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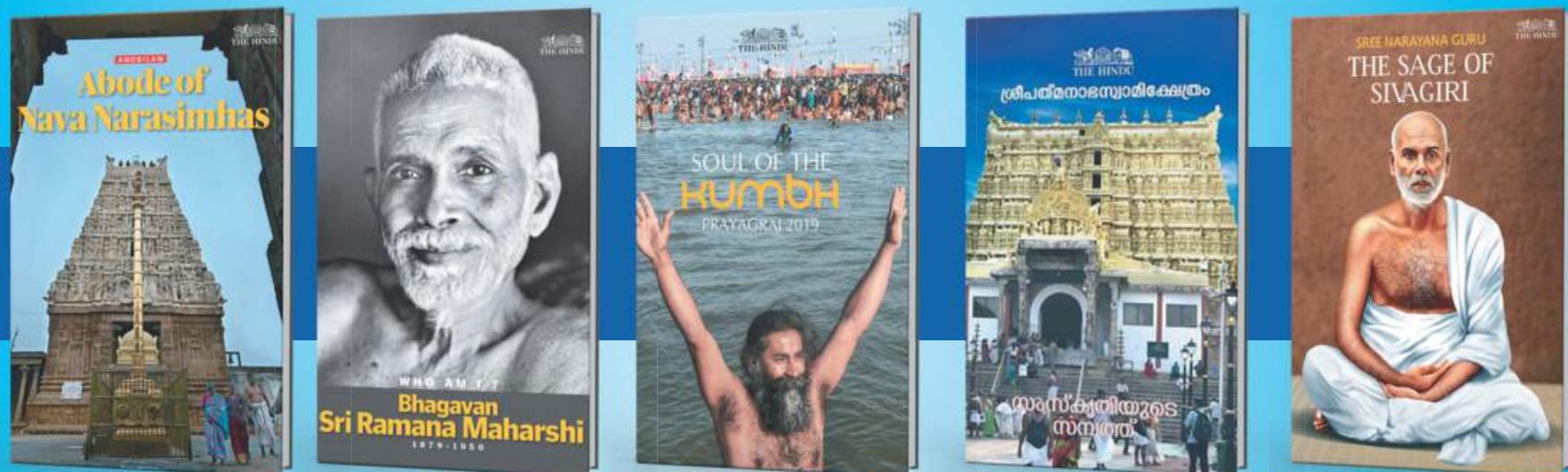
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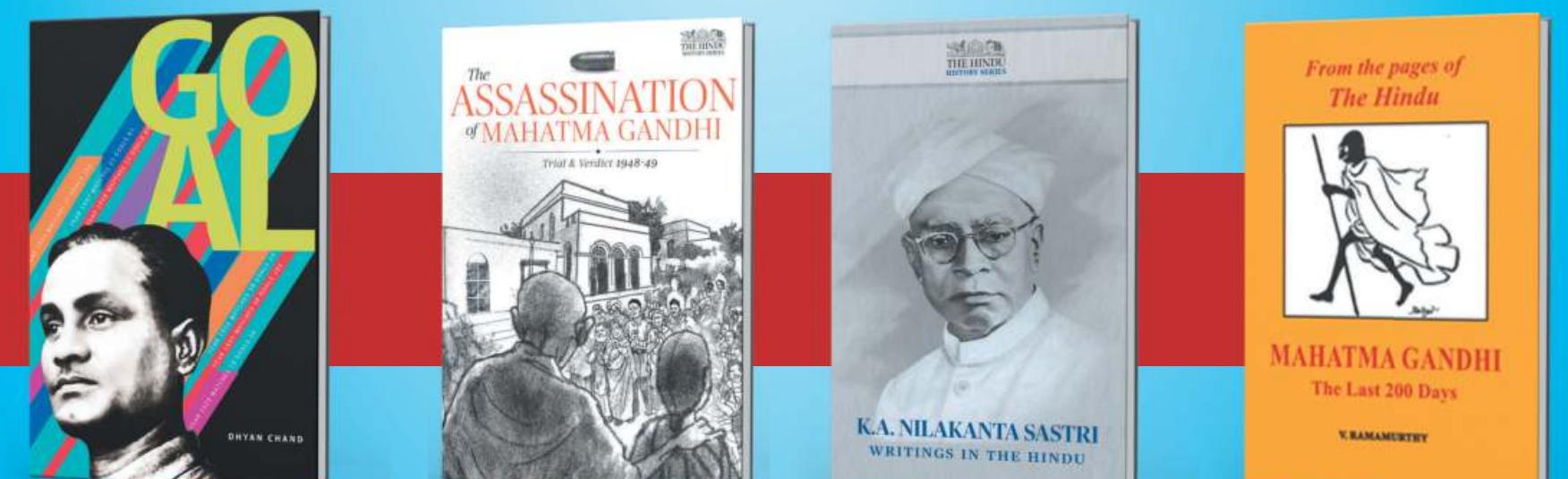
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New aircraft carrier to be commissioned next year, says Rajnath Singh
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Ghani to meet Biden as threat from Taliban insurgency increases
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Centre can cut fuel cess by ₹4.5 per litre, says rating agency ICRA
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Defending champion Halep pulls out of Wimbledon
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NEARBY



Protesting farmers back at Ghazipur border

GAZIABAD Farmers have once again started assembling at the Ghazipur border in large numbers to protest against the contentious farm laws as the number of COVID-19 cases dipped in western Uttar Pradesh. On Friday, Bhartiya Kisan Union president Naresh Tikait led a tractor rally from Saharanpur via Muzaffarnagar and Meerut to Ghazipur border.

NORTH ► PAGE 4

CBSE optional exams in August

Class 10, 12 students unhappy with assessment formula can take it, says Nishank

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Students of Class 10 and 12 who are not satisfied with their marks assigned under the assessment formula of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will be given a chance to write their examinations in August, Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank said on Friday.

However, Mr. Nishank cancelled his planned interaction with students as he was still in hospital due to post-COVID complications.

The Minister posted a short audio message on Twitter detailing the deci-

sion by the Centre to cancel the Class 10 and 12 board examinations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the tabulation policy which the CBSE is using to calculate the results based on internal marks and scores from previous exams. The board will declare results by July 31.

"For those who are not happy with the assessment formula, there is no need to worry. Exams will be conducted for you in August," Mr. Nishank said.

He stressed that the health of the students was the top priority of the government. The CBSE has

said that those who choose to write the exams will have to abide by the marks they score, and cannot revert to the assigned marks under its tabulation policy.

Mr. Nishank had previously said he would be interacting with students, and invited them to send in questions, concerns, doubts and suggestions via Twitter and Facebook. A number of such queries poured in from students, especially private candidates registered with the CBSE, seeking clarity on their examinations.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Delhi CM, deputy attack PM, BJP over oxygen report

While Kejriwal reminded Modi of his poll rallies, Sisodia denied the existence of the report altogether

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a broadside at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, said he was making arrangements for oxygen in Delhi when the latter was busy participating in rallies in poll-bound States.

His statement came in the backdrop of a report submitted by a Supreme Court-appointed oxygen audit team, which said the Delhi government "exaggerated" its oxygen requirement by four times during the peak days of the second COVID-19 wave.

BJP leaders had been attacking the Kejriwal-led government over the report since Friday morning.

"My crime - I fought for the lives of 2 crore people of Delhi. When you were doing election rallies, I was awake all night making arrangements for oxygen. I fought, pleaded with people to get oxygen. People have lost their loved ones due to the lack of oxygen. You shouldn't call them liars, they will feel really bad about it," Mr. Kejriwal said in a tweet.

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who was



An oxygen tanker being refilled in Delhi.

appointed as the point man for COVID-19 management in the Capital on April 16, denied the existence of the report altogether. "From today [Friday] morning BJP is abusing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on the basis of a so-

called report on oxygen. No such report exists. BJP is lying," he said in a video statement. "The Supreme Court had formed an oxygen audit committee. BJP leaders should be ashamed. They sit in BJP headquarters and make a report and call it the oxygen committee's report," he said.

The report, authored by a team led by AIIMS Director Dr. Randeep Guleria, was annexed to an affidavit filed by the Health Ministry in the Supreme Court.

"I challenge you, get the report which has been approved and signed by members of the oxygen audit committee. We talked to many members of this committee. They all said that they have not signed any such report, they said they have not approved any report. Then which report is this?"

Sisodia's challenge
Mr. Sisodia said BJP leaders are alleging that the "so-called report" states that the oxygen demand in Delhi was inflated by four times.

SEE ALSO ► PAGE 3
"DELHI GOVT. EXAGGERATED O2 NEEDS BY 4 TIMES" ► PAGE 10

Pakistan to remain on FATF greylist

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Pakistan was retained on the greylist, or the list of countries under "increased monitoring", by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), as the Paris-based UN watchdog judged it deficient in prosecuting the top leadership of UN Security Council-designated terror groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e Mohammad, Al Qaeda and Talibans.

Announcing the decision at the end of its latest plenary session held virtually from June 21-25, the FATF said despite completing 26 of the 27 tasks it had been handed, Pakistan's failure to complete the last task on convicting terrorists and terror entities meant it would not be delisted for now. In addition, the FATF handed down another six-point list of tasks, mainly on money laundering actions.

"The FATF encourages Pakistan to continue to make progress to address as soon as possible the one remaining Countering Finance of Terrorism-related item by demonstrating that Terror Financing investigations and prosecutions target senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terrorist groups," the FATF president said.

RELATED REPORT ON ► PAGE 8

Kerala 'excess deaths' 1.6 times official toll

Count rises this year after fall in 2020

Low undercut

Kerala's estimated undercut factor for COVID-19 deaths (1.6) for the entire pandemic period is among the lowest for States for which full data on registered deaths for 2020 and 2021 (till May) have been made available so far. The undercut factors for 2021 alone for Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are 42.3 and 33.8 respectively, compared to Kerala's 2.7.

FOR APRIL 2020-MAY 2021

State	Excess deaths	COVID-19 deaths	Undercount
Kerala	13,868	8,816	1.6
Karnataka	1,67,788	29,090	5.8
Tamil Nadu	1,51,408	24,231	6.2

SRINIVASAN RAMANI

After registering a lower number of deaths overall in 2020 compared to 2019, Kerala witnessed a significant increase in the overall death count due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, resulting in an estimated 15,222 "excess deaths" till May 31,

month-wise data from the Civil Registration System showed.

The overall "excess deaths" for the period April 2020-May 2021 were 13,868, which is 1.6 times more than the official COVID-19 death toll of 8,816 during this period.

Not all excess deaths will be related to COVID-19, but a bulk of them will be during the pandemic.

Kerala's estimated under-

count factor of 1.6 is lower than what *The Hindu* estimated for Karnataka (5.8) and Tamil Nadu (6.2) for the same period.

The undercount factor for 2021 alone (2.7) is also much lower than that of Karnataka (4.7), Tamil Nadu (6.5), Andhra Pradesh (33.8) and Madhya Pradesh (42.3).

It is also the same as the World Health Organization estimate for the Americas and Europe in 2020 – 1.6 times the recorded COVID-19 death toll. The "excess deaths" were estimated by calculating the difference between the overall death count registered each month during the pandemic years and the average death tally in the pre-pandemic years (2015-2019).

Not all excess deaths will be related to COVID-19, but a bulk of them will be during the pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

ED raids five places linked to Deshmukh

DEVESHK PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches on five premises linked to former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in Mumbai and Nagpur in connection with a money laundering case.

The premises of Mr. Deshmukh's chartered accountant was also searched. His private secretary was later taken to the ED's Mumbai office for questioning. In April, the CBI had carried out searches in Mumbai and Nagpur after registering a corruption case against Mr. Deshmukh and others.

The case alleges attempt to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of public duty.

DETAILS ON ► PAGE 9

IT Minister slams Twitter for blocking his account, taking 'arbitrary' action

He accuses site of violating new IT rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Microblogging platform Twitter on Friday briefly blocked the account of Union Information and Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad after receiving a complaint for violation of U.S. copyright law.

After his account was unblocked, Mr. Prasad lashed

out at Twitter, accusing it of violating the new Information and Technology Rules by not giving him prior notice of the action, and of taking "high-handed and arbitrary" action against those who do not suit its agenda.

Mr. Prasad said his account was blocked for almost an hour.

He shared a screenshot of Twitter's notice which said that it had received "a compliant Digital Millennium Copyright Act notice for content posted on your account".

count", and warned that "acquiring multiple DMCA strikes could lead to a suspension of your account".

The incident comes in the midst of a tussle between the Central government and Twitter over the company's failure to comply with the new IT Act Rules which came into effect a month ago.

Last week, the Uttar Pradesh Police filed an FIR against Twitter for the circulation of videos related to an attack in Ghaziabad.

Ready to serve



Defending the nation: Newly recruited soldiers of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry celebrate during a passing out parade in Srinagar on Friday. A total of 614 men were formally inducted after 11 months of training. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

'Third COVID-19 wave unlikely to be as severe as second'

Scientists from Indian Council of Medical Research, Imperial College London conduct modelling study

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

A potential third wave of COVID-19 would unlikely be as severe as the second wave, as per a modelling study by a team of scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Imperial College London, U.K. For it to be as devastating, at least 30% of the population that had been infected earlier must entirely lose their immunity, or an emerging variant of the virus must have a reproductive rate (R) over 4.5, and these must occur almost immediately after the second wave ends.

The authors, who include Balram Bhagava, Director-General, ICMR, and Samiran Panda, Head, Infectious Disease Unit, ICMR, suggest that these scenarios are im-



Less than 20% of Indians have received at least one dose of the vaccine and only 4% are fully vaccinated. ■ FILE PHOTO

the in-house *Indian Journal of Medical Research* as a pre-print.

The scientists modelled a potential third wave under several scenarios: a complete loss of immunity from previous waves; emergence of a variant that was more infectious and capable of

thwarting immunity than the ones observed; the impact of moving out of lockdowns; and the role of a highly infectious variant in case of a certain percentage of people getting vaccinated.

Expanding vaccination
Results showed that under all these situations, the peak infections remained much lower than in the second wave, unless the R rate exceeded 4.5, or those previously susceptible exceeded 30%. The emergence of a third wave could be buffered by expanding vaccination, they say. The authors calculate that were vaccines rolled out in a way to cover 40% of the population with two doses over a period of three months following the end of the second wave, it

could reduce symptomatic incidence by around 55%.

Less than 20% of Indians have received at least one dose of the vaccine and only 4% are fully vaccinated. The Centre proposes to vaccinate all adults – about 94.4 crore – by the end of 2021.

However, Dr. Panda told *The Hindu* that while several factors needed to converge for a third wave as devastating as the second, complacency in observing safety norms could be dangerous.

This is the first time that the ICMR's scientists have attempted a formal forecast of a future wave.

In spite of several modell-

ing experts, no group esti-

mated or warned of the se-

verity of the second wave

that saw new infections rise

to nearly 400,000 a day.

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IN BRIEF

'Dormant borewells to be used for water harvesting'

NEW DELHI The DDA on Friday said borewells lying dormant in 80 parks will be revived and used for water harvesting under the "Jal Shakti Abhiyan" campaign. "As part of these efforts to boost water table level and improve environment, it has been planned to revive borewells lying dormant in 80 parks to use them for water harvesting. Under the campaign, catchment areas have been identified and provision will be made to divert rainwater underground," officials said.

Farm laws: SKM submits memorandum to Kovind

NEW DELHI The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Friday submitted a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind, urging him to direct the Centre to immediately repeal the three "anti-farmer laws". Through its memorandum, the SKM said, it conveyed "anguish and deep anger" of crores of farming families to the president. Farmers have been camping at Delhi borders since November last year, demanding the withdrawal of these three laws and that a new law be made to guarantee MSP for their crops.

Honour killing case: brother and cousin involved, alleges woman

23-year-old man dead, wife critical after they were attacked on Thursday night

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI



For the first time in nearly a year, Vinay and his father spoke over the phone 10 days ago. "It was a 10-minute call. He asked me how I was and I said I was fine," the father said before breaking into tears.

In a suspected case of honour killing, the 23-year-old man, Vinay, was shot dead while his 19-year-old wife injured in a village in Dwarka on Thursday night, the police said on Friday. The woman, Kiran Dahiya, who sustained five bullet injuries, is said to be critical.

Vinay's 59-year-old father Om Prakash, who works at a post office, was at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital on Friday along with his brother and his son's friend. He was waiting for his son's body. The last time he had met the son was in August 2020, right before the couple left the village to get married.

"They both belong to the same clan and lived in the same village. How could they get married? We have to live

in the society and their marriage is an insult to us," Mr. Prakash said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena said Vinay and Kiran belonged from Sonipat's Kharkhoda village. Vinay worked as a driver, he said, adding that the incident happened at the couple's rented accommodation in Ambriha village.

Six men barged into their residence at 9 p.m. and shot at both of them multiple times, an officer said. Vinay succumbed to four injuries and Kiran is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Dwarka.

Mr. Prakash said the couple got married on August 13 last year and they got to know about the marriage three days later.

"They [couple] had a court marriage in Chandigarh. A lawyer from the village informed a family member, who further told us. I hadn't seen my son since," he said, adding that he doesn't know if his wife ever spoke to Vinay.

Though in tears, Mr. Prakash still holds a grudge against his son for marrying within the clan. "I was helpless because the police called me to come for post-mortem formalities. I wouldn't have

come otherwise," he said, adding: "Vinay's mother had fallen sick worrying about him in February and was hospitalised as well."

Mr. Prakash was informed about his son's murder on Thursday night. On Friday, he went to the hospital to meet his daughter-in-law – for the first time after their wedlock. "She told me her brother and cousin had come along with a few others and shot at them. The police have picked up her family members to ask about the two," he said.

In a video captured in a CCTV close to the spot, the accused can be seen running.

'Tea with couple'
Police sources said the accused didn't shoot at the couple right after entering the house but first spoke to the woman and also had tea with the couple.

Policemen teams are now looking for the woman's brother and cousin and conducting raids at their suspected hideouts in Haryana.

Students can now request confidential results: DU

Move to help them apply for jobs, studies

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



The Delhi University on Friday announced that students will be able to request for "confidential results" before the results are officially declared to meet the deadline for applications to higher studies or jobs.

Colleges will have to scrutinise the applications and send it to DU's examination branch by July 6, said senior officials.

DU Dean of Examinations D.S. Rawat, said: "Confidential results are the results which students often seek before the results are officially declared as they want to apply for higher studies or while seeking jobs. Last year the examination branch issued around 650 such confidential results but the process usually becomes chaotic. So this year we thought of streamlining the procedure."

In the notification issued, the university said, "...students are advised to send their request to the concerned department or college. Examination branch will try its best to expedite the evaluation of those students' scripts that relate to the confidential result."

The notification further read, "Students are advised to talk only to the nodal officers of the respective colleges regarding confidential results or result-related queries. Merely applying for the confidential result will not guarantee the issuance of the confidential result."

'Civil work on Pink Line's missing link completed'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Friday said after repeated delays due to the pandemic, civil construction was completed in April on the missing Trilokpuri section of the Pink Line.

The officials said the track laying work is expected to be completed by June end and preliminary trials expected to begin after that. To expedite work on the Trilokpuri section, steel girders were used instead of the conventional concrete ones, they explained.

"A total of 40 steel girders have been placed on 10 spans for the 290-metre-long section. These steel girders have been fabricated and brought from a workshop in Ambala in Haryana. This has not only saved time but also there was no need to create a separate casting yard for the concrete casting of the girders," said DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal. Civil construction on the stretch began in early 2020 and was affected by the pandemic leading to missed deadlines.

"Work was repeatedly hampered by the pandemic induced lockdowns and issues such as non-availability of workforce. Now, track laying and other ancillary works have commenced on this stretch between Mayur Vihar Pocket I and Trilokpuri Sanjay Lake following completion of civil work. In addition, overhead electrification work is also under progress," Mr. Dayal said.

Senior officials said the section will be made operational immediately after receiving mandatory clearances from authorities concerned.

Shoe factory blaze: forensic team collects samples; six workers still missing

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Four days after a massive fire broke out at a shoe factory in west Delhi's Udyog Vihar, a forensic team on Friday collected charred human remains from the two-storey building.

Meanwhile, six of the workers present at the godown during the incident are still missing.

The officers added that they are conducting raids to nab the godown's owner, Pan-

kaj Garg, who has been on the run since the day of the incident.

The police said the search operation will continue till all areas of the building have been scanned.

The fire broke out in the building, where shoes were assembled and packed for sale, on Monday and 35 fire tenders and around 140 fire-fighters were pressed into service to douse the blaze.

DCP (Outer) Parvinder Singh said, "One set of human remains has been collected from the second-floor of the building by Forensic Science Laboratory experts. No identification has been possible. The remains have been sent to a mortuary for preliminary autopsy, pending further investigation."

Director of Forensic Science Laboratory, Rohini, Deepa Verma, said: "Two forensic teams have been deployed at this site for finding

and collecting biological evidence." "From a forensic point of view, individual identification is a very challenging task in the case of a fire, especially when the body is highly decomposed or dismembered to deliberately conceal the identity of the individual. In such cases, various techniques of forensic biology are employed to identify individuals through bones or body parts. "In the current scenario, our forensic experts are

involved in searching the body/skeletal remains at this scene of the fire," she said.

Crime scene examination in-charge (FSL), Sanjeev Gupta, said: "The burned material at the scene, including biological tissue, often ends up looking similar. Bones become discoloured, brittle, and highly fragmented. As a consequence, these remains are often disturbed, altered, or even destroyed during scene processing with the existing

protocols."

DFS Director Atul Garg said, "Although it is dangerous to enter the building because of the heat, some of its portions have already collapsed. Our priority is to search for the remains."

The SDM of Punjabi Bagh held a meeting on Thursday to discuss a further course of action to search for the missing workers, officials said. The SDM sought suggestions from the departments con-

cerned, especially the NDRF, the DFS, the municipal corporation and the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation and police, regarding the extraction of the bodies, they said.

During the meeting, the civic authorities said the building may collapse at any time as cracks have appeared in its beams. They suggested that a step-wise demolition be carried out, the officials said.

Israel Embassy blast: four students sent to 10-day police remand

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The four students – arrested from Ladakh in connection with the blast near the Israel embassy in January this year – were produced before a Magistrate court, which sent them on 10 days police remand, officials said on Friday.

