Romania's Simona Halep and Americans Serena Williams and Sofia Kenin.

For the men, apart from No. 1 Djokovic and No. 8 Federer, the others in the list

are No. 2 Daniil Medvedev (Russia), No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas (Greece), No. 6 Alexander Zverev (Germany), No. 7 Andrey Rublev (Russia) and No. 9 Matteo Berrettini (Italy). Spain's Rafael Nadal, Roberto Bautista Agut and Austria's Dominic Thiem do not figure in the list.

Defending singles champion Andy Murray was granted a special exemption because he has the most Olympic and Grand Slam titles of the players whose ranking is not good enough to earn direct entry.

Carlsen and Ding take lead

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Magnus Carlsen hit back to nullify Levon Aronian's lead and regained his lost grip in the fourth game for a 2.5-1.5 victory after Ding Liren raced away to a 2.5-0.5 win over Vladislav Artemiev in the first set clash of the Goldmoney Asian Rapid online chess tournament on Thursday.

Aronian, who topped the league phase following an unbeaten run before downing Arjun Erigaisi, stunned Carlsen in the first game. Undeterred, Carlsen avenged the loss in the second by riding home on a two-pawn cushion. The third game ended in a positional draw in 28 moves.

The results, semifinals: Set One: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) bt Levon Aronian (Arm) 2.5-1.5; Ding Liren (Chn) bt Vladislav Artemiev (Rus) 2.5-0.5.

Giant-killer Switzerland looks to spring a surprise on Spain

Lukaku will likely be the main attacking threat as Belgium takes on Italy in a mouth-watering quarterfinal



Heady duels: Switzerland and Italy players gear up for the quarterfinals against Spain and Belgium respectively. ■ AP/GETTY IMAGES

need to cut out the errors if it is to contend for a record fourth Euro title.

History is on Spain's side against Switzerland, having lost just once in 22 meetings, a 1-0 defeat in South Africa that sparked its run to the

2010 World Cup title.

Spain captain Sergio Busquets is the lone survivor from that team, while the Barcelona midfielder and Jordi Alba are the only two players in the squad left from its Euro 2012 triumph.

Switzerland celebrated what striker Haris Seferović called "the most beautiful of nights" as it dumped out France to win its first European Championship knockout tie. The last time the Swiss reached a major quar-

terfinal it lost 7-5 to Austria as hosts of the 1954 World Cup.

Romelu Lukaku will likely be the main attacking threat when Belgium takes on Italy in Munich in the other quarterfinal. Belgium has only beaten Italy once before in a competitive game – in the 1972 Euro quarterfinals.

in his team's four victories so far. And with Kevin De Bruyne and Eden Hazard both doubtful for the game, Italy captain Giorgio Chiellini and teammate Leonardo Bonucci – both defenders at Juventus – will know just who to focus on.

The Italians haven't been beaten in a national team record 31 matches, though

they were taken to extra-time by Austria in the round of 16. Belgium has only beaten Italy once before in a competitive game – in the 1972 Euro quarterfinals.

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ICC to award same points for each WTC match won

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) will award standardised 12 points for every match won during the second World Test Championships cycle which kicks off with the five-match series between India and England in August.

Teams will get six points in case of a tie and four points if the match ends in a draw.

"Instead of each series being worth the same number of points, 120, irrespective of whether the series is played over two Tests or five Tests, the next cycle will see each match being worth the same number of points – a maximum of 12 per match," an ICC board member said.

ICC to award same points for each WTC match won

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

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TV PICKS

Tour de France: Eurosport (SD & HD), 2.30 p.m.
Wimbledon 2021: SS Select 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.
Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)
Copa America 2021: Sony Ten 1, 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 2.30 a.m. (Saturday); Sony Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. (Saturday)
NBA: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Sharath Kamal signs up with Fast&Up

India's top table tennis player A. Sharath Kamal has signed up with Fast&Up, a sports nutrition brand, for his all-dietary supplement requirements as he prepares for the Tokyo Olympics. "Being a sportsperson, dietary supplementation is important as my competitive performance is heavily dependent on my diet. Therefore, having access to Fast&Up supplements which embrace fitness and a healthy lifestyle, I am inclined towards achieving my fitness goals," he said.

Prajnesh loses

PORTO (PORTUGAL)
Second seed Prajnesh Gunneswaran was beaten 6-3, 1-6, 6-4 by Steven Diez of Canada in the pre-quarterfinals of the €44,820 Challenger tennis tournament here on Thursday. In doubles quarterfinals, Srinir Balaji, in partnership with Luca Margaroli of Switzerland, was beaten 7-6(5), 7-6(4) by the second seeds Hunter Reese and Sem Verbeek.

