

on Sunday



Nitish Kumar, J.P. Nadda hold seat-sharing talks for Bihar election

page 7



Judges are becoming victims of gossip, says Justice Ramana

page 7



British PM Johnson accuses EU of plotting food blockade

page 9



Zverev battles past Carreno Busta, meets Thiem in final

page 14

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## NEARBY



Sonia, Rahul to skip Parliament session

NEW DELHI  
Many MPs, including Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi, are expected to skip the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament. Ms. Gandhi, according to sources, is travelling abroad for her check-up and Mr. Gandhi is expected to accompany her.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 7

Bhushan seeks right to appeal against conviction

NEW DELHI  
Civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan has moved the Supreme Court for a declaration upholding the right of appeal of a person found guilty of contempt. Mr. Bhushan was recently punished for contempt of court with a nominal fine of ₹1. He was found guilty of scandalising the Supreme Court with his tweets.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Delhi riots: Assembly panel summons FB official

NEW DELHI  
The Delhi Assembly Committee on Peace and Harmony, under the chairmanship of AAP MLA Raghav Chadha, has called for the appearance of vice-president and managing director of Facebook India, Ajit Mohan, on Tuesday for recording his statement before the committee, according to a notice issued by the Assembly.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

MAGAZINE ▶ 8 PAGES  
CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4

## Fresh COVID-19 cases touch new high in city

### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The national capital on Saturday witnessed the biggest single-day spike in the number of fresh COVID-19 cases, with 4,321 people testing positive in the past 24 hours, said a health bulletin released by the Delhi government.

Also, 60,076 COVID-19 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, the second highest number of tests done in a day. The highest number of tests so far was recorded on Friday at 60,580.

The total number of cases has reached 2,14,069, of which 1,81,295 people have already recovered.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

## Oxford vaccine trials to resume in U.K.

'With 18,000 persons receiving the vaccine, it is expected that some participants will become unwell'

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Oxford University in a statement on Saturday said it is resuming the 'paused' vaccine trial of the ChAdOx1 COVID vaccine in clinical trial sites in the United Kingdom.

The vaccine candidate developed by researchers at the University and in partnership with the U.K. biopharma company AstraZeneca was paused earlier this week after reports emerged of a "serious adverse event" in a volunteer in the U.K.

The trial is being conducted in the United States, Brazil and South Africa. The Serum Institute of India, which

## India-China standoff casts a shadow on Nathu La border trade

While the pandemic stalled business this year, the 200 traders from Sikkim fear LAC tensions may affect their work next year too

### SHIV SAHAY SINGH KOLKATA

Tenzing Tsepel Bhutia, a second-generation trader at Nathu La in Sikkim, has been doing business with Chinese traders for the past few years. The Gangtok resident got into the business in 2015 after his uncle Gnawang Norbu, who started trading at Nathu La when border trade reopened in 2006, hung up his boots.

This summer, however, there has been no trade because of the COVID-19 outbreak. And as they watch the trading season draw to a close without any earnings, the 200 traders from Sikkim, like Mr. Bhutia, now fear the tension between India and China at the Line of

### SPECIAL

"I used to export foodgrains, particularly rice, maida (flour) and biscuits, and in return, we bought clothes, shoes and handicraft. My annual turnover of export and import was well over ₹50 lakh," said Mr. Bhutia, who is also the general secretary of the Indo-China

Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh may affect their business next year too.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Bhutia said though trade at Nathu La, an elevation of 14,140 feet, is tough as it involves long, arduous journeys and crossing custom checkpoints between the countries, it is good.



Busy border: A file photo of Chinese and Indian traders at a mart, about 5 km from Nathu La. ■ AFP/GETTY IMAGES

### Border Traders' Welfare Association

Sikkim's Minister for Industries and Commerce B.S. Pant also expressed concerns over the future of the trade through Nathu La.

the decision to suspend trade was taken in March.

"Since the Centre has a major role in facilitation of trade, we urged it to suspend the exercise this year, fearing the outbreak of COVID-19," he said.

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, which started via Sikkim a few years ago, was also suspended this year.

The border trade via the Old Silk Route at Nathu La reopened on July 6, 2006, amid expectations of improving relations between the India and China. Trading activity takes place for six months from May to November, four days a week – Monday to Thursday – and only registered traders are allowed to buy and sell.

In 2006, the border trade started with exports worth ₹27.87 lakh and imports of ₹6.88 lakh. By 2016, the volume of the trade had multiplied 200 times.

while imports from China receded to ₹1.02 crore.

According to Customs officials guarding the Serathang checkpost on the Indian side, trade was suspended in 2017 as the Doklam standoff – June to August – coincided with the trading season. Doklam is about 56 km from Nathu La.

But trade picked up again in 2018, and exports increased to ₹52 crore and imports were valued at ₹19.3 crore.

"In 2019, the trade declined because of the poor condition of the roads. Certain stretches had turned very steep and prone to accidents," said Tashi Thendup, another trader.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

## Police link Yechury, Yadav to Delhi riots

Accused have said they provoked crowds, says chargesheet

### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A supplementary chargesheet in the communal riots issue filed by the Delhi police Crime Branch has named Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, along with Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav and some other prominent individuals.

The document in First Information Report number 50, which is part of an alleged disclosure statement, states that Gulfisha Fathima alias Gul, one of those accused, had in her statement said leaders like Mr. Yechury and Mr. Yadav had come to provoke and mobilise the crowd.

The chargesheet, containing garbled language, quoted Ms. Fathima's alleged statement as follows: "Speeches were made at the picket sites by presenting Devangana and Natasha Narwal as JNU Scholars, and telling me the local educated so that less educated people could be tricked, and our talk would have more effect, which we misconstrued CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act). People started explaining to them that they felt that this law was anti-Muslim."

In Ms. Kalita's alleged statement, police quoted her and mentioned former MLA Mateen Ahmed, Anas, Sadaf and MLA Amanatullah Khan. Police quoted her as saying in her statement, that they used their education to influence people.

"Some leaders of Muslim Community are also visited

Pracha said that the sitting in demonstration is your democratic right, and the rest of the leaders filled the feeling of discontent in the community by calling CAA/NRC anti-Muslim."

The supplemental chargesheet has been filed against Gulfisha Fathima, Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal. The police stated that all three belong to "high class educated society".

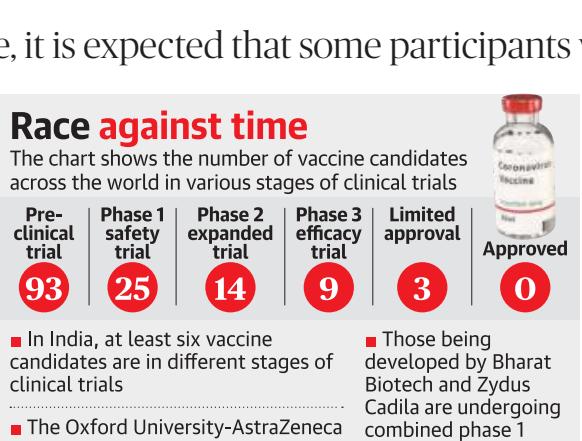
In Ms. Kalita's alleged statement, police quoted her and mentioned former MLA Mateen Ahmed and MLA Amanatullah Khan.

The alleged statements of Ms. Natasha Narwal and Ms. Kalita also mention economist Jayati Ghosh, Delhi University professor Apoorvanand, and documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy.

PRESERVE PROGRESS,  
SAYS JAISHANKAR ▶ PAGE 7

### Race against time

The chart shows the number of vaccine candidates across the world in various stages of clinical trials



global trials to allow the review of safety data by an independent safety review committee, and the national regulators. All routine follow-up appointments continue as normal during this period. The independent review process has concluded, and following the recommendations of both the independent safety review committee and the U.K. regulator, the MHRA (Medical and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency), the trials will recommence in the U.K.," the Oxford vaccine group said in a statement.

"Globally some 18,000 individuals have received study vaccines as part of the trial. In large trials such as this, it is expected that some participants will become unwell and every case must be carefully evaluated to ensure careful assessment of safety," the statement said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

EXPERTS BACK COMBINED VACCINE TRIALS ▶ PAGE 8

## Indian taken hostage in '18 returns from Afghanistan

### SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

The start of intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, which was contingent on the release of the last batch of Taliban prisoners, meant good news for the family of an Indian hostage being held in Afghanistan.

Officials in Delhi and Kabul confirmed to *The Hindu* that Mantu Singh, the last of a group of seven employees of an Indian engineering company who were kidnapped in 2018, had returned to India on Saturday, after being released by the Taliban group holding him.

The other six employees had been released in small batches over the last two years, including two men last month, in exchange for nine Taliban prisoners. Mr. Singh had been held back as the Taliban insisted on the release of other prisoners, a process which was finally completed this week.

According to sources, he returned to Delhi by an Air India flight on Saturday, and will travel home to his family, including his wife and two children in Bihar's Madhepura district.

On Saturday, India participated in the inaugural ceremony of the dialogue between representatives of the Afghan government, civil society and the Taliban, with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressing the delegates.

PRESERVE PROGRESS,  
SAYS JAISHANKAR ▶ PAGE 7

## PLA hands over 5 Arunachal youth who strayed into China

They will be kept in quarantine for 14 days, then sent home

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China on Saturday handed over five Arunachal Pradesh youth to the Indian Army, more than 800 km east of where they strayed beyond the McMahon Line separating the two countries.

The five will be handed over to their families in Nacho area of Upper Subansiri district after they spend 14 days in quarantine as per the COVID-19 protocol, Army officials said.

"Our personnel received the five youth at Kibithu after completing all formalities. They will be quarantined for the specified period," said Lt. Col. P. Khongsai, the Guwahati-based defence spokesperson.

The five teenagers had gone hunting at the Tungdara Mountain, or Sera-7, close to the McMahon Line.

They strayed into the Chi-



Back home: The five youth handed over by the PLA in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday. ■ PTI

nese side on September 2, and were reportedly captured by the PLA.

Family members of the youth – mostly teenagers – said some of them were working as porters for the Army along the LAC.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 6

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**#PrelimsIsComing ABHYAAS 2020 ALL INDIA GS PRELIMS MOCK TEST SERIES**  
4 TESTS | TEST 2 | TEST 3 | TEST 4 | TEST 5 | TEST 6 | TEST 7 | TEST 8 | TEST 9 | TEST 10 | TEST 11 | TEST 12 | TEST 13 | TEST 14 | TEST 15 | TEST 16 | TEST 17 | TEST 18 | TEST 19 | TEST 20

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Air Quality of Delhi-NCR			
Delhi 144	Gurugram 158		
Ghaziabad 136	Faridabad 166		
Noida 144	Greater Noida 202		
■ Good 0-50	■ Satisfactory 51-100	■ Moderate 101-200	
■ Poor 201-300	■ Very Poor 301-400	■ Severe >400	
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) [Source: CPCB]			

# Riots: Assembly panel summons FB official

Site accused of 'deliberate inaction to contain hateful content'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI



Ajit Mohan, vice-president and MD of Facebook India.

next meeting of the panel.

"The committee, under the chairmanship of MLA Raghav Chadha, calls you, the addressee, as a witness for testifying on oath and for rendering your assistance by providing the relevant information and explanations in order to smoothly expedite the determination of the ve-

racity of allegations levelled against Facebook in the complaints and depositions made before the committee," the notice dated Thursday [September 10] read.

"Prima facie it seems that Facebook had a role in Delhi riots. Facebook should be treated as a co-accused in Delhi riots. There should be an inquiry and if the investigating agency finds that there is truth in the charges against Facebook, then a supplementary chargesheet against Facebook should be filed in the court," Mr. Chadha had said at the last meeting of the committee.

Mr. Chadha had also said that the "prima facie view" is that some rioters and Facebook had a "premeditated conspiracy".

The committee is looking into alleged "deliberate and intentional" inaction by Facebook to contain "hateful content". On August 31, the committee said that prima facie it seems that Facebook had a role in the Delhi riots earlier this year, and Facebook India officials will be issued notices to appear at the

## 5 Delhi boys score 100 percentile in JEE-Main

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Five students from the Capital have scored 100 percentile in the JEE-Mains exam, which was conducted earlier this month after being postponed twice in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The result for the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Mains was declared late night on Friday.

The top scorers from Delhi are Chirag Falor, Gurkiran Singh, Laksh Gupta, Nishant Aggarwal and Tushar Sethi. They are among the 24 candidates who have scored 100 percentile in the crucial exam.

### 'I was anxious'

Laksh Gupta, who wants to study at IIT Delhi, said the delay in the exam due to coronavirus made him anxious. "The multiple rescheduling of the exam made me anxious but it also gave me time to prepare more. Rescheduling exams any further would have proved to be disturbing for aspirants," he added.

Chirag Falor, who scored 99.98 percentile in the January attempt at JEE, has scored 100 percentile this time. "My preparations were through. The delay did make me anxious but I would have been demotivated if the year had gone to waste due to the virus," he said.

A total of 8.58 lakh candidates registered for the JEE-Mains exam for admission to engineering courses in IITs, NITs and Centrally Funded Technical Institutions (CFTIs) while only 74% of them appeared for the exam.

## 2 held for cheating man via domestic help app

Accused claimed to be from job agency

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

and photo was also shared on WhatsApp.

### Help left next day

On September 6, the help, S. Kumari came to the man's house with another woman.

When he asked the woman to go to the SJ Placement Service office to pay the commission money, she insisted that he could pay her after which he paid her the amount. Kumari didn't do any work that day and the next day she was gone without informing anyone.

The placement agency could also not be found, the complainant told the police.

With the help of surveillance on mobile numbers, the accused were arrested. The police said that the two accused contacted young girls and used to send them to the victim's house with a woman who took the money and gave it to the accused.

The help's Aadhaar card

was also recovered.

The police said that on August 9, one Ashok Kumar filed a complaint at Sarita Vihar police station alleging that he was looking for a house help on a mobile app and found one Nidhi who claimed to be a representative of SJ Placement Service and when she was contacted, she offered a help at ₹5,000 a month, in addition to ₹25,000 commission.

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The help's Aadhaar card

Timings  
DELHI

SUNDAY, SEP. 13	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:28
RISE 01:20	SET 15:42
MONDAY, SEP. 14	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:27
RISE 02:21	SET 16:32
TUESDAY, SEP. 15	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:26
RISE 03:26	SET 17:19

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	37 25
Safdarjung	37 25
Palam	37 27

Delhi Palam Today  
36°C Dry weather with warm afternoon and partly cloudy sky likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
37°C Comfortable morning turns very warm day with partly cloudy sky and gentle winds.

