



GST revenue surges past Rs 1 lakh cr in economy uptick

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

THE GROSS Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections in July (for sales in June) rebounded over the Rs 1-lakh-crore mark to Rs 1,16,393 crore, data released by the Finance Ministry on Sunday showed.

GST collections in July have increased 33 per cent from the corresponding period last year and 25.4 per cent over the previous month, indicating a pickup in economic activity after a series of localised lockdowns in May during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

GST collections had dropped to a 10-month low of Rs 92,849 crore in June (for sales in May) after topping the Rs 1-lakh-crore mark for eight months. In July 2020, the GST revenue was

recorded at Rs 87,422 crore.

The GST revenue for June 2021 is the second-highest in this fiscal after the Rs 1.41 lakh crore collection in April, which is for sales in March of the previous fiscal, but gets accounted in the new fiscal year.

Experts said GST revenues are expected to pick up in the coming months, even though a possible third wave of the pandemic remains a risk.

The Finance Ministry in its statement said the fall in GST revenue in June was predominantly related to the situation in May, when most states and Union Territories were under complete or partial lockdown.

"With the easing out of Covid restrictions, GST collection for July 2021 has again crossed Rs 1 lakh crore, which clearly indicates that the economy is

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EXPRESS NETWORK

UNDER YOGI, UP IS AT TOP SPOT IN LAW, ORDER: SHAH**PUNJAB SCHOOLS TO REOPEN FOR ALL CLASSES TODAY****PAGE 4**

Hint of thaw: IT Ministry to meet social media firms after House session

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

IN WHAT APPEARS to be early signs of a thaw in relations after an extended public slugfest, senior executives from social media intermediaries such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, are scheduled to meet officials from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) no sooner the Monsoon session of Parliament ends on August 13.

According to sources in the know of the development, social media intermediaries are likely to highlight a lack of an SOP (standard operating procedure) on the newly enacted Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media

Ethics Code, better known as the IT Rules of 2021.

The intermediaries are also likely to list out the operational issues they faced since May 26, with respect to the new rules. They also plan to seek greater clarity on certain aspects such as monthly reports.

The meetings come after multiple exchanges of notices and letters between the IT ministry and the intermediaries will be the first official interaction between the new IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and senior executives of the social media companies.

The spat began in January when Twitter refused to fully comply with the IT ministry

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P V Sindhu on the podium after receiving the badminton women's singles bronze medal in Tokyo on Sunday. PTI

BIG WINS IN HOCKEY, BADMINTON

Super Sindhu Sunday

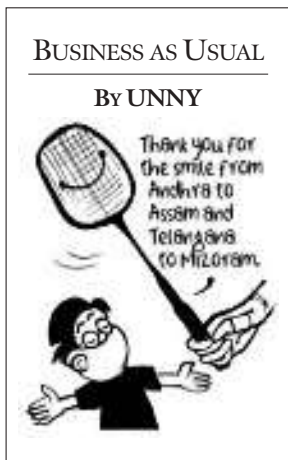
Wins bronze, is first Indian woman to win 2 solo medals

**MIHIR VASAVDA**
TOKYO, AUGUST 1

IN THE end, it felt strangely straightforward.

Playing an opponent who was fast, fit and tricky, PV Sindhu rose to the occasion like she usually does to turn her bronze medal playoff, which was expected to be a humdinger, into a no-contest.

Sindhu became only the second Indian athlete after wrestler Sushil Kumar — and the first woman from the country — to win two individual Olympic medals, dispatching China's He Bingjiao 21-13, 21-15 to win the bronze medal at the Tokyo Games.

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MEANWHILE

ITALY'S LAMONT MARCELL JACOBS WINS 100M GOLD**TEJASWIN SHANKAR ON TOKYO HIGH-JUMP DRAMA****PAGE 12**

Men's hockey team in semis, closest to medal in 41 years



India's Gurjant Singh celebrates after scoring against Great Britain. Dilpreet Singh and Hardik Singh scored the other two goals to seal the 3-1 win for India. Reuters

MIHIR VASAVDA
TOKYO, AUGUST 1

THE LAST 15 minutes weren't just to enjoy. They were to endure.

India were up by two goals against Britain in their Olympics quarterfinals. But if history has taught us anything about India's hockey stars, it's that they have

been serial heartbreakers — raising expectations only to sink them. But then, these young men in Tokyo have no regard for history.

They play with the kind of freedom and flair that youth often entails. They run as if they have guzzled a gallon of fuel before stepping on the pitch.

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NE CMs dial down tensions, Mizoram to withdraw FIR against Sarma

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 1

FOR THE FIRST time since the clashes along the Assam-Mizoram border almost a week ago, Chief Ministers of the two states on Sunday sought to dial down the tensions between their people and security personnel.

In what can be seen as a first step towards de-escalation, the Mizoram government said it would withdraw the FIR filed against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on July 30. Union Home Minister Amit Shah too had a telephonic discussion with Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Mizoram CM Zoramthanga towards a peaceful resolution of the border differences. After the talks, Zoramthanga said in a tweet: "...in order to prevent any possible escalation of the situation, I request the people of Mizoram to avoid posting sensitive messages and make judicious use of their social media platform."

The Mizoram CM said in the talks with Shah and Sarma, the three "agreed to resolve the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Amit Shah spoke to Sarma and Zoramthanga

EXPLAINED
E
Dialogue the only way ahead

THE FIRST signs of de-escalation of tension have come right from the CMs of the two states. Inter-state border issues can be resolved only through meaningful dialogue, as pointed out by the Home Minister in his discussions with Himanta Sarma and Zoramthanga.

RS Pegasus ruckus: TMC lines up Opp MPs in defence of suspended Sen

RAVISH TIWARI
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

AT LEAST a dozen non-TMC Opposition MPs in the Rajya Sabha are said to have offered to depose against Union Minister Hardeep Puri in defence of TMC MP Shantanu Sen who was suspended from the House for tearing up Union Minister Ashwani Vaishnav's statement on the Pegasus issue.

On that day, July 22, there was a heated exchange between Sen and Puri after which the TMC MP alleged that he was

summoned by the Union Minister in a "bad manner".

Amid the commotion, soon after Sen tore Vaishnav's statement, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Hariwansh, who was presiding over the House, said: "Yeh asansadiya parampara kripya hum log na karein... yeh kaunsi loktantrik prakriya hai (Let us not indulge in such unparliamentary traditions, please... what democratic process is this)?"

The next day, after Sen was suspended, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu described the ruckus as a "clear

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Probe finds calls between Sena leader, woman who died of suicide

MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, AUGUST 1

PUNE POLICE investigating the suicide of 22-year-old Pooja Chavan are learned to have found the recordings of "several calls" between her and a man purported to be former Maharashtra minister Sanjay Rathod in the "four-five days" before her death.

Among the recordings of these conversations in Pooja's mobile phone is one that lasted 90 minutes, sources said.

Pooja jumped off a building in Pune early on February 7. Rathod, the three-time Shiv Sena MLA from Digrajs in Yavatmal district, resigned as Maharashtra forest minister on February 28.

"Prima facie based on the evidence retrieved from the phone,

**Sanjay Rathod resigned as minister on Feb 28**

the person talking to her (Pooja) appears to be Rathod. She had recorded all their conversations. The conversations took place in the Banjara language so we are getting a translation done," a police source told *The Indian Express*.

Pooja was from the same tribal Banjara community to which Rathod belongs. Pooja belonged to Beed and was reportedly living in Pune, where she had enrolled in an educational course. Soon after Pooja's death, there were allegations that she was in a relationship with the MLA.

Sources said that Pooja's mobile phone, which contains the recordings of her purported conversations with Rathod, had been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Pune for retrieval of its data.

A second purported piece of evidence too was sent to the lab - CCTV footage from the premises of Yavatmal Medical College hospital, captured before dawn on February 6, approximately 24 hours before Pooja killed herself in Pune.

According to the sources, the footage contains purported images of Pooja with Arun Rathod, a close aide of Sanjay Rathod's. Arun and another aide of Sanjay Rathod's, Vilas Chavan, stayed with Pooja in the rented apartment in Heaven Park in Pune's

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

NO FOSSIL FUELS AS USUAL**BY VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA**
PAGE 6**ABHISHEK TO VISIT TRIPURA TODAY****PAGE 3**

Record 87.8 lakh doses on 31st, India meets July target

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, AUGUST 1

WITH A record 87.8 lakh doses administered on Saturday, India managed to achieve its target of providing 13.5 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses for July. In the process, the total number of vaccine doses administered in the country also crossed the 47-crore mark, the highest in the world after China. Over 10.2 crore people in the country are fully vaccinated.

India had stepped up its vaccination programme on June 21, promising to vaccinate almost everyone by the end of this year. On the first day, June 21, it had administered 87.29 lakh doses. But the number of daily doses

TOP FIVE STATES			
NUMBER OF DOSES (in crores)		NUMBER OF FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE (in lakhs)	
Uttar Pradesh	4.84	Maharashtra	112.01
Maharashtra	4.45	West Bengal	86.85
Gujarat	3.33	Gujarat	79.42
Rajasthan	3.27	Uttar Pradesh	77.92
Madhya Pradesh	3.21	Rajasthan	74.99

has fluctuated wildly after that, and the average number had come down drastically by the third week of July. At one time, it seemed the country would miss its July target by a fair margin.

However, in the last six days, an average of more than 58 lakh doses were administered, bringing

the final July number — 13.45 crore — within a whisker of the target set for the month. Over 43 lakh doses were given daily on an average during the month.

For a long time, Maharashtra was leading the drive, but in the last few days, UP has moved

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PAGE 1 ANCHOR

GARGI VERMA
RAIPUR, AUGUST 1

POLICE IN Dantewada have begun a periodic survey to ascertain the nature and level of the Maoist presence in villages of the district.

The first 'Panchayatwar Naxal Samvedanshilta ka Survey' (Panchayat-wise Naxal Sensitivity Survey) was carried out in January this year, and again in July. Dantewada Police plan to get all 149 gram panchayats in the district to fill out the survey twice every year.

Some of the questions in the survey are: "Do armed Naxals hold meetings in your village? Do armed Naxals stay in the village? Does the village have basic

facilities of electricity, water, road, or school?"

There are also questions on whether a Naxal incident had been recorded in the area during the past year, and whether the village panchayat representatives lived in the village.

The survey is the brainchild of Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava, and is intended to collect data on the basis of which gram panchayats can be classified into green, yellow, and red zones — green denoting a Naxal-free area, yellow being a Naxal-sensitive area, and red being a Naxal hyper-sensitive area.

"We make claims of Naxal dominance decreasing in the villages, but there is no data to back it. We are trying to get this survey

done every six months, to ensure that we have an understanding of the area," Pallava said.

Respondents — the sarpanch, teacher, anganwadi worker, or other government functionaries apart from villagers — are expected to answer the questions in "Yes" or "No".

If all the questions related to Maoists are answered with a "No", the village is declared a 'green' village. If even one of the questions is answered with a "Yes", the village becomes a 'yellow' village. For a village to be marked 'red', villagers and government functionaries must respond to Questions 1, 4, and 5 in the survey — which ask whether a Naxal incident had been recorded in the village over the past year, and whether



The site of a Naxal attack in Dantewada in 2019. File

armed Naxals visited and/or stayed in the village — with a "Yes".