Diksha and Tvesa make modest starts in Holland

ARNHEM
Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik opened their campaigns at the Big Green Egg Open on the Ladies European Tour with a card of one-over 73 each to share 34th place after the opening round. However, Vani Kapoor, six-over, and Astha Madan, 11-over, are in danger of missing the cut. Australia's Stephanie Kyriacou is in the lead with a 66. PTI

HFI to organise women's handball league

HYDERABAD
The Handball Federation of India (HFI) president A. Jagan Mohan Rao announced on Thursday that it will organise a separate professional league for women players along with the men's league that has been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The decision was taken at HFI's annual executive meeting in Jaipur on Wednesday.



Former footballer Prasannan passes away

KOZHIKODE
Former India footballer M. Prasannan died at the age of 73 in Mumbai on Thursday. An outstanding midfielder, he made his international debut in 1973. After getting noticed as a promising footballer in his hometown of Kozhikode, he joined Dempo and then Central Bank, Mumbai. He played in the Santosh Trophy for three States – Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra.



Sancho moves to United for \$100m

BERLIN
Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund confirmed on Thursday it had reached a deal to transfer England forward Jadon Sancho to Manchester United for a fee of \$100 million (£73 million). Sancho will become the second most expensive English footballer when he joins United, which signed Harry Maguire two years ago from Leicester for £80 million. AFP

Jhajharia books Tokyo berth with world record



All set: Two-time paralympic champion Devendra Jhajharia is primed to deliver at Tokyo after improving his own world record at the trials on Wednesday. ■ FILE PHOTO

Amit Kumar and Sandeep also qualify for the Games

PARALYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia rewrote his own world record as he punched his ticket for the Tokyo Paralympics during a national selection trial here.

The 40-year-old, who has won two gold medals in the men's F46 category at the Paralympics, sent the spear to a distance of 65.71m during the trials here on Wednesday.

"Today at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Delhi, I qualified for the Tokyo Para-

lympics by setting a new world record of 65.71, breaking my older record of 63.97 [set at Rio in 2016] in a qualifying event.

Family support

"This was possible because of my family's support, and the efforts of my coach Sunil Tanwar and fitness trainer Lakshya Batra," Jhajharia tweeted in Hindi.

Jhajharia won at the 2004 Athens Paralympic Games, setting a new world record of 62.15m, and repeated the feat 12 years later at Rio edging bettering his own record with a throw of 63.97m to become the first Indian to

clinch two gold medals at the Paralympics.

Asian Para Games gold medallists Amit Kumar Saroha and Sandeep Chaudhary have also qualified for the Tokyo Games.

Two-time Paralympian Saroha will represent the country in the F51 category in discus and club throw, while Chaudhary will be competing in the F44 javelin throw event at the Games to be held from August 24 to September 5.

India has been granted 24 slots and the final team list will be announced by the Paralympic Committee of India on Friday.

Jabir qualifies for 400m hurdles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOCHI

M.P. Jabir of the Indian Navy, who clocked 49.78s to win the 400m hurdles gold at the recent inter-State athletics championships, has qualified for Tokyo through the World ranking quota where there are 14 spots available, a defence spokesman said here on Thursday.

The 25-year-old is currently ranked 34th in the World Athletics' Road to Olympics rankings where 40 athletes qualify. Jabir said he would be the first Indian male to participate in that event at the Games.

Japan still unsure about spectators

COVID-19 cases in the capital city have been steadily on the rise

TOKYO OLYMPICS

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

Japan Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga is still uncertain whether fans can be allowed at the Tokyo Olympics because of growing concern about rising COVID-19 cases on Thursday, only three weeks before the Games.

Cases here have been steadily on the rise, triggering fears the Games would accelerate the spread of the virus.

Resurgence

Experts warned that the highly contagious delta strain could trigger rapid resurgence of the infections that may require another state of emergency, even during the Games starting on July 23.

"I have made it clear that having no spectators is a possibility," Suga said as he noted Tokyo's rising caseloads. "We will take steps as we



In doubt: Experts say lifting restrictions is unthinkable given the virus situation. ■ REUTERS

prioritise safety and security of the people."

On Wednesday, the city confirmed 673 new cases, the 12th straight day of a week-on-week increase.

Dr. Mitsui Kaku, a medical advisor for the Tokyo metropolitan government, told a weekly meeting on Thursday that the city was turning

into a "critical situation" as the upsurge was triggered by the delta variant.

A two-month-long state of emergency here and other metro areas was downgraded by Suga on June 21.

Decision next week

He said he will decide what to do with the measures next

week, a decision that will affect Games spectators.

Organisers last week decided to allow up to 10,000 spectators or 50% of venue capacity if emergency measures are lifted before the Games. Following criticisms and concerns raised by experts and the public, government officials later said they were open to having no fans if the infections worsen.

Experts said lifting the measures was unthinkable given the virus situation, and daily cases could exceed 1,000 before the Olympics and quickly multiply during the Games if measures were delayed.

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Mirza to ride Dajara 4 at Tokyo



The choice: Fouad Mirza has picked Dajara 4 as his equine partner. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

EQUESTRIAN

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

Equestrian Fouad Mirza has chosen Dajara 4 as his equine partner for the Tokyo Olympics.

