

**MORE FOR VILLAGES, WOMEN**

2 billion jabs: India crosses global Covid-19 milestone

PM flags people's faith in science; hails doctors, nurses and scientists

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

INDIA REPORTED 2 billion cumulative Covid-19 vaccinations on Sunday, going past a global milestone in the ongoing battle against the pandemic. The country has now achieved a record 97 per cent first-dose coverage, while 90 per cent of its adult population has received both doses of the vaccine.

Around 4.90 lakh doses were given on Sunday, taking cumulative vaccinations to 2,00,03,73,288. The country is **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



At a medical college in Ahmedabad after India crossed 200 crore Covid-19 vaccine jabs. Nirmal Harindran

VACCINE COVERAGE IN STATES

Top five	Two doses	Cumulative vaccinations
Gujarat	100%	11.25 crore
Karnataka	100%	11.37 crore
Telangana	100%	6.43 crore
Madhya Pradesh	97%	12.13 crore
Uttar Pradesh	96%	34.42 crore
Bottom five	Single dose	Cumulative vaccinations
Nagaland	51%	16.83 lakh
Meghalaya	64%	25.47 lakh
Manipur	74%	30.11 lakh
Jharkhand	81%	4.10 crore
Arunachal Pradesh	87%	17.67 lakh

% coverage as per population projections submitted to the SC

Murmu thanks NDA MPs, says tribal community is 'excited'

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A DAY before the election for President, which she is expected to win as the ruling NDA's candidate, former Jharkhand Governor Droupadi Murmu described her nomination as a historic moment that has made the tribal community, especially its women, "utsaahit" (excited), *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Sources said that in a meeting with NDA MPs in the Parliament complex, Murmu also thanked **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



NDA Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu with BJP leaders in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

PRESIDENTIAL POLLS TODAY

Monsoon session begins today; Govt, Opp brace for a stormy start



At the all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Parliament House Sunday. Premnath Pandey

V-P polls: Opp picks Alva; TMC, AAP skip meeting

MANOJ CG & HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

SENIOR CONGRESS leader and former Union minister Margaret Alva was on Sunday pulled out of virtual retirement and nominated as the Opposition's candidate for the vice-presidential election scheduled to be held



Congress leader Margaret Alva

next month.

Sources said the Opposition had initially considered former chief election commissioner **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE GOVERNMENT Sunday accused the Opposition of trying to "belittle the image" of Parliament by insisting that "non-issues" such as the updated list of unparliamentary words be taken up for discussion, setting the stage for a stormy Monsoon Session that is set to begin on Monday.

At an all party-meeting **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

RBI'S STATE OF THE ECONOMY REPORT

Commodity prices' fall can help India escape global inflation trap

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) has said that the Indian economy can escape the global inflation trap if the moderation in commodity prices witnessed in recent weeks endures, alongside an easing of supply-chain pressures.

"The biggest source of relief is from inflation coming off its recent peak, albeit at an elevated

EXPLAINED **E** Moderating inflation

WHILE US inflation shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent, down from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

level still," the central bank has said in its latest 'State of the economy' report. Nonetheless, the signs of its generalisation and the potential unhinging of inflation expectations have elicited a pre-emptive and frontloaded monetary policy response, the RBI said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently said that inflation was likely to "ease gradually in the second half of 2022-23, precluding the chances of a hard **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



"In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug"

DR SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE
ONCOLOGIST
PAGE 9

WORLD

PTI WINS BY A LANDSLIDE
PAGE 12

From hospital gate to upmarket store, fuel squeeze chokes Colombo



EXPRESS IN SRI LANKA

SHUBHAJIT ROY
COLOMBO, JULY 17

■ An official who worked at former prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's office says she's been trying her luck in the fuel queue for the past three days, without success.

■ Another official at former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office says he has "just enough" to



A patient is brought in a grocery delivery van to the National Hospital of Sri Lanka in Colombo on Friday night. Shubhajit Roy

get to the market. He used to get fuel from government sheds earlier but not after Rajapaksa fled.

■ A senior Sri Lankan diplomat has been working from home for the past week. "I walk

to the stores nearby for daily needs," the diplomat said.

■ A former diplomat, down with Covid, has saved up enough fuel to reach the hospital, if needed.

THE FUEL shortage in Sri Lanka has hit the elite as well as common people.

On the streets of Colombo, fewer private cars are plying, serpentine queues outside petrol stations are a common sight and most residents have been walking long distances, keeping the little fuel they have for an "emergency".

Facing the brunt of this shortage are the capital's hospitals. At 7 pm on Friday, when *The Indian Express* reached National **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



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TECH

APPLE HEALTH VP
DR SUMBUL DESAI

'Privacy dictates a lot of our decisions on product availability'

ENTERTAINMENT

REVISITING LIPSTICK
UNDER MY BURKHA

'Elderly people believe they don't have any sense of sexuality'

FROM PAGE ONE

Covid milestone

currently running a special 75-day vaccination drive in which the third, precaution dose is being administered for free at all government vaccination centres. Two important features of India's immunisation coverage — which constitute very significant steps to address vaccine inequity — are, first, 74% of vaccination centres have been set up in rural India and 71% of the vaccination coverage has been reported from rural areas and, second, 51.1% of recipients are women.

"India creates history again! Congrats to all Indians on crossing the special figure of 200 crore vaccine doses. Proud of those who contributed to making India's vaccination drive unparalleled in scale and speed. This has strengthened the global fight against COVID-19," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet. "Throughout the rollout of the vaccine, the people of India have shown remarkable faith in science. Our doctors, nurses, frontline workers, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs have played a key role in ensuring a safer planet. I appreciate their spirit and determination," Modi said.

India's vaccination drive — the world's largest — was rolled out on January 16, 2021, and coverage was progressively expanded in seven phases based on the principle of prioritisation of vulnerable population groups.

Among the priority population, 1 crore healthcare workers have received two doses and 60.21 lakh have received their precaution dose; 1.76 crore frontline workers have received two doses and 1.14 crore have received the precaution dose; 12.15 crore elderly recipients above the age of 60 have got their two doses and 2.81 crores have got the precaution shot as well.

Delhi tops the list of cities that have administered the most double doses with 1.53 crore jabs, followed by Mumbai (97.30 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (93.46 lakh), Pune (83.69 lakh), and the Ahmedabad Corporation area (49.73 lakh).

On January 3 this year, India also started administering Covid-19 vaccines to children: 5.01 crore teens in the age group 15-18 years, and 2.62 crore adolescents ages 12-14 are now fully vaccinated. The drugs regulator has approved vaccines for children younger than 12 as well; however, the expert body of the government is yet to take a decision on rolling out jabs for this age group.

The list of states that have administered the most doses (cumulative) to children is headed by Uttar Pradesh (1.94 crore), followed by Bihar (63.42 lakh), West Bengal (48.39 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (46.24 lakh), and Gujarat (43.49 lakh).

The precautionary dose is cur-

rently being administered only to adults, and has been given predominantly in the large metros. The cities that have administered the most precaution doses are Delhi (19.34 lakh), Mumbai (10.33 lakh), Bengaluru Urban (9.30 lakh), Kolkata (7.40 lakh), and Pune (7.08 lakh).

The vaccination drive has made use of the strong child immunisation infrastructure that was already in place in the country. Some 2.6 lakh vaccinators and 4.7 lakh vaccination team members were involved in the drive, and a record 213.51 crore syringes were mobilised.

The drive witnessed augmentation of the existing cold chain for storage and transportation of vaccines: an additional 13,626 ice line refrigerators and 12,461 deep freezers were made available.

"Greater Goals, Bigger Victories! Overcoming all the odds, India under PM @NarendraModi Ji's leadership has achieved the new milestone of #200CoreVaccinations. A moment to remember forever! The world's largest vaccination drive has been consistently creating new records," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet.

Monsoon session

ahead of the session, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Opposition leaders demanded that the alleged misuse of investigation agencies, the Agnipath scheme for recruitment in the defence forces, price rise, alleged attacks on the federal structure and the "Chinese incursion", be taken up for discussion.

With the session scheduled to end on August 12 — during which 32 Bills are likely to be introduced — the Opposition said it anticipates that key Bills would "bulldozed" through. Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said that with the session "leaving us effectively with only 14 days", the government did not offer them clear answers on how it plans to discuss the proposed legislation in such a short time.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi later told reporters that while the government was ready to "discuss any issue" under the rules and procedure of the House, the Opposition "is raising non-issues as it does not have anything against the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which has wide acceptance among the people of India and abroad".

PM Modi's absence in the meeting also drew criticism from the Opposition camp, with Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh tweeting, "Isn't this 'unparliamentary'?"

"Because of some reason, the PM did not come. In fact, before

2014, the PM never used to attend these meetings. A senior Cabinet member like Rajnath Singh presided over the meeting, unlike the Congress, which used to send the chief whip to take the meeting during its rule. How many times did (former prime minister) Manmohan Singh attend all-party meetings?" Joshi said.

At the meeting, attended by 36 parties, the Congress made it clear that it plans to raise issues such as the "DHFL bank fraud, rising unemployment, fiscal and rupee value crisis, hate speech, rising crimes in Jammu and Kashmir and attacks on Kashmiri Pandits, the collapse of autonomous bodies and constitutional institutions, and illegal demolition of homes of minorities".

Many parties also raised the issue of the new forest conservation rules, pointing out that it "dilutes" the rights of tribals. "Today in the all-party meeting, many political parties, including those supporting NDA, pointed out the contradiction in the Modi Sarkar claiming credit for its Presidential candidate on the one hand and killing off the Forest Rights Act, 2006, on the other hand!" Ramesh tweeted.

Among other parties, the Trinamool Congress said it will firmly oppose the updated list of unparliamentary words, circular banning protests and dharmas on Parliament premises, apart from "the anti-people policies and schemes such as Agnipath", inflation, and matters of foreign policy.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh said he raised the issue of "CBI and ED's misuse". "I said if the government can jail a person like Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain, the architect of projects like mohalla clinics, and intimidate the Opposition, then it is not sending out a good message to the country. We are not going to sit quietly. They are not letting Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal travel to Singapore to attend a summit of global leaders. The government did not have any answers," Singh said.

The DMK and AIADMK also raised the Sri Lankan crisis. The government will on Tuesday hold another all-party meeting on Sri Lanka.

Apart from Kharge, Ramesh and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, DMK's T R Baalu and Tiruchi Siva, TMC's Sudip Bandyopadhyay, BJD MP Pinaki Misra, YSRCP's Vijaya Sai Reddy, TRS's Keshava Rao, and Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut were among those present in the meeting.

The government, meanwhile, suggested that it was not likely to give in to the Opposition's demands to discuss the issue of "unparliamentary words", reiterating Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's statement that the compilation of the words and phrases is merely an updation of practice being carried out since 1954.

The circular on dharmas and protests is also issued routinely

ahead of any session, Joshi said.

"They do not have any major issue against the government because the government is functioning extremely well, people have accepted the leadership of Narendra Modi. Even foreign delegates and the diaspora have recognised his leadership. That's why these kinds of non-issues are being raised and they are trying to portray that in India even in Parliament they are not allowed to speak. They are trying to belittle the image of Parliament. I condemn the attitude of the opposition parties," Joshi said.

V-P polls

SY Quraishi — CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury reached out to Quraishi — and turned to Alva after he declined their offer. West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, sources said, had earlier suggested PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti's name but the proposal did not make much headway.

At the meeting of Opposition leaders, held at NCP chief Sharad Pawar's residence on Sunday, Yechury suggested and Pawar seconded Alva's name. That capped a week's groundwork by Yechury, Pawar and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, sources said.

In fact, Yechury suggesting Alva's name at the meeting too was planned to ensure that her candidature is not seen as having come from the Congress — part of a strategy to ensure that Alva has the backing of those uncomfortable with the Congress.

Sources said Yechury had spoken to Alva several days ago while Sonia spoke to her on Saturday. With Alva's name, the Opposition hoped to send out a political message — something they missed while picking the presidential nominee — by fielding a woman from South India who is also from a minority community.

Among the Opposition parties, the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party, which had extended support to Sinha, did not attend Sunday's meeting.

Pawar informed the leaders that he has spoken to Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and he has assured his party's support to the Opposition. Sources said a senior Trinamool Congress leader was spoken to during the meeting and he assured the leaders that his party was with the Opposition. "Your candidate is our candidate," a leader quoted him as having said.

Sources in the Trinamool Congress said the party's leaders could not attend the meeting because they were preoccupied with preparations for the July 21 Martyr's Day rally. They said Banerjee would consult all her MPs before taking a decision.

In the case of Yashwant Sinha, the Opposition's candidate for the presidential polls, Banerjee, whose Trinamool Congress had suggested Sinha's candidature

and got the other Opposition parties to accept her choice, later said there could have been a consensus on Droupadi Murmu, the NDA's candidate, had the BJP reached out to the Opposition.

After the meeting on Sunday, Pawar announced that 17 Opposition parties had unanimously decided on Alva's name.

"We have decided to announce a joint candidate for the Vice-President election," Pawar said while introducing Alva as a "person who has a vast experience in administration and in parliamentary affairs".

Alva, a five-term MP, has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and P V Narasimha Rao. In 2009, she was appointed Governor of Uttarakhand, which was followed by gubernatorial assignments in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa.

Thanking Opposition parties for deciding on her name, Alva tweeted, "It is a privilege and an honour to be nominated as the candidate of the joint opposition for the post of Vice President of India. I accept this nomination with great humility and thank the leaders of the opposition for the faith they've put in me."

On Saturday, the BJP had announced West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as the NDA's vice-presidential candidate.

The election for the office of the 16th Vice-President of India will be held on August 6 and counting will take place on the same day. The last date to file a nomination is July 19.

The term of the current Vice-President, M Venkaiah Naidu, is ending on August 10.

Murmu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP for nominating her, adding that around 10 crore tribals, from more than 700 communities, "are all delighted".

The sources quoted Murmu as saying that she hails "from a small village" and has "struggled a lot" to "come up in life". They also quoted her as telling the MPs that it was "an honour to get all your support".

Before Murmu's arrival, a mock voting drill for the poll on Monday was carried out, as BJP leaders with Parliamentary experience and members of the party's legal cell briefed NDA MPs on the process. On Monday, the BJPMs will gather at the Parliament annexe around 9.30 am before casting their votes, sources said.

Sunday's meeting was also attended by Chirag Paswan, who had distanced himself from the NDA when the IJP split and several senior members formed another party to partner the BJP.

While BJP leaders pointed out it was for the first time that Chirag had attended an NDA meeting after the Bihar assembly elections in 2020, Paswan said he came only to support Murmu, sources said.

National People's Party MP Agatha Sangma was also present

in the meeting, sources said.

Inflation trap

landing in India". Prior to that, Deputy Governor Michael Patra had noted that there were signs of inflation peaking, and harsh policy may not be needed to contain price pressures.

If the commodity-price moderation seen in recent weeks continues, along with an easing of supply-chain pressures, the worst of the recent inflation surge will be left behind, and the economy can escape the global inflation trap and enjoy the fruits of the ebullient supply response that is taking place, the RBI report said.

While the US inflation rate shot up to a 41-year high of 9.1 per cent in June, India reported a retail inflation of 7.01 per cent in June, down marginally from 7.04 per cent in May and 7.79 per cent in April.

"The international environment is hostile and hence, close and continuous monitoring of the widening trade deficit and portfolio outflows is warranted, notwithstanding strong reserve buffers, moderating external debt, and a fairly valued exchange rate that has wilted less in the face of the monotonic strengthening of the US dollar than many peers," the report said. The recent revival of the southwest monsoon and rejuvenation of sowing activity has raised hopes of another bountiful year for agricultural activity, raising expectations that rural demand will soon catch up with urban spending and consolidate the recovery, it said.

Amidst these developments, India's financial sector remains sound and stable, the RBI said. Knock-on effects of geopolitical spillovers are visible in several sectors, tapering the pace of recovery. However, there are sparks in the wind that ignite the innate strength of the economy and set it on course to becoming the fastest growing economy in the world, the fears of inflation notwithstanding, it said.

In another report on 'Fed taper and Indian financial markets', the RBI said the mild response of Indian financial markets to the "Taper 2" announcement can be linked to the country's strong external sector position during the announcement period. "However, there is evidence of large volatility spillovers from the US to Indian equity and bond markets," the RBI said.

This emphasizes the need for readiness among EMEs in terms of adequate buffers, pre-emptive and calibrated state contingent and data dependent policy responses to withstand future volatility spillovers, it said. Food inflation is a major component of headline inflation, and has a tendency to spill over to core components. Food inflation was at an elevated level in 2013 as compared to 2021.

The report said the Taper 2 announcement was somewhat anticipated by the financial markets,

given the past experience with Taper 1, and the Fed's communication that hinted at chances of taper before the announcement.

Another potential explanation for the resilience in the Indian markets post Taper 2 could be the backing of stronger economic fundamentals in India as opposed to the period before the Taper 1 announcement, the RBI said.

A lower current account deficit as a percentage of GDP, larger foreign exchange reserves, and stronger economic growth in Taper 2 vis-à-vis the Taper 1 period, imply that the Indian economy is in better shape to withstand the Fed's tightening, and manage any associated change in volatility in the financial markets, it said.

Colombo

Hospital of Sri Lanka, one of the largest government hospitals, doctors and nurses said many of them can't turn up for work due to the shortage.

They said the government has allowed priority access for medical professionals at fuel stations but it is too little for too many.

A senior doctor, who did not wish to be identified, said she has to change two buses to get to the hospital, and it is "extremely difficult". "Many patients have been calling the free ambulance service to reach the hospital," she said.

Outside, there were hardly any private vehicles, only ambulances arriving every 5-10 minutes and three-wheelers. One man drove up in a pick-up van, with his uncle lying on a mattress on the floor in the back. "I use the vehicle for bread and grocery deliveries, but today there was an emergency," the driver said.

Ananda Wijewickrama, a senior consultant at National Institute of Infectious Diseases in Colombo who was part of Lanka's Covid task force, said, "The fuel crisis has had a significant impact, preventing doctors and nursing staff from coming to hospitals... The number of patients coming for regular check-ups, and elective surgeries and treatments, has also been impacted."

In Colombo, the crisis has hit schools, too. Sanka, a 32-year-old housewife with two children, said, "The schools had been closed off and on for the past three months. Now they are saying that schools will open after the President's election... because of power cuts, online classes are also difficult."

Due to the shortage, fuel prices have risen nearly four-fold from last year. Despite marginal cuts announced on Sunday, diesel is up from SL Rs 106 last year to 440 per litre while petrol prices have risen from SL Rs 130 to 450 per litre. In the black market, petrol is being sold at about SL Rs 2,000 per litre — an Indian rupee is about SL Rs 4.50.

This has also led to a sharp rise in prices of household goods. At Keells, an upmarket store

in Colombo's Union Place, *The Indian Express* compared the prices of rice and 12 bottles of water. Essential products like milk powder, one of the highest selling items, are in short supply.

According to the manager and customers, the price list has changed dramatically over the past year: Potatoes (SL Rs 110/kg last year to SL Rs 520/kg now); onions (SL Rs 65 to 280), sugar (SL Rs 65 to 451), flour (SL Rs 160 to 350), rice (SL Rs 95-110 to 480) and eggs (SL Rs 13 to 55/egg).

There's more: Toilet roll (SL Rs 30-40/roll last year to SL Rs 215/roll now), Surf Excel detergent powder (SL Rs 350 to 980), Coca-Cola (SL Rs 110 to 390/litre), Maggi noodles (SL Rs 110 to 360/pack) and Lux soap (SL Rs 80 to 225/piece).

Rohana Hettiarachchi, an executive director at an election advocacy group, said his family has reduced consumption of fruits and fish. "My 17-year-old son loves apples and bananas, so we buy just enough fruits for him. If we are denying ourselves these basic needs, imagine the situation of the more vulnerable," he said.

In its latest situation report on Sri Lanka, issued on Friday, the World Food Programme said: "Skyrocketing food costs are making it harder... About 6.7 million people are not consuming adequate diets and 5.3 million people are reducing the number of meals eaten. To cope with the lack of food, 5 million people are using crisis or emergency livelihood coping strategies."

Prof Lalithasiri Gunaruwan, professor of public transport planning and economics at Colombo University, blamed the fuel crisis on lack of foreign exchange. "The real cancer is the shortage of foreign exchange, and the fuel crisis is a symptom, which is visible on the surface," he said, blaming successive governments for the current situation.

Bhavani Fonseka, a lawyer and senior researcher at Centre for Policy Alternatives, said, "While the price rise has hit everyone, it has hit the vulnerable the most. Ambulances cannot reach some places due to lack of fuel."

On Saturday, the Sri Lankan government said a fuel pass will soon be introduced to allocate "a guaranteed weekly fuel quota" with QR codes for each vehicle. "We have made requests (for fuel) to different countries. So, any country that comes to help us, we appreciate that. Right now, the Indian government is the only country that has provided us with a credit line," Energy Minister Kanachana Wijesekara said.

So far, India has extended USD 3.8 billion in economic assistance to Sri Lanka — including fuel.

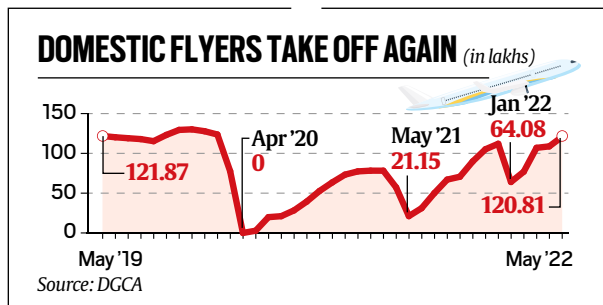
Aviation upturn sees new trends: tourism routes popular; curbs in China benefit India

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE STEADY recovery in India's commercial aviation sector has lifted traffic to near pre-Covid levels — but with a clear realignment in capacities and routes.

On the domestic front, the numbers show a push for tourism routes and direct connectivity to smaller airports. At the same time, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers has already surpassed pre-Covid levels with airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east now looking at other geographies, including India.

Within the country, destinations such as Srinagar and Goa have seen significant capacity addition by airlines, which underlines the "revenge travel trend" after the Covid curbs. But the

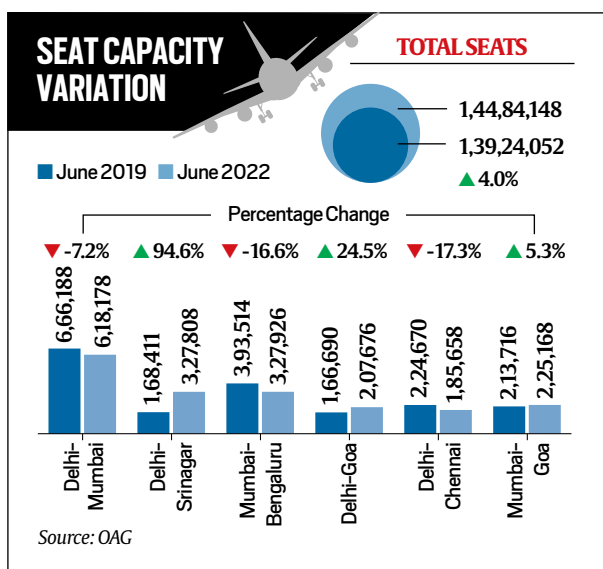


relatively slower rebound in business travel means trunk routes like Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Chennai, Mumbai-Bengaluru and Delhi-Hyderabad remain subdued (chart, page 2).