"In green areas, we get

around 15-20 people to fill in the survey. Villages where fewer people are willing to be surveyed, which we already know

are in areas with Maoist presence, automatically become a 'red' village," Pallava said. According to Dantewada Police, the situation has improved since the baseline survey was conducted in January. Police had then recorded 33 red villages, 42 yellow villages, and 74 green villages. By July, these numbers had changed to 26, 34, and 89 for red, yellow, and green villages respectively.

Among the 15 new green villages are Gamawada and eight other villages in Dantewada block, two villages in Geedam block, and one in Kuakonda block of the district.

"This mapping is helping us find out which area is the most sensitive, and which area needs greater intervention from the

administration. With our questionnaire, we are also trying to find out how many villages have members of [Naxal] front organizations active in them. This would reduce antipathy towards police as well, as villagers want their regions to be declared green," Pallava said.

He added that a more comprehensive 100-question survey is being developed to fine-tune details from the villages that are turning green, in order to collect additional feedback on the findings of the police.

Bastar Inspector General of Police Sundarraj Pattilingam said analysis of the Maoist presence in a district wasn't new, though the nomenclature of the zones might differ.

"It helps us figure out if our

policing is working, and also helps us to identify where the DRG (the anti-Naxal District Reserve Guard) needs to be mobilised, and where police stations can manage their areas. This is a process carried out at all levels — nationally, within the state, and in individual districts," the IGP said.

Deepak Baij, the Congress Lok Sabha MP from Bastar, said he was not aware of the findings of the police survey. "I have come to know about the survey through the media. I will be able to comment once the survey is completed," Baij said.

Congress leader Chavindra Karma, son of the late Mahendra Karma who was killed in the 2013 Naxal attack in Darbha, said

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Kolkata



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WEB EXCLUSIVE



THE 'MEXICAN-HINDUS': THE RISE, AND FALL, OF A UNIQUE HYBRID COMMUNITY

As county clerks perceived similarities in complexion as indicators of belonging to the same race, it allowed Punjabi men to circumvent anti-miscegenation laws and begin their family life in America

TECH



TICWATCHGTH REVIEW:
You can use it to track your heart rate, steps, sleep, SpO2 and notifications

ENTERTAINMENT



STREAMING IN AUGUST
We list all the movies and web series which would start streaming in August

EXPRESS



AUDIO

Cast and craft behind rise of India women's hockey team

Mihir Vasavda and Gaurav Bhatt break down the India women's hockey team's historic progress into the Tokyo Olympics quarterfinals, the reasons behind the improved showing.

Muslim Women Rights Day: Naqvi says decline in triple talaq cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

MUSLIM WOMEN Rights Day, initiated by Ministry of Minority Affairs to mark the enactment of the law against triple talaq, was observed by different organisations across the country on Sunday.

In Delhi, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani and Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav attended an event to mark the occasion and interacted with several Muslim women, who had faced triple talaq.

In her address, Irani said the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Labour Ministry will unitedly work to encourage entrepreneurship among Muslim women.

Yadav said the government has been working to ensure dignity and empowerment of women from every section of society. The government has ensured dignity of Muslim women by bringing the law against triple talaq, he said.

Naqvi said the law against triple talaq has proved to be a big reform to ensure Constitutional rights of Muslim women. "There is a significant decline in triple talaq cases across the country after the law came into effect," said Naqvi, referring to the law that was enacted two years ago.

Meanwhile, a citizens' group issued a statement, signed by 650 activists, academics and students among others, in condemnation of the government's declaration of August 1 as Muslim Women Rights Day.

Addressed to Naqvi, it said, "This government that has worked to ceaselessly one by one decimate the constitutional rights of Muslims in India, now has the temerity to declare Muslim Women Rights Day on August 1. This, to celebrate its passage of its purportedly anti-triple talaq law... that claimed to protect Muslim women's rights, but in reality, had a more sinister purpose -- to show Muslim men their place in a new India. To tell them that they can be criminalized even in civil matters."

Among the signatories are leading rights activists Farah Naqvi, Saeeda Hamid, Aruna Roy, Ayesha Kidwai, Mohini Giri, Teesta Setalvad, Subhashini Ali, Kavita Krishnan, Annie Raja, Shabnam Hashmi, Nivedita Menon and Nandini Sunder.

Police: Stopped from selling infant son, man kills him

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

A 33-YEAR-OLD man killed his one-year-old son in Amroha after he allegedly could not sell him, said police.

According to police, the man allegedly beat his son to death after his wife objected to selling him for money. An FIR for murder has been filed against him.

"We received information that a child had died. A complaint was filed by the family alleging that the father wanted some money and decided to sell his son for Rs 3 lakh. After his wife objected, he beat the child in rage. The one-year-old died of fatal injuries," a local police officer said. The family alleged that the father was angry as he could not sell his son, said police. The accused had allegedly told his wife that if he was unable to sell the child, he would not spare him. The couple got married three years ago and were living in Amroha for the last two years.

FROM PAGE ONE

Sena leader

Mohammed Wadi, where she died.

Police are learnt to have received the FSL reports on Pooja's phone and the CCTV footage from the medical college in Yavatmal last month. But they are yet to ask the lab to test the voice in the recordings against the former minister's voice samples. Police have also received confirmation that the CCTV footage is genuine, the sources said.

Reached for a comment on Sunday evening, Sanjay Rathod told *The Indian Express* that he would not like to say anything at this stage.

Pooja, who initially sought a career in modelling, was popular on social media, in particular on the video-sharing platform TikTok. Her videos had a large following among girls in the Banjara community, and especially in her hometown Beed. TikTok is among the China-linked apps that were banned by India in June last year following the tensions in Ladakh.

Following Pooja's death, the Yavatmal hospital had issued a statement saying one "Pooja Arun Rathod" had been admitted there at 4.34 am on February 6, and had undergone an abortion.

The opposition had alleged at the time that this woman was none other than Pooja Chavan, who had jumped off the Pune building early the following day. Her name had been mentioned as "Pooja Arun Rathod" in the hospital records because she had been accompanied to the hospital by Arun Rathod, the opposition had said.

Pune Police had detained and questioned Arun Rathod after Pooja's suicide, and had also examined his phone. They had filed an accidental death report (ADR) in the matter.

Due to her popularity, Pooja was known to Pankaja Munde, the BJP leader from Beed. Following her death, Munde had tweeted demanding an investigation.

Maharashtra Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis and his BJP colleague Chitra Wagh had gone on the offensive against the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, and demanded an FIR against Sanjay Rathod.

Fadnis had written to the state DGP alleging that the Pune Police were investigating the case only superficially. Fadnis had sent 12 audio clips to the DGP, most of which were believed to contain purported phone conversations between Sanjay Rathod and Arun Rathod, and one between Sanjay Rathod and Pooja.

Most of the purported conversations between Sanjay Rathod and Arun, which were leaked, were about a woman who had agreed to undergo "treatment", but was apparently suicidal. In one of the leaked conversations, a male voice could be heard telling another that he was under enormous stress, and unless "she understands", he might have no option "but to give my life".

Some of the leaked conversations appeared to have taken place after Pooja's death on February 8. In one conversation that appears to have taken place perhaps minutes or hours after her death, one of the men is heard telling the other: "Do you have her mobile...get her mobile quickly." When the other man says the door is locked, the first man says, "Break open the door. Take the help of Vilas and quickly get the mobile phone."

Sources said the Pune Police have not sent either these audio files or Arun Rathod's phone to FSL to confirm the identities of the individuals heard in the conversations.

Asked if the voice samples

had been sent for testing, Pune Police Commissioner Amitabh Gupta said, "I cannot give you details of an ongoing investigation. Whatever was needed to aid the investigation has been done."

Sanjay Rathod said: "I do not want to comment on anything at this stage. The police are conducting their investigation in the matter, and I will only speak once their probe is complete."

Earlier this month, police recorded the statements of Pooja's parents. They have said that they have no complaints against anyone.

GST revenue

recovering at a fast pace. The robust GST revenues are likely to continue in the coming months too," the Ministry said.

Deloitte India Senior Director MS Mani said the sharp increase in collections for June indicates the resumption of economic activities, and will raise expectations of better collections in the coming months.

"The improvement in GST collections both on domestic transactions and imports, accompanied by the fact that major producing states have shown significant increases, would indicate that the economic activities have resumed across the country," he said.

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, and Punjab were some of the major states that recorded over 25 per cent growth in gross GST revenue in June. Gross GST revenue includes revenues for both states and the Centre, and is an indicator of economic activity in the region.

GST revenues are expected to rise going forward if economic activities are not hampered by a major surge in coronavirus infections. "Collections in July have seen a sharp uptick as compared to June on the back of economic revival due to the unlocking of businesses in June. If the country is able to resist the third wave, GST collections should increase from hereon," Rajat Bose, Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co said.

The gross GST revenue collected in the month of July 2021 is Rs 1,16,393 crore of which central GST is Rs 22,197 crore, state GST is Rs 28,541 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 57,864 crore (including Rs 27,900 crore collected on import of goods), and cess is Rs 7,790 crore (including Rs 815 crore collected on imports), the Ministry said.

Hint of thaw: IT Ministry to meet social media companies

orders asking the platform to limit access to certain content in India. Over the next five months, appointment of executives in the role of a chief compliance officer, a resident grievance officer and a nodal contact person or the requirement of tracking the first originator of a message on instant messaging platforms, kept the ministry and intermediaries on either side of a public spat.

Things, however, seem to have calmed down since Vaishnav took charge, ministry officials said, indicating that the fresh mandate now was to find solutions towards ensuring compliance rather than sending "angry notices".

Sources said that though some of the intermediaries are yet to fully comply with the guidelines mentioned in the IT Rules, there are no warnings to comply immediately or face action.

"The intent of the govern-

PV Sindhu gets bronze

She also ensured India's third medal of this Olympics -- after the silver for weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and the assured bronze for boxer Lovlina Borgohain.

Sindhu didn't immediately realise all of this, though. As a backhand tap landed beyond her rival's reach to seal the match, the Indian ace looked blankly at her coach, Park Tae San. It was only after the coach erupted in joy that the shuttler, too, let out a roar. "It still hasn't sunk in," Sindhu said, her voice quivering.

The glitter of bronze might not match the shiny silver she won in Rio, but Sindhu's second medal is significant for multiple reasons.

It comes in what is universally regarded as the golden era for women's badminton, with contenders from half-a-dozen countries capable of winning on their day. Sindhu, a big-tournament player, experienced that herself on Saturday when, after dispatching home favourite Akane Yamaguchi

with disdain, she was handed the same treatment by Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu Ying in the semifinal.

That loss had left Sindhu reeling. "I didn't know if I should be sad that I lost a chance to play the final, or be happy that I have another shot at a medal," she said.

But then, coach Park reminded her of the joy of standing on the podium, never mind the colour of the medal, and the heartbreak of finishing fourth. It didn't help, however, that she had to wait the entire day on Sunday to play her medal match, which started at 8.30 pm Tokyo time.

"I woke up, did my stretches, had breakfast and came back to my room. But constantly, I was just thinking about the match. You have to let go of everything and be calm but that did not happen for me today," she said.

The 40-minute bus journey from the Olympic village to the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza was spent in anxiety. But the

minute she stepped on the court, she had her beast-mode on, not showing any signs that the semifinal defeat still hurt her. And the 26-year-old went on to raise the bar with a near-perfect performance, which was the only way to beat a tricky, left-handed opponent who had slayed giants en-route to the bronze medal playoff.