The students were arrested from Kargil and brought to Delhi on transit remand, they said.

The police said the four students – Nazir Hussain (26), Zulfikar Ali Wazir (25), Aiaz Hussain (28) and Muzammil Hussain (25) – are all from Thang village in Ladakh's Kargil district. "They were presented before a Magistrate court on Thursday that sent them to police remand for 10 days," a senior police officer said.

They had come to Delhi in November last year and were preparing for competitive examinations, he said. All four of them were in Delhi on the day of incident and their phones were found to be switched off, an officer said, adding that five mobile phones have been recovered from them.

The students were active in social media and used to comment on posts related to Israel, India and Palestine. They left the city just before the lockdown was an-

nounced, the police said.

The police are likely to conduct searches at their locations of stay, including Mukherjee Nagar – they had been staying for a brief period. Further probe is under way, they said.

A minor IED blast had taken place outside the Embassy of Israel in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi on January 29. There were no casualties. Some cars were damaged in the explosion that occurred about 150 metres away from the embassy on the Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road.

In a joint operation with a central intelligence agency and the Kargil police, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police detained the four persons from Kargil in connection with the conspiracy to plan and execute terror activities in the national capital, a statement quoting Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswas said. "They have been brought to Delhi for questioning," he said.

The Delhi Police Special Cell had registered a case of "conspiracy" behind the blast. The Ministry of Home Affairs had handed over the probe of the blast to the NIA on February 2. Recently, the NIA announced a reward of ₹10 lakh each for the identification of two people captured on CCTV camera.

CCTV technician held for blackmailing couple

'He got camera access during repair work'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Bangalore.

'Accused seek ₹3 lakh'

"A few weeks back, the couple received their intimate video on their mobile phone. The sender demanded ₹3 lakh. He threatened to upload their videos on social media. Initially, the couple agreed to pay the amount but he started asking for more money," said the officer.

The accused – Rashid, is a CCTV technician, who worked with a company in Delhi – the police said. A few months ago, the company got a complaint of CCTV malfunction from one of their clients in south Delhi and they assigned Rashid to resolve the issue. "Rashid visited the couple's house and while repairing the camera, he fraudulently took the access of their CCTVs on his mobile phone. After this, he left the house," said the officer. Later, during the lockdown, he left the job and joined a new company in

Further probe is on to see if the accused blackmailed other people in a similar manner, the police added.

HC slams AAP govt. on decision to limit non-PDS beneficiaries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Observing that providing ration is the obligation of the State and it cannot deny food to the hungry, the Delhi High Court Friday slammed the AAP government for putting a limit of 20 lakh beneficiaries for providing them dry ration under its non-PDS

guidelines. "These are not issues on which you keep debating policy and say that file is under consideration. This is your obligation under the National Food Security Act," the high court said adding that the Delhi government has "randomly and arbitrarily" reduced the quota.

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Delhi govt. announces contest for online window for public services

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The last date for submission of entries is July 4.

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Timings
DELHI

SATURDAY, JUN. 26	
RISE 05:26	SET 19:23
RISE 21:15	SET 06:43
SUNDAY, JUN. 27	
RISE 05:26	SET 19:23
RISE 22:04	SET 07:50
MONDAY, JUN. 28	
RISE 05:27	SET 19:24
RISE 22:45	SET 08:55

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	40	25
Safdarjung	40	25
Palam	40	27

Delhi Palam Today
38°C Rain or thunderstorm with gusty winds likely at some places. Hot and humid day with partly cloudy to cloudy sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
39°C The weather will be hot and humid with uneasy afternoon. Night will be slight warm. Chances of thunderstorm.

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THE HINDU
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IN BRIEF

Govt. to provide tabs to over 2,000 teachers

NEW DELHI
The Delhi government has decided to provide tabs to over 2,000 teachers newly appointed by the Directorate of Education, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Friday. Mr. Sisodia, in an official statement, said the vision of the Delhi government is to provide excellent education to each child, and providing tablets to teachers is a step in this direction. Use of tabs by teachers will enable better teaching and learning, the Deputy CM said.

BJP demands arrest of Kejriwal, criminal case against Ministers

Deaths during the second wave due to 'pretended oxygen shortage', claims party

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal be arrested and criminal cases filed against other Delhi government Ministers for the loss of several lives due to the alleged mismanagement of oxygen in the Capital.

The deaths of several innocent people during the second wave of the pandemic were due to the "pretended oxygen shortage" claimed by the Delhi government as pointed out in the report of oxygen audit by the Supreme Court, it alleged.

"The Kejriwal government is responsible for the loss of thousands of lives



Relatives of COVID-19 patients waiting for oxygen refill during the second wave of the pandemic in the Capital. ■ FILE PHOTO

and he should be arrested for the same. While only 209 MT oxygen was needed, it [the Delhi government] asked for 1,140 MT and it conspired to shift entire

blame on the Centre," Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta alleged.

Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri urged Lieutenant Governor Anil

1.5 lakh vaccinated, highest in a day

Capital reports 115 fresh COVID-19 cases and four deaths

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A whopping 1,56,636 doses of vaccines – the highest in a day till now – were administered in the city on Thursday, said AAP MLA Atishi, who presents a daily vaccination bulletin.

"Yesterday [Thursday], more than 1.5 lakh doses of vaccines were administered. With this, Delhi's total number of vaccine doses administered has reached more than 69.50 lakh. Out of the 1.5 lakh+ doses administered, 1.25 lakh were administered to youth. They either registered themselves on the CoWIN app or used the



A health worker administering Covishield to a man in the city. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

walk-in vaccination facility," she said.

"Delhi has 1.20 lakh Covaxin doses and 7.70 lakh Covishield doses, 13 days stock of Covaxin available

for administering the second dose and five days stock for Covishield," she added.

Meanwhile, the Capital reported 115 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total cases to 14,33,590, according to the bulletin released by the Delhi government. Moreover, four deaths were reported, which takes the total count to 24,952.

77,477 tested

A total of 77,477 tests were done and that test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.15%. Of the total cases, 14,06,958 have recovered and there are 1,680 active cases.

Chaos mars special CoWIN session for the homeless

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Without an identity proof or a mobile phone, 46-year-old Sunil Thakur waited for four hours to get vaccinated at a special inoculation centre set up for homeless people at Yamuna Pushpa night shelter here, while people who came from places like Baghpat and Ghaziabad had IDs got jabs within minutes.

"Confusion marred the pace of the vaccination drive for homeless people. Nobody knew how to register such people without an identity card or mobile number," an officer at the centre said.

The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board organised the vaccination camp in association with the office of the district magistrate (Central Delhi). One of the officers present at the camp said he got to know about the drive last night.

In the absence of a mechanism to register homeless people on the CoWIN portal, those having an identity proof and a mobile number were vaccinated with Covishield first. "This drive was meant for homeless people; most of them do not have any identity proof or mobile number. So, they had to wait for hours while people from outside got themselves registered and took the jabs within minutes," a member of an NGO present at the night shelter said.

A special session, which allowed registration of "as many homeless beneficiaries as needed" was created on the CoWIN portal, Vaccination Officer Aftab Ahmed said. Around 100 homeless people were linked to an ID created with Aadhaar and mobile number of the night shelter's caretaker, he said.

A total of 150 people were vaccinated on the first day.

Parched throats



Girls carrying drinking water to their homes on the banks of the Yamuna in Delhi on a hot and humid Friday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

Two multimodal transit hubs part of New Delhi Rly Station redevelopment

Traffic decongestion and parking topics discussed at meet



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal on Friday chaired the fourth meeting related to the proposed redevelopment of the New Delhi Railway Station along the lines of the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport as part of a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country.

Apart from solving a significant issue related to public transportation – 1,400 buses plying on 46 routes daily but without a single bus terminal in its vicinity – two multimodal transit hubs and an underground tunnel housing an Automated People Mover (APM) replete with travelators and electric vehicles are part of the proposal which *The Hindu* has accessed.

Four-year project
The project will, over the next four years, seek to redesign the largest and second-busiest railway station in the country with a daily footfall

of approximately 4.5 lakh passengers, both from without and within, according to a senior government official. "Status of the project including grant of NOCs by various departments and preparation of influence zone plans was reviewed

discussed during the meeting.

Proactive measures

While appreciating the progress, the departments were advised to proactively facilitate the approvals for timely implementation of the project, Raj Niwas said.

As *The Hindu* reported on December 10, 2020, the project will see the height of the station being increased to 70 metres, the construction of twin towers 40 metres high, a hangar for trains, the creation of a passengers' lounge similar to the airport, an underground parking for 2,000 vehicles and 40 buses in addition to a commercial area.

A total of 150 people were vaccinated on the first day.

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Baijal to register a case of murder against the CM, Deputy CM and Health Minister.

Court's seal

"Even the managements of big hospitals of Delhi had held the State government responsible for not getting oxygen and now the court's committee has also given its seal of approval on this," Mr. Bidhuri said.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana alleged that the Delhi government's "toolkit" to defame the BJP-led Centre had been exposed which was why it was levelling baseless allegations for which it would be dragged to court by the BJP.

Reply sought on plea for FIR against Jaipur Golden Hospital

21 patients died at hospital allegedly due to oxygen crisis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday sought a status report from the police on a plea seeking registration of an FIR for the offence of murder against Jaipur Golden Hospital management for deaths of COVID patients allegedly due to oxygen shortage.

As many as 21 critically ill COVID-19 patients had died at the hospital on the night of April 23-24 as the hospital allegedly awaited the oxygen supply to be replenished.

Six family members of the deceased have approached the court claiming that the hospital management should be punished but police, with mala fide intention, have neither arrested nor set up an inquiry against them.



A scene at Jaipur Golden Hospital during the second wave. ■ FILE PHOTO

Hearing on July 13

Metropolitan Magistrate Viresh Beniwal has directed Delhi Police to submit the status report on the plea and posted the matter for July 13 for further hearing.

The families have requested the court to take cognizance of the offences such as

murder, criminal intimidation, death by negligence, cheating, criminal conspiracy and disappearance of evidence, summon and try the accused for these offences.

In the petition filed through advocates Sahil Ahuja and Siddhant Sethi, the complainants have stated that the hospital management should have stopped admitting the patients or start discharging them if they were low on oxygen supply.

"Keeping everyone in dark and thereby not providing the proper oxygen support which led to the death is an act of culpable homicide on their part all whilst the accused hospital minted money and raised invoices," it stated.

Sushil to remain in jail as court extends custody

Olympic medallist is facing charges of murder, culpable homicide and kidnapping

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Friday extended the judicial custody of Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar till July 9 in connection with the alleged murder of a young wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium.

Sushil was produced before Metropolitan Magistrate Mayank Aggarwal at the end of the 14-day judicial custody. He is facing charges of murder, culpable homicide and kidnapping.

According to the counsel of the accused, he has been shifted to Tihar jail number 2 from Mandoli jail, where



Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar being shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar on Friday. ■ PTI

he was earlier lodged.

Sushil, along with his associates, allegedly assaulted Sagar Dhankar and two of

his friends at the stadium on the intervening night of May 4 and 5 over an alleged property dispute. Sagar (23)

succumbed to the injuries later.

The police have claimed that Sushil is the "main culprit and mastermind" of the murder and said that there is electronic evidence wherein he and his associates could be seen beating Sagar.

10 arrested so far

Sushil was nabbed on May 23, along with co-accused Ajay Kumar Sehrawat. Till now, he has undergone police and judicial custody of 10 and 23 days, respectively. A total of 10 people, including Sushil, have been arrested so far in connection with the incident.

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WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY (E-tendering Tender Notice No.DY. CE-C-I-BPL-06-2021) dated 22.06.2021

E-Tender on behalf of the President of India acting through Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)-I, West Central Railway, Bhopal for the following work (Single Packet system). Tender No. DY. CE-C-I-BPL-06-2021 Brief Description- Construction of minor bridges, toe walls, drain and other miscellaneous works in connection with diversion of rail line between km 12006-12072 between Bilavaya Rajgarh-Pachor road section on Guna-Maksi line due to construction of Mohanpura dam. Approx. tender value (Rs.)-Nil. Due date of Closing of tender-20.07.2021 at 15:00 hrs. Completion period-04(Four) months including harvest & monsoon period. The complete information of above E-Tender is available on "http://www.irps.gov.in" and also placed on the notice Board of office of the DYCE(C)-II/West Central Railways/Bhopal. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tender. Corrigendum, if any issued in connection with tender, will be available on above mentioned website only.

Dy.Chief Engineer (Const.)-I W.C.R., Bhopal
For & on behalf of President of India
देवकीनगर लालामार्ग, जिला प्रशासन को समर्पित बताये।

ARROW ColorPlus PARK AVENUE LOUIS PHILIPPE

- PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)
- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida,

IN BRIEF



Former Kerala DGP gets bail in ISRO case

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
A court here has granted anticipatory bail to retired Director General of Police Siby Mathews in a "police frame-up" that led to the infamous "ISRO spy scandal" case in 1994. Last month, the CBI had indicted Mr. Mathews for the alleged wrongful arrest and custodial torture of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientist Nambi Narayanan and others in the case. Mr. Mathews had headed the Special Investigation Team then.

10 held for illegal sale of black fungus drugs

TIRUPATI
The Tirupati Urban police arrested 10 persons for allegedly selling medicines to cure black fungus in the black market. Liposomal Amphotericin B Lambin, Amfolin, Ambisome drugs were seized from their possession. The modus operandi of the group was to befriend attendants in corporate hospitals and get information about patients needing the drugs. They used to sell the drug costing ₹7000 for anything between ₹18,000 and ₹30,000.

Appeal to COVID-19-hit Maoists to surrender

KAKINADA
East Godavari SP Adnan Nayem Asmi on Friday appealed to the Maoists belonging to the Galikonda Area Committee (Visakha agency), BK-East Godavari Division (Andhra-Telangana border), and Konta Area Committee (Chhattisgarh) to surrender before the Andhra Pradesh police to get access to timely treatment for COVID-19. Referring to the recent death of some Maoists, Mr. Asmi said intelligence inputs had confirmed that many more among them were battling COVID-19.

SC lauds A.P. for scrapping Class 12 exam

Court had earlier criticised the State over the issue

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday lauded the Andhra Pradesh government's "pragmatic stand" to cancel its Class 12 exams, saying it will be "very harsh" and "very unpredictable" to expose students to the dangers of the pandemic.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for Andhra Pradesh, said the State did not want to do anything that would later "weigh heavy" on its heart, especially when nobody is being held accountable for Kumbh Mela and the West Bengal elections.

Mr. Dave said Mr. Reddy had "gracefully agreed" to cancel the exams as done by other States across the country. "If the entire country is going in one direction, there is no point going in another

direction," Mr. Dave submitted.

Court warning
On Thursday, the Supreme Court had pulled up the Andhra Pradesh government for its insistence on conducting the exam amid the pandemic. The court had warned that the State would be held responsible even if there was one fatality and even ordered to pay a fine of ₹1 crore as compensation. The Bench had asked whether the State



was "trying to prove it was different" by holding the exam when young lives were at stake.

"You could have taken this stand yesterday... We were pushed to say something which could have been avoided," Justice Khanwilkar addressed Mr. Dave and advocate Mahfooz A. Nazki, for the State government.

Mr. Dave said the State would form a High-Powered Committee which would consult with experts and de-

'No other option before us'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ONGOLE
Andhra Pradesh Education Minister A. Suresh on Friday claimed that about 74% of the students wanted the examinations to be held.

"The government had no other option than cancelling the exams as it is not in a position to complete the assessment process within the deadline [of July 31 set by the Supreme Court]."

Josephine quits as Kerala women's panel chief

'Tone towards petitioner indefensible'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala Women's Commission chairperson M.C. Josephine has resigned.



M.C. Josephine leaving after a CPI(M) meeting in Thiruvananthapuram.

cally untenable. The secretariat reportedly said her "needlessly strident tone" towards the petitioner was indefensible.

CPI(M) State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan said Ms. Josephine regretted the episode at the meeting. She expressed her desire to resign.

Police crack ex-councillor murder case in Bengaluru

Two accused were shot at after they tried to escape

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru police on Friday cracked the murder of former Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) councillor Rekha Kadiresh, who was hacked to death outside her office at Cottonpet on Thursday. A police team shot at two men — Peter and Surya — who are believed to have stabbed the corporator. Both were former associates of her late husband Kadiresh S.

Special teams traced the duo to a wooded area in Sun-kadakatte. The police fired at their legs when the two allegedly tried to attack them and flee. They have been admitted to a private hospital.

"While the complainant



Rekha Kadiresh and her husband, who was murdered in 2018. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in the case, Sanjay, nephew of the deceased and one of the first responders after the attack, identified Peter and Surya, we recovered CCTV footage from the area that showed the two fleeing the spot after the murder," said a police officer.

The police believe there

cide the internal assessment scheme for evaluating the marks of Class 12 students. The State assured the court that it would adhere to the timelines given by the court. The court had ordered States to finalise their respective assessment schemes in 10 days and declare their results by July 31, in time for University Grants Commission admissions to colleges.

Closing the proceedings,

Justice Khanwilkar said "all is well that ends well".

Cong. flays Haryana for 'anti-farmer' decision

'Market fee hike will push farm business to private players'

VIKAS VASUDEVA
CHANDIGARH

The Congress leaders on Friday said the Haryana government's decision to increase the market fee and rural development fee on paddy had yet again revealed the "anti-farmer" attitude of the Bharatiya Janata Party-Jannayak Janta Party coalition.

The party's national general secretary and chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala has demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision. He said the government's move is a short-sighted decision. "The farmers will be compelled either to sell off their crops in the neighbouring States or to traders at a lower price," he said.

Mr. Surjewala said, on one hand the government insists



that the grain markets are not being abolished, but on the other hand such decisions in the name of reducing the losses of the Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board were clearly indicative of its intention to eliminate mandis and "push the farm business to big private players".

The Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Bhup-

Third body of trapped coal miner retrieved

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Rescue workers on Friday afternoon retrieved the third body of the miners trapped in a coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district since June 30.

District Deputy Commissioner Ethelbert Kharmalki said an inquest was conducted by an executive magistrate at the spot and the body was later transported to

the civil hospital in district headquarters Khliehriat for post mortem.

"We have informed the relatives of the victims from Cachar, Barpeta and Kamrup districts in Assam and North Tripura district through their respective Superintendents of Police to identify the retrieved bodies," he said. No one has come forward to identify the bodies, he added.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



General Public is hereby informed that one lady **Name:** Pooja, **W/o:** Dharmendra, **R/o:** H.No. C-33, 100 Quarter Firoz Shah Kotla, Harijan Basti, ITO, Delhi, **Age:** 20 Years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Wearing:** Yellow Colour Kurti, leggings and blue colour ladies shoes in her feet has been missing/kidnapped since 17.06.2021 from the area of P.S. IP Estate, Delhi. In this regard **DD No. 81, Dated 19.06.2021**, has been lodged at P.S. IP Estate, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing/kidnapped lady but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing/kidnapped lady please be informed to the undersigned.

Web-site : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-Mail ID: cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax: 011-23011334
DP/845/CD/2021

SHO
P.S. IP Estate, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23370928, 23232294 &
8750870426

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY



General Public is hereby informed that one person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **Address:** Unknown, was found in unconscious condition and admitted in Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, vide MLC No. 163089/21 During the treatment Doctors declared brought him dead on **23.06.2021** in the area of P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi. In this regard a case has been lodged vide **DD No. 14A dated 23.06.2021** at P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi. The description of the dead person is as under: **Age:** About 35 years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Blue-white colour checked shirt and brown-black colour lower. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO
P.S. Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi
Ph.: 011-24106345, 7065036231

Fourth such instance in 14 months, says *The Wire*'s editor

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

An FIR was lodged against news portal *The Wire* in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly spreading false information that religious scriptures of a particular community were thrown into a river and drain following the demolition of a mosque by the administration in Barabanki.

The FIR was lodged for a documentary titled 'How a Mosque in U.P.'s Barabanki was Demolished', which showed members of the committee of the demolished mosque terming the administrative act illegal and claiming that they had documents to prove the structure was legal.

In May, the Barabanki administration, after carrying out the demolition, said an "illegal residential complex" was found situated opposite to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's residence in the Ramnani Ghat tehsil compounds.

The Allahabad High Court recently issued notices to the administration on the demolition after petitions were filed before it terming the administrative act illegal and arbitrary.

Adarsh Singh, District Magistrate, Barabanki, said the FIR against *The Wire* was lodged for allegedly spreading misleading and false information, trying to spread

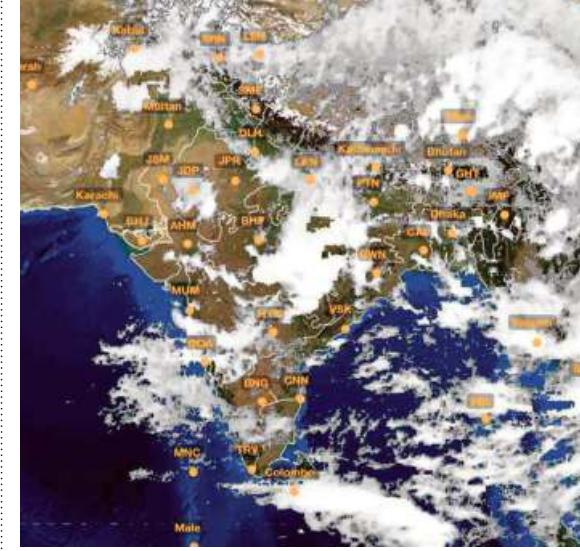
religious animosity and frenzy and spoiling communal harmony.

Mohammad Anees; Mohammad Naeem; Seraj Ali, journalist of *The Wire*, who reported the documentary; Mukul S. Chauhan and *The Wire* were named in the FIR.

The Wire editor Siddharth Varadarajan said this was the fourth FIR filed by the U.P. police in the past 14 months against the portal and/or its journalists and "each of these cases is baseless". The Yogi Adityanath government did not believe in media freedom and was criminalising the work of journalists who were reporting what was happening in the State, he said.