According to data sourced from aviation analytics and consultancy firm OAG, domestic airlines deployed 3.27 lakh seats on the Delhi-Srinagar route in June 2022, nearly twice the 1.68 lakh in June 2019. Similarly, the Delhi-

Goa route saw 2.07 lakh seats in June 2022, much higher than 1.66 lakh in June 2019.

This year's summer schedule also saw the addition of direct connections to Srinagar from non-metro cities such as Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. The seat capacity data includes numbers for both sectors on a given route. Another emerging trend is the increasing direct connectivity to smaller airports. "...in 2019,



just over one-third of capacity growth between 2016 and 2019

in India's domestic market came from new routes that were not

previously operating. OAG's capacity data also shows that there are 24 domestic routes operating in March 2022 to and from Delhi that were not operating before 2017." OAG's Regional Sales Director — JAPAC Mayur Patel said. At the same time, some hub routes are yet to recover to pre-Covid levels. For example, the Delhi-Mumbai route saw 6.18 lakh seats in June this year, lower from 6.66 lakh in June 2019. The third highest route with the most seats in June 2019 — the Mumbai-Bengaluru route — had airlines deploying 3.28 lakh seats last month, almost as much as Delhi-Srinagar, compared to 3.94 lakh three years ago.

Domestic passenger traffic continues to inch closer to 2019 levels. According to the latest available data provided by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), 120.81 lakh pas-

sengers flew domestically in May this year, compared to 121.87 lakh in May 2019.

In October 2021, the Ministry of Civil Aviation fully lifted the Covid-related capacity restrictions that were imposed on domestic flights in May 2020.

On the international front, India reverted to the pre-Covid scheduled operations and bilateral capacity agreements from March 27 this year. As per ICA, since then, international passenger traffic for Indian carriers surged to around 21 lakh in June this year, compared to approximately 18 lakh in June 2019.

Foreign airlines that were dependent on China and the far-east for a meaningful portion of their traffic are now looking at other geographies, such as India and the US, to deploy surplus capacities. This strategy has been further intensified with the various air-

space closures and restrictions in light of the Ukraine crisis.

Singapore Airlines, for example, is witnessing strong load factors on all of its India flights and is looking to add to its number of India flights over the next two schedules. Similarly, Helsinki-based Finnair is adding capacity to India, resuming its suspended flight from Helsinki to Mumbai, given the idle capacity because of the China restrictions and Russia airspace closure. "We used to operate more than 40 weekly flights to China, but at the moment we only have one. Even on that one flight, our capacity is restricted. Also, because of the (Ukraine) war and the airspace closures, a big part of our network in Asia is closed, mainly China and Japan. We have been forced to restructure our network accordingly," Sakari Romu, General Manager, India, for Finnair said.

Chandigarh

3 THE CITY

PANCHKULA FINANCIER, SON MURDER CASE

After 13.5 yrs, 'most wanted' couple arrested for killing man, throwing his son into canal

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

IN A major breakthrough in the sensational murder of a Panchkula financier and his son 13.5 years ago, a couple accused of murdering the financier and then throwing his four-year-old son alive into a canal after he saw his father being killed were arrested by the special task force (STF) of Haryana Police on Sunday.

The "Most Wanted" couple – Raju and his wife Shilpa – were the main accused in the case. They were arrested from Indore.

In 2009, financier Vinod Mittal, a resident of Sector 16 in Panchkula, had lent money to Raju and Shilpa for a salon. He had also lent his car to them. Mittal often used to have haircut from Raju who hit it off with the financier. Taking advantage of their friendship, Raju sought money from Mittal to open a big salon. But their friendship soon turned sour when Mittal started asking Raju to return his money as he was defaulting on his instalments.

On February 14, 2009, Mittal along with his four-year-old son Yashan went to the couple's salon in Baltana to take back his money. Raju's one cousin and three friends were also there. Raju assured Mittal to return his money and on some pretext Raju and his accomplices sat in Mittal's car and stabbed him to death. Shilpa was also there along with others. Police said Mittal's body was disposed of in a canal in Rajpura. As Yashan saw his father being killed, the accused threw the four year old alive into a canal.

While Raju's accomplices were soon arrested and they are serving sentence for helping him in the crime, Raju and Shilpa went underground.

The couple figured on the list of "Most Wanted" criminals (Most Wanted number 1 and 2 on Haryana Police website) of



Raju and Shilpa; (below) Vinod Mittal with his son



Haryana Police. They had a bounty of Rs 50,000 each on their head.

Under the supervision of Inspector General STFB Sateesh Balan, the case was cracked by DSP Aman Kumar, in-charge STF Unit Ambala, and inspector Deepinder Pratap Singh along with their team.

Although Mittal's car was recovered from Hanumangarh, the bodies of the father-son duo could not be found.

Investigations by the STF reveal that immediately after committing the crime, both Pawan alias Raju and Shilpa along with their two-year-old daughter fled to Shirdi. There Raju worked at a puncture shop. After some time, he turned into a barber. Later he opened a small salon where both the husband and wife worked.

After spending a year in Shirdi, they fled to Hyderabad. There Raju changed his name to Vicky Pawar, while Shilpa changed her name to Sunita Pawar. The couple ran a salon service in Hyderabad for almost four years before fleeing to another state.

the ones in Hyderabad and in Indore. To cross-check the target, a sub inspector posing as a customer went to the salon. He enquired whether they were providing any parlour services for women as his wife was looking for one. Sources said that he even made Shilpa speak to his wife to ascertain their credentials and clear all the doubts.

FAILURE OF PANCHKULA POLICE

Police tried to find out if the accused had in between contacted their family members or relatives. But to the dismay of police, the accused kept themselves from their relatives, making the case complicated for the Panchkula Police who despite multiple raids could not find the accused.

A NEW IDENTITY EVERY TIME

According to the police, both Raju and Shilpa had a makeover every time they shifted from a state. They also managed to get fake Aadhaar cards every time. The couple have an eight-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter. Police said that the family came up with a new identity every time whenever they changed the states.

ACCUSED TO BE PRODUCED IN COURT TODAY

Addressing a press conference in Panchkula on Sunday, Aman Kumar, DSP special task force Ambala unit, said, "We will be re-examining all angles again in the murder after interrogation of the accused."

The arrested accused will be produced in the district court on Monday. An FIR dated February 16, 2009, in connection with the murder was registered under Sections 302, 365, 216, 120-B of the IPC at Sector 14 police station, Panchkula.

THE STYLE TOUCH SALON – COP USED TO HAVE HAIRCUT

A police official who used to get his haircut from Raju in Hyderabad became his friend. He later invested in a salon of the duo the way Mittal did. Their set-up was called "The Style Touch Salon". Sources said that when the police official started asking Raju to return his money, their friendship too became sour. It was then the duo fled to Indore.

In Indore, Raju changed his name to Vicky Pawar, while Shilpa changed her name to Anjali. Raju there became a sand contractor, while Shilpa gave door-to-door parlour service. The duo flourished in their business. They soon purchased a 450 square yards house in Indore and kept staff to run the salon, including a manager.

WHAT LED TO THE ARREST

After carrying out intensive research of all salons and those providing parlour services in various states, the STF zeroed in on



Candidates come out from an examination centre in Chandigarh after NEET on Sunday. Kamleshwar Singh

Mohali police arrests 3 'members' of Bhupi Rana gang after encounter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI, JULY 17

THE DISTRICT police and Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF) arrested three alleged members of Bhupi Rana gang after the encounter on Sunday night.

A policeman was injured in the incident while a criminal too was hit. Heavy police force was deployed in the area till filing the story.

The encounter occurred at Furniture Market, Baltana, near a hotel where the criminals were holed up.

According to information, three members of Bhupi Rana gang had come to Zirakpur for allegedly extorting a hotel owner in Baltana area of Zirakpur.

The criminals had stayed in hotel Relax Inn.

The police got wind of the criminals and a team led by Zirakpur DSP Bikramjeet Brar cordoned off the area and the criminals were asked to surrender.

"The criminals opened fire at the police party. They fired two shots at the police party injuring a policeman. The police team too returned the fire. The criminals could not escape and one of them was also injured," a police officer said requesting anonymity.

The police team was ques-



At the encounter site on Sunday night. Kamleshwar Singh

tioning the arrested criminals till filing of the report and the area was cordoned off to keep the locals away. The police also recovered some weapons from the criminals.

According to the police officials, the gang had been running an extortion racket in the area for the past some time and used to threaten the hotel owners.

"There was a case of extortion going on in Zirakpur. They were being traced. Today they came and attacked police party. One assailant and a policeman were injured. Further investigation is going on and our teams are working on further leads,"

Mohali SSP Vivek Sheel Soni said.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Ropar Range) Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, who reached the spot, said that on July 11, the Zirakpur police had registered an extortion case on the complaint of a hotel owner against Haryana-based criminal Ankit Rana, a close associate of Bhupi Rana.

Bhullar said that the police had laid a trap on Sunday and three criminals had reached the hotel where the criminals fired at the police party.

According to DIG Bhullar, Punjab Police Sub-Inspector Rahul was injured in a scuffle when the criminals had hit him with a gun's butt while the criminals fired a bullet which hit the bullet-proof jacket of another police personnel.

Bhullar said that two pistols of .30 bore and .32 bore were recovered from the criminals and two bullet shells were also found on the spot.

Replying to a question about injured criminals, Bhullar said that a criminal identified as Ranbir was also injured in the retaliatory firing.

"The three men are from Barwala. They told us that they had come to take the extortion money at the behest of Ankit Rana," DIG Bhullar stated.

Bhullar said that Ankit Rana is a close associate of Bhupi Rana and that he was booked in a number of criminal cases and was out on bail.

ICSE results: Ravleen Kaur from YPS, Armaan Chahal from Little Flower top Tricity

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17



Ravleen and Armaan

WITH 99 per cent, Ravleen Kaur from Yadindra Public School (YPS), Mohali and Armaan Chahal from Little Flower Convent School, Sector 14, Panchkula, of Class 10, topped the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE) in the Tricity. The Class 10 results were declared here on Sunday.

Ravleen, who wants to become a forensic expert, said that daily revisions, making notes and attempting every question in the book was the key to success.

While speaking to *The Indian Express*, she said, "Since our classes were mostly online, that was the time when one has to keep themselves away from distractions. I was completely off social media. Just that WhatsApp was a necessity because a lot of study material was shared through that."

Ravleen's father is into real estate business while her mother is a headmistress in a government school. The family stays in Kharar. She added, "I want to do something different and I have interest in medical sciences as well. So I aim to become a forensic expert. It is a profession which involves both the mind and the heart."

Meanwhile, Armaan Chahal, of Little Flower Convent School wants to become an aerospace engineer. Armaan's father, Arvinder Singh Chahal, is a scientist while mother Jyotsana Chahal is a homemaker. They are residents of Sector 15 in Panchkula. Armaan got 99 marks in social studies, 98 in Hindi, 98 in English, 99 in science and 100 in mathematics. Chahal told


The Indian Express, "I just followed my teachers' advice and that was the key to success. I used to study for two to three hours daily and during exam days it used to be five to six hours."

Madeti Tarini, from St Xavier's High School, Sector 44, Chandigarh, secured the second position with 98.8 per cent marks. Tarini said, "My success mantra is just that I used to listen to my teachers' advice. They used to give practice tests and I did that thoroughly." She said that she used to study throughout the year so there was no stress or pressure towards the exam session. Tarini said that she hasn't decided as of now but she has a lot of interest in computer science. Both her parents are professors at IIT Ropar. Tarini also said that she would keep herself off social media while studying.

Anusha Kuhad, a student of St Stephens School, Sector 45, Chandigarh, also secured 98.8 per cent.

Her father, Anurag at Panjab University while mother Asha Kuhad is a former faculty member of MCM DAV College, Sector 36. They are residents of Sector 44, Chandigarh.

Anusha said that she aims to become a cardiac surgeon.



Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran Offers e-Auction of

Residential and Commercial Properties in Rohtak, Hissar and Panchkula Zones

On 28th July, 2022

Residential properties in Rohtak Zone				Commercial properties in Hissar Zone				Residential properties in Panchkula Zone				Commercial properties in Panchkula Zone			
Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots		Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots		Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots		Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots	
1	3, Rohtak	1	1	13, Bhiwani	11	1	25, Panchkula	5	1	15, Panchkula	5	1	15, Panchkula	5	
2	5, Rohtak	2	2	13-CB, Bhiwani	11	2	27, Panchkula	5	2	20, Panchkula	15	2	20, Panchkula	15	
3	25, Rohtak	1	3	23, Bhiwani	2	3	28, Panchkula	7	3	6MDC, Panchkula	5	3	6MDC, Panchkula	5	
4	13, Panipat	2	4	26, Bhiwani	5	4	11, Panchkula	1	4	8, Ambala	8	4	8, Ambala	8	
5	17, Panipat	2	5	CCENTRE, Bhiwani	16	5	21, Panchkula	10	5	9, Ambala	1	5	9, Ambala	1	
6	24, Panipat	2	6	TC-BHATTU, Hissar	7	6	4MDC, Panchkula	2	6	10, Ambala	10	6	10, Ambala	10	
7	25 (P-II), Panipat	1	7	AMKT, Hansi	10	7	6MDC, Panchkula	4	7	4, Kurukshetra	3	7	4, Kurukshetra	3	
8	40, Panipat	1	8	11AB-PH-3, Hissar	7	8	27, Ambala	13	8	17, Kurukshetra	5	8	17, Kurukshetra	5	
9	9, Bahadurgarh	1	9	11AB-PH-4, Hissar	2	9	32, Ambala	12	9	30, Kurukshetra	12	9	30, Kurukshetra	12	
10	13, Bahadurgarh	4	10	13-P, Hissar	2	10	34 CANTT, Ambala	5	10	18-MI, Jagadhari	27	10	18-MI, Jagadhari	27	
11	7, Sonapat	63	11	14 (PKT-A), Hissar	5	11	4, Kurukshetra	1	11	TDL-C, Jagadhari	11	11	TDL-C, Jagadhari	11	
12	12, Sonapat	8	12	16-17, Hissar	5	12	5, Kurukshetra	5	12	4 Transport Nagar, Karnal	5	12	4 Transport Nagar, Karnal	5	
13	15-1, Sonapat	3	13	MGA, Hissar	3	13	8, Kurukshetra	2	13	6, Karnal	4	13	6, Karnal	4	
14	15-2, Sonapat	5	14	UE-IISCI, Hissar	3	14	15, Jagadhari	5	14	12, Karnal	4	14	12, Karnal	4	
15	15-3, Sonapat	9	15	UE-IISCI, Hissar	1	15	17, Jagadhari	8	15	Old Tehsil Complex, Karnal	4	15	Old Tehsil Complex, Karnal	4	
16	15-4, Sonapat	4	16	Block-D, Jind	2	16	18, Jagadhari	10	16	20, Kaithal	25	16	20, Kaithal	25	
17	23, Sonapat	61	17	OLHOS, Jind	4	17	4, Karnal	10	17			17			
Commercial properties in Rohtak Zone				Residential properties in Hissar Zone											
Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots		Sr. No.	Sector, Urban Estate	No. of Plots									
1	4 Ext, Rohtak	1		1	11, Fatehabad	40									
2	6, Panipat	1		2	5, Hansi	27									
3	12, Panipat	4		3	6-II, Hansi	9									
4	25, Panipat	42		4	7, Sadidon	6									
5	29, Panipat	2		5	19-1, Sirsa	18									
6	13, Panipat	2		6	20 (P-III), Sirsa	18									
7	12, Bahadurgarh	5													
8	7, Sonapat	78													
9	12 (P-4), Sonapat	37													
10	13, Sonapat	6													
11	14 (P-2), Sonapat	36													
12	15-1, Sonapat	34													

Registration will close one day before the scheduled date of e-Auction, at 5 pm.

Chief Administrator
Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran
C-3, HSVP Complex, Sector 6, Panchkula 154 135, Haryana
● hsvp.org.in ● 1800-180-3030 ● Hsvp.org

The detailed information of the sites and terms & conditions of e-auction will be available on <https://hsvp.org.in>.



State Office, Punjab & U.T. Chandigarh

KHADI & VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION

(Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India)

SCO 3003-3004, Sector 22-D, Chandigarh. Ph: 0172-2701261, 2702690



Shri Manoj Kumar (Chairman)

The newly-appointed Chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Shri Manoj Kumar assumed the charge on Friday, 15th July 2022. After taking over as the Chairman, Shri Manoj Kumar said realizing Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's dream of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' would be his priority while also establishing maximum number of small and micro units and creating self-employment through various schemes of Khadi and Village Industries Commission to achieve the larger goal of self-reliant India. He said Khadi and Village Industries Commission would continue working on the vision of the Hon'ble PM that would make the youths 'Job-givers' instead of being 'job-seekers'.

Shri Manoj Kumar, who has worked as Expert Member (Marketing) at Khadi and Village Industries Commission, has a vast experience in the areas of marketing and rural development. He believes that Khadi is spreading like a 'silent revolution' in the country which is being led by the Hon'ble PM. He said the achievements of 'Khadi India' in the last 8 years have been outstanding.

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission Chairman said he would ensure that the money disbursed by the government reached directly into the hands of Khadi artisans that would, in turn, pave the way for economic empowerment of the weaker sections of the society particularly the poorest of the poor. He said the Khadi and Village Industries Commission would strive to ensure that every hand gets sufficient work and is fairly remunerated for their works.

Shri Manoj Kumar said he would follow the mantra of 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas' and 'Khadi for Nation, Khadi for Fashion and Khadi for Transformation' to take the brand Khadi India to new heights. "Popularizing Khadi on the global platform, the way it has gained popularity in India, will be a top priority. Our efforts will be to make Khadi 'Global' from being a 'Local' product so that Khadi's demand increases significantly across the world," Shri Manoj Kumar said.

Khadi & Village Industries Commission, Chandigarh Advt.

KVIC Chairman
Shri Manoj Kumar
Assumes Charge; says creating livelihood for Artisans & Popularizing Khadi Globally will be Priority

INTERIM REPORT

59.5 pc of traffic at outer cordon of Chandigarh came for work, 3.1 pc for education, says RITES

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

ABOUT 59.5 per cent of the traffic at the outer cordon of Chandigarh was coming for the purpose of work while 3.1 per cent of them came for the purpose of education, the interim report by RITES found.

RITES is an engineering consultancy corporation, specialising in the field of transport infrastructure, under the ownership of Indian Railways.

As the inflow of vehicles was studied at the outer cordon of Chandigarh that is the periphery, the purpose of visit was also stud-

ied of which 18.5 per cent were coming for business while 4.4 per cent were coming for tourism and 8.4 per cent for social purpose.

Also, the travel frequency of the vehicles coming into Chandigarh at the outer cordon was researched of which it was found that 46.9 per cent of them are coming daily and about 23.2 per cent come weekly while 21.5 per cent come monthly and 8.5 per cent of the traffic comes occasionally.

It was said that even as about 47 per cent of trips on the outer cordon of Chandigarh are performed daily, about 29 per cent of passenger trips are made within 25 kilometres, the in-

terim report noted.

The RITES report also found that maximum traffic to study area comes from Chandigarh-Ambala Expressway and Panchkula-Kalka Highway, followed by Kharar-Kurali road and Zirakpur-Rajpura road.

THE NUMBERS

The Chandimandir Toll Plaza, Panchkula-Kalka Highway, saw daily traffic of 61,71 vehicles while Chandigarh-Ambala Expressway saw 1,12,737 vehicles daily. According to the study, the Zirakpur-Rajpura road saw 40,523 vehicles while Panchkula-Rangarh road saw 36,577 vehicles.

Also, the maximum share of goods traffic was observed on Panchkula-Rangarh Road: 15.3 per cent. On the remaining locations, goods traffic varied from 3 per cent to 15 per cent at outer cordon. It was stated that the peak hour factor varies from 6.4 per cent to 8.8 per cent of total traffic.

The maximum daily traffic saw 96,555 passenger car units on the Ropar-Chandigarh road, followed by 80,053 passenger car units on Zirakpur-Panchkula-Kalka stretch.

This had maximum share of personal cars, which was 44 per cent, and 39 per cent of two-wheelers, followed by 5.6 per cent of slow-moving vehicles.

RITES HAS PROPOSED UNDERPASSES AT 9 JUNCTIONS

The Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES), after a survey, has also proposed the building of underpasses at nine of Chandigarh's 15 major junctions to ease traffic congestion and prevent vehicular flow from choking.

According to the RITES, at least 15 traffic junctions in the city stayed choked during peak traffic hours at present, with the situation likely to get worse in the next five years as the number of vehicles increases.

RITES, during its survey, fac-

tored in passenger car unit — that is the number of vehicles approaching these junctions during peak hours.

A "peak approach" — vehicles crossing during peak hours — of passenger car unit was calculated for all the 15 junctions during the study. One bus was calculated to be equivalent to three cars, and one two-wheeler as 0.5 cars by RITES for the sake of its study.

The highest peak approach passenger car unit was found at Transport Chowk (Purv Marg-Madhya Marg junction), at 10,572 vehicles, with the same likely to rise to 14,148 vehicles in 2027.

City kids raise funds for Carmel's Sheela with a bake sale

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

IN ORDER to do their bit for single mother Sheela, the lady conductor battling for life in an ICU at PGI, several students not just from Carmel Convent School but also from other schools of the city, like St Johns School, Vivek High School, etc., conducted a bake sale here on Sunday to raise funds. Sheela, who is currently in a coma, was rescuing the students when a 250-year-old heritage tree's branch fell, leaving one dead and injuring several others.

The participants sold products made by students, famous city and home bakers, with professional bakers from the city also joining in. The children went around markets holding banners and also set up tables at a participant's residence in Sector 9. Local councillor Mahesh Inder Singh Sidhu encouraged the children.

Myra, one of the student organisers, said, "We all saw what happened. It was the grief every one felt. We asked people to donate bakery products and then sold the same. Customers gave big amounts for just cakes, cookies, breads, muffins and brown-

ies. We stood outside, held banners, stopped cars and went around close by markets to ask for donations".

She added, "It was also a big change for the students of Carmel Convent who are going through immense pain. We got so much love from people and our fellow students thanked us".