He Bingjiao had been ruthless with her lightning-quick jump smashes, never letting a rival off the hook once she'd taken the lead. She started the same way this time, using her incredible speed to put Sindhu under pressure, not allowing her to control the rallies.

But mid-way through the opening game, Sindhu found her stride and began to pin her rival to the rear court backhand, forcing her to go for lofty overhead shots and not giving any opportunity or space for those deadly smashes. The Chinese challenger tried to control Sindhu with fierce body smashes but, as she had shown against Yamaguchi

Men's hockey team in semis

They score late goals. They don't concede at the last minute. They win matches. And they qualify for the Olympic semifinals -- a feeling that generations of hockey players and fans have never experienced.

India defeated Britain 3-1 at the Oi Hockey Stadium Sunday to come closest to an Olympic medal in 41 years and made it to the last four for the first time since the sport moved from grass to artificial surface.

India will play world champions Belgium on Tuesday for a place in the final, hoping to win the first medal since the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

On Sunday, goals from 20-year-old Dilpreet Singh, 26-year-old Gurjant Singh and 22-year-old Hardik Singh ensured India reached their first

Olympic semifinal since the 1972 Games, when they won a bronze -- the 1980 Olympics did not have a semifinal because of large-scale boycotts.

India's feat is remarkable for a couple of more reasons. It comes at a time when world hockey is perhaps at one of its highest levels. And it follows a demoralising 7-1 defeat to Australia in a group stage match before the team recovered and finished second in their pool.

Coach Graham Reid's side made a confident start, taking a 2-0 lead at half-time. Britain staged a late fightback after their star player Sam Ward scored in the 45th minute. The goal spurred on the Brits, who parked themselves in the Indian half in the last quarter. And India's troubles compounded

after captain Manpreet Singh was controversially shown a yellow card, leading to a five-minute suspension with a little more than six minutes to go.

The storyline at that point seemed painfully familiar: a key player is shown the card, and India concede late goals to lose the match. But for once, an Indian team did not collapse under pressure, which was immense in those last 10 minutes.

When Manpreet was serving his suspension, goalkeeper P R Sreejesh stepped up to pull off one massive save after another to keep India alive. Sreejesh's defence held the line and the midfield, at every opportunity they got, pushed forward to take the game to Britain.

Three minutes from time,

Hardik sprinted past a couple of British defenders to score the goal that put the result beyond doubt. Soon after the final hooter sounded, some players collapsed on the field while others, like defender Harmanpreet Singh, broke down.

"Sometimes in these situations, you have to bite and scratch and fight. I'm very proud of the way they did," coach Reid said. "This is a very special group," the Australian said.

There was a tinge of symbolism, too, at India beating Britain to achieve this historic feat. It was, after all, a loss to Britain in 2008 that resulted in India failing to qualify for an Olympics for the first, and so far the only, time. Sunday's win will go some way in healing that wound.

ment was to ensure that these intermediaries remained accountable to Indian law and systems, to the users in India. We have gone through a big pandemic period and everything was abnormal during the three months given to the intermediaries to make appointments. They did what they could, so the practical approach would be to look to work together now," a senior official from the IT ministry said.

Senior executives working with social media intermediaries also confirmed things had indeed cooled down over the last fortnight. "Our intent was always to comply with the guidelines. But whenever any new rules or law comes in, there will always be some operational and logistical issues. More than three-fourth of our India team was down with Covid during March-June this year. We had no option but to push everything back," an executive with one of the social media intermediaries said, asking not to be named.

Pegasus ruckus: TMC lines up Opp MPs

assault on our Parliamentary democracy".

In a complaint to the House Chairman, TMC chief whip Sukhendu Sekhar Roy is learnt to have listed the names of the Opposition MPs, from TMC's

arch-rival CPI(M) to the Shiv Sena and senior Congress leaders such as P Chidambaram, who are "ready to depose" as "eye-witnesses" against Puri.

Apart from TMC MPs, they include CPI(M)'s Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya, Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi, Akali Dal's Balwinder Singh Bhunder, SP's Ram Gopal Yadav, RJD's Manoj Jha, DMK's Tiruchi Siva and several Congress MPs, including Digvijaya Singh and Shaktisinh Gohil apart from Chidambaram, sources aware of the complaint told *The Indian Express*.

In the complaint, the TMC chief whip has alleged "abuses" and "heckling" by the Union Minister, and sought a "thorough probe into the rowdiness".

"These names were communicated to the Rajya Sabha Chairman after the MPs were asked whether they witnessed the events and were ready to vouch for the sequence," sources said.

On July 23, Naidu had said: "...unfortunately, the proceedings of the House hit a new low with the papers being snatched from the Minister and torn into pieces and thrown into the air. Such actions are a clear assault on our parliamentary democracy. They do not cover the world's largest democracy with glory."

According to sources, the TMC believes that the inclusion of senior MPs from other parties will add weight to its allegations. Besides, they said, the names of

floor leaders of the SP and DMK on the list indicates that the TMC has access to and wields sway across the Opposition spectrum.

Dantewada cops survey Maoist footprint

the police were overreaching. "How are the police, who are claiming that Maoism has reduced, carrying out such a survey? Why isn't the revenue department or another department looking into gathering this information?" he asked.

Chavindra's sister Tulika Karma, also a Congress leader, said: "It is very important to find out who is conducting the survey and how much knowledge of the area they have. It is good to know where the Maoist presence is less, but a competent authority which is independent, needs to carry out the survey."

NE CMs dial down tensions, Mizoram to withdraw FIR against Sarma

Mizoram-Assam border issue amicably through meaningful dialogue".

Two hours later, Assam CM

Sarma said what happened along the border was "unacceptable to the people of both the states". "Our main focus is on keeping the spirit of North-East alive..." Honble CM @ZoramthangaCM had promised to call me post his quarantine. Border disputes can only be resolved through discussion," he said in a tweet.

Since the border clashes which killed six Assam police personnel, there had been an impasse, with both states stationing their forces at the border, along with the CAPF -- neither ready to back down.

Two Union government functionaries in Delhi told the PTI that the Centre wanted a peaceful resolution to the dispute and Home Minister Shah was in regular touch with the two CMs. "Both the state governments are cooperating and the central government is assured that there will be no more border flare-ups," one of them said.

The two functionaries also said there was no formal request from either Assam or Mizoram for a probe by a neutral agency, and the Centre too did not plan to order such an inquiry by CBI.

Sarma told reporters he had always wanted peace from the Assam side. "We have never tried to encroach on any land...in fact, last year when the border issue had surfaced (during the Sarbananda Sonowal-led government), I had only fixed it by way of discussion," he said. These things were "not good", he

said, especially when his government's main aim was "development".

"Assam government is ready to talk to the Mizoram government at any point of time -- be in Aizawl, Silchar or Guwahati," Sarma said. "I was in touch with Mr Zoramthanga three-four days back. I called him no less than 20 times. He said he will talk to me once his quarantine is over...I am certain, he will definitely call me back," he said.

Zoramthanga is currently in quarantine after his PSO tested positive for Covid-19. His test results are expected Monday.

On July 30, Mizoram had disclosed that it had filed an FIR against Sarma, and six other top officials of Assam in connection with the violence on July 26.

While Sarma was not summoned by the Mizoram Police, the other six officers were. Assam, too, had sent summons to six officials of Mizoram's Kolasib district and gone after the state's lone Rajya Sabha member in Delhi, in connection with a media interview he had given.

News agency PTI quoted Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalnunmawia Chuango saying that Chief Minister Zoramthanga had not approved the inclusion of Sarma's name in the FIR. "I will hold discussion with the police officer who filed the FIR, and if there is no legal fit, we would like to remove the name of Assam chief minister from the FIR," he said.

When contacted, David H Lalthangliana, Deputy Secretary, Home Department, Mizoram, told *The Indian Express*, "The Chief Secretary has said we will take steps to remove his name. Since it is a Sunday today, what the Chief Secretary has told the reporters will materialise tomorrow, after he holds discussions with the police officers, and does the necessary formalities. Since it's a police matter, it will have to be taken up by the police authorities," he said.

Lalthangliana said while he was not personally privy to what transpired in the call between the two Chief Ministers and the Shah, he had heard that "a step has been taken by both CMs to calm down the tense situation at the border, as well as the various accusations and counter-accusations playing out on social media."

A senior officer from Mizoram said the removal of Sarma's name from the FIR was a first "gesture of peace from Mizoram side." "It is a positive step and confidence building measure that has been taken by us. It's a give and take situation. We have given something...now we hope Assam will also take a positive step," he said.

July vaccination target met

ahead, administering over 4.84 crore doses so far. Maharashtra, which has given 4.45 crore doses, however, has the largest number of fully vaccinated people -- over 1 crore. West Bengal and Gujarat are next in line, followed by UP, where close 78 lakh people are now fully vaccinated.

According to information on the Our World in Data project, China has already provided more than 160 crore vaccine doses. The US has so far administered over 34 crore doses while Brazil has given 14 crore.

Over 4.14 billion doses have been administered worldwide till now, with at least 28.3% of the global population having received at least one dose, according to Our World in Data project, though there are vast disparities in vaccination numbers. Only 1.1 per cent of the population in low-income countries have received even one dose.

Kolkata

3 WEST BENGAL

Abhishek to visit Tripura today, BJP says focus on Bengal, not outside

ENS & PTI
KOLKATA, AUGUST 1

AS PART of its outreach in BJP-ruled Tripura, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee will visit the north-eastern state where the party claims it has a sizeable support base, on Monday.

The scheduled visit of Banerjee, nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the de facto number two in the party, comes days after a controversy erupted over the “detention” of poll strategist Prashant Kishor’s I-PAC team in an Agartala hotel room by the police that cited the prevailing Covid-19 restrictions.

The incident prompted back-to-back visits to Tripura by TMC leaders, including West Bengal ministers Bratya Basu and Malay Ghatak and TMC MP Derek O’Brien, who decried the “illegal detention of young boys and girls” of a professional firm.

Banerjee will offer prayers at the Tripureswari temple in Agartala during the day, hold a meeting with party members, and address the media in the afternoon, said sources in the TMC. Elections in the north-eastern state are slated to be held in 2023.

Deputy leader of the TMC in the Rajya Sabha, Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, told PTI, “Abhishek will lead the party’s journey in Tripura where Bengalis and other communities are rooting for us, our leader Mamata Banerjee.”

“They are frustrated with the performance of the Biplab Deb-led BJP government,” the Trinamool MP added.

Trinamool had set sights of expanding its footprint outside Bengal after the polls. The “land-



Abhishek Banerjee will meet TMC members

slide victory of the TMC in West Bengal on the face of BJP blitzkrieg” had encouraged a majority of Bengali voters in Tripura to pledge their support for Mamata Banerjee, the parliamentarian claimed.

“Abhishek Banerjee is immensely popular among the Tripura electorate — youth and women in particular. He will chalk out the road map of our Tripura journey,” he added.

Veteran TMC leader and Lok Sabha MP Saugata Roy claimed that “Abhishek’s visit will be the precursor to the storm that will be raised by our supremo Mamata Banerjee in Tripura in the near future”.

Making light of the visit by TMC national general secretary, Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh pointed out that the Mamata Banerjee-led party had no base anywhere outside the state.

