

Back to 1996 as insurgents do
victory rounds in capitalUS uses choppers to evacuate
its embassy and ambassadorBagram airbase, jail housing
Islamists in Taliban hands

Taliban take Kabul, President Ghani flees, America absconds



EXPRESS IN AFGHANISTAN

SHUBHAJIT ROY
KABUL, AUGUST 15

KABUL, THE ultimate prize in every Afghanistan war, fell to the Taliban Sunday, completing their takeover of the country in a lighting offensive that saw provinces and warlords give up without a fight, days after the hasty withdrawal of US troops.

President Ashraf Ghani, sources said, had fled the country, hours after Pakistan-backed Taliban fighters showed up on the outskirts of Kabul and their chiefs demanded transfer of power to avoid bloodshed.

This is the first time since their ouster 20 years ago in the wake of the 9/11 strikes that Taliban fighters have entered the city — they first seized the Capital in 1996. Late at night, fighters in pickups and SUVs did victory rounds in the heart of Kabul.

There was no official statement on Ghani's departure or on the interim power arrangement being put in place.

(The Associated Press reported that Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the Afghan National Reconciliation Council, had confirmed Ghani's departure. "The former president of Afghanistan left Afghanistan, leaving the country in this difficult situation," Abdullah said. "God should hold him accountable.")

The city's fate was sealed — Kabul was the last big city under government control after the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif Saturday evening — when the Taliban were spotted on the outskirts Sunday.

Word of their arrival spread like wildfire, and the city panicked. There were traffic snarls everywhere, and people rushed home to stock up on essentials,



Armed Taliban fighters inside the presidential palace in Kabul on Sunday evening. TV grab/Al Jazeera

FULL COVERAGE P11

withdrawing money from banks. By afternoon, the fall of the city was more or less complete. Streets emptied, and helicopters flew over the downtown area, home to all major offices and embassies.

As the helicopters evacuated personnel from the US embassy, smoke rose from the compound, suggesting destruction of documents, equipment. The US ambassador was among those said to have been evacuated. Many other foreign missions also set in motion their exit plans.

The Taliban moved on Kabul and other cities and towns near it after seizing the key northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif Saturday night.

On Sunday, the Taliban ran over Bagram airbase after the soldiers there surrendered. It also took over a prison where

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AI FLYING TO KABUL, FOR NOW

AIR INDIA will operate its daily Delhi-Kabul flight for now, but will "monitor the situation daily", an AI source said. **FLIGHT FROM DELHI** on Sunday had 40 passengers, and landed in Kabul around an hour later than scheduled after flying in a holding pattern outside Kabul pending ATC clearance. **ON THE RETURN LEG**, the aircraft with a capacity of 162 passengers was fully booked, but there were 33 no-shows. **REPORT P7**

Sealed cartons, night flight home via Iran: India starts vacating

SHUBHAJIT ROY
KABUL, AUGUST 15

AS THE sun set on Kabul, and the Ashraf Ghani government, security checks in Kabul's diplomatic area, usually very heavily guarded, simply disappeared. The security ring around the Green Zone had collapsed, like the regime.

At the Indian Embassy, past the doors, stood a 6-foot replica of the Lion Capital of Ashoka. Next to it were a dozen brown cartons, sealed with duct tapes.

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EXPLAINED The new reality

THE FALL of Kabul completes the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The last time they seized Kabul, in 1996, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE recognised their regime. It remains to be seen how the world accepts this new reality.

Hours before fall, women plead: 'Don't want to go back to that horrible era'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
KABUL, AUGUST 15

AROUND NOON, in a school in Qallai Fatulla area of Kabul, the principal called the teachers and asked them to leave for their homes.

He had just heard that the Taliban had reached the city, and did not want the teachers, especially the women, to stay back

EXPLAINED

THREE QUESTIONS IN THE FALL OF KABUL

BY GAUTAM MUKHOPADHAYA
PAGE 5

and get stuck. The principal, a 62-year-old and witness to many wars, many

ups and downs, panicked because 16 of the 20 teachers in the school were young women, the majority in their 20s and 30s.

"I can't risk their lives," the principal told *The Indian Express*. "They are like my children who teach students who, in turn, are like my grandchildren."

In downtown Shehr-e-nau, the morning queue at the Western Union Transfer was a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Women on a Kabul street on Sunday morning. Shubhajit Roy

Vencob

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Retail Rate Per Dozen of Eggs

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*Based on the average of 10 dealers

Despite broad uptick in the economy, fewer quality jobs in urban areas now

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE ECONOMY MAY be limping towards normalcy after the Covid-19 second wave, but the job market continues to show extended signs of stress — the loss of employment in the contact-intensive sectors now ap-

pears to be accompanied by a progressive shift towards low-paying subsistence work.

Multiple data sets point to differences in the way the first wave impacted workers compared to the trends visible in the job market after the second wave. The biggest brunt after the first wave was borne by women across both rural and urban areas, alongside services and con-

struction sector jobs. Post the second wave, the impact seems to be more pronounced in case of better quality jobs in urban areas, especially salaried jobs.

Also, while both the farm and non-farm sectors accounted for employment generation in rural areas after the first wave last year, a visible increase in rural jobs is being driven by the

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



75TH INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

Time is right, says Modi, maps change milestones over 25 years, 75 weeks

Says 'Amrit Kaal' will see a new India; calls for reduced govt role in life of citizens

RAVISH TIWARI & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

ON THE 75th anniversary of India's Independence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched for the country's transformation over the next 25 years, a period of "Amrit Kaal", he said, during which India would have modern infrastructure and facilities.

"The goal of Amrit Kaal is to ascend to new heights of prosperity for India and the citizens... to create an India where the level of facilities do not divide the village and the city... to build an India where the government does not interfere unnecessarily in the lives of citizens. The goal of Amrit Kaal is to build an India with the best of the world's modern infrastructure," the PM said during his eighth Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

"Amrit Kaal is of 25 years. But we don't have to wait for long to achieve our goals. *Yahi samay hai, sahi samay hai* (This is the right time, we have to start now). Our country also has to change and we as citizens have to change ourselves too," he said, adding that the government would work towards its goals during the 75 weeks of Amrit Mahotsav — the period between March 12 and August 15, 2023.

"During these 75 weeks of the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, 75 Vande Bharat trains will con-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation on the occasion of the 75th Independence Day from the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi on Sunday. ANI

FULL COVERAGE P6

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

NATION IN NEED OF REPAIR

BY SONIA GANDHI
PAGE 8

nect every corner of the country. The pace at which new airports are being built in the country and the UDAN scheme connecting remote areas is unprecedented. We can see how better air connectivity gives new flights to people's dreams," he said.

At a time when the government is under fire for allegedly snooping using the Pegasus spyware, the Prime Minister pitched for reduced role of the government in the life of citizens. "We want an India where governments do not interfere in the lives of the citizens," he said.

He also assured that his government was working towards getting rid of archaic laws. "Earlier, the government was sitting in the driver's seat. Maybe it

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Caste census: Disquiet within over Govt silence, ally demands

LIZ MATHEW & RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

IN HIS I-Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reference to extending reservations for OBCs and letting states decide their OBC list wasn't just a statement of fact. It was also part of the party's high-octane political thrust expected to pick up momentum, even as his Government ducks a response to the growing demand for a caste census, not just from Opposition parties but also from allies and a section within.

For the record, the BJP has maintained a cautious silence but many of its OBC MPs, contacted by *The Indian Express*, expressed concern. "It is going to be a hot political issue... We cannot sideline it nor can we keep silent for a long time," said a senior BJP leader.

The sense of disquiet is unmistakable. Some OBC MPs

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House debates are key to clear laws, but now a sorry state of affairs: CJI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

FLAGGING THE lack of adequate discussion in legislative assemblies on various laws before they are passed, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana Sunday said there used to be "wise" and "constructive" debates in the past but a "sorry state of affairs" now has led to "gaps" and "ambiguity in making laws" — with "no clarity" on the purpose behind the legislation.

Speaking at an Independence Day event organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), CJI Ramana said this was happening because intellectuals and lawyers were not present in adequate numbers in the Houses, and exhorted the legal community to participate "more actively" in public life.

CJI Ramana's remarks come days after the Monsoon Session of Parliament ended on a bitter note with the Opposition demanding discussions on the Pegasus spyware controversy and contentious farm laws, forcing repeated adjournments.



Chief Justice of India N V Ramana spoke at an SC Bar Association event Sunday. File

Amidst the disruptions, the Government pushed through 20 Bills in Lok Sabha and 19 in Rajya Sabha, without any discussion on most of them.

In his speech, the CJI recalled that leaders of the Independence struggle were mostly lawyers who "not only sacrificed their profession, but sacrificed their properties... their everything, their families". He said the first Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and other Houses were filled with lawyers and members of the legal community.

"Unfortunately, over a period of time, you know what is happening in the Houses, i.e., the legislation either in Parliament,

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

BARELY A fortnight ago, the daughter of a senior citizen in Mumbai's Juhu rushed to the police; online fraudsters had looted Rs 75,000 from her father after convincing him to share his credit card details over phone. He had kept aside the money for his cancer treatment. And before the card could be blocked, the fraudsters had gone on an online shopping spree.

The police turned to the

Crime Branch. And the Crime Branch turned to "Stop Banking Fraud", a WhatsApp group started four years ago by two constables in Gwalior. What happened in the next five minutes is what this unique initiative by constables Pushpendra Yadav and Radharaman Tripathi is all about.

Responding to an official request posted on the group by a Crime Branch officer, a representative of the e-commerce site stopped the transactions. Now, all the police had to do was send an email for the money to be re-

turned.

"Saving people's hard-earned money from cyber criminals becomes a passion after a point," says Yadav. "We have added officers from Kashmir to Kanyakumari to the group."

Says Gwalior Cyber Crime SP Sudhir Agarwal: "The group was formed by the two constables from the cyber department nearly four years ago. It has helped us ensure that money lost to cyber crimes can be retrieved. Now, a web portal on similar lines has been started by the Ministry of Home Affairs."



Constables Radharaman Tripathi (left) and Pushpendra Yadav set up the WhatsApp group in Gwalior in 2017. Express



The constables estimate that the initiative — on WhatsApp and later Telegram — has helped recover at least Rs 15 crore.

"In cases of cyber crime, stopping the money at the right time is important. All the other formalities can be done later. And this group plays a vital part in bridging the gap when it comes to stopping fraudulent payments in time," says a senior police officer in Mumbai.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cyber crimes for 2019 — the last available year for which data were

released — rose to 44,546 cases from 27,248 registered a year earlier. Less than one in five cases were detected, as per the data.

"Even in cases of detection, where the accused are arrested, getting the money lost is a challenging task due to the layers of bank accounts used to channel it," says the senior officer.

The "Stop Banking Fraud" WhatsApp and Telegram groups link officers from police forces across the country, and nodal representatives of 75 service providers and five major payment aggregators. Currently, the

WhatsApp group has 256 members, and the Telegram group 2,231 members.

The aim is to get real-time feedback and action from nodal agencies and aggregators, especially in the "golden hour" — the first hour or two after the crime. Before these groups came into play, the traditional method was for police to send an email, and wait for the appropriate authority at the e-company to verify and take action.

For the two constables, it all started in March 2017 when a

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

HOW INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT INFLUENCED KOREA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM FROM JAPANESE RULE
Newspaper clippings from the Korean peninsula under Japanese rule show Gandhi's aim of full independence had an unexpected impact on the Korean independence movement.

ART AND CULTURE

'INDIAN FOOD GAVE ME A VOICE'
Chef Vikas Khanna opens up about his journey

TECH

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Should you buy the new Fitbit Sense at Rs 22,999?

EXPRESS AUDIO
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NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY
Mihir Vasavda joins Gaurav Bhatt to talk about what it was like covering the biggest sporting event in the middle of a pandemic.



J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha inspects a guard of honour during an I-Day parade in Srinagar. AP

Amid complete shutdown, I-Day celebrations peaceful in Valley

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE SRINAGAR, AUGUST 15

INDEPENDENCE DAY celebrations were held peacefully across Kashmir amid a tight security blanket and a complete shutdown in the Valley. From early Sunday morning, huge contingents of J&K Police, paramilitary forces and the Army were deployed across the UT. A three-tier security blanket was thrown around the venues of the main celebrations.

For the first time in three decades, the Tricolour was unfurled at almost all government schools across J&K after it was made mandatory, and the administration warned of action in case a school failed to hoist the flag. A complete shutdown was observed in the Valley.

The main function was held at SK Stadium in Srinagar, where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha unfurled the Tricolour. Speaking at the function, Sinha said: "Vajpayeeji's principle of Jamhoriyat was not allowed to flourish on the ground for decades... But the eve of 2020 ended this jungle raj, and the entire J&K participated in fair, transparent and violence free elections of DDC..."

Sinha also announced that his administration is constituting a mechanism to provide justice to families whose "properties have been illegally bought" — an apparent reference to Kashmiri Hindus.

PK Agrawal appointed as Haryana DGP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 15

THE HARYANA government on Sunday appointed senior IPS officer P K Agrawal as the new state Director General of Police (DGP). Agrawal, a 1988-batch officer, will take over from the incumbent DGP Manoj Yadava, who had earlier sought repatriation to his parent cadre of Intelligence Bureau.

An order issued by state Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajeev Arora said, "On the consideration of the panel received from the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), the Governor of Haryana is pleased to appoint Prashanta Kumar Agrawal as Director General of Police, Haryana. His term shall be for a period of two years from the date of his assumption of office." Agrawal's appointment comes three days after the UPSC finalised a panel of three IPS officers from Haryana for the post of police chief, with the other candidates being Mohammad Akil and RC Mishra.

Yadava had been posted as state police chief since February 21, 2019, and the Union Home Ministry on March 2 this year had extended his tenure till February 20, 2022 or till orders, whichever was earlier.

-WITH PTI INPUTS

FROM PAGE ONE

KEY INDICATORS IMPROVING TREND

■ Pickup in rural jobs driven by seasonal farm sector after the second wave; non-farm jobs negatively impacted

■ Constructions jobs show uptick post second wave; this was not the case after the first wave due to sustained lockdowns

WORSENING TREND

■ Loss of employment in contact-intensive sectors now accompanied by shift towards low-paying subsistence work

■ Post second wave, negative impact more pronounced for better quality jobs in urban areas, especially salaried jobs

■ Latest annual PLFS (July-June 2019-20) data show higher share of self-employed in total employment (53.5 per cent in 12 months to July 2020 from 52.1 per cent in same period in previous year)

■ CMIE data show salaried jobs were at 76.5 million in July 2021, 3.2 million fewer than in June

Jobs in cities

seasonal farm sector post the second wave.

Non-farm sector jobs, however, seem to have been negatively impacted, unlike after the first wave.

On the positive side, the one exception is the construction sector job market, which is markedly improved this time around compared to the period after the first wave.

There are clear indicators of the economic distress and lack of opportunities in the government's latest annual PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey) data, which points to workers being forced into low productivity and low paying work, thereby aggravating the under-employment problem. This seems to be further corroborated by the more updated CMIE's Pyramid Household Surveys.

The latest annual PLFS (July-June 2019-20) data showed a higher share of self-employed in total employment (53.5 per cent in the 12 months to July 2020 from 52.1 per cent in the same period in the previous year). Worse still, even within the self-employed category, the big increase is among those categorised as "unpaid family workers/helpers in household enterprises" — the poorest quality employment — up from 13.3 per cent (in terms of its share in total employment) in 2018-19 to 15.9 per cent in 2019-20.

This trend seems to be continuing, if CMIE data till July 2021 is anything to go by, which testifies to an improvement in growth of employment mostly among agricultural labourers and construction workers.

The disproportionate impact on better quality jobs is clearly evident in the CMIE data too, which shows that salaried jobs, at 76.5 million in July 2021, were actually 3.2 million less than they were in June, notwithstanding the broader economic uptick in July.

The July number is 3.6 million short of the pre-second wave level of 80 million in January-March 2021.

Economists said manufacturing activity has still not reached pre-Covid levels, and the small and medium-level enterprises have seen a hit along-

side the high-contact intensive services sector.

"What seems to be happening is that the employment is shifting from relatively higher pay, higher activity work to low pay subsistence work. So although unemployment is still very high, where it really is showing up is disguised unemployment, which is people working because they have no choice. What it means in effect is that the process we have had for over 20 years of people moving up the income ladder, the whole story about the expanding middle class, that story has been badly dented. The middle class has shrunk. And it's going to take a while for that to come back. That is what it seems to be," Pronab Sen, Chairman, Standing Committee on Economic Statistics, and former Chief Statistician of India said.

The unemployment numbers for the self-employed category are not showing up on a large scale because workers there are taking up any work for survival. "They aren't getting work so they are trying to do something of their own, but that does not make it productive," Sen explained.

That industrial output is up, but still below the pre-Covid levels, is also reflective in the sluggish uptick in the jobs market. While factory output grew 13.6 per cent in June, it is still only little over 91 per cent of the level seen in February 2020. Manufacturing and mining output in June were at 90.2 per cent and 85.6 per cent, respectively, of the pre-Covid period, with electricity generation accounting for most of the upward momentum in the data.

The slow pace of vaccination, and a longer interval between doses, has delayed the return of confidence levels, especially in the services sectors.

"Wherever there was contact-intensive activity, they were affected big time. Now air and rail travel is slowly resuming, but people whose jobs are linked to travel such as ticketing agents, hotel employees are yet to see work pick up to pre-Covid levels. Manufacturing sector also hasn't reached pre-Covid levels yet. So it shows impact on MSMEs. Employment is affected in those sectors, but how much is the sequential effect, it is difficult to put in numbers," Devendra Kumar Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings said.

The disproportionate impact of better quality jobs is clearly evident in the CMIE data. Compared to the levels in 2019-20, while employment in July 2021 was down by 2.3 per cent, the decline in salaried jobs, according to CMIE, is 11.7 per cent. Business persons have seen a loss of 7.5 per cent.

Lower-end jobs are less impacted — small traders and daily wage labourers suffered a much smaller loss of 3.2 per cent. CMIE says some of these people who lost jobs migrated to becoming farmers and so the count of farmers has grown by 9.6 per cent.

But even in the rural areas, unlike the last time, the growth of employment in July 2021 was mostly among agricultural labourers and construction workers — signifying poor quality of employment. It is mostly informal and at least in the case of agriculture, there is a strong likelihood that temporary jobs could go away after the kharif harvest, according to the CMIE study.

A constrained non-farm jobs scenario in the rural areas, however, is bad news, as it effectively squeezes out the options for workers, with the resultant lower wages and potential distress in the jobs market in the hinterland adding to the broader negative sentiment in the country's employment market.

Time is right, says Modi, maps change milestones over 25 years

was needed at that time. But times have changed now. Efforts have increased in the last seven years to free the people from the web of unnecessary laws and procedures. Several unnecessary laws have been scrapped so far," he said. While Atma Nirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) was one of the main themes of the PM's Independence Day speech last year, the emphasis of Sunday's speech was on working towards a new India with cutting-edge innovation and technology.

"We have to work together for next-generation infrastructure. We have to work together for world-class manufacturing. We have to work together for cutting-edge innovation. We have to work together for new-age technology," he said.

He also appealed to Indian manufacturers to produce world-class goods in the new economy and assured them of government support. "Every product is a brand ambassador.

It should give them (users abroad) pride. You should aspire to win over the global market. The government is with you in every way," Prime Minister said.

The PM announced the 'Prime Minister Gati Shakti National Master Plan' that will pave the way for "holistic infrastructure and will lead to an integrated and holistic pathway to our economy".

The project worth Rs 100 lakh crore, which, the PM said, would "generate employment opportunities", appeared to be a version of the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) announced by the government earlier.

He also reiterated the 'Sabka Saath...' slogan he had introduced during his first tenure as Prime Minister. "A time comes in the development journey of every country when that nation defines itself from a new end, when it takes itself forward with new reso-

lutions. Today, that time has come in India's development journey. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas'. Now, 'Sabka Prayas' is important for the achievement of all our goals," Modi said.

For the welfare sector, the PM spoke about the need to achieve "saturation" levels of coverage for eligible beneficiaries.

"We have to move ahead with the goal of achieving saturation of schemes... All the villages should have roads, all the households should have bank accounts, all the beneficiaries should have Ayushman Bharat cards and all the eligible persons should get the benefit of Ujjwala Yojana. We have to connect every entitled person with the government's insurance, pension and housing schemes," he said.

The Prime Minister also highlighted his vision for the new Cooperative Ministry and assured small farmers that the government was working for their welfare. "*Chhota kisaan, bane desh ki shaan* (Small farmers should be the pride of our nation)... this is our dream," Prime Minister said.

Among new initiatives, the Prime Minister announced nutrient-fortified rice through welfare schemes; the National Hydrogen Mission "to make India a global hub for green hydrogen production and export"; and opening up Sainik Schools for girls.

On the military stand-off with China along the LAC, the Prime Minister's speech virtually repeated last year's formulation that India has resolutely stood against "terrorism and expansionism" and will counter them effectively. There was no reference to the situation in Afghanistan.

Concluding his 90-minute address with a Hindi couplet, the Prime Minister said "this is the time, the right's time, India's time".

attributed the government's reluctance to "apprehensions about possible social repercussions" including violence; one leader pointed out "practical and pragmatic" difficulties; some blamed "influential upper-caste leaders and bureaucrats" for stonewalling it; and some said the Centre anyway has empowered states to do their own caste census.

Speak to BJP non-upper caste MPs and they are divided in their response. Those ideologically trained by the Sangh Parivar and part of the BJP's organisation have their own argument against the caste census. "There are no ideological objections to it," said a senior party MP. "Had that been the case, we would not have announced in 2018 that the 2011 census would have caste," he added.

However, another BJP MP red-flagged fears of a backlash: "The leadership is wary that there could be caste conflicts with everyone demanding their share according to their population once they come to know the size of their community. No government can afford this now."

"If the census is done," said a senior BJP leader who is a state minister, "it could reveal the fact that socially backward communities along with SCs and STs constitute more than 80 per cent of the population. So the concept of quota could have to be rethought."

According to a BJP MP in Rajya Sabha, who is a prominent OBC face, the logistics of a "mammoth" exercise like a caste census would require coding, data coordination and aggregation for which the "preparation itself would take a minimum 18-24 months".

"The 2011 census has OBC data but apparently it has countless discrepancies. So it's almost impossible for the government to do it now. But, ultimately, the government may have to agree as the demand is getting more traction," he said.

The day after BJP MP Sanghmitra Maurya, as the first speaker in the OBC Bill debate in Lok Sabha, made a pitch for the caste census, BJP leader and a minister in Nitish Kumar Cabinet, Ram Surat Rai, echoed the demand in Patna. BJP MP from Banda R K Singh Patel underlined the need to do more.

"The Modi government has ensured adequate representation to the weaker sections in the government. But it's true

that more needs to be done for which knowing the exact population is essential. However, I think states also can do a census on the basis of caste to identify the OBCs," Patel told The Indian Express.

Demands for a caste census and a legislation to take reservations beyond 50 per cent resurfaced during the discussion on the Constitution Amendment Bill that sought to override a Supreme Court ruling and restore to states their right to create their own OBC lists. While the Supreme Court ruling fixing the 50 per cent ceiling is an argument against one of these demands, rejecting a caste census is fraught with political costs.

