

21<sup>st</sup> June 2021

  
THE HINDU GROUP

## International Day of Yoga

This International Day of Yoga, *The Hindu* put a spotlight on special Chair Yoga poses that can be performed while working from home, so that nothing comes between our readers and good health.

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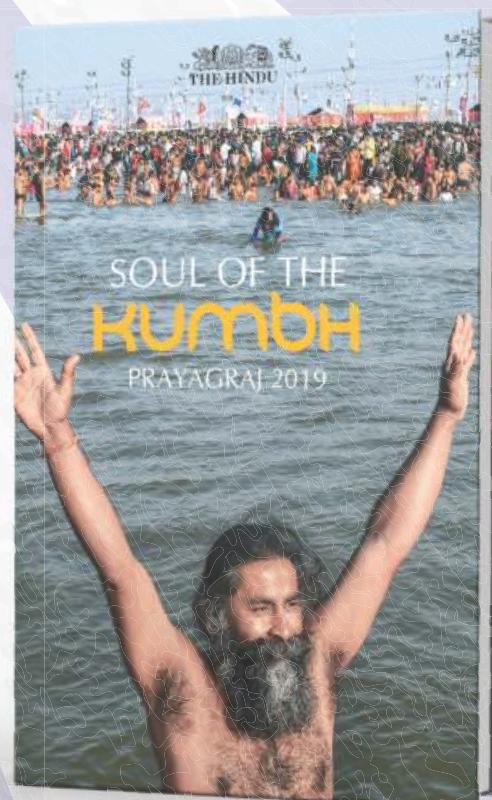
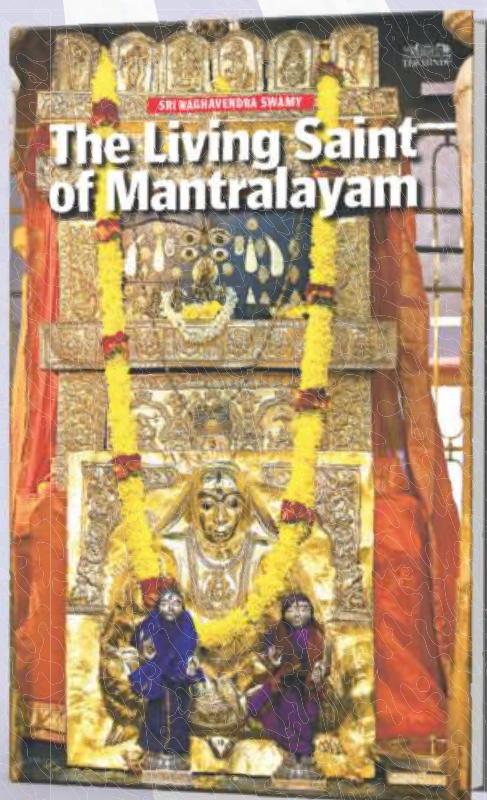
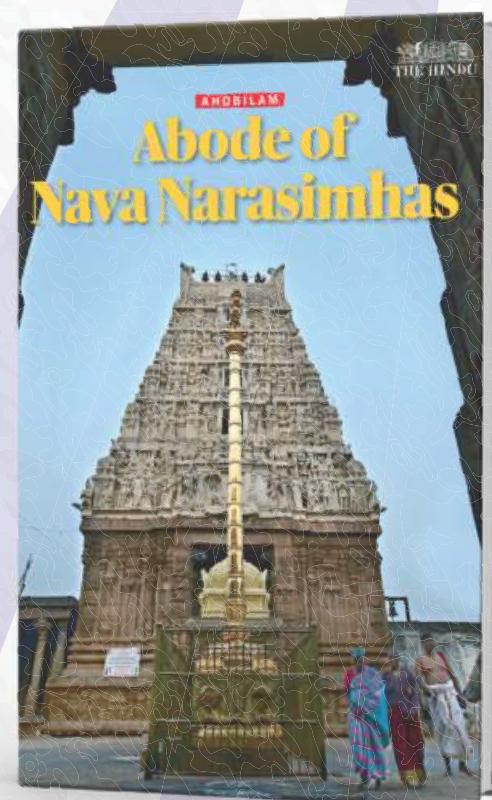
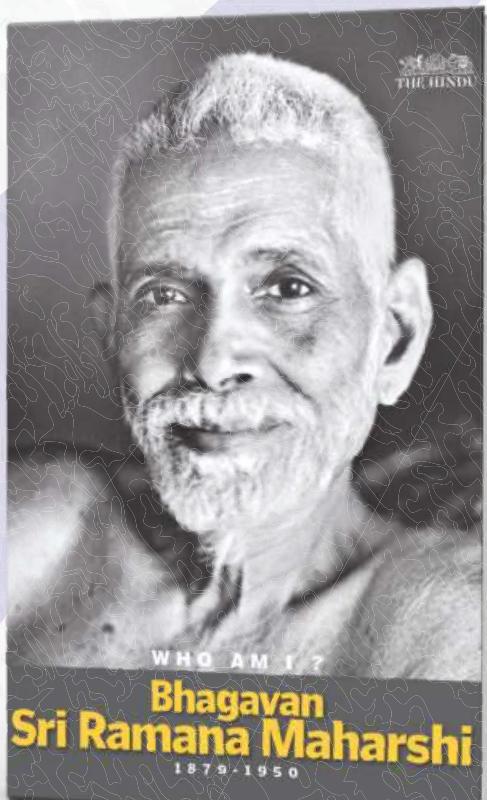
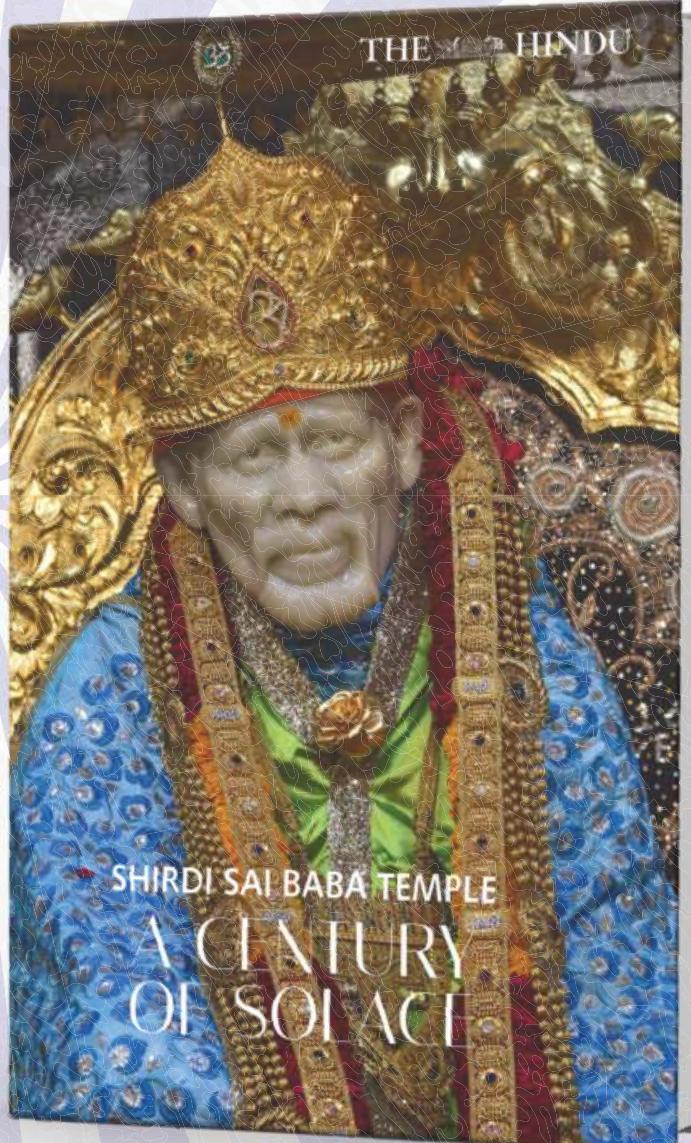
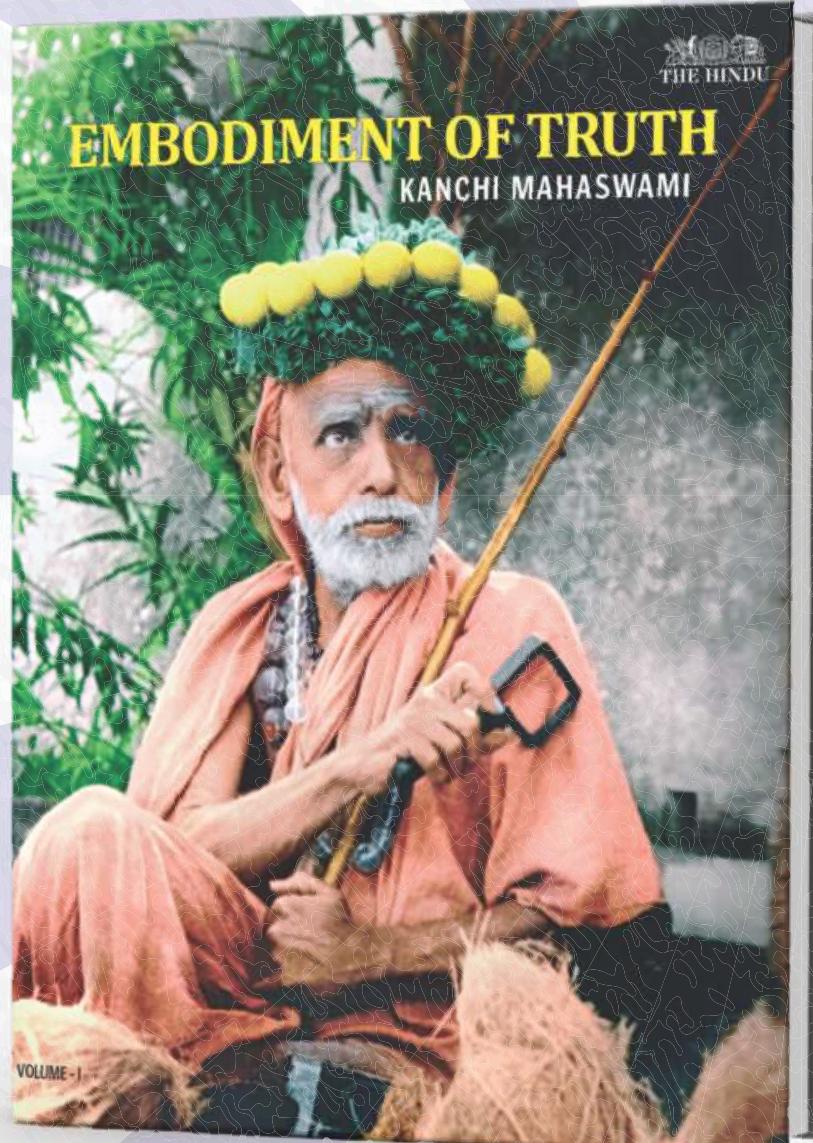
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# *A Journey Towards Harmony*

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Chirag Paswan plans roadshow in Bihar from July 5  
page 9



We were always hopeful that justice will prevail, says Devangana Kalita  
page 9

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## NEARBY



### Parks to reopen today, bars to operate at 50%

NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday permitted bars to reopen with 50% seating capacity. Parks, gardens and golf clubs will also reopen from June 21 as part of the gradual unlock measures. Malls, restaurants and markets that had opened on a trial basis have been allowed to operate for another week.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

### 'Only 8% inmates inoculated in Delhi jails'

NEW DELHI

Only around 8% of the total inmates in Tihar jail, considered the largest prison in Asia, have been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far. Overall, too, a meagre 8% of the total number of inmates in Capital's prisons have been vaccinated, according to the Delhi prisons administration. A senior officer said the inoculation drive among jail inmates has suffered due to shortage of vaccines.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

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EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 3

## Massive distribution of ex gratia will strain finances, says Centre

COVID-19 pandemic not a one-time disaster, broader approach needed, it tells SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

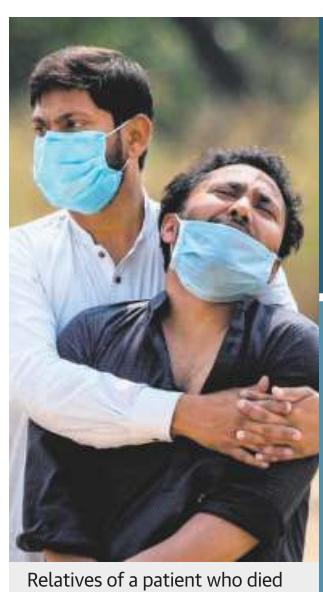
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic is not a "one-time disaster", such as an earthquake or a flood for which victims can be compensated with just money, the Centre told the Supreme Court.

It is an ongoing pandemic, which will continue to attack in waves. A "broader approach" is essential. The government was responding to petitions in the Supreme Court to pay ₹4 lakh compensation to the families of every COVID-19 victim.

"Unlike disasters of a short and finite duration, occurring and ending quickly, COVID-19 is a global pandemic which has affected all the countries in the world. The pandemic has claimed more than 3.85 lakh lives, a number which is likely to increase further... These deaths have affected families from all classes – the rich and poor, professionals and informal workers, traders and farmers..." the Ministry of Home Affairs, represented by Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, said in a 189-page affidavit.

Limiting relief to monetary pay-offs was a "narrow and pedantic approach". There was also no precedent of giving ex gratia compensation for a disease or disaster



Relatives of a patient who died of COVID-19 mourning in Delhi.

The finances of the State and Central governments are under severe strain due to the reduction in tax revenues and increase in health expenses on account of the pandemic

The pandemic started in the early months of January 2020 and the country is still battling the same with different intensity, different symptoms and different mutations, with no certainty regarding the end

CENTRE'S AFFIDAVIT IN SC

spread out over several months or years.

"The pandemic started in the early months of January 2020 and the country is still battling the same with different intensity, different symptoms and different mutations, with no certainty regarding the end," the government said.

Massive distribution of compensation across the country at this point would dry up precious financial resources of the Centre and the States. "If the entire State Disaster Response Funds get consumed on ex gratia com-

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

pensation for COVID-19 victims, the States may not have sufficient funds for organising COVID-19 response, for provision of various essential medical and other supplies, or to take care of other disasters like cyclones, floods, etc. Already the finances of State governments and the Central government are under severe strain due to the reduction in tax revenues and increase in health expenses on account of the pandemic," the affidavit explained.

LIMITING RELIEF TO MONETARY PAY-OFFS WAS A "NARROW AND PEDANTIC APPROACH". THERE WAS ALSO NO PRECEDENT OF GIVING EX GRATIA COMPENSATION FOR A DISEASE OR DISASTER

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION HAS ADVISED COUNTRIES IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION TO SCALE UP PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEASURES, ALONG WITH THE VACCINATION DRIVE, TO PREVENT ANOTHER SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES. ▶ PAGE 10

## Certify all COVID deaths

Any lapse in stating COVID-19 as the cause of demise in a death certificate will have penal consequences for those found responsible, including the certifying doctor, the Centre said in the Supreme Court. ▶ PAGE 10

## Patna HC pulls up Bihar govt.

The Patna High Court pulled up the Bihar government for not maintaining proper records of deaths during the pandemic, saying that the State's reluctance to publish the number of deaths was "uncalled for". ▶ PAGE 10

## Scale up health infra: WHO

The World Health Organization has advised countries in the South-East Asia region to scale up public health and social measures, along with the vaccination drive, to prevent another surge in COVID-19 cases. ▶ PAGE 10

## Karnataka's excess deaths nearly 6 times official toll

Undercount factor of fatalities in Bengaluru is 2.3, show data

SHARATH S. SRIVATS  
SRINIVASAN RAMANI  
BENGALURU / CHENNAI

The number of "excess deaths" registered by the Civil Registration System (CRS) in Karnataka ever since the COVID-19 pandemic hit (from April 2020 to May 2021) was 1,67,788, which is 5.8 times the official reported figure of 29,090 deaths for the same period.

This high number was largely due to the deaths registered in April 2021 (46,000) and May 2021 (77,000) and still being reconciled.

In this period, which coincided with the second COVID-19 wave, the excess deaths were around 53,728, compared to the registered COVID-19 tally of 16,523, leading to an undercount factor of 3.25.

The overall COVID-19 tally in Karnataka as of June 19 is 33,763. Excess deaths in Karnataka were calculated based on the month-wise number of deaths registered by the CRS (provisional figures) from January 2015 to May 2021, which were accessed by *The Hindu*.

Not all excess deaths would be due to COVID-19 but a bulk of them would be related to it during the pandemic.

The undercount factor (5.8) and excess deaths for Karnataka (1,67,788) were

comparable and similar to that of Tamil Nadu (6.2 and 1,51,408 respectively). For 2021 alone, the undercount factors for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were 4.7 and 6.5 respectively, which are much lower than those for Madhya Pradesh (4.2) and Andhra Pradesh (3.4).

(till May) in 2020 and 2021 respectively in the area, which accounted for 31,029 estimated excess deaths, compared to the baseline mortality of the pre-pandemic period (2015-2019).

However, the BBMP's official tally till May 2021 was only 13,296. This adds up to an undercount factor in the city limits of 2.33, which is lower than that of Chennai (5.6).

Other cities such as Hyderabad (17.5-30.5) and Kolkata (4.5) also registered higher undercounts for 2021 alone.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Counting the dead

In 2021, till May, 80,562 excess deaths were recorded in Karnataka, which is 4.7 times the officially reported COVID-19 deaths in the State. The undercount factor in Karnataka was relatively smaller than other States for which excess deaths could be ascertained



Period	Excess deaths	Recorded COVID-19 deaths	UF* (Karnataka)	UF (T.N.)	UF (M.P.)	UF (A.P.)
April 2020 - May 2021	1,67,788	29,090	5.8	6.2		
Jan.- May 2021	80,562	17,000	4.7	6.5	42	34
April-May 2021	53,728	16,523	3.25	5.2	43	31.4

\*UF - Undercount Factor

comparable and similar to that of Tamil Nadu (6.2 and 1,51,408 respectively). For 2021 alone, the undercount factors for Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were 4.7 and 6.5 respectively, which are much lower than those for Madhya Pradesh (4.2) and Andhra Pradesh (3.4).

## Lower in Bengaluru

*The Hindu* also accessed the corresponding CRS figures for the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) (the Greater Bengaluru metropolitan area).

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## Three youth lynched in Tripura on suspicion of stealing cattle

Victims were transporting cattle in a mini-truck, police said

A CORRESPONDENT

AGARTALA

Three youth suspected of stealing cattle were allegedly lynched at north Mahanipur in Khowai district of Tripura on Sunday, police said.

The victims from Sepahijala district were transporting cattle in a mini-truck when they were stopped. The villagers held Billal Mia, 30, and Joyed Hussain, 28,

while Saiful Islam, 18, fled. The mob tied Billal and Joyed and thrashed them to death. Another group caught Saiful at Mungiakam and lynched him.

The CPI(M) said the incident was a fallout of lawlessness in the State. It claimed several lynchings had occurred after the installation of the BJP-led coalition government in Tripura.

The PAC decided that Ms. Mufti would take a call on meeting Mr. Modi after a meeting of the Gupkar alliance, scheduled for Tuesday.

"All members of the Political Affairs Committee shared their inputs on engaging with the Centre. It was unanimously decided that Ms. Mufti will be authorised to take a final call during her meeting with members of the Gupkar alliance [People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration]," PDP spokesman Suhail Bukhari said.

Sources said Ms. Mufti is for nominating National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah as the Gupkar alliance leader to meet the Prime Minister on June 24 in Delhi.

Dr. Abdullah held consultations with senior NC leaders, including general secretary Ali Mohammad Sagar and provincial president of Kashmir Nasir Aslam Wani.

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# Parks to reopen today, bars will be allowed with 50% capacity

Owners of eateries to be responsible for strict COVID norms adherence: DDMA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday permitted bars to reopen with 50% seating capacity along with public parks, gardens, and golf clubs from June 21 as a part of gradual unlock measures in the Capital. It also permitted outdoor yoga activities to coincide with International Yoga Day.



Migrants returning to the city on Sunday as it unlocks in phases. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

## Market places

Markets, market places, malls and restaurants that had opened on a trial basis for a week, have been given permission to operate for another week.

Bars have been allowed to open between 12 p.m. and 10 p.m. and restaurants between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. upto 50% of their capacity.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority in its order said that owners of the restaurants and bars shall be responsible for strict adherence to the prescribed SOPs and all instructions/guidelines issued by GOI/

GNCTD from time to time as well as compliance with COVID-19 appropriate behaviour to contain the spread of the virus. In case any violation is found, strict penal criminal action shall be taken against the owner of the restaurant/bar, it said.