Speaking to reporters in Kolkata, Ghosh said all TMC leaders and workers in Tripura have joined the BJP over the years. “Does the TMC have a presence outside Bengal? I don’t know whether it has a base in Tripura anymore. All their workers and leaders have joined the BJP over the years.

“The TMC had made futile attempts to gain a foothold in the state. But people in Tripura are with us. Instead of going there, the party should focus on Bengal where we have increased our tally from 3 seats to 77 in a short span of time,” the Bengal BJP chief said.

BJP MP CALLS IT QUILTS FROM POLITICS

Supriyo slams Bengal BJP chief, Dilip says ex-minister wants to be in news

Asansol MP says will focus on singing and shows, no time for uncouth remarks



(From left) BJP state president Dilip Ghosh with fellow party MPs Saumitra Khan and Raju Bista at the ‘Cheer4India’ run in Kolkata on Sunday. Partha Paul

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 1

A DAY after announcing on social media that he was quitting politics, former Union minister Babul Supriyo on Sunday said he has not decided his course of future action. The BJP MP from Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman district also lashed out at state BJP president Dilip Ghosh and TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh for their “uncouth comments” about his decision.

Sharing screenshots of the comments made by the two leaders, Supriyo wrote in a Facebook post, “I have gone through your comments. Each is seeing it [his decision to quit politics] in their own way, understanding it in that way, supporting it, opposing it, raising questions and also asking for clarifications. Some people are using language as per their choice. I accept it all, but I can respond with my work. Why do I have to be at the post of an MP or a Minister?”

He added, “Give me some time. I will now focus on my singing and shows. I will have a lot of time in hand. I will not have to deal with such uncouth comments every day. So much positive energy will be saved. I can use this positive energy for good work.”

Reacting to the latest broadcast against him, Ghosh said, “The more my name is taken by people who want to be in news through theatrics, the more I become aware they tend to seek importance by doing that. He [Supriyo] is still in the BJP, as far as my knowledge goes.”

On Saturday, the former Union minister who was



Babul Supriyo was dropped from Union Cabinet

dropped from the Central council of ministers in a reshuffle last month announced that he was quitting politics.

He wrote on Facebook, “After speaking to my father, mother, wife daughter and friends and understanding everything, I am saying that I am not switching over to any other party. I have not been called by TMC, Congress or CPIM and neither am I joining them. I am one team player! Have always supported one team Mohun Bagan. Have done only one party BJP. That’s it!”

He later edited the post to say, “After speaking to my father, mother, wife daughter and friends and understanding everything, I am saying that I am leaving.”

In response, the state BJP chief claimed there was a tendency of his detractors to target him because of his importance.

“If I were not important then why would anyone target me? People can say a lot of things but they should not discuss the party’s internal affairs in a public forum. I still believe that he is in the party and will remain so,” Ghosh added.

Kunal Ghosh asked Supriyo why he did not send his resignation letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, and accused him of “staging a drama on Facebook”.

Supriyo fought against TMC’s Arup Biswas from the Tollygunge constituency in the recently held Assembly election. — WITH PTI INPUTS

Hakim: Doorstep vaccination for old and ailing in Kolkata soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, AUGUST 1

THE KOLKATA Municipal Corporation (KMC) will soon start visiting old and ailing residents of the city to vaccinate them, its chief Firhad Hakim said.

Many residents, who are above 80 years or those over 60 and have serious illnesses, could not travel to Covid vaccination centres, he said, adding that these people will be considered for vaccination during the special drive. Hakim said civic health workers would visit the homes of such persons only if all other family members are vaccinated.

Any family member can go to the nearest vaccination centre and get the names of such old and ailing persons registered for vaccination, he said.

“This is an initiative to vaccinate those who are old and cannot move out of their homes. We have spoken to the state health secretary and arranged for the same,” he said.

The process would start very soon, Hakim added.

State logs 2 more black fungus cases, 1 death

The state on Sunday reported two confirmed cases of mucormycosis in Kolkata’s SSKM Hospital, and another one in a private hospital. This came even as a patient confirmed to be suffering from the disease died, pushing up the mucormycosis toll to 21.

The health authorities said there was no new suspected mucormycosis case. To date, the state has reported 184 suspected cases and 87 confirmed ones. Among the suspected cases, two more deaths were recorded on Sunday, taking the toll in suspected cases to 47.

Meanwhile, the state reported 13 Covid deaths and 701 new cases in the last 24 hours.

— ENS

NCB busts ‘high-quality’ cannabis global supply racket, three held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 1

THE NARCOTICS Control Bureau (NCB) said it arrested three persons, including two women, for allegedly being part of a well-organised drug trafficking ring.

Those allegedly involved in the racket used to send high-quality cannabis by courier for which orders were placed through the dark web. The narcotics substance was being allegedly smuggled into India from the United States and Canada.

“Following a reliable input that a special ‘green kind of cannabis’ was being smuggled into India from California in the US and Canada by courier, the NCB’s Kolkata Zonal unit was

keeping surveillance on various courier services in Kolkata for quite some time and finally seized 42 overseas parcels at FPO Kolkata in a three-day operation — from July 27 to 30. The parcels were falsely declared as containing cosmetics and toys, among other items. Three persons were arrested,” an officer said.

According to NCB officials, the seized cannabis of approximately 20 kg each in all 42 parcels is “costlier strain” known as the World’s Strongest Marijuana Strain. Those arrested have been identified as Shradha Surana (25), Tareena Bhatnagar (26) and Karan Kumar Gupta (30).

Sources said the narcotics substance was ordered through the dark web and used to arrive by courier to bypass the DLEO

(Drug Law Enforcement Officer) surveillance.

“Shradha was running this whole trafficking business under the fake name Simran Singh. She was also found to be holding a fake Aadhaar card in the name of Simran Singh,” the officer said.

Using several dark web channels, the orders were placed with the accused who forwarded them to their overseas contacts for delivery, claimed officials.

According to senior NCB officials, Tareena had ordered three parcels from Telegram (Televend), a dark web platform she created in her name and that of her two friends.

Karan used to allegedly deliver these parcels to different places in Kolkata as per the directions of Shradha and get paid for the deliveries.

NEW TOWN ADULT FILM RACKET

Videographer held, no link with Kundra case: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 1

THE BIDHANNAGAR Police on Sunday arrested a videographer from New Town in a pornography case. They had arrested model-turned-actor Nandita Dutta and her assistant Mainak Ghosh on Thursday.

“One cameraman/videographer, namely Suvankar Dey alias Rony, 30, has been arrested. Dey is a resident of Rabindranagar in Chinsurah in Hooghly district,” said a senior police officer.

The police have made these arrests based on a complaint filed on July 26 by two models who alleged the accused had forced them to go nude for a video shot in a New Town hotel.

The police said they had examined the hotel, and added that they had not found any connection between the accused and businessman Raj Kundra who was arrested last month in Mumbai for his alleged involvement in an adult film racket. The Bidhannagar Police said it wasn’t ruling out the involvement of more people, adding that all angles were being investigated.

Suvankar Dey has been booked under IPC sections 500 (defamation), 509 (insulting the modesty of any woman), 354B (any man who assaults or uses criminal force on any woman), 354C (voyeurism), 417 (cheating), 469 (committing forgery), 370 (trafficking) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention).

Unnao rape victim claims harassment by PSOs, moves court

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

THE VICTIM in the 2017 Unnao rape case has moved a Delhi court, alleging harassment by her personal security officers (PSOs) who had been deputed on the directions of the Supreme Court.

In 2017, the minor had accused expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar of rape, for which he was awarded life-term imprisonment.

On July 31, District and Sessions Judge Dharmesh Sharma directed the investigating officer of the CBI, the agency probing the case, to submit an impact assessment report over the allegations by the victim with assistance of the local police. He further said that a sealed envelope was also received from the police in which certain allegations were levelled against the complainant and her family members. “It is directed that this

application be taken up for consideration,” the judge said.

The lawyers for the victim, in their application before the court, stated that “her personal security officers were vindictive to her and her family members”.

“In the name of security, concerned police/security officials are bent on curtailing the movements/personal liberty of the victim due to reasons best known to them, to such an extent that she is not even allowed to meet her counsel and to come to the court,” the application stated.

The victim further alleged that she was not even allowed to visit Jantar Mantar for a personal purpose. Her lawyers argued that because of this, the “prosecutrix is not able to pursue her case effectively in a democratic way, in terms of her fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution against the accused persons, who are bent on ruining the life of her family members”.

BJP MP hoists flag at Amargarh fort as row flares up in Rajasthan

DEEPMUKHERJEE
JAIPUR, AUGUST 1

IN ANOTHER twist to the ongoing dispute between members of the Meena community and local Hindu outfits, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Kirodi Lal Meena hoisted a white flag, said to represent a community deity, on the ramparts of the Amargarh fort in Jaipur early Sunday morning.

While Meena claimed to have dodged police to hoist the flag, the Jaipur Police said the flag was hoisted away from the disputed site, on the rampart on the outer areas of the fort.

The 18th century fort has been at the centre of a dispute between the two groups with leaders of the Meena community accusing Hindu groups of allegedly trying to tamper with tribal culture and appropriate tribal symbols at Amargarh fort. The Hindu outfits, in turn, hit out at the Meenas for allegedly taking down a saffron flag from the fort on July 21 and had issued calls on social media for followers to reach the fort on August 1



BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena addresses Adivasi Meena Samaj supporters in Jaipur on Sunday. Rohit Jain Paras

to hoist another flag.

BJP MP Meena has led the pushback against Meena leaders led by Independent MLA Ramkesh Meena, maintaining that Meenas are also Hindus — the Meenas are classified as a Scheduled Tribe in Rajasthan.

In videos released by Meena’s team, the MP can be seen talking before daybreak about the journey to the fort, saying they had braved darkness, rain and wild animals to reach the fort, walking towards it as early as 3.30am.

“We had announced that on August 1, we will hoist the flag of Meen Bhagwan at Amargarh fort. We hoisted the flag at 6.30am today. There were nine people. There was a three-tier security arrangement, but it failed. We climbed the three-and-a-half km stretch of the hill and scaled the 40 ft high wall and entered Amargarh. I am not an old man, I am a young man of 70,” Meena told his supporters outside Vidhyadhar Nagar police station, where he was taken after the incident.

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REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Environmental and Social External Monitoring Consultancy for Chennai Peripheral Ring Road Section II & III

REOI Notice No.05/CPRR/E&S/2021-dated: 02.08.2021

The Executive Director invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from the qualified experienced consulting firms with all supporting documents substantiating qualification to perform the service experience in similar assessments for Environmental and Social External Monitoring Consultancy for Chennai Peripheral Ring Road Section II and III so as to reach the office of Executive Director, TNRIDC, Chennai for no later than 4.00 pm (office clock) on 20.08.2021.

