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NEARBY



Delhi govt. cancels Class 9 and 11 exams

NEW DELHI Days after the Central government cancelled the CBSE Class 12 exams, the Delhi government announced on Thursday that exams for Class 9 and 11 have been cancelled and students will be assessed based on their mid-term exam performance.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

FIR registered against group of JNU students

NEW DELHI The JNU administration on Thursday alleged that a group of students broke into the central library and clashed with the staffers, following which an FIR was registered. The university claimed that the students had been occupying the library for the last two days.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Sarma urges minorities to adopt population control

GUWAHATI Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has advised the minority community to adopt population control measures to reduce poverty and pressure on land. He said the illegal occupation of land belonging to temples, sattras (monasteries) and forests cannot be allowed.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Collapsed dreams



Fatal fall: Rescue operations at a building collapse site in Mumbai's Malad area on Thursday. Eleven persons, including eight children, died when a portion of a three-storey building fell on a structure at a slum on Wednesday night, following rain. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI (REPORT ON PAGE 10)

Promote second-rung leadership in Punjab: AICC

Committee submits report to Sonia ahead of election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The report, submitted on Thursday, said Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh is the tallest leader in the State but it was important to accommodate all sections.

A role for Sidhu

The panel's suggestion that the Chief Minister should give importance to other

leaders is being seen as a move to rehabilitate Navjot Singh Sidhu.

A final decision on how to accommodate Mr. Sidhu, who has been at the forefront of dissidence against Capt. Singh, has been left to Ms. Gandhi.

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Yediyurappa will remain CM: Arun Singh

He is doing good work, says BJP leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

In a bid to put a lid on the restiveness in the Karnataka unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), party general secretary in charge of Karnataka Arun Singh on Thursday said there was no move to shift Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa from his post, and that the party's central leadership was very happy with the work done by his government, especially with regard to COVID-19 management.

"Yediyurappaji has done good work and he is Chief Minister and will remain. There is no talk or discussion of his removal or anything. He, along with other Ministers in the Karnataka government, have all done good work, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic."



ic," Mr. Singh said.

He added that Mr. Yediyurappa's statement that he was ready to quit as and when the high command would ask him to, was a "reflection" of his loyalty to the party and obedience to party discipline, but it did not mean that any such thing had been mooted.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Adityanath's Delhi visit sets off buzz on U.P. Cabinet expansion

Rumours of Cabinet reshuffle at Centre also doing rounds

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's arrival in New Delhi for a two-day visit, including appointments lined up with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has set off a buzz over a possible Cabinet expansion in Lucknow.

Mr. Adityanath's visit to the national capital comes just a few days after the BJP's national general secretary (organisation), B.L. Santhosh, was in Lucknow on a stocktaking visit.

Speculation of a Cabinet reshuffle at the Centre was also doing the rounds with BJP president J.P. Nadda holding a one-on-one meeting on Thursday with the



Prime Minister.

Second wave

While Mr. Adityanath's aides insisted that the visit was related to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and raising the de-

mand for a larger allocation of vaccines to the State, they admitted that "after all that happened last week, political issues were and will be discussed".

Corrective measures

Mr. Santhosh's report to Mr. Nadda was on the work culture in Mr. Adityanath's Chief Minister's Office and the corrective measures needed, which included being more accommodative of the party's allies in the State, in the run-up to the 2022 Assembly poll.

The performance of the BJP in the recently concluded panchayat polls in the State, where it came second to the Samajwadi Party, was also underlined as a worrying situation.

13 inmates in Agra jail move apex court for freedom, dignity

They started their 14 to 22 year stretches in prison as juveniles

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Thirteen persons who started their 14 to 22 year stretches in the Agra Central Jail as juveniles have moved the Supreme Court for their freedom and dignity.

The petition argued that a delay in raising the ground of juvenility could not be a reason to let them languish behind bars for years. "The delay in raising the claim of juvenility cannot be a ground for the rejection of such a claim. The claim of juvenility can be raised in appeal, even if not pressed before the trial court, and can be raised for the first time before the Supreme Court, though not pressed before the trial court and in the appellate court," the petition said.

"Yet, no steps have been taken to release them forthwith. The miseries are further compounded by the fact that these petitioners who are languishing in Agra Central Jail have already undergone judicial incarceration for periods ranging from 14 to 22 years," the petition said.

Mr. Malhotra said they had

spent years in "hardcore jails" among "hardcore criminals". "This completely negates the purpose and objects of the Juvenile Justice Act," the petition said.

The petition argued that a delay in raising the ground of juvenility could not be a reason to let them languish behind bars for years. "The delay in raising the claim of juvenility cannot be a ground for the rejection of such a claim. The claim of juvenility can be raised in appeal, even if not pressed before the trial court, and can be raised for the first time before the Supreme Court, though not pressed before the trial court and in the appellate court," the petition said.

"Yet, no steps have been taken to release them forthwith. The miseries are further compounded by the fact that these petitioners who are languishing in Agra Central Jail have already undergone judicial incarceration for periods ranging from 14 to 22 years," the petition said.

Mr. Malhotra said they had

Odisha's tribals flee village fearing jab

Despite awareness drives, villagers were misled by posts on social media



Emptied out: The scene at Champakana in Odisha when a vaccination team arrived on Wednesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

os, which predicted death within two years of vaccination.

The population of Champakana is 500. After three hours of persuasion involving the chieftain, three persons came forward for inoculation.

"During the drive, we have faced a similar situation

Kondhs, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), for days to make them agree to vaccination. Close to 1,000 Dongria Kondhs have so far been administered the vaccine.

Tough to convince Similarly, it was difficult to convince Chukta Bhunja, another PVTG residing in the Sunabeda plateau of Nuapada district, on vaccination. The tribesmen said they feared they would die soon after getting the jab.

Odisha has so far managed to administer the first dose to 9,68,188 people aged between 18 and 44. Only 3,70,095 have received the second dose. While 54,34,038 people aged above 45 have been inoculated, 11,22,935 have been given the second dose.

Buddhadeb Dasgupta passes away

His films took the audience beyond realism and delved into magic realism

SHIV SAHAY SINGH KOLKATA

Buddhadeb Dasgupta, one of the most original icons of cinema, who helped put Indian cinema on the global stage, passed away in Kolkata on Thursday. The 77-year-old director had been suffering from kidney-related ailments for some time. He is survived by his wife, filmmaker Sohini Dasgupta, and two daughters.

Born in Purulia in 1944, Dasgupta graduated from the Scottish Church College in Kolkata and started his career as a lecturer in economics. However, he switched to making documentaries in the late 1960s. His first feature film was *Dooratwa* (1978). Feted with several national and international awards, his seminal works across languages include



Buddhadeb Dasgupta

Dasgupta brought Indian cinema back on the international stage after the death of Satyajit Ray in 1992, winning several international accolades.

Many awards He won 12 national awards and was twice nominated for the prestigious Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival for *Phera* in 1988 and *Charachar* in 1994. In 2007, he was given the Golden Athena Award at the Athens International Film Festival. A year later, he was conferred with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Spain International Film Festival in Madrid.

The filmmaker, however, never liked comparison with legends like Ray and Sen, and preferred to be thought of alongside his great con-

temporary Govindan Aravindan (1935-1991). In his interviews, Dasgupta considered himself from the generation of filmmakers like Aravindan, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Shyam Benegal.

Film genius The subject and treatment of his films took the audience beyond realism and delved into magic realism, and at times, surrealism. Drawn from Bengali literature, his use of images, and at times non-linear narrative, added an element of fantasy, amalgamating magic realism and lyricism of poetry in films. An acclaimed poet, too, Dasgupta emphasised that the most important aspect of a film was not its story but the "image".

Plea in HC to postpone FMGE screening test

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Association of MD Physicians has asked the Delhi High Court to postpone the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE) screening test scheduled for June 18 due to the prevailing COVID-19 situation in the country.

The association contended that there are a limited number of cities being notified as centres for the FMGE screening test and a large number of candidates will be forced to travel without having received even one dose of vaccine.

The petition was opposed by the National Board of Examination (NBE) and the National Medical Commission (NMC) saying that it was only a qualifying exam which can be taken even in December, if not in June and the test should not be postponed at the behest of a few candidates.

Justice Amit Bansal will continue the hearing on Friday.

FIR registered after students break into JNU library, clash with staffers

University to take disciplinary action against students; none arrested so far

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University administration on Thursday alleged that a group of students broke into the central library and clashed with the staffers following which an FIR was registered with the police.

The university claimed that the students have been occupying the library for the last two days. The chief proctor office has been tasked with taking necessary disciplinary action against these students as per the university rules, it said.

According to the police, the incident took place on June 8 and based on a complaint from the university's Chief Security Officer, a case was registered on Wednesday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Ingit Pratap Singh said: "Based on the complaint, a case was registered under Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant)



of the Indian Penal Code, Delhi Disaster Management Act and prevention of damage to public property Act."

Truce meeting

No arrest has been made in the case so far, police said, adding that a meeting between the students and chief librarian was held.

The varsity said a group of students scuffled with the security staffers, broke open the side glass door of the B.R. Ambedkar Library, entered the main reading room of the building on June 8 and has occupied the space since then. It added that they did

not vacate the building even during the night.

COVID norms flouted

"When no amount of persuasion by the librarian and the security personnel convinced these students against violating the law and COVID-19 guidelines, the JNU security office lodged a police complaint in view of the seriousness of the issue. It has been found that these students do not even use masks or follow other COVID-19 related guidelines," the university statement said.

The curfew imposed by the Delhi government is still in place and no new guidelines have yet been announced regarding resuming normal academic activities, it said.

In a statement, the university said: "This incident has caused health risk for library staffers and even other students residing in the hostels, since these unruly students return to hostel for lunch and dinner or other purposes."

The students occupying the space are not permitting library staffers to sanitise the building for making it safer for students who will use the library after restoration of normalcy. All these students are instructed to vacate the library immediately," it said.

A student, requesting anonymity, said: "The library has not opened for a long time, which has left PhD students frustrated. Students have their submissions due and have not been able to access the library. The students entered the library but there was no violence."

Meanwhile, JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) termed the varsity's action as an "intimidation tactic" and demanded withdrawal of the FIR. In a statement issued, the students' body said: "The JNUSU reiterates that the university administration must reopen the library at the earliest. The administration must also withdraw the FIR and focus on issues faced by the JNU community."

Govt. cancels Class 9, 11 exams

Students to be promoted based on mid-term exams: Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Days after the Central government cancelled the CBSE Class 12 exams due to the pandemic, the Delhi government announced here on Thursday that exams for Class 9 and 11 have been cancelled and students will be assessed based on their performance in the mid-term exams.

Students who are unable to take the mid-term examinations will graduate to the next grade through reassessment, with projects and assignments determining reassessment grades. Results will be announced online on June 22 and the Delhi government schools' admission process for Classes 6 to 9 will begin from June 11 and registration can end, it said.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, said that while students in Class 8 were promoted without any hassle due to the non-detention policy, roadblocks in the promotion of students in Classes 9 and 12 needed to be curbed.



Results to be announced online on June 22. ■ FILE PHOTO

Annual examinations of Classes 9 and 12, which were supposed to be held from April 12 onwards, were cancelled by the Delhi government, keeping in mind the safety and security of students, Mr. Sisodia stated.

DoE guidelines

"Private schools that have already conducted their annual assessments can follow guidelines by the Directorate of Education on promotion policy and declare their result," the Minister said.

For schools that did not conduct any mid-term examination or students who were not able to take all mid-term papers, he stated, assessment will be based on

the average of marks obtained in the best two performing subjects out of five main subjects. "Students will receive their result online or via a phone call or WhatsApp," the Minister said.

Reassessment process

According to Mr. Sisodia, all students who gave their mid-term exams in only one subject or were unable to give mid-term exams in any subject and students, who did not receive minimum qualifying marks, will be eligible for reassessment. Such students, he said, will be assessed through assignments, projects or school-based tests for promotion to the next higher class and no additional physical or online assessment will be conducted for these students.

"Admissions to Delhi government schools will begin from July 5 onwards based on the registration of students. Students who are unable to register in the given date will be eligible to register in the second admission cycle which will begin from July 23 to August 6," he also said.

Delhi riots: court denies bail to two accused in murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday dismissed the bail plea of two accused in a murder case related to the 2020 north-east Delhi riots, noting that the allegations against the duo are serious in nature.

Additional Sessions Judge

Vinod Yadav junked the plea filed by Rashid and Shoaib who are accused in the murder case of waiter Dilbar Negi whose body was found charred at a local sweet shop.

While denying relief to them, the judge relied on the chargesheet, CCTV footage and video footage played in

the court by the prosecution and defence, respectively. "It is prima facie clear that the applicants were part of unlawful assembly which was responsible for putting on fire the godown in which deceased Dilbar Negi was there," the court said.

It said both the accused

were clearly visible in the CCTV footage carrying a rod in their hands in an agitated posture and instigating other members of the riotous mob.

The court said that it is also apparent that the riotous mob armed carrying lethal weapons had engaged in vandalism and looting with a

main objective to cause maximum damage to the lives and properties of persons belonging to other community.

"The nature of allegations against the applicants are very serious. I do not find it to be a fit case for grant of bail to both the applicants at this stage," the judge said.

Key accused snatched service pistol and fired at police, but was caught

car in a forested area in Narela where they beat him and robbed his car and two mobile phones at gunpoint, a senior police officer said.

"With the help of technical surveillance, police reached Meerut and traced the car. They chased the car and overpowered all the three accused," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said.

Part of murder plan

Mohan disclosed that the stolen mobile phone was thrown near the jungle in Shahpur Garhi where the car was robbed and they were planning to kill one Krishan of Butana village by using that car, the DCP said.

The accused were taken to the spot for the recovery of mobile phones. When they reached the spot, Mohan snatched the service pistol of constable Sanjeev and tried to escape into the jungle, police said.

According to the police, in the early hours of Wednesday, they received information regarding a carjacking incident with three persons threatening the driver at gunpoint. Driver Pushpendra, a resident of Mainpuri district in U.P., said the three accused had hired his car from Kaushambi to Bawana. On the way, they stopped the

officers said.

According to the police, in the early hours of Wednesday, they received information regarding a carjacking incident with three persons threatening the driver at gunpoint. Driver Pushpendra, a resident of Mainpuri district in U.P., said the three accused had hired his car from Kaushambi to Bawana. On the way, they stopped the

officers said.

When the police chased him, he opened fire at them. Police also fired a bullet that pierced his left leg. He was taken to Maharishi Hospital, police added.

Mr. Singh stated that on June 1, his son Aman had gone

Lifeline



Women filling drinking water from a leaked pipeline of Delhi Jal Board at Ridge Road near Daula Kuan on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Youth stages own kidnapping to repay debt, brought back to Delhi

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 23-year-old youth, who staged a kidnapping and made repeated calls to his father asking for ransom, was tracing in Jalandhar, said the police on Thursday.

On June 3, Shahbad Dairy police received information regarding a kidnapping of a man for ransom of ₹3 lakh. Police reached the spot and recorded the statement of Veer Pal Singh, a resident of Prahlaipur, a police officer said.

"During interrogation, it came to the knowledge that Aman, who is a small time car dealer, wanted to sell a car owned by one Ravi. On June 1,

to market, but did not return home. On June 3 around, he received a call from his son who claimed that he had been kidnapped and the kidnapper was demanding ₹3 lakh as ransom.

During probe, the location of alleged mobile phone was tracked to Jalandhar following which a team was sent there. He was traced and brought back to the Capital on Sunday, police said.

"During interrogation, it came to the knowledge that Aman, who is a small time car dealer, wanted to sell a car owned by one Ravi. On June 1,

Father's untimely demise turns youth's life upside down

Kuldeep was planning to pursue higher studies in Canada, which was his father's dream, but now has to rethink

HEMANI BHANDARI

NEW DELHI

An 18-year-old resident of Laxmi Nagar, Kuldeep Chand, now has the weight of his family on his shoulders. Gurbax Singh, a private taxi driver, had died unexpectedly due to COVID-19, leaving behind his wife, Kuldeep and another son.

A helpless Kuldeep took to his Twitter handle and sought help. Among those who noticed was Delhi Police Commissioner S.N. Srivastava, who, with the help of the force, arranged ₹10,000 for the youth, now temporarily residing in Punjab.

Recalling the night of April 27 that changed his life, he said his father Gurbax Singh complained of chest pain and breathlessness. He, his brother Gurpreet (16) and his mother Kulpreet took him to a nearby nursing home, but his oxygen levels had dropped to 40.

"We didn't know what to do. Doctor asked us to arrange for an oxygen cylinder fearing he had contracted COVID-19. I



Gurbax Singh died due to COVID-19, leaving behind his wife, Kuldeep and another son. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tried over 500 numbers but couldn't arrange one. That day, the world proved to be so selfish. One person said he'll sell the cylinder for ₹60,000," Kuldeep recalled.

Left clueless

A gurdwara in Indirapuram arranged oxygen for a few hours. But when the family was on its way to a hospital to admit him the next morning, he passed

away. In a few seconds, Kuldeep's world turned upside down. He was all set to go to Canada for higher studies. He is now clueless about sustaining his family. Kuldeep, a second-year undergraduate from IGNOU, took the father's body to Punjab's Rupnagar — their hometown — for cremation.