"Caste census will be harmful for the country. Practically and ideologically, no nationalist should agree for a caste census," said a senior BJP functionary who is part of BJP president J P Nadda's national team. "It will lead to political bargaining. Instead of promoting unity, it will become a divisive issue."

That is a matter of debate, say some leaders. "To say that caste census will sow seeds of discord is just an alibi. The caste census will instill confidence among communities lower in the caste hierarchy against politically dominant communities. How can caste census numbers sow discord?" said a Union Minister on the condition of anonymity.

"Remember Kanshi Ram's words — Jiski jitni sankhya bhaari, utni uski hissedari," was the cryptic response of a non-upper caste BJP MP from UP when asked about his views on the party's ambivalence. His remarks suggest that enumeration could put pressure to rejig decision-making bodies within the party to the disadvantage of entrenched upper-caste communities in the BJP.

Another non-upper caste MP from UP dismissed the debate as another issue "manufactured" by the Opposition. "Caste census is being raised because the Opposition has no credible issue," said this MP. He said the recent moves to have 27 OBC Union Ministers and to extend OBC reservations to the NEET Central quota have rattled these "identity-based" parties.

Incidentally, this MP is a relative newcomer to the BJP, and had been with the SP and BSP when those parties demanded a caste census during the UPA government's time. Asked about

this change in stand, he said: "The caste census demand is mostly advocated by third front parties more than by the national parties."

CJI Ramana

Rajya Sabha or any other Houses. If you see, the debates, which used to take place in the Houses those days, were very, very wise, constructive, and they used to debate any legislation which they were making," the CJI said.

Citing an example, he referred to "debates which had taken place about the Industrial Disputes Act, some amendments and all that".

"A member of Tamil Nadu, Mr Ramamurti, a CPI(M) leader, used to discuss so elaborately what are the consequences if you make these amendments in the Industrial Disputes Act, how it affects the working class. Same way, different laws used to be discussed and deliberated. So the burden of the courts, while interpreting or implementing the law, is less. So we had a clear picture of what the legislative... wants to tell us, why they (are) making such a legislation," CJI Ramana said.

"Now, (it is a) sorry state of affairs. We see the legislations, a lot of gaps, a lot of ambiguity in making the laws, there is no clarity in laws. We don't know what purpose the laws are made for, which is creating a lot of litigation, inconvenience and loss to the Government as well as inconvenience to the public," he said.

"This is what happens if intellectuals and lawyers are not there in the Houses... It is time... legal community, lawyers have to lead, participate actively in social life, public life. Don't confine yourself to your profession, earning money and living comfortably... We must also actively participate in public life, do some good service," the CJI said.

Sunday's event was also attended by Supreme Court Justice A M Khanwilkar, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and SCBA president Vijay Singh.

Cyber loot

man, who had lost Rs 40000 to a fraud, cycled to the cyber station in Gwalior. With erratic power supply, the police could not send an email to the payment site where the money had been transferred. Yadav and Tripathi then called up the representative on the landline but were asked to send a message with details of the fraud. And yet, by the next day, Rs 32,000 had been saved.

"We thought that if we were able to save money in this way, we could help many more victims. With that thought, we started the WhatsApp group," says Yadav.

It was not easy. Of the 20 members they added initially, only five stayed back. But the two constables did not give up. They started convincing officers, and representatives of online services, e-commerce sites and cash aggregators, to sign up. Once they were able to track and save more money, more people started joining in.

But for Yadav and Tripathi, it's still those individual cases that give them the most satisfaction.

"Recently, a man lost Rs 1.2 lakh... money he had borrowed to arrange for his daughter's wedding. He came to us and said he would commit suicide if the wedding was called off. The money had been used to make transactions on an e-commerce site. We quickly contacted the company on the group and within 20 minutes, Rs 1 lakh was saved," Yadav says.

"The victim started crying and hugged me so hard that I couldn't breathe. This sense of relief is what gives us satisfaction."





MUMBAI CONFIDENTIAL



RALLYING SUPPORT

NARAYAN RANE, recently inducted into the Union Cabinet, is planning a massive rally from Mumbai to his hometown in Sindhudurg in the third week of August with many stops en route, in what appears to be an effort by the former Shiv Sainik to mobilise his followers ahead of the Mumbai civic elections. In Mumbai, Rane will garland the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji at Shivaji Park and pay homage at the Balasaheb Thackeray memorial there.

LOCAL FARE

CONSUL GENERAL of America David Ranz in Mumbai enjoys Maharashtrian food and knows where to get it too. According to the owner of a well known restaurant in Dadar, Ranz loves misal, vada pav and sabudana vada.

POSTING POSER

A SECTION of Muslim MLAs is quite upset that Haj House chief M A Khan was denied place as a member in the Maharashtra Public Service Commission. Khan had served in the University of Mumbai. He is now posted in Haj House and has started coaching facilities for Muslim students for IAS/IPS. The MPSC had four vacancies, of which three were filled. One remains vacant. Now Congress MLA Amin Patel will be calling on the CM to reconsider their demand to give the post to Khan.

NEW CHAPTER

IAS OFFICER Ashutosh Salil, chosen by the Thackerays to head the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation under Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray, is soon leaving for Delhi on a deputation. Salil worked with the BMC as a joint commissioner and during the first wave of Covid, he coordinated with India Inc for corporate help to BMC. Now he is headed for Delhi to work with a Union minister as private secretary.

COMPILED BY YOGESH NAIK

Have a comment or suggestion for Mumbai Confidential? Write to mumbai.newsline@expressindia.com with subject line: Mumbai Confidential

City sees rain after 15 days, heavy rain forecast for next 24 hours

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

AFTER A gap of over 15 days, Mumbai received a moderate spell of rain on Sunday morning. In 24 hours from 8.30 am on Saturday, the India Meteorological Department's Santacruz observatory recorded 25.6 mm of rainfall, while the Colaba observatory recorded 42.8 mm of rain.

Partly cloudy conditions prevailed over the city on Sunday. IMD has forecast moderate rain in the city and suburbs with the possibility of heavy falls at isolated places

for the next 24 hours. By afternoon, IMD had placed Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Palghar on yellow alert, i.e., forecast of heavy rain at isolated places.

According to the district forecast and warning, the southern Konkan region — Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg are on yellow alert for Tuesday and Wednesday with heavy rain at isolated places.

Since there are no favourable weather systems over Maharashtra, the monsoon rainfall activity is subdued. All the 36 districts in the state have recorded deficient to largely deficient rainfall in 15 days of the month.

Boardwalk-cum-cycle track to connect Mahim Fort and Bandra Fort, project to cost Rs 167 crore

YOGESH NAIK

MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

THE MUNICIPAL Commissioner I S Chahal recently cleared a boardwalk-cum-cycle track from Mahim Fort to Bandra Fort. The tenders for the project, which has been proposed by Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray, will be issued this week.

A boardwalk is an elevated footpath, walkway, or causeway built with wooden stilts.

The Rs 167 crore project will be constructed on a Design, Build, Operate and Maintain basis and will spread over wards — G North and H west — of the BMC. The contractor is expected to build the project in 18 months and will maintain the structure for 10 years.

Additional Commissioner (Projects) of BMC Pav Velarasi said that the total length of the stretch will be 3.59 km and the width will be six metres, including 1.75 metres of a walkway with 2.5 metres of cycle track in between and another 1.75 metres of cycle track on the other side.

"Once the project is complete, it will become an iconic symbol of Mumbai city. This



An artist's impression of the boardwalk-cum-cycle track.

project will create an additional recreational facility for citizens and promote tourism in Mumbai," Velarasi said.

The cycle track will be built from coloured bitumen and the boardwalk from composite wooden material. The substructure will be on single monolithic poles erected on a pile foundation with interconnecting primary and secondary beams.

The project will be divided into four segments. The first one is from Bandra Fort to the proposed subway in Bandra West covering 1.26 km, the second one is from the proposed subway to Bandra Reclamation Garden subway with a length of 0.74 km, the third part covers from

EXTRA SECURITY DEPLOYED

Trains resume for those fully jabbed, no crowding on Day 1

VALLABHOZARKAR

MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

FOUR MONTHS after it shut down its services for the general public, fully vaccinated general commuters were allowed to board Mumbai's suburban trains for the first time on Sunday.

With Sunday being a holiday and due to the Independence Day, the 2,813 services that ran on the Suburban tracks were relatively empty. Officials, however, said that they are bracing for a gradual increase in the number of passengers from Tuesday. They will also deploy an additional 173 services from Monday onwards taking the total number of services to 2,986.

"There was no crowding on most of our services today. The number of people, who travelled on Sunday, was less than the weekdays as most of the offices are shut. The increase in the number of passengers after the relaxation can be judged only on Tuesday as Monday is a holiday as well," a senior railway official said.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of increased crowd extra security staff as well as railway employees were deployed at most stations to check that only eligible passengers were travelling on the trains. While the Government Railway Police (GRP) and local police forces along with the civic body staffers were deployed outside stations to ensure only eligible passengers enter the premises, the Railway Police Force (RPF) and the ticket checkers ensured only those eligible were inside the stations.

Officials said that the ticket checkers conducted surprise



Ticket checkers verify vaccination certificates at CSMT on Sunday. Ganesh Shirsekar

checking of passengers on the platforms as well as on trains to check if commuters are carrying valid tickets/passes and relevant documents like verified Covid vaccine certificate, passes/tickets and ID proof. At various stations like CST ticket checkers were checking commuters if they had the necessary permission to board the trains.

Many commuters who travelled for the first time on Sunday said that they were thankful to the authorities for resuming train services for the general public.

"It would take me close to two hours to reach CST from Nerul when the trains were shut. The opening of the train service will provide major relief to commuters and help them save precious time as well as money that we were forced to spend when trains were not accessible," Irfan Shaikh, a resident of Nerul who works in a shop at Mohammed Ali Road said.

Shaikh had been commuting to his workplace in a bus for the last few months and boarded a train for the first time on Sunday.

Mumbai's suburban train services were shut down in April by the state government after the second wave of the pandemic. Services were gradually resumed but only government employees and essential services staffers are allowed to travel in local trains.

On August 8, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray announced reopening of train services from August 15 for people, who are fully vaccinated and completed 14 days after receiving the second dose of Covid vaccine.

Starting Monday, the Western Railway will run 1,300 suburban services on its Mumbai suburban section while the Central Railway will run 1,686 suburban services on Mumbai division. With this a total of 2,986 train services will

run on the Mumbai suburban network from Monday.

Western Railway is running 1,201 services on the suburban network of Mumbai division. With increase of 99 services, total services of 1,300 suburban services on its suburban section will become about 95% of pre-Covid services when it was 1,367 services.

Similarly, the Central Railway is running 1,612 services on suburban network of Mumbai division and with the increase of 74 services, the total services of 1,686 suburban services on all its suburban sections will become 95% of the pre-Covid services which were 1,774 services.

"We request passengers to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, wear masks and follow social distancing for their own and others safety," said Shivaji Sutar, Central Railway, Chief Public Relations Officer.

Businessman tries to kill self in front of Mantralaya

Mumbai: A businessman from Jalgaon, Sunil Damu Gujar, who was upset over police's inaction on his complaint, allegedly tried to end his life near Mantralaya in South Mumbai on Sunday. Police said that as soon as the businessman poured kerosene on himself, personnel deployed on bandobast duty outside the Secretariat caught him and took him to Marine Drive police station. Senior police inspector Vishwanath Kolekar at the police station said that they are still inquiring with the businessman. Gujar told the police that he is a businessman from Jalgaon. ENS



CHECKS AND BALANCES

Vaccination records of visitors being checked as malls open for the general public across the state on Sunday. According to the guidelines, only those who have got their second vaccine dose are allowed to enter. Deepak Joshi

NAMING OF NAVI MUMBAI AIRPORT

Committee calls off protest after meeting Scindia in Delhi

VALLABHOZARKAR

MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

THE NAVI Mumbai Airport All Party Action Committee, which was formed to demand the naming of the upcoming Navi International airport after late socialist leader DB Patil, has decided to withdraw its planned protest at the Navi Mumbai airport site where it had threatened to stop work on the project starting August 16.

The decision was taken after the committee members met Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation, in New Delhi.

Since May, several protests have been staged by thousands of villagers from Thane, Palghar and Raigad demanding that the under-construction airport be named after late PWP leader DB Patil and not after late Sena Supremo Balasaheb Thackeray, which was sanctioned earlier at a board meeting of the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO).

Earlier on June 24, after staging a huge rally against CIDCO in Navi Mumbai, the protesters said that if the state does not decide on naming the airport after Patil by August 15 they will stop con-

struction work from August 16.

According to Dashrath Patil, President of Navi Mumbai Airport All Party Action Committee, a delegation met with Scindia in New Delhi on Friday. Patil said Scindia took details of the project and expressed displeasure over CIDCO's hurry in naming the airport while the construction is still ongoing.

"He told us that the decision to name the airport will be taken when work on the project is complete. He assured us that our demands will be taken into consideration. He requested us not to stop the work of the airport and he will give us all the co-operation and hence, for now, we have decided not to protest on Monday. However, we also want to convey clearly, in future if any government be it the Centre or the state play with the protesters' emotions, then the protest will start again," Patil said.

BJP MLA from Panvel Prashant Thakur said, "The minister has assured us that when the airport will be named, we will be consulted and our demands will be considered. However, he said there is still a lot of time for the completion of the airport and till then we should wait and hence we have decided to cancel the protest on August 16 temporarily."

Mumbai now has zero containment zones, 267 new cases recorded

SANJANA BHALERAO

MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

WITH A steady decline in Covid-19 cases, Mumbai now has zero containment zones. The last two slum areas, which were under containment in the K-East ward covering areas like Andheri East, Marol, Sakinaka, were removed from the tag on Friday.

Containment zones are areas that have high population density and are sealed to prevent the further spread of the infection.

With a sharp slide in daily cases, civic officials said the numbers of containment zones and sealed floors and buildings have also decreased in the city. On April 17, when the city was going through the second wave of the pandemic, there were 100 containment zones and 1,188 sealed buildings in Mumbai.

As of Sunday, there are 26 sealed buildings or micro-containment zones — the lowest since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, 1,215 sealed floors and fewer than 3,000 active cases. Till last month, there were 60 sealed buildings and 5,000 active cases.

On Sunday, 267 new Covid cases were recorded and four deaths were reported. A steady decline was recorded in the number of daily cases since July. According to the data from BMC, there are 2,879 active cases in the city. The daily average of cases from each of the 24 wards has dropped to below 10.

Out of the 2,879 active cases, 720 are asymptomatic, 1,706 are symptomatic and

63.92 lakh

TOTAL POSITIVE CASES IN MAHARASHTRA

Active Cases	64,219
New Cases	4,797
Total Deaths	1,35,039
New Deaths	130
Quarantined	3.59 lakh
Tested	5.09 crore

7,39,331

TOTAL POSITIVE CASES IN MUMBAI

New Cases	262
Total Deaths	15,981
New Deaths	4

453 are critical. Meanwhile, 68,156 citizens across the city are quarantined in their homes.

"The number of daily cases is going down. However, all ward officers have been told to increase contact tracing. As most things are open in the city, there is a high risk of the virus spreading. The ward officers have also been directed to ramp up daily testing," said a senior BMC official. In the last 24 hours, 3,006 high-risk contacts of Covid-19 patients were traced.

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The New India Assurance Co. Ltd

CORRIGENDUM
Refer Advertisement published in Indian Express Group of newspapers on 15th August 2021. Due to inadvertent typographical error, "74" should be read as "75". Apologies for the unintentional error.
Date : 15th August, 2021. Place : Mumbai, India
Regd. & Head Office: 87, M.G. Road, Fort, Mumbai-400004.
CIN No. : L66000MH1919G01000526, IRDA Reg No : 190

STATE BANK OF INDIA
REGIONAL BUSINESS OFFICE ANDHERI
Snehal Chambers, Telli Galli, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400069

GOLD AUCTION NOTICE

The borrowers, in specific and the public, in general, are hereby notified that public auction of Gold ornaments pledge is proposed to be conducted at the following branches on below mention date. The auction is of Gold ornaments of defaulted customer who have failed to make payment of their loan amount despite being notified by registered letters. The change in venue or date (if any) will be displayed at the auction centre. Un-auctioned Gold items shall be auctioned on subsequent working days after displaying the details at auction centre.

The auction will be conducted on 18.08.2021 from 10AM onwards at the following branches of State Bank of India.

1) Andheri (East) Branch : RAJ CHAMBER, SETH NAGAR DAS ROAD, ANDHERI EAST, MUMBAI **2) Sakinaka (East) Branch :** SAKIVIHAR ROAD, LEKHRAJ BHAVAN, SAKINAKA, MUMBAI **3) Gokuldham (Virvani Indl) Branch :** B-2, SHAGUN MALL, FILM CITY ROAD, NEXT TO DINDOSHI BUS DEPOT, MALAD EAST, MUMBAI **4) Goregaon (East) Branch :** PLOT NO. 2, JAYPRAKASH NAGAR, JAYPRAKASH ROAD NO. 2, GOREGAON EAST, MUMBAI **5) Lokhandwala Complex Branch :** MONTAN APARTMENT, GROUND FLOOR, 2ND CROSS LANE, LOKHANDWALA COMPLEX, ANDHERI (WEST), MUMBAI **6) SBI Officers Quarters Gokuldham :** A-64, SBH OFFICERS' QUARTERS FLAT, GOREGAON (WEST), MUMBAI

Authorised Officer
For State Bank of India

KIDWAI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE OF ONCOLOGY
(Govt. of Karnataka Autonomous Institution)
Dr. M.H. Marigowda Road, Bengaluru - 560 029.
Regional Centre for Cancer Research & Treatment

No.: KMIO/AC/Fellowship/963/2021 Date: 13.08.2021

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from eligible candidates in prescribed format for the following Fellowship Programmes for academic year 2021-22 at Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bengaluru, affiliated to Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Sl. No.	Course	Eligibility	Duration	No. of Seats
1	Paediatric Medical Oncology	MD-General Medicine, MD/DNB-Paediatrics / DCH with 2 years of Experience	12 Months	2
2	Palliative Care	All Super Speciality / Board Speciality of clinical subjects / MBBS with Internship Completed by 31st August 2021	12 Months	4
3	Onco-Imaging	MD / DNB-Radiology / DMRD with 2 years of Experience	12 Months	4
4	Oral Onco - Surgery	MS / DNB (General Surgery) / MDS (Oral & Maxillo Facial Surgery), MS / DNB (ENT)	18 Months	4
5	Tumor Pathology	MD / DNB - Pathology	18 Months	4
6	Head & Neck Cancer Surgery	MS / DNB (General Surgery), MS / DNB (ENT)	18 Months	2

Written test and interview dates are as follows :

Sl. No.	Name of the Course-Fellowship	Date of Written test & Interview
1	Paediatric Medical Oncology, Palliative Care, Oral Onco Surgery	02.09.2021
2	Tumor Pathology, Onco Imaging, Head & Neck Cancer Surgery	03.09.2021

Preference will be given to sponsored candidates from the institutes affiliated to RGUHS.

Instruction : (1) Application form can be downloaded from official website: kmio.karnataka.gov.in. (2) Applicant should pay Rs. 4,000/- (non-refundable) per application per course programme by NEFT/RTGS to CANARA BANK, saving account No. 8409101104566, Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology Branch, Bengaluru. IFSC Code: CNRB0008409. (3) The Scanned (PDF Format) filled in application and relevant attested photocopy along with UTR/Transaction No. for payment of application fee should be sent by email to kmio_fellowship2021@yahoo.com with subject mentioned as "Application for Fellowship Programme 2021" before 5:00 pm on 25.08.2021. (4) Stipend will be paid for non sponsored candidates Rs. 60,000/- per month. (5) Course fee Rs. 1,00,000/- per year. (6) Written test will be conducted, at institute auditorium, at 9:00 A.M. (7) Based on the marks secured in written test, candidates will be called for interview on same day in the ratio of 1:4 for each seat at Director's Chamber. (8) Candidates should bring relevant original documents for verifications before appearing for written test. (9) Selected candidates has to join the institute by 07.09.2021 before 5:00 P.M. (10) Decision of the selection committee in the matter of selection is final. (11) Candidates are instructed not to over crowd the venue at the entry & exit area. (12) Due to prevailing COVID 19 pandemic, guidelines led by Govt. of Karnataka and Local administration should be followed strictly. RTPCR negative test report not lesser than 72 hours to be submitted at the time of written test.

For further details contact: Academic Cell: Ph.: 080-66697999, Extn.: 7301.
E-mail: kmio_fellowship2021@yahoo.com

DIPR/DDU/1174/2021-22 Sd/- Director

COVID-19 - DON'T SPREAD RUMOURS. ACT RESPONSIBLY, AVOID INFECTION-NOT THE INFECTED.

Wear Mask

6 Feet Follow Physical Distancing

Maintain Hand Hygiene



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

What Kabul means in Delhi

The Taliban have seized Kabul. What explains the capitulation of the US and Afghan forces? And what should India do in this crisis, given its past reluctance to talk with the Taliban?

EXPERT EXPLAINS

GAUTAM MUKHOPADHAYA

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



Taliban fighters raise their flag at the Governor's house in Ghazni. AP

WITH THE Taliban entering the outlying districts of Kabul on Sunday and issuing a formal declaration that they do not intend to conduct a witch-hunt against those with the Islamic Republic Government while it waited for the completion of a 'transition process', and amid parallel reports of efforts to form a transitional or interim government for 6 months, the wheel has come full circle on the post-9/11 US 'war on terror' in Afghanistan since 2001 and the country's experiment with an Islamic republic in 2004.

India should be a first responder in the current crisis for humanitarian and longer-term political reasons.

Why the capitulation

First reports from Kabul describe tension and doomsday fears, but no serious outbreaks of violence in the city. The immediate challenge is a massive humanitarian crisis on account of the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced who have left other war zones and taken shelter on pavements and parks in Kabul. The second is the panic and rush for passports and visas for those who fear for their lives from the Taliban or their sponsors. India should facilitate emergency visas and evacuation of those close to India who will be under threat. Outbreaks of violence and political persecution should be anticipated. The biggest losers in the transition will be Afghan women and youth who had tasted political, civic, economic and human rights and opportunities, and media freedoms.

Three questions loom uppermost in the minds of observers in India. First, what accounts for the near-total capitulation of the 300,000-350,000 US and NATO trained and equipped Afghan Army and Police forces, the ANDSF, without much of a fight barring a few honourable exceptions in Lashkargah, Herat and Taloqan, against lightly armed insurgents estimated to be around 60,000? Second, what can explain the US decision to pull out its troops unconditionally without waiting for a negotiated political settlement regardless of consequences that were almost entirely predictable other than the speed with which it occurred? And third, what can explain India's reluctance to engage the Taliban and what can it do?

It is too early for any firm or complete an-

swers to the first question. There is little doubt that the undermining of the September 2019 elections by the Zalmay Khalilzad-led US peace process while trying to force a 'transitional government' as part of the US-Taliban 'deal'; the contested elections and dysfunctional government that came out of it; and an increasingly discredited Ghani government were part of the problem, as was mismanagement of appointments in key security ministries, especially the Ministry of Defence.