The detailed request for Expression of Interest is available at www.cticp.tnhighways.gov.in

Place: Chennai
Date: 02.08.2021
DIPR/646/DISPLAY/2021

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TNRIDC

DR. D. Y. PATIL VIDYAPEETH, PUNE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

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3	Interventional Radiology	DM	1	1	—	—
4	Surgical Gastroenterology	Mch.	1	1	—	1
5	Urology	Mch.	1	—	—	—
6	General Surgery	MS	—	—	2	2
7	Emergency Medicine	MD	1	1	1	8
8	General Medicine	MD	—	2	4	—
9	Dermatology	MD	—	—	—	1
10	Psychiatry	MD	—	1	1	1
11	Radio-Diagnosis	MD	—	2	—	—
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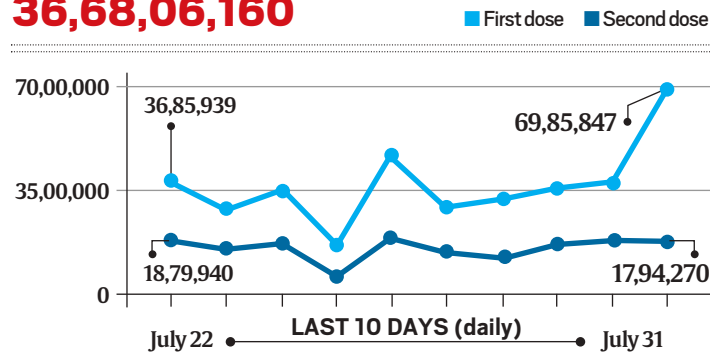
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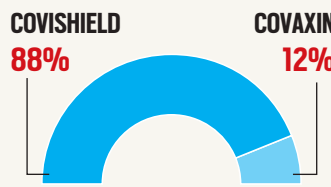
CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA (at least one dose)
36,68,06,160



TOTAL DOSES
47,02,98,596

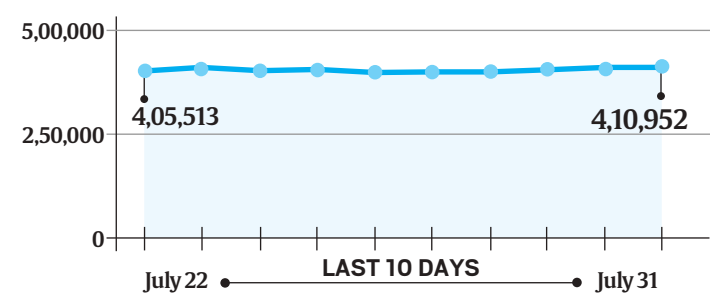
(Sputnik V's 4,74,544 doses not represented in pie)



DOSES ON JULY 31 87,80,117
JULY 30: 54,84,725 (1ST DOSE: 36,79,574; 2ND: 18,05,151)

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

4,10,952

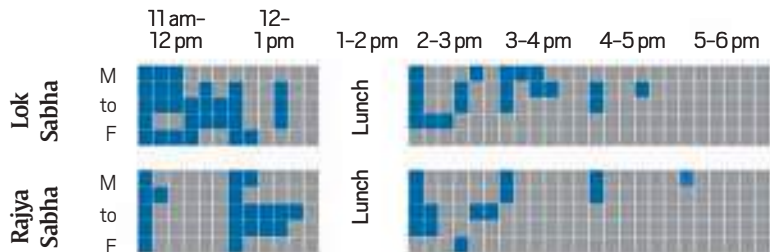


Note: The July 31 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on August 1

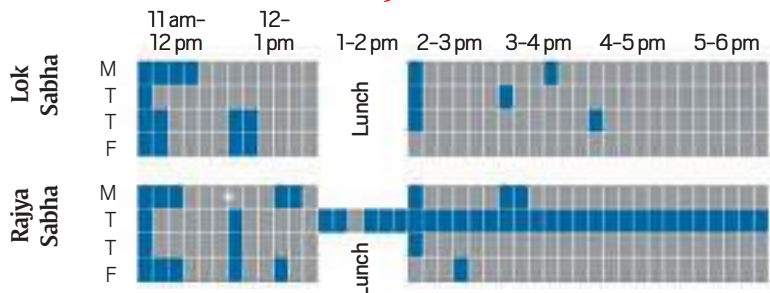
WHEN PARLIAMENT WORKED OR DID NOT, HOUR BY HOUR

A graphical representation of the hours of work and adjournment in Parliament during the last two weeks:

WEEK OF JULY 26-30



WEEK OF JULY 19-23



■ Duration Parliament functioned ■ Duration Parliament remained adjourned
Each cell represents a 10-minute interval. Time is rounded off to the next 10-minute mark.
* RS adjourned for 1 hour in memory of Raghunath Mohapatra and Rajeev Satav

Source: PRS Legislative Research



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EXPLAINED ELECTION ARITHMETIC

Punjab Congress & caste vote

Hit by infighting ahead of Assembly elections, the Punjab Congress has appointed four working presidents, each from a different community. How have these communities voted over the years?

EXPERT EXPLAINS

SANJAY KUMAR

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



THE CRISIS within the Punjab Congress as a result of the power struggle between Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and Navjot Singh Sidhu suggests that the Congress has scored a self-goal. Even if these two leaders are able to work out a formula, supporters of these two leaders may find it difficult to work together on the ground. A four-cornered contest seems inevitable during the 2022 Assembly elections, which the Congress had a good chance of winning — until this crisis and the self-goal happened.

The Congress party's vote share has been above 35% in all recent Assembly elections in Punjab (Table 1). It won the 2017 Assembly elections with 38.5% of the votes. During the 2022 elections, even if its vote share declines by 5-6 percentage points, it would still have about one-third of the total votes (33%), which should be enough for the party to win another election. Punjab has returned the same government only once — in 2012 when the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)-BJP was re-elected — and the Congress should have been able to repeat that feat. But to do that, it needed to put its house in order, something in which it has failed miserably.

In view of the damage caused, the party has appointed four working presidents from different caste groups keeping an eye on the vote of these communities — Kuljit Singh Nagra from the Jat Sikh community; Sangat Singh Gilzian from the Lubana caste, representing the OBC Sikh community; Sukhwinder Singh Danny from the Dalit Sikh community; and Pawan Goel from the Hindu community. These appointments, however, may not be enough to make up for the damage done to the party by this division within.

This article makes an attempt to map the support base of the Congress among the communities from which the working presidents have been appointed.

The Jat Sikh

Jat Sikhs constitute about 20% of the total

TABLE 1 VOTE SHARE OF PARTIES				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	35.8%	36.8%	—	
2007	40.9%	45.3%	—	
2012	40.1%	41.9%	—	
2017	38.5%	30.6%	23.7%	

TABLE 2 JAT SIKH VOTE				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	23%	55%	—	
2007	30%	61%	—	
2012	31%	52%	—	
2017	28%	37%	30%	

TABLE 3 OBC SIKH VOTE				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	39%	32%	—	
2007	43%	43%	—	
2012	44%	46%	—	
2017	37%	32%	26%	

Source: CSDS Data Unit (Table 1); Punjab Assembly Election Studies 2002, 2007, 2012 & 2017, CSDS Data Unit (Tables 2 to 6)

voters in Punjab; roughly 60% of Sikhs belong to the Jat Sikh community. They are not only numerically large, but also economically, socially and politically dominant.

Findings of surveys conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) indicate that Jat Sikhs have been loyal supporters of the Akali Dal. A large majority of Jat Sikhs have voted for the Akalis in various elections, except for the 2017 Assembly election when the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) made a dent among the Akalis' Jat Sikh vote base (Table 2).

TABLE 4 DALIT SIKH VOTE				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	33%	26%	—	
2007	49%	32%	—	
2012	51%	34%	—	
2017	41%	34%	19%	

TABLE 5 HINDU DALIT VOTE				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	47%	11%	—	
2007	56%	25%	—	
2012	37%	33%	—	
2017	43%	26%	21%	

TABLE 6 NON DALIT HINDU VOTE				
Year	Congress	SAD+BJP	AAP	
2002	52%	26%	—	
2007	49%	38%	—	
2012	46%	36%	—	
2017	48%	22%	23%	

The Congress has never been popular amongst the Jat Sikhs. By appointing Nagra as one of its working presidents, the Congress is trying to mobilise the Jat Sikhs towards its fold.



FROM LOKNITI ARCHIVES
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The OBC Sikh

The votes of the Sikhs belonging to OBC communities have remained divided between the Congress and the Akalis. Data from CSDS surveys indicate the two parties have got an almost equal proportion of votes among voters belonging to this community, with only shades of difference (Table 3).

THIS WORD MEANS: e-RUPI

Voucher system ahead of digital currency

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

TAKING THE first step towards having a digital currency in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch an electronic voucher-based digital payment system, e-RUPI, on Monday. The platform, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the National Health Authority, will be a person-specific and purpose-specific payments system.

How will e-RUPI work?

e-RUPI is a cashless and contactless digital payments medium, which will be delivered to mobile phones of beneficiaries in form of an SMS string or a QR code. This will essentially be like a prepaid gift voucher that will be redeemable at specific accepting centres without any credit or debit card, a mobile app or Internet banking. e-RUPI will connect the sponsors of the services with the beneficiaries and service providers digitally, without any physical interface.

The system, built by NPCI on its UPI platform, has onboarded banks that will be the issuing entities. Any corporate or government

agency will have to approach the partner banks, which are both private and public-sector, with details of individuals and the purpose for which payments have to be made. The beneficiaries will be identified using their mobile number; a voucher allocated by a bank to the service provider in any individual's name will only be delivered to that individual.

Where will it be used?

According to the government, e-RUPI is expected to ensure a leak-proof delivery of welfare services. It can also be used for delivering services under schemes meant for providing drugs and nutritional support under mother-and-child welfare schemes, TB eradication programmes, drugs & diagnostics under schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, fertiliser subsidies etc. The government said even the private sector can leverage these digital vouchers as part of their employee welfare and corporate social responsibility programmes.

How is it different than digital currency?

In effect, e-RUPI is still backed by the existing Indian rupee. The underlying asset and specificity of its purpose makes it different from a virtual currency, and puts it closer to a voucher-based payment system.

The government is already working on de-

veloping a central bank digital currency, and the launch of e-RUPI could potentially highlight gaps in the infrastructure that will be necessary for digital payments.

What are these plans?

The Reserve Bank of India had recently said it has been working towards a phased implementation strategy for a central bank digital currency (CBDC). A CBDC generally takes a digital form of the nation's existing fiat currency. Speaking at a webinar on July 23, RBI Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar said that CBDCs "are desirable not just for the benefits they create in payments systems, but also might be necessary to protect the general public in an environment of volatile private VCs".

While RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had flagged concerns over cryptocurrencies in the past, there seems to be a change of mood now in favour of CBDCs on Mint Street. Although a CBDC is conceptually similar to currency notes, its introduction would involve changes to the enabling legal framework since the current provisions are primarily synced for paper currency.

Does India have an appetite for a digital currency?

According to the RBI, there are at least four

reasons why digital currencies are expected to do well in India: One, there is increasing penetration of digital payments that exist alongside sustained interest in cash usage, especially for small value transactions.

Two, India's high currency-to-GDP ratio, according to the RBI, "holds out another benefit of CBDCs". Three, the spread of private virtual currencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum is another reason. As Christine Lagarde, President of the ECB has mentioned in the BIS Annual Report "... central banks have a duty to safeguard people's trust in our money. Central banks must complement their domestic efforts with close cooperation to guide the exploration of central bank digital currencies to identify reliable principles and encourage innovation."

Four, CBDCs might also cushion the general public in an environment of volatile private VCs.

Are there global examples of a voucher-based welfare system?