"The initial idea was of the students of Class 7, who wanted to hold a small bake sale outside their house and gather about Rs 10,000. When we saw many people were ready to connect, we shifted the venue to Sector 9. The event was supervised and well coordinated because of two mothers who went out of their way, Ravneet Jawanda and Kamal Kaleka," another student Amber Dhamija said.

The Carmel Ex-Students Association is also making contributions for Sheela, along with people from Odisha and Delhi, who have got together to help her and her family. Sheela's two children — an 18 year old daughter and a 15 year old son who had Sheela as the only support have been praying for her recovery as she is in a coma. Sheela is a single mother to these two teenagers. People have also contributed to make medicines available to the lady conductor.

Patiala ki Rao flooded again, car gets stuck

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI, JULY 17

A WEEK after a car was washed away in the seasonal rivulet Patiala ki Rao, two persons were stranded in the water-body again on Sunday, near Nayagaon. According to the locals, the two were coming from Haryana in a Mahindra Thar jeep and when they reached near Tanda-Tandi village, the vehicle got stuck.

The villagers found the vehicle following which they rescued the two, and took out the vehicle with the help of tractors.



The floodgate of Sukhna Lake was opened on Sunday after water level crossed the danger mark due to heavy rain in the hills around Chandigarh. Kamleshwar Singh

UT opens floodgate of Sukhna Lake

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

THE CHANDIGARH Administration had to open the floodgate of Sukhna on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday after the water level of the lake touched 1,162.45 feet. The danger mark of the lake is 1,163 feet and last year the floodgates were opened at the same time when the water level had touched 1,162 feet.

At 1.15 am, one flood gate was opened.

Heavy rain on Saturday evening caused the water level of the Sukhna to rise. Last Sunday, the level was recorded at 1,161.25 feet. Before last Sunday, the water level had risen by four feet in a gap of 10 days.

On Sunday morning, as the flood gate was opened, the

The danger mark of the lake is 1,163 feet and last year the floodgates were opened at the same time

Chandigarh traffic police also diverted the traffic coming towards the bridges.

Traffic was diverted at the locations that included bridge rear side of Babu Dham (road coming from Babu Dham/behind Police Lines light point towards Shastri Nagar light point), that on bridge near Kishangarh (behind Sukhna Lake towards Kishangarh).

Also, they had to issue an advisory telling people to avoid travelling on these stretches of roads and take alternative routes.

Residents fume as Mohali areas face power outage

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI, JULY 17

MANY AREAS in Mohali witnessed 6-7 hour long power outage, after heavy rain lashed the region on Saturday night.

Many villages in Zirakpur area were hit badly, where residents complained of long power cuts. The power department, however, claimed to have restored electricity in all

In many areas power cuts are imposed immediately after rain and despite complaints, residents continue to suffer

the affected areas.

After the rains, areas including Adda Jhungian, Chatt, Aastha Residential Society and

Ambala Road were affected. The supply was affected at around 11.30 pm, which was not restored until early morning.

Jasbir Singh, a resident of Adda Jhungian village, said that there was no power supply till 4 am on Sunday and their repeated requests to the power department went in vain.

He added that many nearby villages were also affected and there was no supply till 10 am

on Sunday.

Rajesh Kumar, a resident of Chatt village, said that there was no power till 10.30 am on Sunday.

He added that despite complaints, the power department did not revert.

Sukhdev Chaudhary, president of the Joint Action Committee of Resident Welfare Associations at Zirakpur, said that they have been raising the issue of frequent power out-

ages in the city but to no avail.

There are many areas where power cuts are imposed immediately after rain and despite lodging complaints online, residents continue to suffer due to official apathy.

An officer of the Punjab Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) said that the power supply was affected due a fault on the supply line which was rectified.

Brain-dead patient's organs give new lease of life to three people

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

FOLLOWING IN the footsteps of braveheart families this year, the benevolent Thakur family from Solan gave the gift of life to a terminally ill patient suffering from debilitating renal disease and gift of sight to two corneal blind patients with their act of organ donation of their deceased family member, Nisha Thakur, here at PGI.

Nisha, 65, was admitted to PGI on July 11 following a ruptured aneurysm and was declared brain-dead on July 13. Braving his own loss, Yashpal, husband of Nisha, said, "Our family wishes that the organs of Nisha should be donated to patients who are in dire need and draw consolation from the fact that Nisha was able to do more than many can achieve in a life-



Nisha

time of hundred years."

Acting on the family's decision, the surgeons retrieved the kidneys and corneas from the donor, which on transplantation gave a fresh lease of life to the patient suffering from end-stage kidney disease and sight to two corneal blind patients.

Considering the burgeoning gap between donations and the dire need, the road ahead is really challenging and families like these consenting for organ donation may provide the answer," said Prof Vipin Koushal, nodal officer, ROTTO, PGI.

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
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Block No. 16 & 17, SDA Commercial Complex, Kasumpti, Shimla-8
Phone No. 0177-2611543, 2621703, Email: mds@hpscl.co.in
E-TENDER NOTICE FOR TRANSPORTATION OF JSS GRADE SUGAR M-30
Himachal Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd. Shimla invites E-Tenders for the year 2022-2023 (September, 2022 to August, 2023) from reputed Transporters/Truck Unions/Operators/Co-operative Unions/ Firms/Companies having experience in transportation business in sugar/food grains/other goods/agricultural products for the transportation of sugar (approximately qty 4,000 MT per month and yearly 48,000 MT) from various sugar mills of Haryana State Federation of Cooperative Sugar Mills Ltd.; as mentioned in Annexure "E" to be supplied in various godowns of HP State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd. as per Annexure "C". The detailed tender notice, tender documents and other instructions can be down-loaded or viewed on-line from the portal <http://eptenders.gov.in>. The last date of submission of on-line tenders, earnest money deposit, tender document fee and processing fee shall be till 8th August, 2022 up to 5.00 pm. The tender shall be opened on 10th August, 2022 at 11.00 am. **Rajeshwar Goel, IAS Managing Director**

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ADVT.NO.- NCCS/PMC/P-05/ONLINE/2022.
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Applications are invited for different positions to be filled purely on temporary basis at NCCS under different extra mural projects. For the detailed specifications of the posts, the prescribed application format and other terms and conditions, please see our **Advt.No.-NCCS/PMC/P-05/Online/2022** under **Project Positions** in **Careers** tab on our website (www.nccs.res.in). For any updates please check our website. (Hindi, English & Marathi version of this advertisement is available on our website). **DIRECTOR, NCCS**

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CIN No. : U40109DL2001PLC111526, Website : www.tatapower-dcl.com
NOTICE INVITING TENDERS July 18, 2022
TATA Power-DDL invites tenders as per following details:

Tender Enquiry No. / Work Description	Estimated Cost/EMD (Rs.)	Availability of Bid Document	Last Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date and time of Opening of bids
TPDDL/ENG/ENQ/200001439/22-23 Annual Rate Contract for Supply of 11kV/ 33kV/ 66kV CTs, PTs and NCTs	49 lacs/ 50,000	18.07.2022	08.08.2022:1600 Hrs 08.08.2022:1700 Hrs
TPDDL/ENG/ENQ/200001438/22-23 RC for Supply of FRP Fencing Kit	80 lacs/ 2,00,000	18.07.2022	08.08.2022:1600 Hrs 08.08.2022:1700 Hrs

CORRIGENDUM / TENDER DATE EXTENSION

Tender Enquiry No. / Work Description	Previously Published Date	Revised Due Date & Time of Bid Submission/ Date & time of opening of bids
TPDDL/ENG/ENQ/200001430/22-23 Rate Contract for supply of 1-P Meter Box	04.07.2022	25.07.2022 at 1700 Hrs/ 25.07.2022 at 1730 Hrs

Complete tender and corrigendum document is available on our website www.tatapower-dcl.com → Vendor Zone → Tender / Corrigendum Documents
Contracts - 011-66112222

STATE BANK OF INDIA
STRESSED ASSETS MANAGEMENT BRANCH SCD 95-107, 18T FLOOR, MADHYA MARG SECTOR-6-G, CHANDIGARH, PHONE NO. 9172-4567164
Public Notice
Notice is hereby given to public in general and the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) whose names are appearing herein below in particular that the Loan/Credit Facilities availed by the Borrower(s) from the Bank has not been repaid despite repeated notices. Further, the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) are declared as Willful Defaulter by the Bank following due process of law. The public is hereby cautioned that any dealings with the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) shall be subject to the legal resource available to the Bank. The Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) are hereby advised to pay their dues within fifteen days failing which appropriate legal actions shall follow.

S. No.	Name of Borrowers/ Guarantors & their Address	Photo of Borrower/ Guarantors
1.	M/S Dev Dhanraj Agri Products International Pvt Ltd, 23 Miles Stone, Kurukshetra Road, Dhand Haryana	
2.	Smt. Mona Garg, House No-2131, Sec-7, Urban Estate, Kurukshetra	

Total dues -Rs.77,94,23,748/-+ Interest & other expenses as on date 18.07.2022)
Date: 18-07-2022 **Branch Manager**

EXPRESS EDUCATION
मैथिली
by : Surendra Raut
3 Days Free Workshop
UPSC 18 BPSC
3:30 PM JULY 6:00 PM
206, 2nd Floor, Jaina House, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar
प्रबोधन IAS | 9015277823
Contact for Advt. Booking: M/s Friends Publicity Service
(M): 9212665841, 9212008155

SALUTE THE SOLDIER
S/Exe Atul Saxena SCD, BELAMPALLI 18-07-2000
CSF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this brave-heart. On this day, he laid down his life at the altar of duty while fighting with the LVE outfits. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to him for this noblest deed.

Dilapidated building: Child commission asks govt school students to be shifted

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

THE CHANDIGARH Commission for P rotection of Child Rights (CCPCR) has asked the Chandigarh administration to immediately shift students of a government school building, which is in a dilapidated condition, to avert a possible mishap.

The commission took suo-moto about the damaged building of Government Model Senior Secondary School, Khuda Alisher, Chandigarh. The CCPCR

team, during a visit, found that the building could cause a fatal accident. CCPCR Chairman Harjinder Kaur called an urgent meeting.

It was also said that in view of the safety and security of the students, the commission has now sent its recommendations to the secretary of the education department as well as senior officers of the Chandigarh administration to take up immediate measures to avoid any kind of an unfortunate incident.

"These recommendations include immediate shifting of stu-

dents of GMSSS Khuda Alisher from damage to safe building to avoid any kind of an unfortunate incident. Immediate inspection of the building by the engineering department, identification of old unsafe, dead trees and removal of wild grass in the school premises by the horticulture department, renovation of the school building and other related works, proper cleanliness, water and sanitation facility, etc., to ensure the safety and security of students of the school are some of the recommendations," a statement issued said.

One arrested with heroin

Mohali: Kharar police arrested a man, Charanjit Singh, a resident of Badala village, and recovered 5 grams heroin from him on Sunday. The accused was arrested from near Naya Shehar-Badala road while he was going towards Kharar, the officials said. The accused was remanded in one-day police custody. Singh was arrested by the police during a special naka set up in Naya Shehar- Badala road. Police said the accused was coming in a Honda City car and was stopped at the naka. A case was filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. **ENS**

Conduct golf proficiency test of club member in 90 days: Consumer panel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

WHILE DISPOSING of the complaint of a Chandigarh Golf Club member, the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission of Chandigarh has directed the Club to conduct the complainant's golf proficiency test and thereafter assess his eligibility for permanent membership as per the applicable rules/regulations.

Jaskirat Singh Dullet of Chandigarh had submitted in his complaint that the Chandigarh Golf Club is governed by the memorandum of association, rules and regulations, and the bylaws.

Dullet said that he was granted 'student membership' in 2001 which was terminated in 2007 after he met the criteria to become a Green Card Member as he was playing at a handicap of less than 6 and ac-

Dullet added that despite repeated requests by him, he was not granted permanent membership

cordingly, was issued the Green Card Member.

He added that he was entitled to permanent membership of the Club, including the voting rights as per clause 10 of the byelaws 2020, as he was currently playing at a handicap of 7 which is much less than as prescribed in clause 10.

For the uninitiated, a golf handicap is a numerical measure of a golfer's potential that is used to enable players of varying abilities to compete against one another. In golf, the lower your handicap is, the better you are.

Dullet said that vide letter November 16, 2017, he was

asked to be present at Chandigarh Golf Club for taking the Golf Proficiency Test as he had already figured in the seniority roll and was eligible for being granted permanent membership. However, he could not take the test and wrote an e-mail to the Club on November 24, 2017, requesting for a new date for the test.

Dullet added that despite repeated requests by him, he was not granted permanent membership of the club. He also submitted a detailed representation made in this regard on March 22, 2019. He even served a legal notice on the Club on July 1, 2020, but to no avail.

Finally, he filed a formal complaint before the District Consumer Commission.

The Chandigarh Golf Club failed to appear in the case and as a result, it was ordered to be proceeded against ex parte vide order dated February 18, 2022.

After perusing the docu-

mentary evidence on record, especially the e-mail dated November 24, 2017, the Commission held that the complainant could not appear before the screening sub-committee of the Club for his golf proficiency test on November 22, 2017, to ascertain his seniority in the handicap list — because of the National Shooting Championship at New Delhi from November 22 to November 25, 2017.

The Commission said that the complainant should have been given an opportunity for his golf proficiency test by the Club.

The Commission then disposed of the complaint with direction to the Chandigarh Golf Club to conduct golf proficiency test of the complainant and thereafter assess his eligibility for permanent membership as per the applicable rules/regulations within a period of three months.

5 REGION

On Day 3 of training session, BJP leaders stress strengthening booth-level cadre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

THE THREE-DAY training session of Haryana BJP concluded at Faridabad, Sunday. Several senior leaders of the party addressed the gathering of party workers and leaders and emphasised on further strengthening the party's cadre at the ground level.

Several party leaders spoke how under the leadership of prime minister Narendra Modi and during the BJP's tenure at the centre and in Haryana, lives of people have changed due to public-welfare policies implemented by the BJP government.

Speaking on the occasion, union minister Narendra Tomar said, "For rebuilding India, building the party worker is important. Under the leadership of prime minister Narendra Modi, India is one of the most sought after nations where foreign investors want to come and invest. Our capable citizens who were working in foreign nations have started coming back to their mother country to serve their nation".

"Training is an old tradition in BJP that keeps us different from other political parties", Tomar



Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat addresses the gathering on Sunday. *Twitter*

said while narrating about BJP's history and journey since 1951.

Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that "India is capable of facing any nation of the world and is consistently getting more powerful, militarily

and economically. BJP is such a party that nurtures its party worker and develops him/her into a party leader. The significance of such training sessions is so that the domain-experts can keep updating the party workers

at the ground level".

Shekhawat also elaborated how India has created massive road infrastructure on borders with China and Pakistan in the last few years.

During the concluding day of

the session, a few party workers pointed out that several eligible beneficiaries of government schemes were not getting the due benefit in Haryana. Replying to the workers, chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar said that

any party worker can send his office the details of such eligible beneficiaries in a sealed envelope and prompt action shall be taken to ensure that all such eligible beneficiaries get due benefits of the government's schemes.

BJP's another senior leader Vinod Tawde emphasised that the party's workers need to strengthen the party's cadre at the polling-booth level so that more and more people can be made to join the party.

Talking to the mediapersons on the sidelines of the event, Haryana's home minister Anil Vij said, "respective whether a party is big or small, people look at the party's leadership very minutely. People keep a close watch on the incumbent representatives or those who are likely to be nominated by the party. Party's leader's image is extremely important and this image is not built in one day; it takes years to build an image

Taking a dig at the opposition, Vij added, "The opposition political parties have forgotten their actual purpose for which they existed. Such training sessions are kind of learning grounds for us where different teachers come, teach us and we all sit together and learn from them

When Jagdeep Dhankhar stood by Devi Lal, impressed Chautala family

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

THE THEN Haryana Chief Minister Chaudhary Devi Lal had religiously campaigned for Jagdeep Dhankhar when the Janata Dal had fielded him from Jhunjhunu parliamentary constituency of Rajasthan in 1989.

Ranjit Singh Chautala – Devi Lal's son and a Cabinet minister in Haryana's Manohar Lal Khattar-led government – told *The Indian Express*: "Dhankhar is like a member of our family. He came into politics after being influenced by Devi Lal."

Ranjit Chautala said: "In 1987, Chaudhary Devi Lal had called for a rally of Opposition at Boat Club in Delhi. Dhankhar brought as many as 500 vehicles full of people from Jhunjhunu to participate in the rally. Devi Lal patted him on the back. Devi Lal called him from his home and offered a ticket of Janata Dal to contest from Jhunjhunu Lok Sabha constituency in 1989."

Dhankhar won the election and became minister of state (parliamentary affairs) in V P Singh government when Devi Lal became Deputy Prime Minister.

Ranjit Chautala recalls: "Following differences, V P Singh had dismissed Devi Lal in 1990. Then, Dhankhar was the only minister who resigned from the Union Cabinet standing by Chaudhary Devi Lal. It impressed Chaudhary Devi Lal who called Dhankhar a man of commitment." Later, Devi Lal became Deputy Prime Minister



Ex-deputy PM Chaudhary Devi Lal had campaigned for Jagdeep Dhankhar. *Twitter*

in the minority government led by Chandrashekar while Dhankhar also became a minister in his government.

Ranjit Chautala too had gained prominence in 1989 when he was considered a strong claimant for the post of CM in Haryana after his father Devi Lal had moved to Centre as Deputy Prime Minister.

"My father wanted to see me as the CM. However, because of the decision of the family, Om Prakash, being the eldest, was made the CM. That time Rajiv Gandhi and Bhajan Lal had offered me the post of CM if I joined Congress along with other MLAs. I refused because I had a lot of respect for my father," Ranjit Chautala had told *The Indian Express* earlier.

An independent legislator, Ranjit Chautala is currently looking after the power and jails portfolio in Haryana's BJP-JJP alliance government.

Concerned over depleting groundwater level, Haryana plans awareness campaign

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

CONCERNED OVER the depleting groundwater level, the Haryana government has now planned an intense awareness campaign in a bid to ensure community participation at large scale under the Atal Bhujal Yojana.

Atal Bhujal Yojana's Haryana project director Satbir Singh Kadian on Sunday said: "Taking into consideration the learnings from previous schemes, Atal Bhujal Yojana has adopted participatory groundwater management (PGWM) approach to engage the community in the planning and execution phase. This approach is important to inculcate ownership among the community members."

Kadian on Friday chaired a review meeting with the officers from 14 districts which have been selected under the scheme. The review meeting was called by the World Bank to check the progress and to discuss the way forward. World Bank officials Satya Priya and M K Goel were also present in the meeting. In terms of performance under the scheme till now, Sirsa has been ranked at top spot, while Faridabad is at the bottom.

The Atal Bhujal Yojana is a groundwater management scheme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 on the 95th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee with an outlay of Rs 6,000 crore – out of which Rs 3,000 crore is being provided by the World Bank as loan and Rs

3,000 crore as matching contribution from the central government for seven states. The funds under the scheme are being provided to the states concerned as grants-in-aid.

According to Kadian, the purpose of the scheme is to improve groundwater management in seven states, including Haryana. Kadian said: "As many as 14 districts – 36 blocks covering 1,669 gram panchayats – of Haryana have been identified for the planned intervention where the groundwater consumption and groundwater declining rate were higher. For the effective implementation of the scheme, it has been emphasised that relevant government departments executing schemes related to sustainable groundwater management must arrive at a common platform to

bring in convergence."

According to the data compiled by the groundwater cell of the state irrigation department sourcing it from field units and Central Ground Water Authority, nearly 41% villages of the state have been found in the category of "groundwater stressed", while 18% have been found in the classification of "potential groundwater stressed". Based on these figures, the Haryana Water Resources (conservation, regulation and management) Authority has put 1,780 villages in the red category identifying them as severely groundwater stressed villages, while 1,041 villages have been put in the pink zone as they were found in the "groundwater stressed" category. The state has a total of 6,885 villages.

HARYANA IPS OFFICERS' PROMOTIONS

Assembly panel asks what was the urgency

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

HARYANA ASSEMBLY'S Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has asked from the state government what was the urgency behind the promotion of four IPS officers from the post of IGP to ADGP in May this year.

The PAC headed by Congress MLA Varun Chaudhary through Assembly secretary has sent a communication to state chief secretary asking for the government's comments. The committee has also asked for the number of available posts when the four officers were promoted apart from asking whether sanction was sought for the promotions.

In this case, as many as 14 posts of ADGP rank were available in Haryana in May when four IGP's were promoted. With the promotion of four IPS officers, the number of police officers occupying the post of ADGP had gone to 17.

As many as six of them are cadre posts, while 11 are ex-cadre posts. Ex-cadre posts are temporary posts of the same rank as a cadre post and created by the state government.

Sources say the government has plans to convert three ex-cadre posts of DGP into ADGP to meet the shortfall in ADGP rank as the questions were raised over the promotions alleging the same was done despite the "non-availability of vacancies".

3K cases of power theft detected in 3 days; ₹9.82cr fine imposed in Haryana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

AT LEAST 3,000 cases of power theft have been detected and a fine of Rs 9.82 crore imposed on erring consumers under a campaign launched in the state three days ago, according to officials.

The 'Bijli Chori Pakdo Abhiyaan' (thwart power theft) was launched on July 15 following directions from Power Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala, an official statement said here on Sunday.

Under the Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (UHBVN), 252 teams checked the domestic and non-domestic connections in all the 10 circles in its jurisdiction. During the drive, 13,929 connections were checked and 1,719

Theft to the tune of 6.5 MW was caught during the raids conducted across the state, the statement said

cases of power theft caught, the statement said.

The power theft detected in the UHBVN limits is pegged at Rs 4.88 crore, it said. Similarly, 243 teams in the Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN) checked 5,860 connections and detected 1,286 theft cases. Power theft worth Rs 4.94 crore was detected, it said. Theft to the tune of 6.5 megawatt was caught during the raids conducted across the state, the statement said.

Six Army Medical Corps personnel dismissed from service by court martial



A Mirage 2000 aircraft of IAF takes off on an operational sortie at a forward location. *IAF*

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

SIX PERSONNEL of the Army Medical Corps (AMC) have been dismissed from service and awarded punishment ranging from two years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) to six years RI by a General Court Martial (GCM) in Meerut in a case involving fraud at Army Hospital (Research and Referral), New Delhi.

The court martial gave its finding late Saturday night in Meerut where it was being conducted since 2021. The General Officer Commanding 22 RAPID (Strike), Maj Gen SK Sharma had ordered the trial by court martial of 10 individuals, none of whom were from AMC while one was from Armoured Corps. Intriguingly no AMC officer posted at the Army Hospital (R&R) faced the trial for lapses and only JCOs and jawans underwent the court martial.

Out of the ten JCOs and Jawans who underwent the court martial, four have been acquitted of the charges levelled against them of misappropriation of medicines meant for Army use at the Army Hospital (R&R), New Delhi.