"It was my father's dream to send me to Canada so that I can settle there and eventually take

the whole family. I cracked my English proficiency test and also got admission to a college. My father took loans from friends and managed to pay the first instalment but the next is due in July," he said, adding that over ₹4 lakh have been paid and another ₹4 lakh was due.

Besides, he is crushed by the memories of his father. His father used to address everyone as 'sir' or 'madam', used to wait outside offices and it was his dream to hear someone address his father as 'sir' one day. "But everything seems so blurry now. I am only 18 and suddenly I have the full responsibility of my family, of my brother's college education, my mother's health, and my own career," he said.

Staying back

Kuldeep said his relatives have suggested they stay back in Punjab, where they can do farming. But Kuldeep doesn't want to put to waste his and his brother's education. So the family has resolved to return to Delhi next week.

But unable to find any glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, he tweeted on Wednesday, "i am kuldeep from new delhi as my father was a taxi driver and he recently expired as i left with my mom and younger brother. We are going through the worst days of life, our situation is getting worst day by day please contact us [sic]."

He had tagged Delhi Police, which immediately sent an officer who was in Punjab for work. The force helped him with ₹10,000, which Kuldeep has decided to keep for emergency. "When we go back to Delhi, I'll have some emergency needs. I'll keep this money for then. I am very thankful to Delhi Police for it," said Kuldeep, who said if he is unable to go to Canada, he'll pursue Civil Service and work simultaneously to sustain his family.

Terms and Conditions of Sale:

- The intending Tenderers/Bidders can inspect the material on any date or on or before 22-06-2021 on any working day between 11:00AM to 4:00PM after obtaining permission from the Executive Engineer, (IT) HPPWD Nigam Vihar, Shimla-9, Custodian Officer.
- Articles will not be sold below the reserve price fixed for it and will be sold as a lot only.
- The intending Tenderers should submit their Tender in a sealed cover along with the EMD of Rs.5,000/- for each lot for which he is interested by way of DD drawn in favour of Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 payable at Shimla. The sealed cover should be super scribbled by Tender for the purchase of unserviceable T&P Articles/Computer Hardware Lot II & III.
- Tenders with condition will not be accepted. Tenderers should quote their rate in the format as prescribed for Lot I & Lot II.
- Only those who submit the tender before the stipulated time and along with EMD will be allowed to participate in the Auction on 23-06-2021 at 11:00 AM.
- The sealed tender will be opened by the Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 or Authorized Officer.
- The un serviceable "T&P Articles/Computer Hardware" will be sold on AS IS WHERE IS CONDITION and the successful Bidder will have to meet all the expenses relating to dismantling, restoration, carrying, paying tolls/ taxes if any etc.
- To the best of the knowledge of the Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 or Authorized Officer, there are no encumbrances on the property. If there are any charges or encumbrances which is revealed later.
- The successful bidder will have to deposit sufficient amount to satisfy the above charges/encumbrances over and above the bid amount.
- The Executive Engineer, Electrical Divn. No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9 or Authorized Officer, have the absolute right to accept or reject a bid or postpone/ cancel the sale and to prescribe procedures for the conduct of Auction.
- For further details Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9 can be contacted during office hours on any working days. If the sale is postponed/ adjourned for any reason, no fresh notice will be given. However the new date of sale will be notified on the Notice Board of its present location.
- The successful bidder shall have to deposit the bid amount on same day with the Executive Engineer Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-9.

Place of Auction: O/O Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9.
Address of Offices at Which the Tender are to be submitted: Executive Engineer, Electrical, HPPWD Divn. No-I, Shimla-9.
Date of sale of auction form :- 21-6-2021 from 10.30AM to 5 PM.
Last date and time for receipt of Tender: 10.30AM of 23-06-2021.
Date and time of Auction: 11:00 AM of 23-06-2021.
Executive Engineer, Electrical Division No-I, HPPWD Shimla-171009.

Timings**DELHI**

FRIDAY, JUN. 11
RISE 05:23 SET 19:20
RISE 05:50 SET 20:16
SATURDAY, JUN. 12
RISE 05:23 SET 19:20
RISE 06:39 SET 21:08
SUNDAY, JUN. 13
RISE 05:24 SET 19:20
RISE 07:32 SET 21:57

Delhi Weather

max	min
40	29
40	29
39	30

Delhi Palam Today

30°C Day would remain uneasy hot and humid. A partly cloudy sky. Chances of thunderstorm at few places.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

30°C A hot and humid day with partly cloudy to cloudy sky. Short spell rain and thunder-storm with gusty winds may occur at few places.

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IN BRIEF**Over 1,300 people fined flouting COVID-19 norms**

NEW DELHI

Over 1,300 people were fined in Delhi on June 9 for violation of COVID-19 guidelines, the police said on Thursday. According to data shared by the police, 1,349 challans were issued on Wednesday, of which 1,167 were for not wearing face masks. PTI

'One in nine health workers got infected even after two doses'

Breakthrough infections are occurrences of COVID 14 days after taking both jabs

NIKHIL M BABU

NEW DELHI

A study done by faculty members of a government medical college says that nearly one in nine healthcare workers contracted COVID-19 infection, even after receiving both shots of a vaccine.

The study is yet to be peer reviewed and has currently appeared in preprint on an online platform. As per the study done by faculty of Delhi government's Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC), 36 of 326 healthcare workers at a Delhi hospital, who were part of the study, had breakthrough COVID-19 infections.

Breakthrough infections are occurrences of COVID-19, 14 days after taking both doses of a vaccine.

"A total of 36 breakthrough infections were reported in the HCWs (healthcare workers)... Furthermore, COVID-19 infections occurred in 65 HCWs vaccinated with at least one dose of vaccine but



Health workers attend to children undergoing treatment at GTB COVID Care Centre on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

prior to receiving their second dose or <4 days post second dose," a preprint of the study published online read.

Past history

"Most breakthrough infection cases [94.4%] were mild and did not require supplemental oxygen therapy. Conclusion: nearly one in nine HCWs experienced a COVID-19 breakthrough infection in the present study," it further read.

The study also said that the HCWs with a past history of natural COVID-19 infec-

tion and later recovered, were 4.5 times less likely to experience a COVID-19 infection after partial vaccination.

"Variant strains may be bypassing the immunity created by the vaccine. So, even after vaccination we have to take precautions," said Pragya Sharma, professor at Department of Community Medicine of MAMC, who is one of the authors of the study.

The preprint said that a cross-sectional analysis was conducted at a medical college and hospital complex in Delhi through telephonic in-

terviews among HCWs who had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine during January to March.

Remain vulnerable

"These findings suggest that in real-world settings, a significant proportion of vaccinated individuals with high risk of exposure remain vulnerable to COVID-19 infection albeit with reduced disease severity in most cases," the report said.

In this study, a history of a natural infection and recovery, was observed to be protective against a subsequent COVID-19 infection or reinfection in HCWs who had been administered at least a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

The study also warned that since infection status of the HCWs was based on self-report, mostly symptomatic breakthrough infections diagnosed with RT-PCR test were likely to be captured, while asymptomatic infections were potentially omitted.

'Govt. has asked States not to share info on vaccine stocks'

People have a right to know about vaccine availability: Atishi

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

AAP leader Atishi, who shares the daily vaccine bulletin of the Delhi government, on Thursday claimed that the Central government has asked States not to share details of stocks of the vaccines.

"We are surprised by the fact that, yesterday, the Central government has sent a letter to all State governments where they have mentioned that no government will be allowed to share the information about how many vaccines have been administered and what is the stock position," Ms. Atishi said.

The AAP leader said that they believe that the people of Delhi have a right to know whether there is any vaccination available. "They want to know about the availability of the vaccines and where they are being administered, whether the slots will be opened up or not," she said.

The AAP leader alleged that amid a vaccine scarcity, the Central government



A beneficiary gets a vaccine shot at a centre in Jahangirpuri in north Delhi on Thursday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

finds hiding numbers more important than inoculating its citizens.

"It is our appeal to the Central government that instead of hiding information regarding the vaccines, focus on providing the vaccines. It is the right of every citizen because it is this very vaccine that can save the people from COVID-19," she said.

Vaccines available

Meanwhile, updating about the vaccine stock, she said, "For the 18-44 age group, 1,74,000 doses of the vac-

cine are available out of which 1,24,000 are of Covishield and 50,000 doses of Covaxin are available. Yesterday 29,800 doses of the vaccine were added for the 18-44 category. The vaccines for 45+ we have a stock of two days of Covaxin and 26 days of Covishield. For those between 18-44 years, we have four days of stock of Covaxin and eight days of Covishield. This means those who have been administered the first dose of Covaxin, they can comfortably get their second dose administered in the next four days."

City reports 305 new cases

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 305 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,30,433, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

Also, 44 deaths were reported and the total number of deaths stood at 24,748. A total of 75,133 tests were done in a day, the bulletin said. Of the total cases, 14,01,473 people have recovered and there are 4,212 active cases.

The test positivity rate was 0.41% which means that less than one person out of 100 people taking COVID-19 tests are now positive for the virus.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia directed officials to tie up with e-commerce organisations to ensure vaccination for delivery persons.



Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai at the construction site of a smog tower at Connaught Palace in the city on Thursday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Smog tower to be ready by Aug. 15, experts to study outcomes: Rai

'Based on the success, more such structures will be built'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Thursday said that a smog tower being constructed near Connaught Place will be completed by August 15 and the experts will study the outcomes of this tower.

On January 13 last year, the Supreme Court had ordered the Delhi government to build a 'smog tower' at Connaught Place in the city by April 13 to control air pollution.

Deadlines missed

On the same day, the court had also ordered a smog tower to be installed in Anand Vihar by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) by the same time. But, both the go-

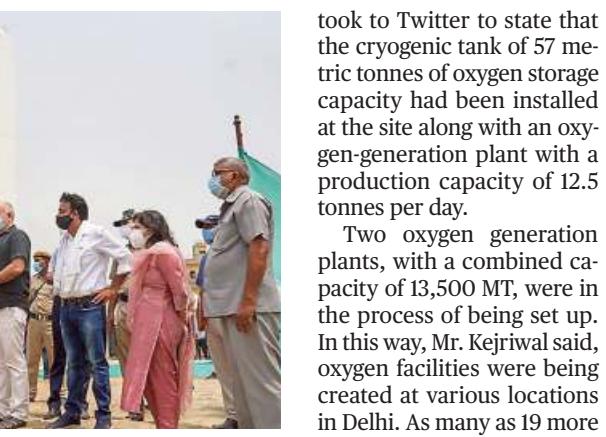
■ The total cost of this tower is ₹20 crore. The height of this tower is around 25 metre. It has a capacity of air purification of 1,000 cubic metres per second

Joint work

"The total cost of this tower is ₹20 crore. The height of this tower is around 25 metre. It has a capacity of air purification of 1,000 cubic metres per second. The Delhi government is rapidly making arrangements in case a third wave

comes. In the second wave, the biggest challenge that was faced was shortage of oxygen, because of which the people of Delhi had to struggle a lot for a few days," he said.

"Therefore, preparations for that are being made that in case, a third wave emerges



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal visits an oxygen storage centre at Siraspur. ■ PTI

then there should be no shortage of oxygen. Today, we are standing in front of the 57-MT oxygen storage centre in Siraspur. Two more oxygen storage centres have been set up in Babasahib Ambedkar Hospital and DDU Hospital," he said.

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The Chief Minister also

Haryana moved backwards under BJP rule: Deepender
'It only leads in crime, unemployment'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Hooda on Thursday said Haryana in the past seven years of BJP rule has moved backwards instead of moving ahead in all spheres.

"The latest data of the NITI Aayog shows that Haryana has slipped in most areas but has taken up the top slots only in crime and unemployment rates. Government of India's NITI Aayog report, which tracks the performance of the State governments on 17 parameters, has exposed the all false claims of the Haryana government," he said at a virtual press conference.

Mr. Hooda said the Sustainable Development Report (SDG) index released by NITI Aayog now puts Haryana in the top 3 States in 'un-

employment and crime'. Apart from this, the State has also lagged behind in education, industrial and economic growth, he said.

The MP said the State government has completely failed to deal with the second wave of COVID-19 and its attitude has been arrogant and unfortunate. "There was a shortage of life saving medicines, oxygen was in short supply when it was needed, beds, ventilators etc. across the State were all found short," he alleged.

He also criticised the government over its refusal to hold meetings with the Opposition parties. "The government should tell us if discussion in Parliament and assemblies should also be stopped for fear of criticism from the Opposition," he said.

Mr. Vij, in a statement to

the press, said: "The farmers had been unable to point out objections even once in the dozen round of talks."

Speaking on the invitation to the farmers for talks, Mr. Vij said the Union government had so far kept all doors open for dialogue. He said Mr. Tomar had always kept the window of dialogue open.

Taking strong exception to the statement, Inderjit Singh, vice-president, Haryana, All-

India Kisan Sabha terms his remarks 'outrageous'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij on Thursday said the farmers' protests seemed to have a "secret agenda" other than the opposition to the three farm laws as they had failed to point out any objections to the legislations. The All India Kisan Sabha Haryana unit has objected to the Minister's remarks as 'outrageous'.

Mr. Vij's statement comes in the wake of Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar's assertion on June 9 that the government was ready to resume talks with the farmers but the unions must point out their objections to the provisions of the three farm laws with sound logic.

Mr. Vij, in a statement to

India Kisan Sabha, said Mr. Tomar's statement was 'deplorable' and not in consonance with the willingness towards resumption of talks with the struggling farmers, while the remarks of the State Home Minister were even more 'outrageous'.

Highly provocative'

"This is highly provocative that he has yet again raised questions over the motives of the farmers' movement. Ironically the public display of ignorance by Mr. Tomar over the stance of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha is nothing but his total incompetence of holding the charge of such a crucial portfolio of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of our large country," said Mr. Singh in a statement.

All India Kisan Sabha terms his remarks 'outrageous'



Haryana Minister Anil Vij

Anti-graft group forms political party in Nagaland

ACAUT was formed in 2013 to protest 'multiple taxations' by extremist groups

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Members of a group that had stood up to "multiple taxations" by extremist groups such as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) factions have formed a political party.

The Rising People's Party (RPP) was registered with the Election Commission of India on June 7.

Its president is Joel Naga, one of the founding members of Against Corruption

and Unabated Taxation (ACAUT) that had "done the impossible" in 2013 by organising a mass movement against "taxes" imposed by at least half a dozen extremist groups.

The group had also taken on fuel adulteration and backdoor appointments in the State government departments.

No woman in Assembly
One of the objectives of the RPP is to ensure that a wo-

man gets into the Assembly. Nagaland had a lone woman MP in Ranjita Shaiba (1977-1980) but is yet to elect one to the 60-member House.

'Change the system'

"Our basic goal is to change the system. But one can do that by entering the system as shouting and protesting from outside changes nothing," Mr. Naga told journalists.

He said his party would

be "realistic" about its prospects in view of the performance of two new political parties - the Assam Jatiya Parishad and the Rajojar Dal - that did not live up to the pre-election hype.

The RPP had more time to work among the masses for changing a system that had long been dictated by money power, Mr. Naga said.

Assembly elections are due in Nagaland by February 2023.

from June 9 demanding their wages since December 2020.

"We decided to call off our strike following a request from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF)

The Pakke Tiger Reserve Workers' Union on Thursday withdrew their indefinite strike after the State government assured payment of four months' wages within 15 days," union president, Taniam Kino said.

"The PCCF has given us a written assurance for the release of our pending salary

but the other demands such as regularisation of job of the Special Tiger Protection Force and other contingency

Release of wages promised within a fortnight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Pakke Tiger Reserve Workers' Union on Thursday withdrew their indefinite strike after the State government assured payment of four months' wages within 15 days," union president, Taniam Kino said.

"Please know that the entire department and the State government have their greatest concern for the welfare of its frontline staff. You are hereby requested to call off the strike and get back to your respective camps and duties..." the letter from PCCF R.K. Singh said.