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 Saturday: Heavy/heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Muzaffarabad, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Yanan.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	8...	34.2...	26.2	Kozhikode	...	32.9...	25.4
Ahmedabad	...	35.9...	26.7	Kurnool	...	35.0...	24.2
Aizawl	9...	32...	22.2	Lucknow	...	33.3...	25.9
Altahabab...	...	33.4...	25.9	Madurai	...	39.4...	24.1
Bengaluru	...	29.7...	20.1	Mangaluru	...	30.2...	24.0
Bhopal	...	32.9...	22.4	Mumbai	...	32.9...	27.0
Bhubaneswar	...	34.6...	25.9	Mysuru	...	29.9...	19.8
Chandigarh	...	34.9...	27.2	New Delhi	...	40.1...	25.1
Chennai	...	37.7...	28.6	Patna	...	32.8...	28.6
Coimbatore	...	34.4...	23.6	Port Blair	...	31.2...	23.4
Dehradun	...	35.0...	23.9	Puducherry	...	37.4...	25.6
Gangtok	3...	23.3...	17.5	Pune	0.8...	28.1...	22.4
Goa	27...	30...	20	Raipur	...	29.2...	23.4
Guwahati	...	35.2...	27.6	Ranchi	7...	30.5...	22.8
Hubballi	...	27.0...	21.0	Shillong	...	26.3...	17.7
Hyderabad	...	32.8...	23.5	Shimla	10...	28.5...	19.5
Imphal	...	31.4...	21.7	Srinagar	...	28.0...	13.8
Jaipur	4...	38.8...	25.1	Thiruvananthapuram	...	32.8...	24.8
Kochi	3...	31.4...	24.8	Tiruchi	...	37.7...	26.0
Kohima	...	26.0...	18.2	Vijayawada	...	38.2...	25.2
Kolkata	...	35.1...	27.9	Visakhapatnam	...	35.0...	27.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing



Future State

Restoration of Statehood should be at the start of the revival of the democratic process in J&K

Political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) who attended a meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday came away with a sense of optimism: restoration of Statehood is somewhere on the horizon, even if a total reversal of the withdrawal of the special status remains unlikely. The meeting itself was a surprise, and came at a time when expectations of any quick resolution were very low. But the fact that a spectrum of political leaders got the invitation from the Centre without any set pre-conditions had raised hopes of progress. Eventually, the meeting gave reason to Kashmiri's political class to believe in possibilities that did not seem to exist just a week earlier. But restoration of Statehood to J&K, which was re-organised as two Union Territories, should be the first step in the revival of the democratic political process and not the culmination of some elaborate negotiation strategy. Mr. Modi described the meeting as an "important step in the ongoing efforts towards a developed and progressive J&K". While committing to strengthen grassroots democracy, he called for quick delimitation of constituencies, after which legislative polls could be held. Home Minister Amit Shah insisted the restoration of Statehood will follow delimitation and elections. Not surprisingly, many participants were not convinced by this sequence suggested by the Centre. But the positives are that the long meeting was freewheeling, without rancour and all parties were united in the demand for the restoration of Statehood. Most participants also sought an assurance to return the domiciliary rights concerning land and State services, but considering the BJP's strident position, this might be difficult.

As Mr. Modi argued, the focus must be on the future, but this will have to be built on the trust and cooperation of the people of J&K. Decades of turmoil have created unique problems of governance and mistrust. The NC and the PDP, with all their deficiencies, remain India's best messengers to the people of the Valley. In deciding to engage them, and other parties, the Centre has made a departure from its earlier position. By seizing the opportunity, these parties also showed maturity. Global and domestic factors might have nudged the Centre towards what appears to be a tentative accommodation of other viewpoints. But the political challenge to its decision to hollow out Article 370 is all but fading. The restoration of Statehood has been placed so far down the path that any discussion on special status is unthinkable in the near future. In that sense, the Centre and the BJP have irreversibly reset the conversation on J&K. That success should not blind them to the resentment among the people. Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah will have to look forward to the future rather than being bound by their past rhetoric on Kashmir.

Top play

Euro 2020 seems to belie fears of subdued performances due to the pandemic

Conservative play is often international football's bugbear. National team players spend very little time together for attacking structures and synchronous moves to develop, and a safety-first approach always seems around the corner. Ahead of Euro 2020, there were fears that players will be less on the front foot because of the physical and mental toll the COVID-19 pandemic had exacted. By that yardstick, Euro 2020 has thus far proved to be an entertaining fare, with the enthralling play matching the energy of the returning fans. Compared to the previous edition's group stage, there have been 25 goals more (94 to 69) and four fewer matches with one goal or less (10 to 14), with just two goalless draws (down from four). Overall, 15 of the 16 countries in the knockouts have a better group stage record than champion Portugal five years ago. Top sides such as the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Spain have not moved away from their lively, pressing style of football, despite the tournament coming at the fag end of a long and tiring season. World Champion France has not been swashbuckling, but seems efficient, while Portugal is always a threat with Cristiano Ronaldo around (five goals and one assist). Denmark's has been the feel-good story, recovering from talisman Christian Eriksen's on-field collapse owing to cardiac arrest in its opening match, to make it to the next round. Eriksen is now out of danger and Denmark has quickly become the neutral's choice.

However, it remains to be seen how much of the positivity spills over into the round-of-16, which begins in Amsterdam on Saturday with the Denmark-Wales clash. If ever there was a time for cautious play, it is now, with the competition essentially a single-elimination, winner-take-all affair. France, having won the 2018 World Cup, knows a way around such situations, and with midfielder Paul Pogba in imperious form, it remains the favourite. Italy has been the stand-out team, with its young and energetic outfit coached by the astute Roberto Mancini expected to go far and bury the ghosts of 2018 when it did not qualify for the World Cup. Belgium's golden generation, led by Eden Hazard, Kevin De Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku, seems well-placed to realise the dream of a first major trophy. But its shaky defence needs some shoring up, first against Ronaldo's Portugal. The most-anticipated pre-quarterfinal clash will however be between England and Germany at Wembley. But both sides have been middling so far, with their halos significantly dimmed. Germany, in particular, was minutes away from elimination, before Leon Goretzka's deflected goal against Hungary saved the day. But the weight of history can hang heavy on England, for it has won just three out of 11 competitive fixtures against Germany, the last coming 20 years ago.

Prepare the ground for a 'Naya J&K'

It must capture the best practices of democratic governance globally, yet be reflective of the idea of India



AMITABH MATTOO

It is too early to conclude whether the all-party meeting held at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence to reduce the trust deficit between New Delhi and the leaders of Jammu and Kashmir will succeed in building the foundations of a 'Naya Jammu and Kashmir'. That the meeting was held, remarkably without rancor, does signal a new beginning after the momentous events of August 2019, which included the dilution of Article 370 and the preventive detention of many of the leaders who attended the all-party meeting.

There are also signals that a new minimal consensus could be forged between the mainstream of political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir and the central leadership that could lead to an early return of democratic governance and full Statehood. In its long and chequered history, there have been several and previous occasions during which federal relations have been rebooted and reset and this would not be the first time that a new, forward-looking political compact is executed.

Centre's policies, the world
It is tempting, especially for out-of-work diplomats, to over-analyse New Delhi's latest moves within a chessboard of a 'great game' being played out, reminiscent of 19th century British strategies in the region. Anyone who has studied New Delhi policies since the troubles of the 1990s will recognise that the Centre's policies on Jammu and Kashmir rarely shift under international pressure, even while tactical gestures may be made to assuage the sentiments of what the

establishment often describes as woolly-headed liberals.

In the hostile atmosphere of the early 1990s, when India was confronted with a full-blown insurgency in the Kashmir Valley and India's staunchest ally, the Soviet Union had collapsed, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia (and Central Asia), Robin L. Raphael (with direct access to U.S. President Bill Clinton) questioned Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India. Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's fragile coalition, within an economically precarious India, refused to concede ground in any substantial measure. Surely, it is surreal to believe that the Modi government would do so under pressure from the Joe Biden administration or gratuitous advice from its Acting Assistant Secretary for South Asia, even while the photo opportunity presented by the all-party meeting would, of course, be flashed by the media czars of the Ministry of External Affairs across the globe.

Similarly, while the dangers to Afghanistan from the gradual takeover by the Taliban are real and present, it is difficult to find any evidence that the once-messianic students rooted in the madrasas of the Frontier will now turn their attention to Kashmir. Moreover, any backchannel that exists between India and Pakistan that led to a successful ceasefire on the Line of Control is reflective much more of Rawalpindi's own internal fault lines and problems on multiple fronts, than any real concession toward India. To be sure, if Pakistan's leadership wanted a face saver to stand down from its fierce reaction to the 'Ides of August', Mr. Modi has provided the very steps to down the ante.

From a position of strength
Counterintuitively, the Modi government seems to have acted unilaterally precisely because there is a window of opportunity where



it can speak and act from a position of almost absolute strength. Even while there are stray incidents of violence, terrorism and militancy are at their lowest levels in recent years; there is little popular disquiet that is finding expression in the streets of the towns and the cities of Kashmir; and the separatists are either in jail or are surprisingly silent. The popular press, once a source of anxiety for the establishment, has either been arm-twisted into projecting good news or found a pragmatic to do so given the scrutiny of central law enforcement agencies on almost every private institution of importance and influence in the Union Territory.

The mainstream of political parties, who had been derided by the Centre as the 'Gupkar gang' et al and detained for months, (who had taken an absolutist stand on the dilution of Article 370) seem to have found at least a modicum of accommodation with the Centre, at least good enough for all of them to respond positively to the Prime Minister's invitation. In sum the employment of the entire spectrum of Kautilyan policies (*saam, daam, dand and bhed* – persuade, purchase, punish, and exploit the weakness) have helped to create this new space; this is not to justify the Centre's conduct, but merely find a convincing explanation for the remarkable degree of acquiescence to the Centre's policies, admittedly within the conve-

nient judicial cover provided by the Supreme Court of India having admitted but not heard the case on the legitimacy of the dilution of Article 370. As the Harvard trained legal ace, Muzaffar Beigh, apparently declared in the all-party meeting: any discussion on Article 370 could be tantamount to contempt of the Supreme Court given its *sub judice* status.

In turn, the Centre also seems to have realised that there are limits to which Chaplinesque 'little dictators' from the bureaucracy, and their minions can deliver in terms of better public services or investment opportunities despite the laudable intentions of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha.

The state of delivery of public service has not improved significantly nor has promised investment from corporate groups translated into reality. The promise of Kashmir remains just that: the promise of Kashmir!

Need for a local connect

Moreover, the experience in Jammu and Kashmir has amplified the Sangh Parivar's long-standing recognition that real leaders cannot be manufactured, but have to be connected organically to the grassroots and supported by a cadre of dedicated workers. The over-reliance on a new crop of shifty leaders, who were paraded into television studios or before visiting diplomats (and who zealously mouthed *Bharat mata ki jai*) had the strong imprint of an intelligence operation, and was, in any case, counterproductive amongst even those already sympathetic to New Delhi's narrative on Kashmir. The elections to the District Development Council demonstrated that the Bharatiya Janata Party, the National Conference, the Congress, Peoples Democratic Party, People's Conference and the Apni Party – all of whom relied on the political leaders of the so-called

Ancien Régime – still had a significant constituency amongst the voters of the State.

Federal relations are dynamic even in countries with almost inviolable rights of the States, including the United States. For most of the 20th century, even much before India's Independence, New Delhi's policies towards this border region have moved between tight central control and a gentler federal grip that provided space for autonomous self-governance. When the British sold Kashmir to the Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh, they wanted to secure the frontiers, but not be responsible for governance. But the British Empire too realised, especially within the reign of Pratap Singh, that they could not firewall security from governance.

Use the bedrock of the young

Twenty-first century governance and empowerment requires a federal solution that is contemporary and built on best practices globally. The fresh consensus for a 'Naya' Jammu and Kashmir must capture the best practices of democratic governance globally, especially from a country such as Australia which I know best, and yet be reflective of the idea of India: a celebration of diversity in all its forms. The challenge before Jammu and Kashmir's leaders, old and new, is to arrive at a compelling blueprint for good governance within a framework of healthy federal relations that will be rooted in a vision for peace, prosperity and real empowerment. The bedrock of such a vision must be the extraordinarily talented and gifted young people of the State, who have, despite the troubles, been able to carve out a niche for themselves across the world.

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Relevant advice for health care-givers, mothers-to-be

With COVID-19 compounding maternal and neonatal complications, vaccination and special facilities must be priorities



LAKSHMI SESADRI &
M.S. SESADRI

India's demographic dividend is largely dependent on its high birth rate. The number of births in India is 72,000 per day; taking into account the 10 month duration of gestation and pregnancy losses, the number of pregnant women on any single day will be much larger. Currently, the number of new cases of COVID-19 per day and the number of daily COVID-19 deaths in India are among the highest in the world. Maternity services in India, both public and private, already overburdened with large numbers even in pre-COVID-19 times, face a crisis situation with the conditions caused by the pandemic.

A danger
Recent reports from Kerala (*The Hindu*, May 14, 2021) on pregnant mothers, have uncovered many serious medical problems faced by pregnant women who contract COVID-19 and their new-born – pre-eclampsia, pre-term labour maternal infections, increased caesarean section rates, fetal growth restriction due to placental insufficiency, still births, neonatal infections and respiratory distress. According to a recent publication in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, maternal mortality is several-fold higher in COVID-19 positive pregnant mothers than in non-COVID-19 pregnant women. Many pregnant women need admission to the intensive care unit and prolonged

hospitalisation. Of all the COVID-19 deaths in the paediatric age-group, neonatal deaths are the most common.

All maternal and neonatal complications increase with maternal obesity and diabetes in pregnancy – problems that are common in pregnant women in India. These facts underscore the need for urgent action to minimise the impact of the coronavirus infection on pregnant mothers and new-born.

There is an urgent need for action from professional bodies to avert a serious calamity; the Government, in consultation with these bodies, should immediately facilitate counselling and care for women in the reproductive age group and provide resources to health-care professionals involved in their care.

Quite early during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we cautioned about the potential adverse effects of COVID-19 in pregnancy and urged pre-conceptual advice for women planning a pregnancy during COVID-19 times (*The Hindu*, September 14, 2020; <https://bit.ly/2U3Nghq>) – a simple precaution that could have averted serious problems for large numbers of women in the reproductive age group.

Steps to be taken
With the massive increase in numbers of COVID-19 infections with the second wave of the novel coronavirus pandemic in India, and its effect on pregnant mothers, this important matter should be taken up on a war footing, alerting women in the reproductive age group and the medical profession.

Two important steps must be considered immediately: Advise all women to postpone pregnancy till both partners are vaccinated; Offer vaccination to all un-vaccinated pregnant women



nated pregnant women

Temporary and reversible contraception during COVID-19 times is a simple and effective way to postpone pregnancies and thereby decrease the number of women who would otherwise seek antenatal advice in crowded hospitals and risk exposure to infection. The demands on health-care personnel who provide antenatal care would decrease; they can be redeployed for COVID-19 care and the vaccination programme, public health measures that make huge demands on health-care professionals.

Reduction in the number of antenatal visits, online consultations, protocols for ultrasonography, glucose tolerance test and antepartum fetal evaluation have been introduced by many institutions. This must be followed by all caregivers.

Ultrasound scans are routinely done during pregnancy. Dedicated and safe ultrasound scan centres for pregnant women, manned exclusively by immunised personnel (either vaccinated or after recovery from previous COVID-19 infection) is a need of the hour.

Pregnant women with fever should be considered to have COVID-19 unless proven otherwise and be taken care of in triage areas

with all personal protective measures in place till COVID-19 test results are available.

At present, COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 pregnant women coming for delivery are not strictly segregated in many hospitals, it is high time that COVID-19 pregnancies and non-COVID-19 pregnancies are handled in different settings to prevent infecting susceptible mothers. Both types of facilities should be manned by immunised personnel, the first to prevent infections in health-care personnel and the second to prevent infections in susceptible mothers. Unvaccinated health-care workers providing care for pregnant women should be quickly vaccinated.

Clear benefits of vaccination
The health authorities in the United Kingdom and the United States have realised the benefits and the safety of vaccinating pregnant women and have approved vaccination of all pregnant women with mRNA vaccines (<https://bit.ly/3xVZlx>). These COVID-19 vaccines have been found to produce a good immune response and, maternal antibodies, demonstrated to cross the placenta and enter the fetus, confer protection against maternal to fetal transmission of the virus. The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks.

Pregnancy and the immediate postpartum period are pro-thrombotic states – they favour the formation of blood clots in veins. Of the two vaccines readily available in India, the vectored vaccine (Covishield) was found to be associated with rare but serious side-effects pertaining to thrombosis of the veins draining critical areas such as the brain and intra-abdominal organs, a feature shared by the single dose (Janssen) vaccine;

indeed, this side-effect may be a feature of all vectored vaccines against COVID-19. In general, inactivated virus vaccines are safe during pregnancy and the World Health Organization has given a nod to the use of the inactivated Synovac vaccine (<https://bit.ly/35WzIHa>). Therefore, the inactivated vaccine available in India (Covaxin) may have advantages over the vectored vaccines (Covishield and Sputnik) for vaccinating pregnant women.

The availability and advantages of the vaccine for pregnant women should be publicised and awareness should be created among the public. Vaccine hesitancy in pregnant women is likely to be much higher than in the general population – this should be addressed by information, education and effective communication. Professional bodies recommended to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that vaccination be offered to pregnant women after providing adequate information and counselling – and the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Ministry of Health have approved this, welcome steps in the right direction (<https://bit.ly/3xRBAgl>).

India will do well to enhance vaccination coverage of couples planning pregnancy and pregnant women on a priority basis in order to protect mothers and their new-born.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Talks on J&K
A few days ago, few would have imagined a thaw was possible in the frozen relationship between Kashmir's political elites and the central government. A meeting between the two sides, which took place unexpectedly, points to their shared view that the restoration of political normalcy in Kashmir cannot be delayed indefinitely (Page 1, "PM

backs delimitation exercise, grassroots democracy in J&K", June 25). Since it was a meeting without any agenda, both sides listened to each other – an exercise that seems to have helped to dispel mutual mistrust and suspicion. The Kashmiri leaders came with a long list of demands. It seems the Government's immediate priority is to conduct the delimitation exercise and hold elections. Restoration of Statehood is

also on the cards, but it depends on the peaceful conduct of elections. The Kashmiri leaders need to accept the harsh reality that Article 370 is history. The Government has managed to turn public opinion regarding its dilution in its favour. The Congress party's demand that the government should take steps to rehabilitate the Pandits seems to be a case of belated wisdom that is

driven by political opportunism. Will the party create a climate of goodwill and safety to help the return of the Pandits? V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN, Tiruvananthapuram

■ Whatever decisions the Government may take, unless the confidence of the people is won, no visible change can be made. After all, democracy is only about reflecting the will of the people in governance. One

cannot expect a magic wand to change the mindset of the people overnight. Engaging constantly with the people is the solution. Empty rhetoric and a military presence cannot make any difference. T. ANAND RAJ, Chennai

Africa ties
The African continent is one of the most neglected yet strategically important regions of the world. Indian diplomacy can do better,

deepening ties with Africa and helping it build better infrastructure. Being highly rich in mineral resources, strengthening ties with Africa could prove to be of great significance to India. With the Sahel region now facing increased terrorism, India should step up counter-terrorism-related activities and reach out. OMKAR ANANDKUMAR REVADKAR, Pune

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When Greyhounds struck in a fading red zone

In June, six Maoists including top leaders of the CPI(Maoist) were killed by the Greyhounds in Koyyuru mandal in Visakhapatnam Agency. **Sumit Bhattacharjee** reports on the setback to the movement which is already at its lowest ebb in the region

On June 16, rain-bearing clouds loomed over Koyyuru mandal in Visakhapatnam Agency, about 170 km from Visakhapatnam city. The monsoon had set in. The entire mandal is thickly forested, with hillocks, deep caverns and perennial streams. Soon, there was a steady drizzle.

A team of around 30 Maoists, including some senior leaders, from the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) were camping on a hillock about 800 m high in the middle of this jungle near a village called Theegalametta. At around 9 a.m., while one group of Maoists, sheltered under plastic tarpaulins, was busy cooking a meal, the others were reportedly gearing up for an important meeting.

There are two versions of what happened a few minutes later. According to a letter from the Maoists, the unsuspecting group suddenly came under heavy fire from the elite anti-Maoist force of Andhra Pradesh, the Greyhounds. Surprised by the fire power and stealth attack, the Maoists took time to respond. The exchange of fire reportedly lasted for about 25 minutes and left six Maoists – three women and three top leaders – dead. According to the official version, the Greyhounds asked the group to surrender but was forced to retaliate when the Maoists opened fire.

A serious setback

Visakhapatnam Agency, located in Viskapatnam district, is around 6,200 sq km and has 11 mandals. Koyyuru is one among them. The district administration and the police have declared all the 11 mandals as "Maoist-affected".

Among the dead were two Divisional Committee Members (DCM) and one Area Committee Member (ACM). The six were identified as Ranadev alias Arjun (DCM), Sande Gangai alias 'Dr' Ashok (DCM), Santu Nachike (ACM), Lalitha, Madakm Chaite, and Pake. Ranadev and Nachike were from Odisha; Ashok was from Pedapalli in Telangana; Lalitha was from GK Veedhi, another Maoist-affected mandal in Visakhapatnam Agency; and Chaite and Pake were from Chhattisgarh.

Ranadev was among the few committed Maoist leaders left in the region. He had been part of the movement for about 20 years and was known to be an elusive and fierce fighter. He had earlier led the Kalimela Dalam. (Dalams are Maoist groups which operate in particular areas.) Not too long ago, he was moved to Boipariguda in Koraput, Odisha, after the merger of the Kalimela and Koraput Area Committees.

The killing of Sande Gangai alias 'Dr' Ashok is a serious setback to the group as he was leading the medical team in the region. Ashok was not a qualified doctor; he had learnt the rudiments of nursing from local Registered Medical Practitioners. It is said that he could even perform minor surgeries, including treating bullet wounds. He hailed from a family of committed Maoists. His older brother, Sande Rajamouli, was the mastermind behind the mine blast in Alipiri in 2003 in which former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu was injured. Rajamouli was killed in 2007 by the police.

The security forces also recovered one AK-47 rifle, two carbines, two modified .303 Lee Enfield rifles, one country-made weapon, at least one single-barrel muzzle-loading gun, some ammunition, explosive materials, extremist literature, VHF sets, medicines and kit bags from the spot.

