



PICTURE PERFECT: Neeraj Chopra during the Men's Javelin Throw final at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo on Saturday.  
Aleksandra Samigiel/Reuters

## 87.58 m, a billion hearts, first athletics medal: Neeraj Chopra makes history

**EXPRESS AT OLYMPICS**  
**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
TOKYO, AUGUST 7



Chopra's gold ensured India ended the Games on a high. PTI

NEERAJ Chopra didn't even give it a second glance. The moment he released the javelin, he was so sure it would at least be his personal best that he turned to his coaches, and lifted his arms to celebrate. But Chopra was wrong. It wasn't his personal best. The throw, which travelled 87.58 m, made him an Olympic

champion. For 100 years, Indian athletics has only been about stories of near-misses, shattered dreams and enduring heartbreaks. When the time finally came — at 9:07 pm on a muggy night at Tokyo's National Stadium — the sport struck gold.

Chopra's medal, which came a little more than an hour after wrestler Bajrang Punia won a bronze in the 65-kg weight class, also ensured India's Olympic sojourn ended on a high. Tokyo 2020 will go down as the country's most successful campaign, with a total of seven

medals — 1 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze. The glitter of the javelin gold, India's first since Abhinav Bindra became an Olympic champion at the 2008 Beijing Games, will endure for long. Chopra didn't just finish on top of the podium Saturday night. He did it with such ease, such dominance that it was very uncharacteristically Indian, especially in a sport like athletics where the country's athletes have notoriously underperformed. It was poetic in a way that on the morning Chopra won the elusive medal, an Indian athlete fell agonisingly short of a podium finish in golf.

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7 MEDALS  
INDIA'S BEST-EVER OLYMPICS

**GOLD:**  
**Neeraj Chopra**, Men's Javelin

**SILVER:**  
**Ravi Kumar Dahiya**, Men's freestyle wrestling (57 kg)  
**Mirabai Chanu**, Women's weightlifting (49 kg)

**BRONZE:**  
**Men's Hockey team**  
**Bajrang Punia**, Men's freestyle wrestling (65 kg)  
**Lovlina Borgohain**, Women's boxing (welterweight)  
**PV Sindhu**, Women's badminton Singles

FULL COVERAGE PAGES 13,14

## Hope & hunger: Why 7 medals in Tokyo add up to a lot more

**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
TOKYO, AUGUST 7

THE OLYMPICS opening parade of nations comes with a crisp synopsis about the sporting identity of each country. For years now, India has said hello to the world with the MC parrot that familiar line: "A country that has won eight hockey golds". That the last one was in 1980 is an embarrassing rider left unsaid. Subsequently, India has got Olympics medals in shooting, wrestling, badminton but it hasn't excelled in any of the Olympics mother sports: athletics, swimming, gymnastics. That changed Saturday.

Neeraj Chopra's javelin gold made sure India will leave Tokyo with a record medal haul — the one gold, two silver and four bronze overtaking the previous-best tally of six at the London Olympics. But then seven is just one more than six. What's history-making is that never ever, since the Dhyan Chand era, has India dominated an Olympics discipline the way 23-year-old Neeraj Chopra did on Saturday. For India, Tokyo 2020's biggest takeaway came on Saturday — the gold in a mainstream mass-sport. Each one of the Tokyo Seven, and some who came within touching distance

of a medal, has a unique story but a common thread runs through all. The Class of 2021 is far too different from past athletes for whom just being at the Olympics was the destination — this bunch is even picky about the colour of the medal. No one encapsulated this better than silver-medal winning wrestler Ravi Dahiya, who was so distraught at not winning the gold that at one point, he offered, half-jokingly, his medal to a reporter who merely requested to see it. "I have to live with the fact that I have silver," he said. It wasn't just him.

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### HOW TO FORGET AND WIN

For Sindhu, it's all about erasing the past and living in the moment

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## From a rank of 200 to No. 4, golfer Aditi's amazing Tokyo run

**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
TOKYO, AUGUST 7

ADITI ASHOK strutted out on the 18th green as though she was always meant to be there. Tipping her hat, waving one hand, flinging her club with the other, and soaking in the thunderous applause from the few hundred people who stood in a semicircle at the edge of the final hole. "Go Ashok!" someone roared from near the main stand. She quickly returned to the Zen mode, lined up her final putt, and those around held their breath. You could hear the finely manicured grass of Saitama's



Aditi missed a podium finish by just a single shot. AP

Kasumigaseki Country Club rustle as the ball rolled over and plunked into the hole.

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## Bajrang gains revenge, bronze in dominating wrestling performance

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
TOKYO, AUGUST 7

BAJRANG PUNIA defeated Kazakhstan's Daulet Niyazbekov Saturday to take bronze in the men's freestyle 65 kg category. Saturday's bout was a grudge match with a medal on the line. It was at the hands of Niyazbekov that Punia's run at the 2019 World Championship had come to an end in a controversial semifinal. Competing in front of his home crowd, the Kazakh had repeatedly pushed his fingers into Punia's face and grabbed his singlet. Though he had been cautioned and fouled



Defeated Kazakh wrestler in freestyle 65 kg category AP

by the referee, the mat chairman had disagreed and refused to

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## Pune's ASI celebrates victory of one of its own: 'It's a golden day for India and the Indian Army'

**SUSHANT KULKARNI**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

OFFICIALS AND trainers at the Pune-based Army Sports Institute (ASI), where India's Olympics gold medalist, javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, received a sizeable amount of his coaching, training and administrative support, believe that Chopra's victory on Saturday won't just be a motivating factor for future athletes of India and Indian Armed Forces, but also a fitting tribute to Milkha Singh, who had also donned the Army uniform. Chopra, 23, was inducted into the Indian Army in the elite sports



Image of Neeraj Chopra shared by Indian Army.

quota in 2016 at the rank of Naib Subedar. He joined the 4 Rajputana Rifles as his parent unit. Prior to that, his outstanding performance in the junior national tournaments had caught the attention of the athletics world and he was hailed as a rising star from the beginning. ASI's Subedar Kashinath Naik, a 2010 Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist in javelin throw,

was the coach of the national javelin throw team between 2013 and 2019. He was one of the coaches Chopra trained under over the years. "Neeraj came to us as a teenager in February 2015. But he had so much potential at the time, quite extraordinary for his age. The talent was boosted by his dedication and hard work. I am feeling proud and sentimental at the time. I am lucky to have witnessed the journey of the teenager with raw talent to a seasoned international athlete and now an Olympic gold medalist. It's a golden day for India and Indian Army in particular," said Naik.

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# In Khandra, a village of 2,000, every resident has a Neeraj story

**ANDREW AMSAN**  
KHANDRA (PANIPAT), AUG 7

AS THE Czech Jakub Vadlejch's final throw went awfully wide and landed way off Neeraj Chopra's mark of 87.58 metres, Khandra, a sketchy village near Panipat, far away from Tokyo, went delirious with joy. From being a red balloon on Google Maps, the village transported itself on to the Olympics map. It was the moment under the sun for the village on the Panipat-Jind border, with a population of barely 2,000 — mostly farmers. The nation's eyes converged on this speck of land, a thousand

cameras panned their eyes, and a million tongues twirled to get the perfect pronunciation. The village witnessed the chaos of a city — at least 20 media vehicles choked the street leading to the giant screen that was showing the Olympics live. Neeraj's mother Saroj, a woman of few words, said she had never seen such fanfare in the village. Neeraj's first coach Jaiveer was at the courtyard of Chopra's newly-built home. Known for his shy demeanour, he made a hasty retreat as the camerapersons sought to turn their attention on him. Neeraj's uncle Bhim Chopra, whose hands were shivering in

nervous excitement during the event, took one for the team. He said, "This is the result of years of sacrifice. We as a family did everything to help him do well in the sport. I am really proud of what our son has done today." Since early morning, roads leading to Khandra had special white markers on them. No matter from which side you entered the village on Saturday, the arrows led you to the action — where a huge screen to show the javelin throw final had been set up. Villagers gathered hours before the final, with children staking claim to the front rows. Excited cheers went up for poor throws by Neeraj's opponents.



Watching Neeraj on the big screen on Saturday. Andrew Amsan

After every throw, TV reporters took turns to take a video bite from the family. As Germany's Johannes Vetter appeared on the screen, a

youngster yelled: "Yahi hai woh!" Khandar had done its homework well, they knew Vetter was the thrower to beat. While Neeraj was

making his throws in Tokyo, members of his family, especially his uncle Bhim, were giving interviews. The most asked question was, "Kaisa lag raha hai?" (How are you feeling?) It's not hard to guess what the family's response would have been. A 16-km drive from Panipat on the Assandh road where a *theka* (liquor store) can be spotted every 500 metres, is Khandra. The village, which is home to nearly 500 families, doesn't have a playground, a stadium, or even a gym. Youngsters either work on the sprawling fields or move to cities to earn a livelihood. The closest, run-down gym is about 6 km away. It was mayhem at the

Chopra household — crackers were burst, sweets were distributed, *dhols* pounded heavily, songs of joy sung out aloud, feet tapped the floor to the tunes of *bhangra* and Hindi pop songs, in no particular rhyme or rhythm. It didn't matter; it was a day when nothing mattered except for the gold their *chhora* (boy) had won miles away in Tokyo. Everyone in the village has a Neeraj story that they tell with undiluted affection, as though he was their own son or brother. Like the one about his nickname, Sarpanch (village chief); it's a story that Neeraj's uncle Bhim never tires of narrating. One day, the story goes,

Neeraj's father gifted him a sparkling white new *kurta*, which he proudly wore to class. So crisp and stately was the *kurta* that his friends began to call him 'Sarpanch', a name that has stuck to him ever since. As Bhim speaks, those around him guffaw loudly. His uncle Sultan has another story. A young Neeraj had burned the kitchen down while trying to swat away bees that were buzzing over ghee, goes the story. Sultan says Neeraj was an "over-pampered boy" — "He wasn't allowed to do any household chores. We didn't send him to work in the fields. He was the first kid in our family and he was like a doll for us."

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AUDIO

Shahrukh, Aamir, Salman: How the 3 Khans changed India

In the latest episode of The Sandip Roy Show, Kaveree Bollyzai talks about how the three Khans of Bollywood have helped shape how Indians have seen themselves since the 90s

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

SARPATTA PARAMBARAI BRINGS NORTH MADRAS' BOXING MEMORIES BACK IN THE RING

While the exact year and origin of when the Parambarai culture in boxing began is unclear, it is said that the Sarpattha Parambarai was one of the first clans of boxing that was formed

## FROM PAGE ONE

### In Khandra, a village of 2,000, everyone has a Neeraj story

That kid, yet another story goes, had once tied the tail of a cow in a knot.

Being the eldest child in a joint family of 17 members meant that his doting grandmother guaranteed he got the lion's share of *malai*, *makkhan* and *doodh* (cream, butter, and milk). Neeraj would never say no to another generous helping. He put on a lot of weight, and the family enrolled him at a gym. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The profile of the village will now change, but Neeraj will not fall into the trappings of stardom, says the family. "For us, he will always remain a child. Whenever he comes, we try to make sure that we don't praise him much because we don't want his success to go to his head. Even now if he comes, you'll find him working in the fields," says father Satish.

It sometimes takes a village to raise a champion. Now is the time to relish the fruits of labour.

### Hope & hunger: Why 7 medals in Tokyo add up to a lot more

Boxer Lovlina Borgohain shed a tear for winning "only" a bronze. PV Sindhu, the only woman to win two Olympic medals, said as much: she didn't know whether she should be sad at missing out on another Olympic final or be happy that she had one more shot at a medal.

Another enduring image, perhaps, would be that of goalkeeper Savita Punia who sobbed on the pitch after losing the bronze medal playoff to Britain. It didn't matter to her that the hockey team had already overachieved by reaching that far despite being one of the most underprepared.

Indeed, heading into Tokyo, her hockey team hadn't played a competitive match since November 2019 and half-a-dozen players had got infected with Covid-19 during the second wave. And they weren't alone. The second wave had wrecked the preparations of almost the entire Indian contingent.

But the government, federations and private not-for-profit companies made sure the elite medal prospects did not suffer a lot. Sample this:

- Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu was sent to the USA almost overnight just as the second wave was starting to wreak havoc. She stayed there until the Olympics.
- Wrestler Bajrang Punia, too,

stayed in Russia to prepare for the Games.

- The entire shooting team was airlifted to Croatia to ensure their preparations weren't affected.

Some, who were infected with Covid, battled it out in their own ways. Aditi Ashok, the golfer who fell agonisingly short of a podium finish, noticed her strength getting considerably sapped post-Covid, which affected the range of her shots, especially from the tee. Still, through sheer grit, she challenged the world's best golfers.

Even Chopra was a desperate man just four months ago. An injury had robbed India's newest Olympic gold medalist of competition for the whole of 2019. When he recovered last year, the pandemic struck and another year had gone waste, a situation that persisted until the middle of this year following the second wave.

So, he made an appeal. "Mujhe competitions ki bahut zyada zaroorat hai (I desperately need competitions)," he had said. Once again the demand was met – before moving to Tokyo, he got to train and compete in France, Sweden and Finland.

On Saturday, Chopra looked in perfect shape. He won the gold when javelin throw is considered to be at its peak given the competition. His field included one of the best throwers of all time, Germany's Johannes Vetter, but Chopra remained unfazed.

It was the same with the hockey team that ended the 41-year wait for an Olympic medal in some style to beat the mighty Germans and win the bronze. Sentimental factors aside, this medal means a lot more to the players as it comes when any of the top eight teams is capable of beating another.

The same was the case with Sindhu, who acknowledged that the Tokyo bronze was tougher than the silver in Rio for two reasons: the expectations placed upon her, and to fight against what is largely considered the golden generation of women's singles badminton.

Sindhu was virtually in a self-imposed exile since the Covid second wave hit – a plight shared by most Indian athletes. This makes the record medal haul even more significant. Chopra did what he did without a proper competition for two years. Imagine how good he could be when Paris comes along in three years. And imagine how hard Dahiya and Lovlina will be training to change the colour of their medals. Tokyo made it slightly easier for a nation to imagine.

### From a rank of 200 to No. 4, golfer Aditi's

## 87.58 m, a billion hearts, first athletics medal: Neeraj Chopra makes history

Aditi Ashok showed incredible grit and focus to remain in contention till the very end but finished fourth, joining the heart-break club that has some of the country's illustrious athletes.

Chopra dedicated his medal to all of them, but first and foremost to the legendary Milkha Singh, who passed away recently due to Covid-19 related complications.

"First of all, I dedicate my gold medal to Milkha Singh Sir. He had longed to see this day and I hope he had been watching this from the heavens," Chopra said. "Then, to so many others who came close, including PT Usha ma'am. This medal is also for all of them."

Not the biggest or bulkiest of throwers, he relied on speed to

generate power in his throws. Second in the starting list for the final, he laid down the gauntlet in a tough field with a massive throw of 87.03 m.

"That was our strategy," his coach Klaus Bartonietz said. "We wanted to put pressure on the rest of the field straightaway and the only way we could do that was by throwing big."

It was one of those rare days when everything aligned perfectly for Chopra. He looked calm and relaxed, had a sip of an energy drink just before his turn came and announced his intention. With the second throw, he went farther, recording 87.58 m.

Chopra being way ahead of the field was not the biggest surprise. He had done that during the qualifying round as well, but

with the weather a lot clearer but equally humid on Saturday, it was expected that others, including the sport's current biggest star Johannes Vetter, would raise his game.

Vetter was the outright favourite to win gold, having recorded throws of 90-plus metres for fun this year. But he had been having troubles with his technique and had complained about the track being slippery.

Vetter didn't look comfortable during the final as well, struggling to get a proper grip on the surface and slipping multiple times. After a first attempt of 82.52 m, he turned over his ankle and slipped during his next throw. His third throw, like the second, was also a foul.

With the world's best javelin

thrower in the last 12 months out of the fray, others struggled to come close to Chopra's effort. The next best throw, by Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, was almost a metre short and the bronze medal winner, Vitezslav Vesely, was a good 2.14 m behind the Indian.

"The plan was just to go after my personal best. I knew if I matched that, I would finish on the podium," Chopra said.

He did finish on the podium, on the top too. When he was presented the medal, Chopra held it firmly, planted a kiss and put it around his neck. And as the national anthem played out in this gigantic stadium, he teared up. The only time in the night he seemed overawed.

### amazing Tokyo run

Sigh, relief, applause.

Ashok had done what she had to. Now, her destiny was in the hands of New Zealand's Lydia Ko, who simply had to sink her putt to push the stubborn Indian out of medal contention after six hours of thrilling stroke-play. Ko didn't miss and, with that, ended Ashok's hopes of a podium finish.

"In a regular tournament whether you finish second or fourth it really doesn't matter, no one cares. But, yeah, fourth at an Olympics where they give out three medals kind of sucks," she said.

Ashok's disappointment was natural. But the fact that it went down to the last shot on the final hole of the deciding day, staying in the mix right until the end is creditworthy in itself. Just imagine: this was a 23-year-old ranked 200th, against World No. 1 Nelly Korda of the US and multiple title winner Ko, standing her ground with a cold-blooded, nervous performance with no one else but just her mother by her side.

These sorts of things don't happen a lot. And almost never at the Olympics.

Heck, she even made the entire cricket-mad nation wake up in the middle of the night for a game of golf, got them so invested in it that after four hours of intense drama, those obsessed with square cuts and cover drives were experts about chips and putts.

And just like that, everyone started rooting for the underdog. This was new territory for Ashok, who is used to perform-

ing in near anonymity. She came to Tokyo after a modest performance in Rio, with the hope of getting some kind of a rhythm going, given the hurdles she faced to get here. Like other Indian athletes, the pandemic meant she couldn't travel for tournaments for the longest time and had to practise at a makeshift net at her Bengaluru home.

Then, she got infected with Covid-19 herself which, she admitted earlier this week, severely impacted her strength. The stats reflect this. As per the Ladies Professional Golf Association, Ashok averaged 246.45 yards off the tee in 2019, when the last full season took place on the tour. This year, it dropped to 238.4 yards.

Her struggles to get the distance were glaring throughout the week – she was the shortest hitter in the field, 60th out of 60 in driving distance. On Saturday, Ashok was behind the two other golfers in her group from the tee by nearly 10 yards almost every time. She made up for that with powerful drives on the approach and once she was on the green, her short-game was almost flawless. She had been No.1 in putting all week, and drew nods of approval from her two more established playing partners.

This was a dramatic day of golf, perhaps the best the sport has had to offer since it joined the Olympic programme in 2016, the Indian interest notwithstanding. Saturday's final round began at 6.30 am, earlier than usual, after a storm was forecast for later in the day. Ashok, who featured in the leader group along with Ko and Korda after three high-quality rounds, started a couple of hours later.

It was a rollercoaster for the young Indian. Ashok started the day three shots behind Korda. After the first seven holes, she had catapulted to the gold medal position, finding herself in joint lead.

If Ashok was nervous, she did not show. Ko and Korda, friends outside golf, constantly chatted with each other: they would make plans to meet at the Village, buy golfing gear, or indulge in some light-hearted banter. Ashok, on the other hand, walked around in near silence, talking only with her mother sometimes. She would quietly make her notes, decide which club to use, gauge the wind direction and decide what trajectory to follow.

She was gritting it out all by herself. And as if that wasn't tough enough, the much-vaunted thunderstorm halted play for 45 minutes. At that point, all that remained to play was two shots on the 17th hole and the par-four 18th.

When the action resumed, Ashok's putter could not make up for the fairways she missed and the distance she conceded from her tee shots. In hindsight, her fate was sealed when she missed a fairly straightforward putt on the 17th. After that, any chance of her winning a medal depended on Ko dropping a shot. "Maybe I made too many through the four rounds, golfing gods were like, okay, we're not going to give her this one," she laughed.

A medal might have been elusive, but with her performance Ashok entered India's 'hall of fame' of the famous fourth-place finishers. To her, that was barely any consolation. "You don't want to join that club. But yeah, I guess I've joined it."

### Bajrang gains revenge, bronze in dominating wrestling performance

On that night in Nur-Sultan, trailing 7-2 and with the clock ticking down, Punia had put pressure and levelled the bout at 9-9, losing on a technicality.

The 27-year-old Indian had avenged that defeat at the Ali Akbar tournament in June right before the Olympics. But with high stakes and the disappointment of Friday's semifinal defeat perhaps still on his mind, it wasn't going to be straightforward.

Niyazbekov, 32, a three-time Asian Champion and two-time Worlds medallist, is a wily operator. He was coming into the play-off with a win by technical superiority in the repechage round. The bronze-medal bout was off to a cagey start.

Punia took the mat with his right knee unstrapped, removing a giant target for his opponent and dissuading any injury speculation.

During his three bouts on Friday, Punia had seemed apprehensive in putting his knee on the mat in search of takedowns. After he scored a point due to Niyazbekov's passivity in the first period on Saturday, Punia went for a takedown. He was put in a headlock for his effort, but the Indian first got free with clever defence, and then sent his opponent out of bounds to make it 2-0.

Like in 2019, the Kazakh held on to Punia's singlet, but the

Indian changed direction, rotating and turning the Kazakh out of bounds. The bout was effectively won there.

In the second period, it was a Punia show. Three cleverly executed, quick two-pointers as Punia went for the right leg of his opponent, who kept looking for a counter which never came. The Indian was relentless and, at one point, leading 8-0 and mounted on his opponent's back, he chose not to advance and go for a technical superiority win. The clock ran out with 8-0 on the scoreboard. Punia was the superior wrestler, no technicalities needed this time.

### Pune's ASI celebrates victory of one of its own

Chopra was promoted to the rank of Subedar later and also received the prestigious Vishisht Seva Medal for his outstanding contribution to sports.

ASI Commandant Colonel Rakesh Yadav said, "His achievement is a motivation for not just the present generation of athletes in general and Indian armed forces in particular, but also a fitting tribute to legendary Mikha Singh."

The legendary sprinter, who passed away earlier this year, had joined the Army in 1951 and was later given the rank of an Honorary Captain.

Colonel Yadav added, "While Neeraj's talent and hard work is an inspiration to every sportsman, there is a lot more to learn from his composure, humility and sincerity. While Neeraj received majority of his training at the national camps, he has intermittently been trained and coached at the ASI, and has got the required administrative support from here."

A tweet from Indian Army's Southern Command stated, "Lt Gen JS Nain GOC-IN-C and All Ranks of Southern Command, Indian Army congratulate Subedar Neeraj Chopra of Battle Axe Division on winning Nation's first ever Gold Medal in Javelin at Tokyo Olympics. We all are proud of your achievement."

In his message, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat said, "Neeraj Chopra has proved that when there is a will there's a way. He has done the Armed Forces and the nation proud like many other Olympians who have created history in Tokyo 2020. We are confident you will continue to reach greater heights in the years to follow. Your achievement will inspire and motivate other sportspersons to aspire and succeed to bring bigger laurels and greater honour to our nation."

## Supply low, will take a year to vaccinate all: Delhi govt

SOURAV ROY BARMAN  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE ENTIRE adult population of Delhi will not be fully vaccinated until next August at the current rate of vaccine supply by the Centre, according to the Delhi government, which has underlined the need for around 45 lakh doses per month till December to complete the vaccination drive by the end of 2021.

For the month of August, Delhi has been allotted 16,79,660 doses – 14.72 lakh Covishield doses and 2.06 lakh Covaxin doses – by the Union government, which falls far short of the demand, according to the government. It had raised the matter in a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday in the presence of representatives of the Centre.

In fact, in September, Delhi needs 60 lakh doses to ensure that its entire adult population is covered by at least one dose so that they become eligible to take the second dose by December.

Till Saturday, 51.4 per cent of the adult population have received one dose and 19.42 per cent have received two doses.

According to a presentation made by the government, there are 1.5 crore eligible vaccine beneficiaries in the city, necessitating 3 crore doses to administer two doses.

So far, the Centre has allotted 1.01 crore doses to Delhi, of which 93.76 lakh were administered till August 5. This does not include vaccinations administered at paid private facilities.

At the DDMA meeting, the government presented two scenarios – one envisages 45 lakh doses per month till December and the other examines the situation if the current pace of vaccine allotment continues.

"Scenario 1 – to complete two doses of all eligible beneficiaries by December, 2021, around 45 lakh doses are required every month. Scenario 2 – at present rate of vaccine supply, it will take till July/August 2022 to complete the two-dose vaccination of all 18+ years beneficiaries," according to the presentation.

# Uphill climb for pahadi restaurant, name cooks up storm

LALMANI VERMA  
DEHRADUN, AUGUST 7

A NONDESCRIPT restaurant promising Indian, Chinese, Tandoori and Chaat food, with local recipes on its menu, and the photo of a cherubic child chuckling next to a tandoor steak on its board, is hardly the stuff of haute cuisine. However, in six days of operations, Dehradun to Delhi, 'Pyari Pahadan' has cooked up a storm.

Owner Preeti Maindoliya, protesters argue, has insulted the hill people to "matrashakti (woman power)" with the name of the restaurant. One of the protesters, who allegedly assaulted Maindoliya, has been arrested.

AB.Tech, Maindoliya, 26, says running a restaurant was her first dream, and so she decided to pursue it after two years of working as an electronics engineer. She took up an 180 sq ft space in the Banjarawala area of Dehradun, and named her eatery 'Pyari Pahadan'.

The name had always appealed to her as 'Pahadan' was what her classmates from the plains called her in college, she says. Her mother moved from Dhumakot, their village in Pauri Garhwal, hit by migration like many other villages in Uttarakhand, to help her run the restaurant.