“Public parks, gardens, golf clubs, and outdoor yoga activities will be allowed. Apart from the individual, parks/gardens owning agencies (MCDs, DDA, NDMC, DCB, etc.) as well as the concerned RWA, owners/directors of golf clubs, yoga instructors shall be

responsible for ensuring strict compliance of Covid appropriate behaviour,” the order stated.

**Those still prohibited**

Activities that continue to remain prohibited include opening of all educational institutions, swimming pools, sports complexes, cinemas, entertainment parks, banquet halls, assembly halls, gyms, spas and yoga institutes.

All social, political, sports, academic, religious, cultural and festival related gatherings and congregations are also prohibited. The prohibition on organising any marriage ceremony at public places also continues and marriages may be organised only at court or at home in which not more than 20 people will be allowed to participate. DJ, sound system, catering and other service will also not be allowed for marriage ceremonies, the order said. The DDMA said that a close watch and supervision will be maintained on the overall functioning of markets, market complexes, malls, restaurants and bars.

“It is found that COVID-appropriate behaviour is not being followed or the positivity rate, number of positive cases is increasing, markets, market complexes, malls, restaurants and bars will be closed forthwith without any loss of time so as to completely avoid and prevent any upsurge and likelihood of the next wave in Delhi,” the DDMA said.

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# Capital records 124 new infections

More than 65 lakh inoculated so far\*

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Capital recorded 124 new COVID-19 cases and seven deaths on Sunday along with 398 recoveries, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government.

It added that 72,670 tests have been conducted with a positivity rate of 0.17%. Of the total tests conducted, 52,790 were RT-PCR tests. There are 2,091 active cases in the Capital of which 600 are under home isolation.

The total number of cases since the pandemic began now stands at 14,32,292 along with 24,914 deaths.

While presenting the vaccination bulletin, AAP leader Atishi said more than 65 lakh people have been vaccinated in Delhi, of which, 49.38 lakh people have been given the first dose and 15.75 lakh people have been given both the doses. Currently, 8.25 lakh vaccines are available in Delhi for 45 and above age group, out of which, five days of Covaxin and 57 days of Covishield are in stock. For the 18-44 age group, 2.65 lakh vaccines are available out of which we have 1 day Covaxin and 13 days Covishield in stock.



A woman gets vaccinated.  
■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

# Crime Branch busts unit manufacturing fake drugs

10 people, including two doctors, held

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police busted a unit manufacturing fake drugs meant for treatment of COVID-19 and black fungus patients and arrested 10 people, including two doctors, officials on Sunday.

The medicines were being black-marketed through WhatsApp, they said. The police said, “The big crackdown on black-marketing of fake ‘injections’ used as life-saving drugs in COVID and black fungus led to arrest of 10 people, including two doctors”.

According to the police, one of the accused, Mayank Taluja (25), worked as a COVID volunteer for two-three months and came in contact with a salesman named Waheed Khan who worked at Al Khidmat Medicos.

Taluja started advertising his mobile number on various WhatsApp groups that injectable drugs for the treatment of black fungus disease were available with him, they said.

On June 17, the Drug Control department notified the police that Taluja was in-

volved in black marketing of drugs meant for the treatment of black fungus patients.

The police then arrested Waseem Khan from the Jamia metro station area where he had come to deliver Liposomal Amphotericin-B drug meant for black fungus patient. Based on his disclosure, Al Khidmat Medicos was raided and 10 more vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B were recovered. The owner of Al Khidmat Medicos, Shobh Khan and his two salesmen Mohd Faizal Yaseen and Afzal were also apprehended, police said. Police said Taluja was also apprehended when he came to Medicos, said DCP (Crime) Monika Bhardwaj.

An officer said from the recovered articles, sample of five drugs were drawn by the Inspector of the Drug Department and sent for examinations. A laptop with images of printing material of these drugs, two high-quality printing machines and raw material used for printing labels were also seized from the premises, the officer said.

# 5 held for running illegal restaurant-cum-bar

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Five people were arrested following a raid on an unauthorised restaurant-cum-bar in east Delhi's Preet Vihar for allegedly organising a party in violation of COVID norms, the police said on Sunday.

It was a joint operation carried out on Saturday by district officials led by the sub-divisional magistrate of Preet Vihar and a police team under the local station house officer.

The officials said a hookah party was underway at the establishment when the raid took place. They added that liquor was being served to underage people at the bar.

The eatery – Scon King Café and Restaurant, which was located on the first floor of the DDA Complex at the New Rajdhani Enclave, did not have a valid license. The place sealed the place.

An official said fines were imposed and a detailed inquiry has been ordered.

A case was registered under Sections 188 (disobedience of order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and the Epidemic Diseases Act at the Preet Vihar police station, a senior police officer said.

# Gambhir launches vaccine drive for slum dwellers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

BJP MP Gautam Gambhir on Sunday launched a drive for administering COVID vaccines to slum dwellers in East Delhi constituency.

The drive began at Shashi Garden slum cluster in East Delhi's Mayur Vihar in presence of Gambhir and several BJP leaders, including Delhi unit general secretary (organisation) Siddharthan.

Mr. Gambhir said free vaccination camps will also be held in other slum clusters in East Delhi.

# Asif murder case: citizens' convention in Nuh protests against communal strife

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

A citizens' convention held at Nuh on Sunday resolved to protect the social amity and strengthen the fight for justice, which was sought to be disrupted by certain communal forces in Mewat.

Organised jointly by Shahidane Mewat and Naikri Manch, the convention condemned a congregation held recently at Sohna, which allegedly intended to inflame communal strife for the release of accused in Asif murder case.

The convention presided over by a panel of Colonel Arya Aryaveer, a former judge; Usha Saroha, Kale Khan and Raj Singh also wanted the arrest of all police personnel accused of the custodial beating of Junaid who succumbed due to the injuries.

Addressing the convention, former Lok Sabha MP Subhashini Ali Sahgal described the attempts of communal polarisation for weakening the emerging unity of farmers and workers as seen in ongoing historical farmers movement. It was announced that a “Kisan Mazdoor Bhaichara” will be organised at the Sunehra border on June 28.

Asif, a resident of Nuh, was returning home from a medical store on May 16 evening with Rashid and his friend Wasif in a car when the accused allegedly waylaid them at Atta village and kidnapped him. He was later found dead in Sohna.



# VACCINE FOR ALL FREE FOR ALL

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### World's Largest Free Vaccination Campaign

#### Corona Will Lose, India Will Win

- Free COVID-19 vaccination for everyone above 18 years of age begins in India today
- So far, vaccines were free for people of 45 years of age and above
- Vaccines will be available free of cost in government-run vaccination centres
- Government of India is providing free vaccines to all states
- Central government has provided 30 crore vaccine doses so far
- Three vaccines approved in India so far, several new vaccines in approval process



#### Get Vaccinated, Stay Safe

- Vaccines are safe, ignore rumours
- Visit [www.cowin.gov.in](http://www.cowin.gov.in) to register and get full details on vaccination centres and vaccines
- Follow COVID-appropriate behaviour even after vaccination



**Central Government is beginning the Free Vaccination For All campaign for every Indian from today. The biggest beneficiary of this phase of India's vaccination drive shall be the poor, the middle class and the youth of the country. All of us should pledge to get ourselves vaccinated. Together we will defeat COVID-19.**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

**TOGETHER LET US DEFEAT COVID-19,  
GET YOURSELF VACCINATED AS PER YOUR TURN**

Information & Public Relations Department, Uttar Pradesh

**Timings****DELHI**

MONDAY, JUN. 21	RISE 05:25 SET 19:23
TUESDAY, JUN. 22	RISE 05:25 SET 19:23
WEDNESDAY, JUN. 23	RISE 05:25 SET 19:23
	RISE 18:01 SET 03:44

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	34 25
Safdarjung	34 25
Palam	34 25

**Delhi Palam Today**  
37°C Thunderstorm likely at few places. Warm and humid day with partly cloudy sky and light winds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
38°C Easy morning and hot day likely with partly cloudy sky. Moderate warm winds during day.

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**THE HINDU**  
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**IN BRIEF****Mild quake strikes Capital, no loss of life or damage**

**NEW DELHI**  
A mild earthquake of magnitude 2.1 struck the Capital on Sunday noon. The National Centre for Seismology said that a earthquake with magnitude 2.1, occurred at 12:02:01 IST. The epicentre of the quake was at Panjab Bagh, 28.67 degrees North latitude and 77.14 degrees east longitude, with a depth of 7 km, it said. There have been no reports of any injuries, loss of life or damage to property.

# 'Only 8% inmates inoculated in Delhi jails'

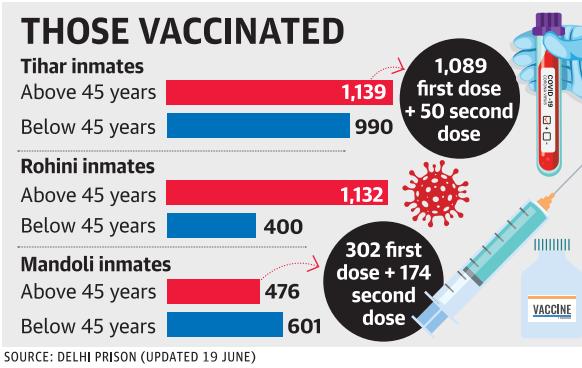
As drive suffers due to vaccine scarcity, administration says it is making all efforts to keep them safe

**SAURABH TRIVEDI**  
NEW DELHI

Only around eight per cent of the total inmates at Tihar jail, considered the largest prison in Asia, has been vaccinated against COVID-19 so far. Overall, too, the total number of inmates inoculated in the Delhi's prison system so far, is a meagre eight per cent, according to the Delhi prisons administration.

A senior officer said the vaccination drive among inmates has suffered due to scarcity of vaccines. Since the inoculation drive started, jail officials have put in a lot of efforts to convince prisoners to get vaccinated.

Prison officials said that 1,615 persons over the age of



45 have been completely vaccinated so far in the three prison complexes, including Tihar, Rohini and Mandoli. Of over 20,000 inmates in Delhi jails, only 3,738 have received jabs that includes completely vaccinated and the inmates who received

only the first dose. Vaccination for the 18-44 age group started at Tihar prison complex on May 18. A total of 1,991 inmates under the category have received the first dose of vaccination as of June 19.

The officer added that

dedicated staffers have been deployed to assist and complete the required paperwork of inmates for vaccination.

**Registration process**

The official is coordinating with family members of inmates to get a copy of their Aadhaar card to complete the registration process. Many inmates have voluntarily come forward for vaccination and also helped to convince their fellow inmates.

Director General (Delhi Prisons) Sandeep Goel said they are in constant touch with the authorities concerned over vaccination of inmates.

"The vaccination drive is in full swing as per the proto-

col. Medical teams keep visiting jails for vaccination. We are in the process of making the process more smooth and quick," said Mr. Goel.

A senior officer said that there are over 20,000 inmates in Delhi prisons and the capacity of prisons is a little over 10,000.

However, the jail administration said that they are making all possible efforts to keep the inmates safe and have been following all COVID-related protocols.

"It is tough to maintain hygiene and COVID protocols in such a congested space. However, inmate wards are regularly sanitised and senior citizens are kept in separate wards for safety," said the officer.

The question as to whether the respondent [woman] herein has been duped by the petitioner (man) or whether she was a party to an adulterous and bigamous relationship or not and whether her conduct would not entitle her for any protection under the DV Act can be determined only after the evidence is led," Justice Subramonium Prasad settled.

The case stems from a complex set of circumstances, which began with an application moved last year by the woman before a local court under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (DV) Act, seeking grant of interim maintenance.

## If over 20 people wish to learn yoga, govt. will give them free instructor'

CM inaugurates Centre for Meditation and Yoga Sciences

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said yoga helps in cultivating high immunity and could not only help preventing people from getting COVID but also in dealing with post-COVID complications.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the Delhi government's Centre for Meditation and Yoga Sciences that has been set up in collaboration with the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University (DPSRU).

"The psychological and emotional needs aggravate

quite a lot post-COVID. Hence, exercise and meditation are key to fighting the infection. COVID affects our lungs the most. For patients who have recovered from the virus, if we teach *pranayama* to them then they will benefit from it. In the COVID crisis, Yoga has a significant role to play in our lives," Mr. Kejriwal said.

The Chief Minister said it has been his dream to make yoga reach each and every house of Delhi and a specific budget was allotted for the purpose.

"If a group of more than 20 people call up, saying

that they wish to learn Yoga, then the government shall provide an instructor to them for free. I felt that this is the easiest way to drive our people towards yoga and provide them the means to practice it," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He added that by October 2, the government would be in a situation to provide instructors free-of-cost.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the government has started training around 450 yoga and meditation instructors, who in three months, will be able to go to different regions to teach people.

## HC appoints retd. judge as observer to conduct election for V-P of DCI

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Dental Council of India (DCI) to forthwith hold election for the post of vice-president under the watch of a court-appointed observer.

Justice Amit Bansal said:

"To carry out the process of holding of election in a

smooth manner, I appoint

Justice G.S. Sistani, retired

judge of this court, as an

observer".

Justice G.S. Sistani will

consult with the Secretary

and the members of the Executive Committee of the

respondent no.2 (DCI) council

to carry out the modalities of the election process,

including but not limited to

holding elections virtually

and the notices to be sent to the members of the council and will oversee the conduct of the elections," the court ordered.

The order came while hearing a petition challenging a May 11, 2021 order of the Centre appointing Ashok Khandelwal to discharge the functions of president of the DCI with immediate effect.

Justice Bansal declined to interfere with the appointment of Dr. Khandelwal noting that the May 11 order only provides that he shall discharge the functions of President of DCI till election takes place for the post.

"I see nothing wrong in respondent no.1 appointing someone to perform functions of the president on a

temporary basis," the court said but added that it was "inclined to maintain the democratic functioning" of DCI.

"It is essential that institutions like the respondent no.2 (DCI) council, that perform important public functions, continue to retain their democratic character. After all, democratic values are the essence of our society and elections are the bedrock of democracy," the court remarked.

"Though the election of the president is subjudice, there is no impediment in election of the vice-president of the respondent no.2 council..." it said while directing election for the post of vice-president.

**THE HINDU**  
+ EDUCATION PLUS

**SALIL SAHADEVAN**

If you have lived through the result seasons of the Class 10 and 12 board exams, you know what a mark obsessive culture is.

In theory, marks indicate a student's unbiased performance; but, in practice, it tells very little about the person. At best, it informs how well the student has remembered the content within a time limit. Researchers tell a different story.

**The grading culture**

Three decades ago, Ruth Butler explores three types of feedback: scores alone, comments alone, and scores with comments. It turned out that those who received scores alone either became complacent if they had performed well, or were unmotivated if they did badly. Students who received scores with comments focused more on scores, and not the comments. The third group who received comments alone significantly improved their performance.

Of late, neuroscientists have been questioning our understanding of exams and unified grading.

In an article last year, neuroscientist Jared Horvath and educator David Bott said that the practice of marks and grades inflates some aspects of reality. And we all do not see reality in the same way. In a 2012 meta-analysis of around 800 studies by John Hattie, students' self-assessment emerged as the most likely effective intervention, and not an externally validated score.

Competition is touted as the main reason behind exams and grading. Contrarily, the works of Alfie Kohn in the last three decades have shown that competition in education re-



## An idea whose time has gone?

What if there are no exams, marks, and grades? Is there another option to assess students?

sults in curtailed creativity and reduced performance. While we need to train to collaborate to live in a resource-constrained future, we are doing the opposite through exams and marks. So, what sort of learning the traditional exams and

marks promote monoculture mindset. Manish Jain of Shikshantar Andolan identifies the root of monoculture creation in schooling practices.

Then, why do we depend on traditional exams and marks? Marks are convenient to measure and plot in a bell curve making it comparable for educators and employers. We pretend the process is transparent and fair but the core reason remains convenience, not learning improvement.

By reducing learning to an average of marks, we ignore the richness of feedback and rigorous iterations required in authentic learning. While marks tangibilise the abstract like learning through exams, we mistake it for assessment.

**Assessment alternatives**  
There are ways to assess the students without exams. Students need personalised as-

sessments for improvements, not judgemental marks. So, what are those alternatives?

Apply collaborative methods such as cooperative experiences, peer reviews, and simulations. Adopt portfolios and a variety of writing practices. Use qualitative rubrics with detailed comments, instead of numerical rubrics. Craft Open Methods such as open-net and take-home examinations. Then, the student becomes more transparent, and understands success more flexibly and contextually. The idea is to converse regularly with the students on their progress and construct their own learning.

Exams and marks, as the core of the educational practice, are overrated. They are prescriptive, unfortunate, unviable, and unnecessary for the future world. As the hangover of the Industrial Age, they are rooted in archaic carrots and sticks.

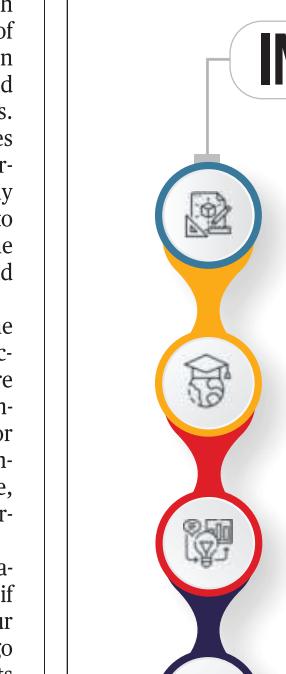
We need alternative evaluation methods. To begin with, if we permit and support our teachers and students to go beyond the traditional tests and experiment with internal assessments, there can be a dawn of alternative forms of evaluations. This is a demanding yet practical proposition. The evolving domain of evaluation science can aid this.

Marks should neither be the driver nor the target of learning. At best, they may be a by-product of learning. As Joe Martin says, no teacher has ever had a former student return to say that an exam conducted by the teacher changed his life.

**Disclaimer: Views expressed in this article are personal.**

The writer is Education Officer, with University Grants Commission.

**The culture of grading obstructs real-world learning and limits student autonomy leading to disposable learning**

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## IN BRIEF



## Row over removal of Kannada from list

BENGALURU  
Questioning the guidelines for the selection of languages to impart training to MPs and officials, Kannada Development Authority chief T.S. Nagabharana expressed disappointment over Kannada being dropped from the list of languages proposed by the Parliament Secretariat.

## Bars in Kerala to shut indefinitely in protest

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
Bar hotels, and beer and wine parlours in Kerala will down shutters for an indefinite period from Monday to protest against the "arbitrary decision" of the Kerala State Beverages Corporation (Bevco) to steeply hike its wholesale profit margin from 8% to 25%, which resulted in losses for owners.

## Auto driver freed in IISc. attack case

No evidence of Habib's involvement in the 2005 terrorist firing, says NIA court

## K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ

BENGALURU  
Habib Mohammed, 41, an auto driver from Agartala, Tripura, is back home after an ordeal that spanned over four years.

In 2017, he was arrested in connection with the 2005 Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) terror attack case. He spent four years and three months in the city prison only to be discharged from the case on June 14, 2021.

It was on December 28, 2005, that two men in Army fatigues opened fire on the IISc campus in Bengaluru, killing a professor and injuring four others.

The National Investigation

## Public transport heralds unlock phase

Karnataka and Telangana ready buses and Metro trains; hospitality sector faces labour shortage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD/BENGALURU

Telangana and Karnataka prepared to resume public bus services within regulated parameters from Monday. In Karnataka, the government's decision to allow shops and even dine-in restaurants was greeted with caution by the industry.

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation will run inter-State bus services to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra as per relaxation during lockdown hours in those States. Buses will be operated between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. in Andhra Pradesh.

Except for Bengaluru, the services will run between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. in Karnataka, except during curfew over the weekends.

Metro passengers were asked to strictly follow COVID-19 guidelines.

After 55 days, transport corporations in Karnataka



**Cautious ride:** A Metro train arriving at the Mysuru road station during a trial run in Bengaluru on Sunday. ■ K. MURALIKUMAR

a.m. to 9 p.m. Most of the bars reopened on Sunday but parks, gyms and sports venues could open from Monday. Charminar and Salarjung Museum reopened on Sunday.

Metro passengers were asked to strictly follow COVID-19 guidelines.

After 55 days, transport corporations in Karnataka

and Bangalore Metro Rail were set to resume services. "Like last year, all protocols to contain the spread of COVID-19 will be followed," said Shankar A.S., executive director (operations and maintenance), BMRC. Trains will run during the peak hours (7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) every five minutes.

In a bid to make it easier

for commuters, BMTC has extended the validity of monthly passes.

BMTC will run 2,000 buses on major routes, besides 17 Vayu Vajra buses to Kempegowda International Airport. QR-code based system will be provided for tickets.

KSRTC, which will operate 3,000 buses initially, will not run local and inter-district services in Mysuru district and Dakshina Kannada.