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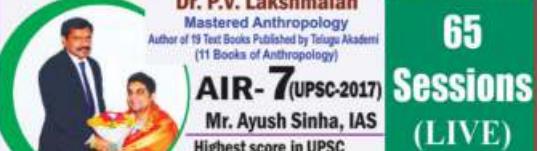
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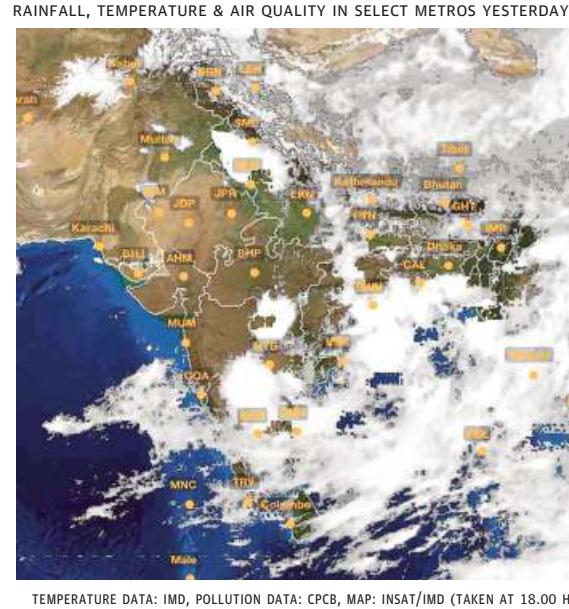
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PUBLIC NOTICE

WEATHER WATCH



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

Forecast for Friday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at a few isolated places over Assam, Odisha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, coastal Andhra Pradesh, coastal Karnataka and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, Bihar, Jharkhand and Kerala.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...34.4	25.3	24.8	Kozhikode	0.4...	32.6...	23.4
Ahmedabad	...39.2	28.5	28.5	Kurnool	...34.5...	36.1	26.1
Aizawl	3...	22.4	22.4	Lucknow	8...	27.4...	27.0
Allahabad	...35.1	28.0	28.0	Madurai	...39.0...	26.0	26.0
Bengaluru	...29.0	20.4	20.4	Mangalore	45.8...	27.4...	22.0
Bhopal	...25.6	25.6	25.6	Mumbai	231...	29.7...	23.4
Bhubaneswar	...32.2	25.5	25.5	Mysoor	...33.0...	21.2	21.2
Chandigarh	...35.4	29.4	29.4	New Delhi	...39.8...	29.0	29.0
Chennai	0.5...	36.6	29.5	Patna	...34.6...	25.2	25.2
Coimbatore	...34.7	23.6	23.6	Port Blair	30...	29.0...	22.1
Dehradun	45...	29.6	22.5	Puducherry	...38.7...	26.4	26.4
Gangtok	4...	22.0	16.7	Pune	3.6...	29.1...	21.5
Goa	64...	31.5	22.8	Raipur	1.4...	28.6...	21.6
Guwahati	...35.6	26.2	26.2	Ranchi	24...	31.2...	22.1
Hubballi	...27.0	22.0	22.0	Shillong	0.6...	25.6...	18.1
Hyderabad	...32.6	23.9	23.9	Shimla	11...	28.5...	19.5
Imphal	...30.1	21.8	21.8	Srinagar	...34.7...	19.2	19.2
Jaipur	41.8...	30.4	30.4	Thiruvananthapuram	0.1...	32.5...	24.7
Kochi	10...	31.4	25.2	Tiruchi	...37.7...	27.5	27.5
Kohima	5...	28.0	18.0	Vijayawada	...36.2...	29.1	29.1
Kolkata	...33.8	27.8	27.8	Visakhapatnam	20...	35.0...	25.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	...3	45	137	...46	...66	■■■■■
Bengaluru	...3	47	37	14	...46	■■■■■
Chennai	43	19	174	29	41	■■■■■
Delhi	...9	25	35	263	291	■■■■■
Hyderabad	...2	70	13	20	...26	■■■■■
Kolkata	10	27	20	70	76	■■■■■
Lucknow	6	36	74	67	85	■■■■■
Mumbai	47	18	17	21	32	■■■■■
Pune	5	1	75	85	58	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	16	57	40	71	94	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

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

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Sonipat, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 323, indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Gagdi, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 11.

Maharashtra govt. clears action plan to protect heritage trees

State to amend Act to preserve trees more than 50 years old in urban areas

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Thursday passed an action plan to protect and preserve trees older than 50 years in urban areas by terming them heritage trees.

The plan includes the concept of heritage tree and plan of action for conservation; method to define age of the tree; compensatory plantation; rules to be followed before hacking trees; formation of the Maharashtra Tree Authority; structure of the local tree authority and their duties; tree census; fixing land of tree plantation; transplantation of trees; and tree cess and fine to be charged.

The State will also bring about amendments in the Maharashtra (Urban Area) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act. As per the plan, trees older than 50 will be termed heritage trees. The Environment and Climate Change Department will issue guidelines in consultation with the State Forest Department based on the existing methods.

Compensatory plantation will include planting the number of trees equivalent to the age of trees to be cut. The saplings need to be six to eight feet in height while planting and they will undergo geo-tagging with seven years of caring period. The option of monetary compensation has also been given, instead of compensatory plantation.

A State-level Tree Authority will be formed to protect and preserve heritage trees. The authority will hear applications seeking permission to cut 200 or more trees that are five or more years old. The local tree authorities will come under this bo-



Green mission: A State-level Tree Authority will be formed to hear applications seeking permission to cut 200 or more trees that are five or more years old. ■ FILE PHOTO

Interest-free crop loans up to ₹3 lakh

2% additional concession for farmers who repay on time

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Thursday cleared a proposal to provide crop loans up to ₹3 lakh at zero interest rate. Under the Dr. P. P. Deshmukh Interest Concession Scheme, farmers who repay their interest of loans up to ₹3 lakh get interest subsidy.

The decision was taken at the State Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Finance Minister Ajit Pawar, while presenting the State

budget for 2021-22, announced that crop loans up to ₹3 lakh will be charged at zero per cent interest. The State government was earlier extending interest concession of 3% to non-defaulters with crop loans up to ₹1 lakh and 1% concession in interest rate if crop loans between ₹1 lakh and ₹3 lakh was repaid on time. The scheme was aimed at encouraging non-defaulters.

Under the new scheme, those who repay crop loans on time will get 2%

additional interest concession for a short-term crop loan between ₹1 lakh and ₹3 lakh. The State government will extend a total concession of 3%.

The Central government too encourages timely repayment of crop loans with 3% interest concession on short-term crop loans up to ₹3 lakh.

Combining both the schemes, farmers will get 6% as total interest concession, ensuring short-term crop loans up to ₹3 lakh at zero interest rate.

for tree plantation.

The State authority will issue directions for the use of tree cess. The fine amount cannot be more than ₹1 lakh per tree in case of violations.

Opportunity to win govt. projects up to ₹15 lakh at Maharashtra Startup Week

Young, innovative entrepreneurs can submit their entries till June 15

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government is set to hold the fourth edition of Maharashtra Startup Week from August 9 to 13 to encourage young and innovative entrepreneurs.

It is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for startups to engage directly with the government

NAWAB MALIK
Maharashtra Minister

ing opportunities for startups to showcase and provide their innovative services/products.

After successfully organising three editions, we invite startups to participate in the fourth edition of the Maharashtra Startup Week. Startups from sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, environment, skill improvement, clean energy, water and waste management, smart infrastructure and mobility, governance and miscellaneous can submit their applications," said Deependra Singh Kushwah, CEO of MSIS. He said the top 100 startups would be selected to pitch their innovative solutions to a select panel of judges comprising representatives from the government, industry, academia and investors.

The Maharashtra Startup Week is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for startups with out-of-the-box innovations to engage directly with the government and also open doors to scale their solutions. The entrepreneurial talent of the country will surely benefit from such a unique programme," said Nawab Malik, Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Minister.

MSIS aims at the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation framed under the Maharashtra State Innovative Startup Policy 2018 to promote an innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem in the State. The MSIS has envisaged Maharashtra Startup Week as a platform to bring innovation in government by giv-

Over the past three editions, 72 startups won pilot projects and an opportunity to provide their solutions to different government bodies such as the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the Directorate of Health Services and the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited.

Visit www.msins.in/startup-week to participate.

Rain in the offing



Overcast skies: Dark clouds hover over Marine Drive at Churchgate, in Mumbai, on Thursday. ■ PTI

+ 'Name Navi Mumbai airport after PWP leader'

Project-affected people, local residents organise human chains to press for demand

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

Thousands of local residents and project-affected people formed human chains on Thursday to express their disappointment over a proposal to name the upcoming Navi Mumbai international airport after Shiv Sena founder late Bal Thackeray.

Around one lakh villagers held placards demanding that the airport be named after the late Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP) leader and parliamentarian Dinkar Balu Patil, who was popularly known as D.B. Patil.

The human chains were spread across 130 km covering Uran, Ulwe, CBD Belapur, Panvel, Digha, Shilphap-

ta, Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Kalwa, Mira-Bhayander, Thane, Chunabhatti and Mankhurd.

"From 2012, when the airport project was announced, we had put up a board in the area saying 'DB Patil International Airport'. All parties had agreed on the name then. Even the Shiv Sena was in support of it. Now, since they are in power, they have decided to name it after Balasaheb Thackeray. We respect Mr. Thackeray, but we want DB Patil's name on it as it was due to his efforts that project-affected people are drawing the benefits from government schemes," Rajesh Patil, who coordinated the human chain in Navi Mumbai, said.

The All-Party Action Committee (APAC) that organised the human chain said that the State government should understand the emotions of the villagers and accept their demand. On April 17, the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO), which is the nodal government agency for the airport that is coming up near Panvel, approved a proposal to name the airport after Bal Thackeray. The proposal was then sent to the State government for final approval.

"Three days ago, the Chief Minister held a meeting in which he said that the airport will be named after Bal Thackeray and that we can suggest some other project

to be named after D.B. Patil. It was the late PWP leader who had fought for the farmers and project-affected people and ensured that they receive 12.5% of the developed land from CIDCO. Apart from Navi Mumbai, Patil had also struggled for the cause of farmers in Thane and Palghar districts. If not this project, which other project would be apt to bear DB Patil's name?" said project-affected person who participated in the human chain.

Protest on June 24
APAC now plans to hold another major protest against CIDCO's decision on June 24, the death anniversary of D.B. Patil.

While catching sight of an FRB is considered a rare thing in the field of radio astronomy, prior to the CHIME project, radio astronomers had only caught sight of around 140 bursts in their scopes since the first FRB was spotted in 2007. FRBs are oddly bright flashes of light, registering in the radio band of the electromagnetic spectrum,

which blaze for a few milliseconds before vanishing without a trace. These brief and mysterious beacons have been spotted in various and distant parts of the universe, as well as in our own galaxy. Their origins are unknown and their appearance is highly unpredictable.

But the advent of the CHIME project – a large stationary radio telescope in British Columbia, Canada – has been a game changer and has nearly quadrupled the number of fast radio bursts discovered to date. With more observations, astronomers hope soon to pin down the extreme origins of these curiously bright signals.

The telescope has detected a whopping 535 new fast radio bursts in its first year of operation itself, between 2018 and 2019.

"Before CHIME came along, different telescopes

had observed a handful of FRBs each, but with their own selection criteria and software. But now, with the help of CHIME, we can observe a large swathe of the sky round the clock and were able to detect FRBs at an unprecedented rate. We could gather the first large sample of FRBs with a single instrument and a single, well-understood selection

criterion which is allowing us to get a far better understanding of the properties of the FRBs as a population," said CHIME/FRB member Shrisharsh Tendulkar, also a faculty member at the TIFR-NCRA. The new catalogue significantly expands the current library of known FRBs, and is already yielding clues as to their properties.

For instance, the newly discovered bursts appear to fall in two distinct classes: those that repeat, and those that don't. Scientists have identified 18 FRB sources that burst repeatedly, while the rest appear to be one-offs.



Seeds and fruits

A mechanism for CMs to cooperate on issues of Centre-State relations is welcome

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's call for cooperation among non-NDA counterparts in other States to support farmers agitating against three controversial laws made in June 2020 seems part of a larger political project. It is meant to go beyond aiding the farmers, who fear that these laws could make them more vulnerable to market fluctuations. But the focus on farm laws, which the Government says would make farming more competitive and remunerative, is an important start. While the Government reiterated this week that MSP for various crops would continue, the fact remains that regardless of the merits of these laws, they were made without adequate consultations with parties, States and the stakeholders. After a meeting with farmer leaders from Uttar Pradesh, Ms. Banerjee said she accepted their request to speak to other Chief Ministers who are not in the NDA. While reiterating her demand to repeal the three laws, she has proposed a virtual conference of CMs with the farmers and a joint letter to the Centre on the issue. Many CMs are likely to agree with her, despite political rivalries among them. At least two other CMs who were elected along with her in the recent Assembly elections share her position on the farm laws – Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan and Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin. In Kerala, the previous Assembly had in December 2020 passed a unanimous resolution seeking the repeal of these laws.

That said, all non-NDA CMs may not be willing to be part of a joint platform because of their individual calculations and expediency, and the fear of retribution by the Centre. Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal, for instance, had sought the support of other CMs against unilateral actions by the Centre that curtailed the powers of his government. Ms. Banerjee had vociferously supported him, but Mr. Kejriwal was not reciprocative when she raised concerns of overreach by the Centre. The recent joint efforts by some CMs to persuade the Centre to withdraw its previous vaccination policy did not get wholehearted support from others. The CMs of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, Naveen Patnaik and Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, have sought to keep the Centre in good humour. Nevertheless, the joint efforts by CMs did lead to a change in the vaccination policy. Joint strategy on farm laws could be more difficult as their impact is uneven across States. But a broader point raised by Ms. Banerjee, about the Centre's tendency to ignore the States while formulating policy, is salient. She has also called for a continuing mechanism for CMs to cooperate on issues of Centre-State relations. Turning this into a combative platform could do more harm than good, but it is a suggestion worth pursuing. Cooperative federalism, a concept that Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocates, can be pursued more meaningfully through continuous and harmonious communication with CMs. A conversation on farm laws could be a good beginning.

Terror in the Sahel

Global powers should not stay away from the growing threat posed by Islamists in Africa

The massacre of at least 160 people in a border village in Burkina Faso over the weekend is a grim reminder of the threat the Sahel region faces from Islamist terrorism. Nobody has claimed responsibility, but Burkinabe authorities have named the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), which has carried out hundreds of terror strikes in recent years. The security situation in Burkina Faso, which saw its first major Islamist terrorist attack in 2015, has deteriorated steadily, especially along the borders with Niger and Mali. This has been the case with much of the Sahel region, a 5,900-km-long semi-arid territory. It has seen terrorist groups expanding their networks and stepping up attacks on civilians and soldiers. The Burkina Faso attack occurred after 137 people were killed by jihadists in Niger, in March. In Nigeria, Islamists control swathes of territories and have carried out abductions and attacks, including gunning down 27 people in a village on Sunday. Mali has been fighting terror groups since 2013.

Four main terror outfits operate in the region – the ISGS, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, the local al-Qaeda branch in Mali, and Boko Haram. Of these, the ISGS and Jama'at Nasr are reportedly in alliance to expand their influence in the Burkina-Mali-Niger border region, where they shoot down anyone who does not declare their loyalty to the jihadists. Boko Haram and the ISWAP are fighting each other but control territories in northeastern Nigeria. France has deployed troops in the region for counter-insurgency operations and is helped by the U.S., which has a drone base in Niger. The regime change policies of the U.S. and France are partly to be blamed for the problems the Sahel countries are facing today. When a NATO invasion removed Muammar Gaddafi from power in Libya in 2011, the region lost a stable bulwark against militias and jihadists. Libya, having fallen into anarchy and civil war, became a jihadist breeding ground. When trouble spread to Mali, France made a military intervention in 2013. But it did not defeat the insurgency, which spread beyond Mali's borders. Now, jihadists find safe havens in the lawless deserts of the Sahel. When the IS-militant infrastructure was destroyed in Iraq and Syria, their foot soldiers fled to Africa, regrouping themselves in the region. The recent attacks should serve as a warning to all stakeholders. Major global powers, which worked together with regional players to defeat the IS in West Asia, should not stay away from the growing threat from Africa. They should, along with the UN, help the Sahel countries build capacity and institutions, offer stable governance and adopt sustainable counter-insurgency strategies.

The dream of a borderless world

More than the biological virus, civilisation is experiencing a pandemic of barriers and barricades across the world



SHELLEY WALIA

The more I see images of racist violence, of the dispossessed sea of humanity travelling hundreds of miles by foot to reach their homes, of migrants being turned back by xenophobic immigration policies at the Mexican border, of vulnerable hungry people moving from Somalia to Jordan, or Bangladesh to India, or of a white policeman suffocating an African-American with his knee pressed into his neck, the more I am compelled to think that the world needs to rise above the frenzy of labels of race, gender, caste, religion and political bias, and begin, instead, to address as one people the issues that are far more crucial to humanity. More than the biological coronavirus, civilisation is indeed experiencing an excruciating world-wide pandemic of barriers and barricades, a disease that since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has jumped from a little more than a dozen border walls to over 60.

The real image

But a different image comes to mind when you visualise a borderless earth from far away in space. The arsenal of concertina wires and checkposts are not visible. You do not see the barriers of language, culture or distance from here. And you do not see the blockade of Gaza where two million Palestinians "caged in a zoo" that could easily be a toxic slum with negligible access to medicines, food, electricity or drinking water. The landmass or the seas

and oceans stretch across the globe interspersed with rivers and mountains. The mind begins to wander across the mountains, an eternal tranquil stretch across the face of the earth.

Absorbed in the landscape, I begin to imagine a world undivided by race, gender, religion or nationalities, a global consciousness unabashedly pro-diversity that is like the white cloud moving freely or the blue sky stretching far into the horizon, a peaceful land that gives you a deep sense of belonging. The cloud is not fenced in like many threatened by death behind a razor-sharp fence that is reproduced globally, in every continent, in every nation, in every state. However, at the back of my mind, I can feel the hidden bazooka-like cameras revealing sorrowfully the apprehensive face of a mother crossing the border from Mexico to Arizona to reunite with a lost child. Cold-blooded xenophobic immigrant laws, threats and detentions clash with the deep sense of peace that I experience from the placid landscape before my eyes, resonating a flash of some utopian borderless world that might someday become a reality.