But within an hour of the restaurant opening on August 1, a man later identified as Surendra Rawat did a Facebook Live from the site, objecting to the name. Later, he arrived with some women, who allegedly threatened Maindoliya, calling the name an insult to matrashakti and pahadis. "I told them I was also a pahadi, and had been born

and brought up in Pauri Garhwal district," says Maindoliya, the daughter of a government teacher.

Soon, she says, she also got calls on her phone threatening that unless she changed its name the restaurant would be vandalised.

On August 2, Rawat reportedly arrived with Bhawana Pandey and Pramila Rawat, and Maindoliya was assaulted, causing her to pass out. Her mother Neelima filed a complaint at the Patel Nagar Police Station and an FIR was lodged against the three under IPC Sections 354 (assault on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 506 (criminal intimidation). Surendra Rawat has been arrested and probe is on, Pradeep Rana, Station Officer, Patel Nagar, said.

The restaurant in Dehradun. Express

While Maindoliya says she was told the three were associated with the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), the political outfit issued a statement denying any

links and condemning the attack on her. "Bhawana Pandey is not associated with the UKD. Names of some other persons associated with the UKD have appeared in

the matter and will be probed. The UKD fully supports the victim and will cooperate in getting the guilty punished," a release by UKD state president Kashi Singh Airy said.

Pandey on her part claims to have fought for Uttarakhand's statehood, and says she is a social worker aspiring to contest the next Assembly elections. Denying raising hands against Maindoliya, she says, "The word pahadan represents women of the hills and it is associated with their honour. The title 'pyari pahadan' is objectionable. What do they want to serve there with this title? Would you like it if somebody calls your mother or sister a 'pyari pahadan'?"

Pandey also claims that Pramila Rawat is a leader of the UKD. Pramila was not available for comment.

Maindoliya says she is determined not to change the name, particularly due to the support she has received since sharing her ordeal on social media. Several people, including politicians, have come to her restaurant to eat as a gesture of support. Among the delicacies the restaurant offers is mandwe ki roti (made of iron, protein-rich ragi, grown in the hills); kheer of jhangora, a local rice variety; daal of local pulse; rot; and Gahat ka fadu (gahat being a pulse given to patients of kidney and gall bladder stones).

AICC general secretary and former chief minister Harish Rawat called Maindoliya up as well as tweeted asking people to visit her restaurant for a pahadi meal. Former Congress state president Kishore Upadhyay dropped in with party leaders. A delega-

tion of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is seeking to contest Uttarakhand elections, has also met Maindoliya. Calling the restaurant an evidence of her entrepreneurship and reflection of "Uttarakhandi spirit", AAP leader Ravindra Jugran said, "If a dhaba with the title 'Pyari Pahadan' is not opened in Uttarakhand, where will it be opened? Those who created a controversy, they do not know the actual meaning of pyari pahadan."

Maindoliya's mother Neelima says she and her husband fully back their daughter. "My husband helped her get a loan. She has not given up even after this controversy. I am also a pahadan and don't feel insulted by the title." Plus, Neelima adds, "Preeti has given employment to four Pahadi youths who lost restaurant jobs during the Covid lockdown."

Pune



# 3 MAHARASHTRA

## One in every 3 schools in rural areas open for Class 8-12

Offline classes for students from Class 5 to 8 will start on Aug 17 in rural areas, city schools will open for students from Class 8 to Class 12

**ALIFIYAKHAN**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

STATE SCHOOL Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad announced on Friday evening that schools in both rural and urban areas will reopen on August 17.

Offline classes will commence in rural areas for students from Class 5 to Class 8, while city

schools will open for students from Class 8 to Class 12 after adherence with Covid-19 protocols.

Schools in rural areas have been open for Class 8 to 12 since July 27. Department sources said that due to the positive response from schools, parents and students on the re-opening of schools for higher classes, and given the drop in Covid-19 cases, it has been decided to cautiously open up

schools for offline classes further.

According to data obtained from the Maharashtra State Council for Education, Research and Training (SCERT), one in every three schools in rural areas has been open since July 27 for Classes 8 to 12. That's the latest figure available with the Maharashtra School Education Department, which is now contemplating opening up of schools for younger

students as well.

There are a total of 36,835 schools and junior colleges in Maharashtra with nearly 86,33,805 students between Class 8 to 12. Of the total number of schools, 34.55 per cent or 12,725 schools have reopened and more than 8,98,894 students have returned to classrooms, said Vikas Garad, deputy director, SCERT. Among all the divisions,

Nanded district in Latur Division has seen the best response as 89 per cent schools have reopened and 64 per cent students are attending school physically, while Nandurbar district in Nashik division has reported 94 per cent schools reopening and 47 per cent students attending school.

While data is not available for Ahmednagar district in Pune Division, the numbers for Pune

district are quite low. The district has seen 12.78 per cent schools reopening, 121 of 947, and of a total student strength of 2,40,394, only 7,034 students are attending school physically.

Even as the number of school students returning to classrooms increases day by day, undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students are yet to return to campus, with colleges and universities

still shut for offline classes.

A couple of days ago, state Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant announced that he has asked the directors of Higher and Technical Education Department to meet the vice-chancellors of universities, local disaster management authorities and district collectors, and submit a report on reopening of degree colleges.

## 2 men on bike force auto to stop, rob passenger

Pune: Two motorcycle-borne men stopped an auto-rickshaw and robbed the gold chain of a woman passenger at gunpoint on Khadki Road late on Friday.

The motorcycle rider pointed a gun at the passenger, while the pillion rider ripped off the gold chain from the woman's neck. Though the woman tried to stop the robbers, they snatched the gold chain, worth Rs 80,000, and escaped towards Holkar bridge. —ENS



Members of Maharashtra Professors' Association, along with NET-SET and PhD-qualified professors, staged an agitation at the Directorate of Higher Education, Central building, on Saturday to demand recruitment of new teachers. The procedure has been halted due to the coronavirus pandemic. Ashish Kale

## Full page Saamana ad on Uddhav's younger son Tejas fuels buzz of political debut

**MANOJ MORE**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

IN A front page advertisement in its mouthpiece, *Saamana*, the Shiv Sena on Saturday compared Tejas Thackeray, the younger son of Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, to cricket legend Vivian Richards even as party leaders dismissed any speculations about his political debut in the near future.

The advertisement issued by Sena secretary Milind Narvekar and released on the occasion of Tejas's 26th birthday carries the latter's picture juxtaposed with that of Richards in his popular cricket pose.

"Aaditya Thackeray (the CM's older son) has the qualities of Sunil Gavaskar... he has patience. But Tejas is aggressive like Richards... He is aggressive as well

as decisive," Narvekar told a television news channel. "The release of the advertisement should not be linked with politics... it is a family matter," he said.

When asked whether the Sena was preparing for Tejas's debut on the political pitch, Shiv Sena's chief spokesperson Sanjay Raut said, "I will only say that he is a very good wildlife researcher and a conservationist..."

BJP spokesman Ashish Shelar said, "If another Thackeray is coming to politics, he is welcome... Youth, especially educated youths should join politics, there will be more transparency."

Unlike Aaditya, 31, who started dabbling in politics from a much younger age, Tejas has had his focus firm on photography and wildlife research. He is credited with discovering 11 specimens of crabs.

## Decision on extending shop timings in Pune district expected today

**MANOJ MORE**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

TRADERS and shopkeepers in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, who have been demanding extension of shop timings, have said they will be forced to launch an intensified agitation from Monday unless a decision was taken soon.

A decision on allowing shops to remain open till 7 pm, instead of the current 4 pm, was expected to be taken at the weekly Covid review meeting which is held every Friday. However, the meeting did not take place this Friday.

"... We have now been told by civic officials that the meeting will be held on Sunday. Usually, government meetings do not take place on Sundays... we hope this one will take place," Mahendra Pitliya, secretary of the Federation of Trade Associations of Pune, told The Indian Express on Saturday.

Pitliya said traders had banked heavily on Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who is also the guardian minister of Pune district, acting on their demand. "... We were confident that he would take an appropriate decision on our demand... but he has not said anything... the shopkeepers and traders are upset with him. However, we are still hoping that Pawar will hold a meeting on Sunday and take a decision in our favour," said Pitliya.

"We will observe the weekend lockdown norm but if no decision is taken by Sunday, we will launch an agitation from Monday," said Fatechand Ranka, president of the Federation of Trade Associations of Pune. A few days ago, the Federation had held a *ghanta naad* (ringing of bells) agitation to draw



A protest by city shopkeepers. Express

the attention of the government to their demands.

Ranka said Pune city's Covid positivity rate has come down to 1.89 per cent, yet the government was not extending the timing of the shops. "... Both shopkeepers and the government are losing precious revenue. If low Covid positivity rate is a deciding factor, there is no reason why timings in Pune city should not be extended," Ranka said.

Members of the Federation said a trader in Mandai area had attempted to die by suicide over the curtailed timings and after the incident, cases were registered against 30 shopkeepers. "This has further angered shopkeepers and traders," they said. District Collector Rajesh Deshmukh, however, said Pawar will hold a meeting with shopkeepers at 3 pm on Sunday. "The decision will be taken on Sunday," he said.

The Merchants Association of Pimpri-Chinchwad has also urged the PCMC to extend shop timings. "We have been called for a meeting at Sunday at 3 pm. We are confident that *Ajitdada* will take a positive decision on extending the timings," said Srichand Aswani, president of the association.

## City institute set to offer masters in Dance Therapy



The course is approved by the SPPU. Express

**ANURADHA MASCARENHAS**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

A CITY-BASED institute is all set to offer a unique postgraduate programme – Masters Programme in Expressive Movement Therapy (Dance Therapy) – from September.

Approved by the Savitribai Phule Pune University, the programme is being offered by the Sancheti Healthcare Academy, which has previously run a certification programme in Dance Therapy. The programme is open to any graduate of Arts, Psychology and Dance besides doctors, therapists and teachers.

Manisha Sanghvi, Executive Director, Sancheti Group of Institutes, said, "We found great results while using this (therapy) at our hospital. The use of dance therapy has now widespread application in our medical and mental healthcare system. It is also used widely for introducing creative tools in pedagogy and detecting issues in early childhood."

Sanghvi said the young generation needs much more than just an education and a career, adding, "Such allied and alternative medical professions will help create stability and resilience in our youth."

"In case of psychological illness, Dance Therapy has been

## Want to learn dance therapy? Here are your options for UG and PG diploma courses

**ALIFIYAKHAN**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

IN THE last couple of years, dance or expression movement therapy is emerging as a viable career option leading to top colleges across the city to offer the course at both undergraduate and postgraduate diploma level.

Since the last couple of years, Artsphere, in academic collaboration with St. Mira's College for Girls, is offering a PG Diploma in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT). It is a 650+ hours course spread over a year and has an internationally trained faculty, which conducts experiential sessions, webinars, online classes, personal therapy, supervision and group process work throughout the year along with guiding the students through a

100-hour internship.

To be eligible for admission, an applicant should be a graduate in any subject.

The course is open to 25 students per batch and the fee for the previous batch was Rs 1 lakh.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences has also been offering a Diploma in Dance Movement Therapy since 2016 in association with Kolkata Sanved, an organisation which has worked in this field extensively. The 30-credit course run both in Mumbai and Kolkata has 300 hours of compulsory field work spread over three months and is open to any graduate.

While most DMT courses are for graduates, the Symbiosis Centre for Liberal Arts offers a four-credit elective in the undergraduate degree course on the subject.

used in the West as a mainstay of treatment and offers solutions that can help in physical, emotional and social rehabilitation of an individual or groups. With an increase in the number of mental health disorders in our country, we use the magic of the creative arts and blend them with the science of psychology and bring wellness to our community at large," said Sanghvi.

Dr Nikita Mittal, founder of Life and Dance, and co-founder of the Masters Programme, said, "When students go to the USA to study a Masters in Dance Therapy,

they acquire the knowledge from a Western perspective. On the other hand, our course aims at using the rich cultural wealth and heritage of our country to teach them how movement can be used as therapy for all populations."

Initially, the course will be open to 25 students.

"This course is being co-founded with support from Kinectons, New York, which is headed by Dr Danielle Fraenkel. She is not only the curriculum creator but also a passionate student mentor," Sanghvi said.

**PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS**  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

FARMERS FROM Purandar, especially growers of custard apple, are worried after the state's first Zika virus infection case was reported in this taluka in Pune district last week. With the custard apple season in full swing, farmers fear that stoppage of movement by other states may see fruit prices plunge.

The dry and arid region of Purandar is known for its orchards of custard apples, pomegranates and figs. The former is a prized produce from the area and has robust demand from states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Delhi. Trade happens via both land and air routes, with multiple packing

**Purandar is known for its orchards of custard apples, pomegranates and figs. The former is a prized produce and has robust demand from states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, MP, Gujarat and Delhi**

and grading centres operating in the area. An average of 100-200 tonnes of the fruit is handled here on a daily basis.

Last week, a village in Purandar reported the first case of Zika virus infection in a 50-year-old woman. The detection comes after multiple Zika cases were reported from Kerala.

Travel advisories issued by the National Institute For Communicable Diseases has urged that non-essential travel to areas with Zika cases should be avoided. This, coupled with fear of the virus, may affect the movement of goods and traders to and from Purandar.

Rohan Ursal, a trader and farmer from the area, said the discovery of a Zika case in Purandar has come as a surprise for them. "The central team had visited the area and since then, there have been many public announcements about the dos and don'ts..." he said.

In case other states ban travel from Purandar, farmers growing custard apples, which are being harvested now, will suffer losses. "We are keeping a close watch on the situation and hope this... does not hamper our earnings," said Ursal.

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**EXTENSION NOTICE**  
Date of submission/re-submission of Online applications against Advertisement No. AEDC/IHRD/SDC/645/03, dated 02/02/2021, for contractual recruitment of skilled technical manpower for Data Center at Guwahati, Assam, has been extended till 08-09-2021, 11:30 PM. Interested candidates may visit the portal recruitment.amtron.in for details.

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**Recruitment directly/on deputation for the post of Senior Medical Officer (01)**  
Advt. No. RO/AU/21/07 Date: 08.08.2021  
Applications are invited from the eligible Indian Nationals for recruitment directly / on deputation for the post of Senior Medical Officer (01). For further details please visit the Institute Website: <http://www.iiests.ac.in>. The last date of submission of applications is 31.08.2021 up to 04.00 PM. Registrar

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- **Stream SX:** Students enrolled in/planning to join XII standard (Science Subjects) during the academic year 2021-22 and aspiring to join an undergraduate program in basic sciences (B.Sc./B.S./B.Stat./B.Math./Int. M.Sc./Int. M.S.) during the academic year 2022-23.
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1 Start of online submission of Application	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2021@ 1700 Hrs.
2 Last date for closing of online Application	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
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STUDY BY ICMR –NIRRH, STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

‘Snakebite a neglected public health issue, multi-sectoral approach needed to tackle it’

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS  
PUNE, AUGUST 7

INDIA HAS seen an estimated 1.2 million (12 lakh) snakebite deaths from 2000 to 2019, an average of 58,000 per year. Of concern is the inappropriate perception, inadequate awareness, and knowledge about snakes and snakebites that may predispose the tribal community to increased risks of venomous snakebites, according to a new study by the Indian Council of Medical Research – National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health and Public Health Department, Maharashtra. The study was published in PLoS One on August 5.

Neglected public health issue in many tropical countries

The snakebite envenoming (poisoning from snake bites) was classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a high-priority neglected tropical disease. About 5.4 million (54 lakh) snake

bites occur globally each year, resulting in 1.8 to 2.7 million cases of envenoming. There are between 81,410 and 1,37,880 deaths and around three times as many amputations and other permanent disabilities each year, caused by snakebites.

Many snakebite victims, mostly in developing countries, suffer from long-term complications such as deformities, amputations, visual impairment, renal complications and psychological distress.

India accounts for nearly 50 per cent of global snakebite deaths

India has the highest number of snakebite cases and accounts for nearly 50% of the global snakebite deaths. Farmers, labourers, hunters, shepherds, snake rescuers, tribal and migrant populations, and those with limited access to education and healthcare are high-risk groups for snakebites.

Lack of awareness, inadequate knowledge of prevention of snakebite and lack of first aid amongst the community, as well as peripheral healthcare workers, delay in receiving lifesaving treat-

ment, and non-availability of trained medical officers for management of snakebite contribute to higher number of deaths, said Dr Smita Mahale, former director of ICMR-NIRRH and coordinator of snakebite research programmes at the institute.

WHO has launched its roadmap with an aim to halve death and disability from snakebite by 2030. Much before the WHO roadmap was launched, researchers from ICMR-NIRRH and Public Health Department, Maharashtra, started community awareness and health system capacity building from the year 2013. They are continuing their work through a national study funded by the National Task Force on snakebite, ICMR.

Dr Rahul Gajbiye, principal investigator and corresponding author of the study, said that the aim was to understand awareness, knowledge of snakebites, prevention, first aid practices,

and healthcare-seeking behaviour of the community members for snakebite treatment and to assess the knowledge, and management practices for snakebites among traditional faith healers, snake rescuers, and health workers in the tribal block of Dahanu.

Initially, the study was started as a part of the research activity of Model Rural Health Research (MRHRU), Dahanu, Palghar district. Based on the pilot study on snakebite, Tribal Health Research Forum, ECD Division of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), funded the study. The case fatality rate due to snakebite envenomation in 2014 was 4.4%. After community intervention, training of medical officers and frontline health workers, the case fatality rate was gradually reduced to 0.4% in 2017.

Superstitions about snakebites abound

The study demonstrates inadequate knowledge, wrong perceptions, use of unproven methods for prevention and management of snakebites amongst the tribal community in Dahanu, Dr Himmatrao Bavaskar, co-author of the study and an international expert on snakebite management, told *The Indian Express*.

The community had wrong perceptions on the identification of venomous snakes and

snakebites. Belief in a snake god, ability of tamarind seeds or magnets to reduce the venom effect were some of the superstitions reported in the study. 50% of medical officers in Dahanu block did not have correct knowledge about the Krait bite symptoms, and renal complications due to the Russell viper bite, the study's lead authors Dr Itta Krishna Chaithanya and Dr Dipak Abnave have said.

According to the study, one female respondent said, "We give green chillies or dry chili powder, salt, sugar to the snakebite victims to eat, if they can identify the taste then it is a non-venomous bite but if they are unable to identify taste then it is venomous snakebite".

Another respondent said, "After the bite, if the victim can't walk even five steps and death occurs immediately, it is considered as venomous snakes".

Some participants stated, "If pregnant woman encounters a snake and if she looks at the snake then the snake will become blind".

'Include snakebite management in curriculum'

There was no 'IEC' (Information, Education, and Communication) material available on the identification of snakes, prevention, first aid, and treatment of snakebites in any of the government healthcare facilities in the study area, according to the study team.

They have recommended the inclusion of snakebite management in the curriculum of training institutions of state public health departments in India, mandatory short-term training of medical graduates during their internship and also as a part of the induction training on joining state health services in India. The study has recommended a multi-sectoral approach of community awareness, capacity building of healthcare facilities for reducing the mortality and morbidity due to snakebite envenoming in India

J&J's 1-dose vaccine cleared, will be India's fifth Covid shot

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE DRUG regulator on Saturday granted the American pharma giant Johnson & Johnson emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine, paving the way for J&J's Indian subsidiary to introduce in India for commercial use the first single-dose vaccine against infection with the novel coronavirus.

The single-shot vaccine, developed by J&J subsidiary Janssen Pharmaceuticals, has been shown to be 85 per cent effective in preventing severe disease in phase 3 human clinical trials.

This is the second Covid-19 vaccine to be granted emergency use authorisation through the fast-track approval route by the Indian drug regulator.

On April 13, India changed its policy on regulatory approvals for foreign manufacturers to commercially market their Covid-19 vaccine in the country – waiving the pre-condition of phase 2-3 clinical trials for those vaccines that have been granted emergency approvals by regulators in the US, EU, UK, and Japan, and those listed by the WHO.

On June 29, the American biotechnology firm Moderna became the first foreign company to be granted emergency use approval for its mRNA vaccine under the liberalised regulatory regime.

After Saturday's approval, J&J, like Moderna, will not be required to conduct bridging studies in India to establish the safety of the vaccine.

"India expands its vaccine basket! Johnson and Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine is given approval for Emergency Use in India. Now India has 5 EUA vaccines. This will further boost our



The vaccine has been developed by J&J subsidiary Janssen Pharmaceuticals.

nation's collective fight against #COVID19." Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya said in a tweet.

The four other vaccines that have been granted emergency use authorisation in India are Serum Institute's Covishield, which is the Indian version of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, Russia's Sputnik V, and Moderna's mRNA vaccine.

"We are pleased to let you know that on 7th August 2021, the Government of India issued Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 single-dose vaccine in India," Johnson & Johnson said in a statement.

While Saturday's approval paves the way for J&J to bring its vaccine to India, talks with the Indian government continue on the contentious issue of indemnity. Multiple rounds of discussions have taken place with Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J, and the negotiations are now in their final stage. On July 27, the Centre informed Parliament that a team of officials is in "continuous dialogue" with Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J to discuss and address "various issues including the issue of indemnity".

Over 80 monsoon deaths in Rajasthan

HAMZA KHAN  
JAIPUR, AUGUST 7

AS MANY as 80 persons have died and 55 injured so far following heavy monsoon rain in Rajasthan.

Most deaths have been recorded in Bundi (16), followed by state capital Jaipur (15). As many as eight persons have died in Tonk, followed by six in Kota, and four in Sawai Madhopur. Nineteen other districts have recorded 1-3 deaths. Most of the deaths in Jaipur were reported after lightning struck a watch tower near Amer Fort last month, which had led to the death of at least 11 persons.

Additionally, at least 125 animals have died so far. The details were shared by government officials during a presentation before Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot at a meeting of the Disaster Management and Relief Department (DMRD) on Saturday. The CM also announced a sum of Rs 5 lakh to the kin of the deceased and Rs 2 lakh to those injured.

Meanwhile, over 150 persons were rescued in Kota's Sangod on Saturday even as Army personnel joined rescue operations in Hadoti region. Among those rescued were teachers and students stuck at a residential school. The opening of gates of Bhimsagar dam had led to flooding in some villages, prompting rescue work.

SDRF Commandant Pankaj Choudhary said personnel undertaking rescue operations in Gelana and Lalawata villages were informed of teachers and students stuck at a school in Heengli village in Kota's Sangod area. Choudhary said that 28 teachers and students were stuck at the residential school, and that the rescue teams reached near the spot around 2:30 am on Saturday. Rescue operations began at 6 am and ended at 11 am, with the students being rescued one by one with the help of life jackets and boats.

**HIMACHAL PRADESH HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (HPHDP)**  
(Govt. of Himachal Pradesh)  
Dyerton Bizhub, Talland Bypass, Shimla, H.P. 171001

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATION FOR MATCHING GRANT SCHEME FROM ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS/ENTREPRENEURS**

Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Development Project (HPHDP) is inviting applications for Matching Grant Scheme from eligible applicants/ entrepreneurs interested to invest in horticulture value chain in Himachal Pradesh.

The grant (30% of the eligible project cost) for male applicant and 35% in case of female applicant or specially abled applicant, with max. grant amount capped at INR 60 Lakh for all categories will be provided on competitive basis with mandatory equity contribution by the applicant/entrepreneur. The Request for Application (RFA) i.e. application form, eligibility criteria and other necessary information are available on the Project website ([www.hds.hp.gov.in](http://www.hds.hp.gov.in)). The duly completed application may be submitted via email ([hdp-pd-hp@gov.in](mailto:hdp-pd-hp@gov.in)) or can be procured from and submitted at HPHDP Office, Shimla (Ph- 8894497175) or office of Deputy Director of Horticulture (DDH), Kangra (Ph- 7781004578) or DDH, Mandi (Ph- 9811185010) or DDH, Solan (Ph- 9311018839) during office hours on or before 05.09.2021.

**Project Director**  
Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Development Project (HPHDP)

0311/HP

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Government of Maharashtra, Environment Department, Room No.217, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mantralaya Annexe, Mumbai - 400 032, has accorded Environmental Clearance No SEIAA-EC-0000002342 Dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020 for Residential & Commercial Project of M/s. Keystone Properties. Pune. Copies of the Clearance letter are available with Maharashtra Pollution Control Board & May also be seen at website of Government of Maharashtra, Department of Environment. <https://www.ecmpcb.in/>

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**Place:** Pune  
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**OBITUARY**

**22<sup>nd</sup> DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

In Loving memory of **Shri Rajagopala Pillai**

... Remembered by ... **Preeta, Shrinnath, Shreya and family.**

**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION AJMER**

PHONE No. 0145-2624748 FAX No. 0145-2627671  
No. F. ( JAR. MP/2021-2022/5663-5713 ) Dated: 30.07.2021

**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS**

Bids for the work for Reorganisation of Rural water supply scheme CLUSTER DARDATURI for providing functional Tap connections in Block Peepul under JMM with one year defect Liability and 5 years O&M in the jurisdiction of PHED Division TONK. (Estimated cost of work- Rs. 318.82 lacs) are invited from interested bidders upto 23.08.2021. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://proc.ra.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.ra.nic.in>) of the state. UBN No:- PHE2122WSOB05614 NIB No:- PHE2122A2494

(Mukul Bhargava)  
Additional Chief Engineer,  
PHED, Region, Ajmer.