Sources say that some senior leaders such as Gajrala Ravi alias Uday, Secretary of the CPI (Maoist) Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee; Aruna, the next in command; and Kakuri Pandana alias Jagan, who is in-charge of the Galikonda area were present at the campsite, too.

The attack

A senior police officer as well as tribals in the nearby villages say that the police had been aware of the Maoists' presence as barely 20 days ago, there had been an exchange of fire at another place in Koyyuru. This attack was made possible by specific intelligence inputs, sources say.

During the monsoon, for at least two months, many villages in the interior parts of the district remain cut off from the mandal headquarters. Traversing the area, which has slippery red soil, and streams and rivulets in spate, is fraught with danger. Given the difficulty in negotiating the terrain, both the Maoists and the security forces normally let their guard down during this time. While the Maoists refrain from their tactical counter offensive campaign (when they carry out maximum attacks against security forces), the security forces scale down their combing and area domination operations.

According to sources in the police, the Greyhounds trekked overnight for at least 15 to 18 km in pitch darkness and swam the last lap to reach the vantage point early in the morning.

Children walk near a memorial built by the Maoists in a village close to the site where six Maoists were shot dead by the Greyhounds in Koyyuru mandal in Visakhapatnam Agency. (Below): Greyhounds conduct a combing operation close to Theegalametta village in Koyyuru mandal. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

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Children walk near a memorial built by

FROM PAGE ONE

CBSE optional exams in August, says Minister

Aspirants of professional entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET also wanted to know if and when their examinations would be held. The engineering entrance test JEE-Main is held four times a year, but two sessions scheduled for April and May had been suspended because of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The undergraduate medical entrance test NEET is scheduled to be held on August 1 as of now.

There is also uncertainty regarding the Central Universities Common Entrance Test, with questions being

Kerala 'excess deaths' 1.6 times official toll

Districts of concern

The table lists the excess deaths, recorded COVID-19 deaths and the estimated undercount factor for Kerala's districts between April 2020 and May 2021

District	Excess deaths	COVID-19 deaths	Undercount factor
Kannur	2,149	620	3.47
Palakkad	1,762	603	2.92
Malappuram	1,634	669	2.44
Thrissur	1,298	1,028	1.26
Kollam	1,230	498	2.47
Kozhikode	959	971	0.99
Ernakulam	957	876	1.22
Thiruvananthapuram	941	1,745	0.54
Kottayam	741	434	1.71
Kasaragod	724	150	4.83
Alappuzha	706	704	1.00
Idukki	316	62	5.10
Wayanad	228	207	1.10
Pathanamthitta	224	293	0.76

If instead of averages, a year-by-year growth rate of deaths is considered from 2015 to 2021, the 3,03,313 registered deaths in the State were still lower than the estimated 3,12,664 deaths between April 2020 and May 2021. Yet, as registrations for recent months are not fully complete, we utilised the averages method for better approximation.

Among districts, while Thiruvananthapuram registered the most COVID-19 deaths (1,745), the estimated excess deaths for the pandemic period was lower (941). Kannur (2,149), Palakkad (1,762) and Malappuram (1,634) recorded the highest number of excess deaths, with undercount factors 3.5, 2.9 and 2.4 respectively. Idukki (5.1) and Kasaragod (4.8) also recorded high undercounts but had fewer excess deaths (316 and 724 respectively). Kozhikode and Pathanamthitta also register fewer excess deaths than the actual COVID-19 tally.

Rajan Khobragade, Principal Secretary (Health), Kerala, told *The Hindu*, "Since March-April 2020, we have followed a system where deaths occurring will be reported in the medical bulletin. Those who died after testing positive had been counted and reported. A State-level death audit committee looked at all deaths due to communicable diseases and accordingly the reports were updated. We may be the only State doing this properly by a multi disciplinary team of doctors."

The State government had taken into account concerns about possible omission of deaths due to COVID-19, especially in some cases where patients recovered from COVID-19, tested negative and then died due to health complications.

(With inputs from C. Maya in Thiruvananthapuram and data support from Sumanth Sen)

Sedition case against Aisha won't stand: HC

K.C. GOPAKUMAR
Kochi

Observing that *prima facie* the offences, including the sedition charge, alleged against Lakshadweep filmmaker Aisha Sultana are not attracted, the Kerala HC on Friday made absolute the interim anticipatory bail granted to her in a case filed by the

CMYK

IAC will be commissioned next year: Rajnath

First India-made carrier is being built at the Cochin Shipyard

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) being built at the Cochin Shipyard will join the naval fleet next year, coinciding with the 75th year of India's Independence. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here on Friday after reviewing the progress of its construction.

He said in a statement, after visiting the aircraft carrier at the Cochin Port Trust, that the combat capability, reach and versatility of the IAC would add formidable capabilities in India's defence and help secure its interests in the maritime domain.

On his Karwar visit on Thursday to review Project Seabird, the largest upcom-



Taking stock: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh near the Indigenous Aircraft carrier berthed at the Cochin Port Trust on Friday. ■ THULASI KAKKAT

ing naval base, he said it would provide the facilities and infrastructure to support the Navy's operations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.

"Our impetus on modernisation, harnessing India's indigenous industry and know-how, is a key priority. That 42 of the 44 warships on order are being built at Indian shipyards is a testimony to this,"

said would give a fillip to indigenous development of niche manufacturing technologies.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) recently approved requests for proposals (RFP) of Project 75-I [for the construction of another line of diesel-electric submarines] under the strategic partnership model, which he

Carrier will be the Navy's most potent platform

Delivery to force slated for early 2022

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The first indigenous carrier (IAC) is expected to have its maiden entry into the sea for a series of trials before September this year, and delivery to the Navy is slated for early 2022.

Basin trials of the vessel being built by Cochin Shipyard were completed in November 2020, but travel restrictions put the brakes on its preparations for sea trials.

The vessel, to be named Vikrant after the decommissioned maiden carrier of the Navy, will have an air component of 30 aircraft, comprising MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 airborne early warning helicopters and the

soon-to-be-induced MH-60R multi-role helicopter, besides the indigenous Advanced Light Helicopters.

With an overall length of 263 metre and a breadth of 63 metre, it is the largest vessel made in India and carries a price tag of about ₹20,000 crore. The towering vessel has a total of 15 decks and a displacement of 40,000 tonnes.

It is expected to have a top speed of 30 knots (approximately 55 kmph) and is propelled by four gas turbines.

The shipborne weapons include Barak LR SAM and AK-630, while it has MFSTAR and RAN-40L 3D radars as sensors. The vessel has a Shakti EW Suite.

SC allows Mamata, Minister to file fresh affidavits in Narada case

Top court asks HC to consider their applications afresh

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday annulled a Calcutta High Court order of June 9 refusing to consider the affidavits filed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Law Minister Moloy Ghatak and the State government countering allegations about their role on the day of the arrest of four TMC leaders by the CBI in the Narada sting case.

A Vacation Bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari allowed Ms. Banerjee, Mr. Ghatak and the government to apply to the High Court again for permission to file their affidavits. It requested the High Court to consider their applications afresh on June 29, the next date of hearing. It asked the High Court to consider their applications first before going further into the merits of the case.

The Supreme Court did not get into the merits of the case, but went to the extent of opining that the petitioners (Ms. Banerjee, Mr. Ghatak and government) ought



Mamata Banerjee

to have first applied to the High Court, urging it to take their counter-affidavits on record, "especially when the arguments were going on [in the Narada case] and had progressed substantially".

The CBI had objected to the filing of counter affidavits by the petitioners and argued that the High Court's June 9 order was fully justified. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had argued that the petitioners had "fully participated" in the hearings and they had "waived their right" to file their replies.

Senior advocates Rakesh Dwivedi and Vikas Singh, for the petitioners, said the High Court, instead of refusing the affidavits, should

have taken them on record in the normal course of the hearings. Mr. Singh said the CBI did not have to file an application before submitting its affidavits.

Mr. Dwivedi said the affidavits were "essential" to the case and provided the truth about the events of May 17, day of arrest of four TMC leaders.

The separate plea by Ms. Banerjee in the Supreme Court contended that the CBI was trying to malign the State Ministers without any proof to substantiate its allegations against them. She said it was essential to allow her to file an affidavit to counter the agency's claims that she "terrorised" them by protesting outside their office.

Mr. Dwivedi countered the CBI's claims that Mr. Ghatak was present in the courtroom with a mob when the four TMC leaders were produced after their arrest.

He said the Minister was in an official meeting at the time. Even CBI officials were not present at the spot as the hearing was held virtually.

NHRC teams visit areas hit by post-poll violence

The move follows Calcutta HC's order

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Officials of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) have started visiting areas affected by post poll violence in north and south Bengal.

Two separate teams arrived in the State on Thursday. On Friday one team visited Cooch Behar in north Bengal, while the other travelled to Harao and Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas. The members of the team spoke to villagers in these two affected areas.

Raju Mukherjee, member secretary West Bengal State Legal Services Authority and registrar of West Bengal Human Rights Commission Pradip Kumar Panja are also part of the Committee. The committee is expected to visit districts of South 24 Parganas and Birbhum which have reported incidents of post poll violence.

In its order, the Court has asked the Committee to suggest "steps to be taken to ensure confidence of the people that they can peacefully live in their houses and also carry on their occupation or business to earn their livelihood" and point out "persons prima facie responsible for crime and the officers

who maintained calculated silence on the issue". The State government's request to the court to recall the order was turned down on June 21.

On the same day the NHRC set up a committee led by Rajiv Jain, member of Commission, vice-chairman National Commission for Minorities vice-chairman Atif Rasheed and NHRC's (director) investigation Santosh Mehra and DIG (investigation) Manzil Saini.

A five-judge bench of Calcutta High Court headed by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal had on June 18 urged the chairperson of NHRC to set up a committee to look into allegations of post-poll violence while hearing a writ petition on the issue.

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who maintained calculated silence on the issue". The State government's request to the court to recall the order was turned down on June 21.

Earlier, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar had visited areas in Cooch Behar and Nandigram. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has maintained that "stray incidents" of violence occurred before her government was sworn in and the administration was under ECI.

IN BRIEF



Kangana moves Bombay HC in copyright case

MUMBAI

Actor Kangana Ranaut and her brother Akshat Deep Ranaut moved the Bombay High Court challenging an order directing an FIR against them by the Mumbai Police for copyright violation and cheating in connection with a film. A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and G.A. Sanap was hearing a petition filed by the duo to quash the order passed by the magistrate directing the police to register an FIR.

Adarsh case: ED attaches assets worth ₹365.94 cr.

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹365.94 crore of the Adarsh Group entities, the Ridhi Siddhi Group of companies and others in a money laundering case. The assets are in the form of agricultural, residential and commercial land parcels in Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan, besides fixed deposits and bank balances.

Vikassheel Insaan Party to contest U.P. poll

PATNA

Bihar's Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP), a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance, will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election next year. Its leader Mukesh Sahani is Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fish Resources in the Bihar government. It has four MLAs. The VIP has not yet decided whether it will contest as part of the NDA or in alliance with other parties.

Wife kills imam for planning another marriage

MUZAFFARNAGAR

An imam in a village here was castrated and beaten to death by his wife for planning another marriage, police said on Friday. The incident took place in Shikarpur village on Thursday. The woman told the police that her husband was planning another marriage and an argument over the issue turned violent, leading to his death.

Publishers give details under ethics code

Many forms did not have details about self-regulating bodies, says Vikram Sahay

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress leadership continued to seek feedback from Punjab leaders to end the bitter factionalism, with former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi meeting Rajya Sabha member Shamsher Singh Dullo on Friday.

Mr. Dullo, a former PCC president, has been a long-time critic of Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh. Speaking to reporters later, Mr. Dullo seemed critical of former Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu as well without naming him.

Press Information Bureau (South Zone), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in association with the Film Federation of India.

The session on Digital Media Ethics Code-2021 was attended by representatives of various digital media and film associations.

Mr. Sahay said although many forms did not have details about self-regulating bodies, the publishers should nevertheless furnish the rest of the basic details. The bodies would come up in due course. The publishers could come together at the State or regional level to form such bodies headed by persons of

eminence, if not retired Supreme Court/High Court judges, he said.

Several entities in Kerala, Patna and Jammu & Kashmir had already expressed interest in forming small bodies.

He clarified that digital media platforms that were part of traditional media outlets were not required to join a separate self-regulating body.

"The concern is only one that once you are a news publisher, you are expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics. Anyone can get into this profession... there is no pre-registration, no prior permission required," he said.

The Joint Secretary said anyone who was into a casual enterprise of placing some news on intermediary platforms, or putting out non-news contents, was not a publisher. Such a person was required only to adhere to the due diligence part under the intermediary platform framework.

The Code of Ethics for online news publishers essentially covers the norms of journalistic conduct under the Press Council Act, Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Rules, and non-transmission of prohibited contents.

India 'politicising' FATF process: Pakistan

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Pakistan's Energy Minister Hammad Azhar on Friday accused India of attempting to "politicise the process" at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), after the Paris-based UN watchdog decided to retain Pakistan on its greylist of countries under "increased monitoring".

"Whether [India] admits it or not, everyone at FATF knows that India's goal is to make the technical forum a political one [by targeting] Pakistan. This is something we have raised with FATF officials in Paris as well," he said.

The MEA did not respond to Mr. Azhar's accusation, but has in the past, dismissed all such charges.

Confident of relief

In the weeks leading up to the FATF plenary, Pakistan had been fairly confident of being let off the greylist during the June 21-25 plenary session.

ED raids 5 places linked to Deshmukh

Search linked to graft case against former Minister

DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches on five premises linked to former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in Mumbai and Nagpur in connection with a money laundering case.

The premises of Mr. Deshmukh's chartered accountant was also searched. His private secretary was later taken to the ED's Mumbai office for questioning.

In April, the CBI carried out searches in Mumbai and Nagpur after registering a corruption case against Mr. Deshmukh and others.

The case – alleging attempt to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of public duty – was instituted following a preliminary inquiry initiated on the directions of the Bombay High



Under watch: Security personnel standing guard at the residence of former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh in Nagpur on Friday. •PTI

Court on April 5.

An inquiry revealed that now dismissed Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze had been reinstated into the police force after being out of service for over 15 years. He was entrusted with most of the important cases of the Mumbai City Police and the then Home Minister was in

the know of these facts, as alleged by the CBI.

Param Bir Singh's charge
A petition of former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh in the High Court also alleged that the then Home Minister and others exercised undue influence over the transfer and posting

of police officers.

Earlier, it was alleged that some police officers had been told to collect ₹100 crore every month from bars and restaurants in Mumbai.

Mr. Deshmukh, who has refuted the charges, had resigned from the post following the High Court order for a CBI inquiry.

Afghan exit by U.S. may bring infiltrators: Army

'Ready to foil any infiltration bid'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Army on Friday said the U.S. pull-out from Afghanistan this year may result in some militants moving into Kashmir.

"Whatever happened 30 years ago has caused a huge distress to the people of Kashmir. Yes, there is a possibility that the U.S. forces' pull-out from Afghanistan may push some militants into Kashmir, but the situation is not what it was 30 years ago," General Officer Commanding (GoC), 15 Corps, Lieutenant General D.P. Pandey, said on the sidelines of a passing out parade of a JAKLI regimental in Srinagar.

Lt. Gen. Pandey said the Army was ready and fully geared to foil all infiltrations and face every challenge, whether on the Line of Control (LoC) or the hinterland. There had been zero infiltration this year. "Launch pads, however, are active," he added.

"A ceasefire or not, the



Lt. Gen. D.P. Pandey

Army's eyes are set on our enemy. We are ready to face any misadventure. We are ready to respond at every level effectively," he noted.

Balance of forces*

On the situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, he stated, "Given the Chinese situation on the LAC, a balance of forces is being maintained."

On Thursday, the GoC said all the parameters of violence in Kashmir have come down by 50% and the situation was very good with stability across the Valley.

Militant killed in Shopian operation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

One militant was killed and another surrendered in an anti-militancy operation in south Kashmir's Shopian on Friday. Security forces also foiled an infiltration in north Kashmir's Tangdhar the same day.

A police spokesman said the encounter occurred in Hanjipura village of Kachdoora hamlet in Shopian.

The operation, carried out jointly by the police, the Army's 34 Rashtriya Rifles and the CRPF against some hiding militants, apparently followed a tip-off.

The police did not identify the slain militant.

"A terrorist of the Lashkar-e-Taiba surrendered along with an AK-56 rifle," the police said.

The police said an infiltration bid was stopped in Kupwara. "The Kupwara police, along with the Army's 7RR and Border Security Forces' 87 Battalion, foiled an infiltration bid at Tangdhar area," the police said.

President and First Lady embark on special train ride

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind, accompanied by First Lady Savita Devi Kovind, boarded a special train from the Safdarjung railway station on Friday to travel to his native place Kanpur.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and Chairman of the Railway Board Suneet Sharma were present at the station to see him off.

"President Kovind boards a special Presidential train from Safdarjung railway station to Kanpur. The train will make two stop-overs, at Jhunjhun and Rura of Kanpur Dehat, and will reach Kanpur Central in the evening," the official handle of the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted.

The two stops have been organised to facilitate Mr. Kovind's interaction with his old acquaintances from his schooldays, a statement

Kovind revives tradition after interval of 15 years



Track record: President Ram Nath Kovind boarding the special train at Safdarjung railway station in New Delhi. •PTI

from Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

"On June 28, the President will board the train at Kanpur Central railway station to reach Lucknow for his two-day visit to the State capital. On June 29, he will return to New Delhi on a special flight," a statement said.

After a gap of 15 years, Mr.

India, China plan 12th round of talks on Ladakh stand-off

Commander-level dialogue aims at 'complete disengagement'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Agreeing on the need to find an early resolution to the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, India and China on Friday agreed to hold the 12th round of military commander talks at an early date to achieve "complete disengagement" from "all the friction points" along the LAC in the Western Sector.

"It is out of despair and frustration that the ED was set upon Mr. Deshmukh... This misuse of central agencies is a new pattern of the BJP-ruled Centre. Even prior to this, central agencies had their eye on businesses owned by Mr. Deshmukh's son. At that time, too, they failed to unearth anything. Anil Deshmukh is not the first to face such action. So, we are not unduly worried by all this," said Mr. Pawar.



The banks of the Pangong Tso in Ladakh, which saw tensions last year.

points so as to ensure full restoration of peace and tranquillity to enable progress in the bilateral relations," a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"In this regard, the two sides agreed to maintain dialogue and communication through the diplomatic and military mechanisms to reach a mutually acceptable solution for complete disengagement from all friction

The Indian delegation was led by Additional Secretary, East Asia, from the MEA, while the Chinese delegation was led by the Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A statement by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said that the two sides agreed to "consolidate the achievements" of the disengagement of border troops from both sides and "properly resolve the remaining issues" along the western section of the Sino-Indian border.

"The two sides will continue to work to promote further de-escalation of the border situation, avoid any recurrence of the situation on the ground and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity in the border area," the MFA statement said.

DRDO tests enhanced range Pinaka rocket

Targets can be at distances up to 45 km

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Friday successfully test fired the enhanced range versions of the indigenously developed 122 mm calibre rocket as well as the extended range version of the indigenous Pinaka rocket from a Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) at integrated test range, Chandipur in Odisha.



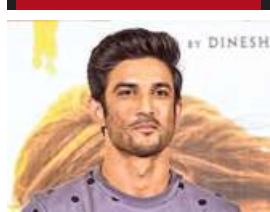
A multi-barrel launcher firing a Pinaka rocket at Chandipur beach in Odisha.

"Four enhanced range version of 122mm rockets were test fired with full instrumentation and they met the complete mission objectives. These rockets have been developed for Army applications and can destroy targets up to 40 km," a DRDO statement said.

This enhanced rocket system would replace the existing 122mm Grad rockets.

In a second statement, the DRDO said that 25 enhanced Pinaka rockets were launched in quick succession against targets at different ranges on June 24 and

IN BRIEF



DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

OFB federations threaten to go on indefinite strike

BY DINESH

HC declines to order stay on film based on Sushant

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday declined to stay the release of movie *Nyay: The Justice*, purportedly based on the late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, in cinema halls and on OTT platforms, saying there is no "unholy interest" in the story of the man's life which was "exceptional". PTI

NIA files chargesheet against seven 'terrorists'

NEW DELHI
The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet against seven alleged Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The accused have been identified as Mohammed Mustafa Khan, Yaseen Farooq, Ibrar, Javid Khan, Sher Ali and Rafiq Nai. The case was initially registered in Poonch after the arrest of Mohammed Mustafa Khan and alleged seizure of six hand grenades.

6 of family drown as car plunges into pond in U.P.

BALRAMPUR
Six members of a family drowned after their car overturned and fell into a pond on Balrampur-Tulsipur road on Friday, police said. The car overturned while trying to save a motorcyclist, who was also injured in the mishap and referred to a hospital in Gonda town, police said. PTI

CM YK

CThe decision is stage-managed, hasty and taken in a hurried manner

LETTER FROM OFB FEDERATIONS

"It is a clear case of betrayal by the government, because Secretary, DP himself has asked the federations to give a viable alternate and robust proposal to MoD which would be submitted to the EGOM for a discussion with the federations, so that OFB could achieve the higher expectations of its customers, being in the government set up itself," it said.

The federations said that the entire process to corporatise the OFB is "stage-managed, hasty and taken in a hurried manner, without any application of mind about the impact of this decision on the defence preparedness of our country and also about the future and service conditions of 76,000 employees".

The letter noted that employees were recruited as Central government employees, and as per Article 309 of the Constitution, there was no mention in their appointment letters that their status would be changed during the service period and would have to work in Corporation or Public Sector Undertakings (PSU).

The federations, as well as three other associations, have called for a joint meeting on June 27.

ICMR - NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

R-127, Second Main Road, TNHB, Ayappakkam, Chennai – 600077.