In the US, there is the system of education vouchers or school vouchers, which is a certificate of government funding for selected students. These are essentially subsidies given directly to parents of students for the specific purpose of education. The school voucher system has also been used in countries such as Colombia, Chile, Sweden, Hong Kong etc.

BJP's "election engineering" and flagged concerns over illegal structures being regularised.

On Saturday, Goa Forward Party MLAs submitted a memorandum to Governor P S Shreedharan Pillai not to give his assent to the 11 Bills, which the state government passed "in an utmost hurry, obviously with oblique motives..." The Bhumi Putra Bill, the GFP stated, "smacks of *malafides*" and its provisions would "amount to giving a premium on illegalities and perpetuate further illegalities." They said that this would recognise encroachments by slum-dwellers that are over 30 years old as Bhumi Putras.

Former Revenue Minister Rohan Khaunte said, "This Bill has open the floodgates for the migrant population that has been staying in densely populated areas in Goa and has no legality."

Administrative Tribunal within 30 days. The four-page Bill states: "No suit, prosecution or any other legal proceedings shall lie against the Government or any officer or employee of the Government or any person authorised by the Government or Bhumi Putra Adhikarini or its members for anything which is done, or intended to be done, in a good faith under this Act." It states that no court shall have jurisdiction "to entertain, decide or deal with any question which is to be decided by the Bhumi Putra Adhikarini and Administrative Tribunal under this Act".

Why is the Opposition objecting?

The Opposition had said there was not enough time in the curtailed Assembly session to study or debate the Bill, and 10 others passed "in a haste". It called this the ruling

Who is a Bhumi Putra in Goa, and why is Opposition objecting to new law?

MAYURA JANWALKAR
PANAJI, AUGUST 1

ON FRIDAY, the Assembly passed the Goa Bhumi Putra Adhikarini Bill, 2021 recognising anyone living in the state for 30 years or more as a 'Bhumi Putra (son of the soil)' and giving such a person the right to own his or her 'small dwelling unit' if ownership was undetermined so far. Assembly polls are six months away and the Bill, along with 10 others, was passed even as 12 Opposition MLAs walked out on the last day of the three-day Assembly session.

Why was the need for such a Bill felt?

The 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the Bill, introduced on Thursday, states, "The

Bill provides for a mechanism to give ownership right to the self-occupied dweller of a small housing unit to enable him to live with dignity and self-respect and exercise his right to life." Once recognised as a Bhumi Putra, an individual can stake claim to ownership of their house of not more than 250 sq m, built before April 1, 2019.

The objective, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said, was to enable the 'mool Goenkar (original Goan)' to live with dignity. Addressing the House on Friday, he said, "In the last so many years there have been cases of homes built by a person or his parents but the land is not in his name. There is always a sword dangling over their head that someone will file a case against them (over ownership). The land is of different kinds like ancestral property, comunidade property,

panchayat land. Everyone had wished for the house that they lived in, their generations lived in, to be theirs." He said there were several such cases in rural areas including Sattari, Sanguem and Pernem. "My brothers and sisters have been waiting for this. They built 250-300 sq m homes, built by their parents, but the land could never be theirs."

The possible number of beneficiaries is yet to be estimated, officials said.

How does one apply?

The Bill provides for the constitution of the Bhumi Putra Adhikarini — a committee consisting of the Deputy Collector as its Chairperson, and officials from the departments of Town and Country Planning, Forest and Environment, and Mamlatdars of respective *talukas* as its members.



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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

WALKING NEP TALK

A year later, the national education policy remains a guide to the future, but there are challenges

IT'S BEEN A year since the National Education Policy 2020 laid out a map for a long-overdue re-imagining of Indian education. Twelve months is too short a time to evaluate a policy which proposes vital shifts in education — from creating a system in which “children not only learn, but more importantly learn how to learn”, to one in which “pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, inquiry-driven, flexible” and in which there is “no hard separation between arts and sciences”. The Covid-19 pandemic has indeed slowed down the implementation of this transition, but some proposals are poised to see light of day this academic year, including an academic credit bank for undergraduate students. In his speech marking a year of NEP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announced that 14 engineering colleges across eight states will teach undergraduate programmes in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Marathi from the new academic year. This has the potential to open up technical education to the vast majority of students for whom English remains a handicap. But it is important not to understate the challenge: The government will need to put in significant resources and work in creating such a knowledge ecosystem.

The tension between NEP's ambition and facts on the ground is evident on other counts too. The call for greater autonomy to higher educational institutions is undercut by the fact that several universities continue to function without vice-chancellors. Last fortnight, the Centre appointed VCs to 12 universities after a delay of months — 10 central universities, including Delhi University and JNU, remain without full-time heads. The NEP asks for the highest priority to literacy and numeracy but the government has slashed the school education budget by almost Rs 5,000 crore; higher education has suffered a Rs 1,000 crore cut. Without financial resources and committed people to take ownership of institutions and policy, it will be hard to walk the talk. While the PM hailed the transition to online learning, the pandemic's unkindest cut has been in deepening the inequality in access to education. Covid might have accelerated at least one aspect of change. The cancellation of the Class XII board examinations and subsequent challenges for institutes of higher education is a vindication of NEP's prescription — it is time to let go of the old normal in examinations and university enrolment.

The NEP forcefully lends its weight to the idea of institutional autonomy. But critical thinking cannot be decreed into existence. It needs an enabling eco-system, which is sadly missing. The most recent instance of a Madhya Pradesh police superintendent, acting on the complaints of ABVP, forcing a university to exit a webinar because it disapproved of some of the speakers is an illustration of the shrinking of the campus as a space for ideas and creativity. As the Centre and other stakeholders embark on NEP's implementation, the promise — and the challenges — are both evident.

THE KERALA CHALLENGE

State government must strategise vaccine delivery to most affected districts. Centre should ramp up vaccine supplies

AFTER FALLING APPRECIABLY for most of May and June, India's Covid graph plateaued last month. Kerala has been one of the notable outliers in the country's second wave recovery. The state added more than 20,000 cases every day on five days last week — about half the country's caseload — and its positivity rate is more than six times the national average. The BJP has ascribed the spike to the relaxation of curbs during Eid, while the Kerala government has blamed the rising caseload on vaccine shortage. Though there is truth to both these claims, it's also apparent that Kerala's situation is a complicated one, and resolving it will need the Centre and state government to put their heads together — a blame game is the last thing the state needs at this critical juncture. It's, therefore, welcome that the Centre has dispatched a team of experts to study the situation in the state's worst affected areas.

The nationwide serosurvey results indicate that less than 45 per cent of Kerala's population has been exposed to the virus — way below the national average of 68 per cent. It seems that the state's initial success in curbing the spread of the infection is now working against it: A majority of its population lacks antibodies against the more infectious variants driving the second wave. Kerala has done well to keep its case fatality rate low — at 0.87 per cent, it's the lowest amongst the states that reported the most fatalities last week. But with the state's RO figure — number of people to whom an infected person can transmit the disease — going past the danger threshold of 1, the state has lost about 100 people to Covid every day in the past 10 days. The Kerala government has attempted to strike a balance between lives and livelihoods with a weekly lockdown policy and by restricting the working hours at business centres. But with people crowding markets during the limited hours at their disposal, such restrictions could end up becoming counterproductive.

The serosurvey results offer more clues to solving the Kerala conundrum. Though the state's vaccine coverage is much above the national figure, the survey indicates that a far larger section of its population will need vaccine-produced antibodies in the next few weeks to check the second wave. With vaccines continuing to be scarce, the state government will need to strategise their rollout — giving special attention to districts with high infection incidence. The expert team's insights could prove invaluable in this respect, as well as in fine-tuning other containment measures. At the same time, the Centre must not waver from its commitment to increase vaccine supply from August onwards.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA

THE SPREAD AND speed of the destruction caused by climate change in recent weeks present our new Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas with a policy dilemma, if not a moral one: How to redefine the supply-side priorities of his Ministry in the face of the imperatives of atmanirbharta with the starkest evidence yet of the consequences of continued dependence on fossil fuels. This article offers five suggestions to help crack the conundrum.

The events of the past month have caught even the most alarmist of climate scientists by surprise. In China, 1.2 million people were displaced in the province of Henan by what was reported as a “once in a 1,000-year down-pour”. In Russia, the Siberian city of Yakutsk, better known for its subzero winter temperatures faced the “worst-ever air pollution” because of smoke from 200 nearby wildfires. In Europe, flash floods killed approximately 200 people in Germany and Belgium. And in North America, city after city was scorched by unprecedentedly high temperatures.

These events brought into sharp relief the reality that there was no ducking the consequential implications of the “fossil fuels as usual” scenario. This reality offers, however, cold comfort to the Minister of Petroleum. This is because the Indian economy is dependent on fossil fuels and there is no discernible end in sight to this dependence. Further, India imports approximately 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements and is exposed to the volatility of the international oil market. There is good reason, therefore, for the Minister to rank the harnessing of India's indigenous petroleum resources by intensifying exploration as a top policy priority.

My first suggestion is that he should review this ranking and that the government should scale back its emphasis on domestic exploration. I make this suggestion because I believe the resources earmarked for exploration can be deployed more productively elsewhere. A review of the public sector's exploration and production (EP) track record suggests that whilst India may well be sitting on substantial hydrocarbon reserves, as is

Quickening pace of climate change means new petroleum minister must become progenitor of energy transition

Pre-Covid, we imported approximately 4.5 million barrels of oil, of which 50 per cent or so came from the Middle East, predominantly Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. This region faces deep political and social fault lines and there is no knowing when our supply lines might get ruptured. We would therefore be well-advised to build contingency safeguards.

claimed by our petroleum scientists, these reserves are not easy to locate and, even when located, difficult to develop and produce on a commercial basis. There have been few substantive commercial discoveries in recent years, in large part because the bulk of the reserves are in complex geological structures and harsh terrain (Himalayan foothills or deep waters offshore). They are difficult to find but even when found, the costs incurred are often so high that except in market conditions of high prices, the discovery is not commercially viable. The government has often compounded this economic challenge by placing administrative limits on marketing by companies and their pricing freedom. The fundamental point is that EP in India is a high-risk activity, and this risk is even greater today because of the longer-term structural softness of the petroleum market. There is good reason to question the expending of public resources on wildcat exploration.

Flowing from this contrarian thought, my second suggestion is that ONGC allocate increasing resources to improving the productivity of its producing fields. Years ago, when I was part of the petroleum industry, the average oil recovery rate in India was around 28 per cent. That is, for every 100 molecules discovered, only 28 were monetised. This number did not compare well with the global average of around 45 per cent for fields of comparable geology. The recovery rate may be better today but if there is still a wide gap, the application of enhanced oil recovery (EOR) technology offers a relatively low-risk avenue for increasing domestic production. ONGC might have to shed a part of its equity in its ageing crown jewel, Mumbai High, to get the best technology service partner.

The consequential increment in production from EOR will not materially reduce our vulnerability to unexpected supply disruptions. Pre-Covid, we imported approximately 4.5 million barrels of oil, of which 50 per cent or so came from the Middle East, predominantly Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. This region faces deep political and social fault lines and there is no knowing when our supply lines

might get ruptured. We would, therefore, be well-advised to build contingency safeguards. We hold currently strategic reserves equivalent to 12 days of imports. The government has approved plans to increase this buffer to 25 days. By comparison, China, the EU, South Korea and Japan hold between 70-100 days of reserves. We do not need to create such a large buffer, but I would suggest we increase it to around 35 days equivalent. This should be done by constructing a cavern in Jamnagar, the entrepôt that receives approximately 60 per cent of our crude oil imports and is well connected through tanks and pipelines to the hinterland refineries.