Equally true is the fact that, despite clear intimations and notices of withdrawal of US support to President Ashraf Ghani and of US troops regardless of what Afghans felt, the Afghan Army was unprepared and caught by surprise by the Taliban offensive. Technical dependence on the US for air support, weapon systems, intelligence etc, psychological denial that they would indeed leave as they warned, a lack of military strategy, poor supplies and logistics, indefensible and thinly manned posts, unpaid salaries, phantom rolls, and a sense of betrayal, abandonment and demoralisation, all played a role in this.

Responsibility with US

More importantly, there were also structural reasons for their failure for which notwithstanding the sacrifices made by the West in Afghanistan, responsibility must lie with the US and NATO. To fit the US definition of the war on terror, and also for reasons of cost of developing such an army to NATO standards, the Afghan National Army was never really trained and equipped with the normal attributes of a national army capable of defending territory with adequate mobility, artillery, armour, engineering, logistics, intelligence, air support etc for rugged terrain; and infantry

battalions and doctrines designed for it. On the contrary, most of the effort went into grooming Special Forces units meant to recover targets of urban terrorist attacks, at which they acquitted themselves admirably, but not of offensive operations. In sum, they invested just enough for the war on terror, but not the defence of Afghanistan although it was perfectly aware of the connection between the two in the Pakistani role in nurturing the Taliban.

Pakistan also leveraged US dependence on ground lines of communication through Pakistan to ensure that the ANA remained stunted. Afghan authorities, aware of this, approached other countries for such equipment, but nothing that was not inter-operable and up to NATO standards would have been acceptable. Pakistani masterminds exploited this weakness since the Taliban regrouped in Pakistan and used it once the US was clearly on the way out. As a result, it was left to the limited number of Afghan Special Forces commando units to fight what was effectively a Pakistani invasion with an Afghan face and foreign fighters, most of all from Pakistan, from one theatre to another without adequate support.

US motives for literally abandoning a 20-year investment in blood, treasure and associates are more puzzling. First, it is arguable that after the end of the Soviet intervention and the fall of the Soviet Union, the US has never really considered Afghanistan of strategic importance. For all its \$1 trillion investment in Afghanistan and its awareness of Afghanistan's mineral wealth, the US never really invested in the Afghan economy or attempt to integrate it to its economic sphere of influence (including India) as it did after its interventions after World War II in Europe, East Asia and later in the oil economies of the Gulf.

Neither did it invest in Afghan democracy as an antidote to the kind of Taliban religious fundamentalism that is intrinsically linked to religious extremism and terrorism. Ironically, despite western attempts to portray the Afghan 'democracy' that came in its wake as a failure, the 20 years since the ouster of the Taliban, for all its flaws, have arguably been one of the most promising periods in Afghanistan's recent history in terms of education and capacity building in which India too played a major part. If one were to take just one metric, refugees, this was the one period when there was a net return of refugees and expatriates, not outflow of refugees that has now begun.

More baffling is why the US should cede strategic space in Afghanistan in the most vulnerable underbelly of its principal strategic rivals, Xinjiang for China, while it is working to contain it in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, the Central Asian Republics for Russia, and Iran to the west. One of the ironies of the US intervention in Afghanistan is that far from using Afghanistan strategically against its rivals in the region, it ended up effectively extending security against the Taliban for them.

Is it then possible that the primary motivation behind its decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is not fatigue from an endless war, but a cold-blooded decision to convert what was essentially a counter-terrorist operation against the al-Qaeda, that expanded to a limited counter-insurgency operation learning from the Iraq experience until President Barack Obama's 'surge', into a drawdown and training mission from Obama to Trump, into finally, an intelligence operation using the Taliban whose return it has legitimised and facilitated through the US-Taliban deal and its withdrawal, to destabilise the region to keep China, Russia, Iran, and possibly even Pakistan off-balance with Afghanistan, the Central Asian Republics and India as collateral damage?

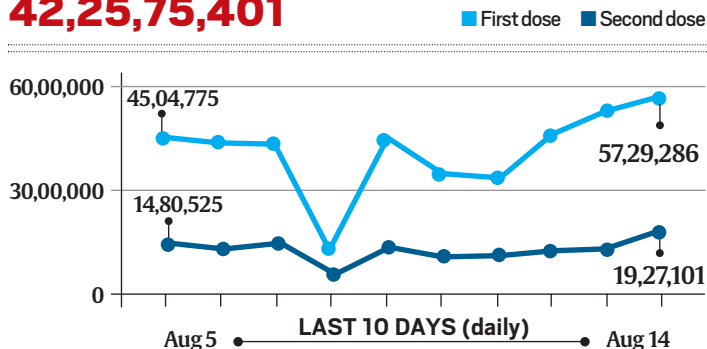
What next for India

Finally, what should India do under the circumstances? With the Taliban in Kabul, the old debate in India on whether to talk or not to the Taliban is now academic. The Taliban have proclaimed that there will be no witch hunt, that it will respect a transitional process, and that it will work for a 'future Islamic system... that is acceptable to all'.

Prudence dictates that we keep an open mind, wait and watch what they actually do during and after the transitional process, assess how inclusive they are in accommodating the gains of the last 20 years and the progressive principles of the Islamic Republic, judge the opposition to Taliban rule, and our security needs before we jump into any hasty recognition of an Islamic 'Emirate' which will have profound consequences for the region, the world and the US in particular.

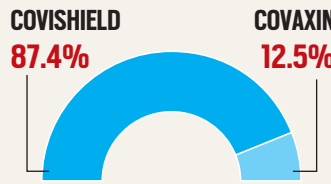
CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA (at least one dose)
42,25,75,401



TOTAL DOSES
54,38,46,290

(Sputnik V's 5,76,647 doses not represented in pie)

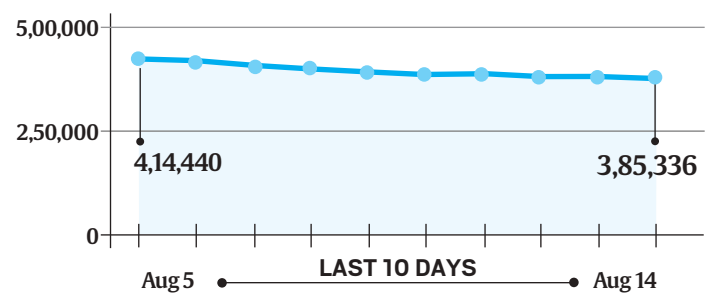


DOSES ON AUG 14 76,56,387

AUG 13: 66,06,947 (1ST DOSE: 52,16,759; 2ND: 13,90,188)

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

3,85,336



Note: The August 14 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on August 15

INDIA TOTAL CASES 3,21,92,576

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on August 15

In first wave in UK, 1 in 10 Covid patients were infected in hospital

MORE THAN 1 in 10 Covid-19 patients in 314 UK hospitals caught the infection in hospital during the first pandemic wave, say researchers. The research into hospital acquired infections (HAIs) has been published in *The Lancet*.

The researchers examined records of Covid-19 patients in UK hospitals enrolled in the International Severe Acute Respiratory and emerging Infections Consortium (ISARIC) Clinical Characterisation Protocol UK (CCP-UK) study, who became ill before 1st August 2020.

They found that at least 11.1% of Covid-19 patients in 314 UK hospitals were infected after admission. The proportion of Covid-19 patients infected in hospital also rose to between 16% and 20% in mid-May 2020, long after the peak of admissions in the first wave. The researchers said: "We estimate between 5,699 and 11,862 patients admitted in the first wave were infected during their stay in hospital. This is, unfortunately, likely to be an underestimate, as we did not include patients who may have been infected but discharged before they could be diagnosed."

In a press release, Lancaster University quoted lead author Dr Jonathan Read as saying: "Controlling

viruses like SARS-CoV-2 has been difficult in the past, so the situation could have been much worse. However, infection control should remain a priority in hospitals and care facilities."

Dr Chris Green from the University of Birmingham was quoted as saying: "There are likely to be a number of reasons why many patients were infected

in these care settings. These include the large numbers of patients admitted to hospitals with limited facilities for case isolation, limited access to rapid and reliable diagnostic testing in the early stages of the outbreak, the challenges around access to and best use of PPE, our understanding of when patients are most infectious in their illness, some misclassification of cases due to presentation with atypical symptoms, and an under-appreciation of the role of airborne transmission."

There were marked differences in the numbers of patients infected in hospital according to the type of care provided. Hospitals providing acute and general care had lower proportions of hospital acquired infections (9.7%) than residential community care hospitals (61.9%) and mental health hospitals (67.5%), which reflects the outbreaks seen in care-homes.

Source: Lancaster University



PAPER CLIP
NEW RESEARCH

46 yrs ago, another US exit and fall of Saigon

OM MARATHE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

ON SOCIAL media, the Taliban's march to Kabul is being likened to the 'fall of Saigon' — a reference to 1975 when the capital of US-backed South Vietnam fell to Communist-ruled North Vietnam two years after the withdrawal of US military presence of 19 years.

Saigon's capture on April 30, 1975 (it was later renamed Ho Chi Minh City) signalled the end of the Vietnam War, and the Communists consolidated their hold over the entire country in the next few months — just as security analysts fear the Taliban would do in Afghanistan in the near future.

What happened in the Vietnam War leading to the fall of Saigon?

The Vietnam War (1954-75) left 58,000 Americans and 2,50,000 Vietnamese dead, and ended with the US being thrown out of the country. From 1954, when North Vietnam's General Vo Nguyen Giap defeated French colonial troops at Dien Bien Phu, the war raged for 21 years until Giap defeated the Americans and the South Vietnamese at Saigon.

When Saigon fell, TV and the next morning's newspapers showed large groups of Americans, soldiers and civilians on the roof of the US Embassy, waiting to be rescued by military helicopters. As each US helicopter was overfilled and rose a few feet, dozens

clung to its skids and jumped down on aircraft carriers before the helicopter could land.

That very day, four hours after a US helicopter evacuated the last of a dozen Americans, the National Liberation Front (the Communists) captured the city. Saigon surrendered unconditionally, ending 120 years of foreign occupation.

What position did India take?

Then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi congratulated the North on its victory.

The Indian Express reported at the time: "In a veiled criticism of the foreign policy attitudes associated with Dr Henry Kissinger, Indira Gandhi said that the balance of power model certainly did not provide an answer.

The idea that four or five or six great powers interacting among themselves could preserve peace in the world was an extension of the ideas developed in Europe in the 19th century. The world has become extremely complex."

Indira Gandhi's statement reflected what had been India's position on Vietnam since she had become Prime Minister nine years earlier. In 1966, when she went on a state visit to the US, she refused to tell President Lyndon Johnson that India "shared America's agony over Vietnam" — as had been the wish of her top advisors. "All she was prepared to say to LBJ was: 'India understands your agony,'" the late journalist Inder Malhotra wrote in a 2015 column in this paper.

Tribunal reforms: what's abolished, what happens to pending cases

APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE SUPREME COURT RECENTLY expressed its discontentment over the functioning of tribunals in the country, given that several of these important quasi-judicial bodies are understaffed. In a hearing on August 6, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana asked the government if it intends to shut down tribunals that have several key vacant posts. This came days after Lok Sabha passed a Bill to dissolve at least eight tribunals.

What is the Bill about?

The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021 replaces a similar Ordinance promulgated in April 2021 that sought to dissolve eight tribunals that functioned as appellate bodies to hear disputes under various statutes, and transferred their functions to existing judicial forums such as a civil court or a High Court.

The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and was passed on August 3 amid protests by the Opposition over the Pegasus issue.

The Bill states that the Chairpersons and

Members of the tribunal being abolished shall cease to hold office, and they will be entitled to claim compensation equivalent to three months' pay and allowances for their premature termination.

It also proposes changes in the process of appointment of certain other tribunals.

What are these changes?

While the Bill provides for uniform pay and rules for the search and selection committees across tribunals, it also provides for removal of tribunal members. It states that the central government shall, on the recommendation of the Search-cum-Selection Committee, remove from office any Chairperson or a Member, who—

(a) has been adjudged as an insolvent; or
(b) has been convicted of an offence which involves moral turpitude; or
(c) has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as such Chairperson or Member; or

(d) has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially his functions as such Chairperson or Member; or

(e) has so abused his position as to ren-

EIGHT TRIBUNALS DISSOLVED VIA BILL

Act under which Tribunal was set up	Abolished tribunal	Where disputes are heard after abolition
The Cinematograph Act, 1952	Film Certification Appellate Tribunal	High Court
The Trade Marks Act, 1999	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court
The Copyright Act, 1957	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	Commercial Division of High Court
The Customs Act, 1962	Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal	High Court
The Patents Act, 1970	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court
The Airports Authority of India Act, 1994	Airports Appellate Tribunal	<div> <div></div> Central government (disposal of properties on airport premises left by unauthorised occupants) </div> <div> <div></div> High Court (appeals against eviction orders) </div>
The Control of National Highways (Land & Traffic) Act, 2002	The National Highways Tribunal	Civil Court
The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999	Intellectual Property Appellate Board	High Court

der his continuance in office prejudicial to the public interest.

Chairpersons and judicial members of tribunals are former judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court. While the move brings greater accountability on the functioning of the tribunals, it also raises questions on the independence of these judicial bodies.

In the Search-cum-Selection Committee for state tribunals, the Bill brings in the Chief Secretary of the state and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission of the concerned state who will have a vote and Secretary or Principal Secretary of the state's General Administrative Department with no voting right. This gives the government a foot in the door in the process. The Chief Justice of the High Court, who would head the committee, will not have a casting vote.

What are the tribunals that are being dissolved?

Among the key ones are the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) under the Cinematograph Act, 1952; the Intellectual Property Appellate Board under the Copyrights Act, 1957; and the Customs Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal.

The government has said that analysis of data of the last three years has shown that tribunals in several sectors have not necessarily led to faster justice delivery and they are also at a considerable expense to the exchequer. This has led to the decision to rationalise the functioning of tribunals, a process that it began in 2015.

India now has 16 tribunals including the National Green Tribunal, the Armed Forces Appellate Tribunal, the Debt Recovery Tribunal among others which also suffer from crippling vacancies as the SC has noted.

What happens to cases pending before the tribunals dissolved?

These cases will be transferred to High Courts or commercial civil courts immediately. Legal experts have been divided on the efficacy of the government's move. While on the one hand, the cases might get a faster hearing and disposal if taken to High Courts, experts fear that the lack of specialisation in regular courts could be detrimental to the decision-making process. For example, the FCAT exclusively heard decisions appealing against decisions of the censor board, which requires expertise in art and cinema.

6 GOVT & POLITICS

RSS chief: Will have to bow to China if dependence rises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

IF DEPENDENCE on China increases, we will have to bow before it, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Sunday.

Speaking after hoisting the national flag at a Mumbai school, Bhagwat also said "swadeshi" means doing business on India's terms. "We use the Internet and technology a lot. Our country does not have the original technology. It comes from outside," he said. "No matter how much we shout as a society about China and boycott Chinese items, but from where does everything that is in your mobiles come from? If the dependence on China increases, then [we] will have to bow before China," Bhagwat said.

Economic security is important, he said, adding the adaptation of technology should be



PTI

Bhagwat after hoisting the flag at a Mumbai school.

based on our terms. "We have to be swa-nirbhar," he said. "Swadeshi does not mean ignoring everything else. International trade will remain, but on our terms," he said. We have to be self-reliant for that, he added. "What we can manufacture at home should not be brought from the market," he said.

"We are not against international trade but our production must be in villages. It should not be mass production but production by masses," he said.

AT HOME



During the At Home ceremony, President Ram Nath Kovind greets the service chiefs — Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria; Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh; Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane; and Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat. PTI

In CMs' I-Day speeches: Population control, health cards, water disputes

GREETING PEOPLE on the 75th Independence Day, Chief Ministers in the country Sunday made a number of announcements, put out promises, and also issued Covid-19 cautions. A snapshot of some speeches:

PUNJAB

'Dalit welfare law soon'

Amritsar: Months before Assembly polls, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced that a law will be enacted soon to ensure budgetary spending on the welfare of Dalits in proportion to their population. The CM also vowed to protect the state against "heinous designs" of Pakistan and said "we want peace but won't tolerate any aggression". Singh pledged to continue fighting with farmers for the repeal of the Centre's farm laws. PTI

BIHAR

Civils scheme expanded

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Sunday announced that the state government's incentives to OBCs and EBCs for Bihar Public Service Commission and Union Public Service Commission examinations will be extended to all sections of society. Under this scheme, the government gives Rs 50,000 to candidates who clear BPSC examinations prelims and Rs 1 lakh to those who clear UPSC prelims. This comes as almost all Opposition parties and JD(U) itself mount pressure on the Centre to carry out a caste-based count in the 2021 census. SANTOSH SINGH

UTTARAKHAND

'Population law coming'

Dehradun: Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami announced a committee that would help implement effective law on population control in the state. Dhami cited climate change concerns as the reason for the move. In a recent meeting with the ruling BJP, leaders from different affiliates of the RSS had suggested that the Dhami government come up with a population control policy in Uttarakhand similar to Assam and UP to ensure "demographic balance". LALMANI VERMA

WEST BENGAL

'Strengthening voices against forces stifling freedom'

Kolkata: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee called for strengthening voices against forces that try to stifle freedom. Banerjee also penned a song, "Desh ta sobar nijer" (This country belongs to us all), which she shared on Facebook. "On the 75th Independence Day, let us all come together to strengthen our voices against all forces that aim to stifle our freedom..." she tweeted. SANTANU CHOWDHURY

RAJASTHAN

'Must give befitting reply to forces spreading hatred'

Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said there is a need to give a "befitting reply" to the "forces spreading hate." The CM



Partha Paul



PTI



PTI



PTI

(From top) The parade at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata in front of a 150x50 ft flag made by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute; Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai at the Independence Day function in Bengaluru; Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hoists the Tricolour in Lucknow; and Chief Minister Amarinder Singh inspects the parade in Amritsar.

UTTAR PRADESH

'Duty is our religion'

Lucknow: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath recalled the contribution of UP in the freedom struggle, from Jhansi to Ballia, Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur to Kakori in Lucknow. He said that while our faith can be personal and our method of worship can be specific, when it comes to the nation, our duty becomes our religion. MAULSHREE SETH

KARNATAKA

'Will resolve water issues'

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said he is committed to resolving all water disputes including the Mekedatu balancing reservoir across Cauvery river, Mahadayi drinking water project and the third stage of the Krishna Upper project. "We have to complete the third stage of Upper Krishna project to irrigate 5.5 lakh hectares," Bommai said. PTI

GOA

'No Mahadayi compromise'

Panaji: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said all Goans will get 16,000 litres of free water from September 1. The announcement comes before the Goa polls next year. He said the government would make no compromise in the Mhadei river water dispute. While the Supreme Court had dismissed Goa's plea on mining activities, Sawant said livelihoods

dependent on mining will be revived with the state mining corporation. MAYURA JANWALKAR

HARYANA

Khattar lauds Olympians

Chandigarh: Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar hoisted the Tricolour and recalled the supreme sacrifice made by those who laid down their lives for the country, including Subhas Chandra Bose, Ram Prasad Bismil, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev and Chandrashekhar Azad. He lauded the Olympians from the state, saying three of the seven medals at the Games were won by residents of the state. "Winning one gold, one silver and one bronze medal in individual competitions, Haryanvis have made the state and country proud," he said. SUKHBIR SIWACH

CHHATTISGARH

Four new dists announced

Raipur: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel announced four new districts and 18 new tehsils in the state. The new districts would be carved out of bigger districts within a year, the chief minister said. The addition of Manpur Mohla, Manendragarh, Sarangadh-Bhilaigadh and Sakti takes the number of districts in the state to 34. GARGI VERMA

MADHYA PRADESH

'Will bring 27% BC quota'

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh government will leave no stone unturned for implementing 27 per cent reservation for backward classes in the state, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said as he announced a commission to study its economic, social and educational impact and give recommendations to improve their condition. He also announced measures for STs. IRAM SIDDIQUE

GUJARAT

Cooking gas for 5L families

Rajkot: Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said 5 lakh households will be given cooking gas connections, and announced an increase in government funding to municipalities and the introduction of a ranking system to encourage efficiency. The CM also announced a scheme for augmenting capacity of municipalities in the state so that they can distribute water among town residents daily. He inaugurated 10,000 body cameras and 15 drone cameras purchased by the police, adding that Gujarat was the first state to purchase such equipment. GOPAL KATESHIYA

ODISHA

Health cards launched

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched smart health cards aimed at benefiting 3.5 crore people in the state. Beneficiaries of national and state food security schemes, and Annapurna and Antyodaya initiatives will get the cards under which women can avail treatment up to Rs 10 lakh per year and other family members will get the benefit up to Rs 5 lakh each. AISHWARYA MOHANTY

PM announces rice fortification plan to tackle malnutrition

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

SAYING MALNUTRITION poses "major obstacles" in the development of women and children, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced the fortification of rice distributed under various government schemes, including the Public Distribution System and mid-day meals in schools, by 2024.

Addressing the nation from the Red Fort on Independence Day, Modi said, "Malnutrition and lack of essential nutrients in poor women and poor children poses major obstacles in their development. In view of this, it has been decided that the government will fortify the rice given to the poor under its various schemes. Be it the rice available at ration shops or the rice provided to children in their mid-day meals, the rice available through every scheme will be fortified by year 2024."

The announcement is significant as the country has high levels of malnutrition among women and children. According to the Food Ministry, every second woman in the country is anaemic and every third child is stunted. India ranks 94 out of 107 countries and is in the 'serious hunger' category on the Global Hunger Index.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), that sets standards for food items in the country, defines fortification as "deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health".

According to FSSAI norms, 1 kg fortified rice will contain iron (28 mg-42.5 mg), folic acid (75-125 microgram) and Vitamin B-12 (0.75-1.25 microgram). In addition, rice may also be fortified with micronutrients, singly or in combination, with zinc (10 mg-15 mg), Vitamin A (500-750 microgram RE), Vitamin B1 (1 mg-1.5 mg), Vitamin B2 (1.25 mg-1.75 mg), Vitamin B3 (12.5 mg-20 mg) and Vitamin B6 (15 mg-2.5 mg) per kg.

The government distributes over 300 lakh tonnes of rice under various schemes covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013. For 2021-22, the Centre has allocated 328 lakh tonnes of rice under NFSA.

In 2019-20, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched a pilot scheme on 'Fortification of Rice and its Distribution under PDS' for three years with a budget outlay of Rs 174.64 crore. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



PM Narendra Modi pays tribute at the samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat on Sunday. ANI

Critical decisions being taken to benefit small farmers: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

OBSERVING THAT more than 80 per cent of the farmers have less than two hectares of land, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that agricultural reforms and "critical decisions" are being undertaken keeping in mind these small farmers, as he coined a new slogan – "*Chhota kisan, bane desh ki shaan*" (small farmer becomes the nation's pride)".

Addressing the nation, Modi said: "We need to take cognizance of a major challenge posed in our agriculture sector. Challenge of shrinking of land of villagers which is due to immense rise in population, and smaller land holdings due to the divisions happening in the family. Farming land has shrunk alarmingly."