ONLINE INTERVIEW

Candidates are invited for Online zoom app/Walk-in Interview for the posts of: **PROJECT SCIENTIST-C (Medical), PROJECT JUNIOR NURSE** on contract basis under various projects at ICMR - NIE. For application proforma and other details regarding qualification and experience, etc., please refer to www.nie.gov.in

Director

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY
e-Tender Notice
Tender No: 01/2021-22/KWAPHC/D2/TVM(RT1), State plan 2016-17 water treatment plant at Neyar Dam and allied works - Construction, trial running, commissioning and maintenance of 120 mld Water treatment plant with Plate settler technology (lamella), construction, commissioning and maintenance of floating intake structure, Supplying and laying 142mm MS Raw Water Pumping Main, Supplying, erection, testing and commissioning of submerged centrifugal pump set, Supplying and erection of Transformers, construction of Substation Building, Installation of SCADA system for functioning of entire WTP components and allied works with full automation as per the design attached including trial running and commissioning of WTP and all allied works. EMD : Rs. 5,00,000/- Tender fee: Rs. 15,000/- Last Date for submitting Tender: 27-07-2021, 03:00pm. Phone: 0471-322303, Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in www.etenders.kerala.gov.in KWA-JB-GL-6-225-2021-22 Thiruvananthapuram

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
(A Statutory Body of the Government of A.P.)
3rd, 4th, and 5th Floors, Neelafuri Towers, Sri Ram Nagar, 6th Battalion Road, Atmakur(V), Manapadipuri(M), Guntur - 522 503, Andhra Pradesh
Web: <https://apsche.approcurement.gov.in> | Email: secretaryapsche@gmail.com
APSCE-CETS-WAC-2021-22 e-Procurement Notice Dt. 25-06-2021
Tenders are here by invited from reputed companies/agencies/firms "For conduct Web based Admission Counselling by APSCHE" through e-procurement portal <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> with tender Id No. 418993. Tender schedule is from 25.06.2021 & last date of tender submission is 17.07.2021 by 04.00 PM.
The schedule & other details of the tender can be downloaded from e-procurement portal <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or <https://apsche.ap.gov.in> Sd/- SECRETARY

BHARAT COOKING COAL LIMITED
'A Mini Ratna Company'
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

All the tenders* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCCL www.bccclweb.in, Coal India Limited (CIL) e-procurement portal <https://coалиндияtenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM Portal <https://gem.gov.in>.

*This is applicable to all Open (Domestic / Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

THE HUTTI GOLD MINES COMPANY LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

3RD Floor, KHB Shopping Complex, National Games Village, Koramangala

BANGALORE-560 040 Phone: 2570 5723/24/26 Fax: 2570 7380

e-Mail : regdoffice-hgml@ka.gov.in website: www.huttigold.co.in

CIN No.U85110KA1947SGC001321

OPR-32411/11/002/2122

NOTICE INVITING GLOBAL TENDER FOR SALE OF BULLION (Gold & Silver - Dore Bars) Short-term Notification No. 11/21-22, Dt: 26-06-2021

HGML/2021-20/SALE OF BULLION/04

(Through Govt. of Karnataka E-Procurement portal only)

(Two Cover System)

The Hutt Gold Mines is engaged in the business of mining and extraction of Bullion / Dore Bars (Gold & Silver) at Hutt, Raichur Dist. Karnataka. HGML is desirous to select individuals / firms / companies/ others to sell its product i.e. Bullion for a period of one year based on lowest competitive discount rate to the gold price as per the terms and conditions of the tender document.	

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India records nearly 50 Delta Plus variant cases

Maximum cases in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

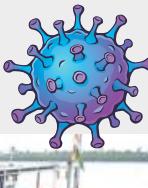
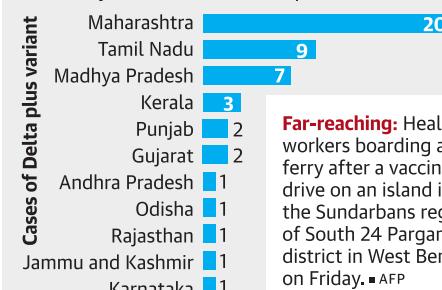
India has so far reported almost 50 cases of the Delta Plus variant of SARS-CoV-2, with Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu leading with the maximum number of cases, the Union Health Ministry said at a press conference on Friday.

Sujeet Kumar Singh, Director, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), said in India, COVID-19 'variants of concerns' were found to be distributed in 174 districts in 35 States. The highest numbers were reported from districts in Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Telangana, West Bengal and Gujarat.

"Variants of Concerns with public health importance detected in community samples in India include Alpha [3,969], Beta [149], Gamma [1] and B.1.617, Delta

Mounting concern

As many as 48 COVID-19 cases attributed to the Delta Plus variant (from 45,000 samples in 11 States/Union Territories) have been detected in India till Friday. Maharashtra has reported 20, the highest in the country



and Kappa were detected in 16,238 samples," said Dr. Singh.

High proportion

The proportion of cases with 'variants of concerns' had risen from 10.31% in May 2021 to 51% on June 20, 2021.

Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, said in the last couple of months, the first variant of concern was the one an-

nounced by the U.K., where it was identified.

"Subsequently, we now have four of these, which the World Health Organization has called Alpha, Beta, Gamma & Delta. 'Delta is the one that was identified in India,' she noted.

Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Balram Bhagava, warned that India was still not out of the second

wave of the pandemic.

The reason why SARS-CoV-2 mutated includes random error during replication, immune pressure after treatments (Convalescent Plasma, Vaccination etc), and uninterrupted transmission due to lack of COVID-19-appropriate behaviour, which allowed the virus to transmit more and acquire fitness, Dr. Bhagava pointed out.

Maharashtra reports first fatality from Delta Plus

STAFF REPORTER
PUNE

An 80-year-old patient from Ratnagiri district in the Konkan region became Maharashtra's first fatality due to the Delta plus variant of the novel coronavirus.

State Health Minister Rajesh Tope confirmed on Friday.

District officials said the deceased, who was from the Sangameshwar taluk in Ratnagiri district, was also suffering from other age-related comorbidities.

Mr. Tope said of the 21 'Delta Plus' patients identified thus far in seven districts across Maharashtra, only one had succumbed to the infection; the others were stable and some had been discharged from hospital.

However, urging people

to observe COVID-19-appropriate behaviour, the Health Minister ruled out suggestions for an immediate stringent lockdown.

"The Delta variant is not new ... with one death, the remaining 20 cases are being closely monitored by authorities. While there are not a large number of patients at present, we are collecting more samples in each of the 36 districts and the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) is assisting the State government in this," said Mr. Tope.

The highest number of Delta Plus variant cases have been found in Ratnagiri, followed by seven in Jalgaon, two in Mumbai, and one case each in Palghar, Thane and Sindhudurg districts.

'Delhi govt. exaggerated oxygen needs by 4 times'

Audit team says the govt. used a 'wrong formula'



People waiting to refill oxygen cylinders in New Delhi on May 8.

NTF calls for 100 MT storage in metro cities

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

All 18 metro cities have to be made oxygen-independent, with at least 100 MT storage in each of them, the Supreme Court-appointed National Task Force (NTF)

recommended. There should be a strategy to manufacture oxygen locally or in the neighbourhood of big cities to fulfil at least 50% of their Liquid Medical Oxygen demand as road transportation is vulnerable.

collected data had so many gross errors and it took an oxygen audit to point out the same".

On May 5, the court ordered the Centre to prepare a "comprehensive plan" for the supply of 700 MT of oxygen to Delhi on a daily basis.

But the sub-group report noted that the "Government of Delhi used a wrong formula and made exaggerated claims on April 30" in the court. "Some hospitals could not differentiate between KL and MT and the same was not examined while projecting 700 MT," the report said.

At one point, the report recorded, the Centre was "anguished" over the discrepancy in liquid medical oxygen data uploaded. The report said it was not clear "on what basis an allocation of 700 MT was sought by the Government of Delhi in the Supreme Court when the

+

SIT to probe fake camps for vaccination in Mumbai

Police have arrested 10 individuals

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

After reports of fake COVID-19 vaccination camps being held in the city, the Mumbai Police on Friday said it has formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the racket. A total of six instances in the city have been identified where fake vaccination drives were conducted and which saw the attendance of more than 1,500 people.

The racket came to light on June 17, when after a camp at a residential complex in Kandivali, many residents complained of not receiving vaccination certificates. "A Special Investigation Team under Deputy Commissioner of Police Vishal Thakur has been constituted," said a police

In Kolkata, antibiotic given as jab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Kolkata officials alleged that at several camps, instead of COVID-19 vaccines, people were administered Amikacin, an antibiotic. Medical teams have been sent to assess such people.

official. The police have arrested 10 individuals, including Shivraj Paratia and Nita Shivraj Paratia of Shivan Hospital, as the alleged fake vaccines were provided through this hospital to the society in Kandivali.

Study links air pollution to COVID-19 cases and deaths

Mumbai, Pune are hotspots among 16 cities

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

A first-of-its-kind pan India study says Mumbai and Pune are among hotspots where high air pollution from the transport and industrial sectors is related to a higher number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.

The study is titled 'Establishing a link between fine particulate matter (PM2.5) zones and COVID-19 over India based on anthropogenic emission sources and air quality data'.

"Maharashtra recorded the second-highest emission load in India – 828.3 gigagram per year (Gg/Yr) of

PM2.5 – based on the National Emission Inventory developed by us. Uttar Pradesh had the highest," said Dr. Saroj Kumar Sahu, lead author of the study.

Among the 16 cities captured in the study, Mumbai and Pune recorded the third- and fourth-highest number of "bad air quality days", respectively. Delhi and Ahmedabad stood first and second, respectively.

"Through our analysis, it has become clear that the rising pollution load is a catalyst in aggravating COVID-19 cases," Dr. Sahu said. He added that polluted hot-spots are also triggering long-term effects, and more studies are needed to understand this.

and Ahmedabad stood first and second, respectively.

"Let the municipal board make alternative arrangements and serve notice to the birds to vacate the municipal area," he said.

Udalguri Deputy Commissioner P. Uday Praveen said he had asked the municipal authorities to stop hewing down any more trees.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13283

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Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

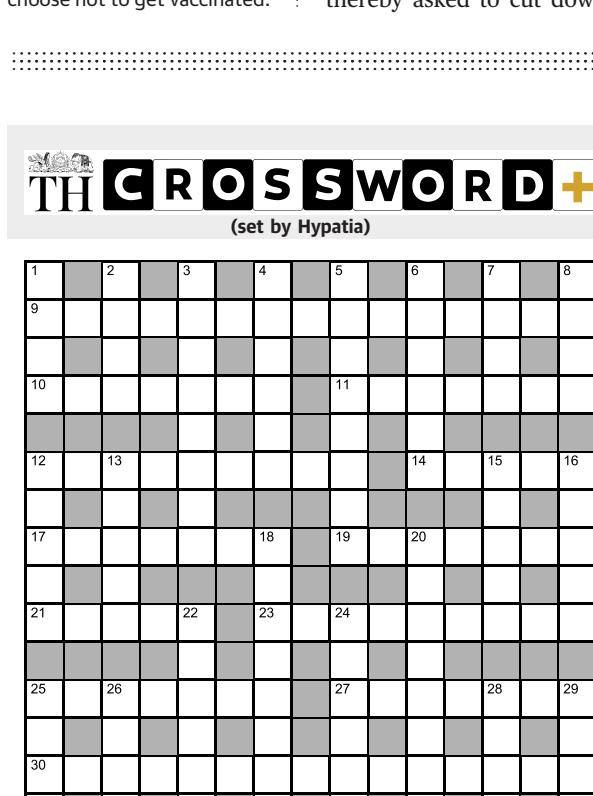
FAITH

Ineffable ways of Devi

The stories in the Devi Bhagavata Purana illustrate how many have propitiated the excellent Goddess Devi and have been recipients of Her boundless grace. She is the Supreme, Parama Shakti who is the cause of creation and of all beings including the Trimurtis. In her Supreme State she is the Nirguna Shakti. She is not the object of jnana, but is the very essence of jnana and hence beyond the reach of even great yogis.

But She is also manifest as Saguna Shakti, when it is possible for many of us to worship and serve her with full meditation and involvement. That is why many devout souls have become enlightened through Her grace, explains Vyasa to Janamejaya when he relates the story of Sudarsana, pointed out Sri K. Srinivasan in a discourse. In the case of Sudarsana, though he is the heir apparent of the kingdom of Kosala, circumstances had forced him to suffer exile even when he was a child. But he had the good fortune to obtain the powerful Kama Bija Mantra of Devi. Though he was not aware of its power and the method of meditation, he began to chant it with devotion. In course of time, when he lived with the rishis in their hermitage, he was initiated into the proper way of Devi upasana that led him towards the highest form of bhakti, Parama bhakti, believed to confer Darsana of the Goddess to the aspirant. So, when a situation arose in his life and he had to face his enemies, Devi personally intervened and fought on his behalf, killed them and bestowed the kingdom to him.

Devi also is Maya Shakti that deludes people and immerses them in the ocean of samsara infected with crocodiles of lust, anger, greed, etc. But She alone is the boat to lead them out of this mess if only they worship her with devotion.



- ACROSS
 - 9 Somehow Europe must not be flatter (6,7,2)
 - 10 Fix tariff charges basically for trade (7)
 - 11 Escort again joins one going back East (7)
 - 12 Upset policemen per Reverend in bakeries (9)
 - 13 Some regularly fell back for tests (5)
 - 17 Rig Veda embracing old Indian source of doctrines shunned (7)
 - 19 A "Hole-in-the-wall" diner? (7)



Advertising 2020-21

The last year saw dynamic experiments in this industry, even while tackling the pandemic and its fallouts. Think 'The World's Most Reported Trailer' by Dentsu Webchutney, pegged on Taapsee Pannu's film *Thappad*, that sparked a conversation about reporting domestic abuse. It picked up a silver Lion at Cannes Lions this week. In this issue, *The Hindu Weekend* explores advertising's pandemic pivot, in the digital space and with social consciousness in ads.



Talking point

Spielberg and Netflix: Two years ago, when Netflix distributed Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, Steven Spielberg spoke in favour of the theatrical experience. How time, and a pandemic, changes perspectives! Spielberg's production company, Amblin, has just signed a deal with the streaming behemoth to produce several features a year. It's another step towards a shift in consumption.

SPIT TAKE

Why Zumba when there's RAMBHA?

Copyright-free ideas rooted in Vedic times to get you that next bestseller

KRISHNA SHASTRI DEVULAPALLI

Rejoice, young literary *mitron*. It is a golden time for aspiring writers who dream of contributing to India's intellectual discourse. Suddenly, wonderful opportunities are raining from the sky like renegade petals from a *pushpaka vimanam* doing loops.

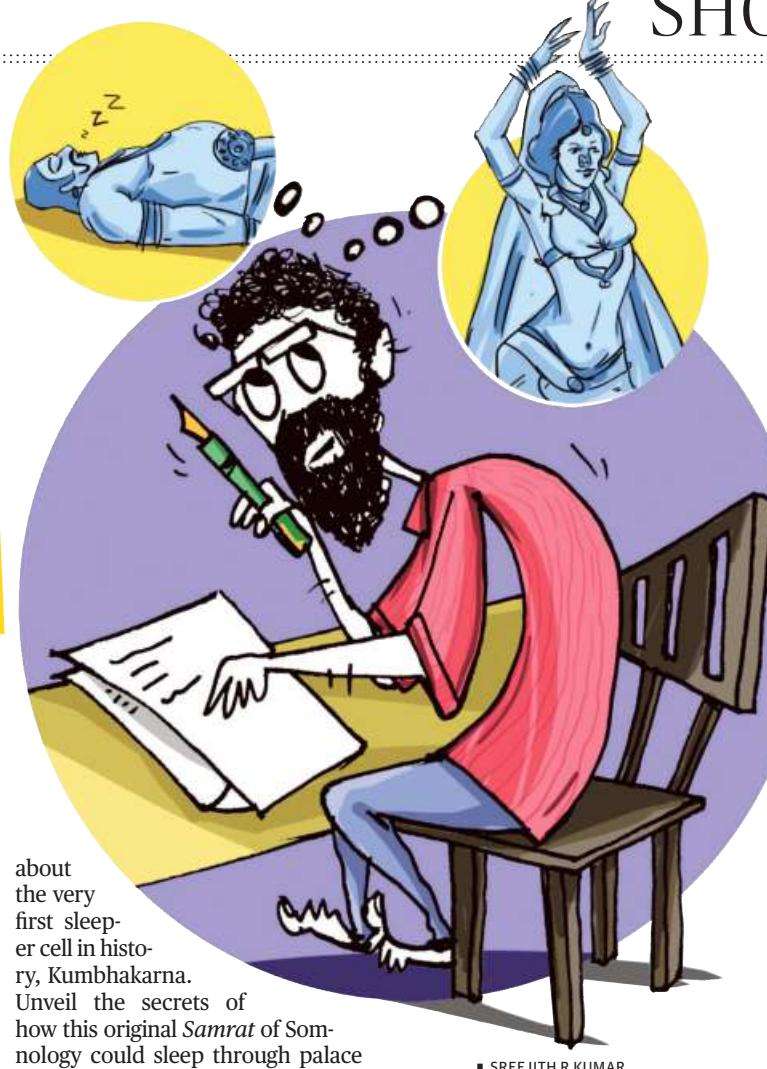
Are you yearning to project our culture and literature globally? Then look no further, all you *Saraswati* seekers. Young scribes, use these copyright-free ideas as starting points and write many, many books that bring back our lost glory.

Apsarobics for Heavenly Bodies
Everyone wants to be fit. Unfortunately, the lucrative fitness market has been cornered by the diabolical West. It is time to wrest it back with

an unbeatable book on fitness that goes back to Vedic times. Why should one cross-train or do Pilates in unflattering tights when one can lose weight dancing like Rambha and her sister *Apsaras* in sequinned bustiers to a Raj-Koti tune? Imagine how strenuous it must have been for these ageless women to distract stubborn sages deep in penance. Share the six-pack secrets of our divine damsels in an unbeatable fitness book reeking of our culture.

Sweet Dreams with Kumbhakarna

They say health is wealth. And we know sleep is health. Today, almost everyone is sleep-deprived. And again the West has misled us into believing that sound sleep can be achieved only through evil allopathic medication. Let the world know



* SREEJITH R KUMAR

about the very first sleep-cell in history, Kumbhakarna. Unveil the secrets of how this original *Samrat* of Somnology could sleep through palace remodelling work, bickering concubines, forest fires, and war with not a care in the world. Teach the world to snore without pills like our Vedic ancestors did.

Maricha & Subahu's Essential Guide to Disruption

What do all the biggest businesses today – like, say, Netflix, Uber, Airbnb – have in common? They are *all* disruptors. The West, that villain

again, has been pretending for far too long that the concept of disruption is somehow something they invented. We are the original disruptors. And the true brand ambassadors are Messrs Maricha and Subahu. A book on them is long overdue. Let the world learn from them. While the West has upstarts, we will have a fresh wave of start-ups.

Organic Farming the Shakuntala Way

Today, every morsel of food we put into our mouths is contaminated with toxic pesticides and foul antibiotics that have been introduced into them only because of faulty western thinking.

What better way to detox than to follow Shakuntala's Vedic Agri Tech. After all, any of our ancient books will tell you that during her apprenticeship at Sage Kanya's *ashram*, she was in charge of the veggie patch. Young writers, let us show the West that nothing beats wholly organic deer dung and peacock urine when it comes to growing wholesome vegetables, not to mention mood-enhancing mushrooms.

Bakasura's Barbecue Recipes

Other than Padma Lakshmi, who has been showing the West the power of curd rice (in her lovely food videos, attired in fetching gear), our culinary versatility has been sadly underrepresented.

Bakasura, if you ask me, has got a bad rap. He wasn't a gluttonous man-eater as purported. In today's world, he'd be called a foodie. He's like the guy who pushes you out of the way at the buffet queue to get his sixth helping of *Nargisi kofta*. Time we did a recipe book in his honour. If he was eating humans for all three meals, I'm sure he must have used some pretty interesting condiments, and techniques to spice things up.

Krishna Shastri Devulapalli is a satirist. He has written four books and edited an anthology.

Pick of the week

Virtual tours, workshops, and other events you just can't miss



Cookies and cookalongs

Add to all the focaccia, sourdough, and pan pasta experience you racked up last year with ITC Master Chef's live cookalong, *Recipes Made Easy*. Hosted by chefs Kirti Bhoutika and Akanksha Khatri (winner and finalist of *MasterChef India* seasons 5 and 6 respectively), 5 pm, in.bookmyshow.com. But if you'd like to skip kitchen time, *Ricky's Cookies* presents 'Mango Binge', with golden Imampasand in Sunny Days cookies (₹90), a rice pudding (₹210), and a baked custard (₹200). Details: rickyscookies.com

Get your laugh on

Prepare for a comedy Sunday. Here's the roster: actor-comic **Yipul Goyal** will ponder dreams, arranged marriage, and more in *Humorously Yours* (5 pm, ₹599); **Parvinder Singh** will take to Zoom with *Punchliners*. Expect his family and pandemic observations to star in his rib-ticklers (6 pm, ₹349). And finally, multi-lingual comic **Vivek Muralidharan** – who switches between English, Tamil, Hindi and Telugu – will bring his brand of socio-political humour in *Bits & Pieces* (8 pm, ₹199). All tickets on in.bookmyshow.com

Off the loom

There's a new **handloom brand** in the market. Founded by Mumbai-based Prachi Saraf – a designer who fine-tuned her skills at her family's business house – **Yvusti** is just days old and is a for-profit social enterprise that works directly with weavers in Karnataka and Maharashtra. With *dhotis*, *duppattas*, saris, shawls and stoles, the inventory is limited at the moment, but the Chitradurga, Karvat, Kat, Paithani, Himroo, and Bagalkot weaves are tempting. From ₹2,700 (for a silk *dupatta*) onwards, on yvusti.co.in

Cartoon hour

There's no escaping screens, but you can introduce kids to a paper-and-pencil hour. HobbyStation is organising a **doodling workshop** for children. The Zoom workshop will teach fun sketches and help improve concentration, memory, and problem-solving skills. ₹250, 3 pm and 6.30 pm. Alternatively, there's the **Cartoon Classroom** with Ajit Narayan, who's worked with publishing houses such as Pratham Books. Learn to draw comic strips, animal cartoons, and more. 6 pm, ₹699. Register on [unluu.io](http://on.unluu.io)

Bajpayee teaches acting

He's fresh off *The Family Man Season 2* and raking up kudos for his role in Netflix's *Ray* (a series inspired by the works of filmmaker Satyajit Ray). But Manoj Bajpayee is still making time for his fans, to share some **acting tips** and anecdotes. His 2.5-hour masterclass, powered by learning and entertainment platform Unluu class, will cover everything from **cracking auditions**, breaking down the script, and improvising, to training your voice and even dealing with criticism. Sign up for ₹999, on unluu.io

In remembrance

Korean Cultural Centre India is hosting an online **Photo Exhibition** to mark the 71st anniversary of the **Korean War**. Titled '**'60 Para Field Ambulance**', it is a homage that commemorates India's support in deploying the largest **medical troop** that treated those injured in the war. The sacrifice and dedication of Indian and Korean troops are showcased through 32 archived photographs. The exhibition opens with a message of remembrance to the troops. Can be viewed till August 25 on www.kcci-exhibitions.com/special-exhibition.