DIPRC/7605/2021

**Public Notice**

Public-at-large shall take note that the plot of land with the building standing thereupon named as **'Datar Blocks'** bearing CTS no. 245/103. Bhamburda, (Shivajinagar), Deccan Gymkhana, situated in **Deccan Gymkhana Co.op.Hsg Society Ltd.** held by its owners. **Mr. Suhas Gopal Datar and Col. Arun Gopal Datar** as the lessee of the plot and the owners of the existing structure is being agreed to be developed by our Client - **Mr. Uday Vasudev Shaligram, Prop. RK Estates**, for floating the ownership Scheme: and the said owners of the leasehold and the structures thereupon have assured the Developer that the said rights are their independent rights; and except the said Deccan Gymkhana coop.Hsg. Society, no other person entity hold any rights therein, and the said Owners hold the absolute title therein. Our Client thus has started the necessary activities in furtherance of the development thereof. Any person/s having any objection thereto shall inform us within **7 days** from the publication of this notice, in writing together with the documentary proof, attached thereto. And in the event of not receiving any objection thereto, our Client shall continue with the development of the subject plot of land, assuming the rights and the clear title of the owners thereto. Dt. 7.8.2021

(Nandini Deshpande), Advocate  
For Nandini Deshpande & Asso.  
46/22, Sadashiv Peth, Opp. Alka Talkies,  
Pune-30, Tel.: 020-24476140

Pune,  
Dt. 8.8.2021

**SOUTHERN RAILWAY**

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION**  
**E-TENDER NOTICE**

**E-Tender Notice No: E/CN/ERS/TN/04/2021-22 Dated 06.08.2021**

For and on behalf of the President of India, The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Ernakulam Junction – 682016, invites E-tenders for the works mentioned below as per Notice Inviting Tender(NIT) in the portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The tenderer / Contractors intending to apply for the tenders needs to get enrolled in the portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and only online tenders will be accepted.

accepted.

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Name of work				
1	E.572/CN/ERS/WC/OT/557	Doubling of track between Kuruppanthara – Chingavanam section – Electrification of Platforms, FOB's, Second Entry Booking office and other service buildings at Kottayam Station.				
2	E.320/CN/ERS/OT/TSS-35	PUNNAPRA (PNPR) – Traction Substation – Second Bay with 21.6 MVA 110/27 Kv Single phase Power Transformer – Erection testing and commissioning of 21.6 MVA traction power transformer along with Supply fabrication erection and commissioning of gantry arrangements and associated equipments.				
3	E.320/CN/ERS/OT/OHE-36	Design, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of Sub sectioning post with 25 kv A.C. supply at Changanasserri and Modification of existing Over Head Equipment at Chingavanam in Connection with doubling of tracks between Ernakulam and Kayankulam (via Kottayam) section in Trivandrum Division of Southern Railway.				
Sl. No.	Tender No.	Approx cash value in Lakhs	Earnest money deposit (₹)	Date of opening of Tender	Cost of Tender Form (₹)	Completion of Period in months
1	E.572/CN/ERS/WC/OT/557	98.964	NIL	30.08.2021	NIL	9 Months
2	E.320/CN/ERS/OT/TSS-35	247.99				12 Months
3	E.320/CN/ERS/OT/OHE-36	232.99				4 Months

**Tender can submit Bid Security Declaration in place of Earnest Money Deposit**

For further details visit internet site [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) or contact office of Dy.Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway Ernakulam Junction 682016.

**Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Ernakulam Junction**

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**PUNE CANTONMENT BOARD**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public is hereby informed that the property known as House No. 1788 Kamathipura, G.L.R. Sy. No. 390-1272 admeasuring 564.00 sq.ft Pune Cantonment (Class B - 3 land held on Old Grant Terms. The recorded HoRs are (i) (1)Laxmibai Hemant Urad (2)Suresh H Urad (3) Nandkishor H Urad (4) Dhananjay H Urad (5) Shankar Shiram Urad (6) Pramila Dattatray Urad (7) Smt. Kiran Prakash Pote. Smt.Uma Nandkishor Urad submitted application dated 15.9.2020 for mutation of property on the basis of following documents: (a) Admission Deed dtd. 11.9.2020 Regd. at HVL - 10 Sr. No. 11434/2020 (b) Affidavit dt. 7.9.2020 executed by Mrs. Uma Nandkishor Urad (c) Affidavit dt. 7.9.2020 executed by Mrs. Uma N Urad and others. (d) Death certificate of Nandkishor H Urad expired on 28.4.2020 After mutation, name of HoRs to be recorded in the General Land Register are - (i)(a)Laxmibai Hemant Urad (b)Suresh H Urad (c)(i) Smt. Uma Nandkishor Urad (ii) Ms. Tejashree Nandkishor Urad (iii)Ms. Bhagyashree Nandkishor Urad (iv)Mr. Devendra Nandkishor Urad (d) Dhananjay H Urad (5) Shankar Shiram Urad (6)Pramila Dattatray Urad (7) Smt. Kiran Prakash Pote Any person having objection / claim for above correction, may submit his / her objection / claim within 30 (thirty) days of publication of this notice to Lands Section, Pune Cantonment Board, Golibar Maidan, Pune 411001. Office of Pune Cantonment Board is reserved to revoke the mutation, if it is noticed in future that, the applicant has misrepresented the facts. Signed at Pune on this 30 day of July 2021.

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Pune Cantonment Board  
(Amit Kumar)

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**BUSINESS POULTRY**

**Pune** Broilers Traders' Association Rate On 08.08.2021 For Live Big Birds Rs..... Live Tandoori Birds Rs.....Momin Poultry (Asif Momin) 26336349. 00902867395-1

**A** Pune Broiler Traders Association Rate on 08.08.2021 For Live big birds Rs-117 Live small Birds Rs-116/- Contact:- 8695842684. 90281765-1

**NECC** suggested farm-gate price for 100eggs on 08.08.2021 in Pune without tray is Rs.470- (Rupees four hundred and seventy only) Phone:-NECC 24270724, 26336377, Dealer:- 24332689, 24455130, 24265787. 0090287335-30

**Pimpri** Chinchwad Broilers Traders Association Rate On 08.08.2021 For Live Big Birds Rs 116 Live small Birds Rs117 Al\_Taqdeer Broiler(Siraj Shaikh 9822931357, 7720080489. 0090286498-1

**Vencobb** today's ex-shop delivery rate at Pune Rs.78 per kg. Contact (9522) 22872417, Pune (9520) 24269414. 0090284455-1

**Pune** District Broiler Traders Association Rate on 08.08.2021 for Live big birds Rs.120 Live Small Birds Rs.119 Contact: 9309113062 0090285085-61

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Sushma Yeatne, Spouse of 13990225X, Ex Hav, Yetane Dilip Trimbak, Resident-Arvi, Have Changed My Name From Sushma Yeatne to Yeatne Sushma Dilip. And Have Changed My Date Of Birth From 01/07/1979 To 01/07/1980. Affidavit No. 12516. 0090289075-3

I Smt Suman Balasaheb Ubale, widow of Army No- 14581690L, Rank-Hav, Name- Ubale Balasaheb Raghunath. In my husband's Army record my son's name Ganesh is wrongly mentioned but his true and correct name is Ubale Ganesh Balasaheb as per affidavit No - 6763/dt.04/08/2021 0090289065-1

I, Maria Sacramenta Flaviana Da Cruz, D/o Late Mr. Julio Torcato Da Cruz and Late Mrs. Ana Graca Costa, Wife of Late.Diego Peter Francis Lobo, Age: 61, Occupation: Retired, Residing at Flat No. 406/409, Cloverdale building 'C', South Main Road, Koregaon Park, Pune- 411001 do hereby state and declare on solemn affirmation that I am changing my name from Maria Diago Lobo (Name after Marriage) to Maria Sacramenta Flaviana Da Cruz (Maiden Name/Name before Marriage) as per Affidavit no.1986/2021, as per Gazette of Maharashtra registration no. P-217550, as per my Civil Birth Certificate Issued by the Pune Cantonment Board with registration 36/1190 with date of registration 26th December 1959, as per my Baptism Certificate of year 1960 record no. 1960002 issued by St Patrick's Cathedral Church, 1B, Prince of Wales Drive, Pune 411001 with date of registration 3rd January 1960 and as per my Marriage certificate of 1982 record no.26 (1982/26) issued by St Immaculate Conception Church, NanaPeth, Pune-411002 with date of registration 29th May 1982. My Aadhar card no. is 774716602412 0090289017-2

I have changed my old name Dipali Sunil Khuspe (At. Post Nidhal, Tal. Khatav (Vadui), Dist. Satara) to Mrs. Ankita Sunil Khuspe. Both names are same. Affidavit no. 6243/2.8.2021. 0090289064-1

I have changed my name Shyama Machindra Sonawane (wife) to Shyamla Machindra Sonawane add.- plot-466, sector no 27A Pradhikaran, Nigdi (P-2118595). 0090289059-1

I, Henry L, state that my mothers name has been wrongly put in my ICSC Admssion Card as Lalnwuthari ( wrong name).The correct name should be Lal Nun Thari as per aadhar card 923999188580 0090289009-1

I No. 8033435A Ex. Hav Wankhade Dnyaneshwar Anandrao declare that name of my three children in the service record of my self are wrongly mentioned single name only as Abhishek, Priya and Vaishnavi. Their correct and true names are Abhishek Dnyaneshwar Wankhade, Priya Dnyaneshwar Wankhade and Vaishnavi Dnyaneshwar Wankhade to be changed in the army service record in the Artillery Regiment Nashik Camp. Affidavit sworn before the Execute Magistrate 1st class. Affidavit No. 215003911268200338358, 215003911268200338361 and 215003911268200338366 respectively. 0090289074-1

I No. 15142 943F, EX Hav, Sathe Sanjay Shivaji, Name of My Daughter Changed from Dikshha to Sathe Dikshha Sanjay. Affidavit No. 12429. 0090289075-1

I No. 13990225X, Ex Hav, Yetane Dilip Trimbak, Name of My Son Changed From Pratik To Pratik Dilip Yeatne. Affidavit No. 12532. 0090289075-2

MY OLD NAME VRAJESH KRISHNAKUMAR SHAH CHANGED AS VRAJESHKUMAR KRISHNAKUMAR SHAH AS PER PASSPORT NO.K 1791743. 0090289058-2

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# 5 GOVT & POLITICS

## States not consulted: Mamata on electricity Bill

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
KOLKATA, AUGUST 7

PROTESTING AGAINST the Centre's move to place the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 in Parliament, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday alleged that states were not consulted properly on the legislation. She also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to "refrain from initiation of the legislation".



**Bengal CM wrote to PM**

In her letter, she said that if the Bill was passed, it would "hamper the interest of the common people". Banerjee wrote, "Power is too important a sector for such unilateral interferences, especially when 'electricity' as a subject is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India and any legislation on a subject in such a list needs serious prior consultation with the states. In the present case, there has been some tokenism of consultations, but no real exchange of views, which is antithetical to the federal structure of our polity".

"In the name of market reforms, the state will give up its commanding height, state PSUs will become sick and ailing and yet forced to serve areas where no corporate body would focus. Allowing cherry-picking to select private entities cannot be the goal of public policies..."

The CM also said, "Such an approach would result in concentration of private profit-focused utility players in the lucrative urban-industrial segments, while poor and rural consumers would be left to be tended by public sector DISCOMs."

## BJP shared maximum fake news in 2014, '17 polls: Akhilesh

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 7

A DAY after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said social media was at present a "belagaam ghora [unbridled horse]", Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday claimed that the BJP government had spread the maximum amount of fake news during the elections in 2014 and 2017 in the state.

Speaking at a press conference at the party headquarters in Lucknow, Akhilesh said, "During the 2014 and 2017 polls in UP, the BJP was the one who shared maximum fake news, fake videos and rumours... If anyone has expanded the 4G network, it was the Samajwadi Party government due to which internet has reached villages. Today, when everyone can speak the truth, then the government is panicking. Let the elections come. The number that I have predicted for the elections will come true."

During the press conference, former BSP Rajya Sabha member from Muzaffarnagar Rajpal Saini joined the SP along with several other OBC leaders from the BSP and Congress.

Referring to an interview of Adityanath to a TV channel on Friday where he called SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav "abbajaan", Akhilesh said, "The CM knows another language. He can't hear what the farmers are saying. He wants to take the election in another direction."

He also said that Adityanath is the "first CM of UP who lies so much".

## Cabinet Secy term extended

**New Delhi:** Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba was given a one-year extension Saturday. Gauba's tenure was to end on August 30. Gauba, a 1982 batch IAS officer of the Jharkhand cadre, was appointed Cabinet Secretary in 2019 for a two-year period.

Prior to his appointment as the country's top bureaucrat, Gauba served as Union Home Secretary. He had also served as Chief Secretary, Jharkhand. **ENS**

# PM: Previous govts spoke of poor but didn't work for their welfare; MP has uplifted them

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
BHOPAL, AUGUST 7

IN A veiled attack on the previous Congress-led governments, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused them of indulging in hypocrisy and said they chanted the word "poor" many times each day but did not work for their welfare.

In a video interaction with Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) beneficiaries from Madhya Pradesh, he also praised the state government under Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, saying that the state has led behind its earlier image of a "beemarajya (sick state)".

Modi accused the previous



**PM Narendra Modi and Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan during the virtual address on Saturday. PTI**

government of keeping the poor and villagers away from basic amenities such as roads, electricity, housing, cooking fuel, banking etc. He said, "They used to speak the word poor hundreds of times a day. They recited the word poor like a song, but did not adopt their welfare in practice. Such acts are called 'pakhand' (hypocrisy). They

did not give these facilities to the poor but used to express false sympathy."

Modi was presiding over the 'Anna Utsav' organised by the MP government to distribute additional 5 kg free ration to 1.15 crore families as part of PMGKAY.

He spoke to four beneficiaries from the state: Rajendra Sharma,

an autorickshaw driver from Burhanpur; Dilip Kori from Satna; Chandra Badan Vishwakarma from Niwari; and Maya Dhurve from Hoshangabad.

The four were among 1.15 crore families from across the state who were given 5 kg additional wheat and rice through 25,453 fair price shops in MP. People in the list of beneficiaries in flood-hit districts of Gwalior-Chambal region would be given an additional 50 kg ration per family, apart from 5 kg wheat and rice, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had announced on Friday.

Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives and livelihood of those affected by rain and flood in the Gwalior-Chambal region and as-

sured them of all help by the Centre.

Speaking about development of the state under Chouhan, the Prime Minister said: "I remember the condition of roads in MP — the state was infamous for its scams. But today, MP's cities are touching new heights of cleanliness and development. If government schemes today are being implemented on ground, it is due to the change in governance."

Pointing out that August 7 also marked the beginning of Swadeshi movement in 1905, Modi urged people to purchase handicraft from local shops and promote handloom, and warned them against letting down their guard against Covid-19.



## PRESIDENT HOSTS MINISTERS

**President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday interacted with the Union Council of Ministers and hosted a high tea for them at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, according to an official communique. Apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu was also present, the statement said. PTI**

# Shah: Modi put a system in place; development happens automatically

**AVINASH NAIR**  
GANDHINAGAR, AUGUST 7

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi has put a system in place in Gujarat where development happens automatically, said Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while virtually addressing the seventh day of celebrations to mark the completion of five years of Vijay Rupani government in Gujarat on Saturday.

"Narendrabhai (PM Modi) has created a new tradition in the country's democracy. A system has been created in such a way that even when a leader is not serving as the chief minister, the development work goes on automatically. I am proud that



**Amit Shah addressed an event to mark five years of Vijay Rupani gov't in Gujarat**

Narendrabhai has created such a system in Gujarat, whereby even after he has left the state, development is happening beautifully," Shah said, addressing the "Vikas Divas" event held at the Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar.

The Union minister said both CM Rupani and his deputy Nitin

Patel have continued to provide speed to development works in the state "on the path shown by Narendrabhai". "Gujarat is either number one or is heading towards being number one in all sectors," Shah said.

In the presence of Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, Shah also virtually inaugurated and laid foundation stones for various projects worth Rs 5,300 crore, belonging to nine different state departments. Of these, projects worth Rs 900 crore were part of his Lok Sabha constituency of Gandhinagar, Shah said.

"Narendrabhai's throne is like Vikramaditya's throne and the person sitting on it imbibes the powers," Rupani said.

# Rahul's account locked, Congress says BJP busy intimidating Twitter

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE TWITTER account of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was 'temporarily' locked on Saturday, a day after a photograph he had posted with the family of the nine-year-old Dalit rape victim was taken down by the microblogging site.

The action came after the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) issued a notice to Twitter India, asking

the social media platform to remove the tweet which revealed the identity of the rape victim.

"Shri @RahulGandhi's Twitter account has been temporarily locked & due process is being followed for its restoration," the Congress tweeted. "Until then, he will stay connected with you all through his other SM platforms & continue to raise his voice for our people & fight for their cause. Jai Hind!"

There was no reaction from Gandhi.

The Congress, on the other hand, accused the government of

intimidating Twitter.

"Based on a complaint by the BJP, the Twitter account of Rahul Gandhi has been locked. Instead of giving justice to the 9-year-old Dalit girl, the BJP and the Narendra Modi government are far too preoccupied in intimidating Twitter as also illegally chasing Rahul Gandhi. Had PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah used this time in ensuring justice for the Dalit girl... Delhi would have been a safer place," Congress communication department head Randeep Surjewala told *The Sunday Express*.



**S Jaishankar with Qatari special envoy for conflict resolution Mutlaq bin Majed Al-Qahtani, in Delhi on Saturday. PTI**

# Govt writes to UIDAI, seeks Aadhaar use for new voters

**RITIKA CHOPRA**  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE GOVERNMENT has approached the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) with a proposal to permit the Election Commission (EC) to use Aadhaar for registration of new voters.

Aadhaar verification could be used for faster delivery of some other services such as change of address as well, the Law Ministry has suggested.

Downloading e-EPICs (electronic Elector's Photo Identity Card) or Voter Slips could be allowed under Rule 3 of The Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation and Knowledge) Rules, 2020, the government has said.

The Rules, which were notified by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on August 5 last year, provide for Aadhaar authentication "in the interest of good governance, preventing leakage of public funds, promoting ease of living of residents, and enabling better access to services for them".

To use Aadhaar for such purposes, the interested entity has to submit a proposal to the union government which forwards it to the UIDAI. The Indian Express has learned that the Law Ministry's letter to UIDAI was sent at the behest of the EC, and that the proposed Aadhaar verification would be voluntary.

If the UIDAI and the government agree, the seeding of voter cards with Aadhaar for the above-mentioned purposes could begin without need for amendments to The Representation of the People Act, 1950, and The Aadhaar Act, 2016.

In August 2019, the Commission had written to the Law Secretary proposing amendments to the RP Act and the Aadhaar Act to empower it to collect and use Aadhaar data for "cleaning" voters' lists as a "back-end exercise".

The EC had argued then that

Aadhaar-seeding of voter cards would help weed out duplicate entries and bogus voters, and hence serve the national interest. "This step will also pave the way for exploring use of technology for voting and verification of voter identity in the future," it had said in its letter.

As per the EC's proposed amendment to the RP Act, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) may, for the purpose of establishing identity, ask a person to furnish her Aadhaar number and even ask those who are already enrolled as voters to furnish their Aadhaar to check for duplicate entries.

However, the proposed amendment had also said that no one would be denied enrolment or would be deleted from the voters' list for their inability to furnish Aadhaar or for not having Aadhaar.

The EC had initiated the exercise of linking Aadhaar with EPIC in February 2015, when HS Brahma was Chief Election Commissioner. But the exercise was suspended in August of that year, after the Supreme Court restricted the use of Aadhaar to the Public Distribution System (PDS), and the distribution of LPG and kerosene. The EC had already linked 38 crore voter cards to Aadhaar by then.

In its final order passed in September 2018, the apex court held that although privacy is a fundamental right, it can be curtailed if there is either a specific law authorising collection of Aadhaar or if the interest of the state is involved or the test of proportionality is satisfied. Hence, the Commission's demand in 2019 for legal powers to resume seeding of voter cards with Aadhaar.

While the Law Ministry had responded positively to the request and a proposal for the Cabinet's approval was learnt to have been prepared, there had been no development since — except now that the Ministry has proposed a beginning for Aadhaar-seeding of voter cards without amending the law.

# Karnataka: Bommai allocates portfolios, keeps finance dept

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
BENGALURU, AUGUST 7

KARNATAKA CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday allocated portfolios to ministers in his new cabinet, with most of them retaining the ministries they had in the previous B S Yediyurappa government.

Debutant ministers have got plum portfolios like Araga Jnanendra (Home) and V Sunil Kumar (Energy, along with Kannada and Culture). The Chief Minister who had on Wednesday expanded his new cabinet, by inducting 29 ministers, tried to play it safe by retaining many old faces — 23 of them were ministers in the previous B S Yediyurappa cabinet.

Bommai has retained the Department of Personnel and



**Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai**

Administrative Reforms (DAPR), Finance, Intelligence, Cabinet Affairs, Bengaluru Development and all unallocated portfolios with himself.

Kudhakar has retained the all important health and medical education department, amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The lone woman minister in the Cabinet, Shashikala Jolle, has been made in-charge of Muzrai, Wafk and Hajj. Those with major changes include Govind Karjol (water resources), CC Patil (public works), B Sriramulu (transport and ST welfare), Murugesh Nirani (industries).

Al-Qahtani had played a key role in the Afghan peace process and his visit to India came amid mounting global concerns over escalating violence by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Qatar's capital Doha has been the venue for the intra-Afghan peace talks and the Gulf country has emerged as a crucial player in facilitating the Afghan peace process.

The visit also comes days ahead of talks among Russia, China, the US and Pakistan on the situation in Afghanistan. The 'extended Troika' convened by Russia is scheduled to be held in Doha on August 11.





# 6 SUNDAY STORY

TORA AGARWALA

IN THE year 2000, weighed down by liabilities, and with few avenues for revenue, Mizoram had managed to extract Rs 182.45 crore as “bonus” from the Centre. First of its kind, the package, extended by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, came to be known as a “peace bonus” — awarded to Mizoram for being “the most peaceful state in the Northeast”.

Back then, if one were to ask the man who made it happen and who was just two years into his chief ministership, Zoramthanga would possibly have smiled and said, “Peace pays”, a catchphrase the rebel-turned-politician is fond of using.

Because, ever since it emerged from a two-decade-long insurgency in the mid-1980s, peace is what the hill state has prided itself on — even its tourism pitch is based on that. Since the militant outfits laid down arms in 1986, few if any insurgents are recorded as having gone underground. The Mizo Accord of June 30, 1986, between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Government of India is perhaps the most successful of its kind in the country. Security experts often call it the “only insurgency in the world that ended with the stroke of a pen”.

The last fortnight though has been far from peaceful for Mizoram. First, in what was possibly the bloodiest standoff in its old border dispute with Assam, six policemen from Assam were killed. Assam issued an unusual travel advisory against travelling to Mizoram; Mizoram instituted an FIR against Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, among others; Assam responded with counter-FIRs — with the diminutive Zoramthanga going toe-to-toe with Sarma, arguably Northeast’s most influential political leader.

Those who know him saw shades of Zoramthanga of old — the college graduate-turned-MNF rebel, who joined the armed insurgency, rose to second only in stature to the legendary Laldenga, and survived in the bush for 20 years. He penned down an autobiography in Mizo recording all this, and is currently writing his memoirs in English.

The insurgency was the result of the Mizos feeling neglected at the hands of the larger Assam state it was a part of then, and New Delhi. In a culmination of the anger, on February 28, 1966, the bank clerk-turned-rebel Laldenga led Operation Jericho to capture Aizawl. For the first and only time in the history of independent India, the government, led by Indira Gandhi, ordered air raids on its own territory. The violence raged on for two decades, before the MNF declared peace and joined electoral politics. Power has since largely remained with the party, first under Laldenga and then his personal secretary and closest aide, Zoramthanga.

Now into his third term, Zoramthanga is known as frank and outspoken, but also soft and pacifist — a carefully cultivated image. “His politics has never been combative. He barely attacks his opponents even during poll campaigns. And if there is a scandal, he probably won’t even make a statement — at best, issue a press release,” says a senior Aizawl journalist, who asked to remain anonymous.

“Zoramthanga does not betray that side of him which pushed him to take up guns. Rebel leaders need not fit the stereotype of being tough and uncompromising,” says Patricia Mukhim, Editor, *Shillong Times*.

Robert Romawia Royte, a Cabinet minister in the MNF government who is close to Zoramthanga, says the CM never “scolds anyone”, not even a “peon”, but can “be tough when the situation demands it”.

Given this record, over the years, the Central government — from the Vajpayee-

## THE SUNDAY PROFILE THE REBEL WHO CHOSE PEACE

His years as an armed insurgent are two decades in the past. Since then, Zoramthanga has helped Mizoram emerge as NE’s most peaceful state. When it comes to land though, the 77-yr-old CM won’t back down, as Assam just found



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

led one to Narendra Modi’s — has sought Zoramthanga’s help to reach out to other rebel groups in the Northeast. In an interview, he once said, “It is my life’s mission to bring peace here.”

Since the 1990s, the MNF has been an ally of the BJP, before it even registered a presence in the Northeast, and is now a part of its Northeast Democratic Alliance. In local, state-level politics though, the MNF and BJP often fight each other.

To dissect the events of the past week then, it is important to not just look at Zoramthanga alone, but Mizo society as a whole, for whom land is the most important asset. “It’s not just Zoramthanga. Any other

**Given his record of peace, Centre seeks Zoramthanga’s help often to reach out to NE rebel groups... For standoff with Assam, one must look beyond him, at Mizo society**

Mizoram CM would have taken a similar stand,” says an observer in Mizoram. “When it comes to issues of ethnicity, whether it’s against the Brus or for the Chins (from Myanmar), or land, they will rally together across political lines, no matter what.”

Adds Mukhim: “Land (in tribal communities) belongs to clans, not to the State... This is the primary difference in our understanding of land as a constitutional entity, and land as a living space which tribal ancestors handed down to their people. International boundaries are often meaningless.”

As Assam raised the heat on an old land claim, Zoramthanga had to show he would do whatever was in his power to protect the territory. In the several rounds of talks with Delhi, his representatives refused to budge even an inch. “They would say, ‘Sorry, that’s my CM’s position’, and that was that,” says an official from Assam privy to the talks.