Rights for all

But as a river bursts out of a dam that its gushing waters find irksome, fences too are broken by rebels incarcerated for no crime but the love of freedom or a happier tomorrow. How long can you keep a human being locked up when the crime is struggling for the human rights of all? The insatiable desire to breakout becomes the carnival of the oppressed, an iconic symbol of that ray of hope that sustains the power of imagination and reclaims the space for freedom and the dream of reality where the past meets the future in the present.

The wandering cloud or the ef-



fortless river is a souvenir of rebels dancing on the edge of chaos, between the broken and the built, each telling her untold story that profoundly surpasses in its intensity the single overriding story that is always ideologically frozen in its linearity and intransigence. Their action is the action of life, powerful as the winds converging into a whirlwind, distinct, and yet a reflection of the many alliances uniting to target the rich and the powerful in their palaces and in the government buildings gradually beginning to feel insecure.

Tyranny of the majority

The fence is a testimony of death and terror of race and ultra-nationalism, something Mexicans or Palestinians or we in India can very well realise, cut off as we are from the rest of the world lest we infect it with an unsurpassable wave of death and human suffering. We stand fractured by not only borders but political and economic and social and ethnic differences. Surveillance, lockdowns and military vigilance at the borders are a lame excuse of self defence camouflaging the tyranny of the majority aiming at the "other".

Between the rich and the poor, between the business class and the tourist class travelling in the same plane, reaching the same destination or crashing together,

between an upmarket gated community and the suburbia of poverty and hunger, between the mosque and the temple, there is the jarring sense of imbalance, screaming out in a burlesque of the inordinate magnificence of bigotry and self-indulgence.

An onslaught

Sorrowfully, racism now seems to be embedded in the very idea of the fence. The world overflows with stern vigilanism, the cold and heartless bureaucracy, the secret agents and the terrorising state apparatus. The onslaught is on the people, jobless and homeless, with no choices in their own land. They leave their homes seeking a better way of life as well as serve the host country supplying it the labour that it so desperately needs to uphold its economy. Migration occurs owing to the unbearable suffering in war-torn homelands lacking social security, or the construction of mega-dams that drive out the native farmers from their land, the only means of their subsistence. As the author Naomi Klein says, they "are increasingly treated like cargo, with no rights at all". Rich nations who believe in free trade do not realise that the migrants who have come to their shores in the face of death are not their "clients but sellers" of their labour, their blood, sweat and tears. How long will they remain silent?

If you listen carefully, you can hear the whispering of the voices from below, the voices the rich and the powerful refrain from hearing. How long will they ignore the farmers, the artisans, the builders? How long will they turn a deaf ear to the demands of those who want to break out of the confines of chauvinism or racial fanaticism? How long will their voices go unheard from across the fences, voices fortified with the words

of resistance not for rewards but for the vision of peace and freedom, of human rights and dignity that await people of all races, of all colours of all ethnicities, of all genders?

These voices cannot submit to the powerful and the rich. They cannot because they are on the other side of the fence opposing the rich nations which meet annually in sickeningly opulent venues, discussing and adjudicating on the poor and the deprived on whose land they now exercise their will and their right. Armed policemen keep the hungry and the deprived out, and if ever they dare to cross over, the unfortunate warden in detention centres behind the impenetrable walls of the hawk-eyed state. The fence keeps them at bay from vast stretches of land preventing thousands from cultivating on the land that rightly belongs to them. Surely, clean air, drinking water, health care, land and shelter and food are their birthright.

The power of peace

The only option left is to peacefully send across the fences their messages and songs of resistance that reverberate across the world with the ideas of revolution and hope, of emancipation and freedom from the tyranny of the handful who rule the world. The rebel voices, sooner or later, will remember their poets and the songs of their past that will penetrate the fences, tear them down in globally interconnected social movements when the extremes of wealth and poverty will no longer be endured. The language of diversity and dignity would soon engulf the unilateral predatory game plans of the rich and the mighty.

Shelley Walia is Professor Emeritus at Panjab University, Chandigarh and is the author of *'Humanities at the Crossroads'*

The rope of federalism and an unwanted tug-of-war

The controversy in West Bengal, over political and administrative issues, is an aberration in the federal polity



NIRANJAN PATNAIK

The Centre-West Bengal controversy on the conduct of Bengal's former Chief Secretary, Alapan Bandyopadhyay in the final days of his tenure, in May, has thrown up several political and administrative issues that deserve our attention for the future health of our federal polity.

In the overall context, there are two elements which need to be kept in mind while discussing this subject. First, India is a 'union of states' and in this union, the State governments are not subordinate agencies of the central government. There are, no doubt, matters enunciated in our Constitution, where the Centre's decisions have primacy over those of the State governments, but this does not extend to holding of meetings, even if these are called by the Prime Minister. A State's functions – both political and administrative – are requested or advised to attend such meetings and this necessitates courtesy and consideration on the part of both sides. It is possible that due to the no-holds-barred electoral campaigns in the recently held Assembly elections, which included West Bengal, these considerations were gi-

ven a go-by; the result is an unseemly controversy which is best avoided for healthy Centre-State relations.

Relief and the third tier

Second, the meeting that became a flashpoint was the one called by the Prime Minister on May 28 to review cyclone relief work – in connection with cyclone Yaas – in West Bengal. The allegation is that Mr. Bandyopadhyay reached the meeting late and then left abruptly along with West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, to visit the cyclone-affected areas in her State. In real life, most relief and rehabilitation work in the event of a natural calamity or management of a disaster is of a local nature and is carried out by the district, sub-divisional and village level officials working under the State governments. Over time, the States have conceded space to the Centre for disaster management for getting financial, technical and logistical support. Even then, the comprehensive framework under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (<https://bit.ly/3ivdLAd>) operates mainly at the State, district and local levels.

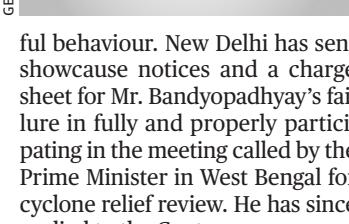
The conduct of Mr. Bandyopadhyay, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, must be seen in this overall context along with the central government's reactions which together raise issues regarding the norms of civil service conduct, political and administrative arrogance and revenge-

ment of their States. To that extent their position is somewhat different from that of the central services who go through similar recruitment procedures but are under the Centre's total control.

The IAS officers work for the central government on "deputation" from their respective State cadres and during their central deputation, their loyalty is of course to the central government. IAS officers will face acute trust deficit, if while working for a State government, they show preferential allegiance or loyalty to central government functionaries by reason of the fact that they were initially appointed by the President of India.

High-handed approach

As a measure of the vindictive assertion of its rights and power, Mr. Bandyopadhyay was initially called to the Centre on 'deputation' and asked to report in New Delhi on the day he was to superannuate. It is a different matter that he chose to retire on that day instead of availing himself of the three-month extension given to him earlier. Several commentators have pointed out that the "concurrence" of the relevant State government is required before an officer of its cadre is deputed to the Centre. Also, there must be prior consultation between the Centre and the State for the latter's viewpoint to be overruled. The Central government did not exactly cover itself with glory by violating these



ful behaviour. New Delhi has sent showcase notices and a charge sheet for Mr. Bandyopadhyay's failure in fully and properly participating in the meeting called by the Prime Minister in West Bengal for cyclone relief review. He has since replied to the Centre.

The services and fine balance

The All-India Services, that includes the IAS, were conceived by the makers of our Constitution to provide uniformity and high standards of public service in both the Centre and the States, and to provide a measure of administrative unity in our diverse and plural society. The architecture has been exquisitely designed. To ensure quality and as a measure of convenience, IAS officers are recruited by the Union Public Service Commission and formally appointed by the President of India. But they are ultimately borne in State cadres which makes them subject to the control of the respective State governments as well, especially when they are in the employ-

requirements. Further, action has been initiated against Mr. Bandyopadhyay under Section 51(b) of the Disaster Management Act for failing to comply with the Centre's direction to attend the review meeting taken by the Prime Minister.

This is an absurd interpretation of the provision that is meant to deal with cases of defiance of the lawful orders or action of the competent authorities (handling disaster management) under the Act. Besides, Mr. Bandyopadhyay was with the Chief Minister, his administrative boss. It is obvious that in the performance of his official duties, an All-India service officer, or any officer for that matter, will have to act under the direction of his official superior. Obviously, Mr. Bandyopadhyay listened to his boss; this is what it should be when IAS officers work for a State government or any other government; otherwise, there will be chaos and indiscipline in administration.

It is very unfortunate that for some inexplicable reasons, a mountain has been made of a molehill, as the cliché goes. In these circumstances one misses the sagacity, wisdom and sophistication of some of our tall political leaders who steered the destiny of our nation in the past.

Niranjan Patnaik, a former Minister of the Odisha Government, is presently the President of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Needed, 'tact'

I am a former civil servant, having retired from service in the early 1980s. Let me join the commentator on *'l'affaire Bandyopadhyay'*. There is something called 'tact' on which comments are also recorded in the annual confidential report, or ACR, of government servants. Awkward situations arise, sometimes all of a sudden, which would need 'tactful handling' by those holding positions of responsibility. I believe the Chief Secretary (CS) could have risen to the occasion and prevented the embarrassing fallout, by handling the situation with greater tact. Having said that, it is difficult to believe that Mr. Alapan Bandyopadhyay would have reached the level of CS

without 'tact' being in his armoury. So, what could have happened? Either he was over-exhausted or going through some inexplicable stress or caught in an 'anxiety syndrome' as to how to avoid, at the fag end of his career, being caught in a crossfire – though eventually finding himself in the thick of it. The CS is nobody's shadow nor is she or he a push-over. The service rules governing her or him are protective and not vindictive. She or he represents the entire permanent Executive of the State as its head. I believe Mr. Bandyopadhyay missed an opportunity to come out with a better score card. And for young civil servants, my word of

advice. Ponder over this and come to your own conclusions.

V.I. RAJAGOPAL,
Jaipur, Rajasthan

Exit Congress

The leadership of the Indian National Congress is not serious enough in keeping its flock together (Page 1, "Former Minister Jitin Prasada leaves Congress, joins BJP", June 10). After its electoral debacle in West Bengal and its handling of the second wave of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Bharatiya Janata Party is definitely on the back foot. Any political party would have used this golden opportunity, worked smartly and turned the tide in its favour. But the Congress party just

seems to continually stamp out the spark of an opportunity. If Rahul Gandhi really aspires to be in a serious figure in politics, he must learn to observe and practise some serious politics. The absence of a strong leadership in the Congress party is apparent. If the same situation continues, by the time the next general election comes, all mainstream leaders would have left the Congress party.

T. ANAND RAJ,
Chennai

Mr. Prasada's crossover is another sad pointer to the pathetic state of affairs in the Congress. It is bound to affect the fortunes of the party in the crucial State of Uttar Pradesh as the entry of

Mr. Prasada is a shot in the arm for the BJP having faced setbacks in the U.P. local body elections along with facing the discontent of a section of party leaders against the style of functioning of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

For the Congress, a beleaguered party that is yet to recover from the magnitude of electoral defeats in elections of every kind, the exodus of young and committed leaders is another indicator of deep crisis within the organisation. The pathetic slide of the one-time majestic

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: The picture caption accompanying the report titled "Pakke Tiger Reserve's contingency workers go on strike" (some editions, June 10, 2021) erroneously said the Tiger Reserve is in Assam. It should have been Arunachal Pradesh as given in the story.

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Congress can be attributed to its total disconnect with the grassroots and its obstinate obsession to invoke dynastic politics to revive its electoral fortunes. Mr. Prasada's departure should make the party nourish its grass roots, purge itself of power-brokers and sycophants, conduct organisational elections in a free and fair manner, and, above all, to usher in generational change in order to prevent a total disintegration.

B.

FROM PAGE ONE

Bihar in fudging row as toll jumps by 72% after recount

In May last, a division bench of the Patna High Court slammed the government and expressed concern over inconsistencies in the death toll in Buxar district presented by two top government officials in two separate affidavits. It asked the government to verify all facts before putting them on record. "All facts must be verified from all sources and

then only be placed before us, else it will amount to filing of false or incomplete affidavit," the court of Chief Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice S. Kumar told the government.

Bihar, till June 9, registered 7,353 active cases with a total of 7,15,179 positive cases. The death toll, so far, has been reported to be 9,429.

Promote second-rung leadership in Punjab: AICC



Sonia Gandhi

Sources said the report of three-member panel, comprising Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC general secretary (Punjab) Harish Rawat and Congress leader J.P. Aggarwal, also suggested a complete revamp of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) along with the various committees, including the election-related committees.

Among the 20-odd recommendations, one was related to the setting up of a panel of Ministers and party leaders to regularly monitor the response/action on the requests made by party MLAs about various developmental work in their constituencies. This is in the backdrop of several MLAs complaining about lack of access to the Chief Minister.

The AICC panel is also learnt to have suggested welfare schemes for targeted groups like farmers and Scheduled Castes. The panel had met party leaders from Punjab, including Mr Sidhu, and the Punjab Chief Minister in Delhi last week.

While Mr. Sidhu claimed to have told "the loud truth"

Yediyurappa will remain CM: Arun Singh

Dissident activity against Mr. Yediyurappa had shot up in the last month or so, with State Minister C.P. Yogiashwar visiting Delhi with his issues with regard to the Chief Minister. He got a lukewarm response and made public statements expressing his dissatisfaction with the CM. In Bengaluru, Mr. Yediyurappa's loyalists decided to start a signature campaign by MLAs who supported the CM, which was then halted at his behest. In all this, Mr. Yediyurappa's son, State unit vice president B.Y. Vijayendra visited Delhi and met with party chief J.P. Nadda. A pet

grouse of dissidents against Mr. Yediyurappa has been the prominence being given to Mr. Vijayendra.

Mr. Singh, however, kept his remarks to dissident MLAs, urging them not to voice their opinions on the internal affairs of the party on a public forum, and to discuss it within appropriate quarters in the party. "I will be visiting Bengaluru soon and will meet with MLAs and party leaders. I will speak to them on all these issues," he said.

As of now, it seems the storm clouds brewing over Mr. Yediyurappa have dissipated.

Refused entry, MP moves against Lakshadweep Administrator

Binoy Viswam has filed a privilege motion against Praful Patel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

CPI MP Binoy Viswam has filed a breach of privilege motion against the Lakshadweep Administrator Praful K. Patel for denying him permission to visit the islands, preventing him from meeting his cadre and people of the island amidst growing resentment about the policies of the new administrator.

In his letter to the Rajya Sabha secretary general, Mr. Viswam said he had informed the Lakshadweep administration regarding his proposed visit on May 26, assuring them that he would abide by the COVID proto-



LDF members holding a protest outside the Lakshadweep Administration office in Kochi. ■ H. VIBHU

col. Mr. Viswam said it took five days for the administration to revert. Following which the Additional District Magistrate of Kavaratti replied that due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Viswam should postpone his visit.

"It is pertinent to note that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the islands of Lakshadweep had

been able to keep the virus out in 2020. However, post the appointment of the current administration certain quarantining guidelines were relaxed as a result of which the UT has seen over 4,000 cases, with over 20 deaths already," Mr. Viswam said in his letter.

He said it is "undemocratic" and "abuse of power" on part of the administration to

use the pandemic as an excuse to prevent elected representatives from visiting the island. Earlier a delegation of the CPI (M) were also denied permission for a visit.

"The Right of a parliamentarian to move freely and meet with the people is integral to the privilege of their position itself," Mr. Viswam said.

Since Mr. Patel's appointment, Mr. Viswam said, the administration has passed a number of directions that encroach on personal liberty, disrupting economic activity and snatching away the livelihood of the people.

"It is unacceptable for a governing authority to have such blatant disregard for the people under its jurisdiction and continue to perpetuate decisions that cause great harm to them," he added.

No starvation in island, Collector tells Kerala HC

'Sufficient food stock to last up to Oct.'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHE

The Lakshadweep administration on Thursday assured a Division Bench of the Kerala High Court that necessary steps would be taken to ensure that there was no shortfall in the supply of food kits and other necessary provisions to islanders during the lockdown period.

The undertaking was given by counsel for the Lakshadweep Collector when a public interest litigation petition alleging starvation on the islands came up for hearing before a Bench comprising Justices Anil K. Narendra and Ziyad Rahim A.A.

The court also directed the Collector to file a statement regarding the measures already taken and proposed additional measures, if any, to ensure adequate

and sufficient supply of rice and other provisions to the islanders either free of cost or on a payment basis.

Central schemes

S. Manu, counsel for the Lakshadweep Administrator, submitted that there had been no starvation in the islands as sufficient quantities of food were being distributed to islanders under Central schemes.

He submitted that ration articles were being distributed to the islanders through 39 ration shops. Every 1.5 km on the islands had a ration shop. In fact, free rice of 5 kg per person was being distributed under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana through the public distribution system.

He said there was sufficient stock of food on all the islands to last up to October.

IN BRIEF



'My priority is to restructure the party'

KOZHIKKODE The newly appointed Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president K. Sudhakaran on Thursday said, "My priority is to restructure the party on a semi-cadre line. The KPCC and District Congress Committees will be overhauled. Jumbo panels will be done away with. Only the best will be retained on the committees."

Project to ensure connectivity for students

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM A time-bound project will be drawn up to ensure Internet connectivity across the State to facilitate online education for all students, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is to

conduct an action plan within four days, he said.