All the accused had faced ten charges under various sections of the Army Act, including Section 69, Section 63 and Sec 57 (C) coupled with relevant sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The case dates back to the year 201 when all the accused were posted at the Army Hospital (R&R) in New Delhi. In August 2017, an FIR was lodged by a drug inspector in Kotwala Thana, Delhi, alleging that a civil firm was stocking for sale huge stock of drugs which were labelled "Army Hospital Supply-Not for sale".

A Court of Inquiry was ordered by the HQs Delhi Area in August 2017 itself to investigate the circumstances under which medicines with marking of "Defence supply only" were seized by drug inspectors from M/S Balaji Medicos, Bhagirath Palace, New Delhi leading to the FIR on August 11, 2017. A bag containing packet of medicines and cash was seized from one of the accused Havildars on August 14, 2017 by a team of Counter Intelligence Unit of the Military Intelligence, Army HQs, New Delhi. The accused persons had been attached to various Army units during the pendency of inquiry against them before a court martial was finally ordered in February 2021.

The accused had out up a defence that their confessions had been extracted under duress and that they had been made to sign blank sheets of paper. They had also alleged that they were being made scapegoats in order to cover up a huge scam in Army Hospital (R&R) which involved senior officers. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Advocate Anand Kumar,

who was the counsel representing five accused personnel, three out of whom were acquitted, said that while the General Court Martial has rightly acquitted the accused after finding two of the charges against them unsustainable, the court has erred with respect to other charges. "The trial was conducted at Meerut whereas all the documents were in New Delhi. The GCM failed to summon the ledgers of medicines from Army Hospital (R&R) despite prosecution agreeing for the same during the trial. Many documents in favour of the accused persons were suppressed and one key witness who was apprehended by the hospital in 2017 was left out and no effort was made to summon him and other related witnesses. We will file an appeal in higher court as the trial was also barred by limitation," he said.

Air Force Day flypast to be over Sukhna Lake

For the first time, the Indian Air Force (IAF) will hold its Air Force Day flypast at Chandigarh on October 8 when the event will be conducted over the skies above Sukhna lake, Chandigarh.

A senior officer at Air Force Station Chandigarh informed that the flypast will not be held at Hindon air base on the outskirts of New Delhi this time. This is being done in line with the government's directive that major events of the three services should be taken out of the national capital and held at various parts of the country.

It may be recalled that the flypast on Air Force Day used to be held at Air Force Station Palam in Delhi till 2006 when it was shifted to Hindon because the flypast led to closure of airspace for a long period of time and disrupted the civilian air traffic.

Detailed meetings are being held by the IAF officers with Chandigarh Administration in order to finalise the programme for the event which will require extensive traffic management as the Sukhna Lake complex has only limited parking available. Shuttle buses are expected to be run to ferry the general public from far away designated parking spots who may wish to see the event at the lake. Given the fact that the lake also falls in a high security zone abutting the Punjab and Haryana Raj Bhavans, additional security measures would also be needed to put in place.

The last big event of the IAF that took place in Chandigarh was the Fleet Review by the then President APJ Abdul Kalam in March 2007. A large variety of aircraft of the IAF had taken part in the review at the time. This time around too the review is likely to feature the latest acquisitions of the IAF, including Rafale aircraft, which are stationed next doors in Ambala.

Medical aspirant takes 'Bhishma Pratigya' to look after her ailing dad

RAJESH CHANDER SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

SAKSHI, 17, is a papa's girl. She has pinned great hopes on July 17 – the day of NEET (National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test). While she revised her notes and marked questions as 'important' and 'more important' during her preparation for the test, she remembered the most important lesson of her life: To take care of her father. She knew the time when she had to give a newspaper to her father, hand him his shaving kit, make tea for him and bring his meals – the timetable for her father's very little need, including the one to dress his wounds.

Yes, she was already playing the doctor and making a neat job of it.

Now she dreams of wearing the white robes and acquiring a medicine degree. Papa's daughter to papa's doctor – this dream of Sakshi is born out of a nine-year nightmare. "I would have chosen some other field but for him," she says, referring to her father Sanjeet Kumar. "I don't want others to suffer the pain that he has." The 52-year-old has retired as a bus conductor from Himachal Road Transport Corporation after one year of active service – from March 7, 2012, to March 24, 2013 – at HRTC's Reckong Peo unit in Kinnaur district. Sitting at his house at Malghota village in Baijnath tehsil in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, he narrates his story from one March to another to another – March 11, 2022, when he retired.

"Sab kuchh theek chal raha tha. Naukari lag gayi thi aur pakki hone

ki ummed thi. Parkismat mein kuchh aur hi tha (Everything was fine. I had got a job and was hoping to get regularised. But destiny had something else for me)," he says. On March 24, 2013, he recalls, they were on a bus to Reckong Peo. The time was around 7:30 am, the road was nearly empty and the weather was cold. When they reached near Rarang village, the bus suddenly rolled into a gorge. There were no fatalities but he suffered a serious injury to his spine. All the injured were first rushed to Rarang dispensary, from there to Reckong Peo Civil Hospital and then to Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Shimla. As his condition was serious, he was referred to the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh.

"He remained admitted to PGI



Sakshi (second from left) with her mother Sapna Devi, father Sanjeet Kumar on wheelchair, grandfather Ram Pratap and sister Mehak at their house at Malghota. *Express*

for a month and was operated upon. When he was discharged, we took a room on rent at Dhanas village because he required regular

check-ups," says Sanjeet Kumar's mother Jai Devi, 70.

The doctors ruled out full recovery for him and issued 100% disability certificate on September 19, 2014. "Humein to kuchh samajh nahin aa raha tha ki kya kiya jaye. Maine to isse ek baar lagane wali dawa pila di thi (We could not figure out what to do. Once I made him gulp down one liquid medicine which was meant for external application)," says Jai Devi.

His permanent disability meant more responsibility for his father. "Thankfully, I was getting a pension so we could make ends meet," says Sanjeet's father Ram Pratap, 80, a retired primary school teacher.

Bringing up two small kids – Sakshi and her sibling Mehak – became difficult for his wife. "For first two years, I could not step out be-

cause he needed regular dressing. To move him on the bed, help of at least two-three people was required," says Sanjeet's wife Sapna Devi, 39. The family got a breather with the restoration of movement in the upper part of his body.

"The doctors had assured us that he would get sensation back above his waist in due course of time. Two doctors from Australia had checked him at a Palampur hospital. They too were of the same opinion. Slowly and slowly, he started moving his hands," says Jai Devi.

Mehak, 13, who studies in Class IX, made the most of this welcome break by playing carrom and ludo with her father.

Sapna Devi, who has studied up to Plus Two, started looking for a job, and soon got one of a physiotherapy assistant at a Palampur

hospital.

Not to be left behind, a bed-ridden Sanjeet Kumar joined the family struggle through pen and paper. He would write to his department authorities to draw their attention to his plight. "Every month I would attach an application with my medical bills. I would request them to do something for me. I would get the reimbursement but no reply," he says.

In January this year, however, HRTC implemented a scheme which has a provision for giving a job to the eligible dependents of an employee who suffers disability or dies due to an accident while on active duty. The job is to be given within three months of the incident. So far, 16 people have benefited from this scheme.

Sanjeet's case qualified for relief under this scheme. So, as soon

as he retired from service, his wife was provided the job of a junior office assistant (IT). His dues amounting to over Rs 8 lakh were cleared as well.

"This is too little, too late. We can't compensate him for his emotional suffering," says HRTC managing director Sandeep Kumar.

Sanjeet's life seems to be on the road to recovery now.

But Sakshi is still worried. "When papa met with the accident, we were too young to grasp the tragedy. Its enormity dawned on us as we grew up. Then we came to know papa was in terrible pain. There is a slight improvement. But we know he can't be on his own as there is no sensation below his waist. I can't leave him alone. That's why I have decided I won't get married ever."

Sakshi is indeed a papa's girl.



Chandigarh

6 REGION

No dearth of funds for nobel cause: Mann announces campaign to clean rivers, drain

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JALANDHAR, JULY 17

CHIEF MINISTER Bhagwant Mann on Sunday announced the launch of a statewide campaign to clean rivers and drains.

Addressing a gathering here during a function to mark 22nd anniversary of cleaning of holy Kali Bein (Rivulet), he said that Punjab is a sacred land of great gurus and saints, who have shown us the path to preserve the environment.

He said that following the footsteps of the gurus, the state government will soon embark upon a massive campaign to clean the natural resources in form of rivers and drains in the state. Mann said that while there is no dearth of funds for this noble cause, he called upon people to support it and make the campaign a mass movement.

He also said, that the state government was making concerted efforts to enhance the green cover in the state, for which Shaheed Bhagat Singh Haryiwal Lehar has been

started. Bhagwant Mann urged the people to come forward in large numbers this campaign to support the campaign to make Punjab clean, green and pollution free.

Quoting from the Gurbani, the CM said 'Pawan Guru, Paani Pitaah, Mata Dharat Mahat' which explain how our Gurus have equated air (pawan) with teacher, water (paani) with father and earth (dharat) with mother. Unfortunately, the word of the Gurus has not been honoured by us, as we have polluted all these three, he added. CM said that now the time has come when we must imbibe the teachings of Gurbani in letter and spirit to restore the glory of state.

The Chief Minister said that the Corona wave has taught us the importance of trees, as people spent huge amount of money to get artificial respiratory system in form of oxygen cylinders. Whereas, trees are our natural source of oxygen so each one of us should focus on planting more and more saplings for enhancing green cover and saving our coming generations.



Mann with Seechewal at the Kali Bein on Sunday. *Express*

He said that the state government is also making strenuous efforts for checking depletion of

ground water by ensuring optimum utilisation of surface water thereby reducing the pres-

sure on ground water.

Slamming the previous state governments for ruining the ecosystem of the state, the CM said that it is unfortunate that those who were entrusted the responsibility of serving the state had ruined the ecosystem for their own vested interests. Elaborating on this, Mann said that those Ministers who were supposed to enhance green cover by planting trees did the opposite by mercilessly allowing felling of trees and claiming commission from it.

These leaders plundered the wealth of the state far more than the Britishers Raj, he said, adding that these leaders minted money illegally for their own interests thereby jeopardising the welfare of people.

He said that the state government has launched a war against corruption to check the open loot of public money.

Lauding the efforts made by Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal for cleaning of Kali Bein, the Chief Minister said that the historic initiative taken around 22 years ago had acted

as a catalyst in cleaning this holy Bein, where Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji used to have bath. He said that such efforts needs to be replicated at a mass level to carry forward the legacy of great gurus. He assured full support and co-operation for this noble task.

Welcoming CM, renowned environmentalist and Rajya Sabha member Balbir Singh Seechewal, apprised him about the efforts made for cleaning of the Bein in the past 22 years. He also stressed on the need to clean Buddha Nullah and Chitti Bein on the same pattern with active support of the state government.

Earlier, he drank water from the Bein and said that he was blessed to have got this opportunity and planted a sapling on the bank of Bein.

Sant Seechewal had started cleaning of this 22 years back with handful of his followers without any government support and cleaned 165 long KM rivulet which had turned into slush because of which it was named "kali Bein" (Black rivulet).

Punjab CM appoints cabinet ministers in charge of districts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

IN ORDER to ensure effective monitoring of the pro-people welfare schemes and ongoing development works in the state, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has allotted various districts to the Cabinet Ministers.

In a statement, the CM said that these ministers will be overseeing the development of these districts besides ensuring that benefits of the people-centric and growth-oriented government schemes are percolated to people. He said that these ministers will also ensure prompt redressal of the grievances of people along with giving an impetus to development in these districts. Stating that his government is committed for well-being of the people and progress of the state, Mann said no stone is being left unturned for it.

The CM said that Finance Minister Harpal Cheema will be in charge of Patiala, Higher Education Minister Meet Hayer will be in charge of Amritsar and Tarn Taran districts, Social Security Minister Dr Baljeet Kaur will oversee Bathinda and Mansa

districts whereas PWD Minister Harbhajan Singh will be in charge of Ferozepur and Moga districts. Likewise, he said that Food and Civil Supplies Minister Lal Chand will be in charge of Ludhiana district, Rural Development Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal will be in charge of Gurdaspur and Pathankot districts whereas Transport Minister Lajjeet Singh Bhullar will be in charge of Sangur.

The CM said that Revenue Minister Bram Shankar will oversee districts of Ropar and Mohali, Jail Minister Harjot Singh Bains will be in charge of Hoshiarpur district and Housing and Urban Development Minister Aman Arora will be in charge of Fatehgarh Sahib and Muktsar districts. Similarly, he said that Local Government Minister Dr Inderbeer Singh Nijjar will be in charge of Jalandhar District and Defence Services Minister Fauja Singh will be in charge of Faridkot and Fazilka districts. In the same manner, Bhagwant Mann said that Health and Family Welfare Minister Chetan Singh Jouramajra will be in charge of Malerkotla and Barnala while Tourism Minister Anmol Gagan Mann will be in charge of Nawanshahr.

People caught for speeding, drink driving to donate blood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH, JULY 17

PEOPLE CAUGHT overspeeding and driving under the influence of alcohol in Punjab will have to deliver a lecture to school students on road safety and perform community service at a hospital or donate blood besides paying a fine. According to a new notification issued by the state transport department on fines for different traffic violations, an offender caught for overspeeding will pay Rs 1,000 for first offence and Rs 2,000 for subsequent offence.

For driving vehicles under the influence of alcohol and drugs, the traffic rules violator will pay Rs 5,000 for first offence and Rs 10,000 for subsequent offence, it said, adding that the licence will also be suspended for three months in both these violations. According to the order, a person "will have to undergo community service as specified by the competent authority" in case of overspeeding and driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs. "The traffic rules offender will have to undertake a refresher course by the transport authority and thereafter teach at least 20 students of Classes 9, 10, 11 and 12 for at least two hours in a nearby school," it said.

Official sources said the violator would be first provided road safety education and then he or she would be giving a lecture to students on the same subject. After delivering the lecture, the offender will be issued a certificate by the nodal officer. The officer concerned at the time of compounding of offence will check the certificate issued to the offender, it said.

MUNDRA PORT

Gujarat ATS arrests Punjab man in ₹376 cr heroin seizure

Bhuj: A man has been arrested from Punjab in connection with the seizure of heroin worth Rs 376 crore by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) near the Mundra port in Kutch district, an official said on Sunday.

The accused, Deepak Kingar, was produced before a special court of judge Chirag Shah who remanded him to the ATS' custody till July 27, said special public prosecutor Kalpesh Goswami. The ATS had sought a 14-day remand of Kingar but court granted them his custody for 10 days, he said. ATS on July 12 seized over 70 kg of heroin estimated to be worth more than Rs 376 crore from a container near the Mundra port in the Kutch district. The ATS said the seized contraband had been sent from UAE and was meant to be delivered to Punjab. **PTI**

Hoshiarpur girl tops ICSE Class X exams in Punjab

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, JULY 17

BY SECURING 99.20% marks, Hoshiarpur girl Divya Aggarwal topped the ICSE Class X exams in Punjab, the results of which were declared on Sunday evening. Divya, a student of St Joseph's Convent school in Hoshiarpur, told The Indian Express that her dream is to become a doctor. "I am thankful to all my teachers as they helped me clear all the concepts as I never took tuitions and focused only on self-study," Divya said, adding that she used to study 4-5 hours daily after her school.

The daughter of a cloth merchant, Ankush Kumar, in Hoshiarpur, Divya attributes her success to hard work, consistency and sincerity towards studies. "We have to be regular with our studies from the the day one of our school to get good results. Putting in 10-15 hours daily before exams can't get you good marks," says Divya.

She scored 100% marks in math, science, social studies and



Divya Aggarwal, who scored 99.20% marks, celebrates with her parents. *Express*

computer applications, and got 96 marks in English.

"It was only English in which I scored less than 100 marks. Had I scored 100% in this also, then I would have got cent per cent," Divya said. Divya's mother Sangeeta is a homemaker, while her younger brother is in Class X studying in her school.

"It is a matter of great joy for

our school to have cent per cent result in the ICSE exams. It is a proud moment for us to have a student like Divya Aggarwal who scored 99.20% marks and stood first in the state. Also, two more students of our school bagged the third position at the state-level," said Dr Sudha, the school principal.

In Punjab, five students

shared the second position jointly by securing 99% marks each. They include Ananya Sharma of St Joseph's Convent School, Jalandhar; Prakriti of Sacred Heart Convent School, Fazilka; Ravleen Kaur of Yadvindra Public School, Mohali; Diya Singh Sachdeva of St Joseph's Convent School, Ferozpur; Krish Baghla of St

Joseph's Convent School, Jalandhar.

As many as 16 students shared the third position jointly in the state with 98.80% marks each. They include Harshita, Damanpreet Kaur, Raina Mehra, Ananya Chowdhury, Anshika Kohli, Shouraya Aggarwal, Kushpreet Kaur, Pragun Saklani, Varinda, Adritya, Ridhi, Inayatpreet Kaur Sran, Pahul Singh Sandhu, Dipanshu Monga, Mansi and Tanmay Goyal.

A total of 15,271 students had taken the ICSE examinations in Punjab, out of which 8,230 were boys and 7,041 were girls. The total pass percentage of Punjab is 99.97%. While the pass percentage of girls is 99.99%, it's 99.96% for boys.

As many as 1,339 students from the Scheduled Caste had taken the exam and all of them have cleared it. A total of 29 Scheduled Tribe students sat the exam and their pass percentage was 100%. From the Other Backward Classes, 1,903 students appeared for the exam and their pass percentage was 99.95%.

Acres of Muktsar farmland in deep water after one day of heavy rain

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, JULY 17

THOUSANDS OF acres of agriculture land falling in about 100 villages of Muktsar district is under water after 6 hours of heavy rain on Friday and 1 hour of down-pour on Saturday.

A few houses in low-lying areas of the district have also been damaged.

The district administration said that pump sets have been installed to drain the water out of the fields. As per its claims, water will be pumped out in a day or two.

Pakistan has opened barrage gates of Sutlej river towards Pakistan side.

Water of Sutlej river flows towards Pakistan from Ferozepur's Harrike Pattan but this water then enters India at Mohar Jamsher village in Fazilka and again makes a U-turn to flow towards Pakistan. Barrage gates installed on Sutlej river by Pakistan 2 km ahead of Mohar Jamsher village in Pakistan territory have been opened for the time being because of which water will flow towards Pakistan.

"Drainage of water has started at a faster pace now," said Fazilka Deputy Commissioner, Dr Himanshu Aggarwal.

Around 10 villages of Fazilka have also been partially affected as the flow of water is coming from Muktsar to Fazilka.

Around 89 mm of rainfall was recorded in Muktsar on Friday. As a result, many of the cotton fields, paddy and vegetable farms are under water.

Ranjodh Singh Lambi, Akali worker from Lambi village, said,



One of the affected areas in Gidderbaha. *Facebook*

"My 15 acres moong crop is under water. Many farmers had sown cotton which was under whitefly attack earlier and now it seems that the crop will be damaged due to rainwater. Paddy still has some hope if water drains out in 2-3 days."

Jagmeet Singh from Tapakhera village also said that his 20 acres paddy crop is under water. It is said that even in the city area of Muktsar, water entered shops in markets on Friday and was drained out after hours.

Villages at the tail end of all the four constituencies – Muktsar, Gidderbaha, Lambi and Malaut – have been affected due to one day's heavy rain.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, SAD president Sukhbir Badal visited a few of the affected villages of Muktsar and demanded immediate girdawari of affected area, while on Sunday, PPCC president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring visited a few

Gidderbaha villages and demanded Rs 35,000 per acre compensation to farmers for damage to crops. He said that had proper measures been taken in advance and drains cleared in time, the damage could have been avoided.

Warring claimed that during the previous five years of the Congress rule, all precautions and preventive measures were taken in advance and as a result, there were no floods and no damage to crops.

He hoped that the Punjab government will order special girdawari of the affected areas and the farmers are given timely compensation.

Warring said that there is a need to find a comprehensive and long-term solution to water-logging in this belt which has badly hit the farmers.

Muktsar Deputy Commissioner Vineet Kumar said, "Pump sets have been pro-

vided in the affected villages. Most of the water will be drained out in a day or two. The area under rainwater doesn't signify actual damage as of now. We are assessing damage of houses in the area."

The DC, however, claimed that all sem nallahs had been cleaned properly before the monsoon. But now they are running to full capacity. A breach occurred in two canals, but they have been plugged, he said.

As water started flowing towards Fazilka, DC Fazilka took up the matter with the Border Security Force which further took up the matter with Pakistan rangers.

Barrage gates were opened on Saturday night itself after heavy rain, water from the nallahs of Muktsar and Ferozepur is coming towards Fazilka which can thus be drained out towards Pakistan, said district authorities of Fazilka.

TEEN'S MURDER AT LUDHIANA HOSPITAL

Hospital staff ask, 'How can they perform if their life is at risk?'

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL
LUDHIANA, JULY 17

A POLICE control room (PCR) vehicle is now stationed outside the emergency ward of Lord Mahavira Civil Hospital, Ludhiana, 24x7 with a team of cops on patrolling duty.

Three days after a group of at least 15 assailants butchered a 15-year-old boy Savan inside the Emergency ward of the hospital, the probe has found that the reason behind the clash lied somewhere in the middle of two things – egos of two groups of youths and a brewing rivalry between two groups within Scheduled Caste (SC) community, Valmikis and Sansis. While the victim was from the Sansi group, all accused booked in the case are Valmikis, both are the communities within Scheduled Caste and living together in the EWS Colony of Ludhiana. According to Dr Gurmehar Kaur, who was on emergency duty in the ward, a group of youths badly assaulted Savan and he was then rushed to Christian Medical College and Hospital (CMCH), but was declared dead on arrival.

Ludhiana police commissioner Kaustubh Sharma said: "Three cops led by ASI Rajinder Singh are posted at Civil Hospital police post none was on duty. An enquiry has been marked and action will be taken accordingly."

Additional DCP-1 Rupinder Kaur Sra said that the victim and the accused were from different caste sub-groups which added to their rivalry.

Surinder Kalyan, vice-chairman, Punjab Safai Karamchari



Security has been beefed at Ludhiana civil hospital. *Express*

Commission, said that both Valmiki and Sansi have been living peacefully in Punjab since the 1990s when Sansi were allotted a part of EWS colony to settle down. "This is probably the first such incident where we have seen Valmikis and Sansis coming to loggerheads, otherwise they have always lived in harmony. It was during the tenure of Beant Singh as Punjab CM when Sansis were allotted a part of EWS Colony in Ludhiana," said Kalyan.

A cousin of the deceased said that "the opposite group were bullying Sansi community boys in the colony for months". "Whenever someone from our side would roam in the street, they would abuse or slap us. They used to harass Savan and his brother too," he said.