My fourth suggestion is to restructure and reorganise the public sector petroleum companies. In the first instance, the upstream assets should be consolidated under ONGC (the upstream assets of BPCL, IOC, HPCL, and GAIL should pass onto ONGC) and GAIL should be unbundled into a public utility gas pipeline company (its non-pipeline assets should be allocated to the upstream company and/or one of the downstream entities). Thereafter, these companies should be encouraged to look beyond hydrocarbons to build an “energy” enterprise. I believe this restructuring will help cut back the “avoidable” costs of intra public sector competition, reduce the inefficiencies of “sub-scale” operations and provide a focused platform for balancing the shorter-term need to provide secure and affordable hydrocarbons with the medium and longer-term imperative of developing clean energy.

My final thought: The petroleum minister should not, in the current context, see his responsibility through the siloed prism of oil and natural gas. He should broaden the aperture and become the progenitor of the energy transition. The dilemma referred to in the opening sentence will be easier to resolve if he develops his priorities within the framework of clean energy and in collaboration with his cabinet colleagues.

The writer is chairman, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)



MANJU MENON AND KANCHI KOHLI

ON JULY 23, the Supreme Court heard five petitions on the evictions of Khori Gaon, a large informal workers' settlement at the foothills of the Aravallis on the Delhi-Haryana border. Four petitions arose after the SC ordered the petitioner in the lead case, the Municipal Corporation of Faridabad (MCF), to evict the basti in the middle of the pandemic in 2020. Following these orders, nearly a lakh people have been pushed into the throes of suffering as most of them have lost their only home in this world.

This judicial action has also been extended to “all unauthorised structures” in Haryana. This is demonstrative of the return to an era of green imperialism, wherein using “rule of law”, well-maintained forests around the country are routinely handed over for capitalist profiteering through private mines, dams and real estate development while the landless poor are displaced from public lands in the name of restoring ecologies.

The razing of Khori Gaon is a jarring example of forest conservation models that frame forests versus people. While our environmental institutions keep reestablishing this framing, projects done by ecologists and social activists have tried to break down the hard boundaries between these constituencies. The Forest Rights Act was enacted to restore the dignity and place-based rights of Adivasi communities and forest workers. Policies for the relocation of people even from protected areas and tiger reserves now eschew forced evictions and encourage voluntary rehabilitation.

THE GREEN WARRANT

SC order on Khori Gaon basti is example of coercive environmentalism

The Forest Rights Act was enacted to restore the dignity and place-based rights of Adivasi communities and forest workers. Policies for the relocation of people even from protected areas and tiger reserves now eschew forced evictions and encourage voluntary rehabilitation. Yet, this middle ground of humane approaches to conservation keeps getting hijacked by top-down, coercive models the state is used to.

Yet, this middle ground of humane approaches to conservation keeps getting hijacked by top-down, coercive models the state is used to.

Through the MCF's case, the Haryana state government and judiciary are aiming to create a tabula rasa by violently erasing a large settlement and restoring forest cover in the Aravallis using the colonial Punjab Land Presentation Act of 1900. The MCF has the ignominious success of vacating 150 acres of urban land with the most dense habitation of affordable homes of the working poor. The basti residents have been repeatedly vilified as “forest encroachers” even though most of them have some documentation to show that they were sold small plots of land. But no government agency has bothered to check the documents and trace under whose patronage an entire settlement of nearly 10,000 houses came up on public land. Such an investigation would probably point in politically inconvenient directions. This might explain the hurry to tear down the whole basti.

Environmentalists and housing rights activists are agast that the orders of the highest court have been instrumentalised to unleash the worst form of violence against a community that already has its back to the wall due to the pandemic. The Municipal Corporation shut off electricity and water tankers to the basti in the middle of the summer. When the residents protested, many were beaten and arrested. The demolitions started the day the monsoons arrived in these parts and now

many of them are homeless and sick.

The SC has expanded this case to cover all forest violations in Haryana. That is a long list because forest land under the PLPA covers 25 per cent of Haryana. It includes lands that are public and privately owned in rural and urban areas. The SC's aim is ostensibly to treat all encroachers as equals. But they are all clearly not equal by class, by opportunity, by location or by nature of the violation. Ishita Chatterjee's scholarly work on Khori Gaon shows that this basti should be seen as restorer of quarry land, because the residents turned these areas that were mined till the SC's mining ban in 2002, into liveable habitats by using individual and community labour. This is no mean feat when governments around the world struggle to reuse mined areas after the earth has been polluted and exhausted of all its productivity.

Poor and migrant workers in cities have little choice but to make homes on public land because the state simply will not provide for them. The state governments that are ever willing to extract their labour loathe to spend on their housing and welfare. The people of Khori Gaon are acutely aware that they are unwanted by the political and bureaucratic establishment that gave them voter IDs, Aadhaar cards, ration cards and other identification. But it has come as a jolt to them that the Supreme Court of India has abandoned them.

The authors are with the Centre for Policy Research.

AUGUST 2, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

FLOOD WOES

FLOODS IN THE major rivers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had by the night of August 1 engulfed 37 districts in the two states, while in Assam the deluge compelled the authorities to seek the help of the army in Dibrugarh subdivision for relief and rescue work. According to official reports, about 9.3 million people were in distress in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar caused by heavy rains and floods which have destroyed crops, flattened or washed away houses and breached roads. The Army was called out to assist the civil authorities in Telpani area of the Dibrugarh subdivision. The surging waters of the Buridihing washed away 200 metres of the embankment on July 31.



JAIPUR DOC AWARDED

A 54-YEAR-OLD DOCTOR from Jaipur who has spent the past five years developing artificial legs for thousands of amputees has been selected to receive the 1981 Ramon Magsaysay award. The award established in honour of the third president of the Philippines cited Dr Pramod Karan Sethi for “applying his surgical genius” which enabled the crippled and limbless from Rajasthan to resume near-normal lives. The artificial leg Dr Sethi and his associates have devised is called Jaipur foot. “When a formerly legless man with his new Jaipur feet and limbs bicycles off to his village, he is a new man with an opportunity to become a productive member of the community,” the citation noted.

CONG (U) ACCOUNT'S

THE RESERVE BANK of India has instructed all the banks in the country to freeze the accounts of Congress (U) following instructions from the Union government. A circular to this effect issued by the Agriculture and Credit Department of the RBI was sent to all state, central and primary cooperative banks on July 25. The circular stated: “The Election Commission has derecognised the Congress U and declared the Indian National Congress (I) as the real Congress. This decision of the Election Commission may please be taken note of with a view to ensuring that the deposits of the Indian National Congress are not allowed to be withdrawn or operated upon by the party which has been derecognised.”



Kolkata



THE IDEAS PAGE

Renewing the tryst with destiny

India has done well to reduce poverty. Policy must now aim at improving education, enhancing skills, rather than giving freebies



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

IN ANOTHER TWO weeks, India will be celebrating its 75th Independence Day. Year-long celebrations are likely to follow. This is also an occasion to reflect on how India's "tryst with destiny" has played out over these years. India started its journey as a newborn nation with deep wounds of Partition. Independent India's population was roughly 340 million, with more than 70 per cent extremely poor, and only 12 per cent literate.

Winston Churchill had famously warned: "If Independence is granted to India, power will go to the hands of rascals, rogues, free-booters, all Indian leaders will be of low calibre and men of straw. They will have sweet tongues and silly hearts. They will fight amongst themselves for power and India will be lost in political squabbles. A day would come when even air and water would be taxed in India".

Partition made things grim. But Jawaharlal Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly on August 14, 1947, "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and still to the larger cause of humanity....The service of India means, the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity".

It is against these predicaments and pledges that we need to assess how far we have travelled. One can find both Churchill and Nehru to be right in varying degrees. But here let me focus on the basic necessities -- poverty, illiteracy and food.

From more than 70 per cent poor in 1947, the head-count ratio (HCR) of poverty in India dropped to 21.9 per cent in 2011, as per the erstwhile Planning Commission's estimates based on the Tendulkar poverty line. The drop in HCR during 2004-11 was almost three times faster than during 1993 to 2004, and much faster than during the socialist era of 1947-91. But many Leftists disputed the poverty line, and the government had to set up a committee under C Rangarajan, which estimated HCR poverty at 29.5 percent in 2011. It is ironic that after 2011, we have no official estimates of poverty. But the World Bank estimated India's HCR to be between 8.1 and 11.3 per cent in 2017, as per the international definition of per capita income of \$1.9 per day (at 2011 PPP). Using the same definition, the World Poverty Clock estimates India's poverty



CR Sasikumar

at just 6 per cent in 2021. One can quibble with this definition as well as the estimates. But the irrefutable fact is that HCR has been going down, and this accelerated after 2004, when GDP growth touched 8.4 per cent per annum during the first seven years of the Manmohan Singh government.

Could India have done better? Of course, yes. If India had invested in better quality education for the masses, especially for the girl child, the results would have been much better. While India is proud of its IITs, IIMs and AIIMS, and its overall literacy rates going up from 12 per cent in 1947 to about 77 per cent now -- with Kerala at the top and Bihar at the bottom -- the quality of education for large sections of the poor remains poor. Year after year, Pratham's ASER reports indicate that a large number of children in the eighth grade do not fulfil the learning requirements of the fifth or sixth grades. Without quality education, their incomes remain low and many remain stuck in the poverty trap. The pandemic has exacerbated the digital divide between rural and urban schoolchildren. So, a lot has to be done on this front.

What about basic food security? There has been tremendous success in this respect, with the country moving from a "ship to mouth" situation in the mid-1960s to become the largest exporter of rice (17.7 MMT) in 2020-21, amounting to 38.5 per cent of the global rice trade. This has been achieved through the use of modern technology, improved seeds, irrigation, fertilisers, and, of course, the right incentives for farmers. But it has come at a huge cost of groundwater depletion. Future poli-

India's public grain management system of procurement, stocking and distributing is, perhaps, the biggest food programme in the world. But it is also an expensive, inefficient and corrupt system, and is crying for reforms. Look at the following facts: In 2020-21, as per the provisional estimates of the Controller General of Accounts, food subsidy amounted to 31 per cent of the total revenue of the Union government. Instead of spending money on education and skills, giving free rice and wheat is definitely not the right way to go forward.

cies need to focus on greater sustainability.

The question that bothers us is that if India has been so successful in reducing poverty and improving food availability, why does it have to give almost free food (rice and wheat) to more than 800 million people under the National Food security Act (2013)? However, malnutrition amongst children still runs high. This surely does not square with the facts above. India's public grain management system of procurement, stocking and distributing is, perhaps, the biggest food programme in the world. But it is also an expensive, inefficient and corrupt system, and is crying for reforms. Look at the following facts: In 2020-21, as per the provisional estimates of the Controller General of Accounts, food subsidy amounted to 31 per cent of the total revenue of the Union government. Giving free rice and wheat, instead of improving the quality of education and enhancing skills, is definitely not the right way to go forward.