The relationship between the rider and his horse forms a key part of the sport, with a bond developed over years of being together.

"I saw and rode Dajara for the first time in 2019. I knew right away that she was a top horse. After a conversation with Jitu (Virwani, Chairman and Managing Director at Embassy Group) and Silva Storai

(Embassy International Riding School Director), we were able to procure her," Mirza said.

A veterinary doctor, an equine physiotherapist and a groom will accompany Dajara to Tokyo.

"We have seen him as a young lad in our riding stables. He's been an extremely disciplined cadet, which makes me more convinced that an Olympic medal is right around the corner.

"That will make the country proud and boost the sport overall," Virwani said.

Neymar, Sanchez back for knockouts

Brazil starts favourite against Chile in the quarterfinals

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RIO DE JANEIRO



Ready for the challenge: Neymar, Fred and Gabriel Jesus share a light moment ahead of the last-eight contest. ■ AP

Chile's group-stage matches and his absence affected the team's production.

Coach Martín Lasarte will decide whether 32-year-old Sanchez will start against Brazil or come off the bench.

"To play against the host is always difficult, but Brazil is also the team that is possibly in best shape," Lasarte said. "We have to play our best match so far. That is always possible. We will try to annul their virtues and explore their flaws."

Chile lacks form

Chile's only win in the group stage was against Bolivia and it is lacking the kind of form that inspired its back-to-back championship wins in 2015 and '16. Sanchez missed

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TODAY'S SCHEDULE

QUARTERFINALS

Peru vs Paraguay
2.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Brazil vs Chile
5.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Live on Sony Ten 1, 2 & Sony 6 (SD & HD)

Also on Friday, 2019 runner-up Peru will take on Paraguay at the Olímpico Stadium in Goiania. The winner will face Brazil or Chile in the semifinals in Rio.

Barcelona's finances holding up new Messi contract

We are in the process of finding the best solution, says club chief Laporta

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BARCELONA

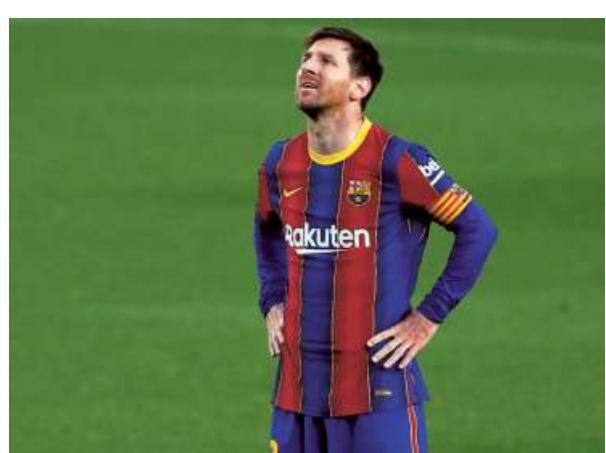
Barcelona's poor finances have become the stumbling block to getting Lionel Messi to sign another contract, according to club president Joan Laporta.

Messi was officially no longer a Barcelona player on Thursday, following the expiry of his contract. That came 16 years after the forward signed his first professional contract with the club that he joined at age 13.

Cautiously optimistic

Laporta has continued to mark a cautiously optimistic tone when asked if he was close to convincing Messi to stay put. Laporta was club president when a teenage Messi had his breakout. He returned to run the club in March after winning an election with the promise he would use his good relationship with Messi to get him to stay.

Late on Wednesday, Laporta told a popular sports talk radio show that the deal was being held up only be-



What next? Lionel Messi is no longer a Barcelona player officially, following the expiry of his contract. ■ AP

cause of the Spanish league's strict financial fair play rules.

the hubbub at Camp Nou.

Huge blow

Barcelona's finances suffered a huge blow last season, when the questionable management by the prior club board was exacerbated by a drop in revenues provoked by the pandemic.

When Laporta returned to power, he inherited a club saddled with debt of 1.2 billion euros (USD 1.4 billion) and massive contracts that

former club president Josep Bartomeu gave players, including Messi.

Messi's previous contract, signed in 2017, earned him an eye-popping 138 million euros (USD 164 million) per season. Laporta has said that Messi is willing to take a significant pay cut, but even so, the club is apparently struggling to make the numbers work.

Laporta recently said Barcelona's finances "were worse than I had imagined." He said the payroll plus other payments totalled 650 million euros (USD 771 million).

The Spanish league slashed the salary cap for Barcelona down from a league-high 671 million euros (USD 796 million) for the 2019-20 season to just 383 million euros (USD 454 million) for last campaign.

A new salary cap is expected to be announced in the coming weeks, but with Barcelona's finances still a mess it is expected to be much more generous. The salary cap is proportional to 70% of a club's revenue.

Paul powers Suns to the summit clash

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