"More than 80 per cent of the farmers of the country are those who have less than two hectares of land. If we see, 80 out of 100 farmers have less than two hectares of land i.e. the farmers of

our country are practically in the small farmer category," he said.

"Unfortunately, small farmers remained excluded from the benefits of the yesteryear's policies in the country. They did not get their due importance. Now, keeping in mind these small farmers in the country, agricultural reforms are being undertaken, and critical decisions are being taken to benefit them," the Prime Minister said.

Listing initiatives like change in the crop insurance scheme or increasing the minimum support price by "one and a half times", he said, "All these efforts will increase the power of the small farmer."

A campaign will also be launched to create a warehouse facility up to the block level, the Prime Minister said. He said the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana is being run keeping in mind the "small expenses" of every small farmer. "So far, more than 1.5 lakh crore has been deposited directly into the bank accounts of more than 10 crore farmer families," he said. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

75 Vande Bharat trains to connect country in 75 weeks, says PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday announced that 75 'Vande Bharat' trains will connect different parts of the country in 75 weeks to mark the ongoing 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

During his address, he termed as unprecedented said the way UDAN scheme was connecting far-flung areas and the speed at which new airports are being built. "The country has re-

solved that 75 Vande Bharat trains will be connecting every corner of the country in 75 weeks of Amrit Mahotsav of Independence," he said.

The Railways gearing to roll out at least 10 Vande Bharat indigenous semi-high speed train set, linking around 40 cities, by August 2022. The PM also talked about boosting rail connectivity in the northeast region, saying it is significant for the country. PTI

National Hydrogen Mission launched

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

IN HIS eighth speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort, marking celebrations of the 75th year of Indian independence on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the government is focusing on meeting its climate targets and towards this end, he announced the National Hydrogen Mission.

"Our efforts are showing results," the PM said, adding that from an increase in forest cover, to increasing populations of tigers and Asiatic lions – the country is making strides in the environment sector adding, "We are giving equal emphasis to

Environmental Security as to National Security. Be it biodiversity or land neutrality, climate change or waste recycling, organic farming, India is progressing in all these sectors."

"We have already announced a target of achieving 450 GW Renewable Energy by 2030, and I am happy to say that out of this we have already achieved 100 GW ahead of time," he said.

"The National Hydrogen Mission and the green hydrogen sector will give us a quantum jump in meeting our climate targets. We have to make India a green hydrogen hub, and this will also lead to a clean energy transition," he said.

Green hydrogen is produced

by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using an electrolyzer powered by electricity from renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

"India is not energy independent. It spends over Rs 12 lakh crore on importing energy. We need to become energy independent before 100 years of independence is completed," he said. Modi said that this can be achieved through various schemes.

Modi further said that Indian Railways had targeted 2030 to attain net zero emissions. He further said that a circular economy was being emphasised by the government to achieve its environment goals, including schemes such as the new vehicles scrappage policy.

Haryana BKU says 5,000 vehicles participated in farmers' Tiranga Yatra to Delhi border

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 15

HARYANA FARMERS protesting the Centre's farm laws celebrated Independence Day on Sunday by undertaking Tiranga Yatras in several parts of Haryana.

A Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson claimed that nearly 5,000 vehicles – mainly motorcycles – participated in a Tiranga Yatra from Pipli town in

Kurukshetra district to Delhi's Singhu border. Farmers from Karnal, Panipat and Sonapat also participated in the cavalcade.

Before heading to the national capital, Haryana BKU chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni laid the foundation stone of the Kisan Kranti Chowk at Pipli.

In Uchana – the Assembly constituency of Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala – farmers carried out a Tiranga Yatra on their tractors, with women also

driving some of the vehicles.

Ministers in the BJP-JJP government in Haryana did not unfurl the national flag in seven "troubled districts" of the state – Kaithal, Rohtak, Sirsa, Kurukshetra, Jind, Hisar and Sonapat – reportedly due to the intense protest by farmers at both public and party events. Instead, senior bureaucrats, mainly deputy commissioners, unfurled the Tricolour in these districts.

CBI: Rs 5 lakh for info on Dhanbad judge’s death

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE CBI has announced a reward of Rs 5 lakh for information related to the alleged murder of Dhanbad Additional Sessions Judge Uttam Anand. “If any person is having any kind of knowledge/information of importance related to this murder, he/she may kindly inform CBI, Special Crime-I, New Dethi, Camp CSIR Satkar Guest House, Dhanbad on the phone numbers given below. Cash reward of Rs 5,00,000... will be given to the person who will furnish worthwhile information relating to the crime,” a CBI notice issued on Sunday said.

The information has to be given to Investigating Officer of the case SP Vijay Shukla on numbers 7827728856, 011-24368640 and 011-24368641, the CBI said, adding that the name of the informant will be kept secret.

Dhanbad Additional Sessions Judge Uttam Anand died on July 28 after being knocked down by an auto-rick-

Chota Shakeel’s brother booked for ‘threatening’ developer, 2 others held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

THE MUMBAI crime branch on Saturday booked gangster Chota Shakeels brother Anwar and arrested two other persons for allegedly threatening a developer from western suburbs. The arrested persons have been identified as Arbaz Shaikh and Kamran Sayyed.

An officer from the Anti Extortion Cell said, “An area in Oshiwara has been under redevelopment since 2016. Shaikh claims that he and his relatives own six houses in the area. However, as per documents available, he has only one house, due to which there is a dispute be-

3 held by DRI for ‘role in gold smuggling racket’

SAGARRAJPUT
MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

THE DIRECTORATE of Revenue Intelligence late Friday arrested three persons for allegedly being a part of an international gold smuggling syndicate.

The men, identified as Ayyambalath Razakh, Kader Mohideen and Prakash Dhariwal, were arrested in connection with a consignment that was intercepted on August 2 at International Courier Terminal in Mumbai. The interception had led to the recovery of 5.252 kg gold valued at Rs 2.33 crore.

The agency said that during the investigation they learnt that Razakh was handling the affairs of the gold smuggling syndicate while Mohideen and Dhariwal were an integral part of the racket.

Following the seizure on August 2, DRI officials came to know that the seized consignment was imported from Dubai on the name of one Arihant Tex and was to be delivered at its Chennai’s address.

“Following the seizure, a team was sent to the address in Chennai. After reaching there we learnt that a couple were running a tailoring business from that address. When we inquired with them, they told us they were operating from there for the past two years,” sources in the DRI said.

The couple said they had rented the place from one Prakash Dhariwal. During further inquiry with regard to a company named Arihant Tex, the couple revealed that Dhariwal was operating that company from their rented address.

DRI officials then learnt that similar consignments had earlier been delivered at their address and Dhariwal would coordinate with the delivery boy and pick up the consignment the same day.

The agency subsequently summoned Dhariwal, who said that while the consignment was



The interception had led to the recovery of 5.252 kg gold valued at Rs 2.33 crore.

being delivered at his address, it was meant for a person named Vijji and another arrested accused Kader Mohideen who would pay him Rs 1000 to collect the consignment on their behalf.

Subsequently, Kader was summoned for questioning, and he stated that he was approached by one Ayyambalath Razakh through Vijji and asked for the import export code (IEC) of a GST registered company. Razakh was also called for questioning and confessed to knowing the role of Arihant Tex in the smuggling business. He said he got eight other consignments pertaining to Arihant Tex cleared in the past.

DRI officials were told that the consignment belongs to one Roshan, who is based in the UAE but is originally from Calicut in Kerala. Razakh told DRI officials that he came in contact with Roshan through a friend, Sulaiman Purayil, and he received Rs 30,000 for clearance of every consignment.

After ascertaining the facts of the racket through their statements, DRI officials arrested Razakh, Mohideen and Dhariwal under section 135 of Customs Act 1962. The trio were brought to Mumbai on transit remand. They were produced before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on Sunday and remanded in judicial custody till August 27.

Unrest over ex-militant’s death: Meghalaya Home Minister quits

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 15

PUTTING THE Meghalaya government in a spot, the state’s Home Minister Lakhmen Rymbui Sunday submitted his resignation and called for a judicial probe “to bring out the truth” behind the killing of a surrendered militant of the outlawed Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC), Cherisherfield Thangkhiw, in a police operation two days ago.

Rymbui’s resignation came hours after the state government banned mobile and data internet services for 48 hours in four districts, and imposed a curfew in the capital Shillong, due to a “serious breakdown of law and order” following the death of Thangkhiw.

According to police, Thangkhiw was allegedly involved in an IED blast that injured two in Shillong last week, and was killed in “retaliatory firing” in the early hours of August 13 in an operation at his home in Shillong’s Mawla.

Following the incident, tensions have been brewing in the state, with Thangkhiw’s family

describing the killing as “cold-blooded murder” and local residents accusing the police of conducting a “fake encounter”.

On Sunday, hundreds joined Thangkhiw’s funeral procession in Shillong, and local organisations called for a “black flag day” to protest his killing. On Saturday, the Hynniewtrep Youths’ Council (HYC) had put up banners in Shillong demanding justice for the slain militant.

Around 10.30 pm, petrol bombs were hurled by unidentified miscreants at Chief Minister Conrad Sangma’s private residence in Upper Shillong area, government sources said. No damages were reported.

Meanwhile, pictures of damaged vehicles, including a black SUV set ablaze by unknown miscreants, as well as videos of stone-pelting by masked men dressed in black, have been circulating on social media.

Government sources told *The Indian Express* that the damaged SUV had been requisitioned by the police. “A crowd gheraoed the vehicle and the police personnel inside had no choice but to flee for their lives. Later, the miscreants drove the vehicle around the city, shouting slogans

and brandishing arms. After that, it was damaged and set ablaze,” sources said.

Meghalaya Police did not respond to calls and messages from *The Indian Express* seeking comment. “The situation is dynamic and we are on the highest alert since some unruly elements seem to be taking advantage of the situation,” said a state official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

In his resignation letter to CM Sangma, Rymbui expressed shock at the killing of Thangkhiw “following the raid of police at his residence exceeding the lawful tenets of the law”.

Rymbui asked the Chief Minister to accept his resignation “considering the gravity of the situation”. “This will facilitate a free and fair enquiry taken by the government to bring out the truth of the incident. I propose a judicial inquiry be conducted,” he wrote.

In a video statement, he said he had taken the step after consultation with his party’s leadership. Rymbui belongs to the United Democratic Party, which is an ally of Sangma’s National People’s Party in the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance government.

Earlier Sunday, an order from Isawanda Laloo, DC, East Khasi

Hills district, said that a curfew under section 144 of the CrPc would be in effect in Shillong from 8 pm Sunday to 5 am Tuesday on account of “incidents of stone-pelting, arson and theft, and a serious breakdown of law and order in parts of Shillong city”.

Another notification issued by C V D Diengdoh, Secretary, Home Department, said mobile internet services would be banned for 48 hours in East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, South West Khasi Hills and Ri-Bhoi because of “incidents of vandalism and arson”.

The 54-year-old Thangkhiw, considered by security officials as one of Meghalaya’s most dreaded militants, was the founding general secretary of the separatist HNLC and had surrendered before Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong in Shillong in October 2018.

The HNLC, which demands a sovereign Khasi homeland in Meghalaya, is a breakaway faction of the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALC), the first militant tribal outfit of the state, of which Thangkhiw was a founding member.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com



A FIRST FOR CPM

CPI(M) leaders Biman Bose, Sujan Chakraborty, Md Salim and others hoist the Tricolour at the party’s state headquarters in Kolkata. This is the first time since its formation that the party has celebrated Independence Day by hoisting the Tricolour. Partha Paul

SNOOPING ALLEGATIONS

Former RSS ideologue moves SC to revive 2019 plea for FIR

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

FORMER RSS ideologue K N Govindacharya has moved the Supreme Court urging it to revive a petition filed by him in 2019 – and later withdrawn – seeking registration of an FIR and a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe against Facebook, WhatsApp and Pegasus spyware maker NSO Group, over alleged snooping charges.

In his fresh plea, Govindacharya sought a “fair, impartial and responsible investigation to ascertain the magnitude of use of Pegasus in India, and the entities responsible for the same”.

He termed it “illegal surveillance” and added it “presents the biggest threat to life and personal liberty, and is in fact cyber terrorism, which is punishable under S. 66 F of the Information



KN Govindacharya

Technology Act, 2000”.

Govindacharya had approached the top court in 2019 following revelations by WhatsApp that phones of several Indian citizens were hacked using the Pegasus software.

He had also sought perjury proceedings against WhatsApp for allegedly “misleading” the court in an earlier proceeding by saying that user data is fully encrypted and no one, including WhatsApp, has the key.

The application is likely to be listed for hearing by the court, which is set to take up a clutch of petitions seeking an independent probe in the snooping allegations on August 16.

RUCKUS IN RAJYA SABHA

Ministers’ delegation meets Venkaiah, demands action against Opp leaders

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

WITH VICE President M Venkaiah Naidu considering taking action against Opposition members in Rajya Sabha for unruly behaviour on the last day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament on August 11, a delegation of seven ministers on Sunday met him and submitted a memorandum.

Sources said during their meeting with Naidu, who is also the Rajya Sabha Chairman, the ministers’ delegation “demanded action against some opposition members for, what they called, unprecedented, extreme and violent acts in the House” on August 11. An official said a “memorandum was submitted in this regard to the Chairman”. During the meeting, the ministers “also referred to marshals



M Venkaiah Naidu

being prevented from discharging their duties”, the official said.

Naidu said “he will examine the matter for deciding on appropriate course of action”, the official said.

According to sources, Naidu has consulted former and serving senior officials of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat to look at what the precedent allows, and what kind of a committee can recommend action.

Deshbhakti curriculum rollout in Delhi schools on Sept 27: Kejriwal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE DESHBHAKTI curriculum will be implemented in schools across Delhi starting September 27 to mark freedom fighter Bhagat Singh’s birth anniversary, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday.

He was speaking at the flag hoisting ceremony at Delhi Secretariat on Independence Day. Five tricolours installed in different parts of the city were also inaugurated by the government to “instill patriotism among people”.

While Kejriwal inaugurated the flag at East Kidwai Nagar later in the day, the others have been installed at Kalkaji, Patparganj, Rani Bagh and Dwarka.

The city will see around 490 more such flags come up across the city at a budget of over Rs 90 crore, PWD tender documents show. “When we see the Tiranga, we get goosebumps, and our hearts are filled with love and pride towards the nation. Five hundred similar Tirangas will be installed all around Delhi. When you leave for office, you will see

one or two national flags by the time you reach office. In the hustle and bustle of daily life, we often forget about our country. These flags will act as a constant reminder of our love and patriotism towards the nation,” he said.

Speaking about the deshbhakti curriculum, Kejriwal said it aims to inculcate patriotism among children. “This is not something that will require rote learning. Children will be told about the stories of the nation. There will be discussions about their responsibilities and duties to the nation, and how they can contribute,” he said.

The curriculum was adopted by the State Council of Educational Research and Training last week.

He also spoke about healthcare and frontline workers who lost their lives during the pandemic and paid tribute to them.

In a speech that lasted close to an hour, the CM spoke about the various interventions in school education in the last year. He also said the free-of-cost yoga classes will start in parks and community halls in several parts of the city on October 2.

UP cops arrest Chennai man for remarks against PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, CHENNAI

UTTAR PRADESH Police have arrested a 60-year-old man in Chennai for making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media.

A case was lodged in this connection at Jaunpur City Kotwali

police station last week following which a police team visited Chennai and arrested Manmohan Mishra from his home on Friday.

Circle Officer, City (Jaunpur), Jitendra Kumar Dubey said on Sunday that the accused is being brought to Jaunpur on transit remand. The case was registered under IPC section 505 (statements relating to public mischief). The

police also invoked provisions of Information Technology Act and Epidemic Disease Act. The police refused to share details of the case.

According to a senior officer in Tamil Nadu Police, they were informed about the arrest by the UP Police team. “A native of Jaunpur, Mishra was settled in Chennai for the past 30 years. He was living with family at Madhavaram in

Chennai suburbs,” said an officer. “Fluent in Tamil as well, Mishra was working as an agent for north Indian labourers and families in Chennai to avail government services and certificates. We were informed about the charge against him but we do not know the exact content of the video against the Prime Minister, which is in Hindi.”

IN INDIA TO ASSESS SITUATION, SEE IF IT’S SAFE TO RETURN, SAYS AFGHAN OFFICIAL

Flight from Kabul lands: ‘No one saw this turnaround’

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

A FLIGHT from Kabul arrived in Delhi late Sunday evening, bringing with it Indian nationals as well as members of the collapsed Afghan government.

The Air India flight left Kabul at 6:06 pm and landed in Delhi around 8 pm.

Shiv Kiran, a resident of Hyderabad who was in Kabul on a business trip, said it was life as usual in the city until the time he left. “I had gone there on Monday as I had a few business commitments I had to fulfill. This flight was my pre-booked flight... While I was in Kabul, I was listening to the news and talking to my local business partners there. No one expected this turnaround. They thought the President would fight back... It was regular, normal day life in



An Afghan national who took the Air India flight from Kabul, at the IGI Airport in Delhi on Sunday. Abhinav Saha

Kabul, there was no sense of the conflict outside in the city till this morning... My family was worried though because they were following the news from here,” Kiran told *The Indian Express*.

Some members of the Afghan government arriving in Delhi said they rushed to India to assess the situation and judge if it will be safe for them in their country under the Taliban.

“People were very scared because we have seen the violence of the Taliban 20 years ago and that was very bad, but this time it does not seem so violent. I have come here to see what the situation is like for a week or 10 days, and then hopefully I can go back. I decided to leave today itself... My family members are still there, they could not get their visas done, but I could come because of my diplomatic visa,” said Rizwanullah Ahmadzai, who was senior advisor on public health to the President.

Ahmadzai said that embassies were active as of Sunday, working on issuing visas but that these were likely to close down in the next few days.

Among the Afghan nationals to arrive in Delhi on Sunday night was MP from Pakтия province Sayed Hassan Paktiawal, who claimed he had come to Delhi to attend some

meetings.

“I didn’t want to leave the country but we have meetings here. Hopefully I can go back soon... Taliban are not like before so I hope everything will be all right but right now the situation is very bad, especially tonight. All of Afghanistan is now under Taliban, including Pakтия, from where I have come,” he said.

Another MP Abdul Qadir Zazai also claimed that he had arrived as a matter of routine.

“I have not left because of the current situation. I have come here for a few days to meet my friends, do business... The future looks 50-50. As for the government, the senior positions will all cease to exist – the lower level of government employees will reportedly be there for 6 months under the interim government – but regarding our safety, as per their [Taliban] declaration, everyone will be safe,” he said.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

INDIA’S ROAD AHEAD: THE CHALLENGE & COMPASS

Prime Minister’s urgency for marking the way forward is insistent and striking. It calls for, as he said, ‘sabka prayas’ — but it needs to underline and acknowledge the ‘sabka’

IF THERE WAS a theme to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s nearly 90-minute Independence Day address from Red Fort, it was this: The nation cannot wait any longer. *Yahi samay hai, sahi samay hai*, this is the time, this is the right time, was the refrain, in a sprawling speech that urged a pause in the nation’s *vikas yatra* (journey of progress) for a rededication and renewal — of *sankalp, parishram, parakram*, resolve, hard work and valour. And he set urgent timelines. The nation was entering an “Amrit Kaal” of 25 years at the end of which it would complete a hundred years of Independence, and it had already embarked upon a 75-week “Amrit Mahotsav” or commemoration of 75 years as an independent nation, till August 15, 2023. But, he said, we must not wait even that long, because we don’t have a moment to lose, “*ab ham zyada intezaar nahin kar sakte*”. This, Modi’s eighth I-Day speech as prime minister, was marked by an urgency that was insistent and striking.

And audacious. After all, this speech was set against a much darker backdrop of distress and decline. The Covid pandemic has set the country back in ways that are still being mapped and measured, causing a nation to hunker down behind masks and closed doors, while coping with loss and death. It has hurt an economy that was already on a downward slide, exacerbating the vulnerability and economic precarity of vast numbers of Indians without safety nets. This has also been a time when the government was seen to fumble and flounder the most, especially as the brutal second wave of infections heaved and rose.

A government that prides itself on summoning political will and deploying technology for the targeting and delivery of goods and services, from subsidised gas cylinders to zero-balance bank accounts, failed to prevent the terrible shortage of oxygen cylinders and hospital beds for its citizens even though red flags had been raised between Covid’s first and second waves. In this dismal setting, it was audacious and ambitious — or perhaps strategic — for the prime minister to use the I-Day podium to talk about a makeover, frame the Big Idea, set a deadline.

OF BIG IDEAS, there were many. The PM spoke of a new marker of success of the governance scheme — *shat pratishat* hundred per cent delivery to the *labharthi* or beneficiaries. A *sarv sparshi vikas*, that touches all, would require handholding of some sections, he said, among which he emphasised the OBC. The underlining of his government’s commitment to the OBCs was also a political statement with an eye on impending assembly elections — the PM pointed to the recent extension of the OBC quota in the all-India seats of medical colleges, passing of the bill to give states the power to frame their own OBC lists, and earlier, to give constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Castes.

The PM spoke of recognising cooperative-ism alongside socialism and capitalism. He spoke of the *gati shakti yojana*, a master plan for a renewed push for employment and holistic infrastructure creation, which would reach into Tier 2 and 3 towns to tap the start-ups and unicorns, the new wealth creators. And the need to get the government to roll back unnecessary interference in citizens’ affairs. There was a time, he said, when the government sat itself down on the driving seat, and it was also the need of the hour. But that period is over and it is the moment now to move ahead without the burden of outdated laws and a million compliances. There was a time, too, he said, when primacy was given to the rights of citizens — now they need to prioritise duties. To his earlier slogan of *sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas*, he added: *Sabka prayas* (everyone’s effort).

IN ALL THIS, PM Modi struck more than one jarring note. The attempt to turn the spotlight to citizens’ duties at a time when the country is still in the throes of a pandemic and economic recovery is uncertain, seemed too much like an abdication of government’s own responsibilities. “*Sabka... prayas*” sounds good and alliterative, but it also looks like a negation of the PM’s own ideas of re-energising administration and delivery, in order to pass the burden of recovery and revival on to the people amid a public health emergency. In any case, even as the PM extends the slogan, the “*sabka*” part remains underdeveloped, in idea and practice, under his government’s watch.

“*Sabka...*” implies inclusiveness, and equal participation of all in the nation’s journey. It calls for listening to the dissenter and political opponent, including and especially inside Parliament, which was adjourned too early a few days ago, because the government couldn’t find the language or tools to engage the Opposition. And because it stonewalled demands to discuss allegations of using sophisticated spyware for targeting politicians, activists, journalists and others for snooping. The promise of “*sabka...*” requires outreach to, and handholding of, the poor and vulnerable who include OBCs, but also the minority community made more insecure by decisions and moves such as the discriminatory amendments to the law that make religion a criterion of citizenship.

The framing context for the PM’s speech on August 15 was also provided by his government’s announcement the previous day, of marking every August 14 as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day. The PM has a point: It is necessary to remember in order to break free of the past. But his own party’s chorus in the wake of the announcement, heavy with references to “appeasement”, sends disheartening signals about its real intent.