Rajvir, the brother-in-law of the victim on whose statement FIR has been registered, said that a few days ago, Savan's father had approached the parents of one of the accused to discuss the matter and suggested that "children on both sides should be counselled."

registered at Focal Point police station of Ludhiana under sections 399, 402 of IPC and 25/54/49 of Arms Act dated June 14, 2022-- police arrested Chaudhary, Jaskaran Singh, Ninderdeep, Mani Kant, Satbir, Amandeep Jethi and nominated one Randeep Kharoud. Police said both cases are interlinked and weapons supplied were used in Moosewala's murder.

Chaudhary was a classmate of gangster Bishnoi at DAV College, sector-10, Chandigarh.

Shivraj Singh, superintendent, Ludhiana Central Jail said that five inmates have been shifted to Goindwal jail for "security reasons." "Moosewala's killing is an emotive issue for many and feelings of people are attached with him. It was necessary to separate these men from other inmates and Ludhiana jail is already overcrowded, so they have been shifted to Goindwal jail," said Singh.



Chandigarh

7 GOVT & POLITICS

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



PLAYING IT SAFE

DESPITE THE expected victory of its candidate Droupadi Murmu in Monday's presidential election, the ruling BJP had directed all its MPs to be present in the national capital on Saturday itself. Party leaders said they did not want to take a chance as there could be some unexpected hurdles at the last minute. The MPs met Saturday evening and there was a training session for them on how to vote. However, in the opposition Congress camp, the MPs did not get any instruction or direction from the party leadership on the presidential election. While there was no communication from the central leadership to the party MPs on the presidential election, Congress MPs from Kerala received a letter from state BJP president K Surendran seeking their support for Murmu.

'CHAIRMAN EMERITUS'

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu was pleasantly surprised on Sunday when senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh suggested that the government should create a post of 'Chairman Emeritus' as a token of acknowledgement for his contributions to the Upper House. Ramesh's suggestion came at a meeting of floor leaders of Rajya Sabha convened by Naidu, who is retiring as Vice President next month. It was an emotional meeting with many opposition leaders praising Naidu, with whom they often had arguments and disagreements over various issues. Ramesh, in fact, said Naidu used to get angry and irritated with the opposition leaders at times but he was a good person at heart and he will be missed.

KERALA TRIP

SOON AFTER the conclusion of the monsoon session of Parliament, officials of the Environment Ministry have something to look forward to — the next meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, which this time will take place in Kerala. The last NTCA meeting, held earlier this year, was conducted in Arunachal Pradesh — the first ever NTCA meeting to take place outside of New Delhi. This is the mandate of Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, who has decided to take policy making beyond the national capital. Yadav, who is also the Labour Minister, has also started holding different central level meetings in the states — often interacting with the local population — to address issues on the ground. Yadav has also increased the frequency of meetings of different committees and agencies.

Naidu's request for farewell gift: a productive RS session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

RAJYA SABHA Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who will chair his last session of the House from Monday, has sought a meaningful and productive session from leaders of political parties as a farewell gift.

Naidu will demit office as Vice President on August 10. He made the remarks at a meeting of floor leaders of Rajya Sabha on Sunday. The meeting saw a record 41 leaders attending.

"I am making one last request for upholding the dignity and decorum of the House of Elders," he said at the meeting. Naidu has presided over 13 sessions.

"It was an emotional evening for all political party leaders with Venkaiah Naidu-garu. They expressed their regret at his departure and praised his many contributions as Rajya Sabha Chairman. He will be a very tough act to follow," said Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh.



Venkaiah Naidu greets leaders of political parties at his residence on Sunday. Prem Nath Pandey

flations as Rajya Sabha Chairman. He will be a very tough act to follow," said Congress chief whip Jairam Ramesh.

The meeting saw the Opposition seeking discussions on 16 issues. These are among them — federalism, Agnipath, in-

flation, declining labour force participation rate, EPFO interest rates, "declining credibility" of central institutions, external threats, hate speech, undemocratic actions against opposition leaders, increasing crime in Jammu & Kashmir and attacks

on Kashmiri pundits and reservations in promotion and in private sector.

The meeting saw some leaders also recalling the efforts made by Naidu to give more opportunities to members by streamlining the conduct of Question Hour, Zero Hour and Special Mentions and debates and his commitment to promote the use of mother tongue.

As the meeting turned into a farewell for Naidu, Leader of the House Piyush Goyal said it was a bit premature to do so as Naidu is to preside over one full session and a formal farewell would be held in the House with all the leaders and members sharing their experiences in detail in the House.

"All sections of the House would work together to present a befitting farewell to the Chairman in the form of a productive monsoon session", Goyal said.



PARTY MEET

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Anurag Thakur with BJP MP Anil Baluni during an NDA meeting in Parliament on Sunday. PTI

A QUICK GUIDE TO PRESIDENT POLLS

KEY DATES: Election is on July 18 and counting on July 21. President to take oath on July 25

VOTERS: There are 4,809 electors in the electoral college whose votes have a value of 10,86,431

THE RACE: NDA's Droupadi Murmu is leading with support of 44 parties. Opp's Yashwant Sinha has the support of 34 parties.

VALUE OF VOTE: The value of a vote of each MLA varies from state to state. In UP, the value is 208, followed by 176 in Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. In Sikkim it is just 7 and in Nagaland 9

BJP, JD(U) seek Tejashwi apology for 'murti' jibe at Murmu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, MAY 17

A DAY ahead of the polling to decide the next President, the BJP and JD(U) on Sunday demanded an apology from Leader of Opposition in Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav for calling NDA presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu a "murti (statue)".

On Saturday, Tejashwi said: "We do not want a murti (statue) as President of India. Has anyone heard the NDA candidate for President speak? Has she held any press conference? On the other hand, Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha has held several press conferences."

On Sunday, BJP national spokesperson Guru Prakash Paswan said, "Tejashwi Yadav has insulted not only Droupadi Murmu ji but millions of youngsters from tribal and Dalit communities by saying that she will be a murti in Rashtrapati Bhawan. This is nothing but a reflection of feudal politics in the name of social justice."

The BJP also took a dig at the RJD, saying the state witnessed a "real statue government" when Rabri Devi was the Chief Minister between 1997 and 2005.

BJP national general secretary of OBC Morcha and party spokesperson Nikhil Anand told *The Indian Express*: "Everyone knows how Bihar had a real statue CM in the form of Rabri Devi when she was virtually dragged out of her kitchen to take over reins of the state."

JD(U) MLC and spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said: "Tejashwi should know that President of India is an august post. As Murmu is all set to become President, statue reference to her by him is condemnable. He should immediately apologise. Murmu has served as a minister and Governor and it goes to show her struggle."

Margaret Alva, a once-powerful face who retreated into shadows

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JULY 17

AT THE start of the year, veteran Congress politician Margaret Alva, 80, wrote a letter to PM Narendra Modi, expressing her angst over a move by the BJP government in Karnataka to bring in a law on religious conversions.

"We Christians are a disciplined, non-violent, service-oriented community. If we were involved in mass conversions, why is our number under three per cent? 200 years of rule by Christian colonial powers and work by so-called 'missionaries' involved in forced conversions should have shown in our numbers, which have been declining. Why this false propaganda and violence against us?" she wrote.

The letter to the PM and participation in protests against The Karnataka Protection of Right of Freedom of Religion Bill in the latter half of 2021 saw Alva, once a political force to be reckoned



Opp V-P nominee Margaret Alva

with in Karnataka, returning to the political stage in the state after a long hiatus. Now the Opposition's 'consensus' candidate for the vice-president's post, Alva finds herself in the spotlight once again.

Despite hailing from coastal Karnataka and representing the current Uttara Kannada (then known as Kanara) Lok Sabha constituency in Parliament in 1999, Margaret Alva has largely been identified as a national politician.

A lawyer, Alva entered Rajya Sabha at age 32 and was a member of the Upper House for four terms, and 24 years at a stretch, from 1974.

She has been a minister in several Congress governments at the Centre — under Indira Gandhi,

Rajiv Gandhi, and PV Narasimha Rao. She was minister for women and child development during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure.

Around two decades ago, her connection with the Congress high command was formidable enough for speculation in the Karnataka unit of the party of Alva being a contender for the CM post.

Alva had a brief spell of frosty ties with the Congress leadership in Delhi after she stated, in 2008, that the Karnataka unit of the party was selling election tickets to the highest bidders rather than picking candidates on merit. She was removed from party roles for around six months before being made Uttarakhand Governor.

She later took on gubernatorial assignments in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Goa, taking her farther away from active politics. Her son Nivedith Alva has been an aspirant for representing the Uttara Kannada region in the state legislature for many years. One of her sons Niret Alva is a well-known television producer.

Behind Dhankhar choice: Tussle with Mamata, upper-caste tag

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

HIS PERSISTENT wrangles with the Trinamool Congress — seen as a strong pushback to the "confrontational politics" of the ruling party in West Bengal — combined with the RSS's backing for him led to the BJP choosing Jagdeep Dhankhar as its candidate for the August 6 vice-presidential election.

Party sources said Dhankhar — a lawyer by training and the national convener of the BJP's law and legal affairs department in 2016 — has in the past "extended solid support both politically and through legal advice and assistance" to the BJP, RSS and its affiliates.

The nomination of Dhankhar, who is from the socially and politically dominant Jat community of Rajasthan, could placate a sec-



NDA V-P nominee Jagdeep Dhankhar

tion in the Sangh Parivar that has been increasingly uncomfortable with the BJP leadership's aggressive outreach to Dalits, OBCs and other backward communities.

"Several leaders from the Parivar have conveyed to the party leaders that it's the time for the party to pitch for an *agada* (member of a forward caste)," said a party source.

Sources said the party was aware of an increasing disquiet among Brahmin leaders over the community being allegedly ignored in the power-sharing formula. "The nomination of Dhankhar for the vice-president

MP CIVIC POLLS

BJP set to rule 108 of 133 local bodies, but loses four mayor posts to Cong, AAP

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, JULY 17

MADHYA PRADESH's ruling BJP is poised to rule over 100 of 133 local bodies, the poll results for which were announced Sunday. But the victory was dampened by the party losing its hold over four mayor posts after winning seven of the 11 Nagar Nigams and scraping through in the other two by a slim margin.

The results for the 133 local bodies — comprising 11 municipal corporations, 36 municipal councils and 86 town councils — were announced Sunday during the first phase of counting. The second phase of counting will be held on July 20.

Mayors for 11 municipal councils are being elected directly while the chairperson of the local body will be elected by councilors indirectly in municipal councils. Of the 11 municipal corporations, the BJP won the mayor's seat in seven. Congress got three mayor's posts and Aam Aadmi Party one.

With the counting underway until late Sunday evening, the BJP was comfortably headed towards establishing its rule in 10 of the 11 municipal corporations, 31 of the 36 municipal councils and 67 of the 86 town councils. With BJP having the majority of councilors in most local bodies, it is set appoint a chairperson in them.

Assaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM also debuted with a four of its four councilors winning. Of these, two are in Jabalpur, one each in Burhanpur and Khandwa corporations. Similarly, 14 of AAP's candidates emerged victorious while Rani Aggarwal bagged the mayoral seat in Singrauli municipal corporation.

Congress candidates were elected as mayors in Gwalior, Chhindwara and Jabalpur. But even with that, the party will only be establish its rule in

Chhindwara municipal corporation, with its elected councilors falling short of the majority mark in the corporation.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan held a press conference and reasoned that even though Congress won three Municipal Corporations and AAP won in Singrauli, the saffron party holds the majority of wards which is the true picture. "Despite AAP victory in Singrauli municipal corporation, out of the 45 wards, 23 went to the BJP, Congress got 12 and AAP won on five," said Chouhan.

He continued, "In the local body polls, the BJP emerged victorious on 80 per cent of the seats unlike the earlier trend where vote share was always between 45-55 per cent."

BJP state chief, VD Sharma said that out of the 37 municipal councils BJP has a clear mandate in 27. Similarly, in 64 of the 86 town councils, BJP has a majority. "Even in Jabalpur where Congress won the mayoral post, BJP won on 44 wards and will rule," said Sharma.

By winning three of the 11 mayoral seats, the Congress has improved on its tally from the previous civic polls — zero.

Calling it a historic victory for Congress, state chief Kamal Nath said: "It is for the first time since 2009, there will be three congress mayors out of the 11 municipal corporations. The Congress has snatched three seats from BJP, in two seats we lost with slim margin. I want to ask the BJP, what exactly are you celebrating?"

Nath said that even in Indore and Bhopal where they have lost, the number of councilors in wards have doubled. "The BJP and its B team of AIMIM tried their best and even then, the Congress gave a tough fight in Burhanpur and lost with a narrow margin of 300 votes. Even in a place like Ujjain it was a close fight with merely a difference of 700 votes between the BJP and Congress candidates."

Amid namaz row, Lulu Mall says it's a place of business

Lucknow: Days after the Lulu Mall administration lodged a police complaint against unidentified people who offered namaz in the mall, the establishment issued a statement on Sunday saying it is "purely a place of business, which doesn't discriminate against any caste, religion or any section of society".

On July 14, an FIR was registered on a complaint from the Lulu Mall administration after a video of unidentified people offering namaz inside the mall went viral on social media.

The statement said: "Those who made a cheap attempt to offer namaz were complained about and an FIR was lodged."

"We appeal to you to not target our esteemed establishment for selfish reasons and let us do business peacefully serving the consumers," it said.

Two people were arrested Saturday after they entered the mall and recited the Hanuman Chalisa, police said. **ENS**

UP: Seen carrying photos of PM and Yogi in trash, sanitation worker sacked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JULY 17, 2022

THE CONTRACTUAL service of a 40-year-old Mathura sanitation worker was terminated for allegedly carrying a trash can that happened have photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

While showcase notices have been issued to the sanitary inspector and sanitary supervisor for not briefing the worker about photographs of dignitaries and public representatives, a probe has also been ordered.

In his representation to the municipal corporation, sanitation worker Bobby said he was

innocent as he is illiterate and failed to identify the photographs, said a senior official of the municipal department.

Mathura Municipal Commissioner Anunaya Jha said a fact-finding committee has been instituted. It has been asked to submit its report in 48 hours.

According to the official, Bobby was carrying trash that he took from a collection centre on Saturday. In the trash can, there were photographs of the PM and CM. On the way, he was intercepted by two people from Rajasthan, who made the video. The photographs were removed from the can and Bobby left the spot. In another video, a man is seen washing the photos of the PM and CM from the trash can.



Chandigarh

ROUND 16 OF MILITARY TALKS WITH CHINA

India presses for full disengagement

Talks at Chushul Moldo point on Indian side of LAC last 12 hrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

INDIA ON Sunday strongly pressed for early disengagement of troops from all the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh at the 16th round of high-level military talks with China, which took place after a gap of over four months.

In the discussions that lasted for around 12-and-a-half hours, the Indian delegation also insisted on the restoration of the status quo ante as of April 2020 — before the start of the military standoff, people familiar with the development said.

The talks began at 9.30 am at the Chushul Moldo meeting point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the region, and ended at around 10 pm, they said.

There were some expectations of progress at the talks on completing the disengagement process at Patrolling Point-15 in the Hot Springs area.

The Indian delegation at the talks was led by Lt Gen. Anindya Sengupta, the commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps, while the Chinese team was headed by South Xinjiang Military District Chief Maj Gen. Yang Lin.

Violence in TN town over student's death; buses torched, DIG injured



Buses set on fire by protesters in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi on Sunday. PTI

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 17

PROHIBITORY ORDERS were imposed at several places in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district after protesters clashed with police and indulged in arson at a residential school on Sunday to protest against alleged inaction following the death of a 17-year-old student earlier this week.

Several people, including senior police officers, were injured in the violence at the residential school in Kaniyamore, near Chinnasalem. Later in the day, the school principal and two school officials were arrested and the government transferred the suicide case to the CB-CID.

The protesters set on fire at least 15 buses, including three police buses. Following the violence, Kallakurichi Collector P N Sridhar issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 until July 31 in Kallakurichi taluk and several places in Chinnasalem.

Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed regret over the violence and assured punishment for all those involved in the girl's death. Appealing for peace, the CM said he has ordered the Home Secretary and the DGP to visit the site of the violence.

Sources said that on Sunday morning, around 2,000 people gathered at the school — where the Class 12 student was found dead on Wednesday — in response to a protest call on social media by youth groups in the area.

The student is suspected to have jumped to her death from the third floor of the school building. The autopsy report confirmed injuries on the girl's body.

Police said that a suicide note purportedly written by the girl mentioned that she struggled in several of her school subjects. The letter allegedly blamed some of her teachers for putting her under pressure over her poor scores and also asked the school to refund her annual school fee to her parents.

There was no official word on the outcome of the talks.

The 15th round of the military dialogue took place on March 11 but it failed to yield any significant outcome, with both sides, in a joint statement, reaffirming that resolution of the issues would help restore peace and tranquillity in the region and facilitate progress in bilateral relations.

The Indian side pressed for disengagement of troops as soon as possible in all the remaining friction points, the people cited above said.

It is learnt that the Indian delegation also sought resolution of pending issues in Depsang Bulge and Demchok.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for the overall development of bilateral ties.

The situation in eastern Ladakh figured prominently in talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Bali on July 7.

At the one-hour meeting on the sidelines of a conclave of foreign ministers of the G20 nations, Jaishankar conveyed to Wang the need for early resolution of all the outstanding issues in eastern Ladakh.

"Recalling the disengagement achieved in some friction areas, the External Affairs Minister reiterated the need to sustain the momentum to complete disengagement from all the remaining areas to restore peace and tranquillity in the border areas," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement after the meeting.

The MEA further said Jaishankar "reaffirmed the importance of fully abiding by bilateral agreements and protocols, and the understandings reached between the two ministers during their previous conversations". The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the sensitive sector.

ON VISIT TO FLOOD-HIT TOWN, CM FLOATS CONSPIRACY THEORY

Cloudbursts may be foreign plot to destabilise India: KCR

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, JULY 17

IF TELANGANA Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is to be believed, cloudbursts may well be engineered by "foreign entities" to "destabilise" India. KCR presented his conspiracy theory to people in Bhadrachalam town in the state's Bhadrachalam district, who have been forced into relief shelters by the overflowing Godavari.

"There is this new phenomenon called cloudburst. This is what happened in the Godavari region which caused the flood. There are reports that these cloudbursts are a conspiracy by foreign sources," KCR said on Sunday.

"They (the alleged conspirators) first did a cloudburst in Leh-Ladakh, then in Uttarakhand, and now in the Godavari region. There are theories that these cloudbursts are being done to destabilise the country," the Chief Minister said.

Heavy rain and inflows over a week up led to Godavari rising to levels not seen in Bhadrachalam in more than 35 years, some residents said. The state government moved several thousand people to camps as the river flooded its banks, before the water level began to fall on Saturday.

The Telangana BJP described the Chief Minister's conspiracy



Telangana CM during a visit to a flood-affected area. Express

theory as the "joke of the century". The Congress advised him to share his information with the central government and intelligence agencies.

State BJP president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar accused KCR of making outlandish claims to divert attention from "failures", including "submergence" of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy said that as Chief Minister, it was KCR's responsibility to hand over the information about the "foreign hand" behind the cloudburst to the Centre, the Intelligence Bureau, and R&AW.

KCR visited the relief camps, and announced Rs 1,000 crore to build colonies on higher ground

for the displaced people.

He promised Rs 10,000 per family as immediate relief during their stay in the camps, as well as free rice and essential commodities when they returned home.

The CM said it was "God's miracle" that the Kadem dam on the Godavari tributary of the same name survived. "Its maximum capacity is about 2.90 lakh cusecs but during this flood, it (the flow) reached 5 lakh cusecs and it is a miracle it (the dam) is still standing. Thankfully, there is no loss of life in spite of the heavy floods," he said.

KCR had to cancel his aerial survey of the flood-hit areas due to poor weather. He flew to Warangal by helicopter and thereafter travelled by road to assess the extent of the flooding and damage. **WITH PTI INPUTS**

J&K: CRPF ASI killed as militants fire at checkpoint

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JULY 17

AN ASSISTANT Sub Inspector (ASI) of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed when militants targeted a joint checkpoint of J&K Police and the CRPF in south Kashmir's Pulwama on Sunday.

Sunday's attack is the second shoot-and-run attack by the militants in the Valley this week. On Tuesday, an ASI of police was killed and two of his colleagues injured in a similar attack in Srinagar.

The police said that on Sunday afternoon militants fired indiscriminately at the checkpoint at Gangoo village of south Kashmir's Pulwama.

"Today at about 1415hrs, terrorists fired upon a joint naka party at Gangoo crossing area of Pulwama in which one CRPF personnel attained martyrdom. Senior police officers along with reinforcement reached on the terror crime spot," the police said.

"In this terror incident, one CRPF personnel namely ASI/GD Vinod Kumar was critically injured and was immediately shifted to nearby hospital for the treatment of his injuries. However, he succumbed to his injuries and attained martyrdom."

The police said the militants appeared from the nearby dense apple orchards and fired at the joint team of police and paramilitary forces. Police sources said after targeting the joint forces, the militants managed to escape taking cover of dense foliage.

The police have registered a case under relevant sections of law and initiated investigation.

121 tribals, arrested for '17 Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh, acquitted after 5 yrs in jail

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

A SPECIAL court in Chhattisgarh has acquitted all 121 people who were arrested in connection with the 2017 Burkapal Maoist ambush in Sukma in which 25 CRPF personnel were killed. The accused had spent nearly five years behind bars.

The NIA special court, which pronounced the judgment on Friday, said the prosecution could not prove that the accused — all of them from the tribal community — were either on the spot of the incident, in possession of any arms or explosives

ED finds firm of Mumbai ex-CP 'snooped on 91 NSE staffers'

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has found that a firm linked to former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey snooped on as many as 91 office-bearers of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on the directions of its then Managing Director Chitra Ramkrishna, sources said.

The agency Thursday booked Pandey and arrested Ramkrishna in a money-laundering case linked to alleged phone tapping.

"We are interrogating Ramkrishna as it was on her directions that the tapping was done by Pandey's company. We want to know the motive behind tapping the phones of so many NSE office-bearers," an ED official said.

Sources said the agency has found documentary and electronic evidence to show that phones of 91 NSE employees had been tapped by Pandey's company, iSec Services Pvt Ltd. According to these sources, the agency has found transcripts and voice recordings — most of the conversations are about information on stocks and the functioning of the NSE.

iSec Services was incorporated in March 2001. Pandey was not in service at that time. He quit the directorship in May 2006, with his mother Santosh and son Armaan becoming directors.

"However, it was Pandey who was running the company all along. Almost all correspondence between iSec and top officials of NSE are through Pandey's email ID," another ED official said.

The agency had questioned Pandey on July 5 in connection with the 2018 case of the alleged manipulation of NSE — a separate case in which some brokers were alleged to have made windfall



Sanjay Pandey

profits by manipulating the co-location facility of the bourse in connivance with top NSE officials.