'A.P. stands fifth in conducting COVID tests'

VIJAYAWADA The Andhra Pradesh government on Thursday informed the Andhra Pradesh High Court that it stood 5th in the country in the COVID-19 tests conducted per million population, with the number surpassing two crore. In a memo submitted to the court, in response to a PIL filed by the AP Civil Liberties Association, the government also claimed to have conducted the highest number of RT-PCR tests.

Karnataka eases curbs in districts with fewer cases

Kerala test positivity steady at over 13%; A.P. records 8.29%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Karnataka on Thursday extended lockdown restrictions in 11 districts with high positivity rates, but modified curbs in other districts, including Bengaluru Urban, from June 14 to 21.

The COVID-19 night curfew will be in place from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. in all districts. The weekend curfew will also come into effect from 7 p.m. on Friday to 5 a.m. on Monday in all districts.

Current restrictions will continue till 6 a.m. on June 21 in 11 districts - Chikmagalur

COVID-19

lur, Shivamogga, Davangere, Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Hassan, Dakshina Kannada, Bengaluru Rural, Mandya, Belagavi, and Kodagu - Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa announced after a high-level meeting with Ministers and officials.

Based on the Technical Advisory Committee's suggestions, lockdown restrictions were relaxed in 20 districts. Shops delivering essentials such as food, medicine, milk, fruits and vegetables could open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. All street vendors will be allowed from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Kerala on Thursday reported 14,424 new cases of COVID-19 from 1,07,250 tests. The test positivity rate



Vaccinated residents under observation at a government school in Hyderabad on Thursday. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

(TPR) was steady at around 14-15% with no significant reduction in two weeks. On Thursday, the TPR was 13.45%. Active cases declined to 1,35,298. Cumulative fatalities were 10,631, with the State adding 194 deaths from the past few days.

The cumulative case burden was 26,88,590. Among districts, Thiruvananthapuram reported the highest new cases with 2,030, Kollam 1,605, Malappuram 1,597, Ernakulam 1,596, Thrissur 1,359, Palakkad 1,312, Kozhikode 1,008, Alappuzha 848, Kannur 750, Idukki 673, Kottayam 580, Kasaragod 443, Pathanamthitta 429 and Wayanad 194.

A.P. added 11,763 cases and the cumulative tally was 17,87,883. The number of active cases dropped to below one lakh for the first time in 44 days. The daily TPR of 97,863 samples was 8.29%. Chittoor again reported the highest toll of 11 deaths

in the past day. East Godavari had the highest daily tally of 1,416 infections.

Active cases in Telangana rose to 23,561, with 1,798 new additions from 1,30,430 tests on Thursday. There were also 14 more deaths. Khammam and Nalgonda districts, apart from Hyderabad and its surroundings showed a high number of cases. There was a decline in the numbers in other places across Telangana.

Tamil Nadu's active case-load dropped below two lakh after nearly a month on Thursday. As many as 1,88,664 people are present under treatment. Across the State, 16,813 people tested positive for COVID-19 and 358 succumbed to the infection. With this, the State's tally surpassed 23 lakh - 23,08,838 people have tested positive for COVID-19 so far. The toll rose to 28,528.

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

When CM's son can enter temple, why ban others, asks HC

'Submit probe report on Vijayendra'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

After noticing that B.Y. Vijayendra, son of Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, has admitted to entering Sri Nanjundeshwara temple in Nanjangud recently, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday asked the State government why then even ordinary citizens are not allowed to enter temples like him despite a ban imposed in view of COVID-19 lockdown.

The court noted that Mr. Vijayendra, in his response to the May 27 notice issued by the Mysuru district Deputy Commissioner, had admitted to entering the temple around 8.30 a.m. on May 18.

As details of the preliminary inquiry made by the Deputy Commissioner were not submitted before the court, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Suraj Govindaraj directed the government to submit the report of the Deputy Commissioner along with all documents.

As Advocate-General Prabhulal K. Navadgi pointed out to the court that a photograph of Mr. Vijayendra performing religious rituals inside a temple submitted before the court on behalf of a petitioner was



KARNATAKA

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As the Chief Minister's son has now been found to have violated the ban on entry to the temple, the Bench said it would pass appropriate order after the Deputy Commissioner submitted the final report.

Wide publicity

Meanwhile, the Bench asked the government to give wide publicity in print and electronic media on the public grievance mechanism set up on June 2 to receive complaints of violation of COVID-appropriate behaviour such as wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing, and to take action after verification of complaints by the Deputy Commissioners of districts.

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'Student visa appointments from June 14'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The U.S. will open July-August student visa appointments in all consular offices in India from June 14, the Embassy said on Thursday. The announcement marks the beginning of academic exchanges in the backdrop of the pandemic.

The Embassy has also begun to hold online exchanges with students on the "current operating status and visa processing at the consular sections". U.S. universities are opening up following widespread vaccination drives conducted by the Biden-Harris administration. A large number of Indian students in U.S. campuses were forced to return home and resort to online academic experiences after COVID-19 broke out last year.

The announcement was in contrast with the Chinese decision to prevent the arrival of foreign students. The Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday said India was in touch with the Chinese side "to seek an early resumption of travel by Indian citizens to China, especially for those who work or study there". According to a new rule of the Indian government, students and professionals going abroad would have to get their COWIN vaccination certificates linked to their passport.

'ESI cover for contractual workers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Casual and contractual employees of municipal corporations will be covered under the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act, 1948, Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar said on Thursday.

MEA hints at talks with Taliban

'In touch with various stakeholders'

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

India is in contact with "various stakeholders" in Afghanistan, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in response to specific questions about whether the government has opened direct talks with the Taliban.

While the MEA did not confirm the talks, which would represent a major shift for Indian policy, it did not deny recent reports that indicated that Indian security officials have exchanged messages with several "nationalist" Taliban factions, including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a member of the Rehbari Shura, or the leadership council, which includes the Pakistan-based Taliban accused of terrorism.

"We are in touch with various stakeholders in pursuance of our long-term



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Qatar National Security Adviser Mohamed Bin Ahmed Al Mesned. ■ PTI

commitment towards development and reconstruction of Afghanistan," said MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi while speaking to presspersons on Thursday, where he referred to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's participation at the inaugural ceremony of the Intra-Afghan talks with Taliban leaders in Doha last year.

Significantly, Mr. Jaishankar held a meeting with Qatar National Security Adviser Mohamed Bin Ahmed Al Mesned on Thursday during a transit stop in Doha bet-

ween his visits to Kuwait and Kenya, where he said he had discussed "developments in the region and beyond". The MEA declined to respond to a question on whether the recent developments in the Afghanistan talks came up during the conversation.

The talks appear to have run into trouble both in Doha, where the Taliban's official headquarters are based, and in Istanbul, where a U.S.-backed process for talks with the Taliban have been delayed for more than two months.

So far, India has refused to open a direct dialogue with the Taliban leadership.

However, according to experts, India has reconsidered its position in the aftermath of the U.S. announcement that it would pull out all its troops by September this year.

"The clarity over the U.S. decision to pull out, which could be as early as next month, has added to the sense of urgency for Delhi to make these direct contacts," said Avinash Palwal, an associate professor of international relations at SOAS in the U.K. and an author, who had confirmed the Indian outreach in a column earlier this week.

An official, who asked not to be named, said India's engagement with groups in Afghanistan was driven by a desire to "limit damage" to its security interests as a result of the U.S.'s decision to leave and the Taliban gaining military strength in several key provinces.

EC has vast powers to act against criminalisation of politics: experts

Ex-CEC cautions against it entering political process

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Legal and political experts on Thursday said the Election Commission could do more to stop the criminalisation of politics, during a discussion on the implementation of the Supreme Court's February 2020 directions to political parties on publicising criminal antecedents of candidates.

Retired Supreme Court judge Madan B. Lokur said during the webinar organised by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) that with the assumption that political parties would not cooperate, the EC and the judiciary would have to play their parts. He said the EC had "vast powers", including under Article 324 of the Constitution.



Madan B. Lokur

"All kinds of things are possible if the EC applies its mind to it. It has the power to say that persons accused of crimes cannot stand for elections," Justice Lokur said. He said it was his guess that the EC had not brought it to the Supreme Court's notice that parties had not complied with the order. He added that the role of the judiciary was also important as cases remain pending for years.

Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, an All India Trinamool Congress MP, said he carried the "stigma" of having a pending case since 2010. He said the EC should issue show-cause notices to parties if it finds the reasons they give for selecting a candidate with criminal antecedents "not in consonance with the intent or purpose" of the SC's order.

Former Chief Election Commission O.P. Rawat, however, said he did not agree with the suggestion that the EC should use its plenary power. Citing the SC, he said the EC had "no locus standi to enter the political process per se". He said the investigation and trial of cases should be expedited and there should be an effort to disseminate information to voters.

Chinese man held at West Bengal border

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A Chinese national was on Thursday apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) at Malda in West Bengal. The South Bengal Frontier of the BSF, in a press statement, said Han Junwe, 36, was arrested when he was illegally trying to cross into India from the Indo-Bangladesh international boundary.

"From interrogation and recovered passport, it was learnt that he reached Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 02 June 2021 on a business visa and stayed there with a Chinese friend. On June 08, 2021, he came to Sona Masjid, District-Chapainawabganj [Bangladesh] and stayed in a hotel there before sneaking into India on June 10," the statement said.

In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, while taking on the incumbent BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, the Congress fielded many youngsters to coincide with Mr. Gandhi's debut as a Lok

dy made pronouncements about it.

Choksi's lawyers have alleged that he was abducted and physically tortured in Antigua on May 23 after being lured by one Barbara Jabarika, a Hungarian national and U.K. resident, to her house. She has denied her involvement.

It has been alleged that Choksi was overpowered at Ms. Jabarika's house by about half-a-dozen men, taken to a small boat and then shifted to a larger one to be transported to Dominica, where the authorities knew he did not get any reprieve from lower courts.

Meanwhile, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said: "Regarding Mehul Choksi, no particular update. He continues to remain in custody of Dominican authorities where certain legal proceedings are under way."

Is the Congress' 'Team Rahul' strategy a failure?

Prasada's exit now raises question

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Has the Congress' experiment of creating a generation of young leaders that came to be identified as "Team Rahul" completely failed? With Jitin Prasada following Jyotiraditya Scindia in joining the BJP, such questions are being asked in the Congress, especially among veterans.

In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, while taking on the incumbent BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, the Congress fielded many youngsters to coincide with Mr. Gandhi's debut as a Lok

Rahul Gandhi

have left after his own assessment of the Congress faring poorly in the Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh next year. Mr. Prasada has not won an election since 2009 – he lost the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls as well as the 2017 U.P. Assembly election – and his recent outing as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of West Bengal had resulted in a disaster as the party drew a blank.

His much publicised exit adds to the sense of drift that exists in the Congress.

The party is firefighting in Punjab, as the rivalry between Mr. Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu has peaked ahead of the Assembly election next year. Factionalism has resurfaced in Rajasthan, with Mr. Pilot and his supporters expressing dissatisfaction, while the leadership is yet to work out a workable compromise with the group of 23 dissenters (G23). Finally, the question of leadership still remains open.

"The problem is at the top. The arrangement of power-sharing between the Congress president and Mr. Gandhi with no responsibility won't work any more," said a G23 member.

Nagaland to form panel on Naga issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Nagaland government has decided to institute a committee comprising Opposition leaders to pursue the lingering Naga peace agreement and the Naga political issue with the Centre.

The panel, headed by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, is expected to meet on June 19 in Dimapur to discuss the way forward, as the Naga agreement remains elusive.

The Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) is in power in Nagaland in alliance with the BJP.

Speaking to Northeast Live, Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton said the committee would comprise Independent legislators and the Opposition Naga People's Front led by T.R. Zeliang. It would first discuss the matter before pursuing it with the Centre. A formal order is expected to be issued by the Assembly Speaker soon.

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Adopt population control: Sarma urges minorities

'Govt. will educate women on issue'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has advised the minority community to adopt decent population control measures to reduce poverty and pressure on land.

Reacting to criticisms of his government's drive to free State-owned land from encroachment, the Chief Minister said the illegal occupation of land belonging to temples, *satras* (monasteries) and forests cannot be allowed.

Most of those evicted were Bengali-speaking Muslims.

"Members of the community have assured us that they do not want encroachment on these lands," Dr. Sarma told presspersons on

Restrain online platforms from carrying Islamophobic content'

Plea urges SC to direct a CBI or NIA probe against Twitter

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court to restrain social media platforms from carrying Islamophobic content on their timelines and to direct a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe against Twitter and its users involved in putting out "inflammatory posts".

The petition, filed by Khaaja Ajiazuddin, referred to how "massive publicity was given by the media that many of the positive cases of symptoms of coronavirus were found from Tablighi Jamaat at Nizamuddin in Delhi".

"There was a massive



The plea wanted the court to direct the government to frame guidelines.

trending of tweets on Twitter attaching the Muslim religion to the cause of spread of coronavirus," Mr. Ajiazuddin said in his petition filed in May. "Restrain all online social media networks operating in India not to carry any Islamophobic posts or

messages hurting or insulting the feelings of a particular community. Moreover, with respect to the prayer for issuing directions to the Government of India to register criminal complaint against Twitter and its users, who are spreading hatred messages," the petition said.

It asked the court to direct the government to frame specific guidelines under the Information Technology Act, 2000, on "hate messages against any religious community, including Islamophobic posts on various social media platforms".

Mr. Ajiazuddin had initially moved the Telangana High Court, which directed him to approach the Supreme Court.

Mr. Prasada is said to have left after his own assessment of the Congress faring poorly in the Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh next year. Mr. Prasada has not won an election since 2009 – he lost the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls as well as the 2017 U.P. Assembly election – and his recent outing as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge of West Bengal had resulted in a disaster as the party drew a blank.

His much publicised exit adds to the sense of drift that exists in the Congress.

The party is firefighting in Punjab, as the rivalry between Mr. Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu has peaked ahead of the Assembly election next year. Factionalism has resurfaced in Rajasthan, with Mr. Pilot and his supporters expressing dissatisfaction, while the leadership is yet to work out a workable compromise with the group of 23 dissenters (G23). Finally, the question of leadership still remains open.

"The problem is at the top. The arrangement of power-sharing between the Congress president and Mr. Gandhi with no responsibility won't work any more," said a G23 member.

Programme helps women hone business skills

WEDP has enabled women in Rajasthan take up start-up projects and make profit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

A series of women's entrepreneurship development programmes (WEDP) launched by a Jaipur-based research institution has helped a number of women in Rajasthan overcome barriers to business creation and self-employment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance has enabled them to take up start-up projects with profitable outcomes.

Most of the WEDPs were designed in a manner to train potential women entrepreneurs and were run in a hybrid mode to provide blended learning opportunities. Women were exposed to business theories and practices



Madhu Raturi at 'Sevaarthा' home healthcare unit in Jaipur. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Institute of Health Management Research (IHMR) here has conducted the programmes. CIIE chairperson Sheenu Jain said here on Thursday that several nascent start-ups in the State had commenced the work on a small scale and the women running them had honed up their entrepreneurial skills.

Medical professional Madhu Raturi, 67, who attended a WEDP, has started a home healthcare model, Sevaarthā, along with her son for providing nursing care to patients needing home service. The venture has benefited those isolated at home in the pandemic. Dr. Raturi's institution is currently developing it as a model that could

provide employment to educated girls from rural areas.

Neha Khandelwal, who makes handcrafted paper products, has given a formal shape to her start-up with the title 'Innovative Papers' while looking for new opportunities in social media marketing. She said learning from the programme had helped her get more traction for her business.

"As a feminine phenomenon, the WEDPs have given wings to women's ideas and speeded up their start-up journey. The potential entrepreneurs have received an impetus to curate the models which will fill the gaps existing in various sectors during the pandemic," Dr. Jain said.

Playschools seek loan moratorium

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Many playschools, creches and daycare centres have collectively moved the Supreme Court for help, saying the online mode of functioning does not work for them and they are in financial distress.

The Indian Council of Early Childhood Educators and Institutions, represented by advocate Rohit Pandey, has asked the court to intervene on its behalf with the government to provide financial succour through fresh loan moratorium and a temporary pause in the declaration of non-performing assets by banks.

Probe sought into Choksi's abduction to Dominica

U.K. organisation lodges a complaint with Scotland Yard

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A United Kingdom-based legal help organisation has lodged a complaint with the Scotland Yard's War Crimes unit, seeking an investigation into the role of some British residents in the alleged abduction of Mehul Choksi from Antigua to Dominica.

"The clarity over the U.S. decision to pull out, which could be as early as next month, has added to the sense of urgency for Delhi to make these direct contacts," said Avinash Palwal, an associate professor of international relations at SOAS in the U.K. and an author, who had confirmed the Indian outreach in a column earlier this week.

The organisation, Justice Abroad, is headed by lawyer Michael Polak. At an online press conference on Thursday, he said: "The rule of law is a very important principle across the Commonwealth. People need to know that when they are in Commonwealth countries like Antigua and Dominica, they won't be kidnapped and taken away from places from where they have outstanding legal matters."

With regard to Christian Michel, who is in judicial custody

IN BRIEF



Sunita Narain appointed to climate action group

NEW DELHI
Noted environmentalist Sunita Narain has been appointed to an international advisory group for climate action by Per Olsson Fridh, Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation.