It was a speech, then, that sought to rise, to soar even. In many ways, in a dispiriting time, it did achieve its ambition, in parts. A fuller lift-off, however, will require much harder labour on the ground. Indeed, it will need *sabka prayas* — with *sab* getting their voice heard.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SONIA GANDHI

INDEPENDENCE DAY THIS year marks the beginning of India’s 75th year as a free nation. It is an occasion for proud celebration, deep reflection and renewed commitments. It is an occasion to recall the sacrifices of those who laid the foundations of modern India and who boldly envisioned a prosperous, harmonious, inclusive, democratic nation — united by our diversity, inspired by our rich history, and seeking our rightful place in destiny.

We honour the contributions of our nation’s founders: Mahatma Gandhi’s unflinching moral leadership and his dedication to truth, non-violence, communal harmony and *antyyodaya*; Jawaharlal Nehru’s untiring efforts to build our democracy, economy, public institutions and whose idealism earned India a respected place on the world stage; Sardar Patel’s steely resolve to forge a nation-state by unifying more than 560 princely states; Subhas Chandra Bose’s leadership of the National Planning Committee and his emphasis on military strength; Babasaheb Ambedkar’s crafting of our Constitution committed to justice, liberty and emancipation of the oppressed classes.

Over three-quarters of a century, we have nurtured a vibrant democracy with deep roots. We have achieved self-sufficiency in food production. We have created one of the world’s largest economies and lifted the greatest number of people in the world out of poverty and disease through democratic means. We have built one of the largest, strongest military forces and a pioneering space mission. Yet, as we celebrate our successes, we also realise how much further we still have to go. Unfortunately, recent years have seen a reversal of our nation’s progress on multiple fronts.

The recently concluded Monsoon Session of Parliament displayed the disdain of the Narendra Modi government towards parliamentary processes and building consensus. The Opposition was repeatedly denied an opportunity to raise issues of national importance — destructive farm laws, the use of military-grade software to hack into devices belonging to constitutional figures, political opponents, journalists and activists, runaway inflation and unemployment. Increasingly over the past seven years, laws have been passed without debate in the House or scrutiny by a committee, effectively turning Parliament into a rubber stamp. Democratically elected state governments have been toppled, disrespecting people’s mandates. The media has been systematically intimidated and arm-twisted into forgetting its responsibility to speak truth to power. Institutions that were carefully built and nurtured to provide the structure of true democracy have been systematically degenerated or destroyed, eroding the values that give substance to the inalienable right of our people to equality, justice and individual freedom.

Sadly, we have been witness to the worst sustained economic decline in these past 75

Governance of hollow slogans and divisiveness has reversed gains of past. It is time to undo the damage

Why is our democracy in danger? It is because tangible achievements have been substituted by event management and brand-building only to benefit those in power — at the expense of governance. It is because symbolism has triumphed over meaningful action. It is because democracy is sought to be replaced by an autocracy. Today’s symbolism and reality is that Parliament House is being turned into a museum.



BALAJI VEERARAGHAVAN, KAMINI WALIA

INDIA HAS ONE of the highest levels of antibiotic resistance, which complicates not only the treatment of life-threatening infections but also endangers outcomes in routine hospital procedures. The benefits gained through medical advances are also put in peril when patients contract drug-resistant bacterial infections. The situation has been further complicated by the pandemic, with 3-4 per cent Covid patients acquiring secondary bacterial infections. A recent ICMR study reported a disturbingly high mortality rate of 56 per cent among Covid patients infected with resistant bacterial infections.

The silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance does not draw the required level of attention and resources. This omission has impacted new drug development — research has stagnated with all major pharma companies exiting the arena. The reasons range from poor return on investment, the complexity of discovering novel antibiotics for multidrug-resistant pathogens, the high cost of bringing a novel antibiotic to the market, and irrational use that renders drugs ineffective and contributes to their

years. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit India, the momentum built up in recent years was dissipated through ill-advised initiatives that had no economic rationale. The economic slowdown has come with terrible consequences for our most vulnerable families, for the self-employed, for small and medium enterprises, for farmers, for the youth seeking employment, and for millions of our countrymen and women who are described as migrant labour but are a vital part of our society and production processes. The fast-growing middle-classes have suffered as unemployment, poverty and malnutrition have worsened. Entrepreneurs of all strata, with the exception of a favoured few, are in distress. But the government refuses to heed the signs, to consult or to kickstart the economy by transferring money directly to the people. From high taxes on all forms of fuel to the widespread loss of income, the burdens are increasing by the day.

Decades of progress in improving healthcare have been reversed by the mismanagement of the pandemic. Lives and livelihoods have been devastated as a result of hubris and bad planning. We legitimately take pride in being the world’s largest producer of vaccines. Yet, the percentage of our population that is fully vaccinated is very low due to an inordinate delay in placing orders, leaving us vulnerable to future waves at a time when our people are struggling to return to some semblance of normalcy. Even our children’s education has been disrupted with profound long-term consequences.

Our farmers, who spearheaded the success of the Green Revolution, have been protesting for many months. But the government has refused to heed their legitimate concerns. It is imperative that the government reach out and address their demands. We must ensure that those who feed us do not starve themselves. We have to make agriculture more sustainable, economically and ecologically.

Since Independence, federalism has been a defining feature of our democratic republic. The federal spirit we have nurtured has been accommodative and cooperative, respectful of diversity and regional aspirations. The establishment of the Goods and Services Tax regime was the culmination of decades of effort and reflected the trust that our states reposed in the Union government. Yet, in recent years, states are being deprived of their rightful share of overall revenues through the increasing use of non-shareable cesses. Short-changing states is short-sighted policy, which hollows out our federal structure and hampers implementation of various programmes and schemes.

Another recent dangerous trend is the misuse of laws and government agencies. Laws that were used against our freedom fighters by the British and laws that are specifically targeted at terrorists are being misused against anyone who dares to question the Prime Minister and his government. Doctored videos, planted evidence,

and fake toolkits are all becoming weapons of intimidation and disinformation to suppress dissent. Government agencies are routinely let loose on political opponents. Such moves are aimed at instilling fear and hack away at the very foundations of democratic freedoms.

After decades of progress towards an India of our dreams, why is our democracy in danger? It is because tangible achievements have been substituted by hollow slogans, event management and brand-building only to benefit those in power — at the expense of governance. It is because symbolism has triumphed over meaningful action. It is because democracy is sought to be replaced by an autocracy. Today’s symbolism and reality is that Parliament House is being turned into a museum.

As we begin independent India’s 75th year, we owe it to our freedom fighters to undo this damage to our Republic. We must fight to preserve and strengthen the freedoms that they sacrificed so much for. We need to imbibe their compassion to help crores of our compatriots overcome challenges of poverty, discrimination and disease so they can live fuller, fulfilled lives. We need to draw courage from them to take on those who would replace their inclusive, liberating idealism with a narrow, sectarian, worldview overflowing with prejudice and discrimination. We must not be swayed by hollow attempts to appropriate our icons by those who made no contribution to our struggle for independence. They may borrow Gandhi’s spectacles but their vision for our country remains Godse’s. Our founders rejected that divisive ideology 74 years ago, and we must reject it once again.

A united, harmonious, strong India has a larger role to play on the global stage. In his momentous “Tryst with destiny” speech, Nehru underlined that the world cannot be split into isolated fragments, and that peace is indivisible, and so are freedom, prosperity and also disaster. In a world affected by Covid-19 and climate change, India’s response to these challenges will be crucial to the world.

Going forward, let us renew our commitment to embrace our inclusive civilisational ethos and our founders’ dedication to justice and equity. This is our strength that enabled us to overcome tremendous odds to create a transformative future for our people. India must continue to demonstrate to the world how a country with innumerable languages, religions, cultures and ethnicities can thrive while celebrating diversity. India must be a beacon to other countries with our record of building and sustaining a vibrant democracy. India must showcase our success in creating one of the world’s leading economies that balances growth with equity. India must show that it is possible to translate idealistic visions into lived realities.

The writer is interim president, Indian National Congress

VACCINE EXAMPLE FOR MEDICINES

India needs processes to identify, support research in drug development

short market-life. Worse, antibiotics, recently discovered and developed in the West, do not find their way to India in a timely manner. It took about five to six years for novel antibiotics such as daptomycin and ceftaroline to be introduced in India after their initial launch in the US. Antibiotics such as imipenem/relebactam, and meropenem/vaborbactam, available in the US and EU for more than two years now, are yet to be introduced in India.

The development of the Covid vaccine in India was made possible by the timely infusion of funds as a result of advance purchase payments to companies involved in production. The Covid vaccine story needs to be replicated to support the country’s antibiotic needs.

The bulk of initial drug development happens in small and medium-sized entities and academic institutions that are dependent on external funding and development partnerships. India needs to put together a plan for developing new antimicrobials. As a first step, the government needs to recognise the snags and deficiencies in the production pipeline. Efforts should be

initiated to consolidate the country’s existing strengths in pharmaceuticals by engaging relevant actors. Independent studies demonstrating the therapeutic value of novel drugs could contribute to identifying drugs whose development can be undertaken.

Despite constraints, the antibiotic space in India has seen a few successes. The novel combination cefepime-zidebactam discovered in the country, and highly effective against multidrug-resistant pathogens in animal studies and early human studies, has come under the ambit of the US FDA’s QIDP scheme to promote development of antibacterial drugs. It is time that such valuable leads from Indian laboratories mature into ready-to-use drugs for the country’s patients. That will provide a strong impetus to making the country *atmanirbhar* in healthcare.

Veeraraghavan is Hilda Lazarus Core Research Chair, CMCH, Vellore; Walia is Scientist, Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance and Research Network, ICMR

AUGUST 16, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM’S WARNING

THE PRIME MINISTER has warned that measures would be taken to curb anti-social and anti-national practices like hoarding, profiteering and black marketing. Speaking on the 54th anniversary of Independence, Mrs Gandhi asserted that the people asked for stern measures against anti-social elements but when such measures were introduced, some others came out protesting against them. Nevertheless, the government was determined to deal strictly with anti-social elements. “We have a good harvest at the moment,” Mrs Gandhi said and went on to pose the question, why there should

be food imports. Imports had been ordered to counteract the moves of those who were planning to hoard stocks to jack up prices.

MONSOON SESSION

DESPITE THE OPPOSITION having failed to chalk up a strategy, the Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning on August 16 is bound to be a stormy one. Its numerical superiority notwithstanding, the ruling party seems to be in for a tough time, especially because of the government’s failure on the price front. In the absence of a joint opposition programme, however, it’s tough to

predict what issues will dominate the session.

ASSAM BANDH

THERE WAS A partial to near complete response in Assam to the 24-hour bandh called by the AASU and the AAGSP on August 15, which passed off peacefully. Barring stray clashes between Congress(I) workers and agitators in Upper Assam, a few incidents of picketing where the police intervened and an explosion at a railway track in Maligaon near Guwahati, no untoward incident was reported. About 50 people have been taken into custody.



Learning from China

Beijing’s experience in liberating agri-markets, investing in education and skill development holds important lessons for India



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND
RITIKA JUNEJA

AS INDIANS, WE feel proud of our independence not just on August 15, but every day of the year. After centuries of subjugation, when Indians finally breathed the air of freedom on August 15, 1947, our leaders pledged to shape the country’s destiny. We have achieved several milestones, from reducing poverty to improving literacy to increasing life expectancy to modernising the economy and equipping the nation with space and digital technologies. Amongst the most important technologies was, perhaps, the one that enabled India to feed its population — the “miracle seeds” that unleashed the Green Revolution. Those seeds of change came from outside. They were adapted to the country’s climatic conditions by Indian scientists, and today, India is the largest exporter of rice in the world. Grain stocks in the government’s godowns are overflowing, exceeding 100 million tonnes.

But as we look back on our own journey and feel proud of our achievements, wisdom lies in also looking around to evaluate how other nations have performed, especially those which started with a similar base or even worse conditions than us. If some countries have done better than us, we should not hesitate to learn from them.

To start with, let us look at our immediate neighbours who were part of pre-independent India, namely Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is gratifying to see that independent India has done better than Pakistan if measured on a per capita income basis: India’s per capita income stood at \$1,960 (in current PPP terms, it was \$6,460) in 2020, as per the IMF estimates, while Pakistan’s per capita income was just \$1,260 (in PPP terms \$5,150). But Bangladesh, whose journey as an independent nation began in 1971, had a per capita income of \$2,000 (though \$5,310 in PPP terms), marginally higher than India, and certainly much higher than Pakistan in 2020.

But the real comparison of India should be with China, given the size of population of the two countries and the fact that both countries started their journey in the late 1940s. India adopted a socialist strategy while China took to communism to provide people food, good health, education and prosperity. It is ironic to note that China, during the peak of its communist era — The Great Leap Forward, 1958-61 — lost 30 million lives due to starvation. India, in contrast, managed to escape such horror with support from the USA through PL 480 grain imports.

China, having performed dismally on the economic front from 1949 to 1977, started changing track to more market-oriented policies, beginning with agriculture. Economic reforms that included the Household Responsibility System and liberation of agri-markets led to an annual av-



CR Sasikumar

erage agri-GDP growth of 7.1 per cent during 1978-1984. Farmers’ real incomes increased by almost 14 per cent per annum during this period. This gave not only political legitimacy to carry out reforms in the non-agriculture sector, but also created a huge demand for manufactured products, triggering a manufacturing revolution in China’s town and village enterprises. The rest is history.

By 2020, China’s overall GDP was \$14.7 trillion (\$24.1 trillion in current PPP terms), competing with the USA at \$20.9 trillion. India, however, lags way behind with its overall GDP at \$2.7 trillion (\$8.9 trillion in PPP terms). The quality of life, however, depends on per capita income in PPP terms, with the USA at \$63,420, China at \$17,190 and India at \$6,460. No wonder, this is even reflected in China’s rise as a sporting nation. In the recently concluded Tokyo Olympics, China won the second highest number of medals — 88 (38 gold) after USA’s 113 medals (39 gold). India was at 48th position with a total of 7 medals (1 gold).

India’s sluggish performance when compared to China raises doubts about its flawed democratic structure that makes economic reforms and implementation of policy changes more challenging, unlike China. We feel that India is yet to grow as a mature democracy, where differences of opinions amongst different political parties are respected. But we have to move fast. Else, we will be left far behind China, and without economic prosperity, even defending our borders and sovereignty could prove difficult.

It will take many decades for India to catch up with American standards. But if

In China, economic reforms led to an annual average agri-GDP growth of 7.1 percent during 1978-1984. Farmers’ real incomes increased by almost 14 per cent per annum. This gave not only political legitimacy to carry out reforms in the non-agriculture sector but also created a huge demand for manufactured products, triggering a manufacturing revolution in China’s town and village enterprises. The rest is history.

we target the Chinese standards over the next decade or two, India can perhaps do better. Remember, China’s reforms started with agriculture, and India till date had been avoiding agriculture reforms. Even for manufacturing to grow on a sustainable basis, we have to increase the purchasing power of people in rural areas. This has to be done by raising their productivity and not by distributing freebies. It requires investments in education, skills, health and physical infrastructure, besides much higher R&D in agriculture, both by the government as well as by the private sector. This requires a different institutional set-up than the one we currently have. Liberating agri-markets is part of the reform package that China followed. That’s the first lesson.

The second lesson is a bit controversial: China adopted the one-child norm from 1979-2015. As a result, its per capita income grew much faster. India’s attempts to control its population succeeded only partially and very slowly. Poor education, especially that of the girl child, is at the core of this failure. Compulsory enforcement of population control measures could boomerang politically. The population control bill drafted by the UP Law Commission has attracted much controversy. But given that UP’s average family size is six — the largest in the country (2011 census) — compared to just three in China, increasing household incomes is a big challenge. We feel the focus of economic policy has to be on quality education, skill development, and agriculture reforms. Can India do that? Only time will tell.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor and Juneja is consultant at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The international community must send a strong message to the Taliban: when they do take Kabul, if their country is used to host transnational terrorists, there will be consequences. ”
— DAWN

The promise of August 15, 1947

The liberties Independence promised are under threat, a new freedom struggle is needed to protect them



D RAJA

ON AUGUST 15, seventy-four years ago, our nation began her tryst with destiny. The political independence achieved in 1947 was the result of decades of peoples’ struggles. Recognising the exploitative nature of British rule, people had started resisting the colonial masters much before organised platforms and political parties came to lead them. These spontaneous uprisings were ruthlessly suppressed, leaving an indelible print on the collective memory of the people.

The struggles were multifaceted: There was no singular method nor one universal demand. Freedom meant different things for different sections of society. For women, it was liberation from patriarchal subjugation. For Dalits and Shudras, it meant liberation from the hegemony of Brahmanism. For Adivasis, it was the freedom to reclaim forest land, from the constant fear of displacement in the name of development. For religious minorities, it was freedom from potential subjugation by majoritarian communalism and the right to practice their faith. Common to all of this was the clear understanding that colonial rule was draining the country of its resources.

In the initial decades of the 20th century, when the liberation movement was bringing communities closer, we saw Mohammed Ali Jinnah defending Tilak in a seditious case and Bhagat Singh arguing against communalism. Babasaheb Ambedkar was trying to make his struggle for liberation from caste-based exploitation inclusive of women’s liberation and against feudal economic exploitation. In the anti-feudal struggles that Ambedkar led, the exploited among the upper castes participated in large numbers. All these contributed to the freedom movement along with mass movements led by Gandhi and the Congress and the militant class struggles led by a nascent communist movement and other radical revolutionary organisations.

Freedom fighters understood independence from British rule as freedom from all forms of exploitation and oppression, which was deeply embedded in the social structures indigenous to India. The orthodox and obscurantist sections of the society in coalition with organised institutions of power like zamindars, feudal principalities or *ryasats*, and the newly emerging affluent in colonial India resisted the progressive impulses of the freedom movement. One thing common to these forces was their allegiance to the British. The RSS, born in 1925, consolidated the communal Manuvadi tendencies.

During debates in the Constituent Assembly, there was constant pressure from Hindutva forces to get India declared as a Hindu state. Examples from Ireland and other countries were constantly cited in sup-

port. Ambedkar stood like a rock against it. He rejected theocracy and warned that if at all Hindu Rashtra becomes a reality, it will be calamitous for the nation. The assassination of Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, who had links with RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, marked the beginning of a consolidated and organised assault on secular values.

Ambedkar framed the Constitution in such a way that the values of freedom struggle were enshrined in all its parts. The Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy protected citizens from arbitrary state action. The Constitution makes it mandatory for the Indian state to be secular and build a welfare state. Ambedkar outlined a path to development that was inclusive and in line with social justice and socialism.

On August 15, 1947, the power to administer areas under direct British rule alone was transferred. A significant part of India was under 500-plus native rulers then, among them the Nizam of Hyderabad and Hari Singh who ruled Kashmir. From 1947 to 1950, the founding leaders were occupied with the twin tasks of bringing all these into the new country besides preparing a Constitution for it. The Constituent Assembly of India was elected by the provincial legislatures. The then largely underground Communist Party was unrepresented in the CA, but the militant mass struggles organised by the Communists influenced its agenda. Also, it left the princes, rajas and nawabs with little option but to accede to the Indian Union.

The Communists were the first to raise the demand for “complete Independence”, which radicalised the freedom struggle. Hasrat Mohani, chairman of the reception committee of the first CPI conference in Kanpur, raised the demand for complete independence in a Congress session. He also coined the inspirational slogan, *Inquilab Zindabad*. An early communist, MN Roy, was the first to demand a Constituent Assembly.

Freedom from British colonialism didn’t mean the end of capitalist interests. After World War II ended, a new phase of imperialist onslaught on India began, in collaboration with right-wing forces. The imperial support for right-wing forces has enabled them to widen the fault lines of our society.

In the last three decades, we have seen a process of privatisation, commercialisation and liberalisation of labour and capital markets. The RSS-BJP combine is pushing for complete corporatisation, including in agriculture, education and health. It is forcing India into an irreversible strategic partnership with America, thus killing everything progressive and democratic in our foreign policy.

We see chaos and an all-pervasive crisis around us as we approach the 75th anniversary of our independence. The state is eating away our freedoms, the Pegasus incident being a recent example. The current regime has done so much to undermine our precious independence and values attached with it that a new freedom struggle to take back our freedoms from the RSS and its Hindutva agenda has to start. It has to be waged from the grassroots to Parliament.

The writer is general secretary, CPI



HARISH SHETTY

INDIA RESPONDS TO visible injuries following disasters reasonably well. There are many examples of the same, including building homes after the earthquakes in Latur in 1993 and Gujarat in 2001. To the bureaucrat and the politician, rehabilitation only means providing houses, foodgrains or compensation. Though these are no doubt important, the invisible injuries to the psyche remain unfathomable to policymakers. In this pandemic, we have given lip service to mental health by merely starting a few helplines and framing protocols. That’s inadequate to address the mental health pandemic currently taking shape — a fact underlined by the WHO and many other agencies.

Since the Bangalore Circus fire of 1981, disasters in India have been evaluated for their mental health consequences. Earthquakes, the Bhopal Gas tragedy, bomb blasts, and many other tragedies have been studied in detail by mental health professionals. Unfortunately, this has not led to meaningful mental health interventions largely because of poor awareness among administrators, the stigma associated with mental health issues and the lack of professionals.

Can we face the challenge in India? Yes, we can. Should we lament that we do not have enough mental health professionals? No. Mental health intervention is not rocket science. A compassionate ear, support, reassurance, and tools for tackling grief can be taught to mental health soldiers. Working in pairs prevents burnout. Experts can supervise the entire process and are useful during emergencies, to treat disorders and serious

Treating the invisible pandemic

Dealing with Covid-related trauma calls for sustained mental health interventions

illnesses after a catastrophe.

Every disaster may or may not have a pre-impact phase but it always has an impact phase, a post-impact phase, and a late post-impact phase. The pandemic is unique as the impact phase has been in a continuum for 14 months affecting billions across the world. Surveys and studies across the world reveal an increased prevalence of emotional disturbances and mental disorders during this outbreak.

A report released by the Ministry of Health and ICMR in December 2019 just before the pandemic stated that one out of seven Indians is mentally ill, and approximately 20 crore people in India need treatment. A National Crime Records Bureau study of 2019 also mentions that one out of three people who take their own lives are torn apart by family problems. Nearly a fourth of those who lose their lives after inflicting self-damage are daily wage labourers. The relationship between poverty and emotional disturbances is also well known. Mental health is also related to food and nutrition.

Covid-19 has exacerbated such vulnerabilities. Unresolved grief can erupt in the years to come. Six vulnerable groups need immediate mental health intervention. Families who have lost their dear ones to Covid. Those who have the infection or have recovered from it, as well as their families. Healthcare workers and those involved in emergency services. Those who have lost jobs and incurred financial losses. Those with pre-existing mental or physical illnesses. Children, marginalised groups and elders.

Many who have been affected by an overdose of negative stories, and exposed to distress also need support.

Governments, both at the state and Centre, fall back on their own institutions for massive programmes. This is not always pragmatic as they need to take care of their own hospital load. More than 80 per cent of mental healthcare in India happens outside these institutions. Altruism and seva are hallmarks of Indian culture. Psychologists, psychiatrists, medical social workers, counsellors, ASHA workers, NGOs and emotional aid workers can be easily enrolled for this humane task. Many are willing but they would require a structured approach to providing grief counselling. The effort should be coordinated by state governments and the module can be adapted to the needs, resources available, and the cultural contexts of a region.