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# Mind the gap: Delhi Metro fully operational after five months

Network sees 1.52 lakh ridership as it resumes functioning at optimum capacity

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Five days after the resumption of Delhi Metro services in a graded manner with staggered timings, the nearly 400-km-long metro network became fully operational on Saturday, with the reopening of the Airport Express Line – over five months after all operations were suspended owing to COVID-19 pandemic.

Services were available throughout the day – from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. – for the first time on Saturday, since operations were suspended on March 22. The Delhi Metro witnessed a ridership of 1.52 lakh as opposed to 1.28 lakh on Friday. With a ridership of over 44,000, the Yellow Line saw the highest footfall followed by the Blue Line at over 42,000 on Saturday.

Following complaints on social media pertaining to violation of protocol by commuters, the Delhi Metro has



Metro services were available throughout the day for the first time on Saturday since operations were suspended on March 22. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

also deployed flying squads to "counsel and advise" passengers to follow norms.

#### Fined for flouting norms

As a part of its new protocol, commuters have to wear face masks throughout the journey and while on metro premises. Tokens have also been discontinued and mandatory use of smart cards have been put in place. According to data provided by the DMRC, 200 people were "counselled" for not wearing face

masks properly and 114 were fined ₹200 for violating norms on Saturday.

On Friday, 150 passengers were counselled, while fines were imposed on 92.

Despite concerns and apprehensions, ridership on the metro network saw steady increase with graded resumption of operations on different corridors.

The first corridors to reopen on Monday were the 49.31-km-long Yellow Line (Samaypur Badli to Huda City

Centre) and 12-km-long Rapid Metro, Gurugram.

The Blue Line (Dwarka Sector 21 - Noida Electronic City/Vaishali) and Pink Line (Shiv Vihar - Majlis Park) resumed services on Wednesday followed by the Red Line (Rithala to Shaheed Sthal New Bus Adda), Green Line (Kirti Nagar - Bahadurgarh) and Violet Line (Kashmere Gate to Ballabgarh).

Under the first phase of resumption, metro services were available for eight hours a day – from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The ridership on Thursday, after the completion of the Stage I resumption, stood at over 84,000 till 7:30 pm.

It crossed the 1 lakh mark once the Magenta Line (Jainakpuri West - Botanical Garden) and Grey Line (Dwarka to Najafgarh) were made operational. On Friday, the operation timings were extended to 12 hours a day.



On Saturday, 60,076 COVID-19 tests were conducted in the Capital. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

#### Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
2,14,069	4,715
New cases in the past 24 hours	4,321
New deaths	28

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

the highest so far.

The positivity rate, which is the percentage of people testing positive for every 100 tests done, has gone up slightly to reach 7.19 % from 7% on Friday.

Delhi has conducted 1,09,619 tests per million population, which is one of the highest figures in the country. The government bulletin added that Delhi Health Minister had met Medical Directors/Medical Superintendents of all State government hospitals to review the status of testing.

#### IN BRIEF



#### AAP did not implement Ayushman Bharat: BJP

NEW DELHI  
The Opposition BJP on Saturday accused the Delhi government of deliberately withholding the implementation of Ayushman Bharat health scheme allegedly leading to the loss of several lives. Had the scheme been implemented in Delhi, 10 lakh families and 50 lakh people could have received better treatment even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said.

## Doorstep delivery of services resumes

People can call on 1076, book online or spot-book at centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has resumed its doorstep delivery of services, which had to be suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic, sources have said.

Citizens can once again avail the doorstep delivery of documentation related to income certificates, driver licenses and new water connections among a total of 100 such services

Citizens can once again avail the doorstep delivery of documentation related to income certificates, driver licenses and new water connections among a total of 100 such services

The Delhi government intends to publicise the resumption of the initiative next week even as it waits for the programme to stabilise after having been suspended for five months.

The 100 services to be provided at the doorsteps of

Delhiites include issuance of caste certificates, domicile certificates and marriage certificates, sewer connections, duplicate ration cards, learner's licence, duplicate vehicle registration certificates and renewal of driving licence.

The government has already hired a private company through which its services will be provided at people's doorsteps and the company has hired "mobile Sahayaks" or facilitators.

The applicant has to pay ₹50 more to avail the doorstep delivery of public services. The government has also set up a feedback system for the citizens.

## DTC to hold trial of contactless ticketing

Exercise to be conducted on 29 buses on route no. 534 from September 14 to 21

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) will conduct a week-long trial of its contactless mobile ticketing system on 29 buses running on route no. 534 between Anand Vihar Terminal and Mehrauli.

A task force has been constituted to explore the option of contactless mobile ticketing on DTC buses so that no physical contact between the conductor and commuter takes place due to the exchange of cash or tickets amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"On the recommendations of the Task Force, the



Checking teams have been deployed to physically inspect the trial and get feedback from commuters.

■ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

DTC is conducting an actual trial of contactless mobile ticketing from September 14 to 21," the public transporter said.

Depot and four AC buses from the Ghaziabad Depot.

"To publicise and popularise contactless ticketing, posters and QR code have been affixed inside these

buses explaining the mechanism to download the app and to buy mobile tickets. The pink pass or free pass for women commuters can also be acquired from this app," the DTC also said.

According to the public transporter, checking teams have been deployed to physically inspect the trial aboard the 29 buses and get feedback from commuters.

## Bidhuri seeks extension of 1-day special session

Party to raise demolition of slums issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Saturday demanded extension of the one-day special session, to be held on September 14, to discuss various issues allegedly plaguing the city.

Mr. Bidhuri demanded that the session be held for five days so that issues, especially the resettlement of residents of slum clusters along railway tracks, be discussed.

"I have demanded from

## HC tells police to give keys of centre to Saad's family

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A court here has directed Delhi Police to hand over the keys of the residential portion of the religious centre at Nizamuddin to the family of Tablighi Jamaat chief Maulana Saad.

The centre was locked after a case was registered against several people for attending a religious congregation in violation of COVID-19 norms. An FIR was filed against Saad and six others on March 31, after thousands of people participated in the congregation and later many of them tested positive for COVID-19.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Gurmohina Kaur gave five days to investigating agencies to inspect the premises before it is handed over to Mr. Saad's family. The court was hearing an application, filed by Mr. Saad's mother Khalida, seeking unlocking of the premises where they resided. It directed Khalida and her family members to give an undertaking that they would not obstruct the investigation in any manner and the residential portion of the property shall only be used for residing purpose.

The full court decided that physical hearings would be conducted each day, from September 15 onwards, by one Division Bench and two single-judge Benches on rotation. Till now, two Division Benches and three single-judge Benches were holding physical courts on rotation.

ed on continuing with physical hearings, which were started from September 1, and decided not to discontinue them completely.

The court was hearing an

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Saturday said it has reduced the number of Benches that would be holding physical hearings due to the "alarming" rise in COVID-19 cases in the Capital and majority of lawyers preferring virtual hearings.

According to a note issued by the office of Registrar General Manoj Jain, a full court of the judges of the Delhi High Court deliberated

Sisodia 'attends' event at Vivekananda College

NEW DELHI  
Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday attended the Annual Day celebrations of Vivekananda College in east Delhi in its golden jubilee year through video conferencing. While congratulating the college for completing 50 years, he said: "It was a brave effort to start a women-only college 50 years ago in this area and successfully running it for such a long duration."

No. P.A.II/26/2027/DST/RA III/P.8192, P.8193/BMT-SCTIMST/2020		Dated: 12.09.2020
<b>REQUIRES</b>		
DST SCTIMST Innovative Research Award - Research Associate – III reserved for SC, ST candidates.		
For more details please visit <a href="http://www.sctimst.ac.in">www.sctimst.ac.in</a> .		
Last date of receipt of application: 30.09.2020		
Sd/- DIRECTOR		

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- INTEGRATED SC. & HEALTH
- INTERIOR DESIGN
- LANGUAGE
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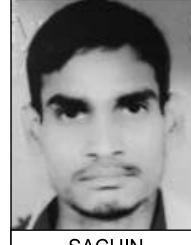
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by 23rd September, 2020

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**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**

General public is hereby informed that one boy named Sachin S/o Brijpal Singh, R/o H.No. F-438, Gali No. 8, Ganga, Delhi, has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Gokal Puri, Delhi since 06.01.2020. In this regard, a case vide DD No. 30-A, dated 06.01.2020 has been registered at P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi. The description of the missing boy is as under:



SACHIN

**Age:** 21 Years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5' 2", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Jamuni colour shirt, Black colour jacket, chocolate colour pant and black colour shoes in feet. Since efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing boy then please inform P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

Fax No. 011-24368639

DP/267/NE/2020

Sd/- S.H.O.  
P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi  
Ph: 011-22810485

**SEARCH FOR MISSING LADY**

General Public is hereby informed that one lady (depicted in the photo) namely Rani W/o Om Prakash R/o H.No. A-574/2, Gali No. 12, Sonia Vihar, Delhi Aged- about 43 Years has been reported missing since 15.08.2020 from her house vide DD No. 32-A Dated 19.08.2020 has been registered at Police Station Khajuri Khas, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-



Rani

**Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 5'3", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Strong, **Wearing:** Pink coloured saree and slipper in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing lady, may inform SHO, Khajuri Khas, Delhi at E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Tel No.: 011-24368638 or 24368641 SHO, Khajuri Khas, Delhi  
Fax No.: 011-24368639 Tel: 011-22962735, 22195181 Mob.: 8750870727

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON****See Section 82 Cr. P.C.**

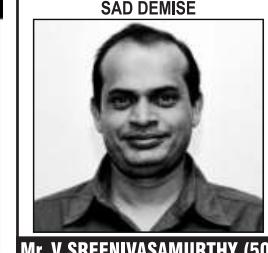
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused namely Suja Kule, S/o Madan Kule, R/o H.No. B-51, B-Block, Chander Vihar, Mandawali, Delhi-110092, and Permanent Address: Rama Nathpur, PO Kumirmore, PS Chanditala, District Hooghly, Kolkata, West Bengal, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case of FIR No. 273/20, U/s 406 IPC, at P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the accused Suja Kule cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Suja Kule has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Suja Kule, FIR No. 273/20, U/s 406 IPC, at P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 20.10.2020.

By Order  
Ms. Gita,Metropolitan Magistrate, Central District  
Room No. 180, 1st Floor,  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/335/CD/2020-(Court Matter)

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE****DEATH**

PINTO MARGARET  
MARY GONCALVEZ  
Retd. Professor, Auxilliary College, Vellore  
Passed away peacefully on Sept. 11, 2020  
Fondly remembered by Cct. Meenatchi,  
Marcus and families.

**DEATH**

Mr. V. SRINIVASAMURTHY (50)  
Senior Special News Photographer  
THE HINDU, Bengaluru  
Passed away on 12-09-2020  
Address: No.9, 3rd Main, Gangan  
Hall, Bengaluru 560 032.

# CLASSIFIEDS

thehinduads.com

**MATRIMONIAL****BRIDEROOMS WANTED****INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL****BRIDEROOMS WANTED****BRIDES WANTED****BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED****Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms****Assamese****Awadhi****Bengali****Bhojpuri****Bihari****Chhattisgarhi****English****Gujarati****Haryanvi****Hindi****Kannada****Kashmiri****Konkani****Malayalam****Manipuri****Marathi****Marwari****Nepali****Oriya****Parsi****Punjabi****Saurashtra****Sindhi****Tamil****Telugu****Tulu****Urdu****MARRIAGE BUREAUS****WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS****COMPUTER / INFO.TECH.**

BALIJA 29, Thulam, MBA MNC Veg fair & good looking seeks professionally qualified groom Age 25-30 yrs

CS Christian AD, God fearing, decent family, 24 years, M.Tech, good looking, 160 cm working in software co., Bangalore. Seeks suitable alliance. Contact: 94439 22703

**COSMOPOLITAN**

35/ 162 cm/ MBA/ Pokanati Reddy/ own business/ Magam Star/ No Chevai Vali Dosham/ ph -09176297452

**DIVORCEE**

SC 36 Tamil BSMS Pvt Clinical Trial Bangalore, Contact : 9629540705.

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Hindu Doctor 32 / 156 well settled. Wanted MBBS / MD grom. Caste no bar. Ct: 9844307597.

DOCTOR, M.S.(OG), Fair, Good looking, 29yrs, 163cm, SC, AD Govt service seeks MD, MS, DM, MCH Groom below 33 years. Caste no bar. Ct: 9788555751

VANEENY CHETTIAN DOCTOR 26/ 152cm(MSENIT) karaikal, Pondy, Doctor parents. Seeking handsome (MD/ MS) doctor clean habit grom. Ct: 9842774997

Kerala Hindu Lady Doctor Working in UK, 31/153, 48kg, Seeks Alliance from Doctors or Professionals below 36 years Working in UK. Contact : 9004596546

ENGLISH

31 YEARS/ 5'4", Mudaliyar/ Naidu, very fair, good looking Doctor bride from affluent family, pursuing super specialty seeks tall, good looking qualified grom preferably Doctors/ Civil services/ Engineers. Contact : 8825001628/ 9840219064

**IAS / ALLIED SERVICES**

HINDU MBBS, I.R.S ( I.T ), Seeks Groom State / Caste No Bar. Contact : 9382743021

**MALAYALAM**

MALAYALI VISWAKARMA GS Ultrahm, M.B.A 31/55", Sn. IT Consultant in MNC educated and employed Groom, Ct No. 0944561626, 09790739037

AFFLUENT MALAYALEE Hindu parents of only daughter 41 yrs 55' MBA seek alliance from suitable Hindu men. She is issueless living in Bangalore and works for IT Company. Contact 9947208753

EZHAVA GIRL 29/167 thriketta (BDS Doctor), slight papam seeks alliance from parents of well educated employed boys - 628129393

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DP/267/NE/2020

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## FROM PAGE ONE

**LAC standoff dampens Nathu La border trade**

The data for 2019 from the Customs put the exports at ₹40.31 crore and imports at ₹32.20 crore.

An official of the Industries and Commerce Department explained that exports were higher because 36 articles were allowed to be exported but only 20 articles were approved for import. In 2006, the trade was restricted to 29 items from Sikkim and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. Indian traders were allowed to carry goods valued at ₹2 lakh and Chinese traders were allowed to bring goods of same value in Yuan, he added.

Now, neither the officials in Gangtok nor the traders at Nathu La are sure about what the future holds.