Raise a toast

Dram alert. John Distilleries (of the internationally-acclaimed Paul John Indian Single Malts) has launched a new blended whiskey, **Roulette**. A balance of peated and unpeated malts, with a 42.8% ABV, it has been matured in ex-bourbon casks. Available in Goa at the moment. ₹850 for 750 ml. At jdl.in. Meanwhile, Diageo India will launch **Epitome Reserve**, the country's first small-batch, craft 100% rice whisky, by the end of July. With 2,000 bottles, the woody spirit has notes of dried fruits, toffee caramel and vanilla. diageoindia.com

After Nike launched sneakers from Piñatex, Mumbai's Studio Beej celebrates the bio-textile with a clutch they've named Ananas



(Clockwise from below)
Arundhati Kumar, a Kesh bag, and the Ananas clutch



working with eco materials such as Arture [cork, Desserto or cactus leather], Aulive [Piñatex, cork], but we are the only company that dabbles in multiple sustainable materials. We were the first to bring cactus leather into the country," says Kumar, whose line of wallets, clutches, bags, belts, laptop sleeves made of bio-based materials marry the aesthetic of Indian craft with the ethical practices of conscious living. "We currently work with four main materials – cork from Portugal, Piñatex from Spanish company Ananas Anam [which sources from the Philippines], Desserto from Mexico, and Kesh from West Bengal."

Cork is the bark of the tree which is harvested responsibly every nine years, explains Kumar, adding that it is light because one-third of its cellular structure is air. "So a big bag, unlike one made of leather, will never weigh you down. It's completely recyclable and comes with cotton backing. It's also naturally antibacterial and antimicrobial." While earlier bags were designed by her, the new launch has been crafted by their creative director, Abhijit Datta.

galuru-based Khaloom, which creates handloom material from recycled yarn, and occasionally upcycled material from discarded umbrellas is also used. Zippers come from Japanese company YKK which makes them from recycled PET plastic, and logos are embroidered. "We live in a time when customers want transparency. We put out supplier and certification details on our website so they can decide whether the product fits into their conscious buying mode," says Kumar, adding that their delivery packaging is made of jute and recyclable cardboard.

Now exploring

While these materials are the core of Studio Beej, she speaks of two other cutting-edge materials she's currently exploring: Malai from Kerala, made from coconut waste, and Mirum from the US that combines natural fibres like corn and rice husk with rubber waste. While Kumar is keen on using homegrown materials, she says not much R&D is happening in India. So, will the worlds of luxury and sustainability meet easily? "Sustainability is going to be the new luxury. Luxury is going the conscious way. From Hermes to Fossil, and Nike, every brand is working on such materials," she concludes.

Products are priced between ₹850 and ₹14,500. studiobeej.com

Having a pineapple moment

they used it in a cross body bag (Laya), a hobo bag (Ananta), and Ditya. With these offerings, the brand joins the list of international names like Chanel, H&M, Hugo Boss, and Nike – who recently launched the seven-sneaker Happy Pineapple Collection – that work with the plant-based alternative to leather.

The startup launched in 2020 is the brainchild of Arundhati Kumar, who believes that being sustainable must go beyond being just eco-friendly. "There are other companies in India who are

Recycled zippers and handloom linings

Kumar goes on to explain how Desserto is vegan leather derived from the Nopal Cactus of Mexico, and Kesh is made from old cotton saris torn into thin strips and re-woven to make a colourful fabric. "When we curate a product, while we do look at the hero material, we also try to minimise the impact of the accessories we use." Bag linings are sourced from Ben-



ANURAG TAGAT

UB40, the hitmakers who created emotive reggae versions of songs like 'Red Red Wine' and 'Can't Help Falling Love', leverage their global popularity in their latest album, a collaboration-heavy offering called *Bigga Baggariddim*. Released on June 25, it features Jamaican reggae veterans like Winston Francis and Inner Circle, plus the newer wave of Caribbean artists like Leno Banton, Protoje, Koffee and Chronixx and Blvk H3ro.

Where the scope of *Bigga Baggariddim* actually gets global is with their inclusion of New Zealand-based roots reggae band House of Shem and Indian vocalist-producer General Zooz aka Zorawar Shukla, part of the party-starting crew Reggae Rajahs. The latter leads the song 'Roots Rock Reggae', which released on June 18.

Bigga Baggariddim sees UB40 hand the reins to their collaborators, letting them take over all vocal duties throughout 15 tracks. "It reflects that our career has been truly international. It's a source of pure joy and we wanted to reflect that in this record," says drummer Jimmy Brown.

Listen on Apple Music, Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube Music.

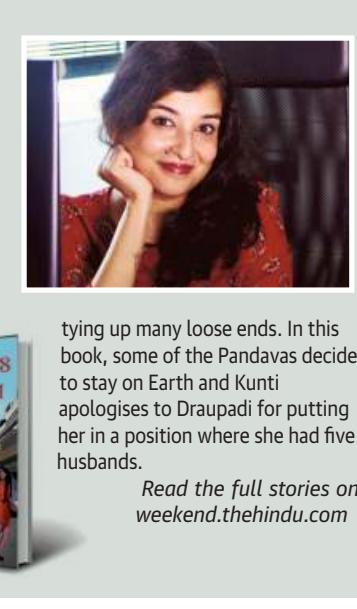
Finding closure

SUBHA J RAO

Trisha Das' debut novel, *Ms Draupadi Kuru: After the Pandavas*, was about Draupadi, Amba, Gandhari and Kunti deciding to leave heaven to live on their own in present-day Delhi. While it is now being developed for the screen (details to be announced), her second novel, a sequel, *The Misters Kuru: A Return to Mahabharat* (published by HarperCollins), takes the story to its logical conclusion, answering many questions and

tying up many loose ends. In this book, some of the Pandavas decide to stay on Earth and Kunti apologises to Draupadi for putting her in a position where she had five husbands.

Read the full stories on weekend.thehindu.com



BHUMIKA K

As the world celebrates International Pineapple Day tomorrow, Mumbai-based Studio Beej is all set to launch Ananas, a clutch made of Piñatex. A fresh take on their evening clutch, Ditya, the new handmade variant is aimed at popularising the bio-textile made from the leaves of the pineapple plant. Globally, it is used by brands such as H&M, Paul Smith, and Hugo Boss.

This is not the Studio's first experiment with Piñatex. Last year,

ANKUR PATHAK

In Vasan Bala's *Spotlight*, part of *Ray*, the Netflix anthology adapted from Satyajit Ray's short stories, a popular actor, Vikram Arora, played by Harshvardhan Kapoor, is crippled with artistic insecurity despite his career being on an upswing. His professional anxieties get progressively worse when the hotel that he's staying at is pretty much hijacked by a religious leader, Didi (Radhika Madan), who commands outsized influence on politicians, business leaders, film producers, and the general populace. In the course of the film, Kapoor's character must come to terms with the limitations of movie stardom and the realisation that between cinema and religion, two factions that enjoy a colossal hold over the Indian psyche, religion will always trump the former.

While the film has an undercurrent of dark commentary, the treatment itself is lighthearted and Bala, who earlier directed the festival darling *Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota*, peppers the narrative with a variety of inside jokes. For instance, Kapoor's manager, played by an astute Chandan Roy Sanyal, takes a dig at Infaks, a housing society in Mumbai's Versova known for aspiring actors who are yet to break through, as well as Scrumptious, an eatery nearby largely frequented by the same crowd. In the film's context, Sanyal's dig is at the star who's refusing a lucrative part that will bring in the money, the suggestion being that if he doesn't take the gig, he may have to go back to the life of a 'struggler.'

"It was a line improvised by Chandan," Bala, whose last film too was seeped in cinephilia, says over a Zoom call. "All the cinephilia is almost like a personal trip for me. If nobody finds out [the references] it's fine, the story will still hold on its own." Which it does, except it's a much more joyful experience once the jokes are understood. Kapoor, who plays an actor grappling with stardom, says that he was thrilled to have that experience, as it's something that has, so far, eluded him.

"He [Vikram Arora] has captured the imagination of the paying public in a way that I haven't done. I enjoyed living in that world. Actors are an insecure lot. The job entails failure, rejection and insecurity. The call from Vasan came during the first wave when everybody was anxious about the future, grappling in uncertainty. So I ended up channeling that nervous

Vasan Bala and the cast of 'Spotlight' from Netflix's *Ray*, led by Harshvardhan Kapoor, Akansha Ranjan and Chandan Roy Sanyal, decode the layered drama about the magic and madness of movies



energy into the part."

A little bit of *Entourage*

Kapoor points out two characters, Johnny Drama and Vincent Chase, from the show, *Entourage* – about the life of a Hollywood star and his coterie – which percolated into *Spotlight*. While the film draws parallels between a cult leader and a movie star, another aspect that runs through the narrative is the cost of fame and how debilitating it can be psychologically for those who live and die under the constant glare of the public eye. As an artist, does Kapoor crave that popularity?

"Honestly, that power would just liberate me to do films like *Spotlight*, *Bhavesh Joshi* and *AK vs. AK*. I told Vasan this: I don't only want to be an option for you when you're making a film with a ₹5 crore budget. I also want to be an option when you're making a ₹50 crore-plus film. If I'm lucky enough to achieve that kind of power, I'd want filmmakers to tell different kinds of stories at a bigger scale. That really can be the best by-product of stardom."

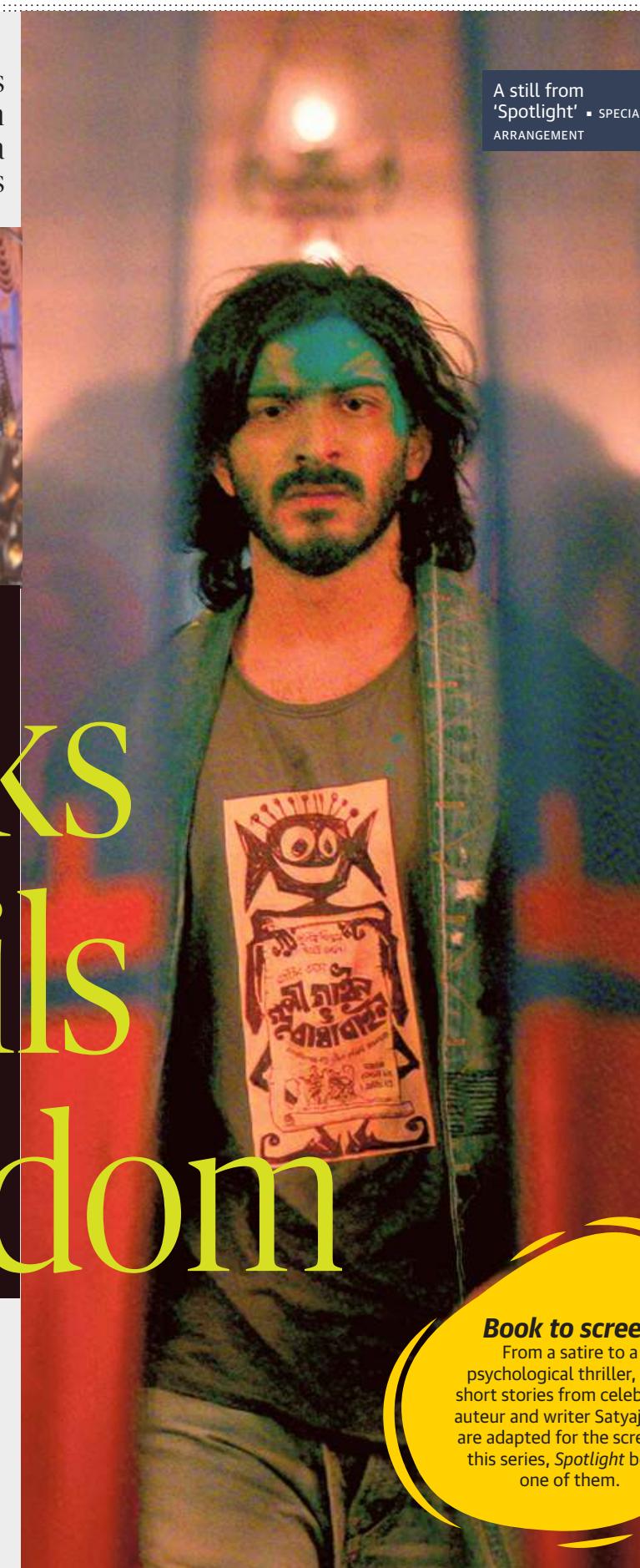
While that's a noble aspiration to chase, the flip side could be that stardom could imprison the star, making them a victim of their own image. One of the reasons why we see a lot of top stars repeat what they've done in the past is because they chase stories that serve their stardom and not the other way round.

"That's a good point. Given the lineage that I come from, I have felt that weight. But I haven't let that affect my

The perks and perils of stardom

choices, whether it was doing a film festival musical as my first film or a vigilante drama disguised as an action film as my second."

Sanyal says he did draw some nuances from Ari Gold, the agent character from *Entourage*, but his primary source was Asrani's character from Srirish Mukherjee's 1973 film, *Abhimaan*, and Rabi Ghosh, the Bengali



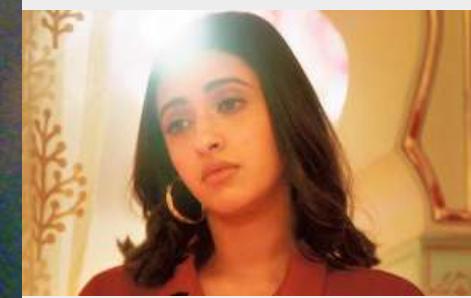
A still from 'Spotlight' • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

actor who did several films with Satyajit Ray.

Great art vs fame

Akansha Ranjan Kapoor, who plays Anuya, Kapoor's partner, and acts as his moral compass and a voice of reason, says that Bala isn't a director who rehearses too much. The idea is to be on set and react to the moment. Even their interpersonal dynamic reflected in the film is the way it really is.

"Harsh knows so much about cinema and I'm pretty blank. I think that method found its way into the film," she says. To this, Bala adds, "With Vikram and Anuya, what I really like is that one is trying to be an artiste but is popular and hence the problems in his life."



Anuya doesn't have such issues. She's pragmatic, wants to earn her money, and live her life. She's not even having those artistic battles. She sleeps better and he doesn't."

Which brings us to a long unanswered argument that the film dabbles in. Does great art inherently come at the cost of sacrificing popularity and mental peace? "It's a classic choice," Bala says. "Till things are working for you, it's great. There's *Barfi*, there's *Rockstar*... all happening at once. And then comes *Bombay Velvet* and people like me come in," he laughs, referring to Ranbir Kapoor's career that took a brief nosedive with the Anurag Kashyap directorial. Vasan was one of the writers of the 2015 film. "When you're used to popularity and fame, the shift is difficult. It takes a lifetime to balance it out. Either you chase stardom or stardom chases you."

Ankur Pathak is a writer based out of Mumbai, who was formerly the entertainment editor of HuffPost India.

Watch Ankur Pathak in conversation with Vasan Bala and the cast on weekend.thehindu.com

On his day of retirement, Savitra B Rajaram, Programme Executive at All India Radio Madurai, was honoured for his service with a national replay of his award winning docu-feature



Control tower Rajaram records inside Madurai ATC in this photo from 2015. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

An unusual gesture from All India Radio



SOMA BASU

On June 12, the Central English Features Unit (CEFU) of All India Radio (AIR) played a national award-winning radio documentary on Air Traffic Controllers (ATC) across its stations in the country. Repeat broadcast of programmes is not unusual, but this one was done as a rare gesture.

It was the day Savitra B Rajaram, the producer of the docu-feature that received the prestigious Akashvani Annual Award in 2015, was retiring. In commemoration of his 33 years of service with AIR, CEFU, Delhi, decided to give a befitting send-off to its colleague, who is a popular voice across Tamil Nadu and known for his innumerable radio documentaries in Tamil.

Naanga Kelambura Neram Vanthachchu (It's time for us to take off), the 20-minute feature programme chronicles how ATCs handle their task with ingenuity, calm and aplomb everyday. It was the only national award Tamil Nadu won in broadcasting in 2015.

"It is the only radio documentary made on the unsung heroes in India; and is a fabulous idea as an audio story," says CEFU In-

charge Basudha Banerji, who adapted the programme in English in 2017 and broadcast it on national network first in 2018. "Before this, the original Tamil version was broadcast from Madurai station twice for local transmission and I felt it needed to reach a much wider audience," she adds.

"It is an important and interesting subject to highlight but a difficult programme to make for the radio. Yet, it was creatively packed with information about the extraordinary skills of the professionals who keep a constant vigil on sky routes for smooth steering of multiple aircraft. The feedback we received was tremendous," says Basudha.

She recalls the technological challenge in replacing the Tamil narration with her English script and fit it to the original sound track. The efforts put in by Madurai and Delhi teams deserve deeper public recognition and when she received the circular about Rajaram's retirement this month, she immediately pulled out the recording from the archives and put it out on the national hook-up once again.

The recent re-broadcast turned into an emotional moment for Rajaram. Basudha Banerji, who adapted the programme in English in 2017 and broadcast it on national network first in 2018. "Before this, the original Tamil version was broadcast from Madurai station twice for local transmission and I felt it needed to reach a much wider audience," she adds.

On his last day at work, as he went around the duty room -- where he started his career as transmission executive in 1989 -- his colleagues gave him a standing ovation as his name as the producer of Eye on the Sky came on air. "God controls the earth from the sky. Air traffic controllers control the sky from earth" - the programme began and Rajaram found the recall and the gesture overwhelming and heartwarming.

He says while visiting Qutub Minar in Delhi in 2014, he saw aeroplanes every two minutes in the sky and it evoked curiosity in him.

The idea to do an exclusive programme on ATC was thus born.

Having worked as the Programme Executive in Tiruchi, Kodaikanal, Nagercoil and Madurai during his career span, Rajaram is known for his live commentaries of hockey and cricket matches through mobile phone and remembered for making Tamil a brand in radio programming with a live oratorical competition (Sep-puga Senthamil), the 16 squares radio crossword in Tamil, science serials on disaster management and reviving 131 extinct lullabies sung by village folks, among several others.

navigation of air traffic; spot interviews with the staff highlight the intricacies and challenges of their high-pressure job and some original music was created to dramatise the effect. "It was fascinating to watch the preparations that go on for every plane flying in and out. However, editing the programme was a greater challenge, we spent 24 hours compiling effects of a multi-sensory feeling in aural format from seven parallel sound tracks. It was a new experience for all of us," says Rajaram, who is no stranger to producing innovative radio features and has won several local and regional awards in the past.

The Chicken Biryani came in a sealed handi, and the aroma of meat and rice wafted up in the air the moment I removed the sticky dough that it had been sealed with. It was, indeed, delicious.

The rice, boiled with shah zeera and cinnamon, had been cooked with the meat in ghee, and then flavoured with garam masala and saffron. And, of course, it had been topped with fried onions.

The dish, I was told, would come from an outfit called The Hyderabad House, run by a mother-and-daughter duo originally from Hyderabad and settled in Delhi. They, and other family members, are seeking to expand the business, which is now in a nascent stage. They make a few special Hyderabadi signature dishes and hope to add to the menu in the near future.

The desserts consist of Double ka meetha and sevaiyan. I was happy to see that neither of the dishes was swimming in oil. With a spoonful in, I felt it was the best way to end a meal! The double ka meetha was spongy and the sweet quotient was just right; nor too much, nor too little. The sevaiyan, known as muzaffar, was light and tasty.

The outfit right now delivers across Delhi NCR. "Our food is fresh and authentic. You get the taste of dum-cooked biryani which one will find only in the houses of Hyderabad," the chefs said in a message.

The rates are also quite competitive. For ₹ 850, you get all these dishes that can serve up to three people. Orders have to be placed a day in advance (Ph no: 9971334216; <https://www.flowcode.com/page/thehyderabadhouse>).

My food hamper came with a picture postcard and a message from Chef Rumisa. "Food should reach your heart before it reaches your stomach," it said. And it did.

The writer is a veteran food critic

FOOD SPOT

This Chicken Biryani is a winner

The Hyderabad House will soon offer many more signature dishes



RAHUL VERMA



Biryani in news Chicken Biryani (top) and Double ka meetha ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Ghani to meet Biden as U.S. exit looms

Afghan President hopes for U.S. support amid Taliban battlefield gains; White House for political settlement

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Afghan leader Ashraf Ghani faces the cold reality of the end of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan on Friday when he meets with President Joe Biden in the White House.

Under increasing threat from an emboldened Taliban insurgency, Mr. Ghani will be hoping for a significant commitment of U.S. aid to his government, which will be without the on-the-ground support of U.S. forces for the first time in nearly two decades.

But any hopes for a delay in America's exit from its longest war are likely to be snuffed.

Speaking in Paris on Friday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. could no longer adhere to the same approach to Afghanistan of the past 20 years, despite the fresh Taliban gains on the ground.

"The status quo was not an option," he said.



Deep uncertainty: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi in Washington. • AP

Mr. Biden has ordered the departure of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the attacks that triggered the invasion.

The final pullout, begun last year by then-president Donald Trump and confirmed by Mr. Biden in April, has moved fast.

Some speculate the exit of some 2,500 U.S. troops and 16,000 civilian contractors could be mostly completed in July.

"This visit is first about

our ongoing commitment and support to the Afghan people and to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Thursday.

"The President will emphasize the need for unity, cohesion, and for the Afghan government to focus on key challenges Afghanistan faces."

But the White House will also pressure the Afghan leader to strike a deal with the Taliban. "We believe that

About 650 U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Roughly 650 U.S. troops are expected to remain in Afghanistan to provide security for diplomats after the main American military force completes its

a negotiated political settlement is the best way to end the conflict," Ms. Jean-Pierre told journalists.