The current ED case is based on a CBI FIR registered recently against Pandey, his company, and others, including Ramkrishna.

Seeking Ramkrishna's remand Thursday, the ED told the court of Special Judge Sunena Sharma that a Rs 4.54 crore payment to iSec for the phone tapping was agreed upon by NSE officials including Ramkrishna and iSec representatives.

The ED told court, "The work orders/contracts/agreements were processed by Chitra Ramkrishna during her tenure as Deputy Managing Director and Managing Director of NSE. During the entire period of offence i.e. from 01.01.2009 till 13.02.2017, Ms Chitra Ramkrishna was holding the position of either Deputy Managing Director (till 2010) or Joint managing Director (till 2013) or Managing Director (till December, 2016) of NSE."

It also alleged there was evidence to show that iSec's work for the bourse lasted for around the same time as Ramkrishna's stint.

"It is further averred that after she relinquished the post of Managing Director of NSE in December, 2016, the contract for so called 'Periodic Study of Cyber Vulnerabilities of NSE' expired on 13.02.2017 and was never renewed subsequently, thus proving that the said illegal activity was co-terminus with her holding key position as Joint Managing Director/Managing Director of NSE," ED said.

Engine snag: IndiGo flight from Sharjah diverted to Karachi

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

AN INDIGO-OPERATED Airbus A320neo plane on its way from Sharjah to Hyderabad was diverted to Karachi in Pakistan early on Sunday after pilots were notified of a fault in the aircraft's right engine.

This is the latest in a series of such incidents that were reported to have occurred on aircraft operated by Indian carriers over the past few days — from engine snags and burning smell in cabin to a bird entering the airplane cockpit.

Prior to this incident, an Air India Express plane from Kozhikode to Dubai diverted to Muscat in Oman on Saturday after burning smell was experienced in one of the vents in the Boeing 737-800 aircraft's forward galley.

On board another Air India Express plane on its way from Bahrain to Kochi on Friday, a live bird was found in the cockpit of the Boeing 737-800 plane in the glove compartment of the co-pi-

lot, while the plane was cruising at 37,000 feet.

In a statement on Sunday, IndiGo said: "IndiGo flight 6E-1406, operating from Sharjah to Hyderabad was diverted to Karachi. The pilot observed a technical defect. Necessary procedures were followed and as a precaution the aircraft was diverted to Karachi. An additional flight is being sent to Karachi to fly the passengers to Hyderabad."

A senior official at India's aviation safety regulator DGCA said these incidents will be probed. IndiGo had faced another technical snag on its Thursday flight from Delhi to Vadodara, which was diverted to Jaipur after unusual vibrations were observed in the engines of the plane.

"We got over serious engine issues long time back. These are mostly precautionary and a part of a robust safety management system. Any indication that comes is to be acknowledged and responded. An aircraft has many thousands components and all have to function in harmony," the DGCA official said.

Chhattisgarh Police had arrested 121 tribal people from various villages in the region. All of them were arrested in 2017 and remained in jail till Friday. One accused turned out to be a minor, while another died in detention.

The Chhattisgarh Police registered a case in the matter under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and even invoked provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) at the time of the charge sheet. As many as 120 people were arrested in the initial phase with one more arrest being made later. Accused Dodi Mangalu of Patel Para in Sukma died in jail.

ICSE Class 10 results: More than 100 students tied in top 3 ranks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

MORE THAN 100 students were tied for the top three positions in the ICSE results released on Sunday, scoring 99.4% and above.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations released results for its Class X board examinations Sunday evening. A total of 2,31,063 candidates from 2,535 schools across the country and abroad had appeared in these examinations, of whom 2,31,004 — or 99.97% of candidates — passed.

Along with a high pass percentage, the board results also show that many students scored in a very high range. Four students — three girls and a boy — were tied for the top position, all having an English plus best 4 subjects score of 99.8%. A total of 34 students were tied for the second spot with 99.6% and 72 tied for third place with 99.4%.

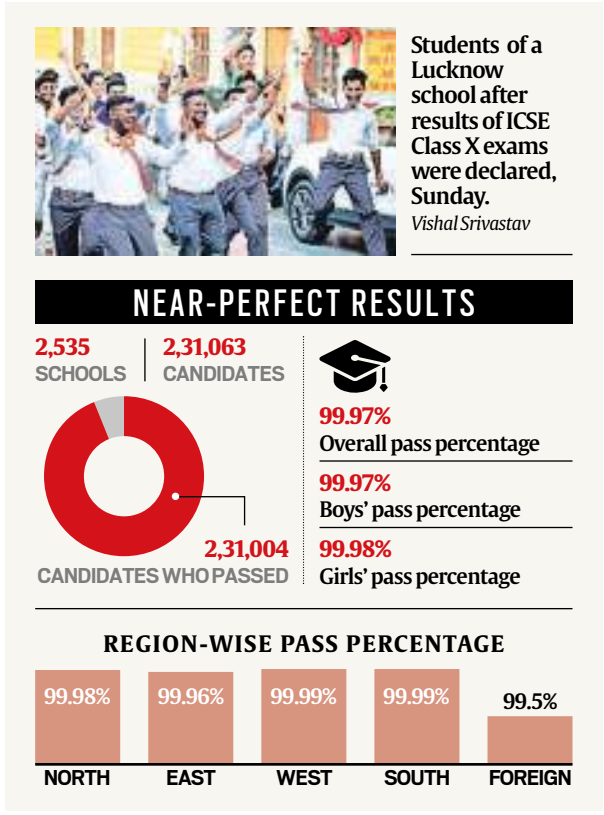
Of these toppers, the highest number are from Maharashtra, from where 37 students scored

99.4% and above.

Hargun Kaur Matharu, of St. Mary's School, Pune, was one of the four students who scored 99.8%. "It seemed to be a possibility. She is very academically inclined and her school had expectations but we didn't want to pressure her. She has been very regular in her studies but maintained a balance," said her father Dev Singh Matharu.

Mohammad Masood Iqbal of The Future Foundation School, Kolkata, was among those who scored 99.60%. "I am preparing for medical entrance exams and I want to be a doctor. I am sure Class 12 will be more challenging. I had a lot of issues with the online mode of classes, so I am happy that offline classes are back now," he said.

Nihara Mariam Oommen, a student of Bethany High School, who also scored 99.6%, said she balanced her studies with music. "I never expected this score... Credit definitely goes to my mother who tutored me for exams. She was a teacher during the Covid-19 lockdown," she said.



NEET records 95% attendance, highest number of applicants ever

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE NATIONAL Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admissions to MBBS and BDS courses, which recorded the highest number of application ever this year, registered 95 per cent attendance on Sunday.

A total of 18.72 lakh candidates had registered for the exam, which is the country's biggest common entrance held by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

According to an official statement issued by the NTA, the test was held across 3,570 centers in 497 cities in India and 14 cities abroad. NEET (UG) 2021, for which 16.14 lakh candidates had registered, was held in 202 cities including Dubai and Kuwait.

"The number of candidates within India were maximum in Jaipur (52,351) and minimum in West Sikkim (105). Similarly, the number of candidates outside India were maximum in Dubai (646) and minimum in Thailand (6)," the statement said.

The arrangements made by the NTA included one central control room, live CCTV surveillance and jammers.

Rajasthan: Students say wrote exam 'twice' due to question paper mix-up

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, JULY 17

STUDENTS WHO appeared for NEET at an examination centre in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar district on Sunday alleged they were forced to write the exam twice on account of a question paper mix-up.

Students said question papers meant for Hindi and English medium students were interchanged mistakenly. A National Testing Agency (NTA) official confirmed the mix-up to this news-paper, but said students were given extra time to complete the paper once the mistake was spotted. However, the exam centre superintendent, in a factual report submitted on Sunday evening, recommended a re-test to NTA.

The incident, earlier in the day, had resulted in students and parents protesting in front of the Army Public School, Sriganganagar, the exam centre. "The examination started at



Students at an examination centre in Ludhiana. Gurmeet Singh

2 pm. Around 4:30 pm, people from the exam centre came to us and said we have been mistakenly given the bilingual question paper meant for Hindi medium students and those studying in Hindi medium have received the question paper meant for English medium students," said Akshita Garg, a NEET aspirant.

Garg added that officials at the examination centre first gave the students another question paper, but subsequently said they will have to write the examination

once again. "We completed our exam by 6 pm. But then, they said our exam has been cancelled and we will have to write it again in another time slot," she said.

Sriganganagar SDO Manoj Kumar Meena had reached the spot after the incident to maintain law and order.

In a factual report sent by centre superintendent Raja Sharma to the observers for the NEET exam, it was recommended that the examination should be conducted again for this centre.



Chandigarh



The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. And remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed

Kaunain Sheriff: Can you take us through the breakthrough therapy that you are introducing in India and the science behind it?

Let's begin with immunotherapy against cancer. It comes in many variations but there are three main ones. First are monoclonal antibodies (MABs) which have been in use for a long time. The second is T-cell therapy. This does not involve transfer of T-cells but uses your own native cells. In order to prevent your own T-cells from attacking themselves, you inactivate them so that you don't get autoimmunity. Some examples of autoimmunity would be Type 1 diabetes, lupus and arthritis. So, your body basically keeps a check on these T-cells and inhibits them. These drugs are called checkpoint inhibitors, some of which are available in India. Obviously, if you activate your T-cells against cancer, they can also be activated against your normal cells. So, checkpoint inhibitors are necessary. The third variant is the CAR T-cell therapy, where we extract T-cells from a cancer patient's body and we use a virus, which is a modified and inactivated version of the HIV virus but doesn't cause HIV, to deliver genes into them. These genes then weaponise the T-cells to attack cancerous cells. In other words, we remove the T-cells from the body through apheresis, they go into an extremely sterile laboratory, are activated with gene therapy and harvested in incubators until they expand to a very large number and are frozen. This process usually takes about 10 to 14 days before the cultured cells are transfused back into patients. Originally, when this was done in the US by several people, including Michel Sadelain at Memorial Sloan Kettering and very successfully by the UPenn group, led by Carl June and Bruce Levine, there was scepticism about whether these highly activated T-cells would attack the tumour which had spread considerably. The results were quite remarkable and almost miraculous. These patients were on the verge of death and mostly had liquid cancers or leukaemia as their tumours had stopped responding to multiple cycles of chemotherapy. We also tried to ensure that the activated T-cells, that would release cytokines or chemicals that T-cells use to communicate with each other and with the immune system, wouldn't generate a cytokine storm. We controlled it with medicines. Since then, we've already dosed several patients. A group in IIT is also dosing patients using the same formula. There is a phase one trial, ours is a phase two trial. There is a new product, ours is a clinically exposed product that has already been proven to be successful in humans. We have in-licensed it from Barcelona, it has already completed trials in Spain and has been proven to be both safe and extremely effective. We are giving the doses of T-cells in not one shot but in three or four shots, depending on how we do the trial.

Uniquely in India, we've been able to reduce the cost, which is a very difficult process because the input costs are already very high. You need an army of scientists, a specialised facility, several machines, manipulations and so on. In India, we have the innovative capacity to administer the dose to patients at a much earlier stage of the disease. If successful, it will be a great contribution to medicine internationally because we will be able to show that we can actually keep longer remissions and keep patients better for a longer period of time.

Kaunain Sheriff: This treatment has been there for almost a decade in the US, parts of the UK and now also in China. What does the global data tell us about its efficacy?

The global data looks very good. The tumours that respond are lymphoma, leukaemia and myeloma, all refractory tumours. I also have another company in the US called Vor Biopharma, which is one of the first companies to attempt this in myeloid leukaemia. This occurs mostly in children though some adults do get it, too. The effectiveness of CAR-T therapy in children has been 90 per cent. In other words, five to seven years of survival in 80 to 90 per cent of patients. Remember, these patients were initially refractory or relapsed. It was a very difficult population to treat, the only other treatment available to them being a bone-marrow transplant. But there the effectiveness is much lower, there's a much more toxic regimen and the side effects could go on for four decades. In contrast, this would be a 14-day process, followed by two or three days of infusion, and the cure rates could be 80 to 90 per cent, depending upon the kind and intensity of leukaemia. In myeloma, the cure rates are 80 to 90 per cent, too.

We have many strategies at Immuneel, which is the Bengaluru-based company, through which we are trying to determine if we can prolong the remissions, increase



WHY SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE

Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee is an eminent oncologist and Pulitzer award-winning author. He's rolling out a significant clinical trial on treatment of cancer, called the Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, which has already been used in several countries. If his phase II clinical trials at Immuneel, the Bengaluru-based company

he's founded with Biocon chairperson Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Dr Kush Parmar, are successful, then this therapy would be India's contribution to the rest of the world. He's also developed an independent pillar of treatment. Not chemotherapy, radiation, surgery or immunotherapy but using customised diet as drug.



Scientists here are of the highest calibre. Clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams are world-class. They work with my lab at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality of conversation or innovation

'In anti-cancer therapy, there is (another) pillar: using diet as a drug'

Oncologist Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee on the crisis in the health economic system in India, attempting to cure blood cancer through sophisticated cell therapy, deploying strategies to prolong remissions and keeping costs down



Special Correspondent Kaunain Sheriff in conversation with Dr Siddhartha Mukherjee. Abhinav Saha

the percentage of remissions, and potentially even cure myeloma, using novel strategies. And again, this would be a contribution from Indian medicine to the rest of the world. Once we've completed clinical tests, we will start working on the product for a clinical trial, which will be a phase two trial.

Safety is paramount at Immuneel. We're following international standards, DCGI and other appropriate guidelines of the Indian ecosystem. So far, there have been very mild adverse effects, nothing to stop the phase two trial.

Kaunain Sheriff: The first participant was a child. How was the experience? Can this be used as a first line of treatment for children?

It was a very big learning experience. A huge amount of training and quality control protocol was involved. We don't want to just throw the drug at someone, we want a full ecosystem, a partnership, and the achievement of that was the first child was appropriately treated.

Part of the protocol involves infusing chemotherapy into the spinal cord, part of the therapy for some high-risk patients involves giving radiation, which causes all sorts of downstream effects. When they grow older, they have cognitive, post-traumatic, psychiatric and psychological disorders. They are growth-limited at times because of the chemotherapy. Who would not like their child to receive one-day therapy, after 14 days of growing T-cells, without being first battered by two years of chemotherapy? But it's impossible to do that in the US if the cost is going to be \$400,000, plus all the associated care. Remember that \$400,000 is coming after two or three years of chemotherapy, which itself is another \$400,000- \$500,000. So, that child is being treated now with nearly a million dollars of chemo plus CAR-T therapy. This is why innovation and tech transfers are very important in this field to lower costs and deliver this therapy upfront.

Kaunain Sheriff: In the US, the cost is around Rs 3-4 crore and that's just the drug itself. Then you have hospitalisation and medicine. How will you bring this cost down in India?

We are attacking every potential pinch point. We are now ramping up the production of our own virus facilities, which will again be of international standards. We have decreased the labour costs enormously, partly because they are intrinsically cheaper. Hospitalisation costs are also intrinsically cheaper. All the associated drug costs are cheaper. We are using all the innovation that is available to decrease the costs dramatically. We cannot change the intrinsic costs of certain goods because the patient's safety comes first. We've already lowered the costs dramatically but are aiming

to lower them further, partly by producing some of these products or goods in India, partly by identifying 10 pinch points.

Kaunain Sheriff: Are you thinking of collaborating with the IIT Bombay team, which is working with Tata Memorial, to bring the cost down?

We've been in touch with the IIT team. But again, the entire ecosystem has to be appropriately deployed such that these are not competitive products but collaborative products. It's fair to say that this industry needs to be appropriately regulated. This is a very sophisticated therapy and the last thing we want is to contaminate the field with actors who don't have the sophistication and the knowledge to develop CAR-T therapies.

Kaunain Sheriff: How was it working with scientists here?

Scientists here are of the highest calibre. There are clinical, manufacturing and scientific teams and they are world-class. The research team works with my laboratory at Columbia University. There's no difference in the quality or the level of conversation and innovation.

Kaunain Sheriff: You're very close to bringing at least two potentially very significant drugs. One is related to untreatable leukaemia and the other addresses stem cells linked to arthritis, which is very common among women in India. When can these be rolled out?

The first one has started its clinical trials. It's a very complex twist on cellular therapy. My lab discovered it, we patented it and we've now sent it off to Vor Biopharma. We are waiting for an outcome signal. In osteoarthritis, we were the first, along with another group, to identify the stem cells or the progenitor cells that form cartilage. In animal models, these cells can be stimulated to grow using a drug. Potentially, they can also be transplanted. So we're using a variety of mechanisms to

grow these cells. This is a regenerative medicine study and if the cells are already dead, then you can't bring them alive. You have to intervene at a stage where you're seeing damage or injury but the cells haven't completely died. The challenge in regenerative medicine is to find the Goldilocks spot, don't go in too early or too late.

We have a third study, which is probably one of the most interesting studies in cancer, which is combining diets with drugs. This is not voodoo nutritional science but is based on extremely rigorous scientific experiments in which we've shown that particular diets, which lack certain substances, or have the addition of other substances, are synergistic with drugs. Targeted therapies make them much more effective. Our last study was published in *Nature* and trials will begin. That's what we call the independent pillar. Not chemotherapy, not radiation, not surgery, not immunotherapy — the four pillars of anti-cancer therapy — but a fifth pillar, where we treat diet as a drug.

Kaunain Sheriff: In India, we are looking at 30 million cases by 2025. Global data says that around 30 to 50 per cent of cancers are preventable. Do these figures worry you?

It worries me a lot. Cancers being treated by CAR-T don't seem to be preventable. Lymphoma has certain carcinogens that are preventable. But childhood leukaemia is a genetic accident. There's a pyramid-like basis for cancer therapy. At the bottom, where you get the most effect for the least cost, is prevention. Preventable carcinogens include tobacco, triggers include obesity while some cancers are caused by viruses. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) causes cervical cancer and there's a very effective vaccine against it. We are in the process of discovering new carcinogens. Large studies are on to find the link between industrial and particulate pollution and cancer. The centre of the pyramid is early detection and screening.

Finally, there's the top of the pyramid and the most expensive: treatment.

Anonna Dutt: What would cancer therapy look like in 10-20 years and why did you choose to work in India?

Each cancer is treated differently. We haven't been able to be very successful with cellular therapy against solid tumours, such as ovarian cancer and colorectal cancer. For such cancers, we'll have to use some other inventive mechanisms or new drugs. You can't imagine how complicated Vor Biopharma is in terms of delivering its therapy for myeloid leukaemia. I have made a series of other inventions that are also going on trial. Those will be for solid tumours. So, it will be a mix. Some parts of it will be personalised for a patient. In the early days of cancer therapeutics, risk assessment was basically clinical. Now, the risk assessment is clinico-pharmacogenetics, which means that we use the patient's own genetic data. In other words, we study how they will metabolise or change responses to drugs, and track the genetic data from the cancer. Our risk assessment is far more sophisticated than it was 50 or 60 years ago. But there are the five pillars I talked about. Then the emphasis on prevention will continue.

I chose India because the clinical and the scientific ecosystem, particularly in tech hubs like Bengaluru, were sufficient and sophisticated enough to develop this.

Harish Damodaran: So much is happening in cell therapy in human biology. Why is there so much resistance to plant biology, be it in gene editing or modification?

In medicine, we're treating sick people. In the entire genetically-modified (GM) food industry, we're giving products to healthy people, so the regulatory concerns are totally different. In one case, the patient would die if you didn't give them the therapy. In the other, you are exposing someone who is physically healthy to unknown GM foods. That said, I'm perfectly sanguine with GM foods as long as they have passed safety paradigms and have been ecologically evaluated. Some of them have also led to monoculture of plants, which is a big problem because evolutionary and ecological diversity are important. If a plant species goes extinct, you can't revive it from the dead. Besides, all species, plants and animals, are mutating all the time which is also genetic modification. The other alternative is to chemically modify plants, which is more harmful.

Liz Mathew: During the African Genome Project, there was one finding that established race as a social construction and not a genetic reality. Any scope for such a study in India?

There's a very large Indian genomic study, which is being conducted to figure

out what the diversity of the Indian genome, broadly speaking, is. I can't tell you what the answer is going to be. There has been a lot of endogamy in India and that will have genetic consequences.

Rinku Ghosh: Can your new therapy arrest the aggressive Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML)? Also, how rigorous should we be about self-screening?

AML is really a tough disease to treat. In fact, we are still treating AML as we used to about 10 or 15 years ago, with standard chemotherapy followed by, in some patients, bone marrow transplantation, which is very toxic and difficult to administer. Vor Biopharma is one of my companies, which arises from the work done at Columbia University. It is a completely new way of treating AML and potentially a curative way, but it's on trial. I'm very hopeful.

Everybody should be aware of screening guidelines as they are available on highly regarded public websites and are constantly upgraded. The WHO, the National Cancer Institute and the European Cancer Institute have very clear guidelines. The epidemiology of India and many countries like India is shifting away from death as a result of infectious diseases towards death from chronic non-infectious diseases. For countries like India, it's like dividing mammals into cows and non-cows because there are now so many non-communicable diseases that are responsible for death, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and, of course, cancer. It's advisable to keep up with the new epidemiology. Appropriate screening, including colonoscopies, should be performed at the right age at the right time for the at-risk population. Upper endoscopy must be performed at the right age at the right time for at-risk people. Don't miss mammography.

Aakash Joshi: How does the cost of a life-saving drug for children, like the one that's being developed, pan out in a country like India?

In India, we will probably end up with a triple-hybrid model, with some cost displacement through the government, some cost assessment through private insurance and some through individuals. This is a health economics problem. I think the health economic system in India is in a crisis. It is a mishmash. Even within a single colony, you have a private hospital, a government hospital, you have a partially government hospital, someone's privately insured, someone's half-insured. It's a complete mishmash.

We need to create a system. My father was ill, and unfortunately passed away. He was in a hospital but the hospital didn't have a pharmacy. I had to go across the street to a private pharmacy to buy the medicines that had been prescribed for him. This is an absurd system.



In the early days of cancer therapeutics, risk assessment was basically clinical. Now, we use the patient's own genetic data. In other words, we study how they will metabolise or change responses to drugs

THE IDEAS PAGE

A prosperity lesson for India

As it prepares to become most populous by 2023, it must remember: Improvement of human development index hinges on providing quality education to girl child



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

THE UNITED NATIONS' latest report, "Population Prospects" forecasts that India will surpass China's population by 2023, reaching 1.5 billion by 2030 and 1.66 billion by 2050. It was only three years ago that the UN Population Prospects (2019) projected that India will surpass China's population by 2027. But it seems that the rate of growth of India's population is faster than that of China, and the global agencies had to change their forecast significantly in three years.