"As a businessman I would certainly want the trade to resume next year. But if the government decides against it, as a citizen of the country I will accept it," said Mr. Bhutia.

**PLA hands over five Arunachal youth to India**

Personnel of Indian Army and PLA during the handover in Anjaw district on Saturday. ■ PTI/TWITTER

"Now that they are back in the country, it doesn't matter how they went to the other side. We are grateful to the Indian Army for helping bring them back, but the government should focus on developing our backward area so that people do not have to risk their lives for sustenance," said Prakash Ringling, the brother of Prasad Ringling, one of the boys who had gone missing.

The others who were returned were identified as

Toch Singkam, Dongtu Ebija, Tanu Baker and Ngari Diri.

There have been several instances in the past of people "abducted" or captured by the Chinese soldiers from the LAC.

In March, 21-year-old Toch Singkam was taken away at gunpoint from the Asapila sector of the district while two of his friends managed to escape. The Chinese Army released him after 19 days in captivity.

**Police link Yechury, Yadav to Delhi riots**

"Accused Devangana Kalita has disclosed that in the month of December after passing CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) Jaidi Ghosh, Professor Apurva Nand, Rahul Roy had explained that we have to protest against CAA/ NRC for which we can go any extreme due to which we can through the Govt and Umar Khalid [the former JNU student leader and activist] had also given some tips for doing protest against CAA/NRC". Identical text has been attributed to Ms. Narwal in the document.

Mr. Yechury responded to the police claim on Twitter. "Delhi Police is under the Centre and Home Ministry. Its illegitimate, illegal actions are a direct outcome of the politics of BJP's top leadership. They are scared of legitimate peaceful protest."

**Oxford vaccine trials to resume in U.K.**

Responding to the resumption, CEO of Serum Institute Adar Poonawala tweeted: "As I'd mentioned earlier, we should not jump to conclusions until the trials are fully concluded. The recent chain of events are a clear example why we should not bias the process and should respect the process till the end. Good news, @UniofOxford."

There was no information on resumption of the India trials.

The Oxford vaccine group said it could not disclose details about the illness because of "participant confidentiality".

**A.P. tests over 75,000 samples in new record**

Cases in Karnataka, A.P. hover at same levels; Telangana tests 62,234 samples, finds 2,278 positive; Kerala's active cases rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Andhra Pradesh crossed the 5.5-lakh mark for COVID-19 cases on Saturday with 9,901 new infections and Karnataka added 9,140 cases. The number of people testing positive was 2,885 in Kerala, and 2,278 in Telangana on Friday.

Kerala's case total stood at 10,5139. COVID-19 patients undergoing treatment in hospitals totalled 28,802.

The State's death toll was 425, with the Health Department adding 15 deaths which occurred between August 22 and September 8 to the provisional death list.

There was a rise in the number of active cases in all districts. Except for Idukki and Wayanad which has less than 500 cases occupying

hospital beds, in all other districts, active cases had crossed four figures.

In seven districts, over 2,000 patients were hospitalised. Samples tested in 24 hours stood at 43,954.

In Karnataka, deaths came down marginally on Saturday but the State added 94 fatalities. The number of active cases dropped to 97,815. As many as 795 patients were being monitored in ICUs.

Bengaluru Urban district reported 3,552 cases and 21 new deaths. A total of 63,583 tests were conducted, including 24,784 rapid antigen tests.

Andhra Pradesh tested 75,465 samples in a day, the highest so far. There were 67 deaths in the past day, the Health Department said.

The test positivity rate stood at 12.32% and tests per million at 84,786.

Telangana tested 62,234

**Signs for our times**

Hospitals and clinics have become sought-after places due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States



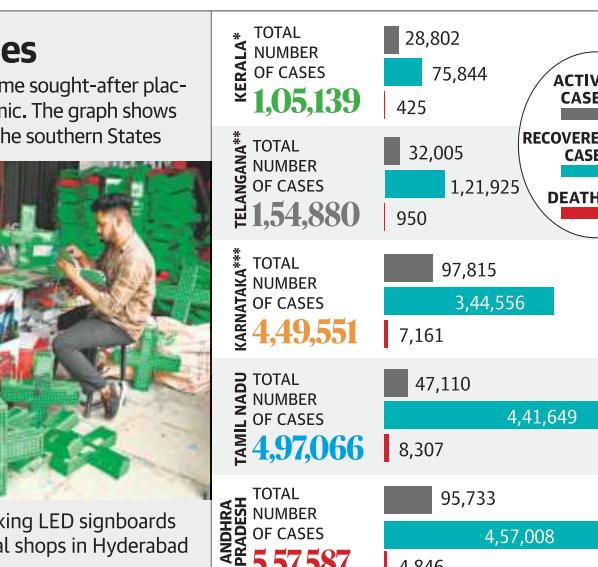
**Busy at work:** Technicians making LED signboards denoting hospitals and medical shops in Hyderabad on Saturday. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

\*Kerala has a mismatch of 68 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons. \*\*Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Friday

\*\*\*Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths

samples on September 11, and results of 2,027 samples were awaited.

The death toll was revised to 950 with 10 more patients succumbing to the infection.



The 2,278 new cases included 331 from Greater Hyderabad, 184 from Rangareddy, 150 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 126 from Nalgonda and 121 from Karimnagar.

Of the total cases detected till September 12, a total of 32,005 were active.

**5,495 test positive in T.N.**  
A total of 5,495 persons test-

ed positive for COVID-19 on Saturday in Tamil Nadu, taking the State's overall tally closer to the five lakh-mark. The State's toll climbed to 8,307 with the deaths of 76 patients being recorded. With the fresh cases, the State's overall tally climbed to 4,97,066. Of this, 47,110 persons were presently under treatment. As many as 6,227 persons were discharged following treatment, taking the total number of persons discharged till date to 4,41,649.

Chennai continued to report 900-plus cases. With 978 new cases, the city's total COVID-19 count increased to 1,47,591 (10,645 active cases, 1,33,987 discharged, 2,959 deaths).

A total of 88,562 samples were tested in the last 24 hours in the State.

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

**After high drama, alleged drug peddler held in Karnataka**

He tried to dodge arrest, saying he was under home quarantine for COVID-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) on Saturday arrested Vibhav Jain, an alleged drug peddler who was organising drug parties for his clients to sell contraband. He had been named as accused no. 5 among the 12 persons named in the FIR.

According to the police, Jain, a resident of Malleshwaram, tried to dodge arrest, stating that he was COVID-19 positive and under home quarantine.

Officials returned after asking him to appear before them for questioning after recovery.

Meanwhile, Jain approached court, seeking anticipatory bail. The CCB officials came to know of Jain's move, and went to his house and arrest-



Ragini Dwivedi

ed him. He had allegedly supplied drugs to Ravi Shankar, a second division assistant, and actor Ragini Dwivedi through Prateek Shetty, who was arrested by the CCB.

The police are now questioning Jain to ascertain his

clients' list and his drug business details.

Shetty is related to Ravi Shankar and was linked to Jain and peddled drugs at parties attended by the accused, the police said. Shetty was arrested by the CCB police earlier in 2018 in an NDPS case along with two Nigerian nationals.

The CCB continued to question actors Ragini Dwivedi and Sanjanaa Galrani and other accused to corroborate the technical evidence they have.

**5 policemen suspended**  
In a related incident, five police personnel, including a Circle Inspector, have been placed under suspension pending enquiry for "failing to detect the huge haul of ganja" stocked at a sheep farm in Lakshman Naik Tan-

da under their limits.

Kalaburagi Superintendent of Police Srimi Mariam George held Kalagi Circle Inspector Bhojaraj Rathod, sub-inspector Basavaraj Chittakote, assistant police sub-inspector Neelakantappa Hebbal, and constables Sharannappa and Anil Bhandari responsible for the vigilance lapses.

The Sheshadripuram police in Bengaluru had, without the knowledge of the local police, recently unearthed 1,200 kg of ganja from the farm owned by Chandrakant Chauhan, a native of Kalagi in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka.

Till the Bengaluru police unearthed the haul, the Kalagi police were apparently unaware of the stock, though the farm was closer to their police station.

**Film producer Prashant Sambargi questioned**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The CCB questioned film producer Prashant Sambargi, seeking an explanation to substantiate his claims about the link Syed Faazil, a suspect who is absconding, has with Chamrajapet MLA Zameer Khan. CCB sources said Mr. Sambargi did not provide any concrete evidence.

get concrete information on the alleged links.

Mr. Sambargi earlier claimed that Faazil conducted drug and gambling parties at casinos in Sri Lanka, which were allegedly attended by Mr. Zameer Khan. CCB sources said Mr. Sambargi did not provide any concrete evidence.

Meanwhile, Mr. Zameer Khan, responding to the allegations, said he had gone to Colombo along with many MLAs and visited the casino, which is legal. He further challenged Mr. Sambargi to prove his link with the drug racket, following which he would bequeath all his property to the government.

**Demand for K.T. Jaleel's resignation grows shriller**

Congress, BJP and IUML activists injured in clashes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The demand for the resignation of Higher Education Minister K.T. Jaleel appeared to grow shriller for the second day on Saturday.

Several persons were injured when Congress, BJP and Indian Union Muslim League workers clashed with the police in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Malappuram districts.

In some places, the Youth Congress and the Muslim Youth League workers also joined the protest.

The demonstrators said Dr. Jaleel had lost the moral right to continue in office after the ED questioned him on Friday



Police using water cannon to disperse BJP Yuva Morcha activists demanding the resignation of K.T. Jaleel. ■ PTI

on suspicion of obtaining "foreign aid and gifts" from the UAE illegally.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said the government should resign. Overlapping investigations by three Central law enforcement agen-

cies had reached the doorstep of the ruling front.

Dr. Jaleel, Binish Kodiyeri, son of CPI (Marxist) State secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, and M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, were under a cloud of suspicion.

This, the university said, was an increase compared to 2019 CLAT, where the attendance for UG CLAT was 90.92 % and for PG CLAT was 85.23 %.

Some candidates The Hindu spoke to said calls to the technical assistance team did not help and later the candidates were asked to contact the National Law

**NLAT: many aspirants complain of glitches**STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

Many candidates who had registered for the National Law Aptitude Test 2020 on Saturday complained that the home-based online test was marred by technical glitches, with some not being able to write it.

The university, meanwhile, said 94% of the 24,603 candidates who registered for UG NLAT appeared for the test, while 97% of 2,935 registered candidates appeared for the PG NLAT.

This, the university said, was an increase compared to 2019 CLAT, where the attendance for UG CLAT was 90.92 % and for PG CLAT was 85.23 %.

Some candidates The Hindu spoke to said calls to the technical assistance team did not help and later the candidates were asked to contact the National Law

School of India University's (NLSIU) helpline. Students alleged that the lines were constantly busy and they were unable to reach them. This happened with both UG-NLAT and PG-NLAT for admissions to NLSIU's programmes.

A candidate who was allotted the 12.30 p.m. slot said though her verification was complete before the test started, an error message popped on her screen and said they were unable to set up audio proctoring.

"I called the technical support team too but got no help. I took a gap year only so that I can get into National Law School of India University but now I have not even been able to give the test," she said.

She sent multiple emails to the university requesting another slot to appear for the test, but had not received any response.

**IN BRIEF**

**TTD darshan tokens only after pandemic subsides**

TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Saturday said it would resume issuance of dharma darshan tokens at Tirupati only after the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

Even though it was earlier resolved to issue 3,000 free darshan tokens at Tirupati, the TTD decided to keep it in abeyance following concerns expressed by locals and elected representatives that the move could lead to further spread of the virus.

**A.P. seeks CBI probe into 'irregularities' in APSFL**

GUNTUR

The Andhra Pradesh government has asked the CBI to inquire into the alleged irregularities in the functioning of A.P. State Fibernet Limited during the period from 2014 to 2019. This follows the findings of the Cabinet Sub-Committee that ₹2,000 crore was allegedly siphoned off by way of awarding contracts for execution of various works in the name of procurements.

**Nod for ₹2,050 cr. for new medical colleges in A.P.**

VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has accorded administrative sanction of ₹2,050 crore for the establishment of four medical colleges in four parliamentary constituencies in the State on Saturday. Orders to this effect were issued by

# Nadda, Nitish discuss seat-sharing plan

No complaints with regard to Bihar CM, will go with BJP's decision, says LJP chief Chirag Paswan

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

Amid talks of seat sharing between NDA alliance partners in Bihar, BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Saturday met Chief Minister (CM) and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar at his official residence.

Mr. Nadda also launched the party's poll campaign "Atmanirbhar Bihar (self-reliant Bihar)" before leaving for Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga districts to meet people and local leaders. Elections for the 243-member Bihar Assembly are due in October-November.

Significantly, soon after the two leaders met in Patna, Chirag Paswan, president of NDA's third alliance partner, the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), said in Delhi that he had no

complaints or grudges against Mr. Kumar. He added that as a public representative from the State it was his duty to raise public issues before the Chief Minister. He added that "his party will go with whatever decision the BJP takes regarding the Bihar elections".

Relations between the JD (U) and LJP had soured after Mr. Chirag Paswan's attacks on several issues. JD(U) leaders had said "their party's alliance has been with the BJP and not the LJP".

Senior State level BJP leaders, including Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi, party in-charge Bhupendra Yadav and State party president Sanjay Jaiswal accompanied Mr. Nadda at the meeting. Party sources told *The Hin-*



Poll planning: J.P. Nadda, right, with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Patna on Saturday. • PTI

du that seat sharing was the focus of the discussion. "Both the principal alliance partners BJP and JD(U) may contest equal number of seats while the LJP may get around 20-22 and HAM(S)

4-5 seats to contest", said a senior JD(U) leader.

Earlier on Friday, former Maharashtra chief minister and newly appointed Bihar in-charge of the party Devendra Fadnavis too was in Pat-

na and inaugurated the party's media center. "Only a government which can work along with PM Modi government at the Center can take Bihar forward..." said Mr. Fadnavis.

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Experts back combined vaccine trials

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Experts have proposed a plan to accelerate the rollout of a potential COVID-19 vaccine in India by combining multiple phases of the vaccine development process. The proposal has been published as a commentary in the latest issue of the *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, the peer-reviewed in-house journal of the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Regulators are authorising drugs for emergency use in COVID cases. These are drugs or repurposed medicines that haven't been indubitably proved as effective.

Amit Dinda of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi; Santanu Tripathi of the Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine, West Bengal, and Bobby John of Aequitas Consulting Pvt Ltd., in their article, propose a similar scheme for the vaccines. While potential vaccines must still be tested for safety at each stage, the Phase 3 and 4 stages could be combined, they say.