Counselling has to be entirely voluntary, preferably in groups, largely online, and in the local language. Every district can have two coordinators from the mental health field. A protocol can be evolved by a core team — a multidisciplinary mental health taskforce — after detailed discussions. Protocols should include tools for screening, counselling, and an algorithm for referrals. It should also have processes for directing emergency treatment of those with serious symptoms — these interventions should be documented. All teams need to undergo orientation for at least 18 hours initially and periodically for two hours every 15 days so that standardisation in interventions can be assured. There should be scope for individual

innovations within this framework. The outcome of the interventions needs to be measurable and built into the treatment process. The intervention period may be six months or as long as required by the pandemic survivor. The process should be secular and free from any religious or political ideology. Monthly meetings of the team leaders are necessary for troubleshooting, course correction, and continuous capacity building. District coordinators need to meet once a week to negotiate difficulties, smoothen rough edges and assist the smooth transaction of the therapeutic process. As the epidemic abates, “live” interventions may also be possible.

After screening, the team will categorise survivors into groups based on requirements — counselling, medication, or both, hospitalisation, simple advice and information. They will be assessed by simple psychological instruments every two weeks. These instruments will be decided during the meetings to finalise the entire protocol. The entire process will be pro bono for the survivor. Similarly, the participation by the mental health professionals from the private sector will also be voluntary and pro bono.

In certain areas, physical access may be the only method to provide such treatment. Adequate safety measures need to be taken during such visits.

It’s often said that time is the best healer. That unfortunately is not always so. Mental health intervention completes the rehabilitation cycle and makes it robust and holistic.

The writer is a Mumbai-based psychiatrist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPEN OUR DOORS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Return of a spectre’ (IE, August 14). The displacement and persecution of Afghan citizens who refuse to toe the Taliban’s line will feed into a new refugee crisis. Though India is not a signatory to either the UN Convention on Refugees 1951 or its 1967 Protocol, Article 21 of our Constitution provides for the fundamental right to life to all, and not just citizens of India. The principle of non-refoulement, which requires each nation to not return a people forcefully back to the nation where they are threatened with such persecution, is implicit in the fundamental Right to Life. A dedicated refugee law should be enacted by the Parliament to deal with such crises. Above all, India, as a crucible of civilisations, has always been welcoming of all those seeking asylum.
Vinay Saroha, Delhi

AT A CROSSROADS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The 1947 we choose’ (IE, August 14). While the idea of India as imagined by our leaders endures even in these trying times, the parallels to the 1930s are sobering. A deep-seated unease with our diversity and the poison of communalism have unleashed horrors. As we stand at the crossroads, we must stay true to the ideals of our Constitution.
Ila Railkar, Mumbai

PEOPLE’S HOUSE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘India misses its House’ (IE, August 14). Parliament is a fountainhead of free-

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thinking, a bastion of universal human values and ethics and represents every citizen. It is not a bailiwick of a particular party to promote its own or its ideological mentor’s self-serving agenda. The NDA government has, therefore, undermined it by ordering marshals to evict from the House Opposition leaders asking it to come clean on sensitive matters agitating the whole nation.
Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

CREDIBILITY NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Crime and politics’ (IE, August 13). Political parties need to make a paradigm shift — the criterion for approval of a candidate shouldn’t be winnability but credibility and legitimacy. The onus of electing a criminally charged candidate can never entirely lie on voters. It is distributed among three pillars of democracy.
Melvin Thomas, Bhopal

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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

P T R PALANIVEL THIAGA RAJAN, TAMIL NADU FINANCE MINISTER

“A competent, powerful Union govt is clearly needed... But can’t rule which school gets toilet sitting in Delhi”

Thiaga Rajan calls the GST Council “poorly designed”, explains how lack of data hinders governance, touches upon his run-in with Jaggi Vasudev and lays out DMK’s federalism principle. The session was moderated by Executive Editor (National Affairs) P Vaidyanathan Iyer

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: In your speech at the GST Council in May, you described it as a rubber-stamp council. You also spoke about extreme concentration of powers with the Centre. Do you think a worsening of government finances due to the prolonged slowdown also led to a situation where states are feeling the brunt?

There are three-four different aspects. The first is the Union-state relationship, and like any relationship, it gets frayed over time, and the cracks are more prominent in times of stress. So, the combination of a deteriorating economy and the Covid crisis has made it inarguable that the relationship is not where it should be. And the irony of it is, I don't have to go far for justification of my quotations — I just have to look at the reign of Narendra Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat. You will find every action taken by the Union government in terms of fiscal relationship with states is directly in contradiction to the statements made (by him) when he was the CM.

The question of the GST Council is more nuanced. The construct is not well-thought-out, the rush to execute it for the sake of the usual showmanship and dramatic effect that we have now seen with the four-hour notice for the lockdown and the overnight demonetisation... There have been hundreds of changes since the introduction of the GST Bill, we are still playing catch-up. The fact that we are doing so four-and-a-half years later...

In my limited understanding of four months, I understand that the GST Council only has an advisory role. It may go ahead and decide a new rate, but for it to take effect, the state has to pass an ordinance or make changes in its own commercial tax rules.

In my opinion, there has been a deterioration in Centre-state relations. A lot of it is avoidable. The thing that really hurts the country is that concentration of power is happening in the hands of people who either don't want to use it or don't know how to use it. They take the power away from other people and then do a very, very poor job of using that power. The fact that the GST Council is so poorly designed adds to this.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: You have spoken of the breakdown of trust between the Centre and states. Is it only related to fiscal federalism or would you like to be more specific?

I will give you two very concrete examples. The first bad faith is the whole pretence of moving devolution to states from 32% to 42% (of divisible tax pool). If you look at any analysis by any independent body, the so-called devolution has not resulted in any real devolution. They have moved so much of the money into the indivisible cess bucket that we don't get any of the money. The outcome of it is that the amount of money we get from the Union in grants and subsidies is higher than what we get as share of the taxes. If we get it as our share of the taxes, we get to legislate on how we want to spend it. That is clearly against any principle of federalism.

Then there is the absurd logic of why the Union government should not have the 14% minimum compensation scheme written into the law. It said we can't pay 14% because there is not enough money, that the system is designed such that only the cess collected on GST is the basis of paying compensation. About the same time, the CAG report comes out saying that the first two years, you collected around Rs 40,000 crore more in cess than you had to pay to the states, and instead of letting it lie in the account, you took it back into the Union government's tax pool without sharing it. So you used the cess logic to collect it, not share it, and you did not use it for the purpose for which it was to be used...

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: The DMK was part of the NDA-I government. What has changed in the NDA, BJP or the DMK's own philosophy that has pulled the two parties apart?

Right now, the gap between the DMK's position and the Union government, rather than the BJP — I don't think it is only the BJP we have an issue with... Let me say, the DMK's position has remained unchanged. We have always been federalists, for devolution of powers not just from Union to states but also from states to lower rungs of power. But the BJP's position has changed dramatically. The same PM and Home Minister when in Gujarat were the greatest federalists. Now, they have become the greatest centralists, at



WHY

P T R PALANIVEL THIAGA RAJAN

A political scion with engineering and management degrees from top institutes at home and in the US, including an MBA in Finance from the Sloan School of Management at MIT, Thiaga Rajan was picked as Finance Minister in the MK Stalin-led DMK government in Tamil Nadu. Known to speak his mind, Thiaga Rajan has often forcefully underlined his case for federalism. He was recently involved in a public spat with Isha Foundation's Jaggi Vasudev over state control of temples

least since the days of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. They want to control everything, from food policy to education to taxes to toilets. So, it's more this government rather than the BJP at some level.

At another level, of course, the notion of secular, social justice parties is quite different from parties driven by Hindutva philosophy. But even there, that philosophy has not remained constant. Most people would feel that the administration of Vajpayee was different from the administration we see today.

LIZ MATHEW: In the recent

Parliament session, the DMK was a silent partner to the Opposition protests. Do you think that like Mamata Banerjee, who has taken an initiative, the DMK could take the lead in bringing all parties together, at least on issues you

have raised today?

I am very, very junior in the party and at some level, I am not in a position to comment on the DMK's position at the national level. Still, I will say that the future of this country lies in regional parties and state governments. Anyone who has any understanding of the complexities, diversity of this country, notions such as 'One Nation, One Taxation'... all these are not executable. And if they are not executable, they will fail, no matter what you do, no matter how many people you get into this cult-like belief.

We are seeing it fail every day. You can't use the Swachh Bharat funds because you can't go and build the toilets yourself. This notion of one national policy is inherently self-defeating. It is a question of how long and after how much pain.

Even the concept of national parties, to me, is contradictory. The BJP is pro-beef in the Northeast and Goa, but you can get killed in some BJP-ruled states on the suspicion of even carrying beef... The Congress is in opposition to some parties elsewhere, we are all in a coalition here. So the BJP may be strong in 10-12 states, in the rest, they either buy power, because they control the Union, or the people... I have told my party leader too that we can show what good governance looks like, what data-driven governance looks like, actions driven by your philosophy... With limited powers we can achieve great outcomes compared to those with unlimited power who are not able to achieve anything. Our honourable CM (M K Stalin) is very clear about his values...

AANCHAL MAGAZINE: You talked about GST compensation dues. For this year, the amount has been estimated based on projections of growth. Is this fair, given that dues of last year have also not been cleared? My second question is regarding your very public spat with the Finance Minister of Goa and other BJP-ruled states. Other finance ministers have also said their views are not heard at the GST Council.

The system is designed for idiosyncratic risk, that is to take care of it if a state faces a problem. But when you have systemic risk, when states and the Union go down, then the entire compensation mechanism is designed to fail. We are in this situation because the entire economy has failed... Like other aspects of the GST, this is not well thought out.

On the issue with the Goa FM, I had only one issue. At the GST Council meet, we spent an hour-and-a-half discussing what is for ratification, what is for approval, and what is for information. Ministers like Mr Badal (Manpreet Badal, Punjab Finance Minister) raised the point that if it is not to be approved by us, but

just informed to us, does it have the weight of law? Because the rule is that we as elected representatives have to approve this... That is all he said, that change the wording of 'for information' to 'for approval', so that we can approve it and you have the luxury of a legal kind of support. But this (Goa) minister went off on a tirade, about 'anti-national', 'this being a war-like situation'. It was nonsense, atrocious because he was casting aspersions on the integrity, competence, patriotism of people who were raising really valid questions. I got in and said it is atrocious that you have these council meetings

where one minister, that too from a tiny state, gets to cast aspersions on the validity of other people who represent millions of people. At this point, Ms Nirmala Sitharaman castigated me, saying that in this Council, there are no small states or big states. Only, 15 minutes later, over ease of doing business, the BJP's satellite states made the argument of being small states. I told Ms Sitharaman, 'Ma'am you just reprimanded me saying there are no big states and small states ... The Goa minister came out and held a press conference and accused me of all kind of things.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: Going forward, how do you see differences of the kind you talk about being resolved?

I am not saying whether it can be resolved or not. But the lack of applying data is surely a shortcoming that can be fixed. Because the very next meeting we had the same discussion again, on tax rate slabs. And again, there was no data... I can sense that even BJP states are starting to chafe

under either the actual diktat to say yes to whatever the Union says, or the implication to be more loyal than the king. Because surely no CM wants to lose their ability to act, their constitutional powers that they need to deliver to the people, which is what they got elected for...

So this notion of centralisation is not about the BJP or DMK, it is antithetical to every state government, of every political party. The difference is that today's BJP is able to keep its state chief ministers and ministers under such an oppressive thumb... But I don't think that is a permanent feature.

ARUN JANARDHANAN: Public debt has been increasing over the years. What is your plan for tackling it — stabilising and reducing it or exploring new revenue models?

politically correct versus things that are economically correct.

There are probably two level of differences. One level is that as an investment banker or a global banker, you are a capitalist to the core. As a politician, as a Dravidian, as an Indian, we are all socialists to some degree or other and rightfully so. So that was not a difficult transformation, because it was a different context. The much harder transition is that we are trying to fight a system that's broken...

In a commercial enterprise, once you have figured out what is the right thing to do, you did it, there was no resistance. Here you can find out what is the right thing to do and then find out there are all kinds of barriers. That's the real challenge I face on a daily basis.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: The late TDP leader N T Rama Rao had described the Centre as a 'conceptual myth'. What has changed over the last 10-15 years between the Centre and states causing the relationship to tilt so much on one side?

I see very clear roles for the Union. The Union should be in charge of foreign policy, defence, inter-state commerce, international commerce, trade policy, vaccine procurement. I am not one of those abolitionists who would say there should be no Union. There is a very clear need for a competent, functional and powerful Union government. I am just saying you can't decide which school needs a toilet sitting in Delhi; we can barely do it sitting in Chennai. We need to devolve that power down to the panchayats and the local bodies.

But if you look at the kind of centralising tendencies... the problem started towards the second term of the UPA and has greatly accelerated in the seven years of the NDA govt.... During the initial lockdown easing, the Union Home Ministry was trying to tell us when we could or couldn't open barber shops. How does it make sense to have a national policy on barber shop opening?

(This centralisation) is a trend that's doomed to fail. The question is, how much damage does it do before it fails because the more you try to centralise, the more you are going to have bad outcomes.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER: Your public run-in with Isha Foundation's Jaggi Vasudev showed you are a strong votary of the State being the custodian of temples.

I don't worry about whether my views are in opposition or concurrence with someone like Jaggi Vasudev... But there are fundamental problems with the notion that you can somehow remove the hand of the government from historically and culturally important artefacts.

PRASANTA SAHU: Many states have complained that tax revenues have not grown under the GST regime. The compensation mechanism is coming to an end in June next year, which is set to drag down revenues further.

Yes, especially because the Union government is going to collect cess and especially because a lot of things have been reset because of two years of unexpected macro risk or failure. I join with other states in the notion that the period of compensation should extend... To be fair to the Honorable Union Finance Minister, she has promised a special GST Council session on the compensation.

If a state like Tamil Nadu were to run its finances properly, I am not sure we would be eligible for any compensation because if the bar is 14% year-on-year growth, we were probably doing that in the sales tax/VAT regime.

We all agree that the GST moved from a production-based tax to a consumption-based tax so the GST inherently disadvantaged large production states. But Tamil Nadu is a bit unique because we are high producers as well as have high personal consumption because we have a much less stratified society than, say, Gujarat or Maharashtra. So our iGST in and out is expected to be roughly flat.

But we find our enforcement system is much better than in other states. So we are continuously finding large gaps between incoming iGST and outgoing iGST — we are paying out a couple of more crores a year than what is coming in. These are all the variables that worry us more. Of course, we are philosophically for the extension of the compensation.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Even BJP states are starting to chafe... No CM wants to lose their powers, ability to deliver to voters... So not just DMK, centralisation is antithetical to every state

The decay of the last 10 years has been horrendous... We came to office with an alleged debt of Rs 5,70,000 crore hanging over our heads. But we are looking at about Rs 9 lakh crore of debt. And yet, we kept our word. The Chief Minister said we will give Rs 4,000 per ration card... Here is where the problem sets in.... Even the Rs 4,000 that we gave to card holders, it was very clear that there were people who didn't deserve to get that money who still have the card. We don't know how our data systems are that bad.

In some cases, our data systems are bad because of the lack of federalism. For example, the Co-WIN portal records all the vaccinations but when we go to do a serosurvey overlaid with the vaccination penetration to start preparing for that third wave, we don't have that data... If I want to target subsidies and I want to know who all should not get the

equivalent of Rs 4,000, the first thing I would say is, 'Whichever family has income tax payers, should not get it'. But I don't have that data. We are completely constrained by this centralisation of everything and we are not able to administer properly because of lack of data. Some of that is our own fault, some of that is the nature of design of the government.

So that's the only concern I have. I am not worried about where the money will come from, but about the rotten, rotten system... the government's capacity to administer has been seriously eroded. It's very hard to turn this around.

ANANT GOENKA: You come from a private sector background. How often do you find that at odds with politics, where you have to do things that are

TOPOF THE WORLD



At the site of the blast in Akkar. Reuters

LEBANON At least 28 killed in fuel tank explosion

AT LEAST 28 people were killed and 79 injured when a fuel tank exploded in northern Lebanon early on Sunday, the health ministry said. Military and security sources said that the army had seized a fuel storage tank hidden by black marketeers and was handing out gasoline to residents when the explosion occurred. Lebanon is suffering from a severe fuel shortage, leading to long lines at gas stations and extended blackouts. The disaster happened in the town of Altalil, in the Akkar region that is one of Lebanon's poorest areas. Caretaker Health Minister Hamad Hassan said the worst cases of burns probably needed quick treatment abroad to save their lives. REUTERS

SOUTH AFRICA Ex-president Zuma undergoes surgery

JAILED FORMER South African president Jacob Zuma has undergone unspecified surgery and remains in hospital with more operations planned, prison authorities said on Sunday. Zuma, serving a 15-month sentence in Estcourt prison for contempt of court, was sent to a hospital outside for observation on Aug. 6, days before the start of a corruption trial he has thus far avoided. There was no word on a potential discharge date for Zuma, who in July asked the country's top court to reverse his incarceration. REUTERS

SRI LANKA Covid guidelines tightened, night curfews imposed

SRI LANKA on Sunday further tightened health guidelines by imposing night curfews in a bid to arrest the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The night curfew will be effective from 10 pm to 4 am from August 16 until further notice, said Army Commander Shavendra Silva, the head of the national operations center for Covid-19 prevention. The authorities have also banned all public gatherings. Weddings will be banned from August 17. Restaurants will function with only at a 50 per cent capacity. PTI

INSURGENTS ENTER AFGHAN CAPITAL

Ghani flees to Tajikistan, says official as other leaders form council to meet Taliban

Afghan delegation in Islamabad for conference with Pak leaders

REUTERS & PTI KABUL, AUGUST 15

TALIBAN INSURGENTS entered Afghanistan's capital Kabul on Sunday and an official said President Ashraf Ghani had left the city for Tajikistan, capping the militants' lightning push for power. A senior Afghan Interior Ministry official said Ghani had left for Tajikistan. Asked for comment, the President's office it "cannot say anything about Ashraf Ghani's movement for security reasons".

A representative of the Taliban said the group was checking on Ghani's whereabouts.

Taliban fighters were reaching the capital "from all sides", a senior Afghan interior ministry official told Reuters.

Afghan leaders have created a coordination council to meet with the Taliban and manage the transfer of the power.

In a statement posted on social media by former president Hamid Karzai, he said the body will be lead by the head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, as well as the leader of Hizb-e-Islami, Gulbudin Hekmatyar, and himself.

The US embassy in Kabul put out a security alert on Sunday. "The security situation in Kabul is changing quickly including at the airport. There are reports of the airport taking fire; therefore we are instructing US citizens to shelter in place," it said.

Meanwhile, several senior Afghan leaders arrived in Pakistan on Sunday for a conference on the future of their nation.

Pakistan Representative for



Ashraf Ghani's office said it cannot say anything about his movement for 'security reasons'

BIDEN ORDERS 1,000 MORE TROOPS TO HELP EVACUATION

Washington: US President Joe Biden authorised an additional 1,000 US troops for deployment to Afghanistan, raising to roughly 5,000 the number of US troops to ensure what Biden called an "orderly and safe draw-down" of American and allied personnel. The last-minute decision to re-insert thousands of US troops into Afghanistan reflected the dire state of security as the Taliban seized control of multiple Afghan cities in a few short days. AP

Afghanistan, Muhammad Sadiq, tweeted that he received the Afghan delegation in Islamabad.

The group consists of leaders who were part of the different governments after the Taliban was toppled in 2001. Their arrival coincided with President Ghani fleeing the country, extremely weakening the bargaining position of his supporters.



People arriving from Afghanistan at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border town of Chaman. While the Chaman border remains open, Pakistan has shut the Torkham border point with Afghanistan after the Taliban took control of the Afghan border facility. Reuters



Afghans wait in long lines for hours to withdraw money, in front of Kabul Bank, on Sunday. AP

A frenzied US flight from Kabul

THE NEW YORK TIMES KABUL, AUGUST 15

AS THE Taliban stood at the gates of Kabul on Sunday, completing the near total takeover of Afghanistan two decades after the American military drove them from power, an eerie quiet that had enveloped the city in recent days transformed into chaos.

A frenzied evacuation of US diplomats and civilians kicked into high gear, while Afghans made a mad dash to the banks, their homes and the airport. Crowds of people ran down the streets as the sound of gunfire echoed in downtown Kabul.

Helicopter after helicopter — including massive Chinooks with their twin engines, and speedy Black Hawks that had been the workhorse of the grinding war — touched down and then took off loaded with passengers. Some dispensed flares overhead, a new addition to Kabul's skyline.

Those being evacuated included a core group of American diplomats who had planned to remain at the embassy in Kabul, according to a senior administration official. They were being

EMBASSIES TAKE ACTION

USA US Secretary of State Antony Blinken says the US is evacuating remaining staff at the US Embassy. Blinken also confirmed that staff were destroying documents and other items ahead of fleeing the embassy.

BRITAIN British media are reporting that the UK's ambassador to Afghanistan is to be airlifted out of the country by Monday evening amid fears that the Taliban could seize the airport imminently.

FRANCE France is relocating its embassy in Kabul to the airport to evacuate all citizens still in Afghanistan.



Members of Joint Forces Headquarters get prepared to deploy to Afghanistan to assist in the draw down

RUSSIA Russia's state news agency reported Sunday that the Taliban promised to guarantee the safety of the Russian embassy in Kabul. The Kremlin's envoy to Afghanistan said Sunday that there are no plans to evacuate the Russian embassy.

moved to a compound at the international airport, where they would stay for an unspecified amount of time, the official said.

The tarmac of the airport was filled with a constellation of uni-

forms from different nations. They joined contractors, diplomats and civilians all trying to catch a flight out of the city. Those who were eligible to fly were given special bracelets, denoting

their status as noncombatants.

For millions of Afghans, including tens of thousands who assisted the US efforts in the country for years, there were no bracelets. They were stuck in the city.

Rumours abounded: The Taliban were in the city, or weren't they? Were the Americans securing the palace?

The streets of the city were packed and many shops were closed. Traffic barely moved.

At one bank in downtown Kabul, a mass of hundreds of people swelled outside, clamoring to get in once doors opened. At one point, two men tried to climb a barred gate into the building.

At Abdul Haq Square in the centre of the capital, five men who appeared to be Taliban fighters gathered as cars drove by showing their support for the militants.

Some police officers appeared to have abandoned their usual checkpoints, leading to speculation that the government was no longer in control.

At a bus station in Kabul, members of the Afghan security forces were seen changing into civilian clothes as they waited for transport to their hometowns.

Japan marks anniversary of WWII end, vows to never wage war again

KIYOSHI TAKENAKA TOKYO, AUGUST 15

JAPAN WILL never wage war again, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged on Sunday, as he commemorated the end of World War Two while members of his cabinet visited a shrine seen by critics as a symbol of the country's past militarism.