Karnataka has allowed all shops to open and restaurants to allow dine-in at 50% occupancy from Monday, but the industry could take a week to fully open up.

Shortage of labour, as many who had returned to their hometowns were yet to return posed a problem. "Since there was no guarantee on when we would be allowed to re-open, we did not get employees back. While Karnataka has eased restrictions, it may not be the case

in other States," said Chandrashekhar Hebbar, president, Karnataka Regional Hotels and Restaurants Federation. However, smaller shops will mostly open up on Monday.

## Vaccination worry

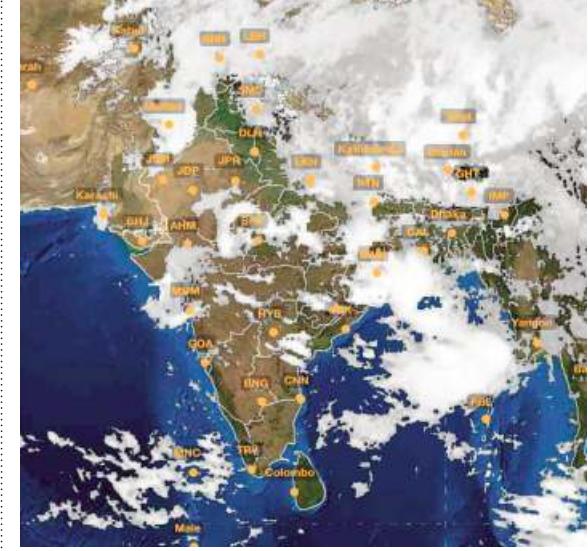
The other concern for businesses was vaccination for their workforce. People in the hospitality industry were considered frontline workers and nearly 50% received the first dose, industry sources said. However, that was not the case with traders and proprietors of small shops.

Manu Chandra, head of Bengaluru Chapter of National Restaurants Association of India, said the present guidelines – 50% occupancy rate, the 5 p.m. deadline to close operations, weekend lockdown and ban

on serving liquor for dining-in – would make things difficult for recovery.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Monday:** Heavy rainfall very likely at isolated places over Bihar, Jharkhand, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Goa, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 28.9	25.2	16	Kozhikode	... 32.1	23	23
Ahmedabad	0.1 ... 31.1	25.4	25.4	Kurnool	... 36.1	25.4	25.4
Aizawl	1 ... 21	21	21	Lucknow	0.2 ... 32.3	25.1	25.1
Allahabad	... 28.1	25	25	Madurai	... 39.4	24.8	24.8
Bengaluru	... 28.2	20.5	20.5	Mangaluru	61.6 ... 27.8	22	22
Bhopal	1 ... 32	23	23	Mumbai	18 ... 31.4	24.5	24.5
Bhubaneswar	0.1 ... 30.7	26.6	26.6	Mysuru	... 30 ... 20.6	20.6	20.6
Chandigarh	... 35.6	25	25	New Delhi	... 34.2	25.4	25.4
Chennai	... 38	28.2	28.2	Patna	26 ... 29.2	24.5	24.5
Coimbatore	... 33	23.3	23.3	Port Blair	... 32.5	26.2	26.2
Dehradun	27 ... 23.8	21.7	21.7	Puducherry	1 ... 38.2	24.6	24.6
Gangtok	85 ... 18.8	16.5	16.5	Pune	15.4 ... 30.2	22	22
Goa	21 ... 23.8	21	21	Raipur	... 32.5	24	24
Guwahati	21 ... 34.5	21	21	Ranchi	1 ... 31.6	22.7	22.7
Hubballi	... 26	26	26	Shillong	6 ... 24.6	16.9	16.9
Hyderabad	... 34.0	23.6	23.6	Shimla	... 26	18.5	18.5
Imphal	8 ... 29.8	19.6	19.6	Srinagar	... 26.6	17.2	17.2
Jaipur	3 ... 30.2	24.3	24.3	Thiruvananthapuram	... 32.5	24.9	24.9
Kochi	4 ... 30.4	25.2	25.2	Tiruchi	... 39.1	26.8	26.8
Kohima	22 ... 27.8	18.2	18.2	Vijayawada	... 36.2	28.2	28.2
Kolkata	12 ... 25.9	24.6	24.6	Visakhapatnam	... 36.2	28.2	28.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

## Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	... 3	16	107	... 44	... 57	■■■■■
Bengaluru	... 6	17	26	49	85	■■■■■
Chennai	... 8	5	44	106	75	■■■■■
Delhi	... 3	11	51	51	157	■■■■■
Hyderabad	... 2	67	14	24	42	■■■■■
Kolkatta	... 9	23	39	60	63	■■■■■
Lucknow	... 9	17	79	26	40	■■■■■
Mumbai	... 5	5	79	97	97	■■■■■
Pune	... 4	21	68	64	114	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	12	46	31	65	142	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO<sub>2</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

M. Sivasankar



## Nana Patole's riposte to Sena: MVA alliance not permanent fixture

Its objective was to stop BJP, says Maharashtra Congress chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

After Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut indirectly criticised the Sena's coalition ally, the Congress, for its talk of contesting elections alone without offering solutions to people's problems.

"If a party says that it wants to contest elections on its own without joining hands with others, it should first generate confidence among the public of its ability to provide jobs," the Chief Minister had said.

Earlier, NCP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar had rebuked Mr. Patole's Chief Ministerial aspirations as well, stating that while there was nothing wrong in someone expressing their desire to become CM, the magic figure of 145 MLAs was imperative to become one.

On Saturday, Mr. Thackeray

Nana Patole

fairs. Every party has the right to strengthen its organisation," said Mr. Patole, while detailing the Congress' COVID-19 relief efforts.

On Saturday, Mr. Thackeray, in his capacity as president of the Shiv Sena and Sena – had contested the local bodies and Assembly polls independently," the Congress chief said.

## HC gives relief to traffic constable accused of raping policewoman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court recently granted interim pre-arrest protection to a traffic constable of the Maharashtra Police who was suspended for allegedly raping a policewoman.

A single judge Bench of Justice Sandeep Shinde was hearing a plea filed by Madhav Vasave seeking anticipatory bail. On March 17, the sessions court had directed the State not to take coercive action against the accused, but declined to grant him protection from arrest.

Mr. Vasave joined the force in 2006 and met the complainant, who was posted at a police station, in 2017. They entered into

sexual relationship, but in 2019 she learnt that he was already married. According to the complainant, the accused told her that his wife was mentally unsound and he wanted to divorce her. The policewoman also said that the accused started abusing her when she asked him to return the ₹1.5 lakh he had borrowed from her.

She said that the accused threatened to circulate her intimate videos and photos if she left him. The complainant also said her marriage was called off last year after the accused sent objectionable messages to her fiance and his sister.

An advocate appearing for Mr. Vasave said the sexual relationship was consensual.

## Heavy rain continues to batter western Maharashtra

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Heavy rain continues to lash parts of western Maharashtra, Raigad and Thane districts with more than 60 barrages submerged in Kolhapur district.

The rain has been particularly heavy in Satara and Kolhapur for the last three days. The water level in the Panchganga river in Kolhapur has risen by nine feet in the last couple of days.

A discharge of 1,200 cusecs of water is on from the district's Radhanagari dam. While Pune recorded intense rain in the intervening night of Friday and Saturday, Sunday was relatively milder with only isolated parts like ghat areas witnessing intense bouts. Authorities said since Saturday, the intensity over the city had generally reduced.

On Saturday, State Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil had said that the Karnataka government had decided to set up a real-time data acquisition system.

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## Hope and promise

The Centre's move to engage with the political leadership in Kashmir is welcome

**S**ignalling a revival of the political process in Jammu and Kashmir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided to meet 14 party leaders from the Union Territory on June 24. Mr. Modi's outreach is taking place nearly two years after the State of Jammu and Kashmir was stripped of its special constitutional status and dismembered into two Union Territories through an unprecedented exercise of the Centre's powers. This demonstrates a desirable flexibility in his approach towards resolving the Kashmir issue. Considering the absence of an agenda for the meeting and the prevailing sense of betrayal among Kashmiris, any hope of a quick resolution to the frozen political questions is not realistic. Discontinuing the special status of Kashmir was a core agenda of Hindutva nationalism for decades, which was achieved after the second parliamentary victory of Mr. Modi in 2019. There has been a concerted campaign to undermine political parties and leaders of the Valley by the BJP and the Centre. Since 2014, the BJP has worked under a premise that the PDP and NC were impediments, not facilitators, to a solution in Kashmir. The BJP's short-lived alliance with PDP, far from building bridges, created more hostility between the parties and de-legitimised both in the eyes of the public. The leaders of mainstream parties, including former Chief Ministers, were jailed after 2019. The Centre's idea to incubate a loyal political class made little progress.

The political environment has changed, meanwhile. The Joe Biden administration is eager to end the U.S. entanglement in Afghanistan and resist China's attempts to dominate the world. India is in a stand-off with China on the border. The Biden administration is publicly disapproving of India's Kashmir policy, while wanting to strategically embrace it. Pakistan is trying to reclaim its strategic advantage. The mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic has dented India's global image and triggered new political challenges domestically. All these make rigidity less rewarding in India's Kashmir policy. All the same, by creating an opportunity to explore a way forward, the Centre has acted wisely, regardless of its reasons. It must engage the political parties in good faith and with an open mind. Kashmir's governance challenges are not managerial, and corruption investigations, legitimate as they may be, must not be used to debase politics itself. Efforts to tackle corruption and pilferage should not amount to furthering instability in J&K. The Centre appears to have done some groundwork, though it has not revealed any plans yet. The meeting must be a beginning towards a durable and democratic resolution of the Kashmir question and not an exercise in managing the Centre's image.

## The rise of Raisi

The new President should use his clout to push for economic, political reforms in Iran

**W**ith the election of Ebrahim Raisi, a hardline cleric, as Iran's President, the Islamic Republic's ruling clergy have tightened their grip on all institutions of power – the military, Parliament, the judiciary, and the presidency. In Iran's unique political system, effectively controlled by the Supreme Leader, Presidents, who run the day-to-day affairs, have an important role to play. In the past, the country had seen tensions between moderate/reformist Presidents and the Supreme Leader. While the reformists, a powerful constituency, have pushed for gradual reforms by rallying behind leaders like Mohammad Khatami and Hassan Rouhani, the conservatives always pushed back. In this tussle for power, Mr. Raisi has been the popular face of the establishment for years. He had contested the 2017 presidential elections, but lost to Mr. Rouhani, who was seeking a second term. Believed to be close to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Mr. Raisi was appointed the Chief Justice in 2019, which kept him in the top echelons of power till the presidential elections. There were allegations that the June 18 election was rigged in favour of Mr. Raisi even before the first ballot was cast. The Guardian Council, which vets potential candidates, had rejected almost all major reformists, leaving him the only prominent figure on the ballot. This led to opposition activists calling for an election boycott, which seems to have had an impact on the voting – the turnout was 48.8%, an all-time low. Mr. Raisi won 62% of the vote, while blank ballots came second at 14%.

Mr. Raisi is a controversial figure. The U.S. has accused him of serving in the "death commission" of 1989 that implemented Ayatollah Khomeini's secret decree to execute thousands of political prisoners. At home, he has presided over a harsh campaign against "corruption", which critics say had targeted political rivals. And he assumes the presidency at a time when Iran is facing daunting challenges. The revolution seems to be ageing – the country has seen protests in recent years; the push to reform the system from within, a long-time promise of the reformists, has not made much progress and the economy is in a shambles. When Mr. Rouhani won the presidency in 2013, he promised a new beginning. But his attempts to open a new chapter with the West through diplomacy were set back by Donald Trump, and his policies at home were resisted by the conservatives. Mr. Raisi, who has supported reviving the nuclear deal, might also bank on sanctions being removed to reboot the economy. And there is growing discontent in society and desperate calls for reforms and liberties. For now, Iran's tactical response to these challenges is repression. Mr. Raisi, as President, should understand that repression will not solve any of Iran's problems. A member of the clerical establishment, he should use his clout and the election victory to push for gradual economic and political reforms.

# The comrades and their divergent perspectives

Russia's uncritical advocacy of China's global vision is what seems to be leaving India quite confounded



VINAY KAURA

**R**ussian President Vladimir Putin has recently asserted that both the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, and the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, are "responsible" enough to solve issues between their countries, while underlining the need to defer any "extra-regional power" to interfere in the process. The implications of Mr. Putin's advice for India are numerous and far-reaching as Moscow expects New Delhi to ignominiously give up all efforts to reverse Beijing's encroachment strategies. The Russians may have their reasons to remain blind to China's growing aggressiveness, but the Indians have learned to expect at Chinese hands an unremittent effort to undermine India's global position – to destroy their confidence in themselves and the confidence of others in them – and to reduce India to a state of isolation and impotence in global affairs.

### The Quad factor

Mr. Putin's remarks can only be seen as reinforcing China's claim that the Quadrilateral or Quad (comprising India, the United States, Japan and Australia) is aimed at containing Beijing's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In fact, Mr. Putin's assertion is the logical extension of views expressed by Russia's Ambassador to India, Nikolay Kudashev. Some time ago, he had advised New Delhi to take a "larger look at Chinese foreign policies", while describing the Indo-Pacific strategy as an effort to revive the Cold War mentality (<https://bit.ly/3gLOVBY>). Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, has frequently, and quite acerbically, lashed out at the

Notwithstanding the cataclysmic changes in the global and regional politico-security environment, India has been able to maintain amicable ties with Russia. Yet, Russia's continued criticism of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad give ample evidence of the

divergent perspectives of New Delhi and Russia on how to deal with China's rise to global prominence. Russia has rejected the Indo-Pacific construct in favour of the Asia-Pacific on the ground that the first is primarily an American initiative designed to contain both China and Russia.

Obviously, India thinks otherwise since Russia's simplistic advice is not sagacious enough to solve its China problem. India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, in a virtual discussion with his Australian and French counterparts, had recently asserted that no country can have a veto on India's participation in the Quad (<https://bit.ly/3cXDdV>). This assertion was an indirect counterpoise to what Mr. Lavrov had termed the Quad – as "Asian NATO". In an unmistakable indication of India's attempt to reimagine a new geostrategic maritime role for itself, Mr. Jaishankar had further observed that incorporation of the Indo-Pacific concept in Indian diplomacy means that India can no longer be confined between the Malacca Strait and Gulf of Aden.

Though the recent diplomatic romance between Russia and Pakistan has generated some unease in India, it is Russia's uncritical advocacy of China's global vision that seems to have left New Delhi overly confounded. For many policymakers and people in our country, the Russian attitude toward China's growing power and influence will be the touchstone of Russia's relations with India. While the Sino-Indian relationship has experienced a sharp downward trend since the Galwan clashes in June 2020, New Delhi has become particularly concerned with Moscow downplaying China's display of coercive military pressure against India. With the catastrophic rise of populist nationalism amidst the bankruptcy of globalisation, the resolution of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute appears a hopeless dream in the absence of a miracle. India is confronted in Ladakh with a situation far uglier and more recalcitrant than is generally recognised.

### Beginnings of looking West

It need not be necessary to remind us again that the decade following the disintegration of the Union of



FILE PHOTO/PTI

Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was a period of great turbulence in global politics. A bewildered India soon realised Russia was much weaker than the erstwhile USSR and incapable of helping New Delhi balance potential threats from Beijing. This does not mean that India completely abandoned external balancing strategies; it began to diversify its sources of external balancing. On the other hand, Russia began to cast Moscow as the leader of a supposed trilateral grouping of Russia-India-China against a U.S.-led unipolar world.

Leaving behind the bitterness and mistrust between Moscow and Beijing during the Cold War, Russia became an early proponent of the 'strategic triangle' to bring together the three major powers. Aware of the emerging international system as an expression of western expansion, India's fear of the unipolar moment too made it easier for New Delhi to become part of this initiative. But China's dismissive attitude toward Indian capabilities, coupled with an emerging China-Pakistan nexus, prevented the success of this trilateral. India, instead, invested its diplomatic energies in rapprochement with the United States.

Unlike Russia, which tried to build an alternative international economic architecture, India decided to get integrated in the economic order it once denounced. Economic liberalisation also allowed New Delhi to buy sophisticated weapons from a wider global market that included suppliers such as Israel and France. Both were keen to sell weapons technology to India, and this also boosted New Delhi's bargaining capacity with Moscow. As the logic of intensive engagement with the West was effectively established, strategic partnership with the U.S. was a logical corollary.

India's cooperation with the U.S. has strengthened still further,

in part against the perceived terrorism threat, but also in light of China's growing assertiveness whose undesirable impacts are now being felt across the world. However, Russia's ability to influence the India-China relationship has become doubtful. India has been searching for other major powers to balance against China as it does not have the sufficient means for hard balancing. Adding options to its strategic toolbox, India has deepened its ties with Japan and Australia in a way that is close to soft balancing. Nevertheless, among all of India's balancing efforts, the stupendous growth in ties with the U.S. has been the greatest source of concern for China which views the India-U.S. rapprochement as containment.

While India needs Russia's partnership for its defence needs, New Delhi cannot endorse the Russian perspective on the Indo-Pacific and the Quad. For New Delhi, it would be self-defeating to accept that the Indo-Pacific is an American construct. With the first-ever summit of the four leaders in the 'Quadrilateral framework' in March this year, the Quad is being formalised into a functional strategic alignment.

### Maritime structures

The real 'strategic triangle' in the maritime domain will be that between New Delhi, Washington and Beijing. While other powers such as France, Australia, Japan and Russia will have an impact on the emerging maritime structures of the Indo-Pacific region, it is the triangular dynamic between India, China and the U.S. that is going to be the most consequential.

Russia is yet to realise that it will gain immensely from the multilateralism that the Indo-Pacific seeks to promote, and being China's junior partner only undermines Moscow's great-power ambitions. But the Putin regime is making things unnecessarily hard for Russia as well as for India; and it is clear that those responsible for Russian policy have arrived at a flawed assessment of the current situation. As the Kremlin's policymakers are obsessively preoccupied with Russia's 'status' rivalry with the U.S., Russia's view of India-China relations seems understandable. But there is an inherent danger in permitting it to harden

into a permanent attitude as an increasingly pro-Beijing Russia might adopt more aggressive blocking of India's policy agendas. That is why India is particularly interested in a normalisation of relations between Washington and Moscow as it will help it steer ties among the great powers, and also diminish Moscow's propensity to closely coordinate its South Asian policies with Beijing.

### India-China ties

There is no doubt that shared identities and beliefs in the principle of non-alignment, painful memories of colonial subjugation, opposition to great-power hegemony, and strong beliefs in sovereignty and strategic autonomy have been the key influencers in shaping India's and China's engagement with each other as well as the western world. But this has begun to change as Beijing is asserting its hegemony over Asia. In such circumstances, multilateral forums such as the Russia-India-China (RIC) grouping and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have little practical value for Indian diplomacy. Without China's reciprocity, options before India are limited. India's concessions, whatever their form, must meet with some form of positive response from China. The response cannot be just symbolic or rhetorical. The absence of any material evidence of reciprocity is bound to doom an attempt at Sino-Indian rapprochement.

Beijing seems to be acting as though it is immune not only to the strategic consequences for its actions but also to all the conventional rules of international politics. China is undoubtedly the most powerful actor in its neighbourhood but it cannot simply have its way in shaping Asia's new geopolitics. Beijing's policies will still be constrained and altered in fundamental ways by India which cannot be expected to adopt a hopeless stance of remaining peripheral in its own strategic backyard.

Vinay Kaura is Assistant Professor in the Department of International Affairs and Security Studies, Sardar Patel University of Police, Security and Criminal Justice, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. He is also a Non-resident Scholar at the Middle East Institute, Washington DC

## In Kerala, the need to budget for the future

Beyond the pandemic, there are structural issues the State has to address concerning livelihoods and employment



VINOJ ABRAHAM

**K**erala, under duress from the novel coronavirus pandemic, is passing through a recessionary phase, shrinking by about 3.8% during 2019-20. Disease containment measures, including intermittent lockdowns, have stalled the livelihoods of many, probably the entire 66% of the workforce who are either self-employed or casual labourers. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) estimates Kerala's unemployment rate at a high of 23.5% for May 2021. The extent of wage loss is uncertain, though primary surveys indicate substantial wage reduction.

### The pandemic and welfare

Social priorities for financial planning under such a crisis must appear straightforward. The Budget of the newly elected government of Kerala presented by Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal weighed the priorities right, keeping the pandemic in focus. The free vaccination policy, despite a drastic decline in public revenue by 18%, positions the Government as one that prioritises its people. Unemployment and employability find mention early in the Budget reiterating its inclinations. Setting aside ₹8,900 crore for an income trans-

fer scheme would be a rescue line for the poor and the vulnerable. Such an infusion will also stimulate the economy by boosting consumption demand.