## Cong. flags Gujarat death toll variation

Crematoria, district hospitals report far higher fatalities due to COVID-19 than the Health Department

MAHESH LANGA  
AHMEDABAD

The remarkable consistency in the daily COVID-19 cases recorded over the last two weeks in Gujarat – ranging between 12 and 16 – has raised eyebrows among public health experts, medical fraternity and the Opposition in the State.

With a surge in cases in rural areas of the State, local doctors in districts allege that the numbers shared by the Health Department are massive underreporting and far from the actual number of deaths due to the virus.

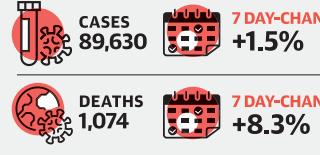
Highlighting the discrepancy in reporting, senior Congress legislator Vikram Madam from Jamnagar, on Saturday said: "In Jamnagar district, as per the government data, total 26 deaths have occurred due to COVID-19. But I have list of 182 dead bodies which were disposed off as per the COVID-19 guidelines in just one crematorium in Jamnagar city."

Speaking to media persons at the crematorium, Mr. Madam shared the names of the 182 persons who had reportedly died of coronavirus

### Viral tracker

With 89,630 COVID-19 cases recorded on Saturday, India's tally stood at 47,47,016. As many as 1,074 new deaths were added, taking India's toll to 78,602. A total of 5.51 crore samples have been tested as of September 11, according to the ICMR

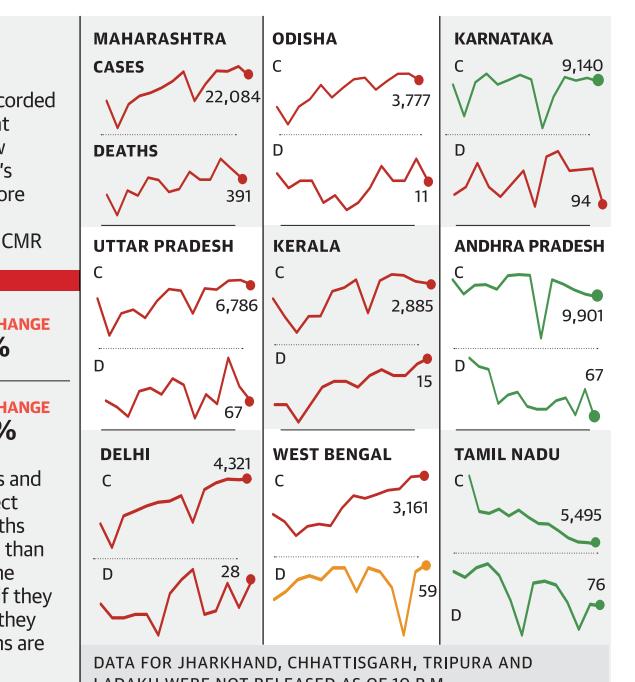
#### NEW CASES AND DEATHS



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

infection and been cremated according to government protocols.

I challenge the government to dispute the figures I am disclosing here. Why is the BJP government playing with the public health? Why are real figures not being disclosed to public at large," Mr. Madamasked.



buried according to the COVID-19 guidelines. But the government figure [for fatalities] is little over 100," a prominent doctor from the city told *The Hindu*, requesting anonymity.

After local media reports on the large number of deaths due to the virus, the authorities tightened norms, restraining local hospitals from releasing figures, and curtailed media access to hospitals.

"There is a death audit committee in every COVID-19 hospital which determines the cause of the death and normally, co-morbid patients who died after they got infected are not included in the COVID-19 deaths," a doctor and member of the audit committee from Rajkot said.

"In August, 334 bodies were handed over as per the COVID-19 protocol in Rajkot civil and private hospitals," a senior government official said.

Under-reporting has been noted in Ahmedabad and Surat also. Gujarat Congress spokesman Manish Doshi obtained data under RTI which contradicts the official figures.

## Dhrupad Sansthan to reconsider ICC composition

Members to be picked after talks with students: Umakanth

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOJPAL

The Dhrupad Sansthan, an international residential music school here, is reconsidering the composition of its internal complaints committee (ICC) formed recently to inquire into allegations of sexual harassment by former students against teacher Akhilesh Gundecha after a section of students claimed its members were connected to the Gundecha family.

"There was less representation of students in the four-member committee," Umakanth Gundecha, chairman of the organisation which promotes the ancient style of Hindustani classical music, told *The Hindu*. "So, we are planning to reconstitute a new one with members picked in consultation with students."

Former IAS officer Anshu Vaish recused herself from the ICC, whose composition the organisation declared on September 5, after arts writer Devina Dutt in a Facebook post said she (Ms. Vaish) was reportedly close to the Gundecha family along with other members.

"The remaining three may remain, but more will be added. But if students want, the committee can be dissolved too," said Mr. Umakanth, whose other brother,



Umakanth Gundecha

cident takes place," the student said.

Pointing out there had been a "complete communication breakdown" between students standing with survivors and the organisation, the student said, "Some women, all foreign nationals, were brave enough to come out publicly, but Indian students fear retribution."

The statement further claimed Mr. Akhilesh did not step down voluntarily, as stated by the organisation, but under pressure from students, and mounting evidence.

"Many resident students raised the allegations against Mr. Akhilesh to his face during a meeting on September 2, which forced him to recuse himself," claimed the student.

However, Mr. Umakanth maintained Mr. Akhilesh, a pakhawaj player, had stepped down of his own accord. "After the discussion with students, he recused himself," he said.

Asserting the *sansthan* had been in touch with students since the allegations came up, Mr. Umakanth said, "We will take the next step based on the committee's recommendations."

Women in distress can dial 011-24373736/24373737 for support.

## Airlines face ban over photography

Failure to implement rule will mean 2-week ban on flight operations, says DGCA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Saturday warned airlines that failure to implement rules banning on photography on flights and at airports would result in a ban on the airline operating in the same sector for two weeks.

The regulator's action comes days after videos of chaotic scenes on board a Chandigarh-Mumbai Indigo flight carrying actor Kangana Ranaut went viral on the social media.

It was often violated and photography as well as videography have become normal at airports in the age of smartphones and social media.

In the order issued to all scheduled airlines, Airports Authority of India and all other airport operators, the DGCA said, "As you are aware that as per Rule 13 of the Aircraft Rules 1937, no person can take, at govern-

ment aerodrome or from an aircraft in flight, any photograph except in accordance with and subject to terms and conditions of a permission in writing... This permission is, however, not applicable when such aircraft is landing, taking off or on ground at a defence aerodrome."

"Keeping this in mind, it has been decided that from now on, in case of such violation occurs on any scheduled passenger aircraft, the schedule of flight for that particular route shall be suspended for a period of two weeks from the next day [of the incident] and shall be restored only after the airline has taken all the necessary punitive action against those responsible for the violation," the circular added.

The DGCA is also learnt to have suspended one Indigo flight in the Chandigarh-Mumbai sector in which the chaotic media incident was reported.

failed to follow these stipulations primarily because of lack of diligence on their part. Needless to say that such deviations result in compromise in maintaining the highest standards of safety and therefore, it is not allowed," the order said.

"In his complaint, Mr. Indrakant's brother, Ravikant, alleged that the suspended SP was irked by his brother's refusal to bow down to his extortion demand.

Mr. Ravikant said his brother was on ventilator

tended to kill him after he refused to pay him ₹6 lakh per month.

In his complaint, Mr. Indrakant's brother, Ravikant, alleged that the suspended SP was irked by his brother's refusal to bow down to his extortion demand.

The Mahoba police tweeted that the matter was being probed.

Modi govt. is anti-farmer, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the monsoon session of Parliament, where three agricultural ordinances, including the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 will come up, the Congress said that these three are part of a calculated design by the government to help crony capitalists at the cost of farmers.

"The Modi Government has dealt a deadly blow to the agriculture sector through these three ordinances. These black laws are the document of a conspiracy to ring a deathknell to agriculture and crores of farmers, agriculture labourers and commission agents (*aarkhis*). This is a well-calculated evil design to mortgage agriculture and farming in the hands of crony capitalists," Randeep Singh Surjewala, chief Congress spokesperson said on Thursday afternoon at a virtual press conference.

Equating the Narendra Modi government with the British East India Company, Mr. Surjewala accused the government of being anti-farmer.

Mr. Surjewala said that destroying the Agricultural Produce Market Committees would mean that farmers will not get a minimum support price.

## Suspended IPS officer charged with murder

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

Days after being suspended as police chief of Mahoba district on charges of corruption and extortion, Mani Lal Patidar, an Uttar Pradesh IPS officer has been charged with allegedly conspiring to murder a businessman.

A case under attempt to

murder, criminal conspiracy and various charges was lodged against Mr. Patidar on Friday on a complaint by the brother of businessman Indrakant Tripathi, after the latter was found on Wednesday in his car with gunshot wounds.

Earlier, Mr. Indrakant had alleged that the officer threat-

ened to kill him after he refused to pay him ₹6 lakh per month.

In his complaint, Mr. Indrakant's brother, Ravikant, alleged that the suspended SP was irked by his brother's refusal to bow down to his extortion demand.

Mr. Ravikant said his brother was on ventilator

support and his condition was deteriorating.

However, he said he was satisfied with government action so far and said he would wait for the investigation before demanding a higher-level probe.

The Mahoba police tweeted that the matter was being probed.

## Train18 architect not in promotion list

Shubhranshu dropped from panel of officers for appointment to GM post

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved a proposal of the Ministry of Railways to empanel 25 seniors officers for appointment to the post of General Manager or equivalent in the Zonal Railways. The name of Shubhranshu, the architect of India's first semi-high speed train - Vande Bharat Express - has been dropped.

Mr. Shubhranshu, as the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer, Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, led a team of officials to roll out the indigenously designed and developed Train18 in a record 18-month period in 2018. Though his name figured in the panel of officers approved by the ACC for posting as General Manager in 2019-20, it was removed from the fresh panel without any reason cited in the order.

The officer, belonging to



A view of the Vande Bharat Express. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

the 1985-batch of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSM), is among those against whom vigilance enquiries were initiated after the Train18 project ran into a controversy. He was transferred and posted as Chief Administrative Officer, Rail Wheel Factory, Belgaum.

The self-propelled train was later flagged off as Vande Bharat Express between Delhi and Varanasi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February 2019.

While another rake of Train18 was also rolled out last year and introduced on the Delhi-Katra-Delhi route and both the Vande Bharat Express trains were running without any issues, allegations surfaced that officials made compromises on certain safety aspects and one company was favoured in the procurement of components.

A turf war between the Mechanical and Electrical departments over claiming ownership of the game-

changer train is said to be the reason behind a series of issues that finally derailed the project.

Even as Mr. Modi announced that more Vande Bharat Expresses would be launched across the country, the making of the trains came to a halt at the ICF.

But despite a new design approved by the Research Design and Standards Organisation and fresh tenders floated last year for making 44 rakes, the project remained shelved. After the second tender was scrapped recently, Railway Board Chairman V.K. Yadav said that fresh tenders would be called as per the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Act.

Mr. Shubhranshu could not be reached for comment. However, senior Railway officials told *The Hindu* that mere initiation of a vigilance enquiry was not enough reason for denying promotion.

## Plea to uphold right of appeal in contempt case

Bhushan moves Supreme Court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan has moved the Supreme Court for a declaration upholding the right of appeal of a person found guilty of contempt.

Mr. Bhushan was recently punished for contempt with a nominal fine of ₹1. He was found guilty of scandalising the Supreme Court with his tweets.

In his writ petition, Mr. Bhushan, represented by senior lawyer Kamini Jaiswal, said a person found guilty of contempt by the Supreme Court cannot file an appeal. He has to accept the verdict unquestioningly.

As a judge of the Supreme Court to convict and sentence the accused is unlimited and arbitrary... No one can be at once a suitor and a judge. Thus, there is a need for an intra-court appeal," Mr. Bhushan contended.

In the alternative, the review proceedings on a finding of guilt in a contempt case should be heard by a different Bench in open court.

The fact that there is inherent unavoidable conflict of interest involved, and the fact that liberty of the alleged contemnor is at stake, it is of utmost importance that certain basic safeguards are designed which would reduce [though not obviate] chances of arbitrary, vengeful and high-handed decisions," the petition said.

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## SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



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# Afghan groups urged to reach ceasefire

World leaders call on the government and the Taliban to seize 'historic opportunity' to make peace

REUTERS

DOHA

Afghan government representatives and the Taliban insurgents gathered on Saturday for peace talks aimed at ending two decades of war that has killed tens of thousands of combatants and civilians.

Ahead of face-to-face negotiations in the coming days, the warring sides were urged by various countries and groups to reach an immediate ceasefire and forge an agreement that upholds women's rights.

The government of U.S. President Donald Trump, who is eager to claim an end to America's longest conflict as he seeks re-election, expressed its intention to use aid as leverage for a deal.

The opening ceremony came one day after the 19th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. that triggered its military involvement in Afghanistan.

## Many challenges

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged the warring sides to seize the opportunity to strike a comprehensive peace deal, while acknowledging many challenges lay ahead. "The choice of your political system is yours to



Fresh start: Members of the Taliban delegation attending the peace talks in Doha on Saturday. ■ AFP

make," he told the opening ceremony in the Qatari capital Doha. "We believe firmly that protecting the rights of all Afghans is the best way for you to break the cycle of violence."

The head of Afghanistan's peace council, Abdullah Abdullah, said that even if the two sides could not agree on all points, they should compromise.

"My delegation is in Doha representing a political system that is supported by millions of men and women from a diversity of cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds in our homeland."

Taliban leader Mullah Baradar Akhund said Afghans

should "have an Islamic system in which all tribes and ethnicities of the country find themselves without any discrimination and live their lives in love and brotherhood".

## Financial assistance

Mr. Pompeo warned that the size and scope of future U.S. financial assistance to the country, which relies heavily on international funding, would depend on their "choices and conduct".

U.S. Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad told reporters that preventing terrorism was the chief condition but that protecting minority and women's rights would also in-

fluence any future decisions on Congress-allocated funding. "There is no blank check."

Officials, diplomats and analysts say that although getting both sides to the negotiating table was a major achievement, this does not mean the path to peace will be easy, especially with violence increasing around the country. Afghanistan government and Taliban representatives met after the opening ceremony to discuss how negotiations would proceed, officials said.