Earlier, in March, following the military

coup in Myanmar, Zoramthanga had similarly stood up to the Centre. While the government ordered that borders be closed to Myanmar refugees, Zoramthanga welcomed them as fellow brethren, invoking a common tribal lineage. Around 10,000 refugees are believed to have crossed over to Mizoram, and have been given official support.

“Zoramthanga does not shy away from speaking his mind,” says the observer, “even if it’s unpopular vis-a-vis the Centre.”

His oratory is another skill Mizoram knows Zoramthanga for. “It is this that eventually helped him become the top MNF leader after Laldenga’s death. Everybody loves his speeches, with their bombastic words,” says Dr Lallianchunga, a professor of Political Science at Mizoram University.

In April 2020, soon after the Covid pandemic started, Zoramthanga had left social media in splits when he came out of a video-conference with the PM on the situation saying he felt perplexed. “They were speaking in Hindi. And I don’t understand a word of Hindi.”

Two decades after he chose peace over insurgency, the 77-year-old remains an endearing personality in Mizoram — often seen playing badminton, cracking jokes, an ordinary man. Married after he came overground, Zoramthanga and wife Roneihsang have a son and a daughter who keep a low profile.

At the same time, Zoramthanga has proved he can be shrewd, knowing when to push the right buttons. “Take the development fund in 2000. It is said he made several rounds of Delhi for it. He does not care much for protocol... if he needs funds, he will go down right to the joint secretary,” says a senior journalist from Aizawl.

Another example of his skills of persuasion is the Lengpui airport, perhaps the only one in the country to be owned by the state government and not the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

Under his uncontested reign in the state, there has been a significant improvement in roads, apart from in healthcare and education.

However, in the last three years, the MNF government under Zoramthanga has invited some criticism. Many complain it’s a dispensation that “talks more, does less”. “Sometimes, people don’t take him seriously because he says a lot of things that never really pan out... for example, the CM’s obsession with importing bamboo species for more than a decade now,” says the journalist, adding that there is a “sense of lethargy”.

The pandemic has also left the state reeling under a severe financial crisis, with salaries reportedly delayed and several development projects stalled.

Senior Congress leader Lalsawta says the bigger problem is that the Zoramthanga government is “wasteful”. “At the end of the day, it is about the management of finances. The CM holds the finance portfolio.” Claiming that any of the other 26 MNF MLAs would make a better CM, Lalsawta says, “The problem is that Zoramthanga talks too much... A person has to think before he speaks.”

Lalduhoma, the founder-president of the Zoram Nationalist Party, which is part of an anti-Congress, anti-MNF alliance, says that while on the border issue Zoramthanga has their full support, “whether it’s the pandemic or development or financial issues”, the government has failed. “Mizoram has only one RT-PCR lab,” he points out.

The two also ask why the root cause of the boundary issue — the border demarcation with Assam — had not been addressed by the CM. “No one has the political will,” says Lalduhoma. But, as his minister Royte puts it: “Zoramthanga did what people expected of him. In a week, we saw his maturity, how he listened to the people — and for Mizoram, that’s what matters.”

## == TAKE 5 == PAPRI CHAAT, PARLIAMENT

MONU SINGH KASBA, 22  
VENDOR AT SAINT NAGAR, DELHIDerek O’Brien with a spread of *papri chaat* as a message to the Modi government. PTI

**‘Can’t work in the farm any more... get tired. This is what I know best’**

On the speed at which the Modi government has been pushing Bills through amidst Opposition protests, TMC MP Derek O’Brien asked if it was making legislation or *papri chaat*. Monu Singh on his hard life as a *papri chaat* maker:

ASHNA BUTANI

**1 How long have you been in this profession?**

I come from a family of farmers in Gwalior, but have been selling street food in Delhi for four years now. My brother came first, and I followed. I have been seeing him make street food since I was 10. Nobody taught me, I saw others, picked the skill. Now I sell *aloo chaat*, *papri chaat* and *golgappas*.

**2 What all goes into a *papri chaat*?**

I use potatoes, onions, tamarind *chutney*, curd and a pinch of *chaat masala*, adding all to the *papri*. I use the same sweet and tangy *chutney* for *golgappas* and *chaat*, preparing it whenever it gets over.

**3 How has Covid hit your work?**

When the lockdown was announced in March last year, I was back home. I didn’t return for six months, but had to continue paying house rent of Rs 3,000. This year too, I went back fearing losses after Covid hit again. The uncertainty and lack of customers leave me hopeless most days. I make around Rs 600 on average daily, of which Rs 300-400 is my profit.

**4 Will you consider going back to the village?**

We grow wheat and paddy on our 1.5-acre land, but *kheti ki aadat choot gayi hai*, *main khet mein bahut thak jaata hoon* (I am not used to farming, it makes me very tired). Making street food comes more naturally to me.

**5 What do you think of *papri chaat* figuring in Parliament?**

I don’t know much about it, would not like to comment on it.

## NUMBER PLATE

150%

The increase in salary of Delhi MLAs — from Rs 12,000 a month (Rs 53,000 with allowances) to Rs 30,000 (Rs 90,000 with allowances). Still, they remain the third lowest paid in the country after Kerala (Rs 2,000 a month), West Bengal (Rs 10,000)

## Highest paid legislators

Inclusive of annual allowances, Telangana has the highest paid legislators in the country (Rs 2.87 lakh a month), followed by Haryana (Rs 2.07 lakh) and Maharashtra (Rs 1.8 lakh). Monthly salaries of MLAs exclusive of all allowances are the highest in Assam (Rs 80,000), followed by Gujarat (Rs 78,800) and Maharashtra (Rs 67,000)

## Smallest increase

Despite its low-paid MLAs, West Bengal has also seen the smallest hikes in salaries (Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 in 2017). CM Mamata Banerjee, who does not take any salary, is entitled to a smaller sum (Rs 27,000) than MLAs from other states. Kerala MLAs get lower salaries than Bengal’s, but make up for it in allowances — getting overall Rs 62,000 a month with allowances, compared to Bengal’s Rs 61,800

## Tax relief

The Acts that mention the wages of legislature members from Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, who have among the highest allowances, also specify that the tax incurred on this income is to be borne by the state

NUSHAIBA IQBAL

## Watching Nikki didi play

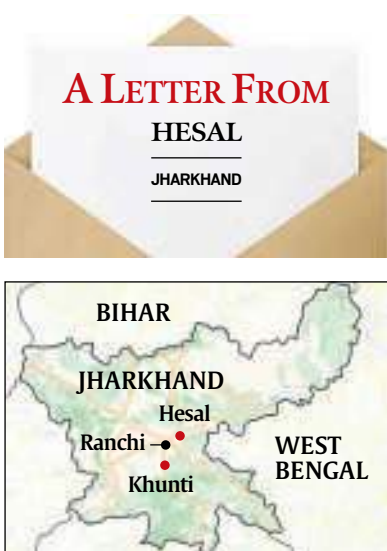
ABHISHEK ANGAD

EARLY FRIDAY morning, as the Indian women’s hockey team walked onto the astroturf at the Oi National Stadium in Tokyo for their semifinal match against Great Britain, thousands of kilometres away, people trickled into a hall lined with asbestos sheets and took their place on a rug in front of a projector.

Hesal, a tribal village in Khunti district of Jharkhand, listed as Naxal territory, seems a long way from even the state capital. On days such as these, when the rains churn the mud roads, the distance is even longer. Yet, even with its non-existent roads and crushing poverty, the tribal village has sent at least 12 hockey players to the state and national teams. Nikki Pradhan, the defender in the Dream 16 team that played in Tokyo, grew up here, playing with bamboo balls and sticks.

Hesal is home to about 60 families, 80% of them tribals. The village has only one health sub-centre that mostly stays shut and no school, with most children walking down to nearby Pilaul.

It was this walk to school that was to change Nikki’s life, along with an other children of her generation. At the Pilaul Middle School was “Mahato sir”, Dasrath Mahato,



who played hockey for Bihar from 1978 to 1981 and who joined the school in 1988 as Assistant Teacher. “He wasn’t a sports teacher but every game period, he encouraged us to play hockey. He trained anyone who showed an interest, including me,” recalls Shashi, 32, Nikki’s sister, elder to her by



Against erratic power, patchy network, watching the Olympic semifinal. Abhishek Angad

five years, who played hockey for Bihar and Jharkhand, and now works for the Railways.

“We would play with bamboo sticks and bamboo balls. Sir took us to tournaments in villages, including with men. After Class 8, those of us who played the game reasonably well were sent to the Bariatu Girls’ Hockey

Center in Ranchi, a boarding school for hockey players. Before we left for Ranchi, he handed Nikki and me food and money,” says Shashi.

Mahato, who is now general secretary of the Khunti unit of Hockey Jharkhand, says, “Around 77 of my students, including the Pradhan sisters, have made it to several top

level circuits... It is a matter of great pride.”

He has a regret, though. “Khunti still lacks basic facilities for training. Simdega (the district from where Salima Tete, the only other Jharkhand player in the Olympics team, hails) has 13 day centres for hockey, two boarding centres for women and three for men, where education, training and lodging are taken care of. Khunti has only one boarding centre each for men and women, apart from eight day centres,” Mahato says. The district has two astroturfs, but they are mostly under water during the rains.

But every such challenge only spurred Hesal’s girls and boys to come out stronger.

After playing national-level hockey for 10 years, from 1998-2004, Hesal girl Neelam Mundu, 32, took to teaching the game. In 2017, she was recruited by Tata Trusts for its programme to “professionalise grassroots-level hockey” in India. Since the pandemic began, Mundu says, she has not been able to travel much to hold lessons.

“I get Rs 8,000 a month to teach hockey. When I took to the game, we thought if we played well, we could at least get into a school where our food and accommodation were taken care of, where we at least didn’t have to worry about getting married off,” she says.

One of Munda’s students is Junita

Pradhan, a Class 8 student of a private school in Khunti. From 7 to 9 every morning, Junita walks barefoot with her hockey stick to the Khunti Sports Shop, where Mundu coaches her and 25 other girls and boys. The hockey stick cost her Rs 400, so she had to shelve her plans of buying shoes. On Friday, she skipped practice to watch the Olympic semifinal.

While sad the team lost, she says, “I saw Nikki *didi* play. I entered the sport due to her.”

Standing beside his under-construction house, Nikki’s father Soma Pradhan, a former constable with the Bihar Police, is a proud father, but it took him long to get here. “I wasn’t happy about the girls playing this game. I did not know much about it. People used to tell me that no one would marry my girls if they played hockey.”

Soma points out that Hesal does not have toilets still while power is erratic and the mobile network patchy. “Even while we were watching the match, we missed some part of it,” he says, adding that in June, a power failure meant he got news of his daughter’s selection for the Olympics two days later.

On Friday morning, surrounded by cheering villagers, he felt his heart weighing down as his daughter leaned against her hockey stick after an agonisingly close match. “But at least the girls played well,” he says.





Across  
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

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The pivot to climbing out of every hole — be it concerning the economy, education, social intercourse or festivals — is vaccination. Unless we vaccinate all the people of India, we will be on a start-stop mode that will take us nowhere. Regrettably, the vaccination drive has not only fallen behind schedule, it is also highly inequitable

THE PANDEMIC is likely to remain with us for some more time. The healthcare infrastructure will be strained, people will be infected, lives will be lost and families will be devastated. The only defence is vaccination. India is doing worse than any of the other G-20 countries in vaccinating the adult population — only 10,81,27,846 people have received two doses of the vaccine against the target of 95-100 crore.

The consolation is, economic losses can be recovered. Closed businesses can be reopened; lost jobs can come back; reduced incomes can be restored; drawn-down savings can be rebuilt; rising debt can be pared; borrowed money can be repaid; and impaired confidence can be revived. An economy that has slid can be put back on the growth path.

**LEARNING DEFICIT**

Life, however, is more than physical existence. Life is living with dignity. There are many deficits that can rob a human being of dignity. Among them is incomplete school education. It is trite that a person with a school education has a better chance to a life with dignity than an unlettered person. And a person with a proper college education has an even better chance. The foundations of a good education are laid in school. Literacy and numeracy are

Caste in the UK, and why Ambedkar matters

Dalitality

SANTOSH DASS

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ON JUNE 30 this year, Gray's Inn, the internationally recognised seat of jurisprudence, unveiled a radical portrait of its former alumnus Dr B R Ambedkar and inaugurated a room named after him. It was the culmination of years of discussion between the Federation of Ambedkarite and Buddhist Organisations UK (FABO UK) and Gray's Inn.

Commissioned and donated by FAB OUK, the David Newens oil painting of Ambedkar is based on a 1946 black-and-white photo by renowned photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White for *Life* magazine. Radical? Ken Hunt, the writer, observes, "Unlike his (Ambedkar's) usual poses, Bourke-White's shoot captured him in a relaxed mood at his home in Delhi. He is on his veranda with a cascade of bougainvillea beside him." His smile engages, and, like Mona Lisa's, his eyes will follow future legal eagles around the room.

Lord David Alton of Liverpool, Master Ali Malek QC, Dr Ambedkar's great-grandson Sujat Ambedkar and I gave speeches before the portrait's unveiling. Lord Alton is a staunch supporter of our campaign against caste-based discrimination and regularly refers to Dr Ambedkar in parliamentary debates on equality legislation, anti-caste discrimination law, and the discrimination Dalits and Adivasis face.

The campaign to publicise caste discrimination experiences in Britain began in the '70s with such committed Ambedkarites as FABO UK's Arun Kumar. For over two decades, Dalit organisations have actively lobbied for a law to address the impact of caste discrimination. It is in essence no different to other forms of discrimination — say, on disability, sexual preference, gender or race — already outlawed in Britain. That's why groups want it to be protected under the Equality Act 2010.

I came to London at the age of eight from Punjab. Britain's pro-equality legislation helped give redress from the caste discrimination we faced.

Powerful Hindu and Sikh lobbies oppose the law and argue "caste consciousness... does not exist" here, or, bizarrely, that the legislation will introduce it. This patent falsehood is laid bare by the prevalence of

gurdwaras and temples in the UK serving specific castes. The suggestion that the Indo-Pakistani diaspora grows up miraculously unaware of caste here was rubbished in the 2019 BBC television documentary *Hindus: Do we have a Caste Problem?* In February 2020, *The Sunday Times* reported how UK Indian dating and matrimonial sites reinforce caste divisions.

The anti-caste-law lobbies promote "education" as the way forward. In 2013, I appeared on *Newsnight*, BBC2's flagship weekly current affairs programme, hours before a parliamentary debate and an important vote on caste law. Jeremy Paxman, the show's combative host, and I shredded the anti-caste-law representative's feeble arguments. "Would you have an educative approach for race or gender discrimination?" Of course, we wouldn't!

Formed in 2008, the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance (ACDA) is one of the leading organisations fighting for such a law. In May 2021, together with the Ravidassia community, ACDA saw through the prosecution of a London-based Sikh man who had produced hate-filled, caste-related diatribe on TikTok.

The government wants to repeal the 2010 caste law provisions based on a flawed consultation. The argument is that principles in one caste-related case, *Tirkey v Chandok*, from 2015 should be enough. But this case could be overturned.

It's also imperative that more people learn about Dr Ambedkar.

In 1991, the Ambedkar Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee installed a blue plaque outside 10, King Henry's Road, in London. It reads 'Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, 1891-1956, Indian crusader for social justice lived here 1921-22'. When the property came on the market in 2014, FABO UK proposed that the then government of Maharashtra fund the purchase of what was already a place of pilgrimage. It took a solid year of badgering the government, and many a sleepless night worrying that some property developer might buy it.

My hope is that our anti-caste discrimination movement, the Ambedkar Museum, Gray's Inn and other initiatives still in planning act as inspirations to think creatively about the emancipatory project that Dr Ambedkar launched.

The writer is one of the leading figures in the campaign to outlaw caste-based discrimination in the UK

Suraj Yengde, the writer of Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly Dalitality column

On the  
LOOSE

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WHEN US gymnast Simone Biles unexpectedly withdrew from the Olympics saying she wasn't in the right headspace, it created a furore. It has never happened that an athlete of Biles's calibre has caved in to agonising pressure, preferring an exit bang in the middle of a competition.

Even one Olympics ago, Biles would have been berated for poor sportsmanship but the post-pandemic buzzword dominating the international narrative is: mental health. Twitter India itself has noted a 108% increase in mentions of the term 'wellness' and a surge in popularity of hashtags like #selflove #LoveYourSelf and #MentalHealthMatters.

Quitting is the new winning

Depending on one's worldview, this display of fragility can feel either like righteous self-preservation or a euphemism for a cop-out. Recently, it feels like the world has done a dramatic U-turn, from stigmatising mental health problems to embracing them manically. So much so that while the greatest spectacle of human endurance is on, quitting is being hailed as some sort of noble act. What would happen if soldiers became immobile thanks to panic attacks before battle? Or if doctors and nurses started having breakdowns and not showing up for duty?

Civillisation is held together by a tangled web of small and large commitments, and we all have our little roles to play. The fact is, all work is, occasionally, painful. Not wanting to strive, resolutely,

the cornerstones.

What is the state of school education in India today? 'Learning deficit' is an acknowledged reality and an important measure of the state of school education. Ask what proportion of children enrolled in Class 5 can read a text prescribed for Class 2? According to the Annual Survey of School Education (ASER) 2018, the proportion was 50.3%. When the children reach Class 7, the proportion that can read a Class 2 text rose to only 73%. The enormity of the learning deficit will hit one like a sledgehammer.

Drill deeper: If we measure learning deficits by gender, urban/rural, religion, caste, economic class, parental education and occupation, and private/government school, the magnitude of the deficit grows larger as we slide down the socio-economic ladder. A child born in a village to low-education, low-income parents whose occupation is farm or casual labour, belonging to a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) or Other Backward Class (OBC), and studying in a government school, lags far behind a child enrolled in an urban, private school and supported by high-education, high-income parents belonging to one of the 'forward' or upwardly mobile castes.

This is a self-evident truth, now proven conclusively by ASER and similar studies.

She  
SAID

SHIVANI NAIK

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IN AN ideal world uncontaminated by overzealous sports officials, their only mandate over what women should wear in sport would extend to choosing colour schemes of the polyester medal ribbons. And in ensuring every athlete with jelly ligaments has proper taping. Like, not leave India's top woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat rudderless without a physio, if she had a strong chance of getting a medal.

Sports policing of athlete outfits could focus on ensuring that sneaker soles and spikes or swimsuits don't accord undue advantage on the track or the pool. But exceeding their brief, sport's officialdom decides that it will not only have an opinion but also air it, on what women will wear when they compete.

German gymnasts gave it a long, hard thought over this summer, and decided they will not take on additional pressure of discomfort wearing bikini-cut leotards at Tokyo Olympics. Instead, they opted for unitards, which incidentally are not a novelty for those watching. Men have always been wearing them.

Smart ankle-lengths and long-sleeved gear in cherry red, with geometric patterns for a yoke, and a snazzy tattoo pattern at the ankle which accentuated the pointed toes — the design that German gymnasts sported merged aesthetics with acrobatic comfort.

Beyond Germany, woman gymnasts in Europe have rebelled this Fall against the unspoken tradition of wearing leotards that are highly sexualised and minutely photographed from uncontrollable angles while women are flinging themselves in the air, and chosen to be more concerned about sticking landings and not breaking their necks.

German Elisabeth Seitz nailed her uneven bars routine, but not before declaring: "We wanted to show that every woman, everybody, should decide what to wear. On competition day, we will decide what to wear." For a sport that has not quite completely resolved yet the traumatised fallout of a sexual abuse scandal in the US, the apprehensions of the Germans were not imaginary.

Elsewhere, the European Beach Handball governing body showed some remarkable thickness in imposing fines on the Norwegian team for turning out in shorts instead of the mandated bikinis. The stipulations are so outrageous that, after 15 years of disapproving, the players couldn't bother less, and their home federation didn't think twice about shelling

A CRUEL JOKE

All the above were before the pandemic hit India, and the first lockdown on March 25, 2020. On that day the schools were closed and, after 16 months, they remain closed in most states. During this period, we have witnessed the much-hyped online learning, internal assessments, automatic promotions and even grades for passing, without exams, Class 10 and Class 12. Conceding that many of these steps were inevitable, was the hype necessary?

Prof Reetika Khera of IIT-Delhi quotes a joint statement of UNESCO and UNICEF that said "schools must be the last to close and the first to reopen" and reads out the grim statistics: only 6% of rural households and 25% of urban households have computers; only 17% of rural areas and 42% of urban areas have Internet facilities; and the vast majority of families do not have smartphones. The boast about online learning in the India of 2020/2021 is a cruel joke on the children of India.

BE JUDGE AND JURY

An average child in India starts with a learning deficit. And if she has no learning for 16 months and more, imagine how rapid will the backward slide be? The governments — Centre and states — have stood by helplessly. As a

nation, we have failed our children and made no effort to find a way to mitigate the unfolding disaster.

Schools must reopen soon. Before that, the children must be vaccinated. The pivot to climbing out of every hole — be it concerning the economy, education, social intercourse or festivals — is vaccination. Unless we vaccinate all the people of India, we will be on a start-stop mode that will take us nowhere. Regrettably, the vaccination drive has not only fallen behind schedule, it is also highly inequitable. On May 17, over 500 renowned scholars, teachers and concerned citizens wrote to Prime Minister Modi on the inequalities that have emerged among the vaccinated: between urban (30.3%) and rural (13%); between men (54%) and women (46%); and between the poor states (175% in Bihar) and the rich (7.5% in Delhi).

The pandemic was unprecedented and can overwhelm any government. Allowing for that, the government that assumed to itself all authority under the National Disaster Management Act and took all the decisions in the last 16 months must be judged on the outcomes: did it contain the spread of the infection, did it reduce the number of deaths and did it achieve the self-declared target of fully vaccinating the adult population of India by the end of December 2021? In the meantime, did it spare a thought for the children of India? You be the judge and the jury.

One small length of legging, and a giant leap



Sarah Voss of German gymnastics team, that wore unitards instead of bikini-cut leotards, at the Tokyo Olympics, seeking their right to wear what they want. AP

out the ridiculous fines on their behalf.

Sample the stupidity as fleshed out by *The New York Times*: "Women must wear bikini bottoms" with a close fit and cut on an upward angle toward the top of the leg", and those bikini bottoms cannot be longer than 4 inches". The corresponding men players could "wear shorts at least four inches above the knee, provided they are 'not too baggy'".

Beach volleyball women's players are split on the topic of whether shorts ought to be allowed, with practical considerations of sand clinging to the pockets.

The entire Muslim world with its women athletes bounding out to participate in every sport possible, meanwhile, is grappling with the skittish issue of why women wearing a hijab — or not, as the case may be — is anyone else's concern.

Egyptian beach volleyball player Doaa Elghobashy has competed at the Games for a decade wearing ankle-length tights and a head scarf. Smashing an unreturnable spike gives her immeasurable glee. Watchers should try following the sport, she reckons.

Serena Williams was wearing a baby literally when she won an Australian Open. The French crinkling their noses at her bodysuit was plain bad form.

At the heart of this debate is women's free choice — to compete feeling comfortable, feeling not being ogled at and feeling good about their game.

As a corollary, women do not want to

be judged for indulging in fashion on their Big Competition Days either. Painted nails, pretty braids of wrestlers, hair parted two-ways for the sprints, dyed a flaming red to streak on the track, an aura of curls and stylised flags on running tights, lipstick and eye shadow — the tyranny of the trudging tracksuit ended a while back.

Tokyo's newest contrivance from the broadcasters zoomed in on swimmers — both male and female — as they wrapped up their swims with limber downs in outdoor showers. But the roving gaze of cameras while athletes compete isn't the only problem. Outdated marketers' insecurity about selling their sport, and untrusting of every sporting discipline being capable of producing exciting match-ups, has led to years of dress dictates from the suits. Defiance was long due when women knew in their bones that they could compete just as well without this skin-showing compulsion, that in fact dissuaded many budding careers after puberty hit and body image issues cropped up.

The talent oozing out of Tokyo's badminton women's singles final between Tai Tzu Ying and Chen Yufei was so mesmerising that you didn't notice that the two had turned up in shorts. Badminton had once contemplated a compulsory skirts rule. The current golden generation emerged right after the dress-code was summarily dumped.

Skills, not body-hugging skins, were enough.

The writer is director, Hutkay Films

Fifth  
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter: @tavleen\_singh



Rape, caste and politics

THERE ARE things in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'new India' that have got worse than they were in the old India. One of them is the false narrative that is spun by his spokesmen and supporters on social media every time a child or a woman is brutally raped and murdered.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) says it recorded 32,033 cases of rape in 2019, which means that 87 Indian women were raped every day. Of these, 15% were children. The statistics are shameful, but it is not the statistics that should worry us as much as the strenuous efforts made in the 'new India' to change the narrative at the behest of political leaders at the highest level.

Last week it was only when Dalit activists took to the streets in protest that arrests were made in the case of the nine-year-old Dalit girl who was allegedly raped and murdered by a priest and his three cohorts. The alleged rapists deny all charges and claim that the child died of an electric shock she got from a water cooler. But this does not explain why they were in such a hurry to cremate the child's body, even when her mother tried to stop them.

The story has been reported in detail in this newspaper and needs no repetition. It is the politics I want to talk about.

This is because I was sickened by the insensitivity with which spokesmen of the Bharatiya Janata Party responded to the child's death. They were more bothered by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi having gone to offer his condolences to the dead girl's family than the horror of what happened to her. Sambit Patra, who is the TV face of the BJP, spoke in crude, ugly detail about what had happened to Dalit women raped in Rajasthan and with his fixed smug smile asked why Rahul Gandhi did not visit their families.