### High unemployment

Beyond the immediate crisis, Kerala is undergoing a transformation grappling with structural issues. For decades, the State has recorded one of the highest open unemployment rates in India – around 10%. Further, the labour force arguably suffers from the problem of 'employability', alluding to poor skills and incompetence.

With the youth bulge in Kerala's age structure, a large share of the population entered the labour force. This coincided with the structural transformation of the economy, i.e., the share of output shifting from agriculture to service.

However, this large rise in the labour force could not be absorbed in the emerging sectors that were less labour intensive causing structural unemployment. The economy now needed to grow at faster rates to absorb the new entrants. Concurrently, high reservation wages owing to international remittances, institutional wage setting and the State's welfare programmes implied that jobseekers sought jobs with decent wages as well. Low wage sectors are filled with inter-State migrant workers, remaining unattractive to the locals. Open unemployment is thus a problem of economic growth and distribution.



THULASIKAKAT

Knowledge economy

This Budget's focus on tackling unemployment is through the knowledge economy mission, initiated by the outgoing Government. With Kerala's reasonably high levels of an educated workforce, global exposure and its fragile ecosystem, a globally-linked knowledge-based economy has the potential for ecologically sustainable high economic growth. However, upon close reading, it seems that the mission addresses the wrong side of the problem. Instead of enhancing production in the knowledge-based economy, it envisages to increase the supply of skilled workers, through skilling programmes and matching demand and supply. The fundamental problem is not of labour market mismatch or supply of educated workforce, but that of poor labour demand.

The above view is often countered by the argument that poor labour demand is due to poor employability.

Part of the knowledge economy frame is to improve 'employability' by improving skills and skill certification.

Improved skills may enhance immediate em-

ployment chances. But the notion that skill is static and once acquired, the worker is employable is misplaced. Skill is dynamic, especially in the knowledge economy. The skill requirements are continuously being redefined. The knowledge economy is distinguished by its ability to innovate in short time spans.

As innovations take place, the skill requirements also evolve. For firms to remain competitive in the knowledge economy, they must recognise skill obsolescence and re-skill their workers. In fact, lifelong learning is a well-known feature of the knowledge economy. Under such circumstances, firms would want to reduce this complex phenomenon into a deficiency in workers, labelling it as poor 'employability' and arguing it as State failure in skilling. In fact, what labour market participants lack is the skill requirements that are ever changing in firms. Firms are best placed to know what skills are needed, and not the State. Firms are best placed to train the workers, not the State. Firms are the prime gainer in skill training, not the public. The Government could at best facilitate producers to undertake skill training. The innovative German programme on skilling can inform us.

### State of traditional industries

Meanwhile, industrial transformation has pushed many into frictional unemployment, due to their inability to move from one sector to another. Even while Kerala entered a high-growth trajectory in

the 1990s driven by the services, the traditional industries and agriculture sectors remained stagnant. These traditional agro-based industries are now competing in the global markets with not only competitor firms but even substitute products – for instance, coir with its plastic variant. Many such industries, such as cashew, are either moving out from Kerala or are being outcompeted in export markets. Having joined these sectors at an early age and worked throughout their lives, workers in these sectors are trapped in these 'sunset' industries, surviving on subsistence incomes and welfare support. With shrinking incomes and no alternative employment, these households are being driven to penury. The State must devise mechanisms to survive their lives with dignity.

Small and marginal farmers, and petty service providers suffer from poor incomes despite their efforts, a form of underemployment. Effective interventions can encourage collectivisation to overcome size-related diseconomies. New forms of collectives such as Kudumbasree and the new initiative of the Cooperative Initiative for Agriculture Infrastructure in Kerala (CAIK), are encouraging. Nevertheless, history must guide us to steer clear of the cooperative failures in the past, marred by poor incentive structures, rent seeking and political intervention.

Vinoj Abraham is Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Hope for J&K

Jammu and Kashmir, famed for its beauty, and now lost peace, has become a hotbed of violence due to a raft of reasons. Its woes have been compounded by political instability and restrictions affecting the basic rights of the people. The citizens of J&K now deserve a new life that

ensures peaceful coexistence and a trouble-free livelihoods ("Centre invites 14 J&K leaders to meet PM Modi next week", June 20) with a sincere and transparent process of the restoration of Statehood, that includes fair elections, fast tracked.

V. JOHAN DHANAKUMAR, Chennai

**Milkha Singh**  
The words of the legendary Milkha Singh, "God wanted me to play a part in bringing glory to India...", are touching. The photograph of the 'Flying Sikh' romping home to a gold in the 440-yard race in Cardiff, 1958 ('Sport' page, June 20) is reminiscent of Usain Bolt's finish for the

gold in the 2008 Olympics. Given the huge chasm between the facilities available to the athletes of 1958 and now, Milkha Singh's feats evoke awe. The fact that the legend was a stickler for discipline and fitness is a good lesson to aspiring athletes in India. S. SANJEEVI RAO, Puducherry

As a youngster, I had once watched Milkha Singh during his practice sessions at the Army regimental centre in Secunderabad; he was already a household name. My father was posted in the regiment and told me that the lean, wiry Sardar was none other than the great man himself. A detail that I will never forget is this.

Even though he was made to stand way behind the start line, he whizzed past the others in seconds. The sight of the great Milkha Singh running like the wind will remain etched in my memory.

V. NAGARAJAN, Chennai

# Focus on COVID-19 estimated deaths

Mortality estimates, not officially reported deaths, have the potential to strengthen the pandemic response



CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

In India, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, around 85% of all deaths were registered and only one-fourth of the registered deaths were medically certified for the causes of death. There have been wide variations among States and within them, in rural and urban areas. Understanding the causes of death is essential for health sector planning and optimal allocation of health resources. In the absence of robust data on the causes of death, governments rely on estimates.

#### Reporting COVID-19 deaths

The World Health Organization has estimated that world over, COVID-19 deaths could be two-three times the officially reported numbers. Public health experts, disease modellers, and research institutes which specialise in morbidity and mortality data have estimated that COVID-19 deaths in India could be in the range of three to 14 times the officially reported number of deaths.

As per ground reports, there has been under-reporting of COVID-19 deaths during the second wave of infections in India. In April and May 2021, crematorium and burial grounds had long queues, dead bodies were floating in rivers, more cremations were being done following the COVID-19 protocols than the officially reported number of deaths, and everyone had a few people in their social circle who had succumbed to COVID-19. All of these have been captured in media reports from various settings, including major cities and a number of States. Each of these cities and States has reported excess deaths (comparing two similar periods in different years) that are twice to even 30-40 times higher than the officially reported COVID-19 numbers.

Rural India is known to have a weak death registration system; however, there is corroborative evidence of excess deaths. At an existing death rate of seven per 1,000 people, an average village of 1,000 people should report around one death ev-



REUTERS

ery two months. But most Indian villages have experienced deaths at a far higher rate in the two months of the second COVID-19 wave.

The Union and State governments have always been quick to deny estimates. Their core argument has been that COVID-19 deaths cannot be hidden.

However, the biggest counter to this position has come from the reconciliation of COVID-19 deaths in Bihar and Maharashtra. Following reviews and audits, these States showed a nearly 75% increase in COVID-19 deaths over the officially reported deaths for the specified periods. The reconciliation from Bihar and Maharashtra was attributed to under-reporting in private hospitals, in home isolation, in transit to the hospitals/facilities and those who died with post-COVID-19 complications. In some of the districts, the revision resulted in the increase being twice or thrice the number of reported deaths. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that if and when other States initiate similar exercises, they are likely to report an upward shift in COVID-19 deaths.

In fact, the majority of the current analyses of excess deaths has come from urban settings and large municipal corporations, known for a relatively better functioning death registration system. The challenges in death reporting in rural areas are very different and far bigger. During the second wave, access to COVID-19 testing services and treatment facilities was limited in rural India. Pandemic-related restrictions, lack of transport and the health-seeking behaviour of citizens indicate that many people from the villages did not come in contact with the formal health system, which is concentrated in urban settings. Very few rural health facilities were providing services for COVID-19 care. Many people

were admitted in the healthcare facilities without a RT-PCR test, and on the basis of clinical symptoms. As many ground reports have shown, deaths in these sub-groups did not make it to officially reported COVID-19 deaths.

One of the core objectives of the pandemic response is to reduce mortality. Therefore, COVID-19 deaths are a good surrogate indicator of the health system's performance at the State and district levels. This is a more focused indicator of the response of the health system compared to process-oriented indicators such as daily tests conducted or dedicated COVID-19 beds added. If realistic estimates of COVID-19 deaths by city, rural settings, districts and States are known, a more targeted response could be mounted to the pandemic. The death estimates could be very useful to plan for the next wave of the pandemic (in the short term) and to strengthen the Indian health care system (in the long run).

#### Refining estimates

There are at least four approaches which can help us refine the estimates: death audits; excess death analysis; death surveys followed by verbal autopsies; and decadal Census, which is due in India.

First, every State should get death audits done to correctly classify all the deaths that occurred during the pandemic. The audits should focus on all the health facilities, in the public and private sector, as well as deaths in homes. The process of death audits needs to be institutionalised. The experiences of Bihar and Maharashtra show that this can be done quickly.

Second, the excess deaths in the pandemic period should be analysed more systematically. For urban set-

tings and those States which have a relatively high death registration, such analysis can be done in a short period of time.

Third, rural areas and smaller towns require additional data collection. The death registers at the village level can be utilised and panchayats can provide this data in real-time, which can be collated by the administration. The sample registration system teams functioning under the Registrar General and Census Commissioner in India and the booth-level officers used in elections can be mobilised to collect additional information on deaths reported in April and May 2021. This can help the government in getting more realistic death estimates in the next few months. The Jharkhand government completed one such survey, focused exclusively on rural areas, which found 43% excess deaths than the comparable period before the pandemic. The State surveyed two-thirds of its population with the help of the existing workforce, in 10 days. Such surveys should be planned by all States, followed by verbal autopsy, to assign the causes of deaths.

Fourth, there is an urgent need to initiate the decadal Census in India. The U.S. and China conducted their census in 2020 during the pandemic. India should urgently plan for the Census, which would provide useful data for all sectors. Inter-censal growth will provide an important insight into the excess mortality.

The political leadership and health policymakers seem to be taking solace in the fact that India has not yet reported the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the world. However, there is bigger merit in developing realistic COVID-19 death estimates, which could be more helpful in policy formulation, planning, resource allocation and health system strengthening. Therefore, the governments at all levels (Union, States and districts) should work to come up with the estimated number of COVID-19 deaths. That kind of granular data on deaths along with other health data will help India fight the pandemic and plan for the post-pandemic period more effectively.

*Chandrakant Lahariya, a physician-epidemiologist, is a public policy and health systems expert and co-author of 'Till We Win: India's Fight Against The COVID-19 Pandemic'*

## FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

# An invitation for a virtual conversation

The RE's Office will host a virtual Open House on July 17



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

In 2012, when I was appointed the Readers' Editor (RE) of this newspaper, I came up with different working methodologies to fulfil the various strands of the mandate under the binding Terms of Reference. One of the tasks assigned to the RE was "to look for ways of improving the paper's work and performance, in the broadest sense, by collating and analysing readers' concerns, ideas, and suggestions and identifying possible new or alternative courses of action and ways to develop the paper for the benefit of its readers and the paper itself".

#### Reaching out to the newspaper

There are three conventional forums through which readers reach out to the newspaper: they write letters to the editor, letters to the RE, and express their opinion in the below-the-line comment section of the web edition of the newspaper. A careful analysis of these comments brought out a simple truth starkly: readers comment on specific news reports and not on the newspaper as a whole. A newspaper is a jigsaw puzzle, where each piece is tied to another in an organic manner. Editorial judgment is the suturing tool which brings these pieces together. The idea that a responsible newspaper is an interlocking public flows from this.

In 2013, we organised the first Open House for The Hindu's readers in Chennai. Even while inviting readers for this event, I made it clear that a newspaper is not a consumer product; it is a public institution, a common good, and a public sphere despite its private ownership. Over a period of time, I have argued that the legacy media, such as The Hindu, can retain the space for the classical four 'd's' of democracy – discussion, dissent, debate and, finally, informed decision. I have also written that digital platforms, despite all the possibilities they offer, often tend to become ideological silos, where common ground is elusive.

Based on this premise, I managed to host several Open House discussions across cities. These paved the way for a free and frank exchange of ideas between the editorial

team, led by the Editor himself, and a vast cross-section of readers. These meetings brought together the various expectations that readers have of the newspaper in different cities. It helped us realise that a one-size-fits-all approach is not only a bad policy for governance but also for a multi-edition newspaper. The last Open House was held on February 1, 2020, in Vijayawada. As I had mentioned in my column, 'The language of grief' (March 23, 2020), we had to call off the Open House that we had planned to celebrate 50 years of this newspaper in Bengaluru.

#### Virtual meetings

While the news cycle moved to being distinctly digital, with virtual meetings becoming the norm, I was still holding on to my belief that a physical meeting is more ideal for dialogue than the virtual space. I was desperately hoping that the pandemic would soon become endemic and we could meet each other for a hearty exchange of views and ideas. But I am not a Luddite to shun the possibilities afforded by science and technology. In fact, as early as in 2015, we hosted a virtual Open House to mark The Hindu's digital presence. Though we gained a lot from our distant interactions with our readers, it certainly lacked the compact of a physical meeting.

However, the severity of the pandemic has changed the dynamics of conversation. More people are now comfortable talking to each other virtually. The lockdown-imposed reality has forced us to reach out to each other in the cyberworld. And so, we have decided to host a virtual Open House on July 17, a Saturday.

We solicit readers to write to us a brief note about themselves if they are interested in attending the virtual Open House. Though technology permits any number of participants, we would like to limit participation to 100 readers in order to have an effective conversation. Your personal note will help us invite people from different parts of India and ensure wider participation. We propose to have the session between 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

The objective of the Open House remains the same: to listen to readers closely to find out what they are interested in and to explain some salient features of the newspaper's working.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

# A matter of dress and discipline

When the police wear formal clothes and conduct themselves professionally, they command respect

M.P. NATHANAEL

The Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, recently directed all officials in the agency to dress in formal clothes while on duty. This means that all the male officers should wear collared shirts, formal trousers and shoes and all the women officers should wear sarees, suits, or formal shirts and trousers. Casuals are a strict no-no.

Until a few decades back, there was no need to issue such an order. Police officers are normally trained to maintain decorum in office. But over the years, there has been more indiscipline, which has led to this situation. The enforcement of discipline originates from the top. The head of the organisation may himself be observing a proper dress code.

But enforcement of discipline needs to flow down the line to the last man. Such enforcement builds up a culture and an ethos within the organisation.

When I joined the Central Reserve Police Force for my basic training in Neemuch, most of my batchmates who wore printed shirts were asked to pack them and never to be seen in them again. Only plain, striped, or checked shirts were to be worn. The barber turned us into easily recognisable trainees by giving us crew cuts. All this instilled a sense of pride in us.

#### Image of the police

Dignity isn't about clothes alone. The Director General (DG) of Bihar Police, S.K. Singh, issued instructions recently to all personnel to not use their mobile phones while on duty, except in exceptional cases, as it "affects the image of the police". A strict enforcement of this order will not only enhance the image of the police but will go a long way in improving the efficiency of the force.

Alertness, the hallmark of efficiency in a police force, will produce the desired results. When the police are seen chatting on mobile phones while on duty, it tends to tarnish the image of the police. They are seen as being negligent and inefficient in the performance of their duties. The responsibility largely devolves on the junior officers to check their subordinates from using mobiles.

A few years ago, the then DG of Bihar Police issued orders that police personnel should not sport any religious symbols on their uniforms or body that would indicate their religious leanings. The order was issued because many were sporting a 'tilak' on their foreheads while in uniform. As per regulations, policemen are debarred from wearing any religious marks on their face or uniform. Only Sikh personnel are permitted to wear turbans and grow a beard and moustache. There can be no compromise in projecting the secular nature of the police forces of the country.

The Police Commissioner of Delhi, S.N. Shrivastava, recently raised objections to civil defence volunteers donning the khaki, an exclusive preserve of the police. A civil defence volunteer was recently arrested for posing as a sub-Inspector and prosecuting those who were violating COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The matter is being taken up by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

When the police are smartly dressed and conduct themselves in a professional manner, they command the respect of the general public. Pot-bellied policemen project a bad image of the force. The Central Armed Police Forces rightly introduced the concept of an annual medical examination in the late nineties for all the personnel. This has not only kept them trim and fit but has also ensured that they are always in good health. Any medical deficiency can result in their losing promotions.

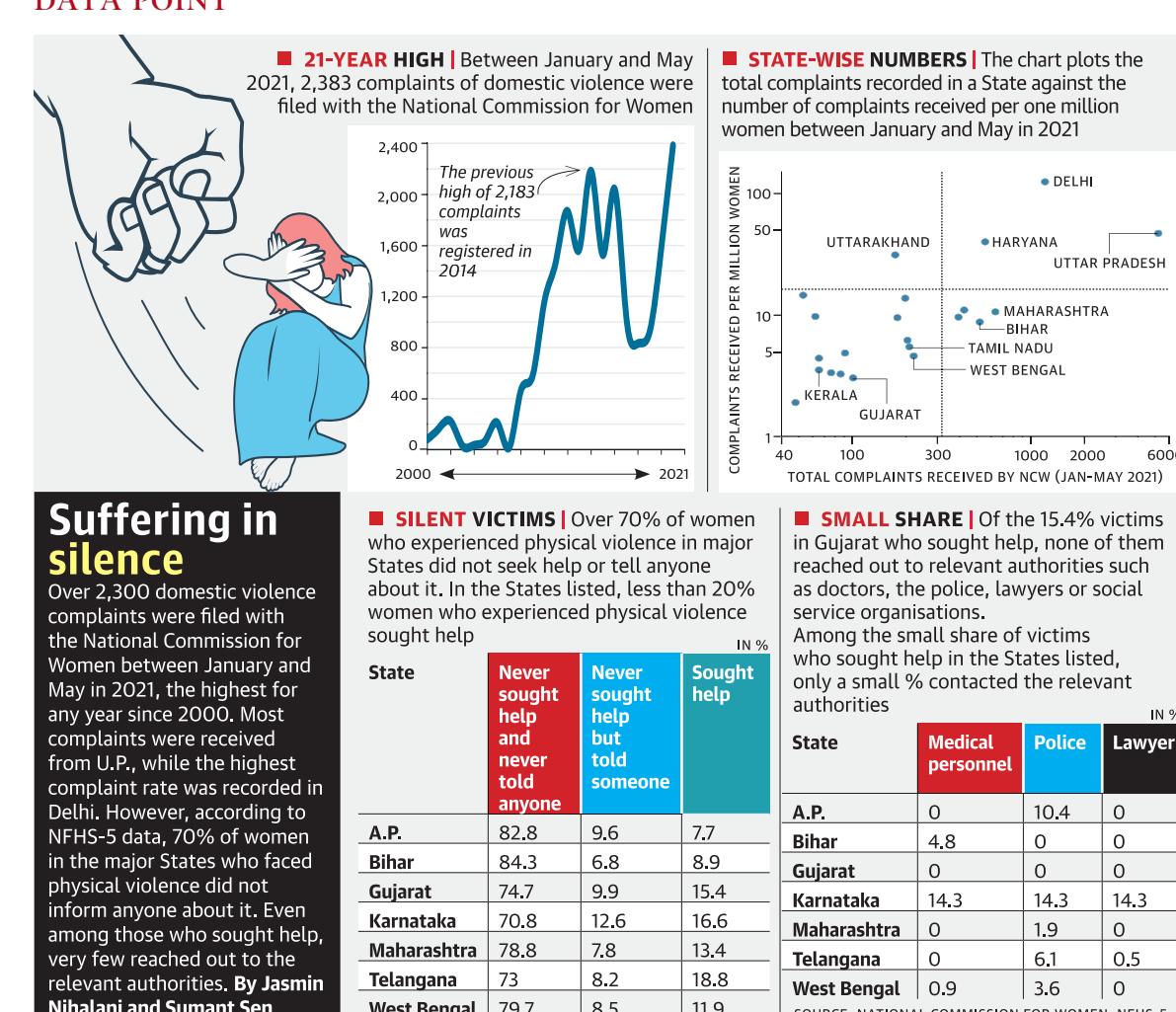
Once the pandemic ends, it is hoped that the health sector shows drastic improvement. It would be a step in the right direction if medical examinations are introduced in all government departments. If this is done, health issues can be detected in the initial stages and treated early.

The Central and State governments should issue orders as part of the conduct rules that all employees must be in formal wear when attending office. When private companies can enforce a dress code, there is no reason why government services shouldn't.