Achieving a significant reduction in violence and how to get to a permanent ceasefire would be among the first

issues the sides would discuss when they meet on Sunday, Mr. Abdullah said.

How to include the Taliban, who have rejected the legitimacy of the Western-backed Afghan government, in any governing arrangement and how to safeguard the rights of women and minorities who suffered under Taliban rule are also big challenges.

"The Afghan people must be at the heart of this peace process ... that leaves no one behind, including women," said Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi.

## Work together: Pak.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi addressed the commencement of intra-Afghan negotiations in Qatar through a video link, the Foreign Office said.

He said the Afghan leaders must seize the historic opportunity to work together constructively and secure an inclusive, broad-based, and comprehensive political settlement.

"We hope all sides will honour their respective commitments, persevere in the face of all challenges and setbacks, and remain unflinchingly committed to achieving a positive outcome," he said.

# Johnson accuses EU of plotting food blockade on U.K.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accused the European Union of threatening to tear the U.K. apart by imposing a food "blockade" between Britain and Northern Ireland, throwing new fuel on the fire of simmering Brexit talks.

Writing in Saturday's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, Mr. Johnson said the EU's stance justified his government's introduction of new legislation

to rewrite its Brexit withdrawal treaty – a Bill that is causing deep alarm among his own MPs.

Talks between London and Brussels on a future trading relationship are deadlocked as both sides struggle to prise apart nearly 50 years of economic integration, after British voters opted for a divorce.

"My assessment is that an unregulated situation (no deal) would have very significant consequences for the

British economy," German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz warned on Saturday after a meeting of EU Finance Ministers in Berlin.

"Europe would be able to deal with it and these would not be particularly difficult consequences after the preparations we have already made," he added.

But absent a deal by the end of this year, when the full force of Brexit kicks in, Mr. Johnson said the EU was bent on an "extreme inter-

pretation" of rules for Northern Ireland under the divorce treaty both sides signed in January.

"We are being told that the EU will not only impose tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, but that they might actually stop the transport of food products from GB to NI," he wrote.

"I have to say that we never seriously believed that the EU would be willing to use a treaty, negotiated in good

faith, to blockade one part of the UK, to cut it off, or that they would actually threaten to destroy the economic and territorial integrity of the UK."

Mr. Johnson said the EU's stance would "seriously endanger peace and stability in Northern Ireland", and stressed he remained committed to finding agreement with the EU by the end of the year, but the new UK Internal Market Bill was a "legal safety net".

# Japan PM hopeful says he may need Abe's help on diplomacy

His leadership was amazing...don't think can match that: Suga

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister hopeful Yoshihide Suga said on Saturday that he lacks the kind of diplomatic skills that outgoing leader Shinzo Abe has, including Mr. Abe's personal friendship with President Donald Trump, and that he will need his assistance if he assumes the top job.

Mr. Abe in late August announced his intention to step down as Prime Minister due to health problems. He has led Japan since he returned to power in December 2012 for a second stint as Prime Minister.

Mr. Suga, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, is expected to win Monday's party election



Yoshihide Suga

and then be endorsed in a parliamentary vote on Wednesday because of the majority held by the ruling bloc.

Mr. Abe has traveled to 80 overseas destinations during his tenure, bringing stability and consistency to Japanese

diplomacy and raising the country's profile in the international community, experts say. He was noted especially for developing a personal friendship with Mr. Trump.

"Prime Minister Abe's leadership diplomacy was truly amazing. I don't think I can match that," Mr. Suga said as he joined the two other contenders at a public debate. Former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba and former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida are also in the race.

"I think there is a diplomatic stance that would fit me and I will stick to my own style, while also seeking assistance from the Foreign Ministry. And of course I will consult with (Abe)," he said.

# Sri Lankan navy plugs fuel leak on oil tanker

New Diamond had caught fire last week

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

COLOMBO

Sri Lankan military divers fixed a fuel leak from the engine of a fire-damaged oil tanker off the island's east coast, the navy said on Saturday, in a salvage operation after the huge weekend blaze.

While the navy says no crude oil has escaped the cargo of the New Diamond, leaked diesel fuel had created a 2-km-long slick in the Indian Ocean that was visible from the air.

The fuel was seeping into the water through damaged pipes connected to a ballast water intake on the ship's starboard side, according to a navy statement.

That leak was plugged on Friday along with an inlet on the port side of the Pan-

ma-registered tanker, it said.

Dutch salvage company SMIT said its experts had boarded the vessel and found the 2,70,000-tonne crude oil cargo unaffected by the fire. "The cargo tanks with the crude are intact," the firm told AFP in The Hague on Friday. "Discussions are ongoing on the destination of the vessel to transfer the crude."

Environmental authorities fear a marine disaster if the tanker is allowed to transfer its oil to another ship in the country's waters.

The fire was completely doused on Wednesday, but an unspecified amount of the ship's 1,700 tonnes of fuel leaked when storage tanks ruptured in the blaze that destroyed the engine room.

# Anti-Shia protesters march for second day in Karachi

The rallies have sparked fears of sectarian violence

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KARACHI

Tens of thousands of anti-Shia protesters, including demonstrators linked to Sunni extremists, rallied in Pakistan's Karachi on Saturday, in the second day of protests that have sparked fears of sectarian violence.

The rallies follow a raft of blasphemy accusations against Shia leaders in Sunni-majority Pakistan after a broadcast of an Ashura procession last month showed clerics and participants allegedly making disparaging remarks about historic Islamic figures.

Ashura commemorates the killing of the Prophet



Differing views: Sunni Muslims shouting slogans during a protest in Karachi on Saturday. ■ AFP

reports of violence.

The rally was organised by the Sunni organisation Jamaat Ahle Sunnat and the hardline Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, which has organised violent protests over alleged blasphemy in the past.

# As Bahrain says it's time to embrace Israel, the Gulf hears a Saudi voice

Manama, scholars say, could never have taken this step if Riyadh opposed it

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

The tiny Persian Gulf kingdom of Bahrain lost much of its autonomy nearly a decade ago, when its rulers turned to their neighbour Saudi Arabia to save them from an Arab Spring uprising threatening their power.

So Bahrain's announcement on Friday that it would become the fourth Arab state to normalise relations with Israel was arguably the most significant clue yet that Saudi Arabia – the heavyweight of Gulf politics – might be moving in the same direction, albeit on a slower time scale.

Bahrain, scholars said, could never have taken this step if Riyadh opposed it.

"It is a vector," said Bernard Haykel, a scholar of Saudi Arabia at Princeton University who has met with



the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. "There are indications Saudi Arabia is moving in the same direction."

## Ultimate prize

Saudi Arabia is without a doubt the ultimate prize in Israel's decades-long quest for recognition from the Arab states around it. With vast oil reserves and revered Islamic pilgrimage sites, the kingdom is the most influential state in the Arab world. Its warming ties with Israel are also a uniquely grave blow to Palestinians in their struggle with Israel.

Over the last 75 years, Saudi Arabia has been the most important advocate among the Arab states for Palestinians, said Khaled Elgindy, a senior fellow at the Middle

East Institute and a former adviser to Palestinian leaders.

That support goes back to the start of the Saudi-American alliance during the Second World War, and in recent years the Saudis have repeatedly sponsored calls for the Arab states to withhold diplomatic relations with Israel unless it accepts a

said. "There will be no more leverage. Everybody else will normalise."

## Remote possibility

But Saudi Arabia's acquiescence to Bahrain's announcement is one thing; its taking the same step is another, and still unlikely any time soon.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss diplomacy, Trump administration officials involved in pushing the Saudis to recognize Israel say that the possibility remains remote at best for now, partly reflecting stark differences in the political context.

Polls show that sympathy for the Palestinian cause remains widespread in public opinion across the Arab world. But since the crackdown on Bahrain's Arab Spring uprising, the royal family has all but eliminated any domestic dissent or opposition, with rights groups

documenting cases of summary execution and torture.

In the aftermath of the uprising, sectarianism has dominated Bahrain's internal dynamics. The country's Sunni Muslim rulers can depend on the almost unquestioning support of a privileged Sunni minority united in fear of the country's Shiite majority. And opposition voices in the Shiite majority have largely been silenced.

Since the uprising, the Bahraini rulers have depended on the threat of military force from Saudi Arabia to keep the country's Shiite majority in check, and Bahrain is regarded around the region as a dependent client of the Saudi royal court.

The rulers of Bahrain, which hosts a major U.S. naval base, had in fact been quietly signaling for more than 15 years that they were considering closer Israeli relations. ■ NY TIMES

# 50 dead as gold mine collapses in east Congo

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KINSHASA

More than 50 people are dead after landslides caused the collapse of three artisanal gold mines near the city of Kamituga in eastern Congo's South Kivu province on Friday, officials said.

"The diggers and the transporters of the stones were swallowed up by the waters," said Kamituga Mayor Alexandre Bundya.

Diwa Honors, who survived the tragedy, said more than 50 people were in the mines, which are about 50 m deep.

Most of the dead were young people, according to a statement from the office of the Governor of South Kivu, Theo Ngwabidje Kasi, who offered condolences to their families.

CM YK

# Discoms' liquidity line to rise to ₹1.2 lakh cr.

Package to cover outstanding dues of discoms for the months from April to June: Power Secretary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The ₹90,000-crore liquidity package for discoms to help them pay their dues till the month of March would soon be enhanced to ₹1.2 lakh crore factoring in these utilities' outstanding till June, said a senior official.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in May announced a ₹90,000 crore liquidity infusion into cash-strapped discoms for payment of their dues till March 2020. Discoms have been facing demand slump due to the lockdown to contain COVID-19.

Participating in a webinar on 'Innovation in Renewable Energy' organised by PHDCCI, Power Secretary S. N. Sahai said the liquidity package would cover the outstanding dues of discoms



Discoms have a total outstanding of ₹94,000 crore towards power generation firms, the government says. ■ S. THANTHONI

for the months from April to June also and it would be enhanced to ₹1.2 lakh crore.

While announcing the package, the government had said, 'At present discoms have a total outstanding of ₹94,000 crore towards power generation firms for the month of April and May as well.'

A source said that an official communication in this regard has already been sent

to the implementing state-owned non-banking finance firms Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC by the Ministry of Power.

The source further said now the respective boards of REC and PFC will approve the increase in liquidity package to about ₹1.2 lakh crore covering a period of dues till June this year, by the end of September.

As much as ₹68,000 crore has been sanctioned and about ₹25,000 crore disbursed to discoms under the package so far.

#### 'More States to tap'

The source further revealed that more States would avail the credit facility after the REC and PFC boards' decision to raise the package.

PFC and REC would apprise States in this regard.

## Non-life insurers get a boost on robust health cover demand

Motor segment, however, remains in the slow lane

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Health insurance products that are seeing an accelerated demand, amid a raging pandemic, remained a positive influence on the overall performance of non-life insurers in August, too, even as motor segment stays in the slow lane.

Provisional data from insurance regulator IRDAI shows non-life insurers, who also include two specialised insurers, have posted a 10.4% year-on-year increase in gross direct premium to ₹7,623.3 crore in August.

Among them, standalone health insurers emerged star

performers with a 36.4% increase to ₹4,462.9 crore.

General insurers', who also issue health covers, gross direct premium grew 5.6% to ₹3,139.6 crore.

Max Bupa Health Insurance MD and CEO Krishnan Ramachandran said COVID-19 had acted as a catalyst for increased awareness of health insurance.

"We have seen significant uptick in business in recent months due to an increase in demand for health insurance. Since May, we have seen strong retail growth, driven by the significant increase in purchase of indemnity plans, and due to the

## ICRA raises Yes Bank's debt ratings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Credit rating agency ICRA has upgraded the ratings for various debt instruments of Yes Bank following 'an improved liquidity position'.

"The upgrade factors in the capital raise of ₹15,000 crore in July, which has resulted in an improvement in the [bank's] capital ratios. The ratios are now comfortably above the regulatory levels," ICRA said on the rationale behind the rating upgrade.

"The upgrade also factors in the improvement in the bank's liquidity position after the stability and subsequent increase in its deposit base," it added.

"CPCL has initiated many

Some of the discoms were not eligible for getting loans under the package because they were not meeting working capital limit norms under Ujal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY).

#### Working capital limit

In August, the Union Cabinet relaxed the working capital limit norms for discoms under UDAY to get loans as part of the liquidity infusion scheme.

Under UDAY, banks and financial institutions are restricted to lend working capital up to 25% of a discom's revenue in the previous year.

Besides, discoms can get loan under the package against the receivables from State governments to clear their dues. But some discoms did not have headroom under both the provisions.

ing directly to the courts of countries that have signed and ratified the treaty, instead of having to enforce the settlement agreement as a contract in accordance with each country's domestic process," an official statement said on Saturday.

#### 'Cross-border disputes'

"Businesses in India and around the world will now have greater certainty in resolving cross-border disputes through mediation, as the Convention provides a more effective means for mediated outcomes to be enforced," it said.

Singapore had worked with the UN Commission on International Trade Law, other UN member states and non-governmental organisations for the Convention.

## Singapore Convention on Mediation comes into force

'Settlement framework to boost ease of doing business'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Singapore Convention on Mediation came into force on Saturday and will provide a more effective way for enforcing mediated settlements of corporate disputes involving businesses in India and other countries that are signatories to the Convention.

Also known as the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, this is also the first UN treaty to be named after Singapore.

"With the Convention in force, businesses seeking enforcement of a mediated settlement agreement across borders can do so by applying

the statement, the Convention, which entered into force on Saturday, would boost India's 'ease of doing business' credentials by enabling swift mediated settlements of corporate disputes.

The harmonised and simplified enforcement framework under the Convention translates to savings in time and legal costs, which is important for businesses in times of uncertainty, such as during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the statement issued by Singapore's Ministry of Law said.

As on September 1, the Convention has 53 signatories, including India, China and the U.S. According to

## CPCL targets improvements to margins

Measures to boost realisation include a naphtha splitter, low sulphur fuel oil foray



Firing up: CPCL also plans to raise output of hexane and lubricant base to increase profitability. ■ B. VELANKANNI RAJ

part of the production within India as also contribute to improve the company's gross refining margin," Mr. Vaidya said.

CPCL had also initiated action to manufacture low sulphur fuel oil, which has a better margin compared to other products. It also plans to raise hexane output from 20,000 MT to 36,000 MT per year during 2021-22 and later scale it up by an additional 15,000 MT per year in the near future. These efforts were expected to improve profitability by about ₹90 crore per year.