Possibly underscoring how uncomfortable the situation is for both sides, no press conference was planned.

Taliban gains

Mr. Ghani and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, who is in charge of stalled negotiations with the Taliban on a power-sharing deal, arrived in Washington on Thursday.

withdrawal, which is set to be largely done in the next two weeks, U.S. officials told the Associated Press.

Several hundred additional U.S. forces will remain at Kabul airport, potentially until September.

The looming U.S. exit has left the country in a deep state of uncertainty, with many worried about the return to power of extremists who applied a brutal version of Islam to the population when they ruled from 1996-2001.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that a new U.S. intelligence report assesses that the Taliban could possibly capture Kabul within six months – though other experts downplay that scenario, at least in the short-term.

Tibet gets first bullet train, links Lhasa to India border

Over 90% of the track is 3,000 m above sea level

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China on Friday started operating the first bullet train line in Tibet, linking Lhasa to Nyingchi near the border with Arunachal Pradesh.

The China State Railway Group said the 435-km line, on which construction began in 2014, has a designed speed of 160 km per hour and would connect the capital city of the Tibet Autonomous Region to the border city of Nyingchi with a travel time of three and a half hours.

Over 90% of the track is 3,000 metres above sea-level, state media quoted the railway group as saying, and the line is the first electrified high speed rail (HSR) line, as China refers to bullet trains, in Tibet. China has the world's longest HSR network.

The Lhasa-Nyingchi rail is one among several major in-

frastructure projects recently completed in Tibet's southern and southeastern counties near the Arunachal border. Last month, China completed construction of a strategically significant highway through the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, as the Brahmaputra is called in Tibet. This is the "second significant passageway" to Medog county that borders Arunachal, the official Xinhua news agency reported, directly connecting the Pad township in Nyingchi to Baigung in Medog county.

Zhu Weiqun, a senior Party official formerly in charge of Tibet policy, was quoted as saying by state media the railway will help "transport advanced equipment and technologies from the rest of China to Tibet and bring local products out". If a scenario of a crisis happens at the border, he said, "the railway can act as a 'fast track' for the delivery of strategic materials".

Four dead in U.S. building collapse, 159 still missing

Rescue workers are looking for survivors

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SURFSIDE

Four people are now known to have died in the collapse of an oceanfront building near Miami Beach, officials said on Friday, while the number of those unaccounted for has risen to 159 – fuelling fears of a much higher death toll.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Mr. Biden's threat of vetoing the Bill unless the budget measures were passed would be a "deal breaker" for him.

"Less than two hours after

publicly commanding our

colleagues and actually en-

dorsing the bipartisan agree-

ment, the President took the

extraordinary step of threat-

ening to veto it," Senate Mi-

nority Leader Mitch McCon-

nell said in the Senate. "It was

a tale of two press conferenc-

ers," he said. "It almost makes

your head spin," he said.

Rescue teams with sniffer dogs again worked through the night despite heavy rain – clinging to the diminishing chance of finding additional survivors.

President Joe Biden declared an emergency early on Friday in response to the

disaster, ordering federal assistance for the relief effort.

Infrastructure deal reached but key Republicans are not on board

\$579 billion to be invested in sector, including \$312 billion in transport

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan appeared to be closer to fruition as a bipartisan group of Senators, on Thursday, reached an agreement that would cost \$1.2 trillion over eight years, including more than half a trillion dollars in transport and infrastructure spending. Mr. Biden has asked the U.S. Congress for about \$4 trillion in infrastructure and social spending in the American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan.

Thursday's agreement, which covers only a fraction



Joe Biden

will also include \$15 billion for electric buses and transit and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure to meet Mr. Biden's goal of 5,000,000 EV chargers across the country. The remaining approximately \$266 billion will be spent on water infrastructure, broadband, resilience and environmental remediation.

The financing of this infrastructure had become a bone of contention – with

Mr. Biden wanting to stick to a campaign promise of not raising taxes for anyone making less than \$4,00,000 per year. Republicans plan to index a tax on petrol to inflation, something several Democrats opposed.

Tax on petrol

Increasing the tax on petrol would result in a higher tax for those earning less than \$4,00,000 per year and was therefore not an option, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Monday.

Democrats have been split broadly along moderate and progressive lines around the infrastructure Bill. In the evenly split Senate, Democrats intend to use a process called budget reconciliation

to fund these priorities. Resolutions passed via the reconciliation route require only 51 of 100 Senators to pass and can therefore make it through the Senate without Republican support.

Mr. Biden said that while the Democratic party was "divided", it was "rational" and that the party would not vote against a "good" Bill. However, he said that the budget (reconciliation) resolutions would also have to be passed for him to sign the infrastructure Bill into law.

"So, what I expect – I expect that in the coming months this summer, before the fiscal year is over [September 30], that we will have voted on this Bill, the infrastructure Bill, as well as

voted on the budget resolution," Mr. Biden said. "But if only one comes to me – if this is the only thing that comes to me, I'm not signing it. It's in tandem," he said.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Mr. Biden's threat of vetoing the Bill unless the budget measures were passed would be a "deal breaker" for him.

"Less than two hours after publicly commanding our colleagues and actually en-

dorsing the bipartisan agree-

Sri Lanka's 'Metoo' moment sparks reflection on newsrooms

Charges include sexual harassment and rape threats

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

A flurry of sexual harassment allegations from Sri Lankan journalists this week has brought the country's media industry in sharp focus, with many, especially women, calling for urgent reform of newsrooms.

Identifying with the global #Metoo campaign, women journalists took to Twitter and recalled incidents in their newsrooms, where they said male colleagues sexually harassed them, including with rape threats. While similar allegations surfaced on social media in 2019 in Sri Lanka, the recent accounts included some specific details of the men accused of harassment, although the women stopped short of naming them.

In a Twitter thread on June 18, journalist Aisha Nazim compiled distressing accounts shared by many women, of facing sexual harassment from male colleagues and bosses, in various Sri Lankan media outlets. Currently on a study break abroad, Ms. Nazim said her Twitter action was driven by the desire to put out the stories in public. "Especially since many of these perpetrators are still out there, in prominent positions, and can often be seen bullying young women online," she told *The Hindu*.

A section of Sri Lankan media reported on the development, when a Cabinet spokesman, responding to a question at the weekly press briefing, said the government would investigate the allegations made, that also included state-run media.

Colombo-based portal *Roar.lk* ran an editorial calling for a "top-down change" of culture within Sri Lanka's media industry. "If there was ever a time for industry-wide introspection and dismantling of informal structures that allow abuse of power within newsrooms, it is now," it said, calling for formal structures and mechanisms, for all involved par-



ties "to be heard, afforded fair inquiry, and adequate redressal."

Mandana Ismail Abeywickrema, editor of *The Sunday Morning* weekend newspaper, said change must begin within newsrooms. "We have told our staff that the paper takes the issue very seriously, and that they should feel free to raise any concern without fear. We also hope to have regular discussions with our teams on what in their view constitutes sexual harassment, and what action they think would be appropriate, so that we can collectively come up with an organisational policy," she said.

Meanwhile, responses to past grievances that have come to light must be guided by what the women who shared their accounts want, in Ms. Tegal's view. "Asking for their consent and giving them control over their own narrative is important. Public disclosure about a grievance can be for many reasons. In these cases, it is often also to break the silence about pain that has been privately endured for many years," she said, adding some survivors experience "relief and release", by asserting that they were wronged.

If they want legal acknowledgement of violence or harassment, this must be supported, but given the legal system, the personal costs to survivors are often high. Which is also why in the past perpetrators have preferred the narrow path of legal victories and defeats," the lawyer noted.

At present, Sri Lanka has only a criminal law to address sexual harassment. A person found guilty may be imprisoned for up to five years, or fined, or both, and may have to pay compensation.

However, the criminal law is rarely used, according to Ermiza Tegal, lawyer with a practice in human rights and addressing gender-based violence. "Accessing justice, particularly on gender-based violence, is a harrowing experience for victims," she told *The Hindu*, citing examples of

complaints not being recorded, victims being ridiculed, intimidated, and threatened, a failure to initiate legal proceedings, lengthy court cases, continued exposure to the alleged perpetrator and possible reprisal because of prolonged court cases, and procedures such as in-person identification parades. Further, the demands on finances and time, not only of the victim but also of her support system, if she has one, also dissuades survivors from seeking justice.

"I think we need to remind ourselves that criminal laws are not the only laws that we need," Ms. Tegal said, pointing to other laws, policies and services required in providing support and protection to the aggrieved.

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**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PPP) P.W.D.
RAJASTHAN, JAIPUR**
No. F.7 (593)/PPP/SHA/WB/2021-22/D-200
NIT No. 09/2021-22
Date: 16/06/21

On behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Rajasthan, PWD, Rajasthan invites sealed bids in specified format from interested Bidders for Package No WB/RSHDP II/Annuity/04 Development and Maintenance of Two Lanes of Ramseem-Bhiman-Ranivara Section of SH-31 (Total Length 62,619 Km) in the state of Rajasthan under RSHDP-II, to be financed by the World Bank on Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM) through Two Envelope e-Procurement bidding through National Competitive Bidding process as per the World Bank Guidelines. The Bidding documents can be viewed or / and downloaded from website: <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> from 28.06.2021; any further amendments shall only be viewed on above websites.

UBN No. PWD 2122WL0B02011
(V K Singh)
DIPR/C/5917
ACE (PPP), PWD, Jaipur

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
"e" - PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO.CCEKIP-(KCD)-04/2021-22
(Pertaining to Kanpur Canal Division, Jhumpura)**
1. Name of the Work : Construction of Additional Structures & Balance Work from R.D.21600m to 38610m of Kanpur Main Canal of Kanpur Irrigation Project"
2. Estimated Cost : Rs.1633.98 Lakh
3. Period of completion : 18 (Eighteen) Calendar Months including rainy season.
4. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : 29.06.2021 from 10.00 Hours to DL.13.07.2021 up to 17.00 Hours.
5. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 13.07.2021 up to 17.00 Hours.
6. Date & Time of Opening of Tender : 14.07.2021 at 11.00 Hours
7. Name & Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Er. Prasanna Kumar Pani, Chief Construction Engineer, Kanpur Irrigation Project, At/PO-Basudevpur, Dist- Keonjhar, Odisha - 758047
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "<https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>"
Sd/- (Er.Prasanna Kumar Pani)
Chief Construction Engineer
Kanpur Irrigation Project, Basudevpur, Keonjhar, Odisha
OPR-32012/11/0002/2122
A-225:
OPR-32012/11/0002/2122

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
EASTERN CIRCLE-I, CUTTACK
Email id :- seccutack@gmail.com**
"e" Procurement Notice No. ACE,EC-II/03 of 2021-22 (On-line)
1. Name of Works : As per detailed Tender call notice
2. Total No. of Works : 5 (Five) Nos. Individual Packages
3. Tender paper Cost : Rs.10,000/- (On-line payment) (Non-refundable) for each Package
4. Bid Security : "Bid Security Declaration" as per F.D.O.M. No. FIN-COD-MISC-0007-2019/8943/F dated 18.03.2021. The bids without "Bid Security Declaration" will be summarily rejected)
5. Other details are as follows.
Procurement Officer : Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern Circle-I, Cuttack
Si. No. : 1 ACE,EC-II/ MSD-II/04 of 2021-22
2 ACE,EC-II/ MSD-II/05 of 2021-22
3 ACE,EC

MARKET WATCH

	25-06-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,925	-0.43
US Dollar	74.20	-0.03
Gold	46,309	0.06
Brent oil	75.62	0.32

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	712.20	+2.30
Asian Paints	3003.90	-39.35
Axist Bank	761.35	+22.20
Bajaj Auto	4196.15	-30.75
Bajaj Finserv	12486.60	153.35
Bajaj Finance	6075.80	32.20
Bharti Airtel	535.10	+6.35
BPCL	470.05	+3.95
Britannia Ind	3670.05	-19.05
Cipla	957.10	+6.20
Coal India	148.75	+2.35
Divis Lab	4248.75	-1.60
Dr Reddys Lab	5309.30	+31.65
Eicher Motors	2720.80	+14.05
Grasim Ind	1506.85	+7.95
HCL Tech	995.65	+5.95
HDFC	2509.20	+21.80
HDFC Bank	1515.10	+8.85
HDFC Life	725.95	+6.35
Hero MotoCorp	2939.20	+32.25
Hindustan	375.90	+6.85
Hind Unilever	2448.65	-41.50
ICICI Bank	649.00	+14.95
IndusInd Bank	1012.90	+12.25
Infosys	1574.20	+15.00
Indian Oil Corp	111.40	-0.05
ITC	205.05	+1.80
JSW Steel	689.50	+10.50
Kotak Bank	1735.00	-2.90
L&T	1523.85	+19.80
M&M	794.25	+2.45
Maruti Suzuki	7649.00	+121.55
Nestle India Ltd.	17506.70	-113.05
NTPC	116.05	-1.95
ONGC	120.90	-1.10
PowerGrid Corp	230.85	-0.30
Reliance Ind	2104.45	-49.05
SBI Life	1007.15	+5.00
State Bank	428.80	+11.60
Shree Cement	28729.10	+56.80
Sun Pharma	672.25	+7.45
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	575.60	+0.15
Tata Motors	339.65	+5.00
Tata Steel	1165.25	+52.10
TCS	3380.80	+7.20
Tech Mahindra	1089.50	+9.50
Titan	1753.85	-27.00
UltraTech Cement	6923.00	-38.95
UPL	805.15	-8.30
Wipro	547.50	-1.55

'Govt. can cut fuel cess by ₹4.5'

Move will ease inflation pressures, spur consumption without revenue loss: ICRA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government has room to cut the cess levies on petrol and diesel by ₹4.5 per litre to ease inflationary pressures without a net loss in revenue, rating agency ICRA said on Friday.

Stressing that consumer sentiment had been singed by the second COVID-19 wave, ICRA said that the record retail fuel prices were 'weighing upon disposable incomes and consumption' and feeding into inflationary pressures. Retail inflation crossed the central bank's comfort zone at 6.3% in May.

The revenue loss entailed by the cess cuts would be offset by an expected increase in fuel consumption making this a revenue-neutral measure, ICRA's chief economist Aditi Nayar pointed out.

"Benefiting from the anticipated rise in mobility and economic recovery aided by



Cash to spare: Such a cut in the cess rates would offer some relief to household budgets, says Nayar. ■ H.S. MANJUNATH

an acceleration of vaccine coverage, ICRA has forecast the YoY growth in the consumption of petrol and HSD (high-speed diesel) at about 14% and about 10%, respectively," Ms. Nayar wrote.

"Our forecasts suggest that consumption this year will be 6.7% higher for petrol and 3.3% lower for HSD."

Aggregated revenue from fuel taxes is expected to rise by about 13% to ₹3.6 lakh

crore this year, with additional revenue of ₹40,000 crore. Foregoing the ₹40,000 crore can support a reduction of ₹4.5 per litre, ICRA estimated in a note.

Room for RBI

"Such a cut in the cess rates would offer some relief to household budgets and ease the inflationary pressures related to the rising global crude oil prices," Ms. Nayar

emphasised, stressing that this would also give the central bank more room to focus on growth imperatives rather than fret about accelerating inflation.

In the three monetary policy reviews since February, the Monetary Policy Committee, chaired by Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das, has reiterated concerns about inflationary pressures created by the higher cess and VAT rates announced by the Centre and State governments on fuel last year, and the need to unwind them to ease cost push pressures.

While global crude oil prices were on an upswing since January, riding on expectations of a rebound in the global economy, India's record retail fuel prices were also driven by a weaker rupee and the higher domestic imposts levied by the Centre and States, said ICRA.

ONGC reports ₹6,734 cr. net profit in Q4

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) reported a net profit of ₹6,734 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher oil prices and exceptional income.

ONGC had reported a net loss of ₹3,214.41 crore in the January-March 2020 period, the company said in a statement. In an investor call, Chairman and MD Subhash Kumar said the company realised \$58.05 for every barrel of crude oil produced and sold in January-March as compared with \$49.01 a barrel realisation a year ago.

The firm had reversed impairment losses, recording an exceptional gain of ₹2,613 crore in the quarter.

SBI to continue digital agenda, looks to slash NPAs in FY22

Better positioned to tackle any subsequent wave: Chairman



Dinesh Khara

tunities for lending in promising sectors will be explored to diversify the portfolio and contain risk."

He said the bank adjusted to the challenges posed by the pandemic and was now better positioned to tackle any subsequent wave. "I am cautiously optimistic that the performance trajectory of FY21 will continue in FY22 as well," he added. He said over the last two financial years, the bank was dealing with a steep rise in stressed assets. All-round efforts in managing stressed accounts initiated in FY19 continued in FY21 as well.

"The corporate segment saw the largest reduction in NPAs at ₹18,530 crore," the chairman added. "The gross NPA ratio of the bank declined to 4.98% from 6.15% in the last year," he said.

ALL eyes used vehicle market

FY22 GDP growth forecast positive for CV sector: Sondhi

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Vipin Sondhi

Commercial vehicle (CV) maker Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) is exploring the possibility of entering the used-vehicle market. It also plans to unveil Bada Dost LCV offshoots from the Phoenix platform, a top official said.

"Yes, we are planning to enter used-vehicle market such as the one for trucks and have already started talking to our channel partners," Vipin Sondhi, MD & CEO, told *The Hindu*. "Details can be disclosed only after things take a final shape."

Going forward, ALL would continue to grow exports, defence, power solutions, LCV and parts business even as it expands the product reach of its core medium and heavy CVs.

"We will intensify our ef-

forts in Central Asia and Africa countries to strengthen our presence," he added.

While trucks, LCVs, aftermarket and power solutions posted good growth during FY21, the bus segment contracted in the absence of public transport and long periods of school closures.

The bus sector would revive when the lockdown situation completely eased. ALL is also betting on fleet replacement by various

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The firm had reversed impairment losses, recording an exceptional gain of ₹2,613 crore in the quarter.

COVID-19 relief up to ₹10 lakh to be tax-free for victims' families

Financial aid sought for treatment also exempted from I-T

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday announced income tax relief for COVID-19 affected taxpayers who had to rely on financial aid for their treatment costs.

Similarly, no income tax liability would arise on financial aid received from employers and well-wishers for meeting COVID-19 treatment costs, effective from financial year 2019-20.

"In order to provide relief to the family members of such taxpayers, it has been decided to provide I-T exemption to ex-gratia payment received by family members of a person from the employer of such person or from other person

on the death of the person

on account of COVID-19 during FY 2019-20 and subsequent years," the finance ministry said in a statement.

"This brings much-needed tax relief to taxpayers, who have suffered from COVID-19 and received monetary help from their employer, friends and extended families, either for treatment or on account of a family member's death from COVID-19," said Shailesh Kumar, partner, Nangia & Co LLP.

"Though the relief is granted retrospectively from 2019-20, since the due date for filing that year's I-T returns has already expired, it would be important to see whether the government revives the time limit for filing those tax returns," he pointed out.

Deadlines extended

The Central Board of Direct Taxes has extended the last date for linkage of Aadhaar with PAN from June 30 to September 30, 2021, while granting more time for several other compliances under the I-T Act of 1961.

SPORT

TV PICKS

England vs Sri Lanka: 3rd T20I, Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 7 p.m.

Tour de France: Stage 1: Eurosport (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

Euro 2020: Sony Ten 2, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

PGA Women's championship: Eurosport (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.

NBA: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 6.30 a.m. (Sunday)

IN BRIEF



Bolt backs Bromell to win Olympic 100m gold

EUGENE
Sprint legend Usain Bolt figures one of the favourites in the 100m at the Tokyo Games will be Trayvon Bromell, who won the event last weekend at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials.

Turkish Grand Prix back on F1 calendar

PARIS
The Turkish Grand Prix has been added to the Formula One calendar, to be run on October 3 replacing the cancelled Singapore GP. AFP

Judoka Sushila Devi books Tokyo ticket

NEW DELHI
Indian judoka Sushila Devi has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics via the continental quota in 48kg, the sport's international federation confirmed on Friday. PTI

Aditi in 39th place

ATLANTA
Aditi Ashok carded a one-over 73 in the opening round to be placed tied 39th at the KPMG women's PGA Championship, her 17th Major start, here on Thursday. Lizette Salas was in the lead with a 67. PTI

Uruguay labours into the quarterfinals

Almiron stars for Paraguay as it too qualifies with a win over Chile

COPA AMERICA

REUTERS
CUIABA

Doing a Bolt: Uruguay's Edinson Cavani celebrates in the style of the Jamaican sprinter after scoring against Bolivia. ■ AFP

Uruguay huffed and puffed through the first half and needed a stroke of luck and a late second from Edinson Cavani gave Uruguay a 2-0 win over Bolivia on Thursday and guaranteed its place in the last eight. Bolivia, meanwhile, is eliminated.

Uruguay has won this tournament more than any other country but it has laboured so far this year, losing 1-0 to Argentina, drawing 1-1 with Chile and failing to shine against a Bolivian side whose last away win was 32 games ago in Myanmar.

A low cross came into the six-yard box and Quinteros – stranded between Cavani and Luis Suarez – was forced to take action but could only knock the ball onto the legs of Carlos Lampe and into the net.

Clean sheet king Italy favourite

Wales will look to up the tempo against Denmark in their last-16 encounter

EURO 2020

AGENCIES
LONDON

Italy stormed into the last 16 scoring more freely than in past European Championships, but it is its near-impenetrable backline that makes it favourite to beat Austria in Saturday's knockout game and head deep into the tournament.

Italy won its first two games 3-0 – after never netting three before at the Euros. A solid Italian defence is nothing new.

In three Euro 2020 games, the Azzurri have faced only 12 shots, on or off target.

Enviable record

Further back, Italy has kept a clean sheet in each of its last 11 matches in all competitions, going 1,055 minutes without conceding since a Donny van de Beek goal for the Netherlands last October.

One more clean sheet will see them equal its record of 12 consecutive games without conceding, set between 1972 and 1974.

This is Austria's first appearance in the knockout stages of the Euros.

Fiery striker Marko Arnautovic is more than happy to ruffle some feathers, but Italy's rearguard will relish the competition.



Up against it: The Austrians will have a tough ask on their hands when they face a rampant Italy. ■ AFP

One worry coach Roberto Mancini does have is over the fitness of central defender Giorgio Chiellini.