M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), CRPF



## DATA POINT



## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 21, 1971

#### Mediation on Bangla Desh

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said to-day [June 20] that "butchery in Bangla Desh" would have to stop first before India took part in any mediation efforts on the issue. She was answering questions on developments in Bangla Desh and the resultant problem of six million refugees on Indian soil at a 30-minute news conference here [Srinagar] at the conclusion of her visit to Kashmir valley. On recognition of Bangla Desh, the Prime Minister made it clear that the time for it "has not come yet." It was for the Government to decide what was good for the country, she added, and not what some people said or demanded. India, said Mrs. Gandhi, would continue to watch the situation as it developed in Bangla Desh. Just now it had no specific solution to the problem. She went on: "I only know that we are not going to allow them (refugees) to stay on here – neither shall we allow them to be butchered there." Asked what India planned to do if Pakistan failed to respond to Indian pleas, she replied: "We will see what the situation is" and went on to add in a lighter vein: "as I love the press, I do not think I shall tell them first."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 21, 1921

#### Tilak Swaraj Fund

The Tilak Swaraj Fund week commenced yesterday. Arrangements have been made in the city for bands of workers accompanied by volunteers to go in for house to house collections. The local Muslim Volunteer corps is a sprightly, well organised band of young men. Their services have been willingly placed at the disposal of the Tilak Swaraj Fund Committee. Other young men have also volunteered their services. There is no lack of enthusiasm in the city but the one great drawback is that the months of May and June are the time of vacation for the members of the legal profession, and for the student community who usually repair to their homes in the districts or go out in quest of rest and recreation. These months are also the principal part of the marriage season. With all these distracting conditions, which render the carrying out of the Bezwada programme not a little difficult for the people in this part of the country, it is earnestly hoped that they will rise to the occasion. The collections reported from the districts are usually in driblets. They show that the movement has got a firm hold on the masses.

## FROM PAGE ONE

**'Massive distribution of ex gratia will hit finances'**

Besides, the MHA said granting ex gratia compensation for one disease while denying it for those accounting for a larger share of mortality would not be fair or proper. "It would create unfairness and invidious discrimination between persons suffering from one disease and those suffering from another," the government justified.

The court said its "broader approach" encompasses a different set of 'Minimum Standards of Relief' focussed on public health interventions, social protec-

tion and economic recovery for the affected communities.

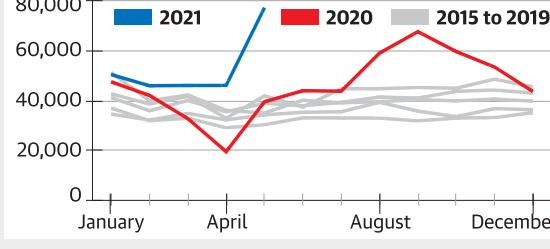
"This would be a more prudent, responsible, and sustainable approach," the Ministry argued.

It said funds to the tune of ₹1,113.21 crore were released to States/UTs towards management and containment of COVID-19 over and above the National Health Mission coverage in 2019-2020 financial year.

In 2020-21, ₹8,257.89 crore was released to the States/UTs to fight the pandemic.

**'Excess deaths nearly 6 times official toll'****Excess deaths**

The graph shows the number of deaths registered by the Civil Registration System in Karnataka through the years



With officials of the Statistics Department remaining tight-lipped after oral gag orders from seniors, COVID-specific death reporting from districts has become inaccessible in Karnataka. It also indicates a much higher toll than reported earlier. For example, last week, the official COVID-19 death toll in Mysuru, which was counted at 1,910, was revised to 3,300 after reconciliation.

Officials admit that even the numbers available in the CRS data is only provisional as reporting of death has always been slow in rural areas. The pandemic has also resulted in inefficient data collection across 35,000 births and deaths registration centres in the State.

With Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa announcing ₹1 lakh to BPL families that have reported a COVID-19 death, the number of deaths being reported is going up, officials said.

The Chief Minister has indicated that the State is estimated to spend between ₹250-₹300 crore on the relief scheme which is expected to benefit between 25,000 and 30,000 families. Irrespective of the number of deaths, each such

BPL family will receive ₹1 lakh.

"Normally, rural areas do not report death immediately. Delayed registration has been a norm," Mr. Yediyurappa said recently. He pointed out that in 2019, of the total 5.08 lakh deaths reported, as many as 1.67 lakh deaths, including 1.01 lakh reported in rural areas, were delayed registration.

While the figures are provisional, and officials are expecting reconciliation of numbers in the coming weeks or months, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969 and the Karnataka Registration of Births and Death Rules 1970 (subsequently amended in 1999), mandate reporting of deaths within 21 days.

Under various other provisions, however, deaths can be reported beyond 21 days. Even after a year, the death can be registered through an order of a First Class Judicial Magistrate.

Attempts to seek a response on the issue of excess deaths from Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Statistics Shalini Rajneesh failed.

(With inputs and graphics from Vignesh Radhakrishnan)

**Mufti holds off decision on meeting PM Modi**

Others who attended the meeting were Chowdhary Mohammad Ramzan, Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, Mian Altaf, Mubarak Gul, Sakina Ito, Khalid Najeeb Suharwardy and two Members of Parliament Mohammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi.

"The consultations are on. After the party presi-

dent is done talking to party leaders, a meeting of the PAGD will take place where the member parties will discuss the issue and take a collective decision," Mr. Wani told reporters after the meeting.

Sajad Lone also chaired a meeting of his Peoples Conference in Srinagar.

(With inputs from PTI)

**Kerala CPI(M) leaders take on KPCC president**

G. ANAND  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Starkly different accounts of the outcome of a campus brawl between Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president K. Sudhakaran in Brennan College in 1967 provoked a fresh round of sniping between the ruling front and the Opposition on Sunday.

The CPI(M) has pulled Mr. Vijayan out of the fray and delegated the task of fending off Mr. Sudhakaran to other leaders. Former Minister A.K. Balan accused Mr. Sudhakaran of laying the ground for political violence. CPI(M) leader P. Jayarajan said Mr. Sudhakaran lacked the courage to act.

was personal. "I have learned to subdue political criminals personally," he said. Mr. Sudhakaran said he was answering to criticism that he had targeted Mr. Vijayan personally.

He also attempted to link Mr. Vijayan to the communal riots in Thalassery in 1971 and the political killing of RMP leader T.P. Chandrasekharan on Sunday.

The CPI(M) has pulled Mr. Vijayan out of the fray and delegated the task of fending off Mr. Sudhakaran to other leaders. Former Minister A.K. Balan accused Mr. Sudhakaran of laying the ground for political violence. CPI(M) leader P. Jayarajan said Mr. Sudhakaran lacked the courage to act.

**Students flay CUET for more varsities**

They say lakhs of them don't have resources to access online paid coaching classes at this stage

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A group of students who have just completed Class 12 are objecting to the proposal to conduct a common entrance test for admission to all Central universities, including those such as Delhi University which have used only Class 12 board marks as the criterion so far. The students, who hail from different parts of the country, have written to the Education Ministry and the DU authorities, warning that such a move will favour rich students who have had access to coaching classes or are already preparing for standardised tests such as JEE or NEET.

The National Testing Agency is yet to take a final decision on the scope or the date for the Central Universities Common Entrance Test (CUET) this year. The test's multiple choice question papers cover language, general awareness, mathematical aptitude and analytical skills, as well as domain knowledge in the candidate's chosen subjects.



Crucial juncture: A student travelling abroad for higher studies getting vaccinated in New Delhi. ■ PTI

"Delhi University aspirants were entirely focused towards Board exam preparation. Since an entrance exam will contain aptitude part, many will face problems dealing with it as it entirely varies from what one has learnt in 10+2," said one common letter sent by students to the DU Vice-Chancellor, noting that science students may not be prepared for the general knowledge section, while arts and commerce stream students may need time to prepare for

"Also, the students who were already preparing for professional degree courses would find it easier as they were already preparing for such a test since grade 11," it said, noting that lakhs of students do not have the resources to suddenly access online paid coaching classes at this stage. The students also noted that students looking to change streams would find it hard to attempt the subject-specific papers.

the logical reasoning and quantitative ability sections.

"The CUET is perhaps a good initiative but it's not right to conduct it suddenly in this unprecedented year without informing about it earlier. Holding another set of exams would further delay our session and waste our entire year keeping us under constant foreboding. We have faith in the Education Ministry and the varsities that they would listen to the students' concerns," she wrote.

Last year, the CUET was only used for admission to 14 new Central Universities and four State universities. However, earlier this year, the Education Ministry told all Central Universities including older, more prestigious institutions that have so far depended on Class 12 mark cut-offs or their own entrance tests, that CUET could be expanded to cover them as well in accordance with the National Education Policy recommendations.

The proposal has taken on new urgency since Class 12 examinations were cancelled, with every Board issuing its own tabulation formula to assign marks instead. The students suggested that these marks be used with different cut-offs for different Boards.

Namrata Kalita, a Class 12 student from Assam, sent her own letter, noting that students from Northeast India who attempt to enter the Central Universities would be particularly affected. "The CUET has no clarification so far, no pattern, no syllabus, no previous year ques-

'We are not against live-in relationship'

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court has directed the police to grant protection to a couple from Uttar Pradesh's Badaun district who were in a live-relationship and recently got married.

While passing the directions on June 18, a Division Bench of Justices Dr. Kaushal Jayendra Thaker and Dinesh Pathak clarified why it had recently refused to grant relief to a married woman who had approached it seeking protection to live-in with someone after leaving her husband. The court had dismissed the plea on grounds that their act went against the mandate of the Hindu Marriage Act.

In the fresh matter, a couple in a live-in relationship had approached it on apprehension that they would be harassed and would not be permitted to live in peace by their families.

"We are not against the live-in relation," the court said.

**Navy team in U.S. for chopper training**

India is buying 24 MH-60R helicopters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A team of 18 Navy personnel reached the U.S. for training on the MH-60R multi-role helicopters, 24 of which were contracted in a \$2.2-billion deal signed during the visit of then President Donald Trump in February 2020.

"Three helicopters are scheduled to be delivered to the Navy next month which will be used for training in the U.S. The first batch is likely to arrive in India by June 2022," a defense official said. Training of the first batch of aircrew and technical crew, will commence at Pensacola, Florida and San Diego, the official said.

The helicopters built by Lockheed Martin are being procured under the 'Buy (Global)' category of the procurement procedure

through the Foreign Military Sales route of the U.S. The deliveries are expected to be completed by 2025.

"MH-60R international partnerships continue – Indian Navy students arrived at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola and North Island to commence training with two MH-60R helicopters while strengthening global partnerships," the U.S. Naval Air Systems Command said on Twitter.

The Navy is facing an acute shortage of helicopters on its frontline warships but procurement of new helicopters has been repeatedly delayed. A tender for 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) is being processed through the strategic partnership route of procurement procedure while there is a projected requirement of 123 multi-role helicopters.

"Keel laying is a major milestone activity in the construction of any ship symbolising formal commencement of the construction process. The keel for the first ship was laid on January 29, 2021. It would be delivered in 2026 and the second ship after six months," the Navy said.

Vice Admiral Kumar said it was for the first time that these vessels, with such technological complexity, were being constructed indigenously at the GSL.

"He said a large number of

Stealth ship is being built by Goa Shipyard with technology transfer from Russia

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

The keel of the second frigate of the additional Krivak class stealth ships being built with technology transfer from Russia by Goa Shipyard Ltd. (GSL) was laid by the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral, G. Ashok Kumar, on Friday.

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"He said a large number of



Full float: At the function to lay the keel for the second frigate of the Krivak class at the Goa Shipyard. ■ PTI

major equipment are being substituted with indigenous equivalents, in addition to use of significant indigenous build material. The entire hulls of the ships are also being built with indigenous steel," the statement quoted him.

In October 2016, India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for four Krivak or Tal-

war stealth frigates – two to be procured directly from Russia and two to be built by the GSL. Following that, India signed a \$1-billion deal with Russia for the direct purchase.

The basic structures of the two frigates are already ready at the Yantar shipyard in Russia and are now being completed.

In November 2018, the

GSL signed a \$500-million deal with Rosoboronexport of Russia for material, design and specialists assistance to locally manufacture two stealth frigates and in January 2019 the contract was signed between the Ministry of Defence and the GSL.

The engines for the ships are supplied by Zorya Nashproekt of Ukraine. Four gas turbine engines, gear boxes and specialist support will cost around \$50-million per ship, officials had said earlier.

India had earlier procured six Krivak class frigates weighing around 4,000 tonnes in two different batches, the Talwar class and the upgraded Teg class.

The four ships to be built will weigh 300 tonnes more than the earlier ones and will be armed with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, the Navy said earlier.

**Congress to celebrate 1971 war jubilee**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress is planning to organise district-level programmes to kick off the golden jubilee celebrations of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh from mid-July, a source said on Sunday.

The party had planned grassroots level meets across 650 districts from May 1 to celebrate an occasion considered to be one of the finest moments of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Politically, it is meant to be an

effective counter to BJP's aggressive nationalism plank by reminding the new generation that Indira Gandhi was the person who managed to break up Pakistan.

However, the party's plan got derailed because of the spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in the second wave.

The source cited above said former Defence Minister A.K. Antony, who heads the Congress committee on organising golden jubilee celebrations of the 1971 War,

has reviewed plans with the convener of the group, Captain Praveen Davar (retd), on restarting the programmes if the corona situation improves by mid-July.

Invitation cards with the iconic photo of the then Pakistani commander, Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi, signing the surrender document before India's Lt General Jagjit Singh Aurora and Ms. Gandhi congratulating the chiefs of Indian armed forces including Sam Manekshaw, have been sent

out. Last December, Congress president Sonia Gandhi had set up a committee that included senior members like Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan among others.

Though Ms. Gandhi was invited by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to take part in the March 26 celebrations at Dhaka, she skipped it because of the pandemic.

**Pact signed to conserve rare turtle in Assam**

NGOs, zoo and Kamrup administration to work with temple for project

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

A major temple in Assam has signed a memorandum of understanding with two green NGOs, the Assam State Zoo-cum-Botanical Garden and the Kamrup district administration for the long-term conservation of the rare freshwater black softshell turtle or the Nilssonia nigricans.

A vision document 2030 was also launched after Turte Survival Alliance India and Help Earth signed the pact involving the Hayagriva Madhava Temple Committee. The temple, revered by both Hindus and Buddhists, is at Hajo, about 30 km northwest of Guwahati.

Until sightings along the Brahmaputra's drainage in Assam, the black softshell turtle was thought to be "extinct in the wild" and confined only to ponds of tem-

ples in northeastern India and Bangladesh. The International Union for Conservation of Nature had in 2021 listed the turtle as "critically endangered". But it does not enjoy legal protection under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, although it has traditionally been hunted for its meat and cartilage, traded in regional and international markets.

"Various temple ponds in Assam such as that of the

Hayagriva Madhava Temple harbour various threatened species of turtles. Since the turtles are conserved in these ponds only based on religious grounds, many biological requirements for building a sustainable wild population have since long been overlooked," Arpita Dutta of Turtle Survival said.

This multi-stakeholder association [conservation pact] aims to restock the wild with viable, self-suffi-

cient and genetically pure threatened turtle populations in the region. We will offer assistance for the required improvement of husbandry of turtles

Govt. open to steps to boost economy: CEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The government is open to coming out with more measures to boost the economy, hit by the second COVID-19 wave, said Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) K.V. Subramanian.

But he said the demand for a fresh stimulus package had to be considered against the backdrop of the initiatives taken by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget for 2021-22. The CEA was responding to a suggestion by some industry bodies that the government needed to announce a ₹3 lakh crore stimulus package to boost the economy.

Sena MLA for party's return to NDA fold

STAFF REPORTER  
PUNE

Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik wrote to Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray asking him to join hands with the BJP. Mr. Sarnaik is facing an ED probe in the NSEL scam.

"While we have complete faith in your leadership ... it would be better if you formed an alliance with Mr. Modi. ... It would also give relief to Sena leaders like Ravindra Waikar, Anil Parab and myself, who are being harassed by Central agencies," he said.

## 2 senior BJP leaders to visit Uttar Pradesh

Party is preparing for 2022 election

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

Two senior leaders of the BJP are due to visit Uttar Pradesh for a two-day tour starting Monday as the party continues its preparation for the 2022 Assembly election.

The visit of general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santhosh and State in-charge Radha Mohan Singh comes when the unit is getting into shape all its frontal units and announced the heads of its morthas.

The visit also assumes significance as it comes days after A.K. Sharma, former bureaucrat and close aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was appointed a vice-president in the State unit, bringing an end to the speculation that he could find himself a berth in the Cabinet of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

INTERVIEW | DEVANGANA KALITA

## 'We were always hopeful that justice will prevail'

I was prepared for a long time in prison given the difficulties of getting bail under UAPA, says the student activist

SHINJINI GHOSH

Jawaharlal Nehru University student and Pinjra Tod activist Devangana Kalita, who was recently released on bail after being arrested for her alleged role in the Delhi riots and charged under the UAPA, speaks on freedom, life inside Tihar jail and other things. Edited excerpts:

It has been over a year since you were charged and in jail. How does it feel to finally be free?

■ It's definitely a relief to be free, not just for Natasha and me, but for all our friends and families who have been supporting us for the last one year ... It's still overwhelming to even look at a bustling street after a year of being locked in. There are many still inside, for crimes they do not even know or never committed, like our friend and jailmate Gulftsha incarcerated for over a year under the same charges as us. In their continued incarceration, our bail doesn't feel like freedom.

## Restore full statehood to J&K'

Congress demand comes ahead of PM's meeting with political leaders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday asked the Narendra Modi government to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in the interest of democracy and upholding constitutional principles.

The demand comes days before the Prime Minister's proposed meeting with political leaders from J&K on June 24. The Prime Minister's Office is learnt to have invited 14 leaders, including four former Chief Ministers from J&K, to discuss the political situation. It will be the first meeting between Mr. Modi and leaders from the region after the Centre diluted in 2019 J&K's special sta-

It is for the Prime Minister and the BJP to decide whether to hold a meeting or to accept the demand of the Indian National Congress in the interest of the Constitution, democracy and the people to restore full statehood to the State of Jammu and Kashmir

RANDEEP SURJEWALA Congress spokesperson



tus under Article 370.

"It is now for the Prime Minister and the BJP to decide whether to hold a meeting or to accept the demand of the Indian National Congress in the interest of the Constitution, democracy and the people to restore full statehood to the State of Jammu and Kashmir," party spo-

kesperson Randeep Surjewala told mediapersons.

He did not say whether or not the party will participate in the June 24 meeting.

### Previous resolution

He recalled that on August 6, 2019, a day after the Centre's decision on Article 370 and bifurcation of J&K, the Con-

gress Working Committee (CWC) had adopted a resolution that clearly demanded the restoration of full statehood. "We believe that undoing it [statehood] is a direct attack on democracy and the constitutional principles." He said elections to the Assembly should be held so that people can elect their representatives instead of being ruled by Delhi.

While the political affairs committee of the PDP has authorised its chief, Mehbooba Mufti, to take a call, the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an umbrella of mainstream parties in J&K, will meet on Tuesday to decide on the June 24 meeting.

## Punjab PCC chief flays move to give jobs to sons of MLAs

Govt. says their grandfathers were murdered by militants

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing turmoil in the Punjab Congress, Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Sunil Jakhar targeted the Amarinder Singh Cabinet's decision to give government jobs to the sons of two sitting Congress legislators, and demanded that the decision be scrapped.

Last Friday, the Punjab government decided to appoint Arjun Partap Bajwa and Bhisham Pandey, both sons of two Congress law-



Growing rift: Amarinder Singh, right, with Sunil Jakhar during an election rally in Pathankot in 2019. ■ PTI

ularisation of *safai karmacharis*, and other pro-employee measures got overshadowed by the news of government jobs for the sons of MLAs.

The rationale for the Cabinet decision was that their grandfathers had been murdered by militants.

"Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh Ji must reverse the ill-advised decision," Mr. Jakhar said in a statement that was released on Saturday, adding that charges of nepotism and political expediency would be levelled against the party. "The decision is also, in my view, against the ethos and culture of neutrality followed by Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh and the Congress party as a whole."

Mr. Jakhar, who is expected to be changed as part of a PCC revamp exercise, asserted that key decisions of the State Cabinet, such as implementing the pay commission recommendations, reg-

former PCC chief and Rajya Sabha member, Partap Singh Bajwa. Once a bitter critic of the Chief Minister, Mr. Bajwa has now joined hands with Capt. Singh to take on Mr. Sidhu.

**Token of gratitude**

"No question of rescinding #PunjabCabinet decision on jobs for sons of 2 @INCpunjab MLAs. It is just a small token of gratitude & compensation for the sacrifices of their families. It's shameful that some people are giving political colour to this decision," the Punjab Chief Minister said on Twitter on Saturday.