If he believed this strengthened his case that Rahul went for political and not compassionate reasons, he achieved the opposite result.

This column is no fan of Rahul Gandhi or Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, but I applaud them for going to the home of this wretchedly poor Dalit family and offering financial and legal help. It is the very least that political leaders should do since they are unable to prevent this most shameful of crimes from happening with such relentless routine that India is sometimes referred to derisively as the rape capital of the world. It should shame us all that this is not a major political issue. And that not one of Modi's women ministers thought they needed to offer help and condolences to the dead girl's family.

Smriti Irani was the shrillest critic of Sheila Dikshit's government when Nirbhaya was brutally raped and murdered. She is now Minister of Women and Child Development but did not care to even tweet about the tragic death of this little girl. Was it because she was Dalit or because one of the alleged rapists is a priest in a temple that adjoins the crematorium in which the girl died?

It is not as if Mrs Irani was staying away from Twitter last week. She found the time to tweet this about the women's hockey team. "An inspiration! Each one of you have renewed hope, emboldened aspirations... each one of you epitomizes strength, skill & fortitude. You are our girls, our pride #Ind onwards to a stronger future." The Prime Minister and several other ministers tweeted in similar triumphant fashion about the hockey team. But, not one tweet about the little Dalit girl, Why?

Is it because the Delhi Police comes directly under the Home Minister and it was important to bury the story as quickly as possible? Changing the narrative when a rape becomes political and reflects the awful realities of caste and poverty is something that has become the norm in the 'new India'. When another Dalit girl was raped, murdered and cremated by the police in the dead of night in Hathras last year, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh tried to make it into an 'international conspiracy' against his government. A Muslim journalist who was arrested on his way to Hathras was implicated in this so-called 'jihad' conspiracy. A year later, he remains in jail.

These foolish attempts to change the narrative can never work. The narrative will change only when our political leaders stop turning their faces away from the horrible truth that not much has changed in the 'new India' when it comes to crimes against women.

Another horrible truth that we need to face up to is that usually the women and children who get raped and killed come from Dalit families. At the risk of being charged yet again by BJP trolls of being 'anti-Hindu' and 'anti-India', I am going to say what our political leaders do not like to admit. In rape cases the victims are usually Dalit and the rapists upper caste.

This is why justice is rarely done. This is why the police use intimidation to get charges dropped. If rape cases manage to come to trial, more than 90 per cent of rapists get away with their barbarous crimes. What has changed in 'new India' is that in BJP states a false narrative is created to obscure facts. Unless the victim is Hindu and the rapist Muslim. Then we have arrests under new 'love jihad' laws.





# 8 ECONOMY

**'PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS TO BE UNREADABLE'; CHILD RIGHT AGENCIES WELCOME MOVE**

## Apple to check iPhones for child abuse pics; a 'backdoor', claim digital privacy bodies

PRANAV MUKUL  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

APPLE IS rolling out a two-pronged mechanism that scans photographs on its devices to check for content that could be classified as Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). While the move is being welcomed by child protection agencies, advocates of digital privacy, and industry peers, are raising red-flags suggesting the technology could have broad-based ramifications on user privacy.

As part of the mechanism, Apple's tool neuralMatch will check for photos before they are uploaded to iCloud — its cloud storage service — and examine the content of messages sent on its end-to-end encrypted iMessage app. "The Messages app will use on-device machine learning to warn about sensitive content, while keeping private communications unreadable by Apple," the company said.

neuralMatch will compare the pictures with a database of child abuse imagery, and when there is a flag, Apple's staff will manually review the images. Once confirmed for child abuse, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in the US will be notified. At a briefing Friday, a day after its initial announcement of the project, the Cupertino-

**'POTENTIAL PRECEDENT FOR GOVT ENTRY'**

**WHILE COMPANIES** like WhatsApp have opposed traceability, experts suggest that Apple's decision to scan photographs on its devices could set a potential precedent to provide the government entry into encrypted systems



AP file

based tech major said it will roll out the system for checking photos for child abuse imagery "on a country-by-country basis, depending on local laws".

However, this move is being seen as building a backdoor into encrypted messages and services. In a blog post, California-based non-profit Electronic Frontier Foundation noted: "Child exploitation is a serious problem, and Apple isn't the first tech company to bend its privacy-protective stance in an attempt to combat it. But that choice will come at a high price for overall user privacy. Apple can explain at length how its technical implementation will preserve privacy and security in its proposed backdoor, but at the end of the day, even a thoroughly documented, carefully thought-out, and narrowly-scope backdoor is still a backdoor".

The non-profit added that it

was "impossible to build a client-side scanning system that can only be used for sexually explicit images sent or received by children". "That's not a slippery slope; that's a fully built system just waiting for external pressure to make the slightest change".

In its statement, Apple has noted that the programme is "ambitious" and "these efforts will evolve and expand over time".

Apple's move has put the spotlight once again on governments and law enforcement authorities seeking a backdoor into encrypted services, and experts are looking for signs that establish if Apple has changed direction in a fundamental way from its stance as an upholder of user privacy rights.

So much so that less than a year ago, *Reuters* had reported that the company was working to make iCloud backups end-to-end encrypted, essentially a move that

### Apple wins court ruling in patent verdict

*New York:* Apple persuaded a US federal judge to throw out a \$308.5 million jury verdict it lost to a licensing firm for infringing a patent associated with digital rights management. As per the judge, Personalized Media Communications intentionally delayed filing the patent application. **REUTERS**

meant the device maker could not turn over readable versions of them to law enforcement. This was, however, dropped after the FBI objected. The latest project is being seen as almost making a full circle, with the proposed system potentially setting the stage for the monitoring of different types of content on iPhone handsets.

Criticising Apple's decision, Will Cathcart, head of Facebook-owned messaging service WhatsApp said in a tweet: "I read the information Apple put out yesterday and I'm concerned. I think this is the wrong approach and a setback for people's privacy all over the world. People have asked if we'll adopt this system for WhatsApp. The answer is no".

"This is an Apple built and operated surveillance system that could very easily be used to scan private content for anything they or a government decides it wants to control. Countries where iPhones are sold will have different definitions on what is acceptable," he argued.

Globally, Apple has around 1.3 billion iMessage users, of which 25-30 million are estimated to be in India, while WhatsApp has two billion global users, around 400 million of which are from India.

This also comes in the wake of the Pegasus scandal, where Israeli private cyber-offensive company NSO Group exploited the loopholes in apps such as iMessage and WhatsApp to provide its government customers access to the devices of their targets through installing a spyware. These targets include human rights activists, journalists, political dissidents, constitutional authorities and even heads of governments.

In India, through the IT Intermediary Guidelines, the government has sought traceability of originator of certain messages or posts on significant social media intermediaries. While companies like WhatsApp have opposed traceability, experts suggest that Apple's decision could set a potential precedent to provide the government entry into encrypted communication systems.

**AMENDMENTS RECOMMENDED TO IBC**

## Panel points out NCLT vacancies to MCA: How appointment delays are affecting resolutions

KARUNJIT SINGH  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE PARLIAMENTARY Standing Committee on Finance has called out the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on persistent vacancies in National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs) leading to delays in corporate insolvency under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The committee has also recommended that the IBC be amended to prevent frivolous litigation and non-adherence to deadlines under the IBC that can lead to value destruction.

The committee recommended that the IBC strictly prohibit the submission for resolution plans after the deadline for plans and that recoveries under the IBC be measured against an international benchmark.

**Why are vacancies in the NCLT a major issue?**

The combined strength of the current NCLT benches around the country is currently only 29 members against the total sanctioned strength of 63 members.

The committee noted that delays in the admission of insolvency cases by NCLTs and the approval of resolution plans were the key reasons behind the non-adherence of timelines under the IBC.

As of March 31, 2016, 79 per cent of the total cases under the IBC had been pending for more than 270 days, the initial time limit envisaged for a resolution process under the IBC.

The committee noted that delays on the part of the NCLT in admitting cases allowed defaulting owners the opportunity to divert funds and transfer assets and, therefore, the NCLT should be required to admit a defaulting com-

**ONLY 29 MEMBERS AGAINST 63 SANCTIONED**

■ The combined strength of the current National Company Law Tribunal benches around the country is currently only 29 members against the total sanctioned strength of 63 members

■ As of March 31, 2016, 79% of the total cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code had been pending for more than 270 days, the initial time limit envisaged for a resolution process under the IBC

**EXPLAINED**

pany into insolvency proceedings and hand over control to a resolution professional within 30 days.

"The MCA, as the nodal ministry, should take greater responsibility to streamline the operational processes in NCLT/NCLAT while constantly monitoring and analysing the workflow, disposal and outcomes with regard to resolutions, recoveries, time taken, etc.," the committee noted.

**What are the key concerns around frivolous litigation?**

A number of high profile cases under the IBC — including those of Essar Steel, Bhushan Power & Steel and Binani Cement — saw multiple decisions being challenged by stakeholders. Experts have called many of these appeals frivolous attempts to slow down insolvency proceedings.

The Standing Committee has also said that cases in which creditors have evaluated resolution plans submitted after the specified deadline would disincentivise bidders from bidding within prescribed timelines and that such plans also contribute to delays and value destruction. In the insolvency proceed-

ings of Bhushan Power & Steel Ltd, the NCLT had directed the committee of creditors (CoC) to evaluate the resolution plan submitted by Liberty House

Pte after the CoC refused to consider the plan as it was submitted after the deadline for resolution plan submission.

"These bidders typically wait for the H1 bidder to become public and then seek to exceed this bid through an unsolicited offer that is submitted after the specified deadline ... As a result, genuine bidders are discouraged from bidding at the right time. The overall process is vitiated and there are significant delays leading to further value erosion," the committee noted.

**What are the other key recommendations by the committee?**

The committee also recommended that the IBC be amended to provide micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are operational creditors under the IBC, with greater protection in the current economic environment. The IBC currently prioritises financial creditors over operational creditors.

## RBI WATCH FOREIGN EXCHANGE

## Propelled by gain in currency assets, reserves skyrocket past \$620 billion

NEW RECORD FOR FOREX RESERVES		
	July 23 2021	July 30 2021
Foreign currency assets	567,628	576,224
Gold	36,884	37,644
SDRs	1,546	1,552
Reserve tranche position	5,091	5,156
<b>Total</b>	<b>611,149</b>	<b>620,576</b>

*in million US dollars; source: Reserve Bank of India/Reuters*

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE NATION'S forex reserves surged by \$9,427 billion to record high of \$620.576 billion in the week ended July 30, according to the latest data from the RBI.

In the previous week ended July 23, the foreign exchange — or forex — reserves had declined by \$1.581 billion to \$611.149 billion.

In the reporting week ended July 30, the rise in the reserves was on the back of an increase in foreign currency assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data released on Friday showed.

FCA increased by \$8,596 billion to \$576.224 billion in the reporting week.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves were up by \$760 million to \$37.644 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rose by \$6 million to \$1.552 billion.

The country's reserve position with the IMF also increased \$65 million to \$5.156 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

## Covid cover for health workers: 1,016 claims settled, paid till Aug 4

*Till August 4, 1,016 claims have been settled and paid under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package: Insurance Scheme for Health Workers Fighting Covid-19, the government informed Parliament*



**NEW CLAIM SETTLEMENT SYSTEM:**

With effect from May 28, a new system of claim settlement has

been implemented, according to which, claim papers are now being examined by district collectors

## 22.12 lakh

Healthcare providers, including community and private health workers who have been in direct contact with and care for Covid-19 patients, who are eligible for comprehensive personal accident cover of Rs 50 lakh under the scheme

**SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION:**

In a reply to the Lok Sabha on Friday, Minister of State for Health Bharti Pawar said the scheme is being implemented via an insurance policy from New India Assurance Company Ltd

*Source: Government of India/PTI*

**48 hours: Time mandated to the insurance company to make payment to claimants, on the basis of certificates furnished by district collectors and counter signed by state nodal officers**

## China regulators meet delivery firms, seek stronger labour rights

REUTERS  
BEIJING, AUGUST 7

CHINA'S DELIVERY platform companies including Meituan and Alibaba's Ele.me recently joined a meeting with government regulators on improving safety and labour rights for delivery workers.

Food delivery platforms, in the spotlight due to China's regulatory reforms, have attracted severe criticism on social media for their treatment of delivery workers, most of whom are not covered by basic social and medical insurance.

The meeting included officials from the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, according to a Saturday notice on WeChat by the

**Food delivery platforms, in the spotlight due to China's regulatory reforms, have attracted severe criticism on social media for their treatment of delivery workers, most of whom are not covered by basic social and medical insurance**

Ministry of Emergency Management, which also attended.

Firms should strengthen safety and labour rights protections, and not set performance indicators which harm the health of workers, according to the meeting.

Alibaba Group, its supermarket operator Hema Xiansheng, Dada Nexus Ltd and other firms also joined the meeting and reported on their efforts to improve safety and labour rights.

Investors believe a major shift

is under way in China as the government aggressively pursues reform aimed at cutting cost-of-living pressures at the expense of businesses, roiling stock markets. A set of reforms announced in July by China's market regulator pushed food delivery platforms in China to guarantee their workers with income above minimum pay, insurance and a relaxation in delivery deadlines.

Investors are worried about the rising cost of employing riders by the platforms, *Reuters* had previously reported.



A display of Tencent at the China International Fair for Trade in Services. Prosecutors had said the "youth mode" on WeChat does not comply with laws protecting minors. *File*

WeChat's "youth mode", when turned on, limits young users' access to some games and functions, such as payments or finding nearby friends.

Chinese authorities have called for minors to be better protected from online dangers, a sentiment echoed by state media this week which criticised the video gaming industry as well as online platforms that help promote celebrity culture. Tencent on Tuesday announced new curbs on minors' access to its flagship video game, "Honor of Kings", after its shares were battered by a state media article that described online games as "spiritual opium".

## BRIEFLY

### Hindustan Copper Q1 net up

*New Delhi:* Hindustan Copper on Saturday reported a 53.6 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 45.63 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2021, against Rs 29.69 crore a year ago. **PTI**

### 'Virgin listing on LSE planned'

*New Delhi:* Virgin Atlantic Airways is planning to list on the London Stock Exchange, *Sky News* reported. The plan received positive responses from institutional investors and an announcement could come soon, it said. **REUTERS**

**AFTER CHINA PROSECUTORS INITIATE LAWSUIT**

## Will inspect WeChat's 'youth mode', says Tencent

REUTERS  
BEIJING, AUGUST 7

TENCENT SAID it would investigate the functions of its popular social messaging app WeChat's "youth mode", after Beijing prosecutors initiated a civil public-interest lawsuit against a subsidiary of the company on Friday.

Prosecutors had said the "youth mode" on WeChat does not comply with laws protecting minors. "We will earnestly inspect and check the functions of WeChat Youth Mode, accept user suggestions humbly and sincerely respond to civil public interest litigation," the company

WeChat team said in a post on Weibo.

The lawsuit was initiated by Beijing's Haidian District People's Procuratorate against Shenzhen Tencent Computer Systems Co Ltd, according to a filing posted on JCRB.com, a website run by China's top prosecutor. The document did not say how WeChat's "youth mode" broke Chinese law.

It said it could support other agencies and organisations that intended to bring lawsuits against the Tencent unit and asked them to contact the prosecutor's office within 30 days. Tencent did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## Q2: Berkshire Hathaway sees higher profits, buys back shares worth \$6 bn

JONATHAN STEMPEL  
NEW YORK, AUGUST 7

WARREN BUFFETT'S Berkshire Hathaway Inc on Saturday said many of its businesses are enjoying strong recoveries from the early depths of the coronavirus pandemic, fueling rebounds in profits and revenue. The company Buffett has run since 1965 also signaled the billionaire's confidence in its future by repurchasing \$6 billion of its own shares in the second quarter, even as its stock price regularly set new highs.

Second-quarter operating profit rose 21 per cent to \$6.69 bil-

**The Warren Buffett-run company's 2nd quarter operating profit rose 21% to \$6.69 billion**

lion, or about \$4,424 per Class A share, from \$5.51 billion, or about \$3,463 per share, a year earlier.

Net income rose 7 per cent to \$28.1 billion, or \$18,488 per Class A share, bolstered by unrealized gains in Berkshire's \$192 billion of investments in Apple Inc, Bank of America Corp and American Express Corp. Revenue jumped 22 per cent to \$69.1 billion. **REUTERS**



# THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



## POINT OF VIEW Column Writing

How the Jaipur Column at the Rashtrapati Bhavan was built to commemorate the transfer of the British capital to Delhi

Shivani Naik

PV SINDHU makes history by clearing browser caches of her competitive life. Her secret to succeeding on a badminton court is remembering, unfailingly, to forget. Win or lose; rinse, don't remember, don't repeat.

There was the BWF (Badminton World Federation) World Championships gold medal she won in 2019, by forgetting the two stinging losses for silvers of 2017 and 2018. This time at Tokyo, Sindhu carefully erased all thoughts of gold or silver to nail a bronze, making this her back-to-back medalling in the Olympic Games. The disappointment of going down in the semifinals was scrubbed clean after the initial tears. It is how Sindhu is staggeringly successful, in obliterating landscapes of losses that would leave most others wandering and lost.

Badminton revels in its disappointments. It nurses regrets and carefully curates every despondency. Malaysian legend Lee Chong Wei never won the Olympics or World Championships titles. Indonesian Olympic champion Taufik Hidayat just couldn't crack the All England Open championships. Taipei's Tai Tzu-Ying, who is the closest a muggle can come to *Wingardium Leviosa*, controlling a feather with a wizard's wand, risked being told she was altogether inadequate had she not made it to the badminton podium this time.

Sindhu, too, was told she can't win the finals, the perennial doubts tarnishing all her silvers. Sindhu herself barely ever publicly indulged in these long, meandering post-mortems.

Ask her about her second match at Tokyo where she faced Hong Kong's Cheung Ngan Yi, who had dragged her into an 87-minute wringer at the 2017 Glasgow World Championships, where she was on all fours, panting heavy, and could barely stand up. Memories like that — an almighty ploid even before Japan's Nozomi Okuhara tested her in the famous final — can leave bruises that can jump up at a nervy stage like the Olympics. Not for Sindhu, who has a sketchy recall of that match.

"But every time we get onto the court, it's a fresh match and I don't think about what has happened before. We, of course, make strategies from the earlier games, but every time you come on the court, you don't think about past matches. You just come with a mindset where you need to give your best present," she says, after winning her bronze. "Best present" is Sindhu's own invention — an original tense that means living only in that moment, which is an unburdened, untangled, isolated few minutes before a rally.

She didn't know whether to be sad about the lost gold or be happy about the second chance. Her Korean coach Park Tae-Sang wasn't quite spouting Nietzsche that evening after she lost the semifinals, by telling her "Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the better even of their blunders". He did pithily tell her though that the fourth place would leave her wretched. Ice bath, recovery massage, dinner, sleep...and memory of the semifinal brushed aside.

Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind; the prayer of a bronze accepted, the wish for gold, resign'd.

Sindhu is the reigning world champion; she has won a bigger medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016. The bronze is only the third step on the podium. But Sindhu saw the next 24 hours with algorithmic ease: one medal, two countries gunning for it, and a Chinese southpaw with suspect backhand, "Hulk, Smash".

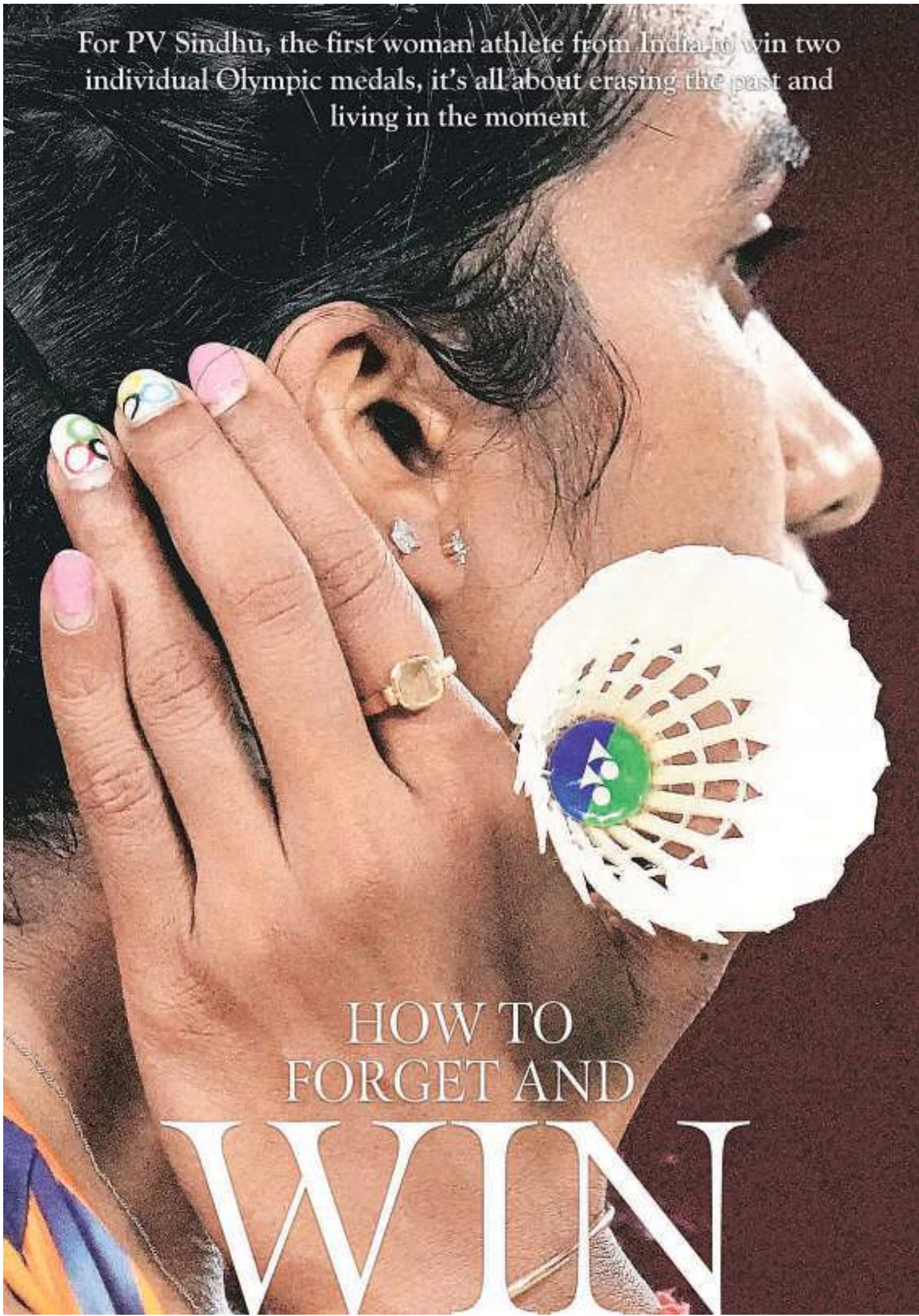


Sindhu has enjoyed an upbringing of a First World athlete. That is not to say her family didn't face financial struggles or that she didn't go through the uncomplaining repetitions during practice to keep her body fit. But marked as a special talent, not shy of working hard, she didn't struggle for facilities. She had it all — top-notch academy, high-performance coaches, shuttles, international tournaments, and seamless funding from the establishment. Sindhu's athletic, rangy game was meant to succeed if she could keep herself uninjured and agile. It needed fine chiselling like the Bidri metal craft and not a dramatic DIY store makeover.

Getting on the *Forbes* list of highest-paid women athletes in 2019, showered by sponsors, Sindhu never had to claw at the basics or build a pucca house, like some others who won at Tokyo. She earned her privilege and preserved it, and stayed within the comfortable straight and narrow on tricky issues, non-committal on anything that could



For PV Sindhu, the first woman athlete from India to win two individual Olympic medals, it's all about erasing the past and living in the moment



AP

nudge her away from the pleasant and polite. India remained an indulgent country, but Sindhu was only one dip away from facing the proverbial cold shoulder. Yet, this was badminton, and she lost plenty on either side of her five medals at the World Championships and two at the Olympics, of which one was gold. In the absence of any major turbulence that ails Indian athletes, her struggles in her snugly cloistered universe were of the elite First World variety: How to forget a stinging loss and move on to the next medal.



Around this New Year's at the UK, after a happy snowy Christmas enjoying her freedom from minute-to-minute monitoring, Sindhu would post an emoji-bookended message: "Life's not about expecting, hoping and wishing, it's about doing, being and becoming." It was the first of these motivational "for self" Post-its that you realised she buys into: ignore expectations, remember actions.



## SMASHING IT

PV Sindhu on the court at the Olympic Games last week, where she took the bronze; with coach Park Tae-Sang at Shamshabad airport, Hyderabad, on their return from Tokyo



PTI

leave her completely unperturbed. If it's all the same, she'd rather sit back with some bubble tea and look to the next match.

Landing in Tokyo, Sindhu enjoyed being in her terrain. "Olympics is everybody's dream come true. The Athletes Village itself is a nice place. There are lots of athletes who

ARTS etc

## The Night of Longing

Documentary filmmaker Payal Kapadia on winning *L'Œil d'Or*: love, discrimination, and the future



do really well and get those medals," she says. Though all she remembers is settling in nicely at her sophomore Games.

Ask her about routines of medal-chasing athletes, and she forgets she's one among them, talking in third person. "Those top shuttlers get into a routine. I noticed how they do things and how every athlete has a different exercise workout," she recalls.

There's a kaleidoscope of movements as she revs up the engine for the knockouts. Like the forced perspective filmmakers have in movies such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Alice in Wonderland* or *King Kong*, where objects look larger by playing with space and distance, for Sindhu, opponents appear in sharp focus. Yamaguchi fetches up, life-sized in the quarters. Cue: Forget just how endlessly the Japanese can retrieve.