Higher production of Lube Oil Base Stock (LOBS) products would also increase CPCL's profitability, as margins from LOBS are quite high, he added.

## Jewellery exports slump 42% in Aug.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

August compared with the \$36 million seen in April.

"The recovery is due to growth in demand for diamonds and jewellery in international markets like U.S., China and Europe, which have opened for trade," the Gem and Jewelry Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said.

Colin Shah, chairman, GJEPC, said in a statement, "We are optimistic, as several countries are now open for trade. We have witnessed initial signs of recovery from markets like the U.S., China, Europe and export orders have seen a steady rise month-on-month over the last 4-5 months."



## MFIs must build capital buffers, says Reserve Bank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

As COVID-19 is likely to pose financial risks for microfinance institutions (MFIs), there is a need to build capital buffers and manage cash positions for microlenders to protect their balance sheets from any disruptions, according to an article published in RBI's monthly bulletin.

The article, by Srinivasan Deep Singh of Department of Supervision, Reserve Bank of India, said though COVID-19 presents significant financial risks for the microfinance sector, it also presents an opportunity to build long-term resilience.

"Going forward, building capital buffers and managing liquidity would be crucial for MFIs in fortifying their balance sheets against COVID-19 led disruptions," it said.

**'Biggest tail-risk event'** The article termed COVID-19 as the biggest tail risk event in a long time.

Owing to disruptions in supply chain and business operations, loss of livelihoods and consequent drop in household incomes is highly likely, it said. "Non-banking financial company microfinance institutions, which extend collateral-free loans to low-income groups, are particularly exposed to credit risks in this scenario," The article said repayment rates had dropped significantly, posing liquidity risks to MFIs.

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## Overseas business helps security firm SIS India

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

When several COVID-19 and global recession-hit Indian companies are seen downsizing their loss-making international operations or restricting investments, Security and Intelligence Services Ltd. (SIS India), a leading security services company, has found its international operations to be a hedge.

"Our international business, which accounts for 40% of the total revenue, has been a great investment," Rituraj Sinha, Group MD, said in an interview. "The international market has been less impacted [during this crisis]."

Of the Group's total revenue of ₹8,500 crore in FY20, the international businesses contributed ₹3,500 crore. "In the context of Corona, it is a lesson for all of us. India is a growth economy but the economy has become extremely volatile," he said.

**Volatile situation** He said India is heading for a projected contraction of 5% in 20-21 compared with 7 to 8% growth a few years ago. "This kind of volatility [in the \$2.5 to \$3 trillion Indian economy] is unprecedented. But, Australia and New Zealand are less impacted in terms of health and economy."

He said governments in those countries were very forthcoming to help businesses such as SIS, which helped in creating jobs.

Those governments provide incentives, employment-support scheme, payroll benefit scheme and business-wise it is good."

SIS is now Australia's largest private security provider with a 20% market share. The company has set up bases in New Zealand and Singapore, where it is the third largest player.

Power, water, roads to see more traction: L&T CEO and MD

N. ANAND

Engineering conglomerate Larsen & Toubro Ltd. (L&T) recently completed divestment of its electrical and automation (E&A) business to Schneider Electric for ₹14,000 crore. The company is also planning to divest or dilute certain concession businesses as part of the strategic review of its business portfolio, said CEO and MD S.N. Subrahmanyam in an interview. Edited excerpts:

Recently, L&T divested its electrical and automation (E&A) division. What next?

■ We keep conducting a strategic review of our business portfolio from time to time and take a call on the basis of consistent, long-term planning process. As per this, we may divest or dilute certain concession businesses such as L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) and Nabha Power Ltd.

What will you do with the sale proceeds of the E&A deal?

■ We are in the middle of an unprecedented pandemic which has caused considerable uncertainty to business during the past five months.

In such times, it is necessary to strengthen the balance sheet and stay adequately liquid. Accordingly, the sale proceeds will be utilised partly for deleveraging the consolidated debt and also to strengthen the liquidity buffer warranted by the current economic environment.

Most of the labourers and workers went back to their villages and towns. But, we have all the reasons to be positive now as about 2.2 lakh are back on our rolls and most of the sites are back to more or less normality. The amount of steel and cement we are purchasing is going up and that indicates better progress.

Have you started getting new business?

■ Infrastructure development is imperative to revive economic activity, create employment and infuse more liquidity into the system.

Additionally, funded projects by the World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Asian Development Bank, among others, should start moving faster.

We are, therefore, optimis-

tic that sectors such as hospitals, power transmission and distribution, water, railways, roads, renewable energy and defence will start showing greater traction.

Digital is the buzzword these days. How is L&T readying for this fourth industrial revolution?

■ Over the last few years, L&T has deliberately and slowly enhanced its technology footprint and is charting a course in recent years that will see its technology portfolio increase its contribution vis-a-vis its traditional businesses.

In 2014-15, the world was seeing a tectonic shift with digital technologies. These emerging technologies were creating new processes, new business models and entirely new businesses.

Digitalisation and digital transformation were sweeping the business world.

L&T was seeing and experiencing this first-hand from the clients of IT services companies.

[We] saw the opportunity of digital as twofold. First, to digitally transform its own operations and use these new technologies to get better at what it was already doing well; and second, to look at digital as a new business opportunity that could shape its future portfolio.

L&T started doing both and it acted swiftly with determination.

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## Foreign funds & NGOs

How does the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act control donations? Who comes under its ambit?

VIJAYITA SINGH

**The story so far:** The licences of 13 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been suspended under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010, this year. Their FCRA certificates were suspended and bank accounts frozen. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said it had received "serious adverse inputs" regarding the working of several NGOs which come under the ambit of the FCRA in tribal areas. The licences of at least two NGOs working in Jharkhand have been suspended.

**What is the FCRA?** The FCRA regulates foreign donations and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security. First enacted in 1976, it was amended in 2010 when a slew of new measures were adopted to regulate foreign donations. The FCRA is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations. It is mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA. The registration is initially valid for five years and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms. Registered associations can receive foreign contribution for social, educational, religious, economic and cultural purposes. Filing of annual returns, on the lines of Income Tax, is compulsory. In 2015, the MHA notified new rules, which required NGOs to give an undertaking that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony. It also said all such NGOs would have to operate accounts in either nationalised or private banks which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.

**Who cannot receive foreign donations?** Members of the legislature and political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution. However, in 2017 the MHA, through the Finance Bill route, amended the 1976-repealed FCRA law paving the

way for political parties to receive funds from the Indian subsidiary of a foreign company or a foreign company in which an Indian holds 50% or more shares.

The amendment, according to legal experts, followed accusations that the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress had been receiving foreign funds for political activities from the U.K.-based Vedanta Group

from 2004 to 2012. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a public advocacy group, had filed a public interest litigation petition at the Delhi High Court in 2013 against both parties for violating FCRA norms by accepting foreign funds. Both parties challenged a High Court order, which had termed the donations illegal in 2014, and moved the Supreme Court. They withdrew the petitions after the FCRA was amended retrospectively.

**How else can one receive foreign funding?** The other way to receive foreign contributions is by applying for prior permission. It is granted for receipt of a specific amount from a specific donor for carrying out specific activities or projects. But the association should be registered under statutes such as the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, or Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. A letter of commitment from the foreign donor specifying the amount and purpose is also required. In 2017, the MHA suspended the FCRA of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), one of India's largest public health advocacy groups, on grounds of using "foreign funds" to lobby with parliamentarians on tobacco control activities. After several representations by the PHFI to the government, it was placed in the 'prior permission' category.

**When is a registration suspended or cancelled?** The MHA on inspection of accounts and on receiving any adverse input against the functioning of an association can suspend the FCRA registration initially for 180 days. Until a decision is taken, the association cannot receive any fresh donation and cannot utilise more than 25% of the amount available in the designated bank account without permission of the MHA. The MHA can cancel the registration of an organisation which will not be eligible for registration or grant of 'prior permission' for three years from the date of cancellation.

**Have there been suspensions in the past?** According to MHA data, since 2011, the registration of 20,664 associations was cancelled for violations such as misutilisation of foreign contribution, non-submission of mandatory annual returns and diversion of foreign funds for other purposes. As on September 11, there are 49,843 FCRA-registered associations.

**What about international donors?** The government has also cracked down on foreign donors such as the U.S.-based Compassion International, Ford Foundation, World Movement for Democracy, Open Society Foundations and the National Endowment for Democracy. The donors have been placed on a 'watch list' or in the 'prior permission' category, barring them from sending money to associations without the MHA's clearance.

## Why is Phase-3 of vaccine trial complicated?

With University of Oxford and AstraZeneca announcing resumption of COVID-19 vaccine trials, how will the process be monitored for safety?

JACOB KOSHY

**The story so far:** On Saturday, the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca said they were resuming clinical trials for a new coronavirus vaccine across all U.K. sites. On Tuesday, the U.K.-based biopharma company AstraZeneca had said it was suspending the Phase-3 global trial of AZD1222, the COVID-19 vaccine it has been developing with Oxford University researchers. The vaccine, by all accounts, was among the handful that had reached the final but most daunting stage of trials and is slated to be available commercially by mid-2021. The pause was announced after a volunteer in Britain fell ill. On September 12, Oxford University and AstraZeneca in separate releases said the independent review process had concluded and following a nod from the regulator, trials would resume in the U.K. There was no word in the releases about resumption of global trials or details of the volunteer's illness.

### How are vaccine and drugs tested in trials?

There are similarities and differences in the way new drugs and vaccines are tested. Broadly both follow a four-stage process when they are tested in people. After a drug has proven itself safe in a variety of animals – usually mice, rabbits, hamsters and primates that mirror human physiology and the way it reacts to diseases – it enters Phase-1 studies. A small group of volunteers is given the drug in small doses and monitored to see if it is safe and whether it was well tolerated. This is also when any occurrences of side effects are closely monitored. On an average, 10-50 candidates are chosen. In the normal course, those undergoing the trial must report results to the drug regulator which gives the go-ahead for the next stage of trials. Phase-2 is when a group of volunteers, usually in the hundreds, are selected. This is the stage when researchers try to determine what dosage would be necessary for it to take effect or produce the desired response. In the case of the COVID-19 vaccine, this is the stage when it's determined if the inoculation had triggered a desired level of antibodies and a sufficient cell response in terms of stimulating T-cells that are known to block and neutralise the virus particles respectively. Again, side effects and adverse reactions are monitored and reported.

### What is different about Phase-3 part of the trial?

Each of these stages can take several months and that includes the time taken to recruit patients as well as the time involved in observing the effects of drugs and vaccines at various intervals of time. Such data is again sent to regulators, who, if satisfied, give the green signal for Phase-3. In this stage, the drug or vaccine is tested at multiple locations in thousands of volunteers or patients.



In the case of a drug, this is the stage when a new drug is compared to the existing standard of care and when it must prove that it is either more efficacious, or is of similar potency but is safer, better tolerable or delivers any of the goods that the drugmakers had claimed when making the drug. In the case of a vaccine for a new disease, there is usually nothing to compare it to, so Phase-3 becomes a larger version of the Phase-2 trial. A

Phase-3 trial is held at multiple locations to capture the demographic variability in the population. It is also double-blinded and randomised and may have multiple treatment arms, meaning some participants may get a placebo, some may get lower doses, some higher doses, and in an ideal

trial, neither the doctor nor the recipient knows who is getting the drug and who the placebo. When the scale and scope of a trial increases and a diverse population group is exposed to a new vaccine, the odds of encountering adverse and the dreaded 'severe adverse reaction' are magnified. When severe reactions are manifested, medical researchers have to determine if the reaction was due to the drug and if a pattern is apparent, a drug or vaccine can be pulled out. Because of the multiple locations and the number of patients that are required, this is also the most expensive stage of a trial. Sometimes, phases are combined, given the kind of drug or vaccine and the urgency of the situation. Several COVID-19 vaccines are being developed on accelerated time lines.

### What happened in the case of AstraZeneca?

For the vaccine candidate, called AZD1222 for now, the

company had begun recruiting 30,000 volunteers for Phase-3 trials in the United States. The Pune-based Serum Institute of India, which had been contracted to manufacture a hundred million doses for 92 countries including India, had also started to test the vaccine on a proposed group of 1,600 volunteers in India. However, it emerged that a recipient of the vaccine in the United Kingdom contracted transverse myelitis, an inflammation of the spinal cord, and this led AstraZeneca to pause its trials. Suspension of vaccine trials is not out of the ordinary but Serum Institute initially said it would not halt the India trial because no adverse reactions had been reported here. However, after a show-cause notice from the regulator, the Drugs Controller-General of India, the company said it would halt recruitment of volunteers until AstraZeneca finishes evaluation of the safety data.

### What has the independent review said?

According to a release from Oxford University, the independent review process has concluded and following the recommendations of both the independent safety review committee and the U.K. regulator, the MHRA (the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency), trials will restart in the U.K. "We are committed to the safety of our participants and the highest standards of conduct in our studies and will continue to monitor safety closely," the release said.

### What happens in Phase-4?

A drug or vaccine candidate that clears Phase-3 is usually approved and licensed and the entire infrastructure of the company is devoted to ramping up production and working out the logistics of storing the drug or vaccine safely without it degrading or losing potency. Once the product goes out into the field, there is post-marketing surveillance, or a Phase-4, where all instances of the product's failure and adverse events are recorded. Companies are expected to furnish periodic data to the drug regulator.

## Are there re-infection fears around COVID-19?

How long does immunity last? What are WHO and scientists saying about antibodies?

RAMYA KANNAN

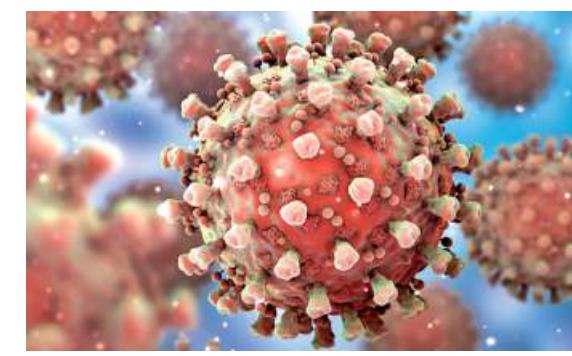
**The story so far:** While the fear of COVID-19 re-infection has dogged discussion on the novel coronavirus, it was in late August that the first 'confirmed' case of re-infection was officially recorded. A 33-year-old Chinese male from Hong Kong reportedly caught his second infection during a trip to Europe, four-and-a-half months after he first tested positive for COVID-19. Post-testing, genomic sequencing made it clear that the first and second infection involved variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. This seemed to rule out viral shedding or continuing infection from the first time. Subsequently, a case of re-infection in Nevada, U.S., was also similarly revelatory, thanks to viral genome sequencing.