Notwithstanding the official explanation, the decision regarding the two MLAs follows a political re-alignment between Capt. Singh and his former critics to take on Navjot Singh Sidhu, who is now leading the dissidence against the Chief Minister.

Mr. Fathehjang is the sitting MLA of Qadian constituency and the brother of

The Amarinder-Bajwa duo in Punjab has been formed to send a clear signal to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) that the high command cannot "force" any decision regarding the cricketer-turned-politician. The three-member AICC panel, set up to resolve Punjab factionalism, had recommended to "suitably accommodate" Mr. Sidhu. However, the high command has to now deal with the Amarinder-Bajwa duo before any compromise can be worked out.

On June 22, the Punjab CM is expected to meet the head of the three-member AICC panel and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, towards resolving the Punjab crisis.

## 'Concerns on IT rules are highly misplaced'

India sends a 'brief' to HRC in Geneva

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

"The LJP has never compromised out of fear of struggle. If we were to compromise we would have accepted Nitish Kumar's offer of 15 seats in the last Assembly poll and our Ministers would have been present in the State," Mr. Paswan said.

While condemning as "unconstitutional" the misconduct of expelled party leader Mr. Pashupati Kumar Paras to mislead people, the national executive committee passed five resolutions.

The committee also urged the Prime Minister to confer Bharat Ratna on the late Ram Vilas Paswan and install his statue in Bihar in view of his 50 years of active politics and his contribution to nation-building.

The committee also opposed the use of LJP's symbol by Mr. Paras.

**The victims of abuse on social media platforms shall have a forum for redressal of their grievances**

PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA  
IN GENEVA

child and when no other intrusive options are working, only then the significant social media intermediary will be required to disclose as to who started the message," India said in response.

The issue has drawn attention in view of the continued differences between the government and social media. The victims of abuse on social media platforms shall have a forum for redressal of their grievances," said a special 'brief' that the Permanent Mission of India in Geneva had sent to the HRC on the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The brief said both the Houses of Parliament "repeatedly" asked the Government of India to "strengthen" the legal framework to hold online platforms accountable under Indian laws.

Three Special Rapporteurs of the U.N. had on June 11 expressed "serious concerns" about the Rules and said they amount to "infringement of a wide range of human rights".

"On the traceability of the first originator of the information, it may be noted that the Rules seek only limited information. Only when a message already in public circulation is giving rise to violence, impinging on the unity and integrity of India, depicting a woman in a bad light, or sexual abuse of a

The statement indicated India's commitment to "protect digital civic space" and respect for human rights and international law.

## Chirag to hold roadshow in Bihar

It will be from July 5; Nitish trying to engineer a split in the LJP, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Locked in a tussle with his uncle over the control of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Chirag Paswan on Sunday attended a national executive committee meeting in Delhi and said he would hold a roadshow across Bihar from July 5 on the occasion of his father and party's founder Ram Vilas Paswan's birth anniversary. Mr. Paswan said Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was trying to engineer a split in the LJP, but "was not successful".

"Like every year, the birth anniversary of the founder of LJP and my father Ram Vilas Paswan will be organised with fanfare in the country and on this occasion I will take out an 'Aashirwad Yatra' [journey of blessings] on July 5 from Hajipur which will pass through all districts of Bihar in nearly two months before culminating in Patna with a call of party's national



**BIG PLANS:** Chirag Paswan with supporters after the LJP's national executive meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ PTI

council meeting. Thereafter, a mammoth rally will be held in Patna," said Mr. Paswan after the national executive committee meeting of his group at his residence in Delhi. Mr. Paswan's father, Ram Vilas Paswan, had represented Hajipur nine times in the Lok Sabha, and currently, his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras is the LJP MP from there.

"The Bihar Chief Minister has been trying to generate a split among Dalit voters' un-

ity for a long time. In this contest, first he made a division among Dalit and Mahadalit and the LJP had opposed this policy of Mr. Kumar and him in the last Assembly election. It was because of the LJP's opposition that the JD(U)'s seats were reduced to half in this election. And after this debacle, Mr. Kumar had decided to make a split in the LJP. It was under this plan that he tried to split our party by promising ministerial berth to a senior

citizen.

While condemning as "unconstitutional" the misconduct of expelled party leader Mr. Pashupati Kumar Paras to mislead people, the national executive committee passed five resolutions.

The committee also urged the Prime Minister to confer Bharat Ratna on the late Ram Vilas Paswan and install his statue in Bihar in view of his 50 years of active politics and his contribution to nation-building.

The committee also opposed the use of LJP's symbol by Mr. Paras.

It and how do you perceive the government's action?

■ It is a terrible reality that today people who are, in fact, speaking up and working to make our country and society more just, equal and free of oppression are being incarcerated and labelled as anti-national, especially those from marginalised communities or in solidarity.

We witnessed first-hand how our jails are filled with the most vulnerable people in our society, mostly working-class, Dalit and Muslim communities. It was also deeply impressed on us how jail is but a microcosm of the power dynamics that operate in society as a whole, with people's vulnerabilities outside only getting intensified inside.

Often, lack of support on

the outside and the challenges of navigating an opaque legal aid system with very scant resources extend and intensify the punishment meted out by the legal system ...

What was your experience like inside Tihar and how has it impacted you?

■ Jail is systematically made into a dehumanising experience. Authorities have absolute power over life and movement and use that power arbitrarily to deny inmates basic freedoms. This over-

long time in prison. The suddenness of the release also did not allow us the chance to say goodbye to our fellow inmates properly...

UAPA charges were slapped against you and the others. In the past year, were there moments of uncertainty and helplessness?

■ Historically, one has seen how laws like the UAPA have been used to keep dissenting voices and people from marginalised communities inside for prolonged periods without bail. The process itself becomes a punishment, even before a trial takes place...

There were many moments of uncertainty and helplessness, especially given the general anxiety and insecurity caused by the pandemic, fearing for the health of our loved ones who we could barely access and could not care for inside and outside prison. Yet, we were

also always hopeful that

sooner or later justice will prevail through the judicial system and through the rising voices of protest...

What was your experience like inside Tihar and how has it impacted you?

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into a dehumanising experience. Authorities have absolute power over life and movement and use that power arbitrarily to deny inmates basic freedoms. This over-

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the outside and the challenges

of navigating an opaque

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scant resources extend and

intensify the punishment

meted out by the legal sys-

tem ...

There are several scholars

and activists who are still

behind bars with similar

charges. Your comments on

the above the lack of infras-

## IN BRIEF



Manoj Sinha lauds 'J&amp;K model of vaccination'

SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Manoj Sinha on Sunday praised the "tireless contribution of corona warriors" and frontline workers in the June episode of the *Awaam ki Awaz* programme aired on all local and primary channels of the All India Radio in the Union Territory. He said J&K had achieved great strides in vaccine coverage. "People are discussing the 'J&K model of vaccination' and want to replicate the same in other parts of the country," he said.

## Villagers light lamps for COVID-19 victims

DIBRUGARH (ASSAM)

In a unique prayer ceremony for the people who have succumbed to COVID-19, nearly 4,500 earthen lamps were lit by residents of two villages in Assam's Dibrugarh district. The Sonowal Kachari community in the Naharkatia area organised the event with villagers of Na-Khotiya. Sonowal gaon and Mathawoni gaon lighting the earthen lamps on both sides of the road passing through the two villages. A total of 774 families in the two villages lit 4,444 lamps on Saturday night remembering the people who have lost their lives battling the COVID-19 infection. PTI

## '3.06 cr. vaccine doses available with States'

NEW DELHI

More than 3.06 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with the States and Union Territories and over 24.53 lakh doses will be received by them in the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday. It said 29,10,54,050 vaccine doses had been provided to States and Union Territories so far through the Union government's free of cost channel and the direct State procurement category. Of these, the total consumption, including wastage, was 26,04,19,412 doses, according to data available at 8 a.m. on Sunday, the Ministry said. PTI

## U.P. reports 251 new COVID-19 cases

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh reported 251 new COVID-19 cases and 46 fatalities on Sunday, taking the State's infection tally to 17,04,358 and its death toll to 22,178. Eleven of the fresh deaths were reported from Allahabad and 10 from Lucknow, the U.P. government said in a statement. Among the new cases, 25 were reported from Lucknow, followed by 11 each in Varanasi, Rae Bareli and Bareilly, and 10 each in Meerut, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Shahjahanpur and Pratapgarh. A total of 561 more COVID-19 patients have recovered from the disease in the State, taking their number to 16,77,611 so far. PTI

## Public deserves to know toll: HC

Bihar govt's reluctance to publish number of deaths is uncalled for, says Bench

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PATNA

The Patna High Court has pulled up the Bihar government again for not maintaining its records of births and deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the State's reluctance to publish the number of deaths was "uncalled for" and was "not protected by any law".

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Sanjay Kumar said, "To cover with a veil of secrecy the common routine business is not in the interest of the public. Such secrecy can seldom be legitimately desired."

"In our considered view, the resistance [to publish records of deaths and births] is uncalled for, as such action is neither protected by any law nor in consonance with settled principles of good governance. The government, while correcting its myopic approach, only needs a reminder that to cover with a veil of secrecy the common routine business is not in the interest of the public," the court said on Friday while hearing a *suo motu* public interest litigation (PIL) petition on COVID-19 management.



Information is key: Health workers at a COVID-19 vaccination centre in Patna, Bihar, earlier this month. ■ PTI

The Bench has been passing strictures on the State government's dismal management of the pandemic for the last several days.

## Transparency in govt'

"Transparency is the hallmark of good governance, more so in today's era, especially when the government, both Central and the State, are committed to making a success the flagship 'Digital India' programme and the 'National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy, 2012,'" the court observed further.

"We see no reason as to why such information of deaths, COVID-19 and non-COVID-19, is not regularly

uploaded and made known to the general public," it added.

The court also asked the elected representatives in the State to elicit the number of deaths in their respective constituencies within 24 hours. "Elected representatives, upon whom an obligation has been placed, are duty-bound to disclose the number of deaths that occurred in their constituencies within 24 hours," the High Court said while directing the State government to complete the process of updating deaths and births within the next two months.

"The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969,

and also the Right to Information Act, 2005, give rights to a person, in almost unequivocal terms, of their access to information and, therefore, digital portals should be made accessible to the general public with regular and timely updates," the court observed.

Recently, Bihar had hit the headlines for undercounting the number of deaths related to COVID-19. In a single day, the death toll had jumped by a whopping 72% and had caused a spike in the number of deaths in the country as well.

Earlier, the contradictory death toll from Buxar district by two top officials in the court had also been highlighted in the media. As many as 81 bodies were recently found floating in the Ganga in Buxar.

Meanwhile, a media report said close to 75,000 persons had died in Bihar of unexplained causes in the first five months of 2021.

Bihar, so far, has registered 9,543 deaths due to COVID-19, while the number of active cases is 3,395. Currently, there are 7,19,400 positive cases and the recovery rate is 98.20%.

## Death due to COVID-19 must be certified as such: Centre

'Lapse in stating cause of death will have consequences'

## KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Any lapse in stating COVID-19 as the cause of demise in a death certificate will have penal consequences for those found responsible, including the certifying doctor, the Centre has said in the Supreme Court.

Recently, Bihar had hit the headlines for undercounting the number of deaths related to COVID-19. In a single day, the death toll had jumped by a whopping 72% and had caused a spike in the number of deaths in the country as well.

"It is mandated that any death resulting from COVID-19 shall have to be so certified, i.e., as COVID death, failing which, everyone responsible, including the certifying doctor, shall be responsible for penal consequences," the Centre said in its affidavit on Sunday.

The Centre further clarified that deaths with a diagnosis of COVID-19, irrespective of co-morbidities, had to be certified as COVID-19 deaths. The only exception to the rule was when there was a clear alternative cause of death, for example, accidental trauma or poisoning.

The Supreme Court recently told the Centre that death certificates of those who died of COVID-19 often did not reveal that fact. "The



Last rites: A family member watching the cremation of a COVID-19 victim in Guwahati, Assam, earlier this year. ■ PTI

death certificates of persons who die from COVID-19 in hospitals show the reason as lung or heart problem or something else," Justice M.R. Shah had told Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, recently.

"All deaths with a diagnosis of COVID-19, irrespective of co-morbidities, are to be classified as deaths due to COVID-19," the Centre clarified.

The said "death certification" was required for recording deaths in accordance with the regulations prescribed by the Registrar-General of India. "The prim-

ary goal of certification of cause of death [death certificate] is to identify and correctly classify all deaths due to a medical condition [e.g. COVID-19] and to eliminate any discrepancy in coding so as to obtain true estimates of burden of COVID-19 deaths," the Centre explained.

"Any breach of the guidelines for recording COVID-19 deaths would be a criminal offence as stipulated under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code," it added. This provision punishes disobedience to an order duly promulgated by a public servant.

## Scale up public health, social measures: WHO

'Accelerate vaccination for COVID-19'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



We need to strengthen our efforts to test, trace and isolate, the WHO said.

rantine are recommended.

Even as countries scale up vaccination against COVID-19, they need to implement public health and social measures, along with efforts to accelerate vaccination for COVID-19, to prevent another surge, as more countries confirmed prevalence of highly transmissible variants of concern.

"We need to continuously strengthen our efforts to test, trace and isolate. Socio-interventions such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and proper wearing of masks need to be stringently implemented. These measures should be in full force and for longer periods in areas reporting more transmissible Variants of Concerns," said Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia. The release added that the public health and social measures were part of a wide range of non-pharmaceutical interventions, both individual and societal, and were cost-effective measures to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

In addition to personal protective measures, cleaning, disinfection, ventilation, surveillance, contact tracing, isolation and qua-

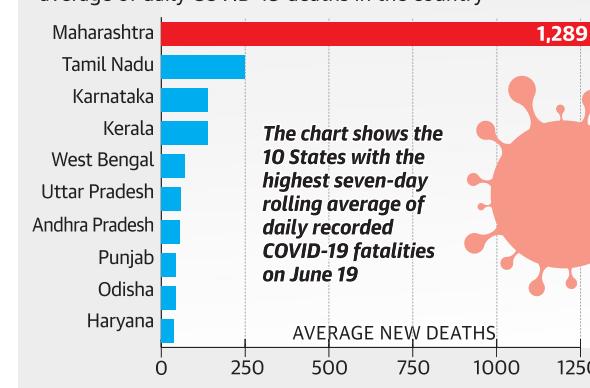
"Where more transmissible Variants of Concern are spreading, these measures need to be applied more stringently," she added.

## India records 51,388 new cases, 1,385 more deaths

Over 43 lakh people vaccinated in the previous 24 hours

## Casualty count

Maharashtra continues to record the highest seven-day average of daily COVID-19 deaths in the country



more than what was recorded in the previous 24 hours. It is also 8.02 lakh doses more than what was recorded during the corresponding period a week ago. The seven-day rolling average of daily vaccinations in the country continues to increase. It stood at 32.22 lakh on June 19, which is more than the 30.3 lakh recorded a week before (June 13).

The figures do not include cases and deaths from Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Ladakh. The data are sourced from the respective States' health bulletins.

## Samples tested

Around 18.11 lakh samples

were tested in the country

on Saturday (the results for

which were made available

on Sunday).

About 43.04 lakh vaccine

doses were administered in

the country in the 24 hours

ending 7 a.m. on Sunday,

which is 10.04 lakh doses

more than what was recorded

in the previous 24 hours.

It is also 8.02 lakh doses

more than what was recorded

during the corresponding

period a week ago. The

seven-day rolling average

of daily vaccinations in the

country continues to in-

crease. It stood at 32.22 lakh

on June 19, which is more

than the 30.3 lakh recorded

a week before (June 13).

About 24.4% of adults in

India, 44.1% of those aged

above 45, and 47.4% of peo-

ple aged above 60, have

been administered with at

least one dose of a COVID-19

vaccine, until 8 p.m. on Sun-

day, which is 16.6% of the

country's population has re-

ceived at least one dose, on-

ly 3.7% are fully vaccinated.

The figures are based on the

estimated population in

2021.

The seven-day rolling av-

erage of daily recorded fatali-

ties in the country stood at

2,333 on June 19.

Maharashtra registered

the highest average daily

deaths (1,289) in the country

followed by Tamil Nadu (248), Karnataka (139), and Kerala (139).

It is also significantly higher

than the average daily de-

athes recorded a month be-

fore (May 19), which stood at

13.63 lakh.

It is also significantly higher

than the average daily de-

athes recorded a month be-

before (May 19), which stood at

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before (May 19), which stood at

13.63 lakh.

It is also significantly higher</p

# Taliban say committed to Afghan peace talks, want 'Islamic system'

Its co-founder assures that the rights of women, minorities would be protected

REUTERS

KABUL

The Taliban said on Sunday they were committed to peace talks, adding they wanted a "genuine Islamic system" in Afghanistan that would make provisions for women's rights in line with cultural traditions and religious rules.

The statement came amid slow progress in the talks between the Islamic group and Afghan government representatives in Qatar and as violence rises dramatically around the country ahead of the withdrawal of foreign forces by September 11.

Officials have said the Taliban has not yet submitted a written peace proposal that could be used as a starting point for substantive talks.

"We understand that the



Intense fighting: A 'Sangorians' militiaman firing at Taliban insurgents in Mukhtar, in this file photo. • AFP

world and Afghans have queries and questions about the form of the system to be established following withdrawal of foreign troops," said the Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, in the statement.

"A genuine Islamic system is the best means for solution of all issues of the Af-

## Ghani to visit U.S. on Friday, says White House

WASHINGTON U.S. President Joe Biden will meet Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, on June 25, the White House said on Sunday. The meeting comes as fighting between Afghan forces and militants has surged. REUTERS

ghans," he said. "Our very participation in the negotiations and support on our part indicates that we believe in resolving issues through understanding."

He said that women and minorities would be protected and diplomats and NGO staff would be able to work securely. "We take it on our-

selves as a commitment to accommodate all rights of citizens of our country, whether they are male or female, in the light of the rules of the glorious religion of Islam and the noble traditions of the Afghan society," he said, adding that "facilities would be provided" for women to work and be educated.

# Sri Lanka to probe 'Army attack and humiliation' of Muslims

Investigation ordered after image of people forced to kneel goes viral

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

A widely-shared image on social media, showing a row of men kneeling in front of soldiers for reportedly violating the Sri Lanka's current lockdown, has prompted the army to probe the incident.

Issuing a media statement on Sunday, the Army said "it immediately removed" the personnel from their duties, "after an alleged improper conduct of a few army personnel" in Eravur, a Muslim-majority town in Batticaloa district. Initial investigation has begun, the Army said, pledging "strictest action".



Out of the blue: Muslim residents kneeling on the streets as a 'punishment' for flouting lockdown rules. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

including UN – concern over "targeted attacks" on Sri Lanka's Muslims, who constitute about 10% of the country's nearly 22 million population.

Forty-four-year-old daily wage earner Mohammed Is-

mail Marzook of Eravur was already going through a rough patch with his income shrinking during the pandemic, whose third wave the country is experiencing. The last thing he expected was to be "beaten and humiliated".

lockdown, and the photograph from Eravur, said the incident showed yet again that it is "one country two laws for this government."

Responding to the Army's

statement that they would probe the incident, the legislator told *The Hindu* that the Army was "forced to acknowledge" the incident and investigate it, since the image had gone viral on social media. "If they can investigate this matter now, why can't they do the same in regard to the Tamils' long-pending concerns about alleged crimes against humanity by the army at the end of the war? Do they mean to say not even one army member could have committed any wrong?" he asked.

"I just went on my bicycle to buy my diabetes medicines at our local pharmacy, and a little bit of rice nearby. I even showed the empty box of my pills, but the soldiers forced me to kneel down right there along with some others, with my hands raised," he told *The Hindu*. "I explained to them in Sinhala that I am a patient, and that I stepped out only to buy medicines, which is allowed. But they wouldn't listen, and kept beating me, like they would beat a cattle," he said.

**One country, two laws?**

Batticaloa MP Shanakyan Rasamanickam, who put out a tweet juxtaposing a photograph of a vehicle pile-up on a Colombo road during the

# Iran, world powers adjourn nuclear talks

Don't negotiate with Tehran: Israel PM

REUTERS

VIENNA

Iran and six world powers have adjourned nuclear talks for consultations in their capitals, the European Union's envoy to the negotiations said on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters, Enrique Mora gave no indication when the talks would resume, but said progress had been made and that the participants would have a clearer idea of how to close a deal when they return.

He added that he expected the international nuclear watchdog and Tehran to reach an agreement on ex-

tending a monitoring deal of Iran's nuclear activities that ends on June 24.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said there are still disagreements between Iran and the world powers on key issues, including on sanctions and on the nuclear commitments that Iran has to make."