"There were long rallies. There are no easy or short matches against her. So, I have to be patient and put the shuttle in the court and use my attack, even though she retrieves," she says. Getting bogged down by the prospect of a tough grind isn't Sindhu's style.

But nothing went right in the semifinals against Tai. A dream of a gold ended, just like that. The Taiwanese dictated points, unveiled trickery and packed the Indian off. The lost semifinal meant Sindhu could miss out on a medal at the Major League for the first time in five years. She cried, then stopped, and erased the thought for first and second place. And then, it began, the slashing at the prospect of a dreaded fourth finish.

Looking back, while Tai has dominated completely, Sindhu latched on to a safety that helped her cope. Ask her if she mulled over lost points and she waves it away with a long "Noooo".

"I played my best. Sometimes, it happens that it might just not be your day. So, yeah, if I might have won the first set, it would have been different. Perhaps, the net-cord was the difference," she muses. This happened at the

18-18 stage in the first set. A net-cord is considered poor luck when the shuttle nicks the net and can fall on either side. Thin margins are bonafide blemishes, and a scaffolding comes up around her confidence, where she will not, for the moment, admit and analyse how strong Tai was. Scratch the match, move on.

Day of the bronze match, breakfast is bread, egg, bacon sausage and some milk. The match is scheduled for the late evening. Lunch is katsu curry and rice, and other Japanese food. "More than that, since our match was in the evening it was like 'When will I play...when will I play...and, when will I get onto the court?' That was the only thing going on in my mind," she says. Fade the expectations, focus on actions. When she was younger, Sindhu would bite her nails before a nervy match. Then nail-art happened. Polish and glitter didn't taste good.

Her opponent that day, China's He Bingjiao, was a compact player and technically proficient, but Sindhu would have none of it. She figured the bronze was the most coveted thing, that moment, for the two nations. "Everybody was aiming for that medal to make their country proud. He Bingjiao has really good wrists so her deception also was very good. But, again, it was important that I am in every point, even if she was covering leads. I made sure even though I'm leading, I don't give her easy points. I maintained that and got the medal," she says simply.

The bronze morphed into a sympathetic pat on Tai's back as the Taiwanese waited for the award ceremony, dealing with her loss of a gold. "I congratulated (China's) Chen Yufei. Of course, Tai was feeling bad so I just told her everything will be fine," she recalls. "Silver's a good medal," the bronze winner told Tai.

It was the warmest of exchanges, where Sindhu forgot her own disappointment and got into the shoes of the silver medallist. At Rio, she had realised she was the only one on the court to lead Spain's Carolina Marin through her early moments with the gold.

She might have become India's biggest female Olympian, but Sindhu has a healthy relationship with a loss. And the bronze. At the 2013 World Championships, when she won her first, she knew the enormity of it. "I was super, super happy. I wasn't very experienced then. So, getting something new was exciting," she recalls. A year later, again at the World Championships, the medal shape-shifted into the "first time for a second successive bronze."

She makes her peace with bronze, then she forgets about it. In December this year is the World Championships at Huelva, Spain, Marin's hometown, where she'll defend her title. "It's the first time I'll be defending my title; it'll be exciting," she says.

Spotless sunshine. Eternal Mind. Same Sindhu.





# The Doctor Will Now Hear You

A takeaway from this pandemic has been that most patients need empathy more than just medicines

Chandrakant Lahariya

ONE EVENTFUL evening in mid-April 2021, after holding back for a while, I posted my contact details on a few online social platforms and circulated them widely on social-media groups, indicating my availability for COVID-19-related telephonic medical consultations. This may appear insignificant; however, it was a major personal decision. Fourteen years ago, I had made a conscious choice to practise public health and policy and stopped attending patients. However, this was not just another April in India. A ferocious second wave of COVID-19 pandemic had stormed the country and people were in frantic search of medical advice and health services.

In the days to follow, the messages and phone calls to seek health advice became routine. People had a variety of questions, including on clinical symptoms, when to get tested for SARS-CoV2, the interpretation of RT-PCR reports, Ct value, D-Dimer, CRP and HRCT. Home isolation proved difficult for many and people had multiple queries on how to make it work. Of course, there were requests for hospital beds, getting tested and for oxygen cylinders (which no one was in a position to help with). There were pressing queries regarding how to keep one's child protected from infection when both parents had tested positive.

Many physicians rue that telephonic consultations are impersonal and lack the connection of an in-person patient consultation. Hippocrates — the father of medicine — would probably have agreed. However, this was a pandemic and unlike anything anyone alive had witnessed. The phone calls brought much-needed relief to people in distress. For a few days in late April and most of May, the trend of calls I received became my personal barometer of the pandemic situation in the country.

I had thought the calls would stop once the second wave began to decline. However, that did not happen. Instead, there was a major change in the nature of advice being sought. Now, it was much less about medical conditions but more on preventive and promotive types of health advice. A large proportion was from people who had recovered from COVID-19. A few had symp-



DOCTOR ON CALL

After the second wave, people needed preventive advice

toms of post and long COVID-19 and many were worried that they may have contracted the virus without realising it. There were people who were seeking advice on whether they could go to a religious place and take a holy dip in a sacred river; a few others wanted to visit a hill station with family and friends. Someone's father had received one shot of vaccine and was insistent on having a meal with his friends in a restaurant and his son wanted to know how to convince his father to refrain from it. These may appear irrelevant issues but were of immediate pressing concerns to people. A mother in Lucknow got distressed as her 18-year-old daughter developed fever and rashes after vaccination; the fever continued for 11 days. A 73-year-old retired professor of ophthalmology in Kolkata developed a severe reaction after the first vaccine shot and wanted advice on what to do with the next one; a concerned husband of a 28-year-old pregnant lady, who had already had COVID-19 in the first trimester, wanted to know whether his wife should get vaccinated and when; the father of a six-year-old boy in Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, whose son was bitten by a stray dog and had level III bite, was worried about his child's health, even though his anti-rabies vaccination had begun. There have been many other questions regarding behavioural issues in school-going children, the opening of schools, and about the selection and types of COVID-19 vaccines.

In these consultations, I prescribed medicines to a few, changed their ongoing treatment occasionally, but for nearly all I needed to counsel them on various preventive and promotive aspects. Nearly everyone needed a little better understanding of their clinical symptoms. More than physical illnesses, people were stressed due to either their own or their family members' illness or possibility of it. Information was available from various sources, yet that online information was no alternative for a human voice or advice from a qualified medical doctor.

A few weeks ago, I received a call from an elderly lady, who had consulted me a few times and was now doing fine. She said, "Every time I consulted other doctors, they either gave me more medicine or changed the medicine. You were the one who patiently listened to me and gave me good advice. Now onwards, you are my doctor." I am yet to take a call on whether I will continue to provide medical consultation or go back to public health and policy work. However, for me, there is one lesson from this pandemic — India needs physicians and a health system, who and which recognise that while medicines may be needed to cure some, most seeking health services need attentive listening and empathy from healthcare providers to heal.

The writer is a physician and epidemiologist and co-author of *Till We Win: India's Fight Against the COVID-19 Pandemic*

# From Where I Stand

Once a testimony to imperial British invincibility and the transfer of capital, the Jaipur Column stands witness to a dynamic republic



Living History

AN INDIAN EXPRESS  
COLLABORATION WITH THE  
RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN

Sunil Trivedi

AS YOU drive on Rajpath, up Raisina Hill towards the Rashtrapati Bhavan, a tall column in the skyline comes into view. The pillar, known as the Jaipur Column, was intended to serve as a testimony to the invincibility of the British Raj. Perhaps, those who built the Viceroy House did not envisage the possibility of an end to British imperialism. The Jaipur Column along with four other columns in the adjoining North and South Blocks tell an interesting story of how the twists and turns of history are not hostage to the rulers' perception of the future.

The Jaipur Column is the centre of attraction at the expansive forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Motorcades of the President of India and visiting heads of states and governments pass by the pillar, which also marks the beginning and culmination of the processional path from and to the Bhavan.

Pillars, columns and obelisks have, of course, been built since ancient times to commemorate victory and dominion. Their significance continued in the colonial empires, too. The British built a 152-ft pillar in their first capital of India, Calcutta, in the early 19th century to mark their victory over the Marathas and the Gorkhas. The Ochterlony Monument, named after David Ochterlony who led their forces, has been renamed Shaheed Minar. Nearly a century after erecting that pillar, the British built another column in their new capital, Delhi. Madho Singh II, the Maharaja of Jaipur, donated a princely sum of 14,000 pounds for its construction.

The architect of the Viceroy's House Edwin Lutyens, who designed this column, took inspiration from the Roman Trajan Column; he even labelled his sketches of the column by the same name. That marble pillar has been the most celebrated prototype for commemorative pillars built by the Europeans.

At a short distance outside the main entrance of the Rashtrapati Bhavan stand four identical columns, modelled on the Ashokan pillars by Lutyens' collaborator, Herbert Baker. Placed in front of South and North Blocks of the secretariat buildings, the columns were gifted by the dominions of



POLE POSITION

COURTESY: RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN PHOTO ARCHIVES

(Clockwise from above) The Jaipur Column; a Dominion column; a close-up of the inscription on the Jaipur Column

Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa to celebrate the Imperial Delhi project. On top of each column is a miniature naval ship, reminding the onlookers that Britannia then ruled the waves. A little to the west of these four dominion-columns, up an incline, about 555 ft from the main gate, stands the Jaipur Column.

Together, these five columns were among the highlights of the inauguration of Imperial Delhi in 1931. They appeared like architectural odes to an empire built to last. But forces of history were chipping away at the very foundations of the empire, of which the Jaipur Column was a new ornament. It was erected to commemorate the foundation laying of Imperial Delhi by King George V and Queen Mary on December 15, 1911. It would be completed after about two decades.

From its base to the top, the Jaipur Column is 145 ft tall with an average diameter of six-and-a-half feet. British oak-leaf patterns cover the entire pillar, which stands on a cube-shaped white pedestal resting on a double base of red sandstone. On each of the four sides of the pedestal are presented themes of imperial domination. At the very top of the column is a bronze lotus, an Indian motif that Lutyens incorporated in the design of the Viceroy House, too. From the lotus emerges a six-pointed Star of India, made of glass. The Star was installed as a reminder of the Order of Knighthood issued by Queen Victoria to honour Indian princes and chiefs, along with British officers and administrators, who served the empire in India. Inside the column, a steel tube runs through, tying the lotus and the star to a block in the foundation.

A statue of Viceroy Hardinge, the "founder" of New Delhi, stood at the base of the Column, facing east, surveying the vista up to the War Memorial Arch (now India Gate) and beyond. It was removed after Independence and shifted to Kingsway Camp, the site of the Coronation Durbar of 1911.

With the Viceroy's House eventually becoming Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Jaipur Column ceased to be a symbol of imperial supremacy. Conceived as an ornament to the "temple of imperial power" in the words of Lutyens scholar ASG Butler, today this impressive pillar defines the path to the sanctum of a robust republic, the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

After Independence, the Jaipur Column stands witness to the Change of Guard ceremony that takes place in the forecourt every Saturday. The seniormost regiment of the Indian Army, the President's Bodyguard, entrusted with the ceremonial duties of the President of India, dressed in their traditional best with swords and lances, are also part of the parade which is a visual treat.

If you go closer to the Column, you can see in the bas-reliefs on the north and south faces of its pedestal, the obverse and reverse sides of the Great Seal of the Empire. The map of the capital (as it was planned then) is on the eastern side. An inscription runs through the base of the column. "The classic inscription at the base of the Jaipur Column," Robert Grant Irving, the renowned historian of the Empire's art and architecture, noted, "was a noble epitaph for British rule and fitting counsel for the future masters of India." It reads:

"In thought faith,  
In word wisdom,  
In deed courage,  
In life service,  
So may India be great."

Sunil Trivedi is officer on special duty (research) with the President's Secretariat

# With a Little Help from My Friends

Perfect friends show us a mirror to what we rather not see, keep us sincere and make us strive to be better



Suvir Saran

Suvir Saran is a chef, author, educator and world traveller

JULY 30 was Friendship Day. Friends I fondly remember thought of me with caring affection, but my closest friends didn't pause to pay heed to the day's pageantry. What does it say about Friendship Day that many of us, who count our friendships as our most precious treasures, were unmoved by the day or totally lost to its happening?

I have never looked at friendship as my gateway to popularity. I was not the least

popular guy in school, but not the most popular either. In fact, my friendships in school, bar a couple, were rather superficial and meaningless. My classmates were friends of utility for the most part. We had to study and play together; we had to socialise and make peace with one another.

As I grew older, friendships of pleasure came my way. Friendships of pleasure are those that take a relationship between two people beyond mere usefulness. These are friendships where we begin to share common passions and indulgences, where we find the ability to connect. These are bonds that go beyond school, jobs, social-networking groups, gardening or book clubs.

But, as pleasurable as these friendships are, they also have their limitations. They, too, can be friendships with barriers and boundaries. We keep in touch throughout the year, but often just enough to keep abreast of each other's happenings in life, and never more than is needed to simply keep a connection going.

As I scan through my mental book of friends, I see more often than not names of those about whom I know little beyond the cursory superficialities. It is this reality that makes me remember what Papa told us about life and friendships. He said we should align our lives with those who are like-minded and who will help us stay on our track of self-growth. People we can count on, in every crucial moment, who will laugh and cry with us. Those who will be there for us when our own betray us. And, so, he told us to be open to welcoming such friends into



SUVIR SARAN

CHERRY-PICKED

After much trial and error, we choose perfect friends, who can be of any age, and who can or not last a lifetime

our lives and, once we find them, to give them respect and care, love and affection, trust and confidence, and, above all, full access to our lives and our loves. These friends he called the perfect friends.

I'm lucky that I have a few perfect friends. We might be broken and scarred, ebullient or ecstatic, but we can show our cracks and failures to one another and never have to put on any airs or make up any stories. With these friends, I have a mirror showing me what I might never want to see. They keep me honest and make me strive daily to be a better person and a more sincere human being. These perfect friends listen to me, give me support and strength, stand by my side as my world slips from under my feet. They ensure that I don't sink with it, but make me watch what I am losing lest I be foolish enough to repeat the mistakes from my past. Without this help, to take into account what I lack and what ails me, I can never become better and bigger versions of myself.

Perfect friends are people we have taken our time to choose. They can be our age or younger or older. In my clutch of such friends, I see my connection to what was and what will be, and so I have friends my grandparents' age and some who are younger than any children I could have had. These friendships keep me grounded in reality, happily

afloat in dreamy lands of fantastical living. They are friends who care and have the comfort of knowing they can speak up and scold, challenge and warn; they are not afraid of the truth.

We must strive to have a handful of such friends, as then we will know that we have lived a life worth living. What better way to leave this earth than knowing we mattered beyond the ordinary? And so I hope to daily feed these perfect friends with love that keeps us connected beyond a day. It takes a lifetime of honest back-and-forth to keep these perfect friendships perfectly comfortable.

Unlike the family we inherit and have close bonds with, these are people cherry-picked by us after much trial and error, and once we find them, it is up to us to feed the bond of friendship with the right dose of honesty, integrity, drama, tedium and laziness. Perfect friendships can last a lifetime or a short time. Sometimes, it takes many such friendships, forged and lost, before we realise the virtues of a perfect friendship. But once we experience it, nothing is more sacred and precious. These are friendships where ammunition gifted from us about our own failures will never become weapons wielded for our destruction. Perfect friends keep our failings in their hearts and teach us how to cope with them, how to improve upon them, and how to move forward. And so, these are the friends that are perfection personified.

This past Friendship Day didn't send any messages from my perfect friends my way. A single day cannot define a friendship, just as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day or Sibling's Day cannot define the love we have for our spouses, parents, or family members. But Friendship Day reminded me that utility, pleasure and perfection are all parts of the world of friendship. The day brought a flood of memories — some sweet, some sad, but all rather personal and special, each taking me back to the people and places that mean the world to me. If this is what a day like this does for us, then I think it is good to mark it and celebrate those we love, respect, admire, adore, have lost to life, or lost touch with.



# Through the Stillness

Filmmaker Payal Kapadia on her latest documentary, *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, which won the Golden Eye award at the recent 74th Cannes Film Festival, and longing for a different future

Suanshu Khurana

HERE IS something fundamentally deliberate about letters, the way its words allow for journeys never taken before. Mumbai-based filmmaker Payal Kapadia uses the tenderness and vulnerability of the written word as the main filament of her latest film, *A Night of Knowing Nothing* — a fleeting glimpse into the world of its anonymous protagonist, L, while cataloguing her love letters to her beloved, K.

"It's an essay film that mixes reality and fiction," says Kapadia, 35. The film uncovers the state of a nation. In this case, the idea of being young in contemporary India.

The film, produced by Petit Chaos, a French production house, has won the *Oeil d'or: Le Prix du documentaire* (The Golden Eye, the Documentary Prize) at the recent 74th Cannes Film Festival, making Kapadia the first Indian to receive the honour since the award's initiation six years ago. Kapadia's film was up against numerous other films, including the Academy Award-winning English filmmaker Andrea Arnold's *Cow*, American director Todd Haynes' *The Velvet Underground*, Irish director Mark Cousins' *The Storms of Jeremy Thomas*, and veteran Italian director and actor Marco Bellocchio's *Marx Can Wait*.

Kapadia places the love story in concomitance with the politics of the day. As it documents a relationship, the film archives contemporary realities. From caste discrimination, communalism, subversion of freedom of speech and expression, and censorship of political dissent, use of nationalism to trample on constitutional loyalties, to right-wing nationalists holding sway — issues that have been significant to India and the world in the last decade. "We've started seeing politics as something separate from us, but that's not the case. A filmmaker's political position shows clearly in her film. No one can shy away from that...and love is also political, no? Especially in our country, where falling in love comes with a great deal of social complications," says Kapadia, in an email interview from Paris.

A graduate from Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Kapadia roped in Bhumisuta Das, another FTII graduate, as the film's narrator. Even as L, who is a student at FTII, talks of love, it's not without the mention of caste since K's parents won't accept her, since she is from a lower caste. The shadowy realities of other incidents that disrupted campus life is what Kapadia trains her lens at — be it the University of Hyderabad student Rohith Vemula's suicide in 2016, FTII protests a year ago, where the students refused to accept actor-turned-politician Gajendra Chauhan as their chairperson, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) protests the next year or those at other universities.



GUILLAUME LUTZ, QUINZAINÉ

Kapadia uses silence through the film even when there is fervent activity on screen — students dancing, police manhandling. Her monochrome shots, many from FTII, are merged with other "found footage" to evoke a sense of melancholy.

The film title, too, she says, was "found". Kapadia's partner and the film's cinematographer and editor Ranabir Das had taken some photographs of the FTII campus, when the two were students there. On one of these shoots, he stumbled upon a poem on a wall, titled *A Night of Knowing Nothing*. The poet was unknown. "The title invoked a vulnerability. The film could be perceived as one long unpredictable night," says Kapadia.

Ranabir and Kapadia shot stray conversations in 2016-17, but there was no holistic vision until 2019. The two then got more footage from filmmakers and friends, apart from archival material, and decided to bind these "seemingly disconnected images" through the "fictional" letters. They were inspired by Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983) and Miguel Gomes' *Redemption* (2013), who used hybrid formats in non-fiction. "We used tools from reality and sometimes made up narratives to speak about our personal truth," she says.

In 2015, months before Kapadia began to shoot *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, she was at

## MANY TRUTHS

(Clockwise from above) Payal Kapadia and Ranabir Das at Cannes; stills from her films — *Afternoon Clouds*; *And What is the Summer Saying*; *A Night of Knowing Nothing*

the forefront of the infamous four-month protests at the FTII campus that were held against the appointment of Chauhan as the new chairperson. On the 68th day of the protest, while the students abandoned classes, Prashant Pathrabhe, the then director, issued a notice to the 2008 batch to vacate the hostel and asked for an assessment of film projects, which were mostly incomplete. Calling it "irrational", the students held him captive in his office. This was followed by a midnight crack-down by the police where five students were arrested. About 35 students were later named in the chargesheet. Kapadia was one of them. She was charged with disciplinary action, lost her scholarship and the opportunity to participate in an international exchange programme, alongside a few others.

Filmmaker Vikas Urs, Kapadia's batchmate, who was one of the five students arrested, recalls those tough months. "Like for a lot of us, and for Payal too, I think the film is a catharsis," says Urs.

After her 13-minute short film *Afternoon Clouds* made it to the 70th Cannes International Festival Cinéfondation in the competition category in 2017, FTII decided to support Kapadia with a letter and travel expenses. The authorities observed that she had been "disciplined". Kapadia, however, does



not delve into the issue. The matter is still ongoing in a Pune court.

Her mother, veteran artist Nalini Malani's politically motivated works has had quite an impact on Kapadia, too, who grew up watching "a lot of arthouse cinema". And, thus, at the heart of the film is an intense sense of yearning. "Maybe, this yearning can be translated into a desire for a certain kind of idea, future or society," she says. So, will *A Night of Knowing Nothing* eventually see the light of day in India? Kapadia is optimistic.

She recalls one of her mother's collaborations with former National School of Drama director Anuradha Kapur in 1997. Based on German playwright Bertolt Brecht's short story, *The Job*, Malani had created the sets for the performance. A 12-year-old Kapadia sat in the audience and watched the lines projected on the walls — "*By the sweat of thy brow, thy shall fail to earn thy bread*".

"These words still ring in my body. I feel a sense of hopelessness that my parents' generation failed to bring about an idea of India that was as inclusive as they had hoped for. Perhaps, the status quo was not challenged enough. So, now, we need to have greater accessibility in art practices for those who don't read about discrimination in books but who face it in their daily lives," she says.

and replace them with new characters. Each frame was important in the boxing sequences. It had three layers — mob in the backdrop, actors at the front row, and the arena. Daily shooting was a real challenge.

## How do you script your films?

I always have a notepad with me. I keep writing my thoughts and I transfer them to the computer later. For *Sarpatta Parambarai*, I approached the writer Tamil Prabha, who is familiar with Chennai's Dalit life. Before we could finalise the script, there were eight or nine drafts. Every draft saw the birth and death of many characters. For instance, one of my favourite characters was Rathie, whom we let go of. She was a daring woman, who ran a meat shop, and was the sister of Dancing Rose (Shabeer Kallarakkal).

## Do you think Sarpatta is your best movie?

All my works are my favourites. *Kaala* was obviously my best effort, and I was happy the way it triggered debates in society. But, I love *Attakathi* (2012), *Madras* (2014) and *Kabali* (2016), too. Personally, I am not fully happy with my movies. Each movie helps me to do the next. The criticisms I received for my previous films have helped me in *Sarpatta Parambarai*. So, I cannot compare them.

## Could you tell us about the casting in Sarpatta Parambarai?

Arya and I were talking about a project for a long time. Finally, when he came with a producer, the project became a reality. Arya had immense trust in me. While all the actors were of darker complexion, I worried about Arya's look, and he went all the way to get a tan. Maybe, without Arya I wouldn't have had this kind of freedom in selecting the characters.

## How has it been working with cinematographer G Murali?

G Murali and Sathyan Sooryan are among the cinematographers I always wanted to work with. I connect with them visually. Murali played a huge role in making *Madras* better. He relates to my frames and understands politics and ideologies.

## How do you curate your music?

I see music as an important tool that makes the movie experience deeper. I find Santhosh Narayanan a suitable colleague as we share aesthetics, emotions and politics. In *Sarpatta Parambarai*, the guitar was used initially, and I wanted it to be replaced with traditional instruments like the parai; bringing the sound of north Madras was the aim.

# DOWN IN JUNGLELAND



Ranjit Lal

Ranjit Lal is an author, environmentalist and bird watcher

# The Root of the Matter

Why transplanting trees is a bad idea

THEY ARE undoubtedly the most unglamorous parts of a plant, but without them no plant — tree, bush or grass — can survive. The taller the tree is the deeper will its root go. Its underground spread can be as much as three times the diameter of the tree's canopy. Roots also serve as repositories of nutrients (which is why some roots, like sweet potato and beet, are so nutritious!), especially in winters when the tree above shuts down food-producing operations.

Significantly, they also anchor the tree or plant into the ground and are designed to withstand astounding amounts of force, be it wind or rain. Roots are categorised into various types — depending on their function and where and how they grow. Not all roots, for example, grow from the bottom of the plant, heading south, some — called adventitious roots — sprout from the trunk and branches and stems and may head in any direction!

The roots are specialised in providing all that the plant or tree needs. Heading the charge into the earth is the root cap, which, as it plunges down, sloughs off, leaving a slimy lubricant in its wake and revealing what's called the apical meristem, which is kind of loaded with fresh root caps (I guess rather like fresh drilling bits), ready to elongate and dig on. Then, root hairs develop at the end of these to absorb the moisture and nutrients, and send these upstairs to the tree or plant!

Roots have power. They can split granite — and everyone knows that it is foolhardy to grow a fig tree too close to a house; it will insert its roots into the foundations, weakening the structure. Many historical monuments have been clasped by the python-like roots of fig trees of various kinds and are crumbling under the onslaught. Perhaps, one day, long-term time-lapse photography might be able to reveal how roots crack apart solid rock.