Rath Yatra in Odisha to be held only in Puri

BHUBANESWAR
Apprehending that large congregations could trigger spread of infection further, the Odisha government on Thursday said the Rath Yatra (car festival) will be organised only in Puri without devotees. The Rath Yatra is scheduled to be held on July 12.

Leopard mauls woman to death in Uttarakhand

KOTDWARA
A 55-year-old woman was mauled to death by a leopard in Uttarakhand's Pauri district on Thursday, officials said. The incident took place in the Chauhattakhal area when the victim, Godambari Devi, was working in a field near her village Dabra, SDM Sandeep Kumar said. PTI

Bengal issues high tide warning for coastal areas

KOLKATA
The West Bengal government issued an alert in the coastal areas and evacuated a few thousand people from islands exposed to the Bay of Bengal over fears of fresh inundation due to a high tide on Friday. The embankments breached during cyclone Yaas are yet to be repaired and the weather office has predicted a low-pressure formation likely over northwestern Bay of Bengal, resulting in enhanced rainfall.

Focus on second dose for HCWs, FLWs'

Health Secretary flags low COVID-19 vaccination among priority groups

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

States have been advised to focus on the second dose of COVID-19 vaccination coverage among healthcare and frontline workers.

A release issued by the Union Health Ministry said Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan chaired a high-level meeting on Thursday and informed States and Union Territories of the modifications in Co-WIN platform.

The Ministry also alerted the States to the new features in the Co-WIN portal. Revised features allow rectifications in personal information (Name, YOB, Gender and Photo ID number of the card used) by citizens requesting changes only in any of the two fields out of the four mentioned. These changes are allowed only once.

E-VIN data

Meanwhile, the Centre advised the States and UTs to obtain the Health Ministry's permission before sharing E-VIN data related to vaccine stocks and the temperature at which they are stored. This, it said, was to prevent any misuse of data by various agencies for commercial purposes. E-VIN is used by the Ministry for inventory management of vaccines and tracking storage temperature data of vaccines under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP).

The Ministry on Thursday said crucial information on vaccine usage trends for multiple vaccines used in the UIP, and temperature-related data, could be used to manipulate the market as well as associated research with respect to various vaccines and cold-chain equipment.



Hard times: Children from a slum waiting to receive food being distributed by social organisations during the lockdown in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

Doctors welcome Ministry's treatment protocol for children

But they urge caution to prevent misinterpretation

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Doctors, while welcoming the Union Health Ministry's latest treatment guidelines for COVID-19-management in children, underlined the need to "create awareness to prevent misinterpretation, which could prove counterproductive".

The Directorate-General of Health Services (DGHS), in its guidelines for the management of COVID-19 among children, has said that Remdesivir is not recommended in this population and that it is an emergency-use-authorisation drug.

"There is lack of sufficient safety and efficacy data with respect to Remdesivir in children below the age of 5 should not wear a mask. It does not mean that they are not at risk. Moreover, since they'll not be wearing a mask, it means that additional care and precautions need to be taken by their guardians,"

low 18 years of age," the guidelines said. They also call for rational use of HRCT imaging.

"...We welcome DGHS for coming out with the all-important guidelines ... However, awareness should be created so that the guideline is not misinterpreted, which would be counterproductive," said Gauri Agarwal, senior gynaecologist at Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad.

DGHS has said children below the age of 5 should not wear a mask. It does not mean that they are not at risk. Moreover, since they'll not be wearing a mask, it means that additional care and precautions need to be taken by their guardians,"

Dr. Agarwal said.

Rahul Nagpal, director, Pediatrics and Neonatology at Fortis Hospital, Vasant Kunj, welcomed the DGHS guidelines and said they standardised treatment protocol for children. Since the first wave, doctors have been using the protocol by the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, which discouraged unnecessary use of steroids, anti-viral drugs and CT scan in children, he said.

Doctors also said while the guidelines will be useful if there is a rise in the number of children getting infected, hospitals will have to ensure that there is enough standardised infrastructure to cater to this population.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Assam Cong. MP slams evictions amid pandemic

State govt. has violated rights: Khaleque

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

A Congress MP has slammed the "two-faced" drive by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government to make Assam encroachment-free. He also asked the Gauhati High Court to take note of the eviction drive that violates human rights amid the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Abdul Khaleque, who represents western Assam's Barpeta constituency in the Lok Sabha, said the State government's move to evict thousands of settlers from more than 77,000 bighas of State-owned land was "two-faced".

This was in reference to 2.28 lakh periodic pattas (land deeds) and allotment certificates distributed among landless people belonging to the indigenous communities on more than 2.09 lakh bighas of government land during the tenure of previous Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

AAMSU criticism

The All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) has also criticised the eviction drive.

"The State government has violated the High Court's order that clearly states there would be no eviction drive during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Assam government should stop harassing the minority people under communal agenda," the AAMSU said.

The Assam Cabinet under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on June 8 formed a committee for properly utilising the 77,000 bighas of land freed from encroachers. The committee is headed by BJP legislator Padma Hazarika.

The petitioner's advocate submitted that recordings of the alleged WhatsApp conversations between the petitioner and the contraband supplier, a Nigerian national, had not been revealed or made available to show the petitioner's involvement.

The NCB counsel stated that the WhatsApp conversation was sent for analysis on April 4 this year, as it was not considered necessary earlier in view of the petitioner's confessional statement. The counsel added that the NCB was subsequently constrained to send the conversations for forensic analysis to submit its report at an appropriate stage during trial.

Justice Sudip Ahluwalia, who was hearing the matter on May 7, stated that the Court finds no justification to release the petitioner on bail at this stage. The petition is, therefore, dismissed.



Cong. MP Abdul Khaleque

Govt. agencies can analyse WhatsApp chats, NCB tells HC

Conversations in drug case sent for forensic analysis

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

WhatsApp chats, which are end-to-end encrypted, can be analysed by government organisations, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) recently told the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Responding to a bail petition filed in the High Court by an 18-year-old under Section 439 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in a Narcotic Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS) case, the NCB stated that since the entire WhatsApp chat of the accused was end-to-end encrypted, it could not be opened by the agency, which was constrained to send it to forensic specialists for its "opening and analysis".



Chats on WhatsApp are end-to-end encrypted.

11 killed, seven injured in building collapse in Mumbai

Four-storey structure fell on adjacent building

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

As many as 11 people, including eight children, were killed and seven others injured after a portion of a four-storey residential structure collapsed on an adjacent two-storey structure in western Mumbai late on Wednesday.

The incident was reported from the Malvani slum at Malad following incessant rains throughout the day. The State government has announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to the kin of the deceased.

According to civic officials, the building had serious structural faults and was further damaged during



Big tragedy: Distressed residents after a building collapsed in Mumbai's Malad area on Thursday. ■ AP

the responsibility." Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, along with Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal and Environment minister Aaditya Thackeray, visited the injured at the Shatabdi hospital in Kandivali.

The police registered a case under Section 304 (2) of the IPC against the owner of the building.

HC no to stay on film based on Sushant's life

'Posthumous privacy not permissible'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to stay the release of a film based on Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's life, noting that the information of events around the actor's death was already in the public domain and "posthumous privacy right is not permissible".

The High Court's direction came on a plea moved by the late actor's father, Krishna Kishore Singh, seeking to restrain anyone from using his son's name or likeness in movies. He had sought to restrain the release of a movie titled *Nyay: The Justice*, a self-proclaimed "tribute to Sushant Singh Rajput (SSR)", slated for release on June 11.

"We must note that the right to privacy has also

been invoked not just of the deceased but also in respect of the right of the family of SSR. The submissions on this aspect are unspecific and vague. No definite instance has been presented by the plaintiff (Mr. Singh) to show how this right is infringed and therefore, the plea is devoid of merit," Justice Sanjeev Narula remarked.

Award of damages

The High Court said that the actor's father can be compensated by award of damages if he is later able to prove in trial that "celebrity/publicity rights were inheritable". The court directed the makers of the film to "render complete and true accounts of the revenue earned from the films by way of sale/licensing of all rights relating to the films".

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13270

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

No. SS510 DataLine: www.nigfifeatures.com

Solution to puzzle 13270

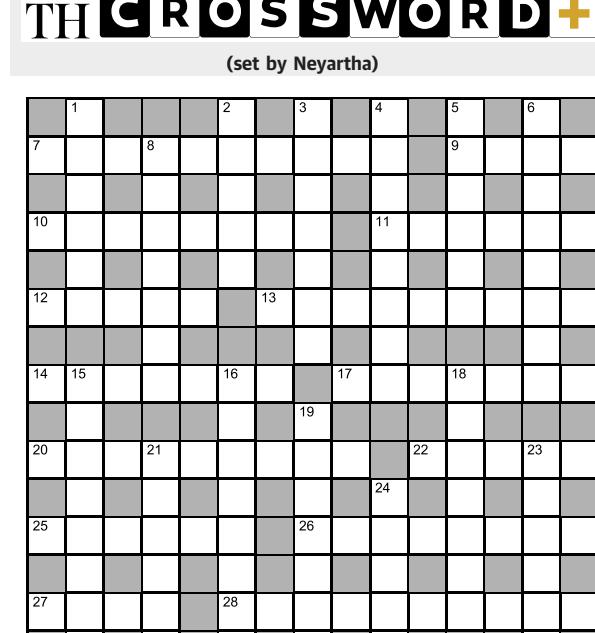
Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Salvation via surrender

No one knows the end which we call salvation, and hence the path is also most hazy. But from the Charama Sloka in the Bhagavad Gita, it is clear that salvation means release from all sins. It is a herculean task to be released from all sins and not within human effort at all, pointed out Asuri Sri Madhavachariar in a discourse. The compassionate Lord gives a direct promise to humanity that by seeking refuge at His feet we can attain this end. To the question of the worship of other celestial beings such as Rudra, Brahma, Indra, Agni, etc, who are propitiated through yagas, yagnas, etc, for fulfilment of laukika ends, He makes it clear that because He is the antaratra in all beings and pervades the entire universe, they are able to grant boons etc. Their power ends here, and when it comes to granting Moksha, it is His sole prerogative.

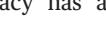
In the Charama Sloka His Supremacy is explicit. "Take refuge in Me alone," He proclaims. "I shall release you from all sins." Though the statement "You can give up all other dharmas," has given rise to many interpretations, the discerning jivatma cannot miss the ultimate message emerging from it. The essence of the karma yoga He has taught, which is engaging in selfless nitya and naimittika karma with no eye on fruits and with the focus that this attitude will please Him, is to be inferred in the statement that one can give up all dharmas. All the confusion in our minds about what is to be done and avoided, about commitment to truth, ordained duties, and other such acts binding on one's thought and word, can be cleared in toto if only we repose faith in His protective powers. Once this faith is firmly established, the jivatma continues to lead life in such a way that will meet the Lord's approval.



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Fed up at home, locked down?
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U.S. to donate 500 mn doses to world

The Pfizer jabs would be distributed to 92 low-and middle-income countries and the African Union

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN
SUHASINI HAIDAR
WASHINGTON DC/ NEW DELHI

The U.S. will purchase half a billion doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and donate them to 92 low and middle-income countries and the African Union. The vaccines will be shipped from August onwards, with 200 million doses distributed this year and 300 million by the middle of next year, according to a 'fact sheet' released by the White House. Rich countries have come under increasing pressure to not sit on orders of excess vaccines as many in middle and lower income countries remain unvaccinated.

The news of Joe Biden's plan broke on Wednesday, as the President was en route to the U.K. to attend the G7 meetings. Mr. Biden is expected to formally announce the plan on Thursday evening from Cornwall, following his meeting with U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson.



First talks: Joe Biden, with wife Jill, and Boris Johnson, with Carrie, right, at Carbis Bay in Britain. ■ REUTERS

The U.S. will work on delivering the vaccines via COVAX, an international coalition that is involved with global vaccine access. Mr. Biden is expected to emphasise, in his remarks, that his plan will give lower income countries access to mRNA vaccines, which have been mostly used in rich countries to date, partly owing to more stringent cold chain requirements, which are harder for poorer countries to ensure.

Pfizer will sell the doses to the U.S. government at a "not-for-profit" price, the *Washington Post* reported. The doses will be produced at Pfizer's plants in Michigan, Kansas, Missouri and Massachusetts, with a combined workforce of at least 7,500 people, according to

the White House. The current administration has been keen to tie its foreign policy to domestic goals and the local economic impact of the massive vaccine order is something Mr. Biden is expected to stress in his remarks, as per the White House's outline of the speech.

India will benefit

Separately, the U.S. has already begun shipping 80 million doses of mostly AstraZeneca vaccines to other countries. Three quarters of these are being allocated through COVAX and a quarter is being shared bilaterally. India is also going to be in receipt of some of these vaccines but numbers are not likely to be more than a few million. When asked at Wednesday's press briefing, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price did not confirm the total number of doses India would receive.

In response to a question

on how many vaccines India would receive, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the government was awaiting details of the U.S. plans.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was in Washington at the end of May to discuss, among other things, vaccine procurement for India, including manufacturing within India. However, regulatory issues remain even as supply chain issues are easing up, partly due to the U.S. releasing AstraZeneca, Novavax and Sanofi vaccines from the purview of its Defence Production Act, which had resulted in export controls for raw materials that go into manufacturing these inoculations.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla met with U.S. Chargé D'Affaires Daniel Smith in New Delhi on Wednesday to discuss, among other things, cooperation on COVID-19 and vaccine supplies.

Biden, Johnson seek to sign 'new Atlantic Charter'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CARBIS BAY

President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson met for the first time on Thursday, looking to highlight their nations' famed "special relationship" but doing so against a backdrop of differences both political and personal.

At their first meeting in the seaside resort of Carbis Bay, the two leaders inspected documents on Thursday related to the Atlantic Charter

ter, a declaration signed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1941, setting out common goals for the world after Second World War. Those goals included freer trade, disarmament and the right to self-determination of all people. It is often cited as a cornerstone of the trans-Atlantic "special relationship."

Mr. Johnson noted that the charter laid the foundation for the United Nations and NATO. "Yeah, I know," Mr. Biden said.

Finding common ground

At their meeting, the two leaders plan to sign what they're calling a new Atlantic Charter, pledging to "defend the principles, values, and institutions of democracy and open societies."

Mr. Biden hopes to use his first overseas trip as President to reassure European allies that the U.S. had shed the transactional tendencies

of Donald Trump's term and is a reliable partner again. But tensions could simmer beneath the surface of Mr. Biden's meeting with Mr. Johnson.

The President staunchly opposed the Brexit movement, the British exodus from the European Union that Mr. Johnson championed, and has expressed great concern with the future of Northern Ireland. And Mr. Biden once called the British leader a "physical

and emotional clone" of Mr. Trump.

The British government has worked hard to overcome that impression, stressing Mr. Johnson's common ground with Mr. Biden on issues such as climate change and his support for global institutions. But Mr. Johnson, the host for the G-7 summit that will follow his sit-down with Mr. Biden, has been frustrated by the lack of a new trade deal with the U.S.

Colombo looks into likely oil slick from ship

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka announced an investigation on Thursday into a possible oil slick reported off its west coast where a container ship is submerged after burning for 13 days.

Coast Conservation Minister Nalaka Godahewa said local experts were asked to examine an oil patch of about 0.35 sq km, where MV X-Press Pearl ran aground. "I visited the area by boat yesterday and what we noticed was a thin film of oil which looked like diesel," Mr. Godahewa told reporters in Colombo.

3 Palestinians killed in West Bank

Clashes erupt during Israeli raid overnight; Abbas calls it 'dangerous escalation'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAMALLAH



Women watching the funeral of a Palestinian killed in West Bank. ■ REUTERS

nian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned what he called a "dangerous Israeli escalation," saying the three were killed by Israeli special forces who disguise themselves as Arabs during arrest

raids. The spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdeneh, called on the international community and the United States to intervene to halt such attacks.

Israeli media reported that special forces went into Jenin to arrest two operatives from the Islamic Jihad militant group when they came under fire. One of the Palestinian suspects was killed, in addition to the two security officers, the media reports said.

'Undercover' forces
There were no reports of any Israeli casualties. The PA said the two officers who were killed were members of its military intelligence force.

Online video appears to show Palestinian officers taking cover behind a vehicle as gunshots are heard in the background. One shouts that they are exchanging fire with Israeli "undercover" forces.

Under interim peace agreements signed in the 1990s, the PA has limited autonomy in scattered enclaves that together make up around 40% of the occupied West Bank. Hamas drove its forces out of Gaza in 2007 when the Islamic militant group seized power. Israel has overarching security authority in the West Bank.

Delta variant is taking hold of Europe: WHO

People are urged to travel wisely

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA

"Over the course of last summer, cases gradually rose in younger age groups and then moved into older age groups, contributing to a devastating resurgence," he said.

Dr. Kluge said that spike in COVID-19 ultimately led to more lockdowns and deaths in the fall and winter of 2020. "Let's not make that mistake again."

Dr. Kluge did not say people shouldn't travel, but urged any travellers to do so wisely. He also called for vaccination and other public health measures to be stepped up across the continent, saying even immunisation coverage "is far from sufficient to protect the region."

"We have been here before," warned Kluge, WHO's European regional director.

During a press briefing on Thursday, WHO's Dr. Hans Kluge said the delta variant has shown signs of being able to evade some vaccines and warned that many vulnerable populations, particularly those over age 60, remain unprotected.