Nearly eight decades since the end of the war, the conflict remains a source of tension between Japan and its neighbours, particularly China and North and South Korea, with the Yasukuni shrine in central Tokyo a focal point for the strain.

"Since the end of the war, Japan has consistently walked the path of a country that values peace," Suga said in a speech at a memorial ceremony in Tokyo. "We must never again repeat the devastation of war. We will continue to remain committed to this conviction."

His comments were little changed from those of his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, at last year's ceremony. Emperor Naruhito again expressed "deep remorse" for Japan's wartime past, something Suga did not mention.

Earlier on Sunday, members of Suga's cabinet, as well as Abe, visited Yasukuni, gestures likely to anger China and both Koreans. Suga did not visit but sent a ritual offering through his secretary, the Sankei newspaper said. REUTERS



Japan PM Yoshihide Suga during a memorial service in Tokyo on Sunday. AP

Trudeau triggers Canadian election, voting day September 20

ROB GILLIES TORONTO, AUGUST 15

PRIME MINISTER Justin Trudeau triggered an election Sunday as he seeks to capitalise on Canada being one of the most fully vaccinated countries in the world.

Trudeau announced the election would be held on September 20 after visiting the governor general, who holds a mostly ceremonial position representing Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. "We've had your back, and now it's time to hear your voice," Trudeau said. "Canadians need to choose how we finish the fight against Covid-19."

Trudeau is seeking to win a majority of seats in Parliament. His Liberal Party fell just short of that two years ago and must rely on the opposition to pass legislation.

The election comes as Canada is experiencing a new wave of Covid-19 cases, driven by the delta variant of the coronavirus.

Trudeau isn't as popular as he once was, but his government's handling of Covid has been widely viewed as a success. AP

12 killed in overnight grenade attack in Pak

ASSOCIATED PRESS KARACHI, AUGUST 15

THE DEATH toll from an overnight grenade attack on a truck carrying women and children in Karachi rose to 12 on Sunday.

Attackers targeted the truck on Saturday evening as it shuttled an extended family from a wedding ceremony in a western Karachi neighborhood, killing nine people and wounding nine others.

Dr. Qarar Abbasi at the city's main Dr. Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital said three of the injured died during treatment, raising the death toll to 12. The rest of the injured were in stable condition. He said seven women and five children were among the dead.



At the site of the explosion in Karachi. AP

Raja Umar Khitab, a counter-terrorism officer, said investigators have found pieces of a Russian made hand grenade from the scene near Mawach Goth. He told media that evidence collected suggested culprits were chasing the truck from and threw the grenade in the truck crowded by women and children.

RESCUERS RACING AS STORM THREATENS TO FOLLOW QUAKE

Powerful earthquake adds to Haiti's misery, at least 724 dead

EVENS SANON & COLLIN BINKLEY LES CAYES, AUGUST 15

THE DEATH toll from a magnitude 7.2 earthquake in Haiti soared on Sunday as rescuers raced to find survivors amid the rubble ahead of a potential deluge from an approaching tropical storm.

Saturday's earthquake left at least 724 dead and 2,800 injured in the Caribbean island nation, with thousands more displaced from their destroyed or damaged homes. Survivors in some areas were forced to shelter in streets or soccer fields with the few belongings they were able to salvage from their homes.

Yet the devastation could soon worsen with the coming of

Tropical Storm Grace, which was predicted to reach Haiti late Monday or early Tuesday, bringing the potential for torrential rain, flooding and landslides. The US National Hurricane Center forecast 4 to 8 inches of rain in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, with up to 15 inches in some southern parts of the island they share.

The earthquake struck the southwestern part of the hemisphere's poorest nation, almost razing some towns and triggering landslides that hampered rescue efforts. The disaster added to the plight of Haitians who were already grappling with the coronavirus pandemic, a presidential assassination and a wave of gang violence.

The epicentre of the quake was about 125 kilometres west



A hotel destroyed by the quake in Les Cayes, Haiti. AP

of the capital of Port-au-Prince, the US Geological Survey said. Aftershocks continued jolting the area Sunday.

In the badly damaged coastal town of Les Cayes, some families salvaged their few belongings and spent the night at an open-air foot-

ball pitch. On Sunday morning, people lined up to buy what little was available: bananas, avocados and water at a local street market.

Some in the town praised God for surviving the earthquake, and many went to the city's cathedral, which appeared outwardly undamaged even if the priests' residence was destroyed.

"We only have Jesus now," said Johanne Dorcelly, 58, whose house was destroyed. "If it wasn't for Jesus, I wouldn't be able to be here today."

Prime Minister Ariel Henry declared a one-month state of emergency for the whole country and said he was rushing aid to areas where towns were destroyed and hospitals overwhelmed with patients. A former senator rented a private

airplane to move injured people from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince for medical assistance.

"The most important thing is to recover as many survivors as possible under the rubble," said Henry. "We have learned that the local hospitals, in particular that of Les Cayes, are overwhelmed with wounded, fractured people."

Sunday's count from Haiti's Office of Civil Protection raised the previous death toll from 304 dead. The agency said more than 7,000 homes were destroyed and nearly 5,000 damaged.

People in Les Cayes tried to pull guests from the rubble of a collapsed hotel, but as the sun set on Saturday, they had only been able to recover the body of a 7-year-old girl whose home was behind the facility. AP

12 ECONOMY

TO BRING DIGITAL PAYMENT INFRA TO FEATURE PHONES, LOCAL LANGUAGES

Agri, handicrafts: IT Min seeks proposals for digital payments beyond smartphones

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

IN AN attempt to promote digital payments, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has decided to provide financial support to agencies and companies working to promote the virtual payments system in supply chains of agriculture, horticulture and handicrafts industry.

According to the proposal calling for applications from these agencies, the ministry will do a complete mapping of the up and down stream of these supply chains, look into their raw material purchase, sales, as well as association with marketplaces including government's e-NAM (e-National Agriculture Market).

MAPPING OF SUPPLY CHAINS

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"The spending thereof also needs to be in digital mode. This would include awareness and capacity building along with merchant on-boarding," the ministry added.

Apart from this, players which are working to provide

■ According to the proposal calling for applications from these agencies, the ministry will do a complete mapping of the up and down stream of these supply chains, look into their raw material purchase, sales, as well as association with marketplaces including government's e-NAM

some sort of offline payment solutions for areas and geographies which have limited internet connectivity will also be considered for the financial grant, the ministry further said.

"Absence of, or erratic, internet connectivity, especially in re-

mote areas, is a major impediment for adoption of digital payments. Availability of options to make offline payments, using cards, wallets or mobile devices could boost the adoption of digital payments. Proposals are invited around capacity building programmes, promotional campaigns aimed at training merchants with focus on women merchants in these districts," the proposal by MeitY calling for applications said.

Apart from smartphones, which have easy access to digital payment infrastructure and digital payment systems, the ministry has also called for proposals from players which are working to bring digital payments to feature phones or in local languages.

"Payments through feature phone is not picking up mainly

due to the fact that digital payments via feature phones is not easy and highly complicated. Security and drop rates are other areas of concern. Proposals inviting ways to increase the usage of feature phones for performing digital payments by creating awareness, finding new use cases and performing a pilot," the ministry said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had, in the Budget for the current financial year, set aside Rs 1,500 crore for a scheme to incentivise digital payments.

"There has been a manifold increase in digital payments in the recent past. To give a further boost to digital transactions, I earmark Rs 1,500 crore for a proposed scheme that will provide financial incentive to promote digital modes of payment," she had then said in her speech.

PACE OF RECOVERY MAY SLOW IN SECOND HALF OF FY22

July: Growth indicators gain pace, but risk aversion may put brakes

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

DESPERATE ATTEMPTS by some economic actors to come out of a crisis that lasted for a frustratingly long period enabled some indicators to move up in July after being trammelled by the second Covid wave in May-June.

However, since the principal economic agents — private investors, lenders and consumers — don't yet seem to have overcome an extreme risk aversion and the government-sector doesn't appear to be living up to its task, the pace of recovery in the second half of FY22 could be lower than predicted by government managers.

As it happens, credit growth continues to be subdued and industrial output is below the pre-Covid level. Also, the services sector that constitutes much of the aggregate demand is weak.

Though a section of Corporate India reported decent operating margins even in Q1 by reining in

costs, that hardly reflects the state of the economy; profits of most firms remain under pressure and the MSMEs are in graver crisis.

Rising commodity prices and shipping costs could continue to impact the larger industry through the current quarter and beyond, and slow the momentum of recovery.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made it clear that growth is being accorded top priority and the monetary policy stance is in concert with this approach. However, given that inflationary pressures are real and the US Federal Reserve has signalled its intent to raise interest rates later this year, the Reserve Bank of India may have to soon start gradually unwinding the monetary stimulus; it dropped hints of this at the latest policy review. The RBI may also shift stance from 'accommodative' to 'neutral' and even hike rates marginally by the end of the current fiscal year.

As for the high-frequency indicators, gross Goods and Services

Tax (GST) collections came in an impressive Rs 1.16 lakh crore in July (largely June transactions), up a third-on-year and a quarter-on-month. That in July, the average daily e-way bill generation was 14 per cent higher than the level in June and 60 per cent higher than in May indicates the August collections (from July sales) could be even higher.

Manufacturing activity, as measured by the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), reversed a contraction witnessed in June and grew at its fastest pace in three months in July, as states relaxed curbs imposed in the wake of the second Covid wave. Output rose at a robust pace, with over one-third of companies reporting a monthly expansion in production. But services activity shrank for a third straight month in July, although the contraction level narrowed from June.

Merchandise exports exceeded the pre-pandemic level (same months in 2019) for five months in a row through July. **FE**

MARKETS WATCH FOREIGN INVESTMENT

FPIs pour ₹2,085 cr into equities in first half of Aug amid rise in economic activity

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO investors (FPIs) bought Indian equities worth Rs 2,085 crore in the first half of August owing to improvement in economic activity.

As per depositories data, overseas investors pumped in a net Rs 2,085 crore between August 2-13.

During the same period, they pulled out a net Rs 2,044 crore from the debt segment.

The inflows in August can be attributed to an improvement in economic activity in the domestic market, even though concerns over the third wave of Covid-19 lingers globally, as per Shrikant Chouhan, executive vice president, equity technical research, Kotak Securities.

The small figure indicates lack of conviction on the part of FPIs, said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services. FPIs were sellers in financial services and IT in July, he added.

Since markets are at record highs with stretched valuations, some profit booking by FPIs can be expected, going forward, Vijayakumar further said.

With respect to other emerging markets, Chouhan

THIRD WAVE WORRIES

■ As per depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped in a net Rs 2,085 crore between August 2-13

■ In the same period, they pulled out a net Rs 2,044 crore from the debt segment

■ Despite the inflows, analysts warned of lingering concerns over the third wave of Covid-19

said flows in South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan continues to be in the negative to the tune of \$1,906 million, \$362 million and \$184 million, respectively.

On the other hand, Indonesia and the Philippines reported FPI inflows to the tune of \$5 million and \$8 million, respectively.

"FPI flows in India are expected to be volatile, given the concern pertaining to the pandemic third wave and Federal Reserve's plans to eventually taper its asset purchases," Chouhan said.

'Faceless assessment to improve efficiency, transparency of tax administration'

Nearly 9 in 10 respondents believe that the faceless assessment scheme will improve efficiency, transparency and accountability of tax administration, a survey by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) stated. According to CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee, "The Transparent Taxation Platform, and more particularly the Faceless Assessment Scheme, has been a significant step forward in reassuring businesses about the tax governance and administration system being impartial and data-based."

One year of Transparent Taxation: On the completion of one year of the 'Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest' platform, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 13, 2020, the industry body conducted a survey to gauge industry views on the effectiveness of the Scheme. The three areas of the platform are:

- Faceless assessment
- Faceless appeals
- Taxpayers' Charter (TC)

73%: Feel faceless assessment resulted in saving precious time as compared to earlier physical assessments



88% Believe faceless assessment will improve efficiency, transparency and accountability of tax administration

>70%: Had excellent to good experience of faceless assessments, despite Covid-related challenges for both tax administration and taxpayers alike

88% Feel faceless assessments will help realise government's objective of reducing interface and reducing undesirable practices on part of tax officials

67% Feel that under Faceless assessment, final assessment order was better than past physical scrutiny assessments

Other positives pointed out by respondents:

- Majority feel that queries raised were focussed and specific to their cases
- Majority did not feel need for personal hearing at any stage of assessment proceedings

Concerns over roving queries: Many respondents, however, felt that there appeared to be a few roving type of queries, and that government may need to consciously avoid phishing and roving queries to build trust with taxpayers

ENS
Economic
Bureau

Ola drives in e-scooter starting at ₹99,999; deliveries from Oct

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

OLA ELECTRIC on Sunday forayed into the green mobility space with the launch of its first electric scooter, Ola S1, at a price starting from Rs 99,999 (ex-showroom). The Ola S1 electric scooter would come in two trims — S1 and S1 Pro — carrying a price tag of Rs 99,999 and Rs 1,29,999, respectively.

"I want to underline that it is

going to be the best scooter ever made. It has the best design, performance and technology," Ola chairman and group executive Officer Bhavish Aggarwal told reporters here. With never seen before technology, design and features, the company is looking for a global leadership in the electric two-wheeler segment, he added.

The company will officially open Ola S1 for purchase from September 8, and start deliveries across 1,000 cities and towns in

October. Till September 8, the company will keep accepting the bookings at Rs 499, Aggarwal stated. He noted that Ola S1 solves one of the biggest challenges which has hampered the growth of the EV sector in India has been the upfront cost.

"In states with active subsidy grants, Ola S1 will be much more affordable than many petrol scooters. For instance, after state subsidy in Delhi, the S1 would cost just Rs 85,009 whereas in Gujarat

it would be only Rs 79,000," Aggarwal said.

The company has also tied up with banks and financial institutes for an EMI plan starting at Rs 2,999, he added.

The Ola S1 comes with a range of 181 km, a top speed of 115 km per hour and can be fully charged in less than 40 minutes with a fast charger, and around six hours with the portable charger that will come with the scooter and can be installed at homes. **WITHPTI**

Faurecia wins bidding tussle for auto lights maker Hella

LUDWIG BURGER
FRANKFURT, AUGUST 15

FRENCH CAR parts suppliers Faurecia on Saturday agreed to acquire a majority stake in German automotive lighting group Hella, trumping rival bidders and creating the world's seventh-largest player in a 6.7 billion euros deal.

Faurecia struck the deal with a pool of family-related shareholders over their 60 per cent stake for 60 euros (\$70.75) per share and will offer the same price for the outstanding stock, Hella said in a statement on Saturday.

Faurecia said in statement the transaction represented an estimated total enterprise value of 6.7 billion euros (\$7.90 billion) for 100 per cent of Hella. People familiar with the matter previously told Reuters that Cie Plastic Omnium and Germany's Mahle GmbH had submitted bids at around 60 euros per share, valuing the target at roughly 7 billion euros. **REUTERS**



An illustration provided by SpaceX showing the SpaceX Starship human lander design that will carry the first NASA astronauts to the surface of the Moon. AP file

ters) tall when coupled with its super-heavy first-stage booster.

It is at the center of the Tesla Inc CEO's ambitions to make human space travel more affordable and routine.

An orbital Starship flight is planned for year's end, and Musk has said he intends to fly Japanese billionaire entrepreneur Yusaku Maezawa around the moon in the Starship in 2023.

BRIEFLY FM to meet CEOs of PSBs

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to meet heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on August 25 to review financial performance of the lenders and progress made by them.

New investor registrations

New Delhi: Stock exchange NSE has seen over 50 lakh new investor registrations so far in FY22, equal to 62.5 per cent of the total number added in 2020-21, its chief Vikram Limaye said. **PTI**

EaseMyTrip Q1 results

New Delhi: Online travel company EaseMyTrip said it posted a profit before tax of Rs 20.8 crore in the June quarter, becoming the only and highest profitable travel portal in India. **ENS**

ORBITAL STARSHIP FLIGHT PLANNED FOR YEAR'S END

Musk: Starship orbital stack to be ready for flight in few weeks

REUTERS
BEIJING, AUGUST 15

SPACEX FOUNDER Elon Musk said Saturday the first orbital stack of the Starship rocket should be ready for flight in the coming weeks, taking the billionaire a step closer to his dream of orbital and then interplanetary travel.

SpaceX in May successfully landed its Starship prototype, SN15, a reusable heavy-lift launch vehicle that could eventually carry astronauts and large cargo payloads to the moon and Mars.

The touchdown came after four prototype landing attempts had ended in explosion.

"First orbital stack of Starship should be ready for flight in a few weeks, pending only regulatory approval," Musk, who also heads Tesla Inc, tweeted.

The complete Starship rocket, SpaceX's next-generation launch vehicle, stands 394 feet (120 me-

'Govt's right to intercept will always be there, but with checks & balances'

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

THE GOVERNMENT'S right to intercept for duly authorised legal causes like security and terrorism will always exist with checks and balances in any democracy, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said. Speaking at Times Now India at 75: The Freedom Summit on Sunday, he said the right to free speech is a fundamental right that any elected government cannot contravene easily.

He said that to remain confident, ignore the conspiracy theorists who will waive a fig leaf of truth and create a whole conspiracy around it. The minister was responding to questions around concerns on the back of certain controversies in worldwide exposure, where the state is also being seen as a bit of a threat. "The senior minister (Ashwini Vaishnaw) in my ministry has very clearly and very simply put it out there that we are a country with checks and balances," he said.

Speaking at an event on Sunday, MoS for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said the right to free speech is a fundamental right that any elected government cannot contravene easily

He said that to remain confident, ignore the conspiracy theorists who will waive a fig leaf of truth and create a whole conspiracy around it. The minister was responding to questions around concerns on the back of certain controversies in worldwide exposure, where the state is also being seen as a bit of a threat. "The senior minister (Ashwini Vaishnaw) in my ministry has very clearly and very simply put it out there that we are a country with checks and balances," he said.

DGH revamps approval processes for oil, gas fields

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

A SELF-CERTIFIED declaration of a commercial oil or gas discovery is all that is now needed by a company to get statutory recognition for a hydrocarbon find after the upstream regulator DGH overhauled approval processes.

Following up on its announcement of last month, Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) released 'Guidance Document' for online submission of various documents. "This document is prepared to guide the E&P (oil and gas exploration and production) contractors for submission of Production Sharing Contract (PSC)," DGH said.

It allows self-certified documents for requirements like bank guarantee to the appointment of auditor and relinquishing an area or a commercial oil and gas discovery is made.

Australians cleared to play in IPL before T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE, AUGUST 15

CRICKET AUSTRALIA has cleared the way for the country's leading players to return to the rescheduled Indian Premier League in the UAE starting next month ahead of the T20 World Cup.

CA has issued No Objection Certificates for the players to return to the IPL next month, while a planned T20 tri-series with Afghanistan and West Indies may be re-purposed as (T20) World Cup warm-ups, according to a report in cricket.au.com.

This year's IPL was halted in May after an outbreak of COVID-19 in India, and about 40 Australian players, coaches, broadcasters and support staff had to spend time in Maldives while international borders were shut, before eventually returning home via a charter flight provided by the BCCI.

The IPL has since been rescheduled to complete the remaining 36 games in 27 days between September 19 and October 15 in the UAE, finishing just two days before the T20 World Cup begins, which has also been relocated to the region from India.

CA's clearance came after the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) confirmed the postponement of a three-match ODI series between the two nations originally planned to be held in India in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup, the report said.

A mooted T20 tri-series also involving the West Indies was due to form an important part of the World Cup preparations for all three squads, and Afghanistan authorities are continuing efforts to secure a venue to host it.

With the initial group stages of the T20 World Cup expected to be played primarily in Oman, the UAE venues could be free to host the matches between the end of the IPL and the start of the World Cup's Super 12 stage, expected to begin on October 23.

Vinesh refutes 2 charges; says wearing wrong jersey was an unintended error

SHIVANI NAIK
AUGUST 15

VINESH PHOGAT responded to allegations hurled at her by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on August 10, refuting them on all counts, save for the one related to the unauthorised jersey. The response to the federation from Vinesh's lawyer stated: "At the outset, the Athlete would like to state that she is distraught upon receiving the said Notice, especially immediately after the Tokyo Olympics 2020...

While the Athlete deeply regrets not winning a medal, the Athlete believes she has been wrongfully accused of misconduct and indiscipline at the Tokyo Olympic Games Village ("Olympic Village"). The Athlete respectfully refutes the allegations specified under the said Notice."

Vidushpat Singhania, managing partner, Krida Legal, said they have only replied to allegations made against Vinesh by the federation and did not get into other issues, including the absence of a dedicated physiotherapist for Vinesh and other women wrestlers.

"We are only answering the three allegations levelled against her in the show-cause notice so we did not go into the details of other logistics regarding the Olympics," Singhania, who is representing Vinesh, said. "The ball is now in WFI's court, we are now waiting for their response."

CHARGE 1: Vinesh was accused of negative behaviour with teammates for refusing to stay and train with the Indian contingent at Olympics village. **REPLY:** "The Athlete completely disagrees with the above stated complaint & refutes the allegation in its entirety."

The wrestler stated that she was merely following the Covid-19 quarantine rules & regulations as specified by the International Olympic Committee & government of Japan in the athletes play-book under the "Test, Trace and



A day after her suspension, Vinesh Phogat had revealed her physical and mental struggles during the Olympic Games. *File*

Every athlete enters the field with the sole purpose of earning laurels for the country and raising the country's flag high. Vinesh Phogat is one of the finest athletes in the country and she has brought honour to the tri colour on numerous occasions. We are all proud of you and will continue to support you through the next phase of your career."

NEERAJ CHOPRA
TOKYO GAMES JAVELIN CHAMPION

Isolate' regulations. Vinesh, who flew in from Hungary (as insisted upon by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to those training abroad), reached Tokyo on July 28 and chose caution to ensure safety of both herself and other wrestlers. She was assigned accommodation with India's track & field contingent who had arrived before the wrestlers and completed their quarantine, and was housed with Revathi Veeramani, Subha Venkatesan and Sekar Dhanalakshmi.

"The Athlete did not stay separately from the Indian contingent, as even the athletics contingent was a part of the larger

Indian contingent at the Tokyo Olympics 2020," the reply said. Subsequently, Vinesh decided to continue her stay with the Indian athletics contingent for all remaining days of her stay at the Olympic Village since she had gotten accustomed to the surroundings during the first three days of her quarantine period. "The actions of the Athlete were genuine and well intentioned as, immediately after the rest of the wrestling contingent had undergone the quarantine period, the Athlete regularly joined the other female wrestlers for lunch and dinner every day from 31.07.2021 (post completion of quarantine period)

till her stay at the Olympic Village."

CHARGE 2: Refusal to train with Indian contingent. **REPLY:** "...the allegation of refusal to train with the other athletes of the Indian wrestling contingent are false & denied."

Vinesh used the same transportation as the other Indian wrestlers for the July 29 afternoon training, but only trained on different mats, due to the high risk in contact sports of infection transmission. Post mandatory quarantine period for Indians, Vinesh trained with Seema Bisla on August 3-4. "The allegation that the Athlete did not train with the Indian wrestling contingent is not factually correct," the reply said.