Earlier, Israel PM Naftali Bennett condemned the victory of hardline judge Ebrahim Raisi as Iranian President, saying his would be a "regime of brutal hangmen" with which world powers should not negotiate a new nuclear deal.

# Saudi Arabia seeks religious reset as clerical power wanes

Kingdom had ordered restrictions on mosque loudspeakers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE RIYADH



Mohammed bin Salman

Muezzins issuing high-decibel calls to prayer have long been part of Saudi identity, but a crackdown on mosque loudspeakers is among contentious reforms seeking to shake off the Muslim kingdom's austere image.

Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest Muslim sites, has long been associated with a rigid strain of Islam known as Wahhabism that inspired generations of global extremists and left the oil-rich kingdom steeped in conservatism.

But the role of religion faces the biggest reset in modern times as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, spurred by the need to diversify the oil-reliant economy, pursues a liberalisation drive in parallel with a vigorous crackdown on dissent.

Chipping away at a key pillar of its Islamic identity, the government last month ordered that mosque loudspeakers limit their volume to one-third of their maximum capacity and not broadcast full sermons, citing concerns over noise pollution.

The move triggered an online backlash with the hashtag "We demand the return of mosque speakers" gaining traction. It also sparked calls to ban

loud music in restaurants, once taboo in the kingdom but now common amid liberalisation efforts, and to fill mosques in such large numbers that authorities are forced to permit loudspeakers for those gathering outside.

But authorities are unlikely to budge, as economic reforms for a post-oil era take precedence over religion, observers say. "The country is re-establishing its foundations," Aziz Alghashian, a politics lecturer at the University of Essex, said.

"It's becoming an economically driven country that is investing substantial effort in trying to appear more appealing – or less intimidating – to investors and tourists. "In what was once unthinkable, some shops and restaurants now remain open during the five daily Muslim prayers.

# Ethiopia's poll board says ready for election today

No ballot is scheduled for Tigray

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ADDIS ABABA

Twice delayed, hobbled by the pandemic, violent insecurity, and planning chaos, Ethiopia's electoral board said it was ready for Monday's crucial vote and assured it will be credible.

"We're actually very confident about it," the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) spokeswoman Solyana Shimeles said. It is not optimism shared by all, with serious doubts remaining over the vote Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed promised would be the most competitive yet in the country.

Voting will not proceed on June 21 in about one-fifth

of the country's 547 constituencies due to unrest and logistical problems.

Those constituencies will mostly vote in September, but no ballot is scheduled in Tigray, a war-torn region of six million.

In some areas where voting will proceed, opposition boycotts have further undermined claims of inclusivity and competition. The majority of national parliamentary seats up for grabs in Mr. Abiy's native Oromia – the country's most populous region – are being contested by a single candidate, election data shows. Three of Ethiopia's 49 registered parties are not contesting the poll.

The Russian Ambassador in Washington flew back on Sunday to the U.S., saying he hoped to build "equal and pragmatic" ties after a U.S.-Russia Summit in Geneva aimed at reducing tensions.

The plane transporting Ambassador Anatoly Antonov, who was recalled in March for consultations, took off at 0620 GMT from Moscow, Russian news agencies reported. "Given the results of the meeting between the two Presidents, I am counting on constructive work with my American colleagues to build equal and pragmatic relations," he said.

Russian envoy returns to Washington

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MOSCOW

# China vaccinations cross 1 billion

More than 500 million doses administered in less than a month: NHC's figures

ANANTH KRISHNAN



A file photo of a student receiving a vaccine shot at a university in Wuhan. • AFP

China has now administered more than one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines, its National Health Commission (NHC) said on Sunday, with the vaccination campaign stepped up in recent weeks amid a small cluster of cases reported in southern China.

The renewed vaccination push saw 500 million doses administered in the past 28 days – more than 17 million doses across the country every day – according to the NHC's figures.

It took more than three months for China to administer its first 100 million doses with its vaccination campaign beginning in December. It took 25 days to reach 200 million, a landmark reached on April 21, and 17 days to then reach the 300 million mark.

The initial slow speed was attributed to a combination of vaccine hesitancy and the

Stringent lockdowns and mass testing and tracing have been deployed to quickly squash subsequent local outbreaks that have been linked to overseas arrivals or port cities, as has happened in recent weeks in southern Guangdong province which reported cases of the Delta variant.

The Guangdong cases, coupled with cases also reported in the northeast, have pushed many to get vaccinated, with State media showing long queues of residents lining up, some waiting overnight in Guangdong to receive their shots.

Around 40% of the population will be fully vaccinated by the end of June, with 70% expected to be fully covered by the end of the year, authorities have said.

China's Sinopharm and SinoVac vaccines have been approved by the World Health Organisation for

emergency use. While there have been questions about the efficacy of the vaccines, a May 26 study based on phase 3 trials of two of Sinopharm's vaccines conducted in the UAE and Bahrain placed their efficacy at 72.8% and 78.1%, respectively, in preventing all infections, lower than mRNA vaccines but similar to the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine's reported efficacy.

Most significantly, the trial found the vaccines to be fully effective in preventing severe infections with the trial reporting zero severe cases among the vaccinated group.

A Beijing-based immunologist told the Communist Party-run *Global Times* on Sunday that the trial found the vaccines to be fully effective in preventing severe infections with the trial reporting zero severe cases among the vaccinated group.

China's Sinopharm and SinoVac vaccines have been approved by the World Health Organisation for

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## Five dead in Belgium school collapse

BRUSSELS

Five building workers were confirmed dead on Saturday, a day after a school construction site partially collapsed in the Belgian city of Antwerp. The last two bodies were pulled out of the rubble on Saturday afternoon, Antwerp's fire department said, meaning that all the missing victims were now accounted for. King Philippe of Belgium visited the scene on Saturday accompanied by Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo. AFP

## ASK US



K. NITYA KALYANI

**Q.** Please tell me about the best health insurance policy for a family of 4 with a monthly income of ₹35,000?

MUHAMMAD ASIF RAO

**A.** You haven't said how old your family members are, so let us go by the assumption of a couple in the late 30s and two children in the 10 to 12 years' range. A basic hospitalisation policy with a family floater sum insured of at least ₹5 lakh would be good to begin with. This would cost between ₹10,000 and ₹12,000 a year.

The premium amount could make one hesitate, but a floater sum insured is cost-effective and the coverage is value-for-money as you are protected against harsh hospital expenses.

Having said that, if you have the option of an employer medical insurance scheme that should be your first option. You can cover your spouse and children and, depending on the scheme, your parents as well.

As to what cover to choose, check a policy called Arogya Sanjeevani. It is a standardised policy that each general insurance company or health insurance company ought to offer. Every insurer's Arogya Sanjeevani policy will have the exact same policy benefits but with different premium rates. You can do an Internet search and see what this policy premium works out to for your family and choose the best option.

**Q.** I have been married for three years. My wife is pursuing her Ph.D. and doesn't have any regular income. I am looking for a life insurance plan for her as I already have a term policy in my name. No insurer would provide any term plan as she did not have regular income. Please advise.

SANTHOSH GEORGE

**A.** Life insurance is an income protection for the dependents of the life assured. From that point of view, insurance companies base the amount of insurance they will offer on the earning capacity of the prospective life assured. An income is also the basis of verifying whether the prospect can afford regular premium payment to keep the policy alive. These would be the reasons why you have found it difficult to get your wife a term insurance policy.

This is not to say that it is not possible for her to buy life insurance. Please talk more in detail with the company that gave you your term insurance policy and set out the details of your family finances and future career prospects after she finishes her doctoral studies. Past employment history, if any, would also help establish her prospects in the employment market. Investments, earnings from investment and property belonging to your wife will give them comfort on premium paying capacity.

One way to make a breakthrough may be to try to buy a small policy. You can always add further sum assured by way of additional policies later.

**Q.** I had taken an annuity policy with a premium-paying period of 10 years. I discontinued premium payment in early 2020, having paid ₹10 lakh in two years. As per the policy terms and conditions the policyholder may surrender his policy after a period of five years from the commencement of the policy and the fund value under the base policy (including top-ups) less applicable discontinuance charges, if any, will be paid to the policyholder according to the following options:

1. To commute to the extent allowed under Income Tax Act (0 to 33.33%) and the balance must be applied to purchase immediate annuity from the same insurer which shall be guaranteed for life, at the prevailing annuity rate or  
2. To utilise the surrender value either to purchase a single premium deferred pension product of the same type from the company, if any. I request you to explain how to assess these options are worked out.

C. SATISH

**A.** Any annuity plan requires you to use the bulk of the fund value/ maturity value on the vesting date or on surrender to buy an annuity policy from the same life insurance company. You have the option of taking up to 33.33% of the fund value as a commutation and this will be tax-free. The remainder of the fund value has to be used to buy an annuity.

Here, you have two options. An immediate annuity, which means your pension amount from this policy will start immediately and be paid at the frequency you opt for through the rest of your life. You may have a few options to consider on that such as return of purchase price and so on.

The other is a deferred annuity, which means you make the purchase now and opt for an annuity to start on a date of your choosing, a.k.a. the vesting date. They would have options on how late that vesting date can be depending on your age.

Deferred annuity would give you a better annuity amount than an immediate annuity simply due to the future value of present money.

As for information from the company, please ask them in writing for clarifications and they are bound to give you the information you require. You can also read your policy bond and read up information about this specific policy on the company's website. Since your policy can be surrendered by 2023, you have time to do the research.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

# Building the right emergency fund

AARATI KRISHNAN

the emergency fund should take over during this period.

While this is logical, job losses or accidents are not the only events that can require large out-of-pocket spending and force you into debt. In recent times, families where multiple members were affected by COVID-19 incurred medical expenses running into lakhs of rupees that either completely eroded savings or led to high debt. During the Kerala and

But how large should that emergency fund be and where should it be invested? Recent experience of real-life emergencies suggests that this is where generic advice tends to trip up.

## Needed, a buffer

It is common practice to link the size of one's emergency fund to one's living expenses. So, if your family's expenses on basics such as house rent, loan EMIs, groceries, food, health, school fees and so on work out to say, ₹40,000 a month, you are advised to hold an emergency fund equal to say, 6 to 9 months' equivalent (₹2.4 lakh to ₹3.6 lakh).

The reasoning behind pegging the size of your emergency fund to monthly living expenses is that it should help your family tide over periods of income loss. If there's a temporary interruption in your earning capacity due to quitting a job, getting fired or suffering an illness or accident,

come at nominal premiums.

## Insurance isn't enough

Health and property insurance are essential components of preparing for emergencies. However, they do not do away with the need for an emergency fund. In natural calamities, accidents or medical emergencies, you need to prepare for the possibility that the event that put you through the wringer may be excluded from your insurance plan.

Most insurance contracts come with truckloads of fine print that include some kinds of emergencies, and leave out others. During COVID-19, many folks filing cashless hospital claims have found to their chagrin that they had to fork out large out-of-pocket expenses, because 40-50% of their hospital bills were disallowed by their insurer. Quite a few hospitals demanded upfront cash deposits to allot beds, overcharged on consumables such as PPE kits or billed more than government-approved rates for treatment that led to such partial reimbursement.

To guard against such exclusions, it would be best to build a buffer of say ₹1-2 lakh into your

emergency fund, over and above your 6-9 months' living expenses.

## Cash component

Thanks to the rise of net banking and digital wallets, most of us can get by with very little hard cash in normal times. But in extraordinary times, currency often turns out to be the king. During the Chennai floods, most ATMs could not be operated as the machines simply didn't receive cash refills. During COVID-19 times, we hear of hospitals demanding cash advances for quick admission and off-the-book purchases of hard-to-get

An emergency fund lying in a bank FD or mutual fund may not meet all your needs in such cases. Though it is a sub-opti-

Liquidity and easy access at all times must be the watchwords while saving money to meet a difficult situation

mal choice from the point of view of safety and returns, it may best for you to hold some hard currency at home to tide over such situations. About a month's living expenses should suffice.

## Safety, not returns

Savings accounts, bank fixed deposits and liquid debt funds are the usual avenues that advisers recommend for investing your emergency money. But when making these selections, avoid the temptation to shoot for high returns.

Co-operative banks, small finance banks, new banks or banks with slightly shaky financials may offer higher interest rates on savings accounts and FDs to woo depositors. But, should they land in trouble, RBI can impose sudden moratoriums on withdrawals when you urgently need the money. The recent cases of PMC Bank and Yes Bank which saw withdrawals capped by RBI moratoriums are examples.

For your emergency money, it is best to stick to systems that are less likely to be affected by such delays, it may be best to divide up your emergency fund, to park some portion (say a third of it) in bank deposits with an instant online liquidation feature and a portion in liquid funds, while also holding hard currency that you can immediately access.

temically important banks despite uninspiring rates.

With liquid or debt funds, there's even more reason not to be lured by returns. The crisis that the Franklin Templeton funds have run into, tell us that debt mutual funds with higher yields than peers are likely to be taking on both credit and liquidity risks. It is also best to go with conservative liquid funds that invest mainly in government paper.

## Prioritise liquidity

The primary purpose of having an emergency fund is to be able to access the money at very short notice.

Take the case of liquid funds, a popular vehicle. The instant withdrawal facility on such funds is limited to ₹50,000. When you redeem higher sums, the official processing time is one or two business days. But the word 'business' is the operative word here. Should non-business days intervene, you may need to endure a 3- or even 4-day wait to get your hands on the money.

To avoid such delays, it may be best to divide up your emergency fund, to park some portion (say a third of it) in bank deposits with an instant online liquidation feature and a portion in liquid funds, while also holding hard currency that you can immediately access.

## THINK INVESTOR: QUEST FOR REAL RETURNS

# When inflation threatens your finances

Commodity or financial services stocks, and realty may offer better returns

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

Even as COVID-19 continues to be a cause for concern, many fear a rise in inflation because of supply-side constraints owing to lockdowns in various parts of the country. In this article, we discuss whether you can moderate the effects of inflation on your personal finance.

## Inflation risk

Inflation has a direct impact on your living expenses because you have to spend more to maintain your current standard of living. It is moot if your income would increase given the current state of the economy. Even if your income does increase, it is unlikely to keep pace with inflation. Now, increased spending without corresponding increase in income would mean lower savings to meet life goals.

## Commodity or financial services stocks, and realty may offer better returns

be costlier. Inflation risk affects everyone whether you are a working executive or a retiree.

## Inflation-based products

The best way to moderate inflation risk is to invest in inflation-based products.

Some products provide returns to protect your purchasing power.

For instance, in U.S., there are Treasury Inflation Protection Securities (TIPS). Similar

retail products are yet to be available in India.

Other inflation-based products generate positive returns when inflation rises. Managed futures in the U.S., for instance. In the absence of such products in India, you have to directly trade in commodity futures such as crude, copper and zinc, which many already do. What if you are uncomfortable with trading in commodity derivatives?



Riding the trough: The best way to moderate inflation risk is to invest in inflation-based products. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

A less-preferred alternative is to trade in momentum stocks. Momentum stocks are those that have been rising for a while and are expected to continue their uptrend. Such stocks produce positive returns but have the tendency to decline sharply when the market turns.

The argument is that you can capture handsome returns on these stocks in quick time. The additional cash flows from such investments can moderate the stress you could face because of rising inflation, but the associated investment risks are high.

Alternatively, you should consider buying shares of commodity-based producers and financial services companies. Commodity producers ought to do well when the commodity prices increase (which increases inflation).

Likewise, rising inflation could push interest rates, making the financial sector appear attractive. The caveat is that better earnings prospects for

companies may not necessarily translate into higher stock prices.

## Conclusion

Rising inflation (inflation risk) is an issue for working executives. Fortunately, retirees and those approaching retirement can moderate inflation risk by investing in income-generating real estate.

This is because rental income can keep pace with rising inflation. New properties fetch market rentals and, therefore, move more closely with inflation than older properties. Real estate is sub-optimal for working executives as such investments are lumpy and illiquid.

Inflation's saving grace? The value of your existing borrowings will fall as money will be worth less than when you borrowed. Hardly comforting when living expenses are increasing, you might say.

(The writer offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

## Bank fixed deposit rates

Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure
<b>SMALL FINANCE BANKS</b>				
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	7.25
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.00	6.75	6.75	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	6.50	6.35	6.35	6.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	6.75	6.50	6.75	6.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	6.75	6.25	6.50	6.50
Fincare Small Finance Bank	6.50	5.60	6.25	6.00
AU Small Finance Bank	6.50	5.25	6.50	6.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	6.50	6.50	5.75	5.25
Capital Small Finance Bank	6.25	6.00	6.00	6.00
<b>PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS</b>				
DCB Bank	6.50	5.80	6.50	6.50
RBL Bank	6.50	6.10	6.30	6.50
State Bank of Mauritius	6.50	6.50	6.50	6.00
IndusInd Bank	6.50	6.00	6.00	6.00
Nainital Bank	6.35	5.25	5.35	5.35
IDFC First Bank	6.00	5.50	5.75	6.00
Karur Vysya Bank	6.00	5.50	5.65	5.75
Bandhan Bank	5.50	5.50	5.25	5.00
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	5.75	5.75	5.50	5.50
CSB Bank	5.75	5.00	5.25	5.25
Axis Bank	5.75	5.10	5.40	5.75
Karnataka Bank	5.60	5.20	5.50	5.50
South Indian Bank	5.65	5.40	5.50	5.65

Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure
<b>PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS</b>				
Dhanlaxmi Bank	5.60	5.25	5.40	5.50
HDFC Bank	5.50	4.90	5.15	5.30
ICICI Bank	5.50	4.90	5.15	5.35
DBS Bank	5.50	4.25	5.50	5.50
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	5.30			

# Jamieson show puts New Zealand on top

Kiwi quick's five-for restricts India to 217; Williamson's men 101 for two in reply after openers shine

## WTC FINAL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SOUTHAMPTON

New Zealand's Kyle Jamieson completed an impressive five-wicket haul before India's bowlers starred on the third day of the inaugural World Test Championship final at Southampton on Sunday.

An absorbing day of high-quality cricket, cut short by bad light despite the floodlights being on full beam, ended with New Zealand 101/2 in reply to India's first innings 217, a deficit of 116 runs.

### Conway falls

New Zealand opener Devon Conway fell for 54 shortly before stumps — his third score of over fifty in just five Test innings following the 29-year-old left-hander's stunning 200 on debut against England at Lord's this month.

Jamieson is also in the early stages of his Test career yet the towering paceman still had a miserly return of 5/31 in 22 overs, including 12 maidens.

The 26-year-old's fifth five-wicket haul in just eight Tests included the prize scalps of India captain Virat Kohli and Rishabh Pant.



**Paying the price:** Jamieson forces a wayward shot from Pant and Latham does the rest. ■ AFP

In a match marred by weather interruptions — Friday's first day was washed out without a ball bowled — India resumed on 146/3.

Kohli was 44 not out and Ajinkya Rahane unbeaten on 29.

But Kohli failed to add his score when Jamieson got a full-length delivery to nip back and strike the star batsman on the front pad.

Kohli reviewed Michael

Gough's lbw decision but the English umpire's 'out' verdict was upheld to end a stand of 61.

The usually free-scoring Pant needed 20 balls to get off nought, with a four through midwicket off Jamieson.

Two balls later, however, Jamieson dismissed the wicketkeeper when Pant, drove loosely outside off stump and was well caught at se-

cond slip by Tom Latham. Rahane had batted in composed fashion.

But, one run shy of a fifty, the vice-captain was cramped trying to pull a Wagner short ball and lobbed a simple catch to Latham, now at midwicket. India's 211/7 at lunch became 213/9 soon afterwards when Jamieson dismissed Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah with successive deliveries.

## SCOREBOARD

**India — 1st innings:** Rohit Sharma c Southee b Jamieson 34 (68b, 6x4), Shubman Gill c Watling b Wagner 28 (64b, 3x4), Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Boutl 8 (54b, 2x4), Virat Kohli lbw b Jamieson 44 (132b, 1x4), Ajinkya Rahane c Latham b Wagner 49 (117b, 5x4), Rishabh Pant c Lathan b Jamieson 4 (22b, 1x4), Ravindra Jadeja c Watling b Boutl 15 (53b, 2x4), R. Ashwin c Latham b Southee 22 (27b, 3x4), Ishant Sharma c Taylor b Jamieson 4 (16b), Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Jamieson 0 (lb), Mohammed Shami (not out) 4 (1b, 1x4); Extras (lb-3, nb-2); 5; Total (in 92.1 overs): 217.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-62 (Rohit, 20 overs), 2-63 (Gill, 24.3), 3-88 (Pujara, 40.2), 4-149 (Kohli, 67.4), 5-156 (Pant, 73.4), 6-182 (Rahane, 78.4), 7-205 (Ashwin, 85.5), 8-213 (Ishant, 91.4), 9-213 (Bumrah, 91.5).