Every country intends for its people to be prosperous and frames policies to attain this goal. China's story since 1978 is unique — the country has achieved the fastest decline in poverty and is today a superpower, perhaps, second only to the US. Its experiences hold some important lessons for India, especially because in 1978, when China embarked on its economic reforms, its per capita income at \$156.4 was way below that of India at \$205.7. Both countries were saddled with humongous poverty. Today, China is more than six times ahead of India in terms of per capita income — China's per capita income in 2021 was \$12,556, while that of India was \$1,933 in 2020. It is this economic prosperity that has enabled China to spend large amounts on building its military might.

How did China do all this? It is well known that China started its economic reforms in 1978 with a primary focus on agriculture. It broke away from the commune system and liberated agri-markets from myriad controls. As a result, during 1978-84, China's agri-GDP grew by 7.1 per cent per annum and farmers' real incomes grew by 14 per cent per annum with the liberalisation of agri-prices. As people gained prosperity and farmers' real incomes doubled, poverty fell by half in just six years. Enhanced incomes of rural people created a huge demand for industrial products, and also gave political legitimacy for pushing further the reform agenda. The aim of China's manufacturing through Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) was basically to meet the surging demand from the hinterlands. The rest is history.

But one important policy during this period that is not talked about much was the one-child policy. China introduced the one-child per family policy in September 1980, which lasted till early 2016. It is this strict control on population growth, coupled with booming growth in overall GDP over these years, that led to a rapid increase in per capita incomes. Chinese population growth today is just 0.1 per cent per annum compared to India's 1.1 per cent per annum. India's overall growth story — though one of reasonable success — has not been as impressive as that of China, certainly not in agriculture. Over a 40-year period, 1978-2018, China's agriculture has grown at 4.5 per cent per annum while India's agri-GDP growth ever since reforms began in 1991 has hovered at around 3 per cent per annum. Market and price liberalisation in agriculture still remains a major issue, and at the drop of any hint of food price rise, the government clamps down exports, im-



C R Sasikumar

poses stock limits on traders, suspends futures markets, and pushes other measures that strangle markets. The net result of all this is reflected in the "implicit taxation" of farmers to favour the vocal lobby of consumers, especially the urban middle class.

Let's get back to the population story, and try to understand what India can do at this juncture. There is no way India can impose the one-child norm that China did in 1980. After Sanjay Gandhi's forceful attempts to control population through sterilisation methods in the early 1970s, and the people's discontent against it, no government is going to attempt it. The only way is through effective education, especially that of the girl child, open discussion and dialogue about family planning methods and conversations about the benefits of small family size in society. The record on that front is not very good.

As per the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21), of all the girls and women above the age of 6 years, only 16.6 per cent were educated for 12 years or more. If one talks of the quality of education, several ASER reports point to the poor quality of education. In our earlier research, based on unit-level data of NFHS, we found that women's education is the most critical determinant of the status of malnutrition amongst children below the age of five. The NFHS-5 data shows that more than 35 per cent of our children below the age of five are stunted, which means their earning capac-

Unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

ity will remain hampered throughout life. They will remain stuck in a low-level income trap. Moreover, 57 per cent of women in the reproductive age group of 15-49, are anaemic, as per NFHS-5 (2019-21), up from 53 per cent in NFHS-4 (2015-16). With this dismal status of women's health and education, the future of children in India is a serious issue to ponder over.

Biofortification of staples, supplying clean and safe drinking water to every household (nal se jal) and mid-day meals are all steps in the right direction to improve the well-being of people. But unless a focused and aggressive campaign is launched to educate the girl child and provide her with more than 12 years of good quality education, India's performance in terms of the prosperity of its masses, and the human development index may not improve significantly for many more years to come. From a policy perspective, if there is any subsidy that deserves priority, it should be for the education of the girl child.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture at ICRIR

The Agniveer's journey

There is need for a deeper conversation about potential social fallout of Agnipath



AAKASH JOSHI

"Back there I could fly a gunship, I could drive a tank, I was in charge of million-dollar equipment, back here I can't even hold a job parking cars."

— Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rambo: First Blood' THANKS TO THE pervasive power of Hollywood, even those who have never been to America are likely to have some idea of the country's attitude towards armed forces personnel after they have completed their "tour(s) of duty". A strong sense of nationalism is tied up with their sacrifice and often promoted by the military-industrial complex. "Supporting the troops" and "thanking them for their service" is an integral part of the political identity of many Americans. Conversely, veterans suffer disproportionately from homelessness and mental health issues compared to the rest of the population — almost 20 per cent of them, according to the US National Institute for Drug Abuse. The prevalence of addiction, a disease of despair, is understandable. Violence is, by definition, traumatic and war — even when it is necessary — wounds entire generations.

Things get worse. As Kathleen Belew points out in *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, after every major conflict, many veterans who are unable to readjust well to civilian life have been involved in violent, organised crime and even terrorist activities. World War II veterans formed the Hells Angels (an "outlaw" motorcycle club) and there is an increasing

amount of scholarship on how veterans have fed the cadres of the White Power movement. Louis Beam, for example, was a decorated pilot in the Vietnam War. On his return, he joined the Ku Klux Klan and is now one of the leading ideologues for racist organisations. His conception of a "leaderless resistance" continues to be an inspiration for violent, anti-state, anti-minority groups and individuals. Unfortunately, Beam is a notable exception only in his notoriety.

The model for the Indian armed forces — a colonial legacy in some ways, to be sure — is different. Until now, short-term recruits formed a negligible part of the non-commissioned personnel. Soldiers are expected to die and kill for their country and are offered, in return, job security, pensions and health benefits. The military, by and large, has taken care of its own.

The economic and strategic imperative for reform in the armed forces is undeniable. The time for better technology, hardware and a more adaptable, efficient and versatile fighting force has long been here, and we are already late to the party. Continuing with the current structure of employment and benefits at the same scale is also an economically untenable proposition: More than half of India's defence budget is spent on pensions, while just around 5 per cent is earmarked for research and development.

The question, then, is not whether the armed forces need reform and restructuring. It is about the limited conversation

around the potential social upheaval the scheme could well lead to. As the protests around the Agnipath scheme die down, is India ready for the inevitable influx of thousands of young men, Agniveers, who are likely to have seen conflict and must now adjust to civilian life?

The protests — and the government's response — have been centred on the lack of job security (Agniveers will serve for four years, including 6 months of training) and benefits. A significant number will be employed in paramilitary forces, and their service and training will be recognised as a degree. Yet, many — if not most — Agniveers will have to make their own way. And the value of a "degree" for employers, more often than not, is only significant if it is a marker for skills that they can use.

The first lesson from America in this regard, then, is: The cold logic of the free market may pay lip service to patriotic sentiments, but it does not give salaries or jobs based on them.

Another issue, perhaps even more important, with creating thousands of armed forces gig workers is the social and psychological readjustment that Agniveers will need assistance with. And dealing with it in any meaningful manner requires facing the more uncomfortable weaves of India's social fabric.

The fact remains that ours is a society permeated by violence and hierarchy, as much as it is by compassion, decency and frater-

nity. Our political conversation continues to be dominated by wounds — real and imagined — of history. Caste animosity — including violence to protect its boundaries — is stoked at regular intervals. A camera on every phone means acts of brutality are recorded and shared, as boastful messages from diseased minds as well as for disturbing ideological ends. When men who have seen death at close quarters, and are trained in violence, are added to this already volatile mix, serious consideration and resources must be put in place to help them readjust. Mental health, community and vocational therapy — and less obvious initiatives — would be a good first step. India does not need — and cannot afford — its own version of the KKK and White Power.

The final lesson from America is a tangential one. Most of the sub-genres of its mainstream cinema have been replicated by Hollywood's Indian counterparts — the romantic comedy, the action movie and even the slick nationalist war film, a la *Uri: The Surgical Strike*. What we haven't had yet is the "war vet" genre — stories of soldiers who come back to a world that does not, cannot understand them. The first *Rambo*, for example, isn't just an action movie, it is a tragedy about irrelevance and loneliness. Let's hope a home-grown version of that tale never has any resonance.

aakash.joshi@expressindia.com

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Like unscrupulous populists and nationalists everywhere, the Rajapaksa exploited divisions stemming from economic insecurity, prejudice and plain ignorance, setting the Sinhalese Buddhist majority against the mostly Hindu Tamil and Muslim minorities."
— THE OBSERVER

The power of goodness

In the late Jagat Mehta's vision lies a lesson for the India of today



ABHIJIT V BANERJEE

I HAD NO reason to get to know Jagat Mehta. He was one of those who came of age during India's transition to Independence. Had he been with us he would be one hundred this month.

I knew of him of course. From the newspapers. He was the foreign secretary when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the External Affairs Minister in the Janata government of the late 1970s — a committed Nehruvian (he worked as Nehru's private secretary in his early years in the IAS) who made such a success of his partnership with Vajpayee that Indira Gandhi felt compelled to fire him when she returned to power. These were years of unusual cordiality between India and Pakistan, and key water-sharing agreements were negotiated. Jagatsaheb, as he was widely known, was justly proud of the achievements of those years. He gave a lot of credit to Vajpayee, who despite being ideologically close to the RSS, was capable of genuine warmth and empathy, which goes a long way in diplomacy. But I imagine Jagatsaheb, with his commitment to finding mutually acceptable solutions and above all, an effortless graciousness that extended to one and all, must have played a central role.

That graciousness touched me even before I met him. This was in the mid-1990s. I was trying to start my first randomised controlled trial (RCT). I had contacted Ajay Mehta, one of Jagatsaheb's four remarkable children through his brother, Uday, who taught political philosophy at MIT. Ajay headed Seva Mandir, a Udaipur-based NGO with a deep commitment to Gandhian ideals and community building. I was going to visit Udaipur to explore working with them. Ajay told me that Jagatsaheb had invited me to stay with them. I demurred, worried about imposing. He insisted. I didn't resist too much, and it was one of the best decisions I ever took.

I remember very clearly the morning I arrived in Udaipur for the first time and was taken to Jeevan Niwas, Jagatsaheb's beautiful house just outside the old city in Udaipur. He was waiting for me to have breakfast, and as soon as we sat down at the enormous table in the dining room — as I was to many, many, times more — he began to quiz me about what I was there to do. I noticed immediately there was an intellectual intensity to his queries, barely masked by the slightly old-fashioned politeness that was his second nature, that took it beyond the usual table talk. This was also Jagatsaheb — some of the leading minds of the time, people like Daniel Moynihan and John Kenneth Galbraith, were his close friends — but he offered his full attention to all comers, including young professors with strange ideas. When he asked me about the subject of

my study, I remember saying that I didn't really have one — if there was an intervention that Seva Mandir felt was important enough to test out, that was good for me. He probably found that odd but was too polite to say so.

Eventually, we started what would be a long sequence of RCTs across health and education, and for the next decade and more, I was in and out of Udaipur every few months and almost always, unless there was a large family gathering, I got to stay in Jeevan Niwas. Often, it was just the two of us. I would come back from a day in the field, shower and settle down in his enormous living room with its walls chock-a-block in Rajasthani miniatures with a glass of whiskey soda. And after some small-talk, Jagatsaheb would lean forward, furrow his brows and ask, "So how is Ind-ia doing?". Ind-ia, with an emphasis on the "d". Never Indiya.

This was the late 1990s and early 2000s, the economy was speeding up, poverty was falling, and I was mostly optimistic. Jagatsaheb didn't disagree, but his stance was always that we can and must do better. Because we are Ind-ia. Because we are the children of Gandhi and Nehru, who for him were the greatest idealists of the 20th century. Because we pledged ourselves to the ideals of equality of all, of universal adult suffrage, of tolerance and brotherhood, already in the 1920s, right from when our national movement became a peoples' movement. This was roughly the time when America only recognised the rights of white (men) and most of Europe was obsessed with race and religion, he would tell me.

It was not because he didn't see our flaws. Having spent his life working in government, he knew all about the rigidity and high-handedness of our bureaucracy, the venality of our politicians, the greed and cynicism among our leaders of industry. He would often quiz me in great detail about the implementation of various programmes and policies — about what might be going wrong, and how to fix it.

He was particularly harsh about the foreign policy establishment, especially during the years when he was active there. He thought we made a huge mistake by not supporting our Afghan friends during the Russian invasion in 1979, which, he believed, pushed them into the hands of Pakistan and contributed to the disastrous dynamic that led to 9/11 and beyond. He blamed himself, among others, for being too unwilling to read the warning signs to an uncomprehending Nehru, which ultimately led to our Chinese catastrophe. Protocol and blind love (for Nehru) make a bad combination, he once told me.

And yet he remained an idealist; unwavering in his belief that we must try to do the right things for the right reason, internally and externally, while accepting that it won't always happen. At a time when we seem to be wavering between trying to be powerful and wanting to be good, I dearly miss his voice telling us that we, Ind-ia, can only be powerful if we are good.

The writer, a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIPLOMATIC BRIDGES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). The I2U2 grouping and the summit of its leaders offer a sneak peek into the future. India has reaffirmed its plan to open itself up for international capital and technologies to address its issues, especially in the key markets of food and energy. The four leaders have also called for strengthening of peace, especially between Israel and the UAE. This is bound to result in more economic opportunities for all.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bridge to the gulf' (IE, July 16). After QUAD, the new formation of I2U2, which has taken UAE and Israel on board, has extended the outreach of India in the gulf region even further. Admittedly, this is a step in the right direction. However, India should ensure that the platform not seem hostile to any nation, especially Iran, keeping the historical animosity of the other three partners in mind. Moreover, Biden's recent visit to Israel and their open stance against Iran's purported plan to become a "nuclear power" will surely make Iran doubtful about the intentions of this nascent organisation. We should make our diplomatic intentions clear.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

LAGGING BEHIND

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Maths without Pythagoras' (IE, July 15). Dropping mathematical concepts like linear equations and Pythagoras' theorem from the Class X CBSE curriculum is like removing the middle rungs of the ladder. Mathematical concepts are heavily interrelated. Since other boards are not cutting their syllabus, CBSE students will lose the opportunity of a level playing field. The CBSE board should have consulted concerned subject teachers regarding revisions, if needed. Moving forward, they must abide by the aims and objectives of NEP 2020.

Ravindra Zinjurke, Ahmednagar

DOUBLE STANDARD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Need to ask some questions', (IE, July 16). Gaurav Bhatia exhorts the duty of the then ruling party to be answerable, but he forgets the same lacuna in the current regime. There is an iron curtain over the current government's work-from Pegasus to PM CARES. Additionally, there is no official data on child labour or employment. There must be a proper investigation of the allegations on the Vice President of India if circumstances demand so. However, the same metric must also be applied to matters concerning the current ruling government.

Abhishek Kumar Anshu, Patna





POPE FRANCIS EXPRESSES PAIN
CANADA TRIP ‘PILGRIMAGE OF PENANCE’

Pope Francis has he hopes his coming trip to Canada from July 24 to 30 can help heal the wrongs done to indigenous people by Roman Catholic priests and nuns who ran abusive residential schools.

TOP OF THE
WORLD



French President
Emmanuel Macron

FRANCE
Anti-Semitism
still rampant,
says Macron

President Emmanuel Macron warned against anti-Semitism and historical revisionism on Sunday as he commemorated victims of the Holocaust on the 80th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv roundup of Jewish families. On July 16-17, 1942, around 13,000 people were taken to the Winter Velodrome, the Vel d'Hiv, in Paris before being sent on to concentration camps across Europe. It was the largest mass detention of Jewish people by French police. "We have not finished with anti-Semitism, it is still there - stronger and more rampant," said Macron at the inauguration of a memorial in the central town of Pithiviers. **REUTERS**

SUDAN
Death toll from
tribal clashes
at 65: minister

THE DEATH toll from days of tribal clashes in a southern Sudanese province climbed to at least 65 people, a senior health official said on Sunday. The fighting between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups in the Blue Nile province also injured around 150 others, said Gamal Nasser al-Sayed, the province's health minister, adding that most of the dead were young men who were either shot or stabbed. The fighting in the Blue Nile grew out of the killing of a farmer earlier last week and continued through Saturday, according to the local government. **AP**

SOUTH AFRICA
Police hunt for
suspects after 9
killed in attacks

Police are on the hunt for suspects after nine people were fatally shot in separate shooting incidents in two provinces of South Africa on Saturday night, police said. The latest shootings come on the heels of an uptick in violent deaths in a country with one of the world's highest murder rates. The shootings took place in the Gauteng and also in Thembelihle. Police said it was not yet clear whether the suspects were involved in an earlier shooting in Alexandria. **REUTERS**

BANGLADESH: FEARFUL RESIDENTS LEAVE VILLAGE

Temple, homes vandalised over Facebook post

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DHAKA, JULY 17

A TEMPLE, shops and several houses of the Hindu community have been vandalised in south-western Bangladesh by some unidentified persons over a Facebook post allegedly belittling Islam, in the latest spate of violence targeting the religious minority in the country, according to media reports on Sunday. Police fired warning shots to disperse a mob that vandalised several homes and torched one

of them in Sahapara village in Narail district on Friday evening, *bdnews24.com*, an online newspaper quoted Haran Chandra Paul, an inspector at the local police station, as saying.

The attackers also threw bricks at a temple in the village during the attack around 7:30pm, he said. They also broke the furniture inside the temple.

Haran said a young man posted something offensive on Facebook, triggering anger among Muslims. Police took his father to the police station after a search for the young man failed to trace him.

The situation was normal at night, said the police inspector. Narail Superintendent of Police Prabir Kumar Roy said the law enforcers were working to keep the situation under control.

"We're investigating the incident. Those responsible for the violence will face action. The situation is normal for now," Roy said.

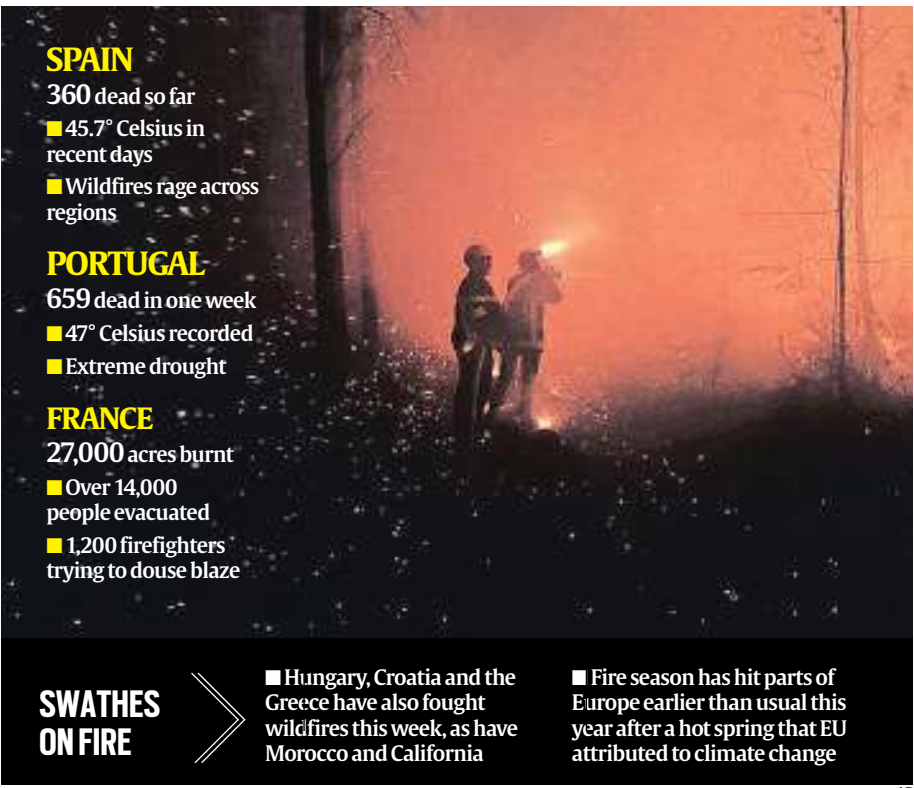
Police were deployed in the area to prevent further violence, *The Daily Star* reported.

"After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot,

they set our home on fire," the paper quoted Deepali Rani Saha, a resident of Sahapara village, as saying.

A former Dighalia Union Parishad said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack. "Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared," she said.

"Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them," the newspaper quoted Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha-Govinda temple, as saying.



SPAIN

360 dead so far

■ 45.7° Celsius in recent days

■ Wildfires rage across regions

PORTUGAL

659 dead in one week

■ 47° Celsius recorded

■ Extreme drought

FRANCE

27,000 acres burnt

■ Over 14,000 people evacuated

■ 1,200 firefighters trying to douse blaze

SWATHES
ON FIRE

■ Hungary, Croatia and the Greece have also fought wildfires this week, as have Morocco and California

■ Fire season has hit parts of Europe earlier than usual this year after a hot spring that EU attributed to climate change

AP

Europe battles to control wildfires

AGENCIES

PARIS, JERTE (SPAIN), JULY 17

FIREFIGHTERS CONTINUED to battle wildfires raging out of control in France and Spain on Sunday as Europe sweltered under an unusually extreme heat wave that authorities in Madrid blamed for hundreds of deaths.

In Spain, firefighters supported by military brigades tried to stamp out over 30 fires consuming forests spread across the country. According to Carlos III Institute, which records temperature-related fatalities daily, 360 deaths were attributed to high temperatures from July 10 to 15.

Fires were raging in several other regions including Castille and Leon in central Spain and Galicia in the north on Sunday.

In Malaga province in southern Spain, wildfires raged into the night, affecting local residents near Mijas, a town popular with northern European tourists.

In Portugal, a pilot of a firefighting plane died when his aircraft crashed on Friday.

Two huge blazes, which have consumed pine forests for six days in southwestern France, have forced the evacuation of some 14,000 people.

Italy is in the midst of an early summer heat wave, coupled with the worst drought in its north in 70 years.

Scorching temperatures have even reached northern Europe.

Britain's weather agency has issued its first-ever "red warning" of extreme heat for Monday and Tuesday, when temperatures in southern England may reach 40 C (104 F) for the first time.

24 dead in floods in China, Sudan

Beijing, Cairo: Flash floods in southwest and northwest China have left at least a dozen dead and put thousands of others in harm's way, state media reported Sunday. More than 4,000 people have been evacuated, the report said.

The rains come amid a heat wave in parts of the country including eastern Zhejiang province and Shanghai, with temperatures soaring as high as 42 degrees Celsius last week.

In Sudan's western Darfur region, 12 people, including children, were killed in floods, the UN and an aid group said Sunday. According to the UN, at least 9,336 people have been affected by heavy rains and flooding since June. **AP**

ATTACKS INTENSIFY IN DONBAS

Russian missiles hit key city in southern Ukraine

HANNA ARHIROVA
& CARA ANNA
VINNYTSIA (UKRAINE)

RUSSIAN MISSILES hit industrial facilities at a strategic city in southern Ukraine Sunday as a funeral was held for a 4-year-old girl killed in an earlier deadly strike elsewhere in the country. Liza, who had Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother when a Russian missile struck the city of Vinnytsia in central Ukraine on Thursday. At least 24 people were killed, including Liza and two boys aged 7 and 8.