### Are these isolated cases?

While there is no doubt this finding is significant, scientists are still debating whether this comprises an isolated few cases or portends a larger batch of infections as the world opens up and global travel begins again. Questions about waning immunity and the viability of a vaccine itself are still not settled either.

### What is immunity and how does it work?

What the discussion intrinsically hinges on is the ability of the human body to fight pathogens harmful to it, and whether in COVID-19 immunity wanes a few months after infection. The human body's immunity acts in two forms – as innate, jumping to the task of protection immediately, and adaptive, meaning immunity acquired



by the body in the process of surviving infection by pathogens, essentially over a period of time.

In a piece in *The New York Times*, Yale immunologists Akiko Iwasaki and Ruslan Medzhitov explain that the adaptive immune system consists of two types of white blood cells, called T and B cells, that detect molecular details specific to the virus and, based on that, mount a targeted response to it. "T cells detect and kill those infected cells. B cells make antibodies, a kind of protein that binds to the viral particles and blocks them from entering our cells; this prevents the replication of the virus and stops the infection in its tracks."

T and B cells retain this memory and help the body fight the infection later. "Yet it is also the case that with other viruses the amount of antibodies in the blood peaks during an infection and drops after the infection has

cleared, often within a few months. This is the fact that has some people worried about COVID-19, but it doesn't mean what it might seem," they add. "It's a normal step in the usual course of an immune response. Nor does a waning antibody count mean waning immunity: The memory B cells that first produced those antibodies are still around, and standing ready to churn out new batches of antibodies on demand."

### What does it mean for the future?

Reacting to the Hong Kong case, Maria Van Kerkhove of the WHO said at a briefing: "There's been more than 24 million cases reported to date and that re-infection possibilities have to be studied at the population level

*Infectious Diseases*: "Our results suggest SARS-CoV-2 may continue to circulate among the human populations despite herd immunity due to natural infection or vaccination. Further studies of patients with re-infection will shed light on protective correlates important for vaccine design." On its website, the WHO says it will continue to review the evidence on antibody responses to SARS-CoV-2.

## Has economic slowdown hit EPFO earnings?

Why has the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation not yet paid interest for fiscal year 2019-20?

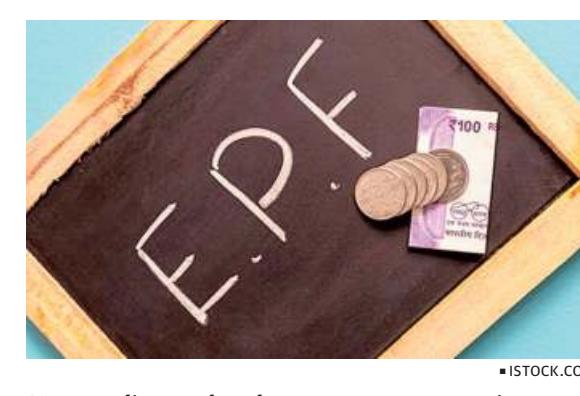
K. BHARAT KUMAR

**The story so far:** In March, the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had recommended an 8.5% interest payout to members for FY20. At a meeting earlier this month, the CBT reiterated its recommendation, after a review, to the Centre. The payout would comprise 8.15% interest based on income from debt instruments and the balance 0.35% would be credited from the sale of a part of its investments in exchange traded funds (capital gains), subject to their redemption by December 31. The CBT also recommended that such capital gains be accounted for as income on an exceptional basis for 2019-20.

**Where does the EPFO invest to generate returns?** The EPFO uses its corpus (estimated at ₹13 lakh crore-₹14 lakh crore in the last fiscal) to earn income from investments in debt instruments and equities. Investment in equities is capped at 15%. The remaining funds are invested in debt. The debt component helps the EPFO earn fairly predictable returns, while the equity component has risks associated with fluctuations in the stock market. Based on the EPFO's earnings for the year, the CBT recommends in March an interest rate at which the payouts can be made. The final decision is notified by the Ministry of Labour.

### What changed this time around?

At the CBT meeting in early March, the earnings for 2019-



20 were discussed. Debt component expectations were more or less fixed and were in the range of ₹58,000 crore-₹59,000 crore. The ETF disinvestment process was expected to result in estimated capital gains of ₹3,000 crore. The interest rate recommendation, of 8.5%, was arrived at based on the estimated earnings. Typically, ETF dilution would have begun thereafter. But by the middle of March this year, equity markets were in free fall as the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a global sell-off. It became clear that the anticipated earnings from ETF dilution could not be realised at the time. At a meeting of the CBT's Finance, Investment and Audit Committee (FIA), which took place later in March, it was decided that the equity dilution would be put on hold until the stock markets recovered. With the recent improvement in market conditions, the

FIA met again, followed by a meeting of the CBT. It was clear that the debt component had earned ₹58,000 crore. What remained was the equity component.

The CBT recommended that the debt component, or the returns that were already in hand, would facilitate a payout at 8.15%. The earnings from ETF dilution were projected at ₹2,700 crore. So, the CBT decided to retain its recommendation of 8.5%, of which 0.35 percentage points would be realised based on the sale of equity. This sale could happen any time now, depending on how the market performs, but within December 31. Once the dilution takes place and it becomes clear that returns were indeed as anticipated, the CBT would convey the same to the Labour Ministry, and from thereon to the Finance Ministry. On approval, the interest rate would then be notified.

**Will EPFO make the payouts in two instalments?** No. For now, there is no decision to make payment in two instalments, according to a member of the CBT. Whenever the ETF dilution takes place, within this calendar year, the interest payout is set to happen in one shot.

### Can the situation change?

It could, but seems unlikely as of now. For example, if the stock market collapses again, and if the ETF dilution does not bring in the expected returns, the 0.35% part of the interest rate may get reduced. However, the CBT member said currently there is nothing the Board foresees that could endanger the returns.

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH



## SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

# A counter-coalition of Eurasian powers

The grouping, which works for regional stability and cooperation, also provides a platform for member states to discuss their differences

### In focus

■ The SCO was founded in June 2001, built on the 'Shanghai Five' grouping of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

■ The platform played a key role in conflict resolution between China and Russia, and among Central Asian republics

■ India and Pakistan joined the SCO as observers in 2005, and were admitted as full members in 2015

SUHASINI HAIDAR

As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi negotiated a five-point agreement which they hoped will lead to a disengagement process between Indian and Chinese troops ranged against each other at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), it wasn't just the host, Russia, that played a part behind the scenes. In fact, the occasion for their presence in Moscow, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), had as much of a role to play.

The SCO was founded in June 2001, built on the 'Shanghai Five' grouping of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz Republic) and Tajikistan, which had come together in the post-Soviet era in 1996, in order to work on regional security, reduction of border troops,

and terrorism. A particular goal all these years has been "conflict resolution", given its early successes between China and Russia, and then within the Central Asian Republics. The 1996 meeting of the Shanghai Five, for example, resulted in an 'Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field Along the Border Areas' between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which led to an agreement on the mutual reduction of military forces on their common borders in 1997. Subsequently, it helped push the Central Asian countries to resolve some of their boundary disputes as well.

In 2001, the Shanghai Five induced Uzbekistan into the group and named it the SCO, outlining its principles in a charter that promoted what was called the "Shanghai spirit" of cooperation.

According to its rules, the organisation has two permanent bodies – the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent. The SCO Secretary-General and the Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of three years. However, the venue of the SCO council meetings moves between the eight members (including India and Pakistan). The SCO also has four observer states – Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus and Mongolia – which may be inducted at a later date.

### Main goals

The SCO describes its main goals, part of its Charter that was adopted in St. Petersburg in 2002, as: "strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, re-

search and technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order."

No doubt, the SCO was eyed with some misgivings by the U.S. and Europe as a result of this, not the least by its desire to build a "new international political and economic order", and it was even dubbed the "Anti-NATO" for proposing military cooperation. In 2005, the Astana declaration called for SCO countries to work on a "joint SCO response to situations that threaten peace, security and stability in the region", indicating the group's strategic ambitions.

Western and NATO concerns were heightened a decade later, when they placed heavy sanctions against Russia for its actions in Crimea, but China came to its aid, signing a 30-year, \$400 billion gas pipeline framework agreement. Since then, helped by the personal bond between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the SCO has become a platform for Eurasian cooperation in a region rich with energy resources. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which Russia is not a part of but supports, and is joined by all members

of the SCO (with the exception of India), has also become a part of the SCO declarations.

### Contradictions

India and Pakistan joined the SCO as observers in 2005, and were admitted as full members in 2015. Joining the SCO has been seen as one of the Modi government's more significant yet puzzling foreign policy choices, as it came at a time that New Delhi was looking more keenly at the West, and in particular at the maritime 'Quadrilateral' with the U.S., Japan and Australia. India has explained its membership in both ostensibly clashing groups as a part of its principles of "strategic autonomy and multi-alignment".

Other contradictions have also been noted. Since 2014, India and Pakistan have cut all ties, talks and trade with each other, and India has refused to attend the SAARC summit due to tensions with Pakistan, but both their leaderships have consistently attended all meetings of the SCO's three councils: the Heads of State, Heads of Government, Council of Foreign Ministers, as well as other meetings.

Despite the fact that India accuses Pakistan of perpetrating cross-border terrorism at every other multilateral forum, at the SCO, Indian and Pakistani armed forces even take part in military and anti-terrorism exercises together, as part of the SCO-Regional Anti-Terrorist

Structure. In addition, the two countries are part of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, to discuss the course of Afghanistan's future, an issue New Delhi and Islamabad are bitterly divided over.

### Bilateral meetings

Through the years, SCO hosts have encouraged members to use the platform to discuss differences on the sidelines. In 2009, India and Pakistan held the first talks after the Mumbai attacks on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Astana, where then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and former Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari met, and in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met then Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif at the SCO summit in Ufa, for a meeting that even resulted in a joint statement. There have been no bilateral meetings between Indian and Pakistani leaders on the sidelines of the SCO since then, and both sides have pointedly ignored the other in recent years, although the SCO secretary general has often expressed the hope they will resolve their issues through dialogue, including last year after the Pulwama attack.

Thus, it should not have

seen violent clashes, killings of soldiers and gun fire exchanges for the first time in 45 years.

"The SCO Charter doesn't allow any bilateral dispute to be taken up, but it provides a comfortable platform for building mutual trust, expanding cooperation, finding common ground and eventually, creating conditions for dialogue between countries," said Russian Deputy Ambassador to India Roman Babushkin in a press conference this week.

It remains to be seen whether the Moscow meet-

**The SCO describes its main goals as: strengthen mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states and promote their cooperation in various fields**

ing between the Indian and Chinese Foreign Minister results in a real breakthrough on the ground at the Line of Actual control, where armies remain entrenched, and the PLA has mobilised both troops and heavy equipment. If it does, that would be a feather in the cap for the SCO, and if fails to do so, the SCO will no doubt continue to provide other venues for its disputing members to meet, as it seeks to build a continental coalition that its founders hope, may one day be as strong as some of the other coalitions that exist to its west and south.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

# A spectre is haunting Brexit

The Irish question is looming large over the U.K.'s planned exit from the EU

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM

The spectre of Britain's cliff-edge exit from the EU – which has loomed large almost since the June 2016 referendum – has returned, months before the country's scheduled departure on December 31. But this is not the most significant feature of this week's controversial legislation, which aims to override the Irish protocol to the U.K.'s EU withdrawal agreement. With the new Bill, the government seeks to overwrite parts of the withdrawal agreement, which Prime Minister Boris Johnson struck with his 27 counterparts last October.

The agreement had sought to avoid a hard border coming up between Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K., and the Irish Republic, an EU member. According to the Northern Ireland protocol, which is part of the agreement, the region is expected to follow some EU rules in trade with the Republic of Ireland. The new law, the Internal Market and Finances Bill, could override the legal force of the withdrawal agreement, which has triggered angry responses from Belfast.

### Political integrity

A precise determination of the status of Northern Ireland after Britain's departure from the EU is most consequential at many levels. As a constituent territory of Britain, the region underpins the country's



overall identity and constitutional and political integrity. Northern Ireland's relations with Great Britain and historical links with the Republic of Ireland to the south exert strong influence on the future of the tenuous peace that has prevailed across the island of Ireland since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. And, given the emerging geopolitical configuration after Britain's exit, the promotion of Dublin's interests within the EU are vital for the preservation of the centrepiece of European post-war integration, the lucrative single market. Ensuring the continuation of the existing soft border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in the changed circumstances arising from Britain's exit from the bloc is thus paramount for overall stability.

To this end, London and Brussels initially negotiated a temporary Irish backstop in 2017-18 wherein, the whole of the U.K. would

continue in the EU customs union until an alternative was in place. Neither the trade-only-in-goods that this arrangement implied, nor the severe limits on concluding trade pacts with third countries was palatable for both hard Brexiters and even pro-remain politicians across parties.

So contentious were the parliamentary debates over this withdrawal deal that three versions were defeated by massive margins in the House of Commons. The prolonged political turmoil pushed Britain's EU exit deadlines at least thrice and eventually forced former Prime Minister Theresa May to step down in June 2019.

### Alternative plan

Mr. Johnson's alternative to the backstop was the establishment of customs checks on the Irish Sea to regulate the flow of goods in and out of Great Britain from Northern Ireland and vice versa. Dublin would

have the best of both worlds, being brought under dual jurisdiction of the EU and the U.K. to safeguard Britain's constitutional integrity and sovereignty, as also that of the European single market. Following the massive majority Mr. Johnson secured in the December 2019 general election, which was evidently a vote for Brexit, any dissenting voice from Northern Ireland's hard-line Democratic Unionist Party were muted.

The government now claims it was unaware of the onerous provisions in the Irish protocol requiring close regulatory alignment with the EU when the withdrawal deal was sealed during the tumultuous atmosphere in January. Accordingly, the amendments to the protocol tabled in the internal market Bill this week seek to empower authorities to sidestep EU jurisdiction in the areas of customs and state subsidies for industries. Mr. Johnson has defended the move as necessary to protect the country from external dangers.

Although the government has refused to retract modifications to the Irish protocol, it is likely that this was an act of brinkmanship on the part of Mr. Johnson. The legislation could well be another ploy to secure relaxations on EU demands for greater access to Britain's fisheries market. But then the present government is dominated by members who strongly back Brexit even without a deal.