**New Zealand bowling:** Southee 22-6-64-1, Boutl 21.1-4-47-2, Jamieson 22-12-31-5, de Grandhomme 12-6-32-0, Wagner 15-5-40-2.

**New Zealand — 1st innings:** Tom Latham c Kohli b Ashwin 30 (104b, 3x4), Devon Conway c Shami b Ishant 54 (153b, 6x4), Kane Williamson (batting) 12 (37b, 7x4), Ross Taylor (batting) 0 (2b); Extras (lb-3, nb-2); 5; Total (for two wkts. in 49 overs): 101.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-70 (Latham, 34.2), 2-101 (Conway, 48.4).

**India bowling:** Ishant 12-4-19-1, Bumrah 11-3-34-0, Shami 11-4-19-0, Ashwin 12-5-20-1, Jadeja 3-1-6-0.

# Kohli's journey to world-beater

10 years since his Test debut, the India skipper has overcome a tentative start to become a giant of the game

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

When Virat Kohli walked into the ground in Southampton on Sunday, it marked, to this day, exactly 10 years for him in Test cricket. And the transformation in him since his Test debut has been remarkable.

In fact, this writer was at the press box in Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica, 2011, when a young Kohli played his maiden Test.

And, soon after he began his first Test knock, Kohli became an object of mirth with the West Indian scribes.

Fidel Edwards, deceptively quick with a nasty short ball, got Kohli to hop around with a short leg in place.

### Uncomfortable

And Kohli was clearly uncomfortable, often jumping awkwardly to keep these deliveries down instead of going for the hook or the pull or swaying away, or ducking. And we heard voices. 'He cannot play the short ball, maan,' said one of the local scribes.

Edwards fired out Kohli early in both the innings; in the second he fell to a delivery aimed at his ribs.

During the practice ses-



**Mastering it:** After initially struggling against the short ball, Kohli is now adept at handling it. ■ AFP

sions on the tour, Kohli would have tennis balls bounced at him. He had to keep his feet on the ground, watch the ball.

And when India toured Australia in 2011-12, the fiercely determined Kohli turned things around.

At the lively Perth pitch, he hooked and pulled, coming up with scores of 44 and

75. Then he conjured a magnificent 116 in the Adelaide Test. Kohli had arrived on the big stage. Now he is a giant in the game with 70 international hundreds, 27 of them in Tests.

From a tentative start to a world-beater, it has been a spirit-lifting journey by Kohli with a perfect 10 for dedication.

## West Indies skittled out for 149

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GROS ISLET

Heavy morning showers resulted in the first session of the third day getting washed out as umpires called early lunch on Sunday in the second Test between West Indies and South Africa.

On the second day, South Africa's bowlers backed up a solid batting performance to put the Proteas in a command.

Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi and Anrich Nortje crashed through the West Indies' top and middle order while Wiaan Mulder took three wickets for one run to wrap up the tail as South Africa bowled out the home side for 149 in exactly two sessions. South Africa made 298 in its first innings. Shai Hope made 43 and Jermaine Blackwood scored 49.

**Getting noticed**  
India's heroics and the exciting cricket on all four days would surely have won new followers for the women's game. There is a pink-ball Test to come later in the year in Australia.

Captain Mithali Raj and Co. want to play more Tests. Certainly not at a rate of one in seven years.

## India women present a strong case for more Tests

Debutants Shafali, Sneh, Deepi and Taniya prove they are up for the challenge in the longest format

### INDIA IN ENG

P.K. AJITH KUMAR



**Rocking pairs:** Shafali and Deepi had provided the initial resistance before Sneh and Taniya took over. ■ AP & GETTY IMAGES



won three in a row (2006, Taunton; 2014, Wormsley and Mysuru).

Shafali Verma, the 17-year-old who scored 96 and 63,

She had been thought of so much as a T20 specialist that she wasn't even given an ODI cap.

It was remarkable how the likes of Shafali and Taniya — the 23-year-old wicketkeeper known for her smart stumpings — adapted to the demands of a Test match despite playing little to no red-ball cricket.

All-rounder Deepi Shar-

ma, also making her debut, impressed with both bat and ball.

She took three wickets in the England innings, including the big one of skipper Heather Knight.

Deepi remained unbeaten in the first innings, and promoted to No. 3 in the second, she delivered with a gritty half-century.

Multi-day cricket is a rarity on India's domestic circuit. As for Tests, before Bristol, the Indian women had

won three in a row (2006, Taunton; 2014, Wormsley and Mysuru).

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**The scores:**  
South Africa 298 vs West Indies 149 in 54 overs (Shai Hope 43, Jermaine Blackwood 49, Wiaan Mulder 3/1).

## BCCI lends support to India's Olympic campaign

Commits to a ₹10 crore assistance

AMOL KARHADKAR  
MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Sunday approved upto ₹10 crore as support for India's Olympic campaign.

The BCCI apex council approved the proposal in an emergent meeting after it received a request from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

*The Hindu* understands that, in line with the BCCI rulebook, the council has decided to release ₹2.5 crore as liquid funds and a maximum of ₹7.5 crore for running a promotional campaign in the lead-up to the Games, which start on July 23.

"The BCCI has always been supportive of India's sporting movement. We are happy to help the national sports fraternity," an apex council member told *The Hindu*. "The liquid component will be utilised for logistical requirements of the contingent whereas the remaining funds will be used to

create a buzz for the Olympic campaign."

"Since the BCCI constitution doesn't allow more than ₹2.5 crore to be released as cash for such a cause, the remaining amount will be directed towards the agencies that will run the marketing campaign."

Earlier on Sunday, the BCCI office-bearers briefed select State associations about supporting the Olympic contingent.

### Compensation package

Meanwhile, the apex council also formed an 11-member working group to decide on the compensation package for scores of domestic cricketers and officials who are waiting to be compensated for the loss of matches due to the pandemic.

Between them, Sneh Rana and Taniya Bhatia had lasted 22 balls in the first innings. So England must have been hoping to get the last two Indian wickets quickly.

### In no mood to oblige

Sneh and Taniya, however, were in no mood to oblige. They blunted, tormented and attacked the formidable England line-up, as they stayed firm for more than 30 overs. Their unbroken 104-

run stand for the ninth wicket gave India a draw that captured the imagination of cricket lovers.

So much so, Sneh was trending on Twitter. The unbeaten 80 wasn't her only contribution; she had taken four wickets with her off-spin in the England innings. She was making a comeback to international cricket after five years, and two months after losing her father.

Sneh, though, is only one of the success stories for In-

dia from Bristol. There is Shafali Verma, the 17-year-old who scored 96 and 63.

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## Wales qualifies despite losing to Italy

Switzerland made to wait despite beating Turkey; Poland holds wasteful Spain

### EURO 2020

REUTERS

ROME

Italy topped its group in the European Championship after a third straight win on Sunday, with a first-half goal from Matteo Pessina giving it a 1-0 victory over 10-man Wales, which also advanced to the knockout stages of the competition.

The Italians had already guaranteed their progress, while Wales secured a berth by finishing ahead of Switzerland on goal difference. The Swiss, who could still advance as one of the four best third-placed teams, beat Turkey 3-1 in Baku.

Italy manager Roberto Mancini made eight changes to rest most of his first-choice starters, but Italy still dominated and missed several chances either side of Pessina's 42nd-minute goal.

Welsh centre back Ethan Ampadu was shown a straight red card in the 55th minute for stamping on Federico Bernadeschi's foot, and Wales then missed its best chance of an equaliser in the 74th when Gareth Bale volleyed over the bar from close range.

Spain was again haunted by its inability to finish off



**Cool finish:** Matteo Pessina, bottom, turns in a low free-kick to net Italy's winner. ■ AFP

chances as it drew 1-1 with Poland on Saturday after missing a second-half penalty to leave its hopes of making the Euro 2020 knockouts hanging in the balance.

Alvaro Morata gave Spain the lead in the 25th minute but Poland, which had hit the woodwork twice in the first half, deservedly drew level with a towering header from Robert Lewandowski in the 54th.

Spain was again haunted by its inability to finish off

soon after but Gerard Moreno blasted his shot against the post and Morata scuffed the rebound wide, leaving Luis Enrique's side cursing its profligacy just as in its goalless opening draw with Sweden.

**The results:**

**Group E:** Spain 1 (

## TV PICKS

**WTC 2021 final:** India vs New Zealand; Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 3 p.m.  
**Euro 2020:** SONY Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Tuesday)  
**Copa America 2021:** SONY Ten 1 & 2 (SD & HD), 2.30 a.m. (Tuesday); SONY Ten 2 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

## COPA AMERICA

## TODAY'S SCHEDULE

## GROUP A

Uruguay vs Chile  
2.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Argentina vs Paraguay  
5.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Live on SONY Ten 2 &  
SONY 6 (SD & HD)

## IN BRIEF



Marquez takes German MotoGP for first win since 2019

SACHSENRENNING  
Marc Marquez banished 18 months of struggles on Sunday as he dominated in the rain at the Sachsenring to win the German MotoGP. The six-time World champion, who returned this season after crashing in the opening race last year, escaped early and stayed clear of in-form Portuguese Miguel Oliveira and championship leader Fabio Quartararo. AFP



Barcelona to sign Memphis Depay

BARCELONA  
Barcelona has reached an agreement to sign Netherlands forward Memphis Depay, La Liga club said on Saturday. A statement from the Catalans said Depay, whose contract with Olympique Lyonnais runs out later this month, will sign a deal with Barca until the end of the 2022/23 campaign. REUTERS

Tejaswini beats Riddhi, stays ahead

NEW DELHI  
G. Tejaswini defeated Riddhi Patel to maintain her all-win record and stayed in the lead after seven rounds of National girls' (under-14) online rapid chess tournament on Sunday. Aahana Pachchigar and M.S. Harshavardhini (6.5 points each) shared the second spot after comprehensive victories over top seed Shivika Rohilla and third seed Mrittika Mallick (5.5 each), respectively. Four rounds remain in the event that has attracted over 300 players.



Injured Raonic out of Wimbledon

Milos Raonic, who lost in the Wimbledon final in 2016, said on Sunday that he was pulling out of this year's tournament because of a calf injury. "I am incredible sad and hurt that I won't be ready to compete at Wimbledon this year," Raonic said on Instagram, explaining that during his preparations he had hurt his calf and then suffered a "minor setback". AFP



Gurpreet remembers Milkha's advice

NEW DELHI  
"Tumhe runka nahi hai (you cannot stop)", these words from Milkha Singh still inspire Indian football goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu who says Milkha's advice helped him fight challenges during his European stint. "He told me 'Hard work has no replacement. I even used to vomit blood at times after training but you cannot stop!' he said in an AIFF release."

# Oosthuizen in a three-way tie for lead

Joins Hughes and Henley after 54 holes; McIlroy, DeChambeau waiting to pounce

## US OPEN GOLF

REUTERS  
SAN DIEGO

Perennial Major contender Louis Oosthuizen sank a monster eagle putt at the final hole to go into a three-way tie for the lead after the third round at the US Open on Saturday.

The South African's downhill 50-footer slammed into the middle of the flag and toppled in to add another layer of fascination to what already was shaping up to be a compelling final round.

With one-under-par 70, Oosthuizen joined Canadian Mackenzie Hughes (68) and steady American Russell Henley (71) at five-under 208.

But the three frontrunners did not have to look far over their shoulders to see heavyweights Rory McIlroy (67) and Bryson DeChambeau (68) waiting to pounce



Superb: Louis Oosthuizen sank a monster eagle putt at the final hole. ■ AFP

just two strokes behind.

Oosthuizen has completed the career runner-up Grand Slam, and just last month was equal second be-

hind Phil Mickelson at the PGA Championship.

Now he has another chance but knows it will take something special.

Henley started tied for the lead with Richard Bland, and maintained at least a share of it the entire day.

Hughes, meanwhile,

## Humbert triumphs

## TENNIS

REUTERS  
HALLE

France's Ugo Humbert pulled off a surprise 6-3, 7-6 (4) win over World No. 7 Andre Rublev to claim his maiden ATP 500 title on the Halle grasscourts on Sunday.

Humbert stepped up his Wimbledon preparations by producing a clinical display, winning 85% of his first-serve points and hitting nine aces to extend his perfect record in ATP Tour finals to 3-0.

Meanwhile in London, Italian top seed Matteo Berrettini marked himself down as a genuine Wimbledon threat after beating Britain's Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-7(5), 6-3 to win the Queen's Club title on Sunday.



Ugo Humbert. ■ AFP

The 25-year-old used his huge serve and forehand to great effect once again to claim his fifth career title and become the first Italian champion at the prestigious event.

**Other results (final): German Open:** Ludmilla Samsonova bt Belinda Bencic 1-6, 6-1, 6-3.

**Birmingham Classic:** Ons Jabeur bt Daria Kasatkina 7-5, 6-4.

## Milkha's Hyderabad connection

Where the legendary athlete took his first racing steps

## GENERAL

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM  
HYDERABAD

'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh had an emotional connect with Hyderabad City!

The sight of the legendary athlete kissing the 'hallowed ground' of the EME Artillery Centre on November 29, 2014 (his last visit to the City) would have been frozen in the memory of all those assembled there on the occasion.

Milkha Singh, 86 then, was in the City as brand ambassador of the Hyderabad 10K Run. He recalled the support he received from everyone at the EME Centre when he was a fresh Army recruit in 1952.

"How can I forget this

place! It was here in 1952 that I was encouraged to take up athletics by my coach Havaladar Gurudev Singh," Milkha Singh said then.

## Getting emotional

"Yeh to mujhe Gurudwara samaan hai (this EME Stadium is equivalent to a Gurdwara to me)," he said struggling to control his emotions.

"I never knew about 200m or 400m when I started running. A group of 10 of us was made to run five km every day with the promise that the best would represent the Indian Army and the country in the competitions. And, I topped the group," he recalled with a big smile.

## Sindhu's salute

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

The legendary Milkha Singh was a great inspiration to generations of Indian athletes, said PV Sindhu.

Sindhu said she had spent some time with him at an awards ceremony and shared thoughts on the contemporary sports scenario. "He was such a humble person despite his stature. It was an unforgettable meeting and it is sad that he is no longer with us," she said.

## Milkha's achievements are incomparable: Jyotirmoyee

Olympians from Bengal pay tribute to the legend

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

Olympians from Bengal paid tribute to Milkha Singh, who passed away in Chandigarh on Friday night.

Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, who won two gold medals in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games, said Milkha's achievements were incomparable.

"Now athletes are getting so many facilities. Even we got some. But think of the time when a few years after independence, Milkha shone

in international events without any facilities," Jyotirmoyee told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

"I remember getting a call from him when I won the two golds. I met him twice. When I introduced myself, he said, 'Oh! You are Jyotirmoyee. Who does not know you?'

"Good that a film was made on him. Once I attended a school sports event and was delighted to see kids encouraging their friends by

Think of the time when a few years after independence, Milkha shone in international events without any facilities

— JYOTIRMOWEE

shouting 'Bhag Milkha, Bhag.' The film inspired the younger generation. He was a great athlete and it's a sad day for Indian sports," said Jyotirmoyee.

Another Olympian Soma Biswas, an Asian Games sil-

ver medallist, remembered Milkha as a legend who encouraged youngsters.

## An idol, says Soma

"I met him for the first time during the 2001 Ludhiana National Games. He was an idol for all athletes. A few words of encouragement from him were enough for up-and-coming athletes like me. His death is a great loss to Indian sports," said Soma.

Gurbux Singh, a 1964 Tokyo Olympics gold medal-

winning hockey player, remembered his contemporaries Milkha.

"In 1959, we had our hockey camp at the Yadavindra Singh Stadium in Patiala, where Milkha trained for the 1960 Olympics. Our captain Leslie Claudio was friendly with him.

"Later, we both participated in the 1964 Olympics. Milkha was a great icon of Indian sports and had a long and fruitful life," said Gurbux.

## Olympics organisers working on safe stay of Indian athletes'

IOA in discussion with TOCOG seeking clarifications

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Tokyo Olympic organisers are working on how to ensure safe stay and seamless training of the Indian athletes inside the Games Village, according to a letter they have sent to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

The Indian athletes and officials travelling for the Olympics will be asked by the Japanese government to undergo daily COVID-19 tests for a week prior to their departure.

ture and not to interact with anyone from another country for three days upon arrival, strictures that have left the IOA fuming.

Terming the rules as "unfair and discriminatory", the IOA had written to the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (TOCOG).

In its reply, TOCOG said: "Tokyo 2020 is working to define how athletes of your NOC as well as from other

10 countries and all other 195 NOCs can stay safe in the Villages and have training.

"We hope to provide you with those information and discuss together as soon as possible."

The IOA, on its part, said that its president Narinder Batra and secretary-general Rajeev Mehta were in discussion with TOCOG and seeking clarifications on the conditions imposed on the Indian contingent.

## Indian women archers fail to bag team quota

SPORTS BUREAU  
PARIS

India lost to Colombia 6-0 in a second round match of the final archery qualifying event for the Tokyo Olympic Games and failed to earn a women's team quota place here on Sunday.

The trio of Deepika Kumari, Komalika Bari and Ankita Bhakat gathered 1992 points to place second behind Mexico (1993) in the ranking

India got a bye in the first round, but lost to 15th-ranked Colombia — comprising Ana Rendon, Valentina Giraldo, Maria Sepulveda — in the next round. Colombia won 55-54, 51-49, 53-52 to collect six set points and advance to the quarterfinals.

India has bagged a men's team quota place and Deepika the lone individual spot for the Tokyo Games.

## Van Niekerk qualifies

REUTERS  
MADRID

Olympic 400m champion Wayde van Niekerk belatedly confirmed he will defend his title at the Tokyo Games, finishing inside the qualifying time in Madrid on Saturday.

Beset by injury since his Rio heroics, the South African ran 44.56 at the Continental Tour event to finish 0.34s inside the qualifying time.

Organisers of the Tokyo Olympics opened the athletes' village to the media on Sunday, showing off apartments and a timber-laced shopping plaza where 11,000 athletes would stay and mingle during the sporting extravaganza.

**Everyday testing**  
Athletes will be shuttled in and out of the village and be tested for the coronavirus every day. Olympic rules ban singing and chanting during

events and require athletes to wear masks at all times except when outdoors, sleeping or eating. The shopping area features an automatic teller machine, dry cleaner, post office, bank and courier counter.

The wooden plaza, which draws on Japanese minimalist design aesthetics, follows the Tokyo 2020 theme of using timber in the construction of Olympics venues, including the National Stadium.

The apartment complex abutting the shopping plaza

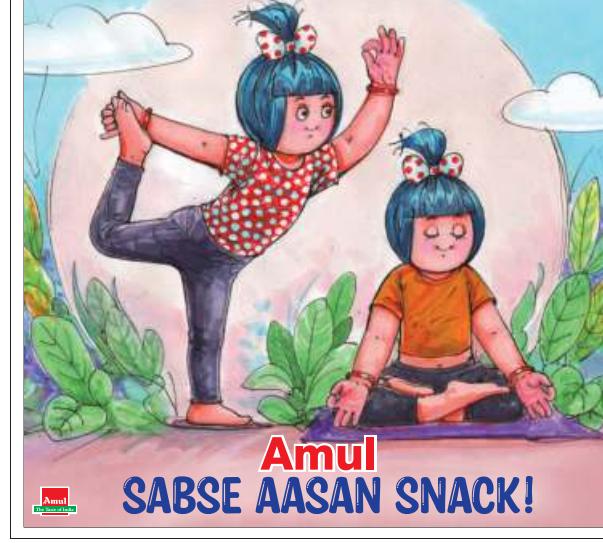
was built on reclaimed land, and designed to house about 12,000 people in 23 buildings. It includes shops, a park and a school. The buildings will be converted into flats later.

Organisers were originally planning to feed residents of the village in vast dining halls — the largest with a capacity to seat 4,500 people.

But now, organisers will ask athletes to dine alone, maintain social distancing with others, and wipe down surfaces after eating to curb the spread of the virus.

Sha'Carri Richardson. ■ AFP

## BREAD IN, BREAD OUT!



Amul  
SABSE AASAN SNACK!

daCunha/AB747

## Team MRF Tyres wins Pohjanmaa Ralli



Driving to glory: Reeta Hamalainen, left, and Emil Lindholm celebrate their success. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## MOTORSPORTS

SPORTS REPORTER  
CHENNAI

Team MRF Tyres' Emil Lindholm and Reeta Hamalainen won the Pohjanmaa Ralli,

the fourth round of the Finnish championship, on Saturday. The first win for MRF Tyres in the competition comes on the back of multiple podium finishes for Lindholm and Hamalainen.

MRF Tyres' success here follows its maiden win in the Italian Gravel Championship earlier in the month.

"It is amazing to win

here. This result shows the pace of development from the entire team at Team MRF Tyres and we should all be proud of our work," said Lindholm.