"We have been here before," warned Kluge, WHO's European regional director.

She also asked for another 3,000,000 ballots to be reviewed, so "half a million votes are in play," she said at a press conference.

Ms. Fujimori, the daughter of jailed former President Alberto Fujimori, led in early counting but as Mr. Castillo slowly gained ground, she alleged "irregularities" and "signs of fraud."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LIMA

Leftist Pedro Castillo held a razor-thin lead on Wednesday in Peru's polarising presidential election as his right-wing rival Keiko Fujimori made renewed allegations of voter fraud she claimed involved half a million ballots.

With 99% of votes count-



Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Mohali, an institution of National Importance, invites applications from suitable Indian nationals for appointment to the post of Deputy Registrar (Finance & Accounts). Last date for submission of application forms is 10.07.2021 upto 5.00 p.m. For details regarding educational qualifications, experience, general conditions, etc., please visit the Institute's website www.iisermohali.ac.in.

REGISTRAR

Description of Equipment	Qty. (NO)	Display of Tender Documents Period	Last date & Time for submission of Final offer
Supply, Erection & Commissioning including Comprehensive AMC of 5 years after expiry of Guarantee period of One year for IP based CCTV surveillance system for BIOM Bacheli Complex, Chhattisgarh State. (Prebid Meeting on 24/6/2021 at 11.00 AM through Microsoft Teams, mail)	01	Draft Tender : 10.06.2021 to 24-06-2021 FINAL Tender (Tentative) 05/07/2021 to 20/07/2021 upto 2.30 p.m. (IST)	20-07-2021 by 2.30 PM (IST)

Prospective bidders may visit our websites: www.hmdc.co.in; CPP Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>; <https://msteccommerce.com> and may download the tender documents. Any corrigendum to the above tender notice will be uploaded on our website and MSTC e-portal only.

CGM (Materials)

Myanmar military charges Suu Kyi with corruption

She is accused of accepting bribes and misusing authority

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

The Myanmar junta has charged deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi with corruption over claims she accepted illegal payments of gold and more than half a million dollars in cash, state media reported Thursday.

The country has been in turmoil since the generals ousted Ms. Suu Kyi on February 1, with more than 850 civilians killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate, who has been in custody since the putsch, is facing a raft of wide-ranging criminal charges, including sedition and breaching a colonial-era secrecy law.

The latest charges relate to allegations by the former Yangon region Chief Minister that Ms. Suu Kyi illegally accepted \$6,000,000 in cash from him along with around 11 kg of gold.

The Anti-Corruption Commission found evidence that Ms. Suu Kyi had committed "corruption using her rank", according to the Global New Light of Myanmar, a state-run newspaper.

"So she was charged under Anti-Corruption Law section 55."

She is also accused of abusing her authority when renting two areas of land for her charitable foundation.

After weeks of legal wrangling, two of Ms. Suu Kyi's trials are due to start in earnest next week, hearing evidence from witnesses.

In Naypyidaw, the remote capital purpose-built by the previous military regime, her trial on charges of violating restrictions during last year's election campaign and possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies will start on Monday.

A separate case is scheduled to start on June 15, where she is charged with sedition alongside ousted President Win Myint and another senior member of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

Charges 'absurd'

Her lawyer, Khin Maung Zaw, dismissed the corruption charges as "absurd".

"There is an undeniable political background to keep her out of the scene of the country and to smear her prestige," he told AFP, saying she could face long prison terms on the secrecy and corruption charges.

"That's one of the reasons to charge her – to keep her out of the scene."

Ms. Suu Kyi spent more than 15 years under house arrest during the previous military rule before her 2010 release.



New pressures: A file photo of a protester holding up a poster of Aung San Suu Kyi during a demonstration in Yangon. ■ AFP

12 killed as military plane crashes near Mandalay

REUTERS

NAYPYIDAW

A military plane crashed on Thursday near Myanmar's second-biggest city of Mandalay, killing 12 people, the city's fire service said in a post on social media.

The plane was flying in

turmoil since the generals ousted Ms. Suu Kyi on February 1, with more than 850 civilians killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

The pilot and one passenger survived and were taken to a military hospital, according to a resident and posting by a community group.

It was not clear what had caused the crash.

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bled down, describing Mr. Navalny as an agent collaborating with Washington.

The court decision was the latest move against critics of President Vladimir Putin. Some of his loudest opponents have fled the country and several prominent activist groups and independent media have closed.

The ruling bans Mr. Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and a network of regional offices from operating and, under a recently passed law, prevents those previously associated with the groups from running in parliamentary elections.

The FBK was defiant, saying in a Twitter post: "We woke up, smiled with destructive intent and knowing that we are a 'danger to society' will continue to fight corruption!"

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MARKET WATCH

	10-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52300	0.69
US Dollar	73.06	-0.12
Gold	48127	-0.61
Brent oil	72.39	-0.12

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	846.75	-5.85
Asian Paints	2950.60	7.05
Axis Bank	744.25	7.50
Bajaj Auto	4179.90	-44.60
Bajaj Finserv	11993.10	434.25
Bajaj Finance	6086.40	411.90
Bharti Airtel	545.15	5.15
BPCL	483.55	-1.50
Britannia Ind	3576.30	1.60
Cipla	974.20	15.55
Coal India	156.50	0.10
Divis Lab	4372.55	105.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	5292.05	69.25
Eicher Motors	2705.05	-24.00
Gasim Ind	1492.50	0.45
HCL Tech	968.55	-2.75
HDPC	2561.90	17.15
HDPC Bank	1481.05	0.75
HDFC Life	689.25	4.35
Hero MotoCorp	3009.00	-14.50
Hindalco	385.40	2.25
Hind Unilever	2378.80	22.80
ICICI Bank	640.40	4.30
IndusInd Bank	1024.35	20.80
Infosys	1424.30	9.00
Indian Oil Corp	115.95	1.00
ITC	209.30	-3.20
JSW Steel	705.80	7.95
Kotak Bank	1799.55	16.65
L&T	1519.70	0.40
M&M	806.95	-2.50
Maruti Suzuki	7199.90	-39.10
Nestle India Ltd.	17556.10	-1.05
NTPC	118.50	0.40
ONGC	123.95	-0.10
PowerGrid Corp	241.65	-0.45
Reliance Ind	2183.00	8.00
SBI Life	997.55	-1.05
State Bank	432.25	10.80
Shree Cement	28225.80	-181.55
Sun Pharma	676.05	3.20

EXCHANGE RATES		
Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 10		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.85	73.17
Euro	88.60	88.99
British Pound	102.67	103.13
Japanese Yen (100)	66.52	66.82
Chinese Yuan	11.40	11.45
Swiss Franc	81.24	81.64
Singapore Dollar	54.96	55.21
Canadian Dollar	60.17	60.43
Malaysian Ringgit	17.67	17.76

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Škoda rolls out new Octavia at ₹25.99 lakh
MUMBAI Škoda Auto India has unveiled the all new Octavia at an ex-showroom price of ₹25.99 lakh nationwide. The Octavia marked the beginning of Škoda Auto's model introduction in India two decades ago. "Octavia in its fourth generation pushes the yardstick further," the company said.

Yes Bank gets nod to raise up to ₹10,000 cr.
NEW DELHI Yes Bank on Thursday received board approval for raising up to ₹10,000 crore by issuing debt securities. The board of directors in its meeting held on June 10, 2021, considered and approved seeking shareholders' approval for borrowing funds in Indian/foreign currency up to ₹10,000 crore by issuing debt securities, Yes Bank said in a filing. PTI

Open market purchase of G-secs on June 17
MUMBAI The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it will conduct the third tranche of open market purchase of government securities of ₹40,000 crore under the G-sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP 1.0) on June 17, 2021, as announced earlier this month. Of this, state development loans (SDLs) up to ₹10,000 crore would be purchased, RBI said.

Tata Digital to acquire majority stake in 1MG
MUMBAI Tata Digital Ltd., a 100% subsidiary of Tata Sons, has entered into an agreement to acquire majority stake in 1MG Technologies Pvt. Ltd., a digital health company, for an unspecified amount. The investment is in line with Tata Group's vision of creating a digital ecosystem which addresses the consumer needs across categories in a unified manner, the company said.

Auto retail sales more than halved in May from April: FADA

Dealers' body says PVs slid 59%, CVs by 66%; urges support from banks, OEMs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI Automobile retail sales in the country declined by 55% in May as compared with April as lockdowns across various States amid the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hit vehicle registrations, automobile dealers' body FADA said on Thursday.

All segments were hit as showrooms across various States were forced to down shutters amid the restrictions. Total registrations across categories in May dropped to 5,35,855 units from 11,85,374 units in April.

According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, which collected vehicle registration data



Dire straits: Centre should direct banks to allow a moratorium of 90 days to all dealer categories, says FADA. ■ BIJOY GHOSH

from 1,294 out of the 1,497 regional transport offices, passenger vehicle sales slumped 59%. Two-wheeler sales also declined 53% to 4,10,757 units last month.

Similarly, commercial vehicle sales dropped by

66% to 17,534 units last month, from 51,436 in April.

Three-wheeler sales saw a decline of 76% to 5,215 units, while tractor sales witnessed a dip of 57% to 16,616 units.

"The second wave of CO-

VID has left the entire coun-

try devastated as there may

not be a single household

which did not get affected,"

FADA President Vinkesh Gu-

lati noted. "Apart from ur-

ban markets, this time, even

rural areas were badly hit."

He added auto retailers were

in dire need of support.

"While a handful of OEMs... have announced fi-

nancial help to their channel

partners, others are yet to do

so. Hence, FADA humbly re-

quests all those OEMs which

have still not announced any

financial assistance to kindly

do it urgently," he said.

He also appealed that in-

stead of restructuring, banks

should allow a moratorium

of 90 days to all categories of

dealers sans a turnover limit.

Centre to auction 'major' fields of ONGC, OIL

Aim is to boost output, says Pradhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Centre will auction un-
monetised, large oil and gas
fields of state-owned ONGC
and OIL to boost hydrocar-
bon production, Petroleum
Minister Dharmendra Pradhan
said on Thursday.



Dharmendra Pradhan

Speaking at the start of the
third round of auction of small
discovered fields, he said compa-

nies cannot indefinitely sit on re-

sources they may have dis-

covered.

These resources belonged to
the nation and would be
monetised by auctioning them
out to interested enti-

ties, he said. As many as 32

oil and gas blocks with 75

discoveries have been of-

fered in the Discovered Small
Field (DSF) round-III.

Under DSF, liberal terms

including pricing and mar-

keting freedom are offered,
making them viable. "There
will be no DSF next time.
Next time, it will be a 'major'
round (auction of large fields)," Mr. Pradhan said.

He said the Directorate
General of Hydrocarbons,
has the "full mandate" to
identify unmonetised major
fields that could be offered
for bidding.

GST Council to mull tax cut on June 12

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The GST Council, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, will meet on June 12 to decide on GST rate cut for COVID essentials, according to officials.

In the previous meeting of the council on May 28, a Group of Ministers (GoM) was set up to recommend tax relief on COVID essentials including PPE kits, masks and vaccines, to the GST Council. The GoM submitted its report on June 7.

Officials said the GST Council would discuss the report as well as consider tax rate cuts for black fun-

gus medicine. Currently, 5% GST is levied on domestically made vaccines and 12% on CO-
VID-19 drugs and oxygen concentrators.

GST: FinMin revamps Groups of Ministers

Pawar is convenor of IT-related GoM

VIKAS DHOTI

NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has modified the composition of ministerial groups studying pending Goods and Services Tax (GST) issues.

Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar has been appointed convenor of the Group of Ministers (GoM) monitoring IT-related challenges, replacing former Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi.

Mr. Modi's successor in the Bihar government Tarikishore Prasad has also been included in the GoM, while former Haryana Minister Captain Abhimanyu has been replaced by the State's Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala. Mr. Pawar replaced former Maharashtra

LALATENDU MISHRA

MUMBAI

Information technology (IT), pharma and e-commerce have bucked the trend of job losses, emerging as top hires between February and April, said a top HR official.

The hiring surge comes in the backdrop of an estimated 8.6 million salaried jobs, especially in tourism and hospitality, being lost in the same period, as data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy showed.

In the three months, the IT industry saw a surge of more than 100% in demand growth for skilled technical job roles, said Sudhakar Balakrishnan, group CEO,

FirstMeridian, a human resources (HR) firm. "In IT, some specialised roles are commanding a wage premium of 30-50%," Mr. Balakrishnan said.

Since demand for medicines has risen, the pharma sector is also hiring, he said.

In healthcare, the govern-

ment's decision to employ medical and nursing students who are yet to pass the qualifying examinations, to bridge the demand-supply gap, has enhanced employment, he said. "In healthcare, over three lakh jobs have been created."

Home delivery of food and grocery as well as closure of markets has led to increased pressure on e-commerce firms that have been hiring in thousands. The warehousing sector is also hiring to support e-commerce.

"Almost 75,000 temporary jobs are available, led by sectors such as e-commerce, retail, IT/ITES and financial services," he added.

Paytm, Infosys offer to help on vaccine booking

More platforms will help, says Sharma

Pavlyuchenkova one step away

Beats a wildly erratic Zidansek to reach her first Grand Slam final

ROLAND-GARROS

REUTERS
PARIS
Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova held a steady course to beat a wildly erratic Tamara Zidansek and reach the final at Roland-Garros, showing all her experience to win 7-5, 6-3 on Thursday.

Slovenian World No. 85 Zidansek made a flying start with her aggressive style earning her an early break but Pavlyuchenkova soaked up her opponent's best shots and proved way too solid in the end.

Zidansek, like Pavlyuchenkova a Grand Slam semifinal debutant, cracked down 27 winners but struggled to contain errors at key moments of the match and handed over the first set with a double fault.

The 29-year-old Pavlyuchenkova forged 4-1 ahead in the second set and then snuffed out an attempted Zidansek comeback, clinching victory when her opponent blazed a backhand wide.

On Wednesday, a fired-up Novak Djokovic repelled a stirring fightback by Italian Matteo Berrettini to claim a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7(5), 7-5 victory to set up a mouth-watering semifinal showdown with defending champion Rafa Nadal.



Battle of the debutantes: Zidansek's made a flying start, but Pavlyuchenkova soaked up her best shots and proved way too solid in the end. ■ GETTY IMAGES

The 34-year-old bellowed a series of frightening roars after completing a victory that at one stage looked like a formality but became increasingly fraught as Berrettini threw the kitchen sink at the Serb.

"This match had it all: falls, crowd, break," he told reporters. "It was a lot of intensity. I just felt under tension the entire time and missed some chances to end it in three."

"It was just super, super stressful to constantly be under pressure... the reaction in the end was just me liberating that tension that was

building up for the entire match."

■ Pavlyuchenkova is the first woman to play more than 50 Majors before reaching her first Grand Slam final

■ Pavlyuchenkova is the seventh Russian woman to reach a Major final after Myskina, Dementieva, Sharapova, Kuznetsova, Safina and Zvonareva

■ Before Pavlyuchenkova, Sharapova was the last Russian woman in a Grand Slam final (2015 Aus Open, lost to Serena)

Evenly poised

In the second semifinal, Sakkari and Krejcikova were 5-5 in the third set after splitting the first two

THE RESULTS

Women (semifinals): 31-Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt Tamara Zidansek (Slo) 7-5, 6-3.

Mixed doubles (final): Desirae Krawczyk (USA) & Joe Salisbury (GBR) bt Elena Vesnina (Rus) & Aslan Karatsev (Rus) 2-6, 6-4, [10-5].

On Wednesday:

Men (quarterfinals): 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt 9-Matteo Berrettini (Ita) 6-3, 6-2, 6-7(5), 7-5.



BATTLE ROYALE

Nadal and Djokovic will meet for a men's record-extending 58th time on Friday.

It's not like any other match. It's the biggest challenge on clay. Each time we face each other, there is extra tension and the vibes are different. I would pick Rafa as the biggest rival I have ever had. Let's have a great battle

DJOKOVIC, ON PLAYING NADAL

Last meeting: ATP Rome Masters 2021, Final, Nadal won 7-5, 1-6, 6-3

At French Open: 2020, Final, Nadal won 6-0, 6-2, 7-5

Djokovic leads the head-to-head 29-28, but Nadal leads 19-7 on clay and has won the last five matches on the surface

■ At Majors, Nadal is ahead 10-6, including 7-1 at the French Open. Djokovic's lone victory came in the 2015 quarterfinal, which he won in straight sets

■ The two have met in French Open semifinals thrice before and Djokovic has lost all of them. Nadal

won in straight sets way back in 2007 and 2008 before being stretched to five sets in 2013 [6-4, 3-6, 6-1, 6-7(3), 7-6].

■ In fact, Nadal is 13-0 in French Open semifinals, while Djokovic is 5-5

■ Friday's other semifinal between Tsitsipas (22) and Zverev (24) is the youngest Roland-Garros last-four clash since a 22-year-old Nadal met a 21-year-old Djokovic in 2008

We know each other well and in these matches anything can happen. But it is the semifinal, not the final. So that's a big difference. The winner still has a lot of work left to do [in the final]. The goal is to play at my highest level

NADAL, LOOKING AHEAD TO THE SEMIFINAL

SEMIFINAL LINE-UP:
5-Tsitsipas vs 6-Zverev (6.20 p.m. IST)
1-Djokovic vs 3-Nadal (Not before 9 p.m.)