In the day's other game in Amsterdam, Denmark will take on Wales.

On the road

While Denmark is hitting the road for the first time at a tournament that is being played in 11 cities across Europe, Wales has had a tougher travel schedule. The team based itself in Baku, Azerbaijan, where it played its first two matches before facing Italy in Rome.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

Wales vs Denmark,

9.30 p.m.

Italy vs Austria,

12.30 a.m. (Sunday)

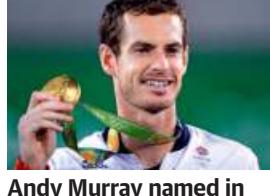
Live on Sony Ten 2, 3 &

Sony Six (SD & HD)

By The Numbers

- 1 - Jorginho leads all Italy players for passes (230), successful passes (190), forward passes (60), interceptions (7) and tackles (5) in this edition
- 11 - The Azzurri are on a record 11-game winning run that began in November 2020 and haven't conceded a single goal in these 11 wins
- 60 - Italy has fired the most shots in Euro 2020 so far; it has also faced the least number of shots (12)

IN BRIEF



Andy Murray named in British Olympics team

LONDON Two-time defending champion Andy Murray will attempt to win his third consecutive Olympic gold medal after being named to the British team on Thursday. The 34-year-old Murray will compete in singles and doubles at the Tokyo Olympics, his fourth games overall. The games open July 23. ■ AP

ICC congratulates NZ

DUBAI The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday congratulated New Zealand on clinching the inaugural World Test Championship title by beating India in a riveting final. ICC acting CEO Geoff Allardice said: "I would like to congratulate the first ever World Test Champions, the Black Caps who displayed the skill and temperament required to be the best Test team in the world." ■ PTI

Verstappen tops practice sessions

SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA) Formula One championship leader Max Verstappen was fastest in Styrian Grand Prix practices at Red Bull's home Austrian track on Friday while Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas caused alarm by spinning in the pitlane. McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo was second fastest in the afternoon and Alpine's Esteban Ocon third. ■ REUTERS



"I like such situations. It gets the best out of me. This is the reason we play Test cricket."

These were not empty words.

New Zealand was reduced to 94 for five in the second innings and the Indian scribes were making plans for two free days with the Test head-

ing for an early finish.

Then Watling joined skipper Brendon McCullum. And India was wicketless till the post-tea session on day four. McCullum (302) and Watling (124) were involved in a record 352-run stand for the sixth wicket, frustrating the visitor.

McCullum displayed typical flair and Watling was rock solid. And the Test ended in a draw. And now Watling has bid adieu to international cricket after the Kiwi conquered the Test peak at Southampton.

The respect for Watling, pushing 36, is enormous within the New Zealand

team. No wonder he was among McCullum's favourite cricketers for his never-say-die attitude. Belief was the cornerstone of Watling's game.

In fact, Watling began his Test career as a specialist opener against Pakistan at Napier in 2009.

And it was McCullum's decision to only 'keep in shorter duration matches that opened the path for Watling to be a wicketkeeper-batsman in Tests.'

He grabbed the opportunity. Watling figured in 75 Tests, scoring 3,790 runs at a commendable 37.52 with eight centuries and holding

267 catches and pulling off eight stumpings.

Priceless quality

For New Zealand, this South Africa-born cricketer was a man for crisis situations in the middle-order. He had the priceless quality of soaking in the pressure and using it as a motivating factor.

The super-fit Watling evolved as a 'keeper and airborne catches on both sides of the wicket were commonplace as his career wore on.

And now when he leaves the international stage to spend more time with family, he does so knowing he has given it his best shot.

T20 WC likely in UAE from Oct. 17

ANI
NEW DELHI

The 2021 men's T20 World Cup is slated to start from October 17 in the UAE, two days after the Indian Premier League (IPL) final, according to a report in ESPNcricinfo. The final is scheduled for November 14. As per the report, the Board of Control for Cricket (BCCI) in India is yet to write to the International Cricket Council (ICC) officially.

Indian men target Olympic podium

Hockey coach Reid says team would do well to focus on the present

UTHRA GANESAN
PATIALA

The Indian men's hockey team knows there are expectations of ending an Olympic medal drought and coach Graham Reid fancies his boys' chances but insists that the team would do well to keep focus on the present.

"There are 11 teams other than us at the Olympics and if you see in the last two years, we have played and beaten all except Canada, who we haven't had a chance to play. That's an important point and we will definitely be trying to jump onto that podium but our primary target will be to first qualify for the quarterfinals and then move forward from there," Reid said at a virtual



Graham Reid. ■ FILE PHOTO

interaction on Friday.

He did admit that the absence of competitive matches would be a factor but denied reading too much into it. "Honestly, no one knows how much it might affect the team's preparation. But we

did have two very good tours coming into this year after a long period of playing internal matches and one of the things we have been talking about is the strength of the daily training environment and how important it is to play those internal games at the competitive level of intensity," he explained.

Downplaying it
With questions being raised on the lack of experience in the team's attack, Reid tried to downplay the issue. "There have been training environments around the world, like ours, where we have been together for 15 months and things are going to happen and players will develop unbeknown to the

rest of the world. I come from a culture where youth and the ability to bring exuberance and freshness to a group is very important to us."

In fact, he insisted that the lockdowns and extended periods of training would be an advantage for the team at Tokyo. "We have spent a lot of time building and understanding the mentality of the players, which normally doesn't happen."

"I got to know their stories and everything and what everyone has been through in their lives and in this period which has been a very powerful thing. I am sure it will be important when the chips are down in Tokyo," he said.

Defending champ Halep pulls out with injury

Djokovic opens against British teen; Barty takes on veteran Navarro in first round

WIMBLEDON

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Defending champion Simona Halep pulled out of Wimbledon with a calf injury as Novak Djokovic learned on Friday he would face Britain's Jack Draper at the start of his quest for a 20th Grand Slam title.

Romanian Halep, who beat Serena Williams in the final in 2019, tore her left calf muscle in Rome last month and was forced to miss the French Open.

She travelled to London earlier this week but announced her withdrawal minutes before the draw for The Championships, which returns on Monday after it was cancelled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Halep's withdrawal fol-

lows that of four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka.

The 39-year-old American, seeded sixth, takes on Aliaksandra Sasnovich in the first round and could play German Angelique Kerber, to whom she lost in the 2018 final, in the third round.

The men's draw is also missing some big names, with two-time winner Rafael Nadal and US Open champion Dominic Thiem also absent.

Eight-time winner Roger Federer, beaten in the 2019 final by Djokovic, and two-time champion Andy Murray are in the draw but there are fitness doubts over both players.

World No. 1 Djokovic arrives at the All England Club after winning his 19th Grand Slam at Roland Garros and will first face 19-year-old Draper. One more Major for the 34-year-old Serbian, who

has won Wimbledon five times, will pull him level with Federer and Nadal.

Vulnerable?

Federer, who is set to play experienced French campaigner Adrian Mannarino in the first round, is seeded sixth this year but has avoided Djokovic's half of the draw.

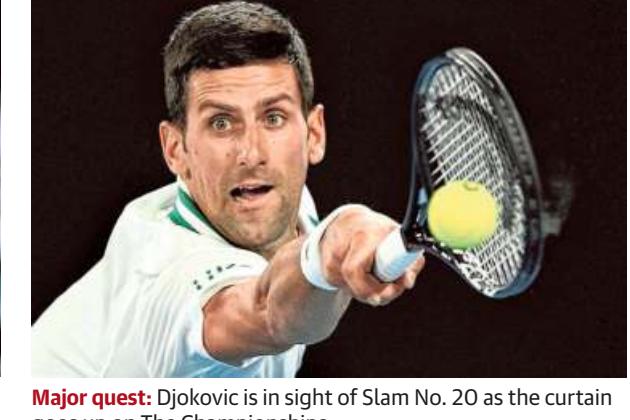
The Swiss master looks vulnerable after losing in the second round of Halle, his traditional Wimbledon warm-up tournament, which he has won 10 times.

Zhang's record

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Zhang Zhizhen became the first Chinese man in the Open era to enter the Wimbledon main draw. The 24-year-old defeated Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-0, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4), 7-6(6) in the final round of qualifying.



Big withdrawal: Halep travelled to London earlier this week but made the announcement minutes before the draw. ■ REUTERS



Major quest: Djokovic is in sight of Slam No. 20 as the curtain goes up on The Championships. ■ AP

Intra-squad games for India in Durham: ECB

Kohli's men unlikely to get any warm-up First Class games

INDIA IN ENGLAND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Indian cricket team will play two intra-squad games at the Riverside ground in Durham before the five-match Test series against England as Virat Kohli's men are unlikely to get any warm-up First Class games against county sides.

Wellington, 2014: Watling addresses the media after the second day's play. It has been a productive outing for him with five catches with the big gloves. However, New Zealand, 24 for one after conceding a massive lead of 246, is staring at a certain defeat against India.

Speaking to the press, Watling is typically defiant.

ing for an early finish.

Then Watling joined skipper Brendon McCullum. And India was wicketless till the post-tea session on day four. McCullum (302) and Watling (124) were involved in a record 352-run stand for the sixth wicket, frustrating the visitor.

McCullum displayed typical flair and Watling was rock solid. And the Test ended in a draw. And now Watling has bid adieu to international cricket after the Kiwi conquered the Test peak at Southampton.

The respect for Watling, pushing 36, is enormous within the New Zealand



Not going his way: Virat Kohli and India would have badly wanted to play practice matches. ■ AFP

Indian men target Olympic podium

Hockey coach Reid says team would do well to focus on the present

UTHRA GANESAN
PATIALA

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Graham Reid. ■ FILE PHOTO

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In fact, he insisted that the lockdowns and extended periods of training would be an advantage for the team at Tokyo. "We have spent a lot of time building and understanding the mentality of the players, which normally doesn't happen."

"I got to know their stories and everything and what everyone has been through in their lives and in this period which has been a very powerful thing. I am sure it will be important when the chips are down in Tokyo," he said.

Anchored by Noah Nirmal Tom and comprising Mohd. Anas Yahiya, Arokia Rajiv and Amoj Jacob, the team clocked 3:01.89 in the heats, a timing which is likely to lift it to 13th place on the Road to Tokyo.

Running in an almost empty stadium at the National Institute of Sports under floodlights, with part of the track in darkness, the competition was all but over when Jacob pulled away in the second leg before Tom accelerated in the last few metres. They now have a chance to further improve in the final.

The foursome of Hima Das, Dutee Chand, Archana Suseendran and Dhanalakshmi managed 43.50 seconds to win its heat but not good enough to improve from the current 20th position.

The results:
Men: 10000m: 1. Vikram Bangari (MP, 30:16.44s), 2. Kartik Kumar (UP, 30:25.79), 3. Dinesh (Mah, 30:50.74); **Pole vault:** 1. Shekhar Pandey (UP, 4.80m), 2. Dhirendra Kumar (UP, 4.50m), 3. Parveen Kumar (Har, 4.50m);

Vidit, Adhiban, Gukesh and Arjun in elite field

Carlsen eyes a third straight title in the Champions Tour

ASIAN RAPID CHESS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

With one-fourth of the 16-player field comprising Indians, the Goldmoney Asian Rapid online chess tournament promises to trigger unprecedented interest amongst the country's chess lovers when action commences on Saturday.

Vidit Gujrathi, B. Adhiban, D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi will also be trying to break the 'hoodoo' and enter the quarterfinals of this elite competition.

Meanwhile, World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen will be eyeing a third straight title in the \$1.5 million Champions Chess Tour. The maiden presence of four-time women's World champion Hou Yifan, currently the top-ranked female player, has added to the interest.

Eighth seed Vidit faces Anish Giri (Netherlands), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Poland), Daniil Dubov, Vladislav Artemiev (both Russia) and Adhiban on the first day. Interestingly, Adhiban plays the other three Indians on the opening day after taking on Levon Aronian (Armenia)



Top bet: Vidit Gujrathi will lead the Indian challenge in the elite competition. ■ FILE PHOTO

and Ding Liren (China).

Gukesh, the youngest in the field, plays Arjun and Vidit in the first two rounds on Saturday, when Arjun is due to face Vidit in the eighth round.

The preliminary stage involves a three-day round-robin league after which the top-eight players advance to the knockout stage. The rapid time-control is 15 mi-

nutes for each player plus a 10-second increment for every move made.

The players: Magnus Carlsen (Nor), Ding Liren (Chn), Levon Aronian (Arm), Anish Giri (Ned), Wesley So (USA), Alireza Firouzja (FIDE), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Pol), Vidit Gujrathi, Daniil Dubov (Rus), Peter Svidler (Rus), Vladislav Artemiev (Rus), Salem Saleh (UAE), B. Adhiban, Hou Yifan (Chn), D. Gukesh, and Arjun Erigaisi.

"The Christian Eriksen incident also showed how football promotes solidarity. Not many sports in the world have this power and vitality to bring the world together."

"That was evident when

up to 130,000 fans for the July 18 race, but Hamilton said he was feeling "split" about the decision.

"I watch the news, so I hear about the cases going up in the UK. On that side I'm worrying for people, naturally," Hamilton said.

"There is less people being in hospital but it feels a bit premature to me. I hope we learn something from it, and I hope people stay safe and keep their masks on."

Feeling "split"
Organisers announced on Thursday they received government approval to host

authorities in Northamptonshire on the specific conditions of entry that will enable the event to operate



Lewis Hamilton. ■ AFP

I hope people stay safe and keep their masks on

safely. It said visitors must show proof of full vaccination or proof of a negative lateral flow test taken within 48 hours of arrival.

Silverstone will host the second Grand Prix with a full capacity crowd since the start of the pandemic, after next week's Austrian GP.

Hamilton said he did not want to "turn it into a negative" and that he was excited "to see people, and first-

ly to see the British crowd ... to be out to see them and feel the energy that they bring into a weekend."

Hamilton main's challenger for the F1 title this season, championship leader Max Verstappen, called a packed Silverstone "simply lovely."

"To have a full crowd in Silverstone is what you want, that is what creates the atmosphere and what makes F1 special," the Red Bull driver said.

The drivers spoke at a news conference ahead of the Austrian GP on Sunday.

It feels a bit premature, says Lewis Hamilton

Mercedes driver worried about full capacity crowd at Silverstone

FORMULA ONE

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SPIELBERG

Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton voiced concern for fans visiting next month's British Grand Prix, calling the decision to allow a full capacity crowd at Silverstone "bit premature" amid the rising number of coronavirus cases.

Working with authorities
Organisers announced on Thursday they received government approval to host

'Eriksen incident showed how football can unify the world'

FOOTBALL

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

The Christian Eriksen episode showed football's great ability to unify the world feels top Indian defender Sandesh Jhingan.

"The Christian Eriksen incident also showed how football promotes solidarity. Not many sports in the world have this power and vitality to bring the world together."

Return of fans
Jhingan was also ecstatic

the Finland fans were chanting Christian and the Denmark fans saying Eriksen. The whole world instantly came in support and prayed for his recovery.

"That is how football brings the world together in harmony and appreciation," said Jhingan about the Denmark midfielder who collapsed in the middle of the action during their Euro 2020 match.

"That was one big thing that everyone was waiting for since the pandemic started," Jhingan, who is covering the Euro 2020 for Sony Ten 2, said.



Thrilled: Sandesh Jhingan has been effusive in his praise of Euro 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

India's young guns are raring to go in Sri Lanka

Sakariya, Rana, Padikkal, Gowtham and Gaikwad pleased with national call-up

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Rookie left-arm pacer Chetan Sakariya says he has done his workouts properly during the hard quarantine period here and is raring to go for the limited-overs series against Sri Lanka starting on July 13.

The Indian players, led by Shikhar Dhawan, started their quarantine on June 14 and will continue till June 28. However, their hard quarantine period is over.

"Everybody is now used to quarantine... it is good to come out of the quarantine and meet other players and everybody has done work out as per the needs. I am feeling very good," the 23-year-old Sakariya, who has earned his maiden India call-up, told *bcci.tv*.

"When I got out of the room, I was constantly looking at myself, I was feeling good wearing the jersey, but once I came to the gym, I started doing my normal workout," said the Saurash-



On a high: Chetan Sakariya is looking forward to doing well in the limited-over series against Sri Lanka. ■ FILE PHOTO:

tra pacer, who recently lost his father due to COVID-19.

Attacking Delhi top-order batsman Nitish Rana, who also got his first call-up in the national team, echoed similar sentiments.

"The first seven days were difficult for me as I was waiting to meet my teammates and I was waiting to wear the jersey. That time was a bit tough for me as each hour was feeling like a year," said 27-year-old.

Rana is looking forward to more intense work-out

sessions with a new trainer. Karnataka players Devdutt Padikkal and K. Gowtham, who too earned their maiden call-ups in the national team, also sounded pleased.

"Yeah, it has been great. Even in quarantine, we were trying to do as much as possible in our room, but it (training) is much better here in the gym and it is good to get out there and have a good session," said Padikkal, himself a flamboyant batsman.

Tamil Nadu's new spin sensation Varun Chakravarthy said representing the country is always a special feeling.

"Because there have been lots of seasoned players in this tour and working out just next to them in the gym is a special feeling, it is definitely a dream come true for me," the leg-break bowler said.

The Shikhar Dhawan-led Indian team will play three ODIs and as many T20Is against Sri Lanka.

Gowtham, on his part, said that it was good to train with his Karnataka teammate.

Dream come true

Young Maharashtra batsman Ruturaj Gaikwad described his India call-up as a dream-come-true moment.

"We were waiting for this for so many years, the place where you want to be, you work hard for that and when you get to know you are finally there, obviously it feels very nice," said Gaikwad.

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WTC: Amarnath for neutral curators

Vengsarkar 'amazed' at Indian team taking a break

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Mohinder Amarnath wants the ICC to introduce neutral curators and ensure a winner is decided in the next World Test Championship cycle.

Amarnath said the games finishing in two days like the day-night Test against England in Ahmedabad is not fair competition.

"You should play on quality wickets. When you play on quality wickets, it doesn't matter where you are playing. Then it is a fair competition."

"The ICC should form a panel of neutral curators like they have for neutral umpires. That team should follow the ICC guidelines and ensure the game goes into the fifth day," Amarnath told PTI on Friday.

No joint winner
The WTC mace would have been shared if the final between India and New Zealand ended in a draw or tie. Amarnath feels this is another aspect the ICC must tweak in the next cycle.

"A final means there can't be any joint winners in any sport. Whether it is one



Candid: Mohinder Amarnath, right, and Dilip Vengsarkar have aired frank views on the WTC and the Indian team. ■ FILE PHOTO

game or a best of three final. They have to complete the final."

India is currently in need of a seam bowling all-rounder like Amarnath with Hardik Pandya being left out of the Test team due to his inability to bowl regularly. The 70-year-old said it is tough to produce that breed.

"I don't know how we approach this kind of an itinerary. Where you go for a holiday in-between and then come back to play Test matches. One week break was enough post the WTC final.

Vengsarkar, a former chief selector, feels India played well over the two-year WTC cycle but their preparation for the final was far from ideal.

"They don't come just like that. They come once in a decade or once in 20 years. I am sure somebody will come but it will come from the longer version of the game," he said.

Meanwhile, former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar is 'amazed' at the news that Virat Kohli and his men will be

History beckons Hoy and Hanna

OLYMPICS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Veteran equestrian Anthony Hoy will compete in a record-extending eighth Olympics after being named on the Australian team on Friday, 37 years after his debut at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

The three-time gold medallist will stretch his own record of the most Olympic appearances by an Australian athlete, while at 62 he becomes the oldest male competitor ever from his country.

"To represent Australia at international level over so many years has been the greatest privilege and honour of my life," he said.

"I have never set out to

break records on my number of Olympic Games participations—I am just a country boy who loves his horses, has a huge passion for our sport and thrives on being competitive at the top end."

He will ride Vassily de Lassos, a 12-year-old gelding, in Tokyo to become just the 13th person in Olympic history to contest eight Games.

Hoy will be joined by grandmother Mary Hanna, 66, aboard mare Calanta after qualifying for her sixth Olympics, the first Australian woman to do so and the oldest ever.

Equestrian Australia chief Darren Goacher said the record-setting Hoy and Hanna were a testament to the longevity of the sport.

Mary Hanna. ■ OLYMPICS.COM.AU

Anthony Hoy. ■ OLYMPICS.COM.AU

'No spectator' Games remain an option

Organisers to take another look at fans after the current 'quasi-state of emergency' ends on July 11

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO

A "no-spectator Games" remains an option for the Tokyo Olympics, which open officially in just four weeks, the president of the Tokyo Olympic organising committee said on Friday.

The admission by Seiko Hashimoto comes only four days after she announced on Monday that up to 10,000 local fans would be allowed into venues — with numbers not to exceed 50% of venue capacity regardless of indoor or outdoor events.

Organisers put off the decision on local fans for several months, and fans from abroad were banned months ago.

The move to allow fans went against many medical experts who have said the safest Olympics would be with no fans due to coronavirus.

"What I feel is that no spectating should remain an option for us as we look into things," Hashimoto said at a news conference.

"The situation is changing from time to time so that is why we need to remain flexible and prompt in responding to any change. A no-



Seiko Hashimoto ■ REUTERS

spectator Games is one of our options."

Resurgence in infections

Organisers seemed to back down slightly on fans after a COVID-19 panel for the Tokyo Metropolitan Government reported on Thursday that "there's a sign of resurgence" of infections in Tokyo.

The panel said infections grew by 11% in the last week — based on the seven-day average — with more of the contagious Delta variant cases being detected. Organisers say they will take another look at fans after the current "quasi-state of emergency" ends on July 11.

The head of Imperial Household Agency had on Thursday said Emperor Naruhito is "extremely worried" about the health risks presented by the Olympics.

Marukawa delivered another wake-up call on Friday when she confirmed that a member of the Ugandan team who tested positive for the coronavirus upon entry to Japan last week was infected with the Delta variant.

Despite extensive testing before and upon entry, cases like this seem certain to happen with 11,000 Olympic athletes and 4,400 Paralympic athletes entering Tokyo, along with tens of thousands of added staff, coaches, judges, and IOC and sports federations officials.

The Olympic organising committee is very much interested in finding out more from this (Uganda) example," Hashimoto said. "We will pay detailed attention to get information as much as possible from this experience," with operations refined accordingly.