They are usually covered with mud, but roots are savvy. They can sense the force of gravity, and they can sniffle out sources of water and nutrients and sense obstacles in their paths. More than all that, they form a vital part of the plant's intelligence and communications network. Root hairs cultivate fungi in a symbiotic relationship in what is called mycorrhizae. The fungi comprising a



RANJIT LAL

## THE GREEN NETWORK

A banyan sending down prop roots

mass of threads called hyphae spread far and wide beyond the root network, supplying the plant with water and nutrients such as phosphorous, even making barter deals with other plants in the region. In return, it charges a hefty fee of up to 30 per cent of the plant's sugar production. This has been dubbed the "wood-wide-web". Roots can also sense what the plant is in need of: and will adjust its actions accordingly — growing slower or faster or deeper as the need maybe — or actively seeking out water, if that's what is required. The plants and trees growing in arid, desert areas, like the notorious *Prosopis juliflora* (*Vilayati kikar*), may send its roots down more than 50 m, which is why it is such a pain to remove!

All roots do not grow underground. The prop roots of the banyan sprout from branches and are used as column supports for the tree: secondary thickening of these roots and of other "buttress roots" at the base of the tree, help to support the huge stupendously heavy structure. Alternatively, the almost thread-like adventitious roots of the coconut palm may extend in a mesh 8 m across, far wider than the crown, and there may be 13,000 of these holding the tree firm in gales and typhoons.

Some roots even grow at canopy level. In dense rainforests, where the canopies of trees form a kind of roof, dead leaves and detritus starts to collect and decompose. The roots of the notorious strangler fig (also adventitious roots), clasp themselves around a host tree and suck up nutrients in parasitical fashion, and eventually kill its host. I remember being stunned by one such in Corbett; all that was left standing was the strangler fig's scaffolding with absolutely nothing in the middle.

Other roots grow upwards, from the ground or from the base of the plants. Mangrove roots grow this way and are equipped with high-quality filters, which remove the salt from briny waters.

Anyone who has tried to rip a plant out by its roots will know how difficult it is. The plant or sapling clings on its mesh of roots holding firm. This is just an indication of how important a root network is to hold the soil together. Which is why felling trees on forest slopes is an invitation to landslides after the first showers. As far as grasslands are concerned the same holds true — if you remove the grass by its roots, the soil loosens up and is quickly blown or washed away. Most roots love it where it's dark and damp underground. Expose them to fresh air and sky and they will wither and die; which is why transplanting trees may not be such a clever idea after all.

# ‘I create between the worlds of fiction and non-fiction’

Tamil filmmaker Pa Ranjith on his latest film *Sarpatta Parambarai*, regional politics, and the struggles of daily shooting during a pandemic

Arun Janardhanan

TAMIL FILMMAKER Pa Ranjith's latest outing, *Sarpatta Parambarai* (released in July on Amazon Prime) has actor Arya as Kabilan, a boxer from Black Town in old Madras. The film is set in the '70s, in north Chennai, a working-class region which had been, for decades, supplying labourers to the city. It tells the story of a socially-backward community, who loved the boxing game. Excerpts from a telephonic interview with Ranjith (38):

## How much of the film is fictional?

I'm not a historian or researcher, neither am I an academic nor are my movies documentaries. I experiment and create between the worlds of fiction and non-fiction. I have certain responsibilities as an artist, and my focus lies there. I ensure that I'm not distorting the facts when I use my creative freedom.

**The film captures the days of the late chief ministers M Karunanidhi and MG Ramachandran (MGR), and the Emergency. How do you see the contrast between the two leaders?**

The movie is set between 1975 and 1978, when Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK, founded in 1949) was ruling the state. The AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, founded in 1972), led by MGR, was emerging as a regional party. The movie looks at the political stand taken by the parties but beyond that there was nothing for or against any particular party. If it is about the sale of illicit liquor, for instance, people irre-



## HAND AND GLOVE

(Above) Pa Ranjith on the sets; a film still from *Sarpatta Parambarai*



spective of politics engaged in that. There were MGR supporters within the traditional DMK families, too. The character Rangan Vaathiyaar (played by Pasupathy) and his family are an example. I tried to show the work done by both the parties. Obviously, DMK was at the forefront of opposing the Emergency, and it was the most affected by it,

too. Elders have told me that there used to be boxers who sported the DMK symbol on their jackets at arenas. The period also saw the rising popularity of the AIADMK. If I had set the movie in the 1980s, AIADMK would have been the dominant party.

## How was it to shoot during the lockdown?

The movie was budgeted at nearly Rs 13-15 crore, the cost exceeded eventually. We finished the shoot in about 63 days, but maintaining the realistic feel was a real struggle. We needed crowds for scenes and that was a challenge in the lockdown. Some, who were infected with the coronavirus, had to leave the set, while some never returned. Then there were important actors who weren't able to complete their portions due to the infection. We had to reshoot, edit those parts,





# 12 THE WORLD/SPORT

## TOP OF THE WORLD



A rainbow balloon in Budapest in June. Reuters

### HUNGARY

#### Curbs on sales of LGBT-themed children's books

HUNGARY ORDERED shops on Friday to sell children's books seen as promoting homosexuality in "closed wrapping", stepping up restrictions that have set PM Viktor Orban on a collision course with the EU. The books were banned from being sold within 200 metres of a school or church. The order is the first to spell out the implications of a law passed in June banning the use of materials seen as promoting homosexuality at schools. **REUTERS**

### MYANMAR

#### New ASEAN envoy says wants full access

THE BRUNEI diplomat appointed by a Southeast Asian regional bloc as its special envoy to Myanmar said on Saturday he should be given full access to all parties when he visits the country, where the military overthrew an elected government. Speaking a day after his appointment by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Brunei's Erywan Yusof gave no date for his visit to Myanmar, whose civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other officials have been detained since the February coup. **REUTERS**

## Knife attacker injures 10 in Tokyo train, wanted to 'kill happy women'

### REUTERS

TOKYO, AUGUST 7

THE MAN alleged to have wounded 10 people in a knife attack on a Tokyo commuter train late on Friday told police he became incensed when he saw women who "looked happy" and wanted to kill them, Japanese media reported on Saturday.

Police arrested the 36-year-old man in another part of Tokyo after he slashed and stabbed people in the attack at about 8.40 pm (1140 GMT) on Friday on a train on the Odakyu Line in the western part of the city, media reported.

One victim, a female university student, was seriously wounded, while the rest suffered less severe injuries.

The *Sankei* newspaper reported that the suspect told police: "I began feeling like I wanted to kill women who looked happy about six years ago. Anyone was fine, I just wanted to kill a lot of people."

Other media, including broadcaster NHK, reported similar quotes from the suspect.

A police spokesman said they had nothing further to share on the details of the case when asked about the media reports on Saturday.

Violent crime is rare in Japan but there have been a spate of knife attacks by assailants unknown to the victims.



Rescue workers carry a person through a train station in Tokyo. Reuters



Afghan honour guards hold a wreath of flowers with a portrait of Dawa Khan Menapal, director of Afghanistan's Government Information Media Centre, in Kabul on Saturday. The Taliban shot and killed Menapal on Friday. AP

## Taliban enter north Afghan provincial capital, lawmaker says

TAMEEM AKHGAR & KATHY GANNON  
KABUL, AUGUST 7

TALIBAN FIGHTERS entered the capital of northern Afghanistan's Jawzjan province Saturday, a provincial lawmaker said, after sweeping through nine of 10 districts in the province.

The government did not deny lawmaker Mohammad Karim Jawzjani's claim that Taliban fighters had entered Sheberghan, but said the city had not fallen. If the city falls, it will be the second provincial capital in as many days to succumb to the Taliban. Several other of the country's 34 provincial capitals are threatened.

On Friday, the Taliban took control of the southwestern Nimroz provincial capital of Zaranj, where the government says it is still battling insurgents inside the capital.

Sheberghan is particularly strategic because it is the stronghold of US-allied Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum, whose militias are among those resurrected to aid the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces.

Heavy airstrikes were reported by residents of Sheberghan who also said the Taliban had

## Pak NSA: US not seeking military base in Pakistan

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf has said that no US official or lawmaker asked for a military base in Pakistan, rejecting reports that the Biden administration was seeking American military bases in the country to influence developments in neighbouring Afghanistan. Yusuf made the comments as he wrapped up his 10-day trip to the US. He met senior officials during his visit before leaving for Islamabad, *Dawn* newspaper reported on Saturday. "The word base was not mentioned, not even once, during our talks, except in the media," Yusuf said. **PTI**

freed prisoners from the city jail.

Taliban fighters have swept through large swathes of Afghanistan at surprising speed, initially taking districts, many in remote areas. In recent weeks they have laid siege to several provincial capitals across the country. **AP**

## 50 held in Pak over attack on Hindu temple

M ZULQERNAIN  
LAHORE, AUGUST 7

PAKISTAN'S LAW enforcement agencies on Saturday arrested over 50 people, including the main suspects, allegedly involved in an attack on a Hindu temple in a remote town of the country's Punjab province, a day after the Supreme Court admonished the authorities for their failure to protect the shrine.

They also booked 150 people in connection with the attack on Wednesday.

A mob attacked the temple at Bhong city of Rahim Yar Khan district of the province, some 590 kms from Lahore, in protest against the release of an eight-year-old Hindu boy, who was arrested for allegedly urinating in a local seminary.

"More than 50 suspects have been arrested so far through analysis of video footages in a shameful ransacking incident at a temple in Rahim Yar Khan," Punjab province Chief Minister Usman Buzdar tweeted. **PTI**

## Journalists briefly held in Pak over 'scandalous' talk

**Lahore:** Pakistani authorities briefly detained two prominent journalists in Lahore on Saturday, drawing condemnation from human rights activists, political leaders, and the country's media.

A senior official from Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said Amir Mir and Imran Shafiq were detained after posting "scandalous content" on social media. The FIA later said the two had been released on bail after questioning.

The content involved a video, which was an informal round-table discussion where journalists discussed the Army's role in politics and the judiciary in Pakistan. The video was posted on YouTube, the FIA said. **AP**

## DELTA VARIANT SPREADS ACROSS COUNTRY

# US now averaging 100,000 new Covid infections a day

Increase from average of 11,000 new daily cases in June

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
AUGUST 7

THE US is now averaging 100,000 new Covid-19 infections a day, returning to a milestone last seen during the winter surge in yet another bleak reminder of how quickly the delta variant has spread through the country.

The US was averaging about 11,000 cases a day in late June. Now the number is 107,143.

It took the US about nine months to cross the 100,000 average case number in November before peaking at about 250,000 in early January. Cases bottomed out in June but took about six weeks to go back above 100,000, despite a vaccine that has been given to more than 70% of the adult population.

The seven-day average for daily new deaths also increased, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. It rose over the past two weeks from about 270 deaths per day to nearly 500 a day as of Friday.

The virus is spreading quickly through unvaccinated populations, especially in the South where hospitals have been overrun with patients.

Health officials are fearful that cases will continue to soar if more Americans don't embrace the vaccine.

"Our models show that if we don't (vaccinate people), we could be up to several hundred thousand cases a day, similar to our surge in early January," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky said on CNN this week.

The number of Americans hospitalised with the virus has also skyrocketed and it has gotten so bad that many hospitals are scrambling to find beds for patients in far-off locations.



People wait in line to get a Covid test to travel overseas at an airport in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. AP

## EXPLAINED Hesitancy over masks, vaccines

THE DELTA variant is driving the latest surge in cases in the US, and preliminary research in the UK suggests that even vaccinated people can easily transmit this strain of the virus. Vaccinations do, however, offer strong protection against serious illness. But the US has seen vaccine hesitancy in a large section of the population, and the quick spread of Delta has coincided with a sharp surge in hospitalisation and death rates. Experts say the situation has been worsened by a rising hesitancy among people to wear masks, and the scrapping of most social distancing norms.

Houston officials say the latest wave of Covid-19 cases is pushing the local health care system to nearly "a breaking point," resulting in some patients having to be transferred out of the city to get medical care, including one who had to be taken to North Dakota.

## UK PM decides not to self-isolate after aide tests positive for Covid

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, AUGUST 7

THERE WAS growing anger within the Opposition Labour party ranks on Saturday over UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's decision to not self-isolate following an aide testing positive for Covid-19.

Downing Street said Johnson will not follow the government's 10-day quarantine guidance for people who come in close contact with someone who goes on to test positive for Covid-19.

According to the *Guardian*, a senior government source said that Johnson and the official in question were "side-by-side" on several occasions.

However, the PM's spokesperson said Johnson was never in close contact "with anyone who has tested positive".

The Labour party accused Johnson of "cooking up a reason to be above the rules". **PTI**

## Australia win 4th T20 to end losing run in Bangladesh

ASSOCIATES PRESS  
DHAKA, AUGUST 7

LEGSPINNER MITCHELL Swepson claimed a career-best 3-12 as Australia ended its losing run in Bangladesh with a hard-fought three-wicket victory in the fourth Twenty20 on Saturday.

Swepton, one of the two changes by Australia, used his googly and quicker deliveries to perfection to limit Bangladesh to 104-9.

Bangladesh, which had already clinched the five-match series, created a chance to make it 4-0 by reducing Australia to 65-6 in the 11th over but Ashton Agar and Ashton Turner batted sensibly to help the side overhaul the target with six balls remaining.

Agar was key in the 105-7 winning total, making a run-a-ball-27 with two fours and one six.

After combining for a match-changing 34 runs with Turner, Agar was dismissed by fast bowler Shoriful Islam when the side was six runs from victory.

Australia won with Turner on 9 and Andrew Tye on 4.

Offspinner Mahedi Hasan broke through in the first over, dismissing captain Matthew Wade for 2. But Dan Christian appeared set to win the match on his own when he struck Shakib Al Hasan for five sixes in his one over.

The arrival of fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman shifted the momentum when he removed Christian after his 39 off 15 balls.

"We've worked hard over the last few games and not had the result go our way. It's hard work out there," Australia captain Matthew Wade said. "The way Dan played, that's the difference between moving and losing sometimes. We needed big runs up top, and that changed the match."

The fifth and final T20 is on Monday.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Australia 105 for 7 (Christian 39) beat Bangladesh 104 for 9 (Swepton 3-12, Tye 3-18) by three wickets

# Root, Bumrah set up intriguing final day

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY  
AUGUST 7

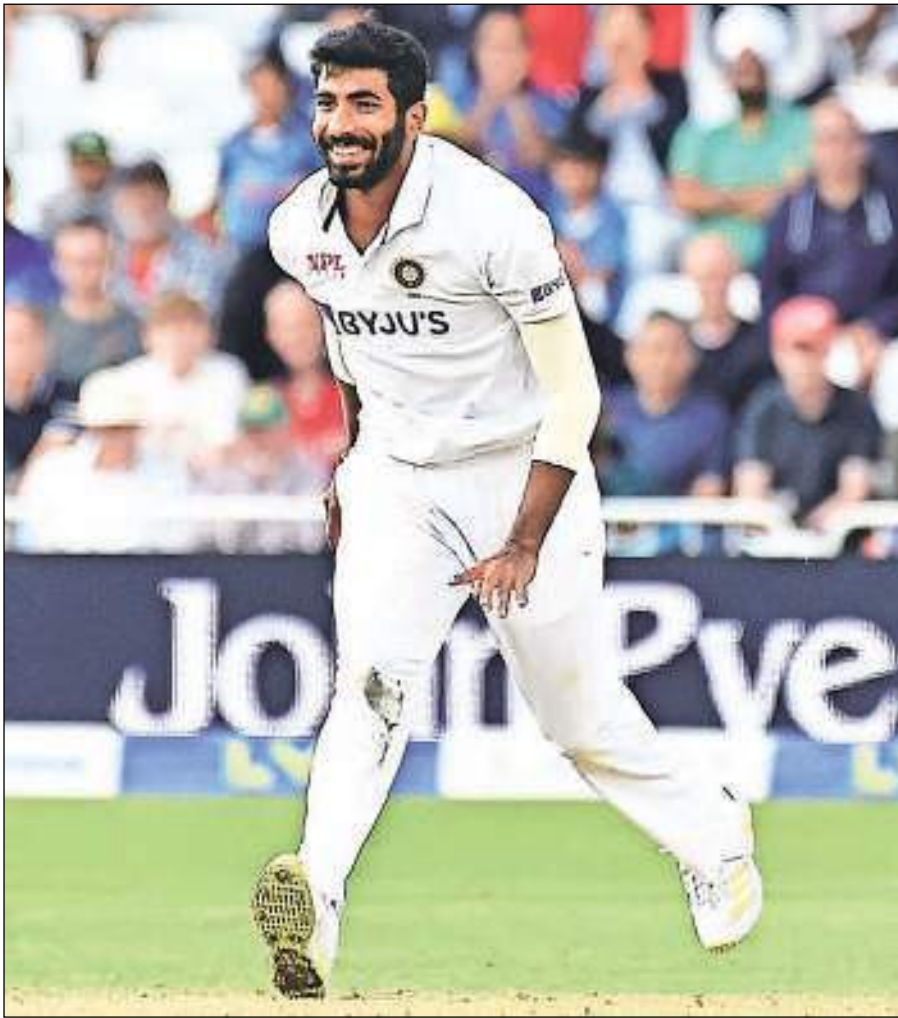
JOE ROOT drove Shardul Thakur past mid-on and let out his emotions. His batting form had dipped since mid-February. His captaincy has been under the scanner. At the pre-match press conference, Root was asked about if the next 10 Tests – five against India followed by five in the Ashes – could determine his captaincy future. The England captain didn't brush aside the question and sort of agreed that the results in the two high-profile series might have a bearing. Then again, he is not an average Joe and his masterclass gave his team a chance at Trent Bridge.

Root's 21st Test century, his first in England in three years, was one of the best of his 106-game career. For the first time in four days, the sun shone unfettered and play was uninterrupted. The pitch and conditions became easier for batting. But Root was up against a top-class Indian pace attack spearheaded by Jasprit Bumrah, who bagged a five-for in England's second innings to announce his return to form after the World Test Championship (WTC) final full. The hosts posted 303 in their second innings to give India a victory target of 209. Root scored 109 of those runs.

India made a strong start to the chase but lost KL Rahul to finish Day 4 at 52/1.

It was a gripping day of Test cricket; a day which in Indian sporting context belonged to Neeraj Chopra. Not often does an India-England game gets overshadowed by other sports events, but 87,58m has now been etched in sporting history.

From England's point of view, however, Root held the key to the day. At 46/2 and trailing by 95 runs on first innings, trouble beckoned. After a streaky four against Bumrah to get off the mark, Root steadily grew into the game. A stiff breeze was blowing across the ground and Mohammed Siraj was getting his inswingers going. England's batting talisman attested his intent with a couple of gorgeous boundaries against the bowler. Back-to-back fours off



The 5/64 on Saturday was Jasprit Bumrah's second five-for at Trent Bridge. AP

Mohammed Shami were even better. Root was taking the game to India.

Virat Kohli tried to keep his opposite number off strike and attack the dour Dom Sibley. The play nearly worked. For a while, Root's batting became a little twitchy. He regained his rhythm by hitting a four off Shami that also took him to his half-century.

Kohli versus James Anderson is not the only subplot of the series. This is also Root's challenge to go shoulder to shoulder with his 'Fab Four' mates – Kohli, Kane Williamson and Steve Smith. This was his 10th Test hundred as England skipper. Only Peter May,

Graham Gooch and Alastair Cook are ahead of him.

### Back to his best

Bumrah copped flak for his performance in the WTC final. Coming back to the red-ball fold after a few months, the fast bowler was undercooked against New Zealand in June. Now, he is back in his element. The delivery that dismissed a well-set Root pitched on the fifth-stump channel and angled in, carrying the extra bounce of the second new ball. Root edged it to Rishabh Pant.

Sam Curran's scalp was equally important. The left-hander, as is his wont, was frustrating

India. England's lead was swelling alarmingly. Bumrah accounted for Curran with a short delivery that cramped the latter for room. A brilliant yorker castled Stuart Broad next ball. The pacer finished with 5/64 from 19 overs on top of his 4/46 in the first innings.

England had one significant partnership – 89 runs between Root and Sibley for the third wicket – surrounded by a few more useful associations. Root's partners were letting him down. Jonny Bairstow looked good, but pulled a Siraj half-tracker straight to Ravindra Jadeja at deep square leg. The field positioning suggested that India were expecting

## Bumrah copped flak for his performance in the WTC final. Coming back to the red-ball fold after a few months, the fast bowler was undercooked against New Zealand in June. Now, he is back in his element.

it. Dan Lawrence, after playing a superb shot, shuffled a little too far across against Thakur to be trapped leg-before. Jos Buttler shouldered arm to an incoming delivery from Thakur to be bowled.

From India's perspective, all 20 wickets in the match went to their fast bowlers. The pace quartet did their job, although Shami didn't have a good day on Saturday. Another 157 runs are required for victory on the final day, as the onus shifts to the batsmen.

**SCOREBOARD**  
**England (1st innings):** 183  
**India (1st innings):** 278  
**England (2nd Innings):** 303  
R Burns c Pant b Siraj 18 (49b, 3x4), D Sibley c Pant b Bumrah 28 (133b, 2x4), Z Crawley c Pant b Bumrah 6 (7b, 1x4), J Root c Pant b Bumrah 109 (172b, 14x4), J Bairstow c Jadeja b Siraj 30 (50b, 4x4), D Lawrence lbw b Thakur 25 (32b, 4x4), J Buttler b Thakur 17 (22b, 3x4), S Curran c Siraj b Bumrah 32 (45b, 4x4), O Robinson c Rahane b Shami 15 (12b, 2x4), S Broad b Bumrah 0 (1b), J Anderson not out 0 (2b)

**Extras:** 23 (b 5, lb 2, nb 10, w 6).  
**Bowling:** J Bumrah 19-2-64-5, Md Siraj 25-3-84-2, Md Shami 15.5-1-72-1, S Thakur 13-1-37-2, R Jadeja 13-3-39-0.

**India (2nd Innings):** 52/1  
KL Rahul c Buttler b Broad 26 (38b, 6x4), R Sharma batting 12 (34b), C Pujara batting 12 (13b, 3x4)  
**Extras:** 2 (lb 1, nb 1)  
**Bowling:** J Anderson 5-1-12-0, S Broad 5-1-18-1, O Robinson 4-0-21-0  
At stumps Day 4  
India need 157 runs

## Messi to hold conference; PSG in talks, reports say

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
AUGUST 7

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN and Lionel Messi are in negotiations on a contract after financially troubled Barcelona was unable to keep the superstar, a person with knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press on Saturday.

Messi's legal team is in Paris and negotiations have seen an annual net salary of around 25 million euros (\$29.5 million) discussed which would be lower than his Barcelona pay, the person said on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing talks.

Barcelona announced that Messi will give a news conference at the Camp Nou on Sunday at noon local time (1000 GMT) but has not specified what it is about. Even so, Barcelona's coach and players did not wait to make public their tributes and farewells to the star.

Barcelona bid farewell to Messi in statements and social media posts on Thursday, making him the most desired free agent in soccer history after his contract expired. The Catalan club had hoped to keep Messi, who agreed to a pay cut, but it still wouldn't have complied with the Spanish league's financial regulations.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino was in contact with his fellow Argentine as Barcelona announced on Thursday that Messi would be leaving the club he joined as a 13-year-old before winning every major trophy and world player of the year titles.

Funded for a decade by Qatari sovereign wealth, PSG is one of the few clubs in the world that can finance a deal. The club is exploring sponsorship deals in South America on the back of being able to sign Messi. There was no immediate response from Messi's media team. PSG, which was opening its French league campaign later Saturday against Troyes, didn't respond to an email with questions seeking comment.

Messi led Barcelona to 35 titles, including four Champions League crowns, while also earn-



"Nothing will ever be the same, not Camp Nou, not the city of Barcelona, not even ourselves," veteran defender Pique said in a message to Messi. Reuters

ing a record six Ballon d'Or awards. But club president Joan Laporta deemed retaining the best player in club history, even at a 50% discount to his previous wages, as too risky to its beleaguered finances.

While Messi waited to speak on his future, Barcelona's coach and players used social media to express their farewells to the 34-year-old star.

Coach Ronald Koeman said Saturday that "it is still difficult to grasp that you will never play again for Barcelona."

Veteran defender Gerard Pique, who had played with Messi since the time both were teenagers at Barcelona's youth academy, said late Friday that "nothing will ever be the same, not Camp Nou, not the city of Barcelona, not even ourselves. We met each other when we were 13 years old and had our careers before us. What a career! If we had written it ourselves, it could not have been better."

Left back Jordi Alba, who developed an almost unstoppable passing connection with Messi for the Argentine to score, said that "it has been a privilege to share these nine years with you. How I enjoyed your passes to meet my run and my pass back to you that always worked. And how much I am going to miss you," Alba said.





# How Tokyo’s 7 medals would impact the trajectory of Indian sport



**HEALING**  
NEERAJ'S GOLD

FOR YEARS it hurt —the two fourth-place finishes of Milkha Singh and PT Usha at the Olympics. It was the closest that Indian athletics reached the vicinity of the podium. As much as Milkha and Usha were romanticised and revered, there was still a part of their own psyche that refused to come into grips with the near miss. No longer though, as Chopra's historic throw in Tokyo shall exorcise the ghosts of Rome and Los Angeles. Usha herself thanked Chopra for realising her unfulfilled dream. Beyond that, Indian athletics now has a legacy, a precedent and pioneer, and a totem who is just 23 years old, who has just begun his career and with the potential to take Indian athletics to further heights.



**RENAISSANCE**  
HOCKEY BRONZE

FORTY ONE years of crushing pain is over. For long, it seemed Indian hockey was quietly rolling down the slope of ignominy, its heyday a sodden reel of the past, beyond redemption and retrieval. The longer the wait for an Olympic medal continued for the record Olympic champs, the lonelier Indian hockey felt. But the men's bronze medal—and the near bronze medal of the women's team—could potentially wake up the sleeping giant. Hockey's stature and popularity could soar, the team would only emerge stronger, bag more laurels, and the sport in the country of hockey's Bradman, Dhyan Chand, would witness a second wind that could reinstate the departed glory.