COVID curfew forces angry fans to leave

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS

Novak Djokovic's quarterfinal against Matteo Berrettini was delayed for about 22 minutes while thousands of spectators were cleared out of the stadium because of an 11 p.m. coronavirus curfew.

Restrictions were eased to allow 5,000 inside Court Philippe-Chatrier on Wednesday rather than the 1,000 for

the previous matches, and it was quite an atmosphere until the rule was imposed.

"The conditions were strange with the fans here and then the atmosphere was a bit different (afterward)," Djokovic said later. "You have to find a different motivation because the emergency from the fans is special."

Some disappointed fans jeered and even sang "We've

paid, we'll stay" as they refused to leave at 10:45 p.m. as curfew approached.

Shortly before 10:55 pm,

both players packed their bags and walked off while fans shouted in frustration.

The top-ranked Djokovic was up 2-1 in sets and leading 3-2 in the fourth when play was halted.

Berrettini waved to the crowd as they chanted his

name shortly before the players departed. The big-hitting Italian said he felt for them. He also felt some sting was taken out of his game.

"I think it's a shame, it's something that I didn't like. But it's bigger than us, it's not what you can do something about," the ninth-seeded Berrettini said of the curfew.

Will France do the rare double of World Cup and Euro?

Portugal and Germany are also in the group of death along with the World champion

EURO 2020

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Euro 2020 finally kicks off on Friday as Portugal prepares to defend its title and world champion France seeks a rare double a year after the tournament was delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

France's fearless forward line makes it favourite to win a third European crown at the pan-continental event, while top-ranked Belgium and a youthful England side will be major threats.

For the first time, the tournament is taking place in 11 cities across Europe – instead of one or two countries – despite the lingering shadow cast by the COVID-19 crisis.

Favourite France is not in

action until Tuesday in the headline act of the first round of group matches when it takes on Germany in Munich.

All eyes will be on 33-year-old forward Karim Benzema, who was recalled after an international exile of five-and-a-half years following a prolific season for Real Madrid.

Portugal and Hungary complete Group F, dubbed the tournament's group of death.

Better squad

Cristiano Ronaldo is now 36 but is still going strong and is supported by a better squad than five years ago, which also boasts the outstanding talents of Joao Felix, Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva and Ruben Dias.

England has the carrot of

knowing both semifinals and the final will be played at Wembley, while Italy and the Netherlands are eager to impress after failing to qualify for recent tournaments.

But despite the ongoing COVID-19 threat, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has been bullish, insisting Euro 2020 will be safe.

Packed to capacity

The clearest illustration of that is set to come from Budapest, where it is hoped the new Puskas Arena will be packed to capacity.

Each of the host cities will welcome back fans, with capacities of between 25 percent and 100 percent apart from Munich, which aims to host a minimum of 14,500 fans – around 22 percent of capacity.



Ready to host: London's Wembley stadium is all set to welcome guests for the European Championships. ■ AFP

Neeraj opens season with gold

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCHI

Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra opened his international season with a very promising 83.18m effort that brought him the gold in the City of Lisbon athletics meet at the Lisbon University Stadium in Portugal on Thursday.

The conditions were windy and Neeraj, the Asian Games champion who set a National record with an 88.07m throw in the Indian Grand Prix in Patiala in March, had a foul-ridden series messing up three of his six rounds. His best came in the last round. He opened with an 80.71 and his other legal throw was 78.50 in the fourth.

Indians undergo first group training session



Intense: The fielding session, under coach R. Sridhar, mostly focused on catching in the slip cordon. ■ BCCI/TWITTER

WTC FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SOUTHAMPTON

India carried out its first group practice session at a ground adjacent to Ageas Bowl here on Thursday, five days after being allowed to staggered training in the run-up to the World Test Championship final against New Zealand, commencing on June 18.

The players had a full net session, where the likes of skipper Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara and Rishabh Pant batted for a considerable amount of time and faced throw-downs as well.

The bowlers too had an intense session with all the main players – Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Ravichandran Ashwin – participating in the practice session.

The nets were followed by a fielding session under fielding coach R. Sridhar, which mostly focused on catching in the slip cordon.

Dhawan to lead in Lanka

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Shikhar Dhawan will lead India in the white-ball series against Sri Lanka in July. The senior selection committee, which picked the squad on Thursday, has named Bhuvneshwar Kumar as vice-captain.

All matches will be played in Colombo.

The squad: Shikhar Dhawan (Capt.), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (vice-capt.), Prithvi Shaw, Devdutt Padikkal, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Suryakumar Yadav, Manish Pandey, Hardik Pandya, Nitish Rana, Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Yuzvendra Chahal, Rahul Chahar, K Gowtham, Krunal Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy.



Dhawan. ■ FILE PHOTO

Deepak Chahar, Navdeep Saini, and Chetan Sakariya.

Net bowlers: Ishan Porel, Sandeep Warrier, Arshdeep Singh, Sai Kishore, Simarjeet Singh.

The schedule: ODIs: July 13, 16 and 18.

T20Is: July 21, 23 and 25.

Nortje runs through West Indies top-order

SA IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

GROS-ISLET (ST. LUCIA)

South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje took three wickets for eight runs as West Indies tumbled to 48 for four at lunch on the first day of the first match of the two-

Test series on Thursday.

Shai Hope (15), captain Kraigg Brathwaite (15), Nkrumah Bonner (10) and Kyle Mayers (1) were all out and the host team was under pressure after opting to bat first. Roston Chase (7) and Jermaine Blackwood (0) were at the crease.

Test series on Thursday.

Fall of wickets: 1-24, 2-31, 3-45, 4-46.

South Africa bowling: Rabada 10-2-24-1, Ngidi 7-2-10-0, Nortje 6-3-8-3, Maharan 4-3-6-0.

Toss: West Indies.

Burns and Lawrence shine

NZ IN ENG

ANI

BIRMINGHAM

Rory Burns and Dan Lawrence were the standout performers for the hosts as England ended day one at 258 for seven in the second Test against New Zealand here on Thursday. Lawrence (67) and Mark Wood (16) were at the crease.

Opting to bat first, England got off to a steady start as openers Dominic Sibley and Burns saw off the new ball, playing out 29 overs

and scoring 67. Matt Henry broke the partnership, dismissing Sibley for 35. Zak Crawley went for a duck and captain Joe Root for four as England slid to 85 for three.

SCOREBOARD

England – 1st innings: Rory

Burns c Latham b Boulton 81, Dom Sibley c Blundell b Henry 35, Zak Crawley c Mitchell b Wagner 0, Joe Root c Blundell b Henry 19, Dan Lawrence (batting) 67, James Bracey c Mitchell b Boulton 0, Olly Stone lbw b Ajaz 20, Mark Wood (batting) 16; Extras (b-5, lb-8, w-1, nb-2); 16; Total (for seven wkts. in 90 overs): 258.

Fall of wickets: 1-72, 2-

TV PICKS

England vs New Zealand: 2nd Test: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 3.30 p.m.

Roland-Garros: Star Sports 1 & SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.

Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

IN BRIEF



Neymar to lead Brazil at Copa America

SAO PAULO
Brazil coach Tite named superstar Neymar captain of his squad for the Copa America. Paris Saint-Germain striker Neymar, who missed Brazil's 2019 Copa America win due to injury, will lead a squad where Thiago Silva will replace Rodrigo Caio. AFP



Jazz's Gobert wins NBA defensive player award

NEW YORK
Utah Jazz's Rudy Gobert was named NBA Defensive Player-of-the-Year on Wednesday, the third time the big Frenchman has won the award. Gobert (2017-18, 2018-19) is the fourth player to win the award at least three times, joining Dikembe Mutombo and Ben Wallace (both four times) and Dwight Howard (three times). AFP

Bhavesh stuns Prithu

NEW DELHI:
Bhavesh Mahajan stunned top seeded Grandmaster Prithu Gupta in the third round of the National (under-18) online rapid chess championship on Thursday. Bhavesh is among the 21 leaders with three points after as many rounds. Top seed Mrudul Dehankar led 11 leaders at three points in the girls' section.

Boxing star Dingko Singh passes away

COVID survivor succumbs to cancer after long battle

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Asian Games gold medallist Dingko Singh, who inspired a generation of Indian boxers with his fear in Bangkok in 1998, passed away at Imphal on Thursday after a prolonged battle with cancer. His death was confirmed by a close family friend.

Dingko was 42 and is survived by his wife, son and daughter. He had been battling cancer since 2017 and recovered from a bout of COVID-19 last year.

According to boxers close to Dingko, the iconic pugilist's health started deteriorating about three months back. The end came early on Thursday.

Rise from the depths
Dingko rose to prominence by winning the 1997 Kings Cup in Bangkok. He could not make it to the 1998 Asian



Dingko Singh.
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Games squad after his second-round exit in the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games and took to alcohol out of frustration.

Dingko was included in the squad at the last minute and gave his best to bring India its first boxing gold medal in 16 years.

In an earlier interview,

Dingko said his semifinal bout against local favourite and World No. 2 Wong Pragues Sontaya was the toughest fight of his career. The Thai supporters threw beers cans at him after the bout.

Dingo beat World No. 3 Timur Tulyakov of Uzbekistan in the bantamweight final to corner glory.

On his return to Imphal, he was accorded a hero's welcome. The Manipur Government even named a road after him.

He was conferred the Arjuna Award in 1998 and Padma Shri in 2013.

"Dingko was a great fighter with great determination. Like Vijender's Olympics bronze medal, Dingko's Asian Games gold popularised boxing, especially in the northeast," said G.S. Sandhu, who was the head coach in 1998.

Middleweight boxer Jitendra Kumar, who was Dingko's teammate at the 1998 Asian Games and 2000 Olympics, walked down memory lane.

Dingko gave his best in the final and was completely exhausted. The crowd was hostile, but he never reacted."

Vijender Singh, who led an initiative to raise funds for Dingko's cancer treatment, was emotional and said, "It is shocking."

Tough coach

Dingko also left his legacy as a coach. He coached the Navy to team championship victory in the 2009 inter-Services meet and groomed some top boxers, including Olympian Anthresh Lakra and Commonwealth Games champion Suranjoy Singh.

"He was a hard taskmaster, but was friendly after the training. His mantra was 'no

Dingko Singh's highs



- Bagged the bantamweight gold at the 1998 Asian Games
- Reached the pre-quarterfinals at the 2000 Sydney Olympics
- Conferred Arjuna Award in 1998 and Padma Shri in 2013

TRIBUTES

MARY KOM
You were a true hero of our nation. You leave but your legacy will live among us

JITENDER KUMAR, DINGKO'S TEAMMATE AT THE 1998 ASIAN GAMES AND 2000 OLYMPICS

G.S. SANDHU, HEAD COACH IN 1998
Dingko was a great fighter with great determination. Dingko's Asian Games gold popularised boxing

pur's head coach, was one of Dingko's last assignments before the recurrence of cancer last year.

Ramkumar & Hoang knock out top seeds

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU

NOTTINGHAM

Ramkumar Ramanathan and Antoine Hoang of France knocked out top seeds Luke Bambridge and Jonny O'Mara of Great Britain 7-6(3), 3-6, [10-7] in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €132,280 Challenger tennis tournament on grass here.

The meeting also decided to disaffiliate an already-suspended Bengal Chess Association and gave affiliation to Sara Bangla Daba Sangathan.

Show-cause notice

The AICF joint-secretary Atanu Lahiri has been issued a show-cause notice for anti-AICF activities. Further, an FIR will be filed against Lahiri's colleague from Bengal, Antarip Roy for maligning AICF on social media platforms.

Y. Suman, erstwhile office-bearer of the Andhra Pra-

desh, faces an FIR for having not paid the prize-money of ₹20 lakh following a tournament in the State.

"These decisions are part of AICF's 'zero-tolerance' approach to corruption. We will recover the last rupee from the defaulters in different parts of the country," declared AICF President Sanjay Kapoor after the meeting.

The meeting also decided to send Grandmaster K. Humpy's application for Rajaiv Gandhi Khel Ratna this year. The applications of GMs Vidit Gujrathi, B. Adhiban, S. P. Sethuraman and M. R. Lalith Babu will be forwarded for Arjuna Awards.

For Dhyan Chand Award, GM Abhijit Kunte will be AICF's choice.

In the \$25,000 ITF women's event in Madrid, Karman Kaur Thandi saved five match points in the 12th game of the decider, before she lost 4-6, 6-2, 7-6(3) to third seed Robin Anderson of the USA in the pre-quarterfinals.

The results: €618,735 ATP.

Suns scorch Nuggets

NBA PLAYOFFS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES



Suns' Chris Paul goes for a shot. • AP

Chris Paul scored 17 points and handed out 15 assists on Wednesday to propel Phoenix Suns to a crushing 123-98 victory over Denver and a 2-0 lead in their NBA playoff series.

Veteran point guard Paul was the keystone of the Suns' dominant victory, pulling down five rebounds and finishing the night without a turnover.

Every starter scored in double figures and the Suns did not give the Nuggets a chance to celebrate the NBA Most Valuable Player award that Nikola Jokic received on Tuesday.

Devin Booker scored 18 points for the Suns. Deandre Ayton added 15

AICF makes course correction

Takes a zero-tolerance stand against corruption, indiscipline

CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Apart from some much-needed constitution amendments, the All India Chess Federation (AICF) has decided to take a zero-tolerance stand against corruption and indiscipline. \

All 21 amendments, including a few to set right some startling anomalies, were passed unanimously in the Annual General Meeting here on Thursday as part of the process to fall in line with the Sports Code of the Sports Ministry.

These include shifting of headquarters from Chennai to New Delhi, formation of the Ethics Commission, an

Appellate Authority and giving the competent courts in New Delhi "the exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide any and all cases against the AICF."

The AGM also decided to disaffiliate an already-suspended Bengal Chess Association and gave affiliation to Sara Bangla Daba Sangathan.

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Rower Drysdale retires



Mahe Drysdale. • FILE PHOTO

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
WELLINGTON

The shooters had trained in Bengaluru at Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance Centre last year. During their week-long stint in India, the biomechanical assessment was done and they were given customised training plans.

"I am sure the journey of Luna and Mahdi will inspire former and current Olympians to take on such initiatives and uplift lives through the power of sports," added Bindra.

Hard work
"It has been an honour to coach Luna and Mahdi, and I am so proud of what they have achieved. They have both worked relentlessly for

the Tokyo Games.

Drysdale, 42, has competed at four Olympics, beginning in Athens in 2004, collecting three medals including back-to-back golds in the single sculls in London and Rio.

Drysdale, 42, has competed at four Olympics, beginning in Athens in 2004, collecting three medals including back-to-back golds in the single sculls in London and Rio.

Economy hit: The Olympics were originally expected to be a huge tourist draw, but banning foreign spectators put paid to hopes of an early recovery in inbound tourism, frozen since last year.

In 2019, Japan hosted 31.9 million foreign visitors, who spent nearly 4.81 trillion yen (\$44 bln). Numbers plunged 87% in 2020.

Here are some areas where costs have grown, and where income that had been expected will not materialise.

The costs: Organisers said last December that the entire cost of holding the Games would come to about \$15.4 billion, including \$2.8 billion in costs for the unprecedented postponement from 2020. Since then, the projected bill for postponement has risen to \$3 billion.

Sponsors: More than 60 Japanese companies together

paid a record of more than \$3 billion to sponsor the Games. Sponsors paid another \$200 million to extend contracts after the Olympics were postponed.

Insurance: Although the cancellation scenario is looking less likely by the day, global insurers would face a hefty bill should that happen, with estimates running to a loss of \$2.3 billion.

Pooja felt the Indian boxers stand with a good chance of winning medals at Tokyo.

They were trained by Campriani along with Bindra

SHOOTING

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Refugee athletes Luna Solomon and Mahdi have been selected to shoot in the Tokyo Olympics.

Both were chosen and trained by triple-Olympic gold medalist Niccolo Campriani since 2018, in collaboration with Abhinav Bindra.

Luna will represent the Refugee Olympic Team while Mahdi will represent Afghanistan.

"In sport, I have finally found peace. At the range, there is just me, my rifle and the target. In Tokyo, this will be no different, and I am ready to make my mark," Luna said in a statement.

"I have dreamt of the Games every day since being selected for this project and it feels incredible for this

Pooja eyes glory at Olympics

ANI

Boxer Pooja Rani (75kg) is not happy with just winning gold at the recently concluded Asian championships. She has set her sights on the Olympics and is leaving no stone unturned to attain ultimate glory.

"Before the Asian championships, we all were mentally down because people around us were testing positive for COVID-19. Then we went to Pune for a camp. Our coach told us not to think about the Asian championships and focus on the Olympics."

Pooja felt the Indian boxers stand with a good chance of winning medals at Tokyo.

They were trained by Campriani along with Bindra



Financial fall-out: The economic implications for the IOC and all involved are enormous. • REUTERS

The cost of a pandemic-delayed Games

Despite growing local opposition amid the coronavirus pandemic, the Tokyo Olympic Games that were postponed last year will get under way in less than two months - barring "Armageddon", as one International Olympic Committee member said.

Here are some areas where costs have grown, and where income that had been expected will not materialise.

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