On Sunday, more Russian missiles struck industrial facilities in the strategic southern city of Mykolaiv, a key shipbuilding center in the estuary of the Southern Bug river. There was no immediate information about casualties.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Sunday that Russian missiles destroyed a depot for anti-ship Harpoon missiles delivered to Ukraine by NATO allies, a claim that couldn't be independently confirmed.

The British Defense Ministry said Sunday that Russia is moving manpower and equipment between Kherson, Mariupol and Zaporizhzhia. It said the Russians also are increasing their security measures around Melitopol.

It added: "Given the pressures on Russian manpower, the reinforcement of the south



A damaged building in Chuhuiv town in Kharkiv. Reuters

whilst the fight for the Donbas continues indicates the seriousness with which Russian commanders view the threat."

The bombings in south apart. Russia has so far focused its efforts on trying to take control of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas, where the most capable and well-equipped Ukrainian forces are located.

Ukraine says it still controls two small villages in Luhansk region, one of the two provinces that make up Donbas, and are successfully fending off Russian attempts to advance deeper into Donetsk.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff said that Ukrainian troops thwarted Russian attempts to advance toward a key stronghold in Donetsk. **AP**

EXPLAINED
A strategic war goal

THE RUSSIAN military has declared a goal to cut off Ukraine's entire Black Sea coast all the way to the Romanian border. If successful, such an effort would deal a crushing blow to the Ukrainian economy and trade and allow Moscow to secure a land bridge to Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, which hosts a Russian military base.

CALLS FOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTIONS

In first poll after his ouster, Imran's PTI wins by a landslide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LAHORE, JULY 17

OUSTED PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Sunday made a 'clean sweep' in the crucial Punjab assembly by-polls, in a major setback to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif whose Chief Minister son Hamza Shehbaz is all set to lose his post.

The election for the CM will be held on July 22 on the Supreme Court's order and PTI-PTI joint candidate Chaudhary Parvez Elahi is likely to be the new chief minister of politically crucial province Punjab.

The ruling PML-N of the Sharifs has accepted its defeat and even congratulation PTI Chairman Khan for 'landslide victory' in the by-polls.

"We respect the mandate of the people. Now we ask the PTI-PMLQ to form the government in Punjab," the Prime Minister's spokesperson Malik Ahmad Khan said.

To a question whether Prime Minister Shehbaz would dissolve the National Assembly to call early general elections, he said: "The PML-N leadership will decide about it in consultation with its allies."

PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz also accepted her party's defeat.

Senior PTI leader Asad Umar said Khan would announce the party strategy after a meeting of the core committee on Monday. He said the ruling PML-N is left with only one option and that is "immediately calling for fresh general elections."



Thanking the people, Imran Khan's party called the victory a historic decision "in this struggle for true freedom" @PTIOfficial

Tory voters feel Sunak will be a good PM

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JULY 17

ALMOST HALF of the voters for the UK's governing Conservative Party believe Rishi Sunak will make a good Prime Minister, according to the results of a new opinion poll on Sunday.

The Sunday Telegraph reported that the JL Partners poll of more than 4,400 people found that 48 per cent of those who backed the Tories in the 2019 general election felt the British Indian former Chancellor would be a good Prime Minister.

This is also the first poll that puts Foreign Secretary Liz Truss in second place, with 39 per cent backing her for Prime Minister and 33 per cent in favour of



In the survey of over 4,400 people, who had backed the Conservative party in 2019, 48 per cent felt Sunak will be a good PM, while 39 per cent were in favour of Liz Truss. File



Trade Minister Penny Mordaunt.

The survey comes as the race to elect Boris Johnson's successor as the next Conservative Party leader is narrowing down to these three main contenders.

James Johnson, co-founder of JL Partners and a ex-Downing Street pollster, told the newspaper: "Sunak invites strong opin-

ions. One-third of voters think he would be good in the top job, one third do not. But in an unpopular field where every other candidate is in net-negative territory, this score draw makes him the public's favourite. He is particularly popular with the all-important 2019 Conservative voter, as the only candidate to have half



With his body still in Spain, dos Santos's portrait was the official focus of mourning in Luanda last week. AP

crucial election. Angola's governing party and current president, João Lourenço, along with dos Santos's widow, want to bring his body home for a state funeral and burial in a Soviet-style mausoleum — the kind of spectacle that could rally support for a party struggling to stay in power. But his daughter Welwitschia dos Santos is pushing for a private funeral and a discreet grave site in Spain, where his children can visit. She says she has the support of some of her siblings who, like her, face accusations of corruption in Angola and could be arrested if they return. They could also be

trying to parlay the return of their father's body to regain their place in Angola's political elite.

With both sides fighting it out in a Spanish court, it is now up to a judge in Barcelona to decide the feud.

The outcome could sway the August election in Angola, a country rich in oil and minerals on the west coast of southern Africa.

"People are just trying to use the body and all these related issues to advance their own personal agendas," said Augusto Santana, a political analyst in Angola. He added that the incumbent president wants to use the death "for electoral purposes," and the children to negotiate "the dropping of accusations related to corruption."

dos Santos, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, was a towering figure in Angola for nearly four decades.

To his supporters, many of whom entered Angola's moneyed elite, he shepherded the country out of violent turmoil to make it one of the world's largest oil producers, its coastal capital dotted with skyscrapers.

But to his many detractors, he was a ruthless dictator who suppressed democracy and oversaw an economy choked by corruption, with most Angolans living

on less than \$2 a day.

dos Santos had been living in self-imposed exile in Barcelona for three years. According to Welwitschia dos Santos, popularly known as Tchizé, he had said he wanted to be buried there.

His handpicked successor, Lourenço, who came to power in 2017, had turned on him, blaming the dos Santos administration for Angola's economic malaise. Lourenço and dos Santos attempted a rapprochement last year. dos Santos returned to Angola and was set to appear at the party's conference. But then he learned that his son José Filomeno dos Santos would

be sentenced to five years in prison for embezzling the state's sovereign fund.

Angola held a seven-day mourning period for its former leader. In lieu of a casket, a large portrait of dos Santos was erected in a government plaza, with a red carpet leading up to it while uniformed soldiers stood guard.

But the fight over dos Santos's remains is of little concern to ordinary Angolans.

"Do you know how much my husband and I earn?" asked Avenina de Vasco, 37, a street cleaner. "I don't care whether he is buried here or in Europe or America." **NYT**

DISPUTE HAS DIVIDED dos SANTOS's FAMILY, COULD DECIDE FATE OF HIS PARTY

Dead but not buried, ex-President's body sparks cross-continental fight

GILBERTONETO,
JOSEBAUTISTA
& LYNSEYCHUTEL
LUANDA, JULY 17

EVEN IN death, Angola's long-time ruler, José Eduardo dos Santos, is at the center of political infighting.

The former president died in Barcelona on July 8 at the age of 79, but when and where he will be buried has set off a cross-continental fight that has pitted the Angolan government and his widow against some of his adult children.

José Eduardo dos Santos's death came just weeks before a



13 ECONOMY

HUSSAIN HAQQANI, APARNA PANDE IN OPINION PIECE

US 'must be alarmed' by foreign cos exiting India: Hudson Institute dirs

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE IMPACT of multiple major global corporations pulling out from India on the country's foreign investment climate could be amplified by the broader geopolitical implications of these exits, given that several of these companies are based in the US. From automobile companies such as Ford, General Motors and Harley Davidson to Citibank, Holcim, Carrefour, and Metro AG, a string of global companies have either exited, scaled down or are working on pulling out of India.

Notably, while some of these companies have either cited poor competitive position or global business strategies, others have had long-running tiffs with law enforcement and tax authorities.

In an opinion piece published by *The Hill*, Washington-based Hudson Institute directors Hussain Haqqani and Aparna Pande have posited that the Joe

Biden administration "must be alarmed" by the decisions of several foreign corporations to either pull out of the Indian market or put their long-term plans on hold. This assumes significance, particularly, because for years the US has hoped to enable India's rise "as a way of checking China's growing power," they wrote.

The authors also argued that Western democracies, which see India as a natural ally, believe that India would be able to deliver on its economic and military potential only if it attains higher growth rates — something that would only be possible "with larger inflows of foreign investment and further opening of India's markets". In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

Last year, the Indian government took steps to address some of the long-standing tax disputes with foreign companies in an effort to repair its damaged repu-

FDI FLOWS

■ In the year ending March 2022, India saw foreign direct investment inflows of \$58.77 billion, marginally down from \$59.64 billion a year ago.

tation as an investment destination. The government had announced rules, which when adhered to, will lead to the Centre withdrawing tax demands raised using the 2012 retrospective tax law and any tax collected in the enforcement of such demand being paid back. The retrospective tax law had an impact on corporations such as UK telecom giant Vodafone Plc, energy company Cairn Energy Plc, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev.

However, a number of disputes still fester. As per a *Reuters*

report last week, French spirits group Pernod Ricard, in a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, has noted that three-decade old tax disputes with authorities on valuing liquor imports has inhibited fresh investment and its current business.

The sale of Swiss cement-maker Holcim's India assets to the Adani Group was also preceded by fines amounting to over Rs 2,300 crore by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Holcim's India companies — ACC and Ambuja Cements. The fines will be paid by the new owner.

Further, in May, Ford, which had already announced that it will stop selling its cars in India, retracted its plans to manufacture and export electric vehicles from India — a plan it had announced only a few months earlier.

In a 2021 report on India's investment climate, the US State Department noted that India remained a challenging place to do business. "New protectionist

measures, including increased tariffs, procurement rules that limit competitive choices, sanitary and phytosanitary measures not based on science, and Indian-specific standards not aligned with international standards, effectively closed off producers from global supply chains and restricted the expansion in bilateral trade," the report said.

Authors of *The Hill* piece also said despite the challenges, India's large size and location continue to make it an attractive market for foreign businesses. "Access to the large Indian consumer market is a dream, as is the hope for a stake in the upgradation of India's civilian and military infrastructure... India's current rate of economic growth is woefully inadequate for India's domestic goals as well as the objective of becoming a serious rival to global economic juggernaut, China. The latter makes India's economic policies a strategic concern for US policymakers," they wrote.

INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL MANAGER INDIA AT FINNAIR

'Own operations a priority, there may be opportunity to have partner in India'

HELSINKI-BASED LEGACY airline Finnair is set to expand its services in India by adding a flight to Mumbai next month, as it also continues to look beyond Delhi and Mumbai for other destinations in the country, SAKARI ROMU, general manager India for Finnair, told PRANAV MUKUL in an interview. Romu also spoke about the airline's plans to look for a local partner in India, and on the potential re-emergence of low-cost long-haul travel. Edited excerpts:

You mentioned that your flights to China have reduced from 40 per week to just one. Where is this surplus capacity being deployed?

If you look at the time before Covid, we had around 370 daily departures, and this year, we are flying about 70 per cent of that on our own, 10 per cent we have been able to wet-lease to British Airways and Lufthansa Group. And by winter of 2023, we will be above 80 per cent but not 100 per cent.

Within India, are you looking at destinations other than Delhi and Mumbai?

We are looking but nothing concrete yet. But certainly, we are making the calculations, but that's normal business for an airline.

Are you looking at destinations from where you're getting traffic from into hubs like Delhi and Mumbai?

At the moment, we do not have a local airline partner in India. I think we have been successful, and I would like to see a good airline partner in India that would help in any way. But that's not something we can't live without. Demand just from Delhi and surrounding areas is taking up our capacity, and it's picking up. If you look at the other end, there was a strong trend before Covid, the travel to Scandinavian destinations, Helsinki and Baltic destinations from India was increasing strongly — by about 40 per cent every year. That's something, which will recur. About 15 per cent of our customers are



Sakari Romu

Finnish visiting India, and if we look only Finland as the destination, about 10 per cent of our customers are Indians visiting only Finland, and all the others are transfer, where the most important destination is the US.

So in the medium term, what would be the priority for Finnair to go to other destinations in India — having an airline partner or flying directly?

In my opinion, we should look for help or have a good co-operation with a partner. But first come our own operations. At a certain point, there might be an opportunity to have a partner in India.

Because of the higher oil prices and the longer flying time for Finnair, how are you dealing with the fare part of business?

We are trying to effect our prices but finally it is the Indian customer who decides what is the correct price for Finnair and we really have to ensure our

prices are set according to the market.

Finnair has a business class fare with no baggage allowance. That is quite unusual...

That is something I have had lot of discussions about. Especially in China and also India, probably the market has not experienced that kind of product, where the customer is only looking for a comfortable in-flight experience. In Europe, and the US, it is very common — no luggage, no change fees, but you're travelling on business class. But the market in India is not ready for that. It is not something very new. We've had such products in Europe for years.

But how has the Indian customer responded to this fare offering?

We will do a study and make changes to this product, and we have faced the same cases in other markets and in some markets, we have taken out the product totally. But I think, India will be also ready in the near future, where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now"

where people are buying the cheapest possible business class fare. Maybe it is too new for India right now.

The Airbus A321XLR is coming out soon and it is expected to change the dynamics of medium to long-haul low-cost travel. How does a full-service airline respond to this scenario?

I think especially now, if we think about making an airline profitable or making a certain route profitable, you can count on passengers but cargo also has a very big role. All those light version of flying impacts opportunities for cargo revenues. Cargo has always played a big role in our business, from India as well.

MARKETS WATCH

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

FPIs in selling mode, pull out ₹7.4K cr from equities in July so far

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

FOREIGN INVESTORS continue to be cautious about the Indian equity market and have pulled out over Rs 7,400 crore this month so far amid sustained strengthening of the dollar and increasing concerns over a recession in the US.

This comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June.

While foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have slowed down their pace of selling, this does not indicate a change in trend as there has not been any significant improvement in the underlying drivers, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India.

There has been an exodus of foreign funds from the Indian equity market over the last nine months.

"Given the uncertainty in the forex market and the sustained strengthening of the dollar, FPIs are unlikely to turn aggressive buyers in the Indian market and at higher levels they may again turn sellers," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Going forward, FPI flows will remain volatile in the emerging markets on account of rising geopolitical risks, rising inflation and tightening of monetary policy by central banks, Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities, said.

According to data with depositories, FPIs pulled out a net



The BSE, Mumbai File

amount of Rs 7,432 crore from Indian equities during July 1-15. While there have been sporadic net inflows by FPIs last week, the broader trend continues to be cautious, Srivastava added.

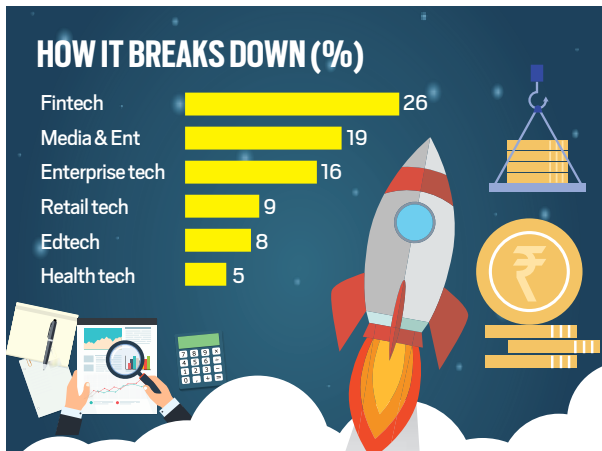
FPIs withdrew a net Rs 50,203 crore from equities in June. This was the highest net outflow since March 2020, when they had pulled out Rs 61,973 crore. With the latest pull out, net outflow by FPIs from equities this year so far has reached around Rs 2.25 lakh crore — a record high. Before this, they withdrew Rs 52,987 crore in the entire 2008, data showed.

According to Chouhan, Indian equities witnessed weakness as global inflation prints remained elevated, concerns of US recession increased, dollar index continued its sharp rally and Q1 results of large IT companies were weaker than expected.

Rupee has touched 80 per dollar mark briefly during the week, highlighting the trouble RBI faces on controlling the currency, said Vijay Singhania, chairman of TradeSmart. **WITH PTI**

'Sequoia, Tiger Global lead startup funding in Apr-Jun'

Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global led funding in Indian startups during April-June, Nasscom said in a report



April-June quarter saw only four unicorns — neobanking firm Open, SaaS platform LeadSquared, edtech start-up PhysicsWallah and online beauty products marketplace Purple

January-March period had witnessed creation of 16 new unicorns, which dropped to only four in the reporting quarter due to decline in fund inflows into the Indian startup space

About 17% drop in investment into Indian tech startups, to \$6 billion, in April-June 2022 owing to macroeconomic slowdown

60% of the investments by Tiger Global and Sequoia were made in the growth stage of the startups

Of Tiger Global's investments, 40% were in the fintech sector and 20% in the enterprise technology domain. For Sequoia, enterprise technology accounted for about 25% of the funding

MAJOR INVESTORS

- Sequoia Capital
- Tiger Global
- Alpha wave
- Accel

Source: Nasscom/PTI

CURRENTLY HOLDS MD-CEO POST AT BSE

Chauhan to be NSE MD & CEO

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JULY 17

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has approved the appointment of Ashishkumar Chauhan as the next Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the country's largest stock exchange.

Chauhan is currently the MD and CEO of the BSE and his tenure will end in November this year. He will join in place of Vikram Limaye whose five-year tenure ended on July 15.

Chauhan is one of the founders of the NSE where he worked from 1992 to 2000. At the NSE, he was involved in setting up India's first fully automated screen-based trading system and first commercial satellite communications network.

This is Chauhan's second



Ashishkumar Chauhan File

tenure in the BSE and under SEBI guidelines, a candidate cannot be appointed as MD & CEO for more than two tenures. BSE is also searching for a new CEO in place of Chauhan.

As per Sebi norm, the MD and CEO of a stock exchange has to apply and compete with other candidates for the top job after the completion of the five-year term. Limaye was appointed the NSE chief in July 2017 following the

exit of Chitra Ramkrishna amid the probe into co-location scam.

According to market observers, the priority of Chauhan will be to implement fair and ethical corporate and market governing practices at the NSE, which was hit by a series of scandals. He will also have to prepare the exchange for the much-delayed IPO.

Market regulator had earlier penalised Limaye's predecessors Ravi Narain and Chitra Ramkrishna for alleged lapses in corporate governance during the appointment of its group operating officer Anand Subramanian. In 2019, NSE was also penalised for giving preferential access to some stock brokers between 2012-2014 through their co-location facility.

Earlier in March, NSE, the largest derivatives exchange in the world, invited applications for the MD & CEO position.

BRIEFLY

Fuel demand

New Delhi: India's demand for petrol and diesel fell in the first half of July over the previous month as the onset of monsoon chipped away consumption in some sectors and restricted mobility, preliminary data showed.

Gulf remittance

Mumbai: The share of inward remittances from Gulf nations dipped sharply during 2020-21 on account of the economic stress created by the Covid pandemic, said an RBI article. On the other hand, advanced economies like the US, the UK and Singapore emerged as important sources for the country for remittances. **PTI**

FROM TODAY

Prepacked, labelled cereal, pulses, flour weighing up to 25 kg to attract 5% GST

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE CENTRAL Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday said single packages of food items like cereals, pulses and flour weighing up to 25 kg will be considered as 'prepackaged and labelled', and liable to five per cent GST from July 18.

It also clarified that if a retail shopkeeper supplies in loose quantity the item bought from a manufacturer or a distributor in a 25-kg pack, such sale to consumers will not attract GST.

The CBIC on Sunday night issued a set of frequently asked

The CBIC said GST will apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages

questions (FAQs) on GST applicability on 'pre-packaged and labelled' goods, just a day before the five per cent GST on such items becomes applicable.

In the context of food items (such as pulses, cereals like rice, wheat, flour etc), the supply of specified pre-packaged food articles would fall within the purview of the definition of 'pre-packaged commodity' un-

der the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, if such pre-packaged and labelled packages contained a quantity up to 25 kilogram (or 25 litres).

"It is clarified that a single package of these items (cereals, pulses, flour etc), containing a quantity of more than 25 Kg/25 litre would not fall in the category of pre-packaged and labelled commodity for the purposes of GST and would therefore not attract GST," it said.

The CBIC said the supply of pre-packed eat a meat for retail sale to ultimate consumer of 25 Kg shall be liable to GST. However, supply of such a 30-kg pack thereof shall be exempt

from levy of GST.

The board also said that GST would apply on a package that contains multiple retail packages, for example a package containing 10 retail packs of flour of 10 kg each, the CBIC said.

It said for the purpose of GST, "pre-packaged commodity" would mean a commodity which, without the purchaser being present, is placed in a package of whatever nature, whether sealed or not, so that the product contained therein has a pre-determined quantity.

Any such supply which requires declaration under the Legal Metrology act would attract GST, it said. **WITH PTI**

EXPLAINED

Raising coverage

WITH AN eye on deeper insurance penetration in the country, Irdai has pitched a company-wise target for premium collection in the next five years.

STEEP HIKE

■ The regulator has proposed that the premium collection, which was at Rs 2.2 lakh crore in FY22, could be increased to Rs 2.98 lakh crore in FY23. This is expected to rise to Rs 11.73 lakh crore in FY27

New India Assurance's premium collection target is Rs 99,430 crore for FY2027 as against Rs 32,569 crore in FY2022. The steepest hike is in the case of Go Digit General Insurance which is being given a target of Rs 150,610 crore in FY27 as against Rs 4,674 crore now, a growth of 3,122 per cent.

Panda said the insurance sector needs more players. "It can be small, medium or niche players. General insurance penetration in India is just one per cent as against the world average of 4.16 per cent," Panda said, adding that this needs to be changed.

"Of around 29.5 crore vehicles in the country, nearly 50 per cent are uninsured. Over 40 crore individuals are devoid of a health insurance policy," Panda said. Irdai has proposed a 45 per cent growth in the health insurance segment to Rs 106,689 crore in FY2023 and a 37.30 per cent rise in the motor segment to Rs 96,6789 crore.

Panda also proposed a long-term insurance policy for 15 years in the case of motor vehicles. "This is something which

can be looked into by insurance companies," he said.

Irdai Chairman also hinted that the regulator is working on a proposal for a salary band for CEOs of insurance companies. "You can decide on the salary based on the band," he said.

Responding to Irdai Chairman's proposals, Star Health and Allied Insurance MD S Prakash said mis-selling in the health segment is creating a trust deficit. "We need to enhance penetration in the health insurance segment," he said.

On crop insurance, many insurance CEOs complained about the lack of adequate reinsurance support. Regarding long-term motor policy, Madhulika Bhaskar, Chairman-in-charge of New India Assurance, said the issue of solvency margin needs to be sorted out and the focus is now more on bottom-line. "How do you account for it in the investment guidelines?" she said.

Irdai has also set up two task forces to suggest steps to sort out the issues between insurers and reinsurers and other problems facing the industry.