**MESSIAH**  
MIRABAI'S SILVER

FOR 21 years, Karnam Malleswari's bronze remained India's only weightlifting medal in the Olympics. Though a popular sport, it seemed drifting down the drain after it got embroiled in doping scandals. The sport was teetering in an existential crisis when Malleswari's spiritual heir burst into the circuit from Imphal, with a beatific smile and charming demeanour. She showed nerves of steeliest steel to overcome injuries and hurt and chart a new path in India's weightlifting history. A path that would be devotedly followed by a thousand unknown Mirabais in the country. The most inspiring of India's medals could inspire a barbell revolution, and no doubt restore the credibility of the sport in the country.



**SUCCESSOR**  
LOVLINA'S BRONZE

IN MARY Kom's Olympics swan-song, she found her successor too—Lovlina Borgohain, the doughy, gritty boxer from Baromukhia. Like her mentor, she has technique, tactical awareness and composure to be more than a one-off, to be a talisman of women's boxing in years to come, to rule the world for many more years. In her bouts in the Olympics, she illustrated Mary-like tenacity to not surrender and keep fighting, even if your adversary has a better repertoire and reputation, as was the case during her semi-finals. Her emergence came just around the time when women's boxing was slithering away from public eyes. Her emergence would catalyse its reemergence.



**SUSTENANCE**  
WRESTLING'S SILVER, BRONZE

SINCE THE Beijing Games, India has been churning out world-class wrestlers at a breezy clip. But winning medals, especially in Olympics, is indispensable in sustaining the legacy from going askance. All it would take is a poor outing for an Olympic sport to go out of fashion. But Ravi and Bajrang ensured that wrestling would continue as India's most prolific medal-winning stream in this century. Bajrang's medal was more or less guaranteed, the colour of the medal was the only speculation, he is ranked second and considered one of the finest.



**CONTINUITY**  
SINDHU'S BRONZE

Though she could not upgrade her silver in Rio, her bronze was well-earned, accomplished as it was against a tough pool of competitors. As with the wrestlers, it was important that she keeps winning medals so as to keep the torch of tradition flickering, to reassert India's stakes as one of the badminton powerhouses of the world. The medal could fuel her for more glory and a shot at completing the medal set in Paris. It also put her in a unique position among the pantheon of some of India's greatest sportspersons because of now having been there, and done that, across two Olympic Games. A silver and a bronze now matches the haul of Sushil Kumar and solidifies her legacy as one of the best.

MEDAL TALLY				
COUNTRY	G	S	B	TOTAL
1. China	38	31	18	87
2. USA	36	39	33	108
3. Japan	27	12	17	56
4. ROC	20	26	23	69
5. G Britain	20	21	22	63
6. Australia	17	07	22	46
7. Germany	10	11	16	37
8. Netherlands	10	11	12	33
9. Italy	10	10	19	39
47. India	01	02	04	07

\*G- Gold, S- Silver, B- Bronze

## HIGHLIGHT REEL

**BASKETBALL**  
**DURANT STEPS UP**  
Kevin Durant scored 29 points and joined Carmelo Anthony as the only three-time men's gold medalists in Olympic history. Jayson Tatum added 19 and the US held off France 87-82 on Saturday to win the title.

**FOOTBALL**  
**BRAZIL TAKE THE CROWN**  
Malcom scored in the 108th minute and Brazil won its second consecutive gold medal in men's soccer with a 2-1 victory over Spain. Brazil also won gold on home soil five years ago at the iconic Maracana Stadium. Neymar struck the winner in a 5-4 shootout after a 11 draw with Germany. Brazil had a 1-0 lead at the half but Mikel Oyarzabal tied it for Spain in the 61st minute off a cross from Carlos Soler.

**ATHLETICS**  
**FELIX EXITS ON A HIGH**  
Allyson Felix made her record-setting 11th trip after starring as the headliner on a 4x400 relay win that featured a who's who of American running. With the gold medal dangling from her neck and the Star-Spangled Banner playing in the near-empty stadium. "I took a moment just to close my eyes and take it in one last time," Felix said. After the final race of the final Games of the 35-year-old sprinter's career, Felix leaves the stage having won the most medals of any track athlete in US history.



# Well begun is half done

**SHIVANI NAIK**  
MUMBAI, AUGUST 7

THE 87.03 metres throw. Not to be mistaken for that 87.58 metres one which fetched Neeraj Chopra the gold. Chopra's first rush in the final - the opening act, India's first step in track & field, Chopra's rocket take-off, his open challenge to Johannes Vetter to see who was better on the big night - was the defining moment of India's 2020+1 Olympics climax. The 87.03 joined a pantheon of statistical coincidences, harbingers of blazing medals India has won over the years in Olympic finals. That the gold medal was sealed with the very first of six throws is clear. Some might even say that the message went out to the field in qualification itself. Chopra 86.65m bt Vetter 85.64m. But on Finals Day, it was the 87.03m that set the tone, even while it was clear that 85m was going to be the new 90m of javelin this summer. While Chopra contemplated gunning for the Olympic record (90.5m) as well as his personal best, it was the impact first throw and "steady" second that actually brought home the gold. "If your first throw is good, you gain confidence. And it also automatically puts pressure on all the other athletes plus you yourself feel good about yourself," he would explain later. But going big on the first throw sits nicely with all of India's medals that have come on the back of aggressive opening attempts in Finals. Abhinav Bindra's 10.7 on the first shot in the Beijing 10m air rifle Finals. Gold. Gagan Narang's 10.7 four years later in London. Bronze. Vijay Kumar's 5/5 in Rapid Fire Pistol. Silver. Shooting success has come on the back of that first near-perfect shot. A good start sets the ball rolling, though the last shot could be just as important, or any other attempts delivered in the course of a final. So, Bindra bookended his final with 10.7 and a Hukling 10.8. Narang finished with another monster 10.7. The confident first stride - either to take the lead, like Chopra did (and never let go) when the best effort gets the medal, or to get into the groove, when scores add up - has been the hallmark of forays into medal territory. Finals for Indians have also gone downhill if the starts were poor, middling or simply not enormous. In shooting, Jitu Rai (9.5), Joydeep Karmakar (10.1) previously, and Saurabh Chaudhary (10.1) in Tokyo, are cases in point.

## Chopra's first throw of 87.03m put pressure on the rest of the field and almost decided the gold at the outset itself



An 87.03m to kick off the contest dumped almighty pressure on Johannes Vetter, and also put the gold seemingly out of reach of the Czechs and German Julian Webber. AP

The 7s and 8s in Archery this time to kick off for Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das have proven more damaging than anything in the clutch - which is assumed to be the weakness. But the poor starts can bring challenges undone.

**Psychology of a fast start**  
An 87.03m to kick off the contest dumped almighty pressure on Vetter, and also put the gold seemingly out of reach of the Czechs and German Webber. While it may be simplistic to assume that Chopra was the form player going into Tokyo, it will rank as one of the smartest tactics to go all-out at the start, and draw desperation and rushed mistakes from Vetter by baiting him to go for '90m or no gold' scenario. While the top eight throwers got six at-

tempts, the bar was set on an above-average 87m throw at the outset, which surely would've upset their own pacing or momentum-building, knowing that Chopra had fired home a biggie and might have enough in the tank to go even further. While Vetter's fidgety restlessness preceded his reputation as the 90+ thrower, coming into the Olympics he was struggling to find his rhythm, which would've given Chopra confidence. Still, it was audacious to go for 85+ in qualification, way above the expected 82-mark. And to sow netting doubts about just how much further he could go. As gold medals go, this was taking it away from the field in a fast-break even before others could settle in and grip their spears.

For India, the 210 kg entry of weightlifter Mirabai Chanu when she won silver was a bold start. It wasn't that the Indian was intending to go straight for that total. But in what was a psychological masterstroke, the mere entry noting was bound to put pressure on Chinese Zhizhi Hou to think if her Snatch world record was in danger - even if it wasn't. India's gold medals come in all manners. The first hockey team sent out in 1928 returned as Olympic champions, and then hockey couldn't stop winning. Abhinav Bindra couldn't stop standing still in deep focus to pick the first individual gold at Beijing. On Saturday, Neeraj Chopra's javelin couldn't stop flying. Not after a 87.03m first throw. Somewhere in between that first statement of intent and the elusive, coveted 90m mark, came the golden mark of 87.58m.

## Former coach recalls a chubby youngster

**NITIN SHARMA**  
PANCHKULA, AUGUST 7

JAVELIN COACH Naseem Ahmad remembers the day in 2011 when a chubby 13-year-old named Neeraj Chopra came to the Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex in Panchkula. The teenager travelled over four hours from his native, Khandra village, near Panipat, to enquire about the process of getting admission at the sports academy that had one of the only two synthetic tracks available in Haryana at the time. That was a big step for the youngster to take in his budding athletics career. An even bigger one, the biggest yet, came on Saturday, when he launched a javelin 87.58 metres at the Tokyo Olympic Stadium to become only the second individual gold medallist at the Olympics from the country. It's an achievement that has created memories, and one that has brought back quite a few for Ahmad. "I still remember how Neeraj would watch his seniors training at the nursery," recalls an emotional Ahmad. "He'd sit with his notebook and take tips from them. He would never shy away from training and would always set targets of winning each day's round with the group. To see him win the gold medal today on the biggest stage is the greatest joy for us. And I am sure he will be spending time with the javelin throwers from the other countries just like he did here with his seniors and friends post training or competition." shares an emotional Ahmad. Chopra first learnt the art of javelin throwing from coach Jaiver Singh in Panipat. In Panchkula he trained from 2011 till early 2016. But it wasn't just the field event Ahmad would make him train for. At the stadium near the foothills of the Shivalik Range, Chopra's morning sessions would be followed by him training with the long-distance runners, and then the javelin event again in the evening. Staying at the hostel in Panchkula with him were also a few friends who used to train with him in Panipat. They weren't bereft of Chopra's constant questioning about the sport either. Narender Ranbir, a Paralympian from London 2012 and Rio 2016, and silver medallist at the 2014 Para Asian Games, shared a room with Chopra when they were in Panipat. *Read full story on Indianexpress.com*

# From Khudan to Tokyo, Bajrang Punia's love for wrestling pays off

**NIHAL KOSHIE**  
AUGUST 7

IT IS a story that dates back to when wrestler Bajrang Punia was about 13-years-old. Balwan Singh, his father, still narrates it with pride. At a dangal near Khudan village, where the family is from, Bajrang grappled with a heavier wrestler and defeated him. "The other pehelwan was about 15 kilograms heavier. Bajrang didn't hesitate. He out-muscled his opponent. I think it was an exhibition bout. There are no videos of it. But I remember he got the better of his opponent," Balwan says, chuckling with joy. Medals his son won in Asian Games, Commonwealth, World Championship, and now the Olympics are close to his heart, but there is a reason Balwan remembers this particular day. The little-known win convinced Balwan his boy was meant to be a wrestler. He was to put the family's name back in the wrestling spotlight. In telling fashion too, by out-manoeuving Kazakhstan's Daulet

Niyazbekov 8-0. **Strong, fearless** A pehelwan himself, Balwan realised that a young Bajrang had two qualities that the akharas across the region could not teach- natural strength and fearlessness. Now 27, Bajrang's comebacks when trailing in the final minute is the stuff of legends. He fought back from the brink during the gold medal match of the Asian Championship and the bronze medal bout at the World Championships two years ago. His father is amused when asked how he remains confident though the clock is running down. "Even as a teenager, he won bouts after staring at defeat. He is mentally strong but equally important is his smartness. He is quick to spot a window of opportunity and backs himself. I was like this in my younger days." Balwan is at home in Sonipat. Six years ago, the family moved from Khudan and closer to the Sports Authority of India centre where Bajrang trains. There is signage fixed across the boundary wall with pictures of Bajrang at felicitations. The Olympic rings painted at the top

of the building reflect the house owner's status. In the evening Balwan sits on the porch, passersby nod in acknowledgment. **Unfulfilled career** Balwan wrestled in dangals for a good part of his youth. A promising university-level wrestler, he dropped out because he had to tend to the three-acre land the family owned. Times were tough back, Balwan says. "I don't want to make it sound like it was a burden, but I had three daughters and two sons. You have to think of the future too when you have a big family. When the time comes, people will ask what the father does or how much land he owns," Balwan adds. Through all his troubles, his one dream was to get his sons into wrestling. Harinder, the older son, followed in his father's footsteps and joined an akhada. But like his father, he had to give it up and work in the fields. Bajrang was the last big hope. "Bajrang was not mischievous and he towed the line at home. The only time we had to be strict with him was when his obsession for wrestling went overboard. But nobody really complained. We wanted a



Bajrang's father Balwan Singh (second from right), mother Om Pyari (right) and older brother Harinder (centre) at their home in Sonipat. File

pehelwan in our family." Bajrang's mother Om Pyari enforced discipline in the house. However, seeing Bajrang's passion for the sport she admits to sparing the

rod a few times. She too has a treasure trove of stories about a young Bajrang. But this one cracks her up even today. It was a Sunday morning and Bajrang hadn't woken up till 9 am. She went towards his bed to jolt him awake only to step back surprised. Bajrang had placed pillows and sheets in such a way to give an impression that he was in the bed. He was nowhere to be seen. "He had left home at 3 am. We knew if he was not at home or in the immediate surroundings he would be at the akhada. That day he went to the akhada and didn't return till noon. I scolded him for trying to fool us but in my heart, I was happy to see his drive," Om Pyari says. Bajrang first followed his brother Harinder to an akhada in Khudan. This was a practice most youngsters followed in the area. "Almost every second or third house in and around our village has someone who has been a wrestler," Harinder says. Soon it was obvious who was the more talented of the two.

**Prodigy on tractor** A special day on the dangal calendar is

Shivaratri. If a wrestler chooses to, he can compete in at least a dozen bouts. Bajrang was always eager. "My father, Bajrang and I would go on a tractor from one village to another. Bajrang would finish one competition at one place, hop onto the tractor and we would go to the next. He must have been around 10 but everyone could see he was talented," Harinder says looking back. The little joys of being on the wrestling circuit made Bajrang determined to work harder. "Sometimes he would win Rs 10, on other days it was a box of ladoos, or a bag of oranges and some churma. In winter, the prize was kilo of rewari or groundnuts. We had a tough life back then. Little things were precious. Bajrang and I discuss those days fondly," Harinder says. On Friday, as his younger brother began his quest for an Olympic medal, Harinder went on a pilgrimage of 15 temples in his village. "I have been doing this since Bajrang's cadet days. On days he is competing, I am praying for him. I don't check my phone nor do I ask anyone about the result. Only when I get back home do I get to know the result. Prayers ensure Bajrang never disappoints."



“

I dedicate this medal to Milkha Singh. Hopefully he will be watching from the heavens.

”

NEERAJ CHOPRA  
AFTER WINNING THE GOLD MEDAL

87.58 m, a new high

Used to celebrating fourth-place finishes till now, India now has a golden tale to savour thanks to Neeraj Chopra’s superlative effort



**GOLDEN ARM:** Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra won India's first-ever athletics gold medal, with a best throw of 87.58 metres on his second attempt. *AP*

**NIHAL KOSHIE**  
AUGUST 7

MORE THAN half a century after Milkha Singh looked back for a fraction of a second and 37 years after PT Usha forgot to dip at the finish line resulting in heart-breaking fourth-place finishes, the glorious flight of Neeraj Chopra's javelin gave the country its first-ever track and field medal, a gold.

Chopra's speed on the runway, the wide block, long pull of the throwing arm, wonderful alignment of the spear with his motor movements and balance came together on the day it mattered most as he was the supreme thrower at the Olympic Stadium. The Indian looked relaxed in a white head-band and fluidly threw 87.03 metres in his first attempt. Chopra's turn was second on the roster for the first three rounds (after which the bottom four get eliminated) but it was clear he was the man to beat.

He looked back at his coaching staff in the stands and lifted his arms even before his second throw could land. It was recorded at 87.58 metres, which was to be the best in the final. Chopra being way ahead of the field was not the biggest surprise. By the end of the first three throws, the contemporary star in men's javelin and the favourite to win gold, Germany's Johannes Vetter was out. Looking displeased with the runway, Vetter, a man who has made 90-metre-plus throws look routine, never got close to his best. After a first attempt of 82.52 metres, he turned over his ankle and slipped in his next throw. His third throw, like the second, was also a foul.

It was ironic that the German bowed out even as two of his countrymen, biomechanics expert Dr Klaus Bartonietz and coach Uwe Hohn were in Chopra's corner watching him out-class the field. Once Vetter exited with Chopra taking the early lead, the rest of the field was fighting for silver and bronze. Chopra dropped to 76.79 metres in his third throw and fouled the fourth and fifth but had the historic gold almost in the bag by then. On the final attempt, he went all out to register 84.24 metres.

**Near-misses end**

Weightlifting, boxing, badminton, wrestling and hockey had brought goose-bumps which lasted nearly a fortnight during the course of the Tokyo Olympics. However, the breakthrough gold medal from the 23-year-old from Khandra village in Panipat ended years of near misses, tales of which have been romanticised with each retelling but were actually stories of heartbreak and shattered dreams.

Once every four years, a country obsessed with the price of gold, hoped and prayed for

**GOLD AND COUNTING**

Cash awards and other perks for Neeraj Chopra

Haryana	₹6 cr, govt job
Punjab	₹2 cr
Union Govt	₹75 lakh
BCCI	₹1 crore
CSK	₹1 cr, Jersey No. 8758.

a medal of any colour with the famed rings on them. Now 74 years after Independence, Indian athletes won't feel like outsiders when they walk into an Olympic Stadium again. Being an 'Olympian' won't matter as much as it did before Chopra's medal. The bar has been set higher. Grassroot coaches have a fresh story which ends on a happy note. Milkha and Usha remain giants who inspired generations of athletes to aspire to a precious medal. But with one gigantic throw into the Tokyo night sky, Chopra took the sport to new heights. Despite bags of medals at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, the Olympics seemed a bridge too far even for some of India's greatest athletes. Until Saturday evening.

The penultimate day of the Tokyo Olympics began with golfer Aditi Ashok, ranked 200 in the world, playing outstandingly well but finishing outside the medals by one stroke. A few hours later, wrestler Bajrang Punia won bronze in the 65kg freestyle category to make it six medals and match India's best-ever performance from the 2012 London Olympics.

Fittingly, it was Chopra who broke the tie in an event that really took off in the country just five years ago when he won the gold at the World Junior Championships to become an overnight star. As a kid, he was made fun of, being called 'sarpanch' for being overweight. He got his early lessons on how to throw a javelin watching videos on YouTube. Now his physique and technique are what hundreds of aspiring throwers will try to copy. The anticipation of a medal was high because of how easily Chopra had glided into the final. He qualified with a throw of 86.65 metres to even top 2017 world champion Vetter. But the javelin throw is an event littered with banana peels. Stories of the best falling short of the podium on the biggest day are many.

Power and technique need to fuse perfectly else it can go all wrong. Just like what happened with Vetter. Throwers had complained about the track which made it difficult for them to get a grip leading to the fear of slipping. Yet, Chopra's movements were

smooth and he didn't look troubled at all. Some of those who were proven performers at major events found the combination of the 'sliding feeling' and the testing weather conditions too difficult. Anderson Peters of Grenada, Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, Julius Yego of Kenya and Marcin Krukowski of Poland had all failed to advance.

There remained dark horses in Germany's Julian Weber, Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem and Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, yet this was meant to be a two-horse race between the best thrower in over a year in Vetter and Chopra. Vadlejch took silver and his compatriot Vitezslav Vesely took bronze to take the other two places on the podium on a historic night for India.

**Restless wait**

Though Chopra made it look easy on Saturday, he had his share of troubles. Like most other athletes, he had a restless wait at the national camp in Patiala as the clock ticked down to the Olympics. With countries not allowing flights from India during the second wave of the pandemic, Chopra could only watch as competitions began in parts of Europe. Vetter was already laying down the marker with 90-plus throws.

Being stuck in a constant cycle of training during peak summer at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala had got to the youngster. In mid-May during a press interaction over video calling, Chopra had expressed his frustration. "It is very difficult to train in such heat. Even if you just stand on the ground for five minutes, it is next to impossible (to train). Now it is hot and in June, it is going to get much hotter. It is going to be very hard to train." India's Olympic medal hope had lamented. The Athletics Federation of India had made calls around the world but it was getting increasingly difficult for Chopra to reach a destination abroad.

"It is getting difficult because along with training, I need competition. Most of 2019, I missed because of injury and in 2020 and 2021, nothing has happened because of Covid. How long will one be patient? Now in 2021, the other athletes abroad are competing but we have not been able to."

At that point, Chopra was losing precious time just months before the Olympics. But after weeks of waiting Chopra and biomechanical expert Bartonietz could travel to France. During his European stint, he gradually hit his stride, starting off with a best throw of 86.79 metres in his first competition and followed it up with 83.18 metres and 80.96 metres. He skipped major events, a World Athletics Continental Tour and also the Diamond League at Gateshead to give his body rest. It was the most well-timed break by an Indian athlete.

**ELASTICITY, PERFECT ANGLE, SPEED: WHAT WORKED FOR NEERAJ**

**HE IS** not the strongest or the tallest but Neeraj Chopra's supreme athleticism and elasticity makes him a special talent, says Dr Klaus Bartonietz, the German biomechanical expert who has trained India's first ever gold medalist in track and field. Dr Bartonietz breaks it down in simple terms when he says Chopra is the 'dhanush' (bow) and the javelin is the arrow.

**All-round athlete**

Neeraj Chopra did some sprinting and some jumps to ensure he retained his explosiveness before the final, says Dr Bartonietz. "His biggest strength is his athleticism I would say. He is an all-round athlete who specializes in the javelin but his body capacity is such that (he is good at) sprinting, jumping and lifting.

**Speed on the runway**

The bigger they are the harder they fall. Germany's Johannes Vetter lost rhythm, looked ungainly and twisted his ankle in his second throw. "We know Vetter is a great athlete and he has 90-plus throws but he faces technical problems," Bartonietz says. What made Neeraj stand out was the speed on the runway. "He was the fastest on the runway. He has to gain energy and then put that energy into the javelin. When you are slow it is hard to do that."

**Elasticity over power**

Chopra is muscular and lean but his elasticity is what really helps him. "You need to get the energy into the javelin. For that you have to have a strong block. Vetter is a great blocker. Neeraj is able to bend like a bow. His body elasticity goes into the javelin. It is not just brutal power.

**Angle of release**

Chopra's throws were flatter than most and it helped in the javelin travelling further. "If you see, some of the throwers threw very high. Then the javelin comes down faster, five metres more in height than five meters in length. You need to get into some body positions so you can work (release) in a more horizontal way. His angle was 36 to 34 degrees.

**NIHAL KOSHIE**

**Chopra knew he was on verge of doing 'something unique' in final**



**MIHIR VASAVDA**  
TOKYO, AUGUST 7

ALL NEERAJ Chopra needs is a good night's sleep. India's newest gold medalist hasn't had a proper nap since he checked into the Games Village. At times, it was because of performance anxiety. On other occasions, like the day of his qualifying round, it was the competition timing. And on most occasions, it's been the dope-control officers.

"I came here from Sweden and there was a significant time difference," he said. "So, it took some time to get used to this. I would sleep a little late, so was hoping to sleep till a little later in the mornings. But the doping control officers would show up at 5.45 am or 6 am for the past two days and whisk me away."

On the bus from the Olympic Village to Tokyo's National Stadium on Saturday, Pakistan's javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem was flipping through some pictures on his mobile phone when he stopped at one image and showed it to Chopra, seated next to him. "It was our photo from the Asian Games," Chopra said. "He was saying how, through that photo, people in Pakistan equate us to Abdul Khaliq and Milkha Singh."

The mere mention of Milkha Singh made Chopra emotional. So much so that during the highest point of his career, the 23-year-old spared a thought for those who came agonisingly close but could not scale the peak. India's first Olympic track and field champion dedicated his medal to them.

"When Milkha Singh ji passed away, I felt very bad. I wanted to meet him with an Olympic medal because that is what his dream was. It is sad that he's not among us but I hope he's seeing us from above and is happy that with this (medal) his dream has come true," Chopra said. "Even other athletes like PT Usha, who missed out on a medal by centimetres, I hope they're all happy."

Chopra hurled the javelin 87.58m during the final, becoming only the second Indian to win an individual gold after Abhinav Bindra at the Beijing Games – and the first to win a medal



**Neeraj Chopra is the first Indian athlete to have won gold in javelin throw at Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, in 2018. *AP***

of any colour in track and field.

He recorded his longest throw in his second attempt, with no one coming close to his mark; the kind of dominance rare and unexpected given the competitiveness of the field. Chopra, who topped the qualification round as well, said he was confident of achieving 'something unique' although he said he was targeting only his personal best.

"After the second throw, I thought I'd get my personal best. The Olympic record is 90.57m and it did cross my mind to target it," Chopra said. "I think I tried to overdo it. My last throw was a little more stable but the ones in between were not great."

The last throw, however, did not matter. By then, he already knew the gold medal was his. The evening's next best thrower, Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, could only manage 86.67m. Chopra said his heart rate increased as the competition neared its end. "These are all great athletes so it was possible they could turn around the competition with just one throw," Chopra said. "So all I thought was we need to be prepared for any kind of throw they may manage. I was confident I would do something unique." Chopra broke into a measured, impromptu celebration after his final throw. He then bowed to the turf, wrapped a Tricolour around his shoulders and did a lap of honour. "All the hard work, all the injuries, everything that's happened over the last five years, went away (with the National Anthem playing). I felt all the hardships were worth it."

He didn't get overly emotional on the podium. A 'current' passed through his body as the anthem played but Chopra 'didn't want to cry' on the podium.

He just wants one thing. "Proper sleep. It's been a while."

Pune