The reply also elaborated on the complication caused after Vinesh was assigned a physiotherapist from the shooting contingent. Since the physio could only become available post 9.15 at night, Vinesh's post-training stretched late into the night that first day, ruining her sleeping pattern.

She requested head coach

Kuldeep Malik, to prepone her training timings of her training and permitted the Athlete to shift her training timings earlier than the scheduled timings from the Indian women wrestling contingent." Post quarantine, she regularly had lunch and dinner with the Indian wrestling contingent and spent time with fellow Indian wrestlers.

"The above stated actions of the Athlete were genuine, bonafide and well intentioned solely with intention to allow the Athlete to perform to best of her abilities while keeping herself safe."

CHARGE 3: WEARING WRONG SINGLET **Reply:** "The athlete hereby acknowledges the regretful error of not wearing the official Indian Olympic jersey/singlet as provided by IOA and the said error by the Athlete is solely attributable to the unintentional & incorrect planning by the Athlete."

Vinesh stated that the Indian jersey which she wore to training was not washed for the day of competition owing to prior circumstances, and the error was not ill-intentioned.

From the day before her first bout, on August 5, Vinesh had been feeling uncomfortable & nauseous. She eventually also vomited before her first bout at the Olympics. "It is pertinent to mention that the Athlete wore the official jersey/kit of India for all training sessions at the Olympic Village, including at her training sessions on August 2-3-4. The Athlete had been donning the full official kit (including t-shirts, track suit & shoes) at all times, even till before the start of her Olympic bout on 05.08.2021. The Athlete, amidst all the chaos that was happening with her body, could not ensure if she was carrying the official jersey (wrestling singlet) of India or not. The Athlete humbly and unconditionally apologises to WFI and IOA for not being able to wear the official jersey/singlet at her Olympic bout," the reply said.

Bayern Munich and West Germany great Gerd Muller dies

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MUNICH, AUGUST 15

GERD MULLER, the Bayern Munich and former West Germany forward known as "Der Bomber" for his scoring-provess, has died. He was 75.

The Bavarian club announced his death on Sunday, with club president Herbert Hainer saying it was "a sad, dark day for FC Bayern and all its fans."

Muller scored 566 goals for Bayern between 1964 and 1979, helping the team to four German titles, four German Cup wins and three European Cup victories in that time.

He still holds the record for the most goals scored in the Bundesliga with 365, scored in 427 league games.

"Gerd Muller was the greatest striker there's ever been, and a fine person and character of world football," Hainer said in a statement posted on the club's website.

"We're all united in deep mourning with his wife Uschi as well as his family."

Bayern announced in October 2015 that Muller had Alzheimer's disease for "a long time" and that he had been cared for professionally with the support of his family since the beginning of February that year.

Muller made 607 competitive appearances for Bayern. He was the league's top-scorer on seven occasions. He was as important to Bayern's ascent to becoming Germany's powerhouse as former teammates Franz Beckenbauer and Uli Hoenes.

Muller's record of 40 goals scored in the 1971-72 Bundesliga season was only beaten last season, when current Bayern forward Robert Lewandowski scored his 41st in the last minute of the last game.

Muller also helped West Germany win the European Championship in 1972, then the World Cup two years later, when he scored the winning goal in the final against the Netherlands.

Altogether he scored 68 goals



Muller still holds the record for the most goals scored in the Bundesliga - 365 in 427 games.

in 62 appearances for West Germany. It was a national record only surpassed in 2014 by Miroslav Klose, who needed 129 appearances to match him.

"He was the best German forward of all time. Without him, FC Bayern and the German team would never have been able to take this successful path," Bavarian state president Markus Soder said.

"I myself was a big fan. All of Bavaria is mourning."

The chief executive of Bayern rival Borussia Dortmund also paid his respect.

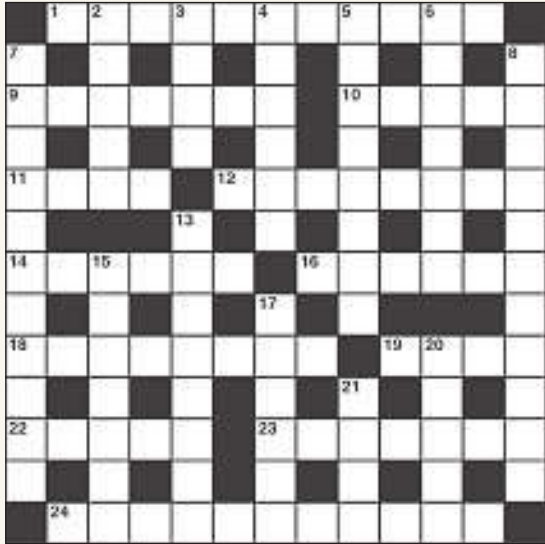
"Gerd Muller was one of the biggest idols of my childhood and youth," Hans-Joachim Watzke said.

"I had the great honor to get to know him personally as a very humble and pleasant person. He was an outstanding player for whom FC Bayern and the German soccer team owe so much."

Muller became a youth coach at Bayern after his playing days, working with players such as Philipp Lahm, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Thomas Muller. "His achievements are unrivaled to this day and will forever be a part of the great history of FC Bayern and all of German football," Bayern chairman Oliver Kahn added in the club statement.

"As a player and a person, Gerd Muller stands for FC Bayern and its development into one of the biggest clubs in the world like no other. Gerd will forever be in our hearts."

CROSSWORD 4509



ACROSS

- Two things on the Christmas tree for decoration (5,6)
- It receives signals from a girl about ten (7)
- Horse holding one girl (5)
- A real sort of aristocrat (4)
- Dealer in Mercedes, 50% less than new (8)
- I grew vexed about a little pest (6)
- Awkward cases caught in a doorway? (6)
- He suffers from depression (8)
- But a change will be forbidden (4)
- Pole taking meat around for sale? (5)
- One is late for this train (7)
- Suits oneself? (4,7)

DOWN

- Change may be made later (5)
- Very bad line-up (4)
- How the foliage goes (6)
- Sporting bird in the main (8)
- Housing row (7)
- Convince it's fantasy (4,7)
- The others confidently said there's no need to worry (4,7)
- A girl lies about weapons (8)
- Even in sorrow taxpayers contribute to it (7)
- Cooperate with Italian scoundrel (6)
- She gives a direction to the printer to erase (5)
- Unusual risk causes annoyance (4)

Solutions Crossword 4508: Across: 1 Jester, 4 Spaniard, 9 Canard, 10 E strange, 12 Paul, 13 Scoop, 14 Hand, 17 To all intents, 20 Housebreaker, 23 Also, 24 Minsk, 25 Stag, 28 Presents, 29 Dublin, 30 Tapestry, 31 Spasms. Down: 1 Jackpots, 2 Singular, 3 Earl, 5 Past one's best, 6 Nero, 7 Annual, 8 Dreads, 11 Scene-shifter, 15 Eliot, 16 Steer, 18 Skittles, 19 Brigands, 21 Carpet, 22 Asleep, 26 Bess, 27 Pulp.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

It is not enough to have a _____, the main thing is to use it well. - René Descartes (4,4)

GMROO



EMOodd



AADIN



AGINGM



SOLUTION: GROOM, NAIAD, DOOMED, GAMING
Descartes: It is not enough to have a good mind; it is to use it well. - René

SUDOKU 4565

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4564



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL



ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

One way or another, you will be expecting other people to make much of you today. In the best of all possible worlds, your pride will be flattered and partners will recognise and admire what you consider to be your finest achievements. But, then, isn't it about time you hogged the limelight?

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You have accomplished most of your routine tasks. Now you must put your creative and imaginative thoughts into action. By all means follow your usual path and move slowly and cautiously. And, in spite of what anyone says to you, there's no need to panic.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Taking a look at the week ahead, we can see two top possibilities. The first is a major change of plan at home, the other, a short but unexpected journey. The most important consideration in both is the need for careful consultation with all concerned.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Now that the planets have forced you to alter your plans, perhaps dramatically so, be prepared for the next phase: within the next few weeks you will be forced to make an abrupt halt, perhaps to go back over old ground. At work, do yourself a favour and improve relationships with colleagues.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You're not afraid to make a song and dance if you think that you're getting a raw deal. However, there are two ways to play events over the next five days. The best option is probably to take partners into your confidence now. That way they can't accuse you of misleading them later.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

You're still feeling the benefit of wonderfully supportive astral influences, and there seems to be nothing to gain from making heavy weather of otherwise fabulous opportunities. It all depends on how you play your cards. And what you have to do is turn delay and frustration to your advantage.



LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

You know, more than anyone, how your general happiness depends on your environment. Yet, what you may only now be coming to realise, is the extent to which your circumstances are shaped by your general outlook. And once you've figured that out you'll be able to improve your attitude and transform your material situation.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Partners and colleagues too often misinterpret your discreet manner as unfriendliness or arrogance. You must make a great effort to break down such preconceptions, exposing your better qualities to public scrutiny. The fact is partners have the best ideas, so listen well.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

There's one kind favour you can do for yourself today, and that's go out and spend a little money on enhancing the quality of your life. After all, a little frivolity never hurt anybody. That should balance your tendency to sacrifice your own interests on the altar of someone else's desires.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The ball is in your court today, so it's no use flapping around waiting for someone else to pick up the tab. There could be a trial of wills at home but partners will only come to your assistance if you issue the orders and make it crystal-clear what needs doing.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You can expect a gradual but insistent build-up of tension until the end of the week, followed by a crisis of sorts and a sudden realisation that problems which have dogged you for years are now in the past. However, if you don't look where you're going, you'll create a series of new, different, difficulties.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Working Pisceans should push themselves harder than ever this week. You will never know what you are capable of achieving until you stretch yourself to the limit. Accept no compromise. After all, deep inside that frail frame of yours there's a real toughie waiting to be let out.

OSAKA PLEDGES TO HAITI EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

Naomi Osaka has pledged to donate her earnings from next week's Western & Southern Open to support earthquake relief efforts in Haiti, the Caribbean nation her father hails from. **REUTERS**

Batt(l)ing duo leaves job unfinished

Pujara and Rahane show plenty of resolve but England hold upper hand with one day remaining at Lord's

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
AUGUST 15

IT COULD have been a tale of stirring resolve, of never-say-die attitude from two batsmen who had been walking a tightrope and looking over their shoulders. But Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane left the job half-done and as stumps were drawn at Lord's on Day Four, England, sans Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad, found themselves in a strong position.

When bad light stopped play, as Joe Root decided to keep his fast bowlers fresh with the second new ball on the final morning, India were 181/6 in their second innings, just 154 runs ahead of England. The hosts will bat fourth on a fifth-day pitch all right, but the visitors don't have Ravichandran Ashwin.

The 100-run partnership between Pujara and Rahane for the fourth wicket, during which they showed plenty of grit, was keeping India in the contest after Rohit Sharma was out-egoed and Virat Kohli out-thought by their opponents. But the Pujara-Rahane combo didn't meet the desired objective of making things safe for their team. They departed in quick succession to open the game for England. On the precipice, Rishabh Pant remains India's tenuous link to proper batting.

Longer innings from Pujara and Rahane could have made things different. For the whole of the second session and a good portion of the third, they stood firm. Their batting wasn't easy on the eye. But at 55/3 and the world's longest batting tail to come, fighting for survival became the key. In the middle were two batsmen who had been going through a lean patch during the ongoing tour, starting from the World Test Championship final.

One false step from Pujara and Rahane, and Suryakumar Yadav and/or Hanuma Vihari were waiting in the wings. After them, India were left with only Pant and Ravindra Jadeja to rely upon. Jadeja didn't last long on Sunday, cleaned up by a fine delivery from Moeen Ali towards the fag end of the day.

As much as playing for their country, Pujara and Rahane were playing for themselves also. Against them was a disciplined England bowling, spearheaded by James Anderson. The duo defied the odds for a long period. After tea, when they saw off Anderson's spell, it felt like safety was achievable. But Mark Wood came up with a snorter, the ball kicking off a length and taking the shoulder of Pujara's bat to Root at second slip.

Closing the face of the bat a little, while playing forward against the seamers, has been Pujara's problem in this series. He is nicking the away-goers as a result. But on Sunday, he showed better judgment outside off-stump before weathering a bodyline attack from Wood post-lunch. The fast bowler targeted Pujara's body with a short square-leg, short backward square, a silly mid-off and a fly slip in place. But India's No. 3 had successfully negotiated more hostile bowling in Australia last winter. He was n't perturbed.

Rahane's position was seemingly even more vulnerable. In 2018, he was dropped for the first two Tests in South Africa despite being the team's vice-captain and the most reliable overseas batsman at the time. He had little margin for error. The first delivery he faced, in the wake of Kohli's dismissal, was a friendly full-toss from Sam Curran, which Rahane failed to put away. A few times, he couldn't capitalise on half-volleys. He has had his struggles against off-spinners over a period of time. But on Sunday, Rahane was judging Moeen's length

WHY DIDN'T ENGLAND BOWL MORE OVERS ON DAY 4?

■ Moeen Ali explains it was a tactical decision by England to not bowl more overs and call stumps. "Joe wanted to bowl the seamers and it wasn't allowed. It was a tactical decision (by Root not to give quick runs). I completely agree with it. One party (within the team) wanted to stay out there and other didn't! Former England captain Andrew Strauss said: "I understand the decision, but I would have bowled two more overs of spin."

well, although a dropped catch by Jonny Bairstow at point gave him a reprieve on 31. India were 119/3 then. Ironically, his dismissal was down to a misjudgement against the off-spinner, as he played away from his body and was caught behind.

Test cricket is not a three-hour evening show and a celebration of 100m sixes. It's the ultimate test of a cricketer's skill and character. So, it didn't matter that Pujara took 35 balls to get off the mark or he and Rahane consumed 175 balls to add 50 runs, and accounted for 296 deliveries to stitch a 100-run partnership. They were trying to take India to safety and were under no obligation to wow the audience. After Rahane's 61 and Pujara's 45, they will live to fight another day, but both understandably walked back to the pavilion disappointed.

Earlier in the day, England successfully played on Rohit's ego. Wood kept three men back on the hook and challenged the Indian opener with bouncers. Rohit hooked one for a six but found Moeen at deep square-leg three balls later. The first one was near his right shoulder and the second ball closer to his left. Rohit backed himself to clear the short leg-side boundary, but couldn't middle it.

Kohli was out-thought by Curran, who switched to over the wicket – partially due to a warning from umpire Michael Gough for running on to the danger area – and broke the sequence of inswingers by moving one away. The India captain was set up to play in-swing and poked at the wishid delivery to the wicket-keeper. His tale of batting woe continues.

SCORECARD

ENGLAND vs INDIA

LORD'S

Toss: England, chose to field

IND 1ST INNINGS 364

ENG 1ST INNINGS 391

INDIA 2ND INNINGS 181/6

KL Rahul c Buttler b Wood 5 (30b)

R Sharma c Ali b Wood 21 (36b, 2x4, 1x6)

C Pujara c Root b Wood 45 (206b, 4x4)

V Kohli c Buttler b Curran 20 (31b, 4x4)

A Rahane c Buttler b Ali 61 (146b, 5x4)

R Pant not out 14 (29b)

R Jadeja b Ali 3 (5b)

I Sharma not out 4 (10b)

■ Extras (b 2, lb 5, nb 1) 8

■ FoW: 1-18 (KL Rahul, 9.2 ov), 2-27 (Rohit Sharma, 11.6 ov), 3-55 (Virat Kohli, 23.1 ov), 4-155 (Cheteshwar Pujara, 72.4 ov), 5-167 (Ajinkya Rahane, 75.6 ov), 6-175 (Ravindra Jadeja, 79.1 ov)

■ Bowling: J Anderson 18-6-23-0, O Robinson 10-6-20-0, M Wood 14-3-40-3, S Curran 15-3-30-1, M Ali 20-1-52-2, J Root 5-0-9-0

■ Stumps on Day 4



Mark Wood got rid of both of India's openers as England started strong on Day Four at Lord's. *Reuters*

Lord's applauds Pujara's 'Block-buster' knock

SANDIP G
AUGUST 15

TO THE rousing cheers of the Sunday crowd, Cheteshwar Pujara blocked the 100th ball he faced in the innings. As he had through most of his combatively laborious knock, as he had when he scored his first run off the 35th ball he faced, as he had when he cuffed his first boundary off the 117th delivery. To each of this round of applause—not to be mistaken with sarcastic cheers—he would raise his gloved thumb, or let out half a smile or crack a joke with his partner.

He was neither overawed nor over-conscious to alter his means or methods, but locked in an intense battle of survival. Surviving for his team, surviving for himself, a battle he could not afford to lose, neither for himself nor the team. Pujara was dealing with the situation in the best way he knew, by sticking to his biggest strengths, by trusting his defence and discipline. Just like hitters hit out of a rut, blockers would look to block out of their rough.

But neither can he blast himself into form like Virender Sehwa nor could Sehwa block himself out of form like Pujara. There is no definite template to reviving form, it's entirely upon a batsman's instinct. His strike rate—21.84—and its bearings on the game



Cheteshwar Pujara dug deep to score 46 off 206 deliveries. *Reuters*

will be dissected and critiqued, but in a dire phase of his career, he would not have turned into Sehwa or Kohli overnight. It should also be read in the context of the game—another wicket then would have imperilled India.

So he rolled out some captivating duels. James Anderson probed and persisted. He tested both edges, swung and seamed both ways, used the upright seam and the wob-

ble seam, harnessed conventional and reverse swing, mixed his lengths - but Pujara didn't flinch.

Resolute against Anderson

Unlike in the last two instances, he succumbed to Anderson in this series, he was not tricked by the inward angle (before the ball slides away fatally). He was looking to defend in front of the stumps, and not towards the mid-on, as is his inclination. Besides, he was defending beside the body and not in front of it.

The front-foot did come across a few times, but the stride was more pronounced and definite. He still played and missed a few, Anderson teased him in the post-tea session, but he was resolute. And when Anderson erred fractionally on the shorter side, he rode the bounce and steered it past the point fence, again to rippling applause, who seemed to have cultivated a genuine fondness for Pujara and his sweat to rediscover his form and runs.

The foremost threat negotiated, he blunted the rest without much fuss. Mark Wood's pace was dealt adeptly, until the 206th ball he faced, which exploded off a good length and took his glove; Ollie Robinson's seam movement and lift was negated with delicate hands; Sam Curran's left-handed menace neutered with watchful leaves; the temptation of quick runs Moeen Ali

promise didn't lure him into something silly.

There, though, were shrewdly-designed traps laid for him. He kept abreast of them all, navigating the field of mines like an expert mine-diffuser. For much of the second session, when Robinson and Wood were bowling, they placed a triangle of fielders in his leg-side vicinity. Often, a square leg-gully, a deep short leg and shortish midwicket, and they would bowl back-of-length at his body, in case one bobbled in the air from the top half of his bat. He had perished a few times in this manner in Australia. But here, on a comparatively slow wicket, he smothered the bounce. Wood would then set a field that telegraphed short-ball barrage—men in the deep and 3-6 field, but then would slip in fiendishly in-swinging corks at 90mph. But Pujara would have some part of his bat in time to abort its stump-ward hustle, illustrating his resolve as much as reflexes.

In his quest for redemption, he shelved his well-worn template of accelerating after kicking onto 20s or 30s. Some of his boundaries-bound strokes were intervened, Anderson at point was the frequent intruder, but he didn't let the pressure of not ticking the scorecard burden him. He stole singles, called with clarity, and ran with purpose, and in the process kept India in the game, and probably bought himself some more time to salvage his career.

BRIEFLY

Ali's grandson wins on pro debut

London: **Nico Ali Walsh** made a successful pro debut on Saturday night, winning in the first round and then paying homage to his grandfather, Muhammad Ali. Wearing trunks made for his grandfather, Ali Walsh knocked down his outmatched opponent midway through the first round before the middleweight fight finally stopped at 1:49 with Ali Walsh landing unanswered punches to the head. "It's been an emotional journey, this whole ride," Ali Walsh said. "Obviously, my grandfather, I've been thinking about him so much. I miss him."



The fight between Ali Walsh, a 21-year-old college student, and Jordan Weeks was notable not because of anything the two had done in the ring but because Ali Walsh was trying to follow in his grandfather's footsteps into boxing. Still, Ali Walsh looked competent for a relative novice and displayed good hand speed and power against Weeks, an MMA fighter he had stopped in his last boxing match. Ali Walsh celebrated with family members in the ring afterwards with 89-year-old promoter Bob Arum, who promoted 27 of Muhammad Ali's fights. **AP**

Benzema leads Real to victory in opener

Madrid: Karim Benzema picked up from where he left off last season, playing a decisive role for Real Madrid once again. Benzema led Madrid in its Spanish league opener on Saturday by scoring twice in the team's comfortable 4-1 win at Alavés. "Benzema is more than just a striker, he is a very complete player," said Carlo Ancelotti, who began his second stint as Madrid coach. "He is a much more complete player than when I coached him a few years ago."

Madrid also got a goal from Nacho Fernández, one of the defenders stepping in to replace veteran captain Sergio Ramos, who left after 16 seasons because the club didn't want to extend his contract. "This has just started, there's still a long way to go, but it was important to begin with a victory like this," Fernández said. Benzema, the team's top player and scoring leader last season under Zinedine Zidane, put Madrid ahead with a shot from inside the area after a clever back-heel touch by Eden Hazard in the 48th minute. The France striker added his second from close range in the 62nd, six minutes after Fernández had found the net following a cross from Luka Modric. Alavés pulled one back with a penalty kick converted by Joselu Mato in the 65th, and substitute Vinícius Júnior completed the scoring with a header two minutes into stoppage time. **AP**

PREMIER LEAGUE

Son rises as Tottenham off the mark against City

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LONDON, AUGUST 15

SON HEUNG-MIN made up for the absence of Harry Kane by scoring a second-half winner to give Tottenham a 1-0 win over defending champion Manchester City on Sunday in their opening game of the Premier League season. With Kane left out of Tottenham's team altogether amid continued speculation about a pending move to City, Son led the attack instead and showed that Spurs still have a top-class scorer to count on.

Son finished off a quick counterattack in the 55th minute and Tottenham effectively neutralized City's many attacking threats to give new manager Nuno Espirito Santo a statement victory on his debut.

Kane's absence was the big pregame talking point, although Nuno insisted the decision was made solely because the England striker only returned to full training on Friday after his holiday.

Kane has reportedly told Tottenham he wants to leave, with City manager Pep Guardiola previously acknowledging that his club is "very interested" in buying him.

Based on this performance, City's expensively assembled squad could use a finisher — especially after letting Sergio Aguero leave on a free transfer this summer.

City dominated possession but struggled



Son Heung-min has now scored in all of his four competitive matches against Manchester City at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. *AP*

to break down a disciplined Tottenham side, which was content to sit back and wait for opportunities to counter. City's record signing Jack Grealish showed early flashes of his abilities — breaking forward in the opening minutes to draw a free kick just outside the area — but missed his best chance to score when his shot from a tight angle was easily

saved by Hugo Lloris in the 75th.

West Ham on target

West Ham twice came from a goal down to start its Premier League campaign with a 4-2 victory against Newcastle on Sunday in a crowd-pleasing game in front of a full St James' Park. Callum Wilson put