## SUMEDH SINGH SAINI

# A former top cop on the run

Punjab's ex-DGP faces arrest for the abduction and murder of a man in 1991

VIKAS VASUDEV

A decorated former police chief who played a key role in bringing normalcy back to Punjab after the Khalistan militancy, Sumedh Singh Saini is now in the news for all the wrong reasons. Mr. Saini, a 1982-batch Indian Police Service officer, is on the run, with the police continuing to conduct raids across States to nab him. He is facing arrest for the abduction and murder of a man in 1991.

Mr. Saini became the youngest DGP in the country at the age of 54, when he was appointed to the coveted post in 2012, during the Shiromani Akali Dal-Bharatiya Janta Party government. He was shifted from his office in 2015, in the aftermath of a police firing incident, in which two persons were killed at Behbal Kalan of Ferozepur district, which followed the sacrifice of the Guru Granth Sahib at Batala. After 36 years of service, he retired in 2018.

Mr. Saini was said to enjoy the full confidence of K.P.S. Gill, a former DGP of Punjab, who has been credited with bringing the Punjab insurgency under control. Mr. Saini took active part in counter-terrorism and anti-insurgency operations and was awarded the President's Police Medal for gallantry and The Wound Medal (Parakram medal).

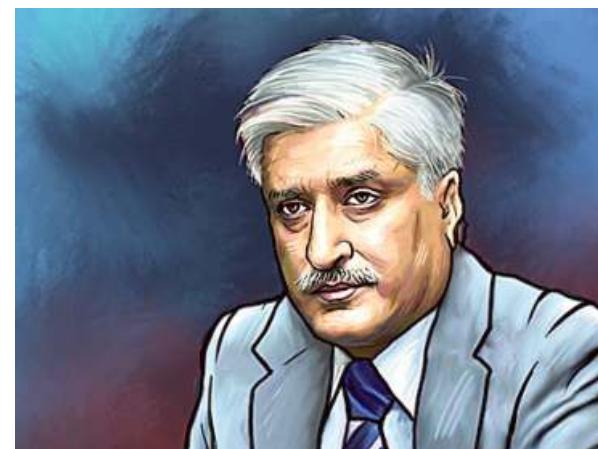
Later, Mr. Saini was involved in anti-corruption drives when he served as

the head of Punjab's Vigilance Bureau between 2007 and 2012.

Mr. Saini's critics, however, accuse him of indulging in police excesses and human rights violations. They say he was a police officer with political patronage and had sought to meander through various episodes of rights violations and encounters during his tenure in the force. Many accuse him of even going to the extent of overawing the courts.

Mr. Saini served as Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) at Batala, Bathinda, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Rupnagar and Chandigarh during his service. It was in 1991 after a terrorist attack on Mr. Saini, in which he suffered injuries, while three policemen were killed, Balwant Singh Multani, an employee at Chandigarh Industrial and Tourism Corporation, was allegedly picked up by the police from his residence in Mohali.

ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR



charge under Section 302 was added to the FIR, after two co-accused turned approvers, and in their statement, claimed to be witnesses to the torture meted out to Balwant Singh Multani, under the custody of Mr. Saini, who was then the SSP of Chandigarh.

### CBI case

After a preliminary inquiry surrounding the case had been conducted under the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered an FIR against Mr. Saini and others in 2008.

However, the High Court's order was challenged in the Supreme Court, which set aside the former's orders on the ground that the Bench of the High Court lacked jurisdiction and consequently, the FIR was quashed. The Supreme Court, however, had given the victim's family the liberty to take recourse to fresh proceedings.

With controversies surrounding him, a case of alleged kidnapping of three Ludhiana men in 1994 is still pending against Mr. Saini at Delhi's special CBI court. In 2007, during the SAD-BJP government, Mr. Saini was heading the State's Vigilance, when Captain Amrinder Singh was booked for corruption in Ludhiana's City Centre scam. Captain Singh, currently the Chief Minister of Punjab, was acquitted in the case in 2019.

### Murder charge

In May this year, on the basis of a fresh application by the victim's (Balwant Singh Multani) brother, Palwinder Singh Multani, the former DGP and six other accused were booked for alleged kidnapping and wrongful confinement, among other charges, under the Indian Penal Code. Later, murder

# Royals hope to rise again on Ashes heroes' wings

Stokes' availability is a concern for Smith's men, however; Archer will spearhead the pace attack of the Rajasthan side

## IPL COUNTDOWN

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

After Shane Warne scripted a fairytale in the IPL's inaugural edition, the title has not returned to Jaipur. Twelve years later, and more than 2,000km away from home, Rajasthan Royals is looking to another tactician from Australia to lead from the front.

Steve Smith showed he could make a difference to the side when he was handed the captain's armband towards the end of Royals' disappointing campaign last year. The team played better, he batted better. The Royals management must be relieved that he has recovered from a concussion during Australia's current tour of England.

Jos Buttler holds the key to the Royals batting. The explosive England opener could only play eight games last year, but smashed 311 runs (at a strike rate of 151.7).

Buttler's fellow World Cup-winner Ben Stokes is likely to miss a few matches, though, as he is in New Zealand with his ailing father. Not having the services of the world's

best all-rounder, even for a few games, is a blow, especially given the fabulous form he has been in over the last year or so. He masterminded the World Cup triumph and an Ashes Test win for England with two of the greatest innings in history, within the space of six weeks.

The power-hitting of David Miller should compensate for the loss of the deft touch of Ajinkya Rahane. Big sixes could also come off the blades of the dashing Sanju Samson, the seasoned Robin Uthappa and the exciting Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Jofra Archer leads a fine pace line-up that includes Tom Curran, Andrew Tye, Oshane Thomas, Jaydev Un-

akat, Ankit Rajpoot and Varun Aaron. The two teenaged seamers, Kartik Tyagi and Akash Singh, could take inspiration from teammate Ryan Parag, who last year became the youngest to score an IPL fifty, aged just 17.

Shreyas Gopal, whose googlies beat the best of batsmen in the 2019 edition, and Mayank Markande are excellent leggies, but Royals could be missing a quality finger-spinner or two on UAE's slow wickets.

New coach Andrew McDonald has his task cut out, given the side finished second from bottom last season. Revisiting scenes from 2008 in the team room may not be a bad way to start.



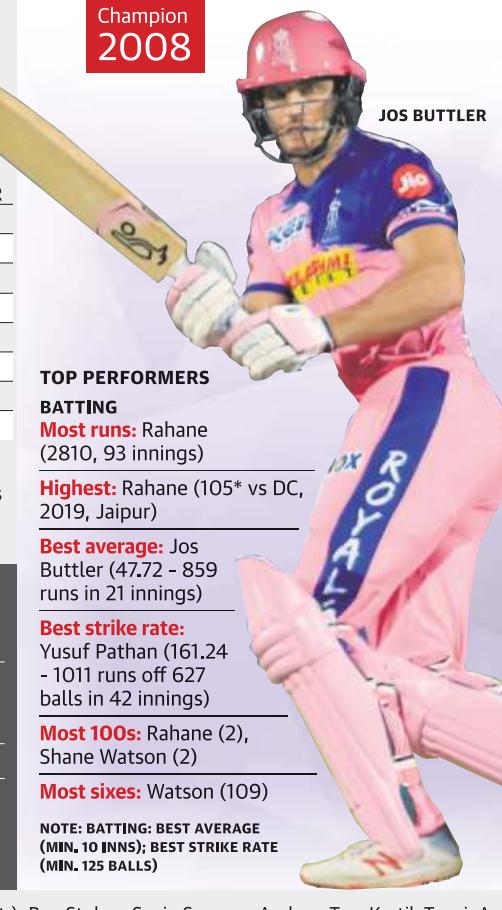
Royal moment! Shane Warne's magnificent men. ■ FILE PHOTO

**THE RAJASTHAN ROYALS DOSSIER**



	P	W	L	NR
Overall*	147	75	70	2
vs CSK	21	7	14	-
vs DC	20	11	9	-
vs KXIP	19	10	9	-
vs KKR	20	10	10	-
vs MI	20	10	10	-
vs RCB	20	10	8	2
vs SRH	11	5	6	-

\* Royals' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (9), Pune Warriors (5), and Kochi Tuskers Kerala (2)



**CHAMPION 2008**

**JOS BUTTLE**

**BATTING**

**Most runs:** Rahane (2810, 93 innings)

**Highest:** Rahane (105\* vs DC, 2019, Jaipur)

**Best average:** Jos Buttler (47.72 vs 859 runs in 21 innings)

**Best strike rate:** Yusuf Pathan (161.24 - 1011 runs off 627 balls in 42 innings)

**Most 100s:** Rahane (2), Watson (2)

**Most sixes:** Watson (109)

**NOTE: BATTING: BEST AVERAGE (MIN. 10 INNS); BEST STRIKE RATE (MIN. 125 BALLS)**

**BOWLING**

**Most wickets:** Siddharth Trivedi (65, 75 innnings)

**Best bowling:** Sohail Tanvir (6/14 vs CSK, 2008, Jaipur)

**Best average:** Shreyas Gopal (18.80 - 31 wickets off 79 overs in 25 matches)

**Best strike rate:** Shreyas Gopal (15.2)

**Best economy rate:** Johan Botha (6.85)

**ROYALS' 2020 FIXTURES**

Sept. 22	vs. CSK	7.30 p.m.	Sharjah
Sept. 27	vs. KXIP	7.30 p.m.	Sharjah
Sept. 30	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Dubai
Oct. 3	vs. RCB	3.30 p.m.	Abu Dhabi
Oct. 6	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Abu Dhabi
Oct. 9	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Sharjah
Oct. 11	vs. SRH	3.30 p.m.	Dubai
Oct. 14	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Dubai
Oct. 17	vs. RCB	3.30 p.m.	Dubai
Oct. 19	vs. CSK	7.30 p.m.	Abu Dhabi
Oct. 22	vs. SRH	7.30 p.m.	Dubai
Oct. 25	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Abu Dhabi
Oct. 30	vs. KXIP	7.30 p.m.	Abu Dhabi
Nov. 1	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Dubai

ALL TIMES IST

- 610 runs conceded off 89 overs in 24 matches

**Most four-fors:** Tanvir (2), James Faulkner (2)

**BOWLING: BEST AVERAGE, BEST ECONOMY RATE, BEST STRIKE RATE (MIN. 250 BALLS)**

**THE scores:**

Australia 294/9 in 50 overs (G. Maxwell 77, M. Marsh 73, M. Wood 3/54, J. Archer 3/57) bt England 275/9 in 50 overs (S. Billings 118, J. Bairstow 84, A. Zampa 4/55, J. Hazlewood 3/26). Australia won by 19 runs and leads three-match series 1-0.

**Second match:** Sept. 13 (Sunday), 5.30 p.m. IST.

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

## Ferguson keen to get back to the grind

Excited to take on the tough situations in T20 cricket, says the Kiwi pacer

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

An important component in the Kolkata Knight Riders pace battery, New Zealander Lockie Ferguson is keen to 'get back to the grind' again.

Ferguson, who trained with the KKR squad in Abu Dhabi on Friday after completing his week-long quarantine, might showcase some new variations in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL).

### Nice little break

"In my arsenal, I pack my yorkers and slower balls. But I am also working on some other variations... It was a nice little break (during the lockdown) but my body needs to adjust now from no bowling to lots of training," Ferguson told www.kkr.in.

Ferguson – who grew up in a sports family (father a rugby player and mother a sprinter) and competed with his elder brother in bowling fast – felt experience taught him to adapt to the T20 format.

### Super aggressive

"He was always super aggressive (as a batsman) and I guess my bowling mirrors him in a way when it comes to aggression. I am looking forward to playing under him."

On Mills, Ferguson said, "I remember I was a young chubby pup at Auckland when I was starting out. Mills was well established in the Black Caps. I tried to rub shoulders... and learned some tricks from him. He has a really calm attitude... I am sure he has plenty to teach now."

Lockie Ferguson.

■ TWITTER/KKRIDERS

hood heroes and fellow-New Zealanders, head coach Brendon McCullum and bowling coach Kyle Mills, has made Ferguson's second season with KKR more special.

Brendon was definitely one of our heroes while growing up. After watching him do so well in the first match for KKR (in 2008), it was hard not to be a Kolkata fan.

**Smooth start, but...**

In the other semifinal, Thiem seized the early momentum, handily carrying the first set before Medvedev took an early lead in the second.

The Australian Open runner-up converted a critical break to level the score 5-5 before the 24-year-old Russian dragged it into a tie-break. The 27-year-old Austrian, who slipped and fell twice in the match and unfurled a string of frustrated exclamations, regained his cool to survive yet another tiebreak and clinch the affair.

in the semifinal where I am supposed to be the favourite and I am down two sets to love," said Zverev.

After Zverev levelled the match at two sets apiece, Carreno Busta took a medical time-out to have his back tended to and the German, with a sudden swagger in his step, got the break he needed in the first game before cruising home.

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### THE RESULTS

**Men: Semifinals:** 5-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt 20-Pablo Carreno Busta (Esp) 3-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; 2-Dominic Thiem (Aut) bt 3-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) 6-2, 7-6(7), 7-6(5).

Zverev, with his back against the wall, raised his game just in time to deny the Spanish 20th seed the upset and, in doing so, secured his first career victory from two sets down.

### Error-prone

The German looked headed for certain defeat after committing 36 errors through the first two sets but used his versatile game to pick himself up and looked like a completely different player the rest of the way. "I was actually looking at the scoreboard when I was down two sets to love and I was like 'I can't believe it, I am playing

in the semifinal where I am supposed to be the favourite and I am down two sets to love," said Zverev.

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**Women: Semifinals:** 1-Sofia Kenin (Usa) bt 20-Maria Sakkari (Greece) 6-3, 6-4; 2-Elise Mertens (Belgium) bt 20-Karolina Pliskova (Czech Rep) 6-3, 6-4.

He will take on Austria's Dominic Thiem, who advanced to his second Slam final of 2020 by digging out a win over thirded Russian Daniil Medvedev 6-2, 7-6(7), 7-6(5).

**Smooth start, but...**

In the other semifinal, Thiem seized the early momentum, handily carrying the first set before Medvedev took an early lead in the second.

The Australian Open runner-up converted a critical break to level the score 5-5 before the 24-year-old Russian dragged it into a tie-break. The 27-year-old Austrian, who slipped and fell twice in the match and unfurled a string of frustrated exclamations, regained his cool to survive yet another tiebreak and clinch the affair.

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