Our work at ICRIER on food policy shows that a rational policy of gradually moving towards cash transfers to targeted beneficiaries, limiting grain stocks, can easily save Rs 50,000 crore every year from the food subsidy bill. This can be achieved without sacrificing the objectives of supporting the vulnerable population as well as giving a fair deal to farmers. This rationalisation of food policy needs to come up high in priority, with changed policy instruments, if we have to fulfil the pledges we made to our people in 1947.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor for Agriculture at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Foreign states must continue to hammer home the message that militancy based out of Afghanistan will not be accepted, while it should also be communicated that religious freedom and women's rights must be assured." — DAWN

A failing state, a visionary president

President Ashraf Ghani, a theorist of state-building, will have to share blame if Afghanistan descends into civil war



SANJIB BARUAH

NO ONE KNOWS what the future holds for Afghanistan once US-led foreign troops fully withdraw from the country. But the swift battleground victories of the Taliban since the troops' withdrawal began, have surprised many observers. While a return to Taliban rule is unlikely, few would rule out a descent into civil war.

There is a particular irony to this turn of events. It is happening under the watch of a cerebral head of state globally respected for his expertise on state failure and civil wars. President Ashraf Ghani is often described as a technocrat perhaps because of his stint at the World Bank. But Ghani is a humanistically oriented academic and a policy intellectual. An anthropologist by training, he is deeply knowledgeable of the history, politics, and economics of Afghanistan. "Afghanistan's Theorist-in-Chief", the appellation given by American writer George Packer, seems more apt.

Packer asks if President Ashraf Ghani, "an expert on failed states can save his country from collapse". Ironically, Ghani's ideas on how to fix failed states -- to borrow the title of the book he co-authored with Clare Lockhart -- provide the best explanation for the country's current crisis. Ghani and Lockhart see the failed state not just as a localised problem of individual states. That "forty to sixty states, home to nearly two billion people, are either sliding backward and teetering on the brink of implosion or have already collapsed", they argue, is "at the heart of a worldwide systematic crisis".

Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Building a Fractured World is a critique of the international community's piecemeal and incoherent response to the problem. Ghani and Lockhart offer a framework of coordinated action that could reorient the aid system "towards building capable states".

If Ghani speaks relentlessly about the need for a state-building strategy, Americans like to talk of nation-building, though oddly, only to disavow it as a goal. "We did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build", declares President Joe Biden. He is not the first US president to disavow nation-building. George W Bush said as a presidential candidate in 2000 that US troops should not be used for nation-building, but "to fight and win war". Barack Obama and Donald Trump both promised not to get mired in nation-building.

But what do Americans mean by nation-building? It is not what most of us in India would understand by the term. It is a "false friend" -- a word in a foreign language that seems familiar but has a different meaning. While the term has lost its saliency in Indian public discourse, it retains its old meaning -- building national political communities.

Columnist Vir Sanghvi recently invoked the term in remembering Hindi cinema star Dilip Kumar. "In the 1950s, when the term

nation-building was in vogue," he writes, Jawaharlal Nehru enlisted Kumar "for the task of helping build up morale in the young nation". Kumar promoted India's new social welfare programmes, played leading roles in short patriotic films, appeared in events promoting national integration and raised money for the armed forces. And significantly, he did all this free of charge.

Contrast this to the use of the term in American public discourse. US diplomat and security expert James Dobbins defines nation-building as "the use of armed force in the aftermath of a conflict to promote enduring peace and establish a representative government". When the US invaded Iraq in 2003, Dobbins declared that "no military in the world had more nation-building experience".

The two meanings could not be more different. To most people in the global South, the idea of an invading force engaging in nation-building would seem suspect. Significantly, when many American civil and military officials disavow nation-building they often do it with a sense of wistfulness. The American general David Petraeus once told a reporter that he understands "the intellectual aversion to nation-building", but he doesn't "see how you avoid it".

When commentators talk unfavourably about military personnel serving short tours of duty in Afghanistan or Iraq, the contrast is with British or other European imperial forces spending most of their careers in the colonies where they could learn the cultures and languages of the "natives".

It is hard to miss the nostalgia for empires. American journalists reporting from Iraq or Afghanistan referred to a couple of the US ambassadors to those countries as Viceroyes. While one can quarrel with this choice of words, there is little doubt that during that time the US ambassador was the most powerful person in that country, at least until the "formal handover of sovereignty" to "the host government".

In *Fixing Failed States*, Ghani and his collaborator point out that in half the countries that emerge from conflict there is renewal of hostilities within a decade. If civil war returns to Afghanistan, it will be primarily because the US and its allies lacked the political capacity to target their assistance towards building a functioning state.

It was much easier for US presidents to mobilise Congressional support for a form of assistance where US private contractors were the key agents. The result, to extend one of Ghani's examples, was that out of each US dollar "generously allocated by the American citizen to support stability in Afghanistan" as much as 80 cents ended up in the US, and at least 10 cents of the rest pocketed by Afghan elites may have ended up in Dubai. Despite evidence that the emergence of a national construction industry could be a critical factor in fixing failed states, no such industry could come up under these circumstances. If Afghanistan were to descend into civil war, President Ghani, of course, will have to share part of the blame, but only for his failure to master politics as the art of the possible despite being dealt a bad hand.

The writer is Professor of Political Studies at Bard College, New York



ZAMEER UDDIN SHAH

Listening to Mohan Bhagwat

His call for Hindu-Muslim dialogue resonates, despite his apparent backtracking

I ATTENDED THE launch, organised by the Muslim Rashtriya Manch, of Khwaja Iftikhar Ahmed's book, *The Meeting of Minds - A Bridging Initiative* at the Mewar Institute, Ghaziabad on July 4. The author had assisted me, whilst I was Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, in explaining to the RSS, the ethos of this institution of national importance. The function was presided over by Mohan Bhagwat and leading functionaries of the RSS and General VK Singh, MP.

I have been a leading proponent of Hindu-Muslim dialogue to foster amity between the two estranged communities. I was accused of angling for a gubernatorial appointment and a sprinkling of brother-officers, lifelong friends, "advised" me and members of my family, who have been active on social media, saying what they believe is best for our country, to "Go to Pakistan". I ignored these as the rantings of immature minds.

The author gave a lengthy, impassioned speech, spelling out the book's contents, supported by references to the Holy Quran. Bhagwat took note and commented upon these in his 45-minute scholarly, impassioned appeal for amity.

He explained that he had agreed to the launch because continuous dialogue and amity between Hindus and Muslims is imperative for progress. In a democracy, religious groups cannot dominate one another. The demand that Muslims should not live in

India is counter to the Hindu ethos and is rightly opposed by the majority. The Constitution guarantees the safety of minorities and their apprehension that "Islam is threatened in India" is unfounded. Religion and patriotism are not contradictory.

Bhagwat dwelt, at length, on the fact that the cow is sacred but condemned incidents of lynching by vigilantes as "anti-Hindutva", warranting action by the law without partiality. He, however, cautioned against counter FIRs being registered. All have the right to protest in forums like the legislature, judiciary, NHRC etc.

I would like to stress that the police can easily ascertain facts and must not shield culprits. Also, why restrict protest to limited forums? Citizens have a right to publicly protest. Freedom of speech, essential for the preservation of democracy, is guaranteed under Article 19 (1)(a) of the Indian Constitution with a limiting clause, under Article 19(2), that "reasonable restrictions can be imposed on the exercise of this right for certain purposes". Do peaceful, non-violent protests warrant the imposition of restrictions?

Another contentious point was Bhagwat's statement that "India is a Hindu Rashtra and all citizens are Hindu", immediately clarified to mean "All citizens are Bharatiyas". This latter position is acceptable to the minorities as the former has a religious connotation. As far as Hindu "Rashtra" is concerned, India was always one, in my opinion. It makes no difference.

The majority in a democracy will always call the shots, even if, for the sake of nicety, "secular" is prefixed/suffixed.

The assertion that nationalism should be the basis of unity among all sections of people would be more acceptable if this unifying factor is substituted with patriotism. There is a danger of nationalism snowballing to hyper-nationalism -- witness Nazi Germany, Japan and erstwhile Yugoslavia.

Bhagwat conveyed that he meant well for the minorities. Amity was at the top of his agenda. He acknowledged he would probably be criticised by some of his cadres, viewing it as Muslim appeasement.

Was it this compulsion that compelled him to backtrack somewhat in his later statement at Guwahati, on July 21, where he supported the CAA and NRC? He asserted that a communal narrative was being peddled for political mileage. Governments across the world document their respective country's population through NRC-like exercises, essential to identify illegal immigrants. This stand cannot be contested but has a flip side. The NRC, completed in Assam in 2019 on the instructions of the Supreme Court, compiled a registry of citizens, a key charter of the Assam Accord. The roster excluded around 1.9 million of the nearly 33 million applicants from the NRC. The list was dubbed faulty by most people, citing the exclusion of genuine citizens and inclusion of persons with doubtful identity. Protesters in Assam alleged that the NRC vi-

olated the 1985 Assam Accord that provided for the deportation of all refugees and migrants, who entered Assam after March 25, 1971. If the result of the NRC in Assam, despite the time and expense, was dubious and inconclusive, one can imagine its fate at the national level.

The contentious CAA, which was passed in Parliament in 2019, fast-tracks Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Refugees from other neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar have been left out, as are the Ahmadiyyas, Shias and Hazaras facing persecution in their home countries. This exclusion of Muslims is, therefore, viewed as discriminatory even by organs of the UN.

Septics remonstrated, "we told you so". I, however, have profound hope in the well-intentioned efforts of Bhagwat. The only plausible explanation is that a person of his stature has to keep in mind the sensitivities of all constituencies to maintain a balance. It is time for the hardliners from both communities to weigh his words carefully and carry forward the process of dialogue. Amity, across all sections, is essential for India's progress.

The writer is a retired lieutenant general, educationist, and author of *The Sarkari Mussalman*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHITHER DEMOCRACY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Phantom Democracy" (IE, July 31). India's inclusion in the list of partially free and failing democracies should be a matter of great concern. Years of stagnant progress and widening socio-economic gaps, especially post globalisation, have led to a clamour for a strong and authoritarian leader, willing to "restore" India's prestige. Due process and fundamental rights are being seen as an unnecessary hurdle in the path of development. The nightmare of the Pegasus scandal and unwillingness to come clean only reinforces these fears.

Ila Railkar, Mumbai

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Phantom Democracy', (IE, JULY 31). The author has rightly pointed out that democracy is dying in India. It seems the people of India have only one true right, that is the right to vote. We must have some framework to hold the representatives of the people accountable so that they will act responsibly.

Amar Dombre, Parbhani

FLAWED SYSTEM

THIS REFERS TO the article 'How does a democracy die?' (IE, July 31). The writer has convincingly bared the rough and crude side of our democracy. What continues to be a black spot on our democracy is that even when it is entering the 75th year of our independence, the people remain bereft even of their basic needs. The make-believe politics of our

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rulers does not appear to be the right answer to chinks visible in our overrated largest democracy.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

FIND THE TRUTH

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Disrespecting House' (IE, July 31). India's Parliamentary Affairs Minister described Pegasus as a "non-issue", which does not merit a discussion in Parliament. Information obtained illegally may have been used to compromise institutions, to steal elections, sabotage Opposition campaigns, and even dislodge Opposition governments. The truth about these revelations must be unearthed through an investigation by the SC or any other credible mechanism.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

8

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

TEJASHWI YADAV, LEADER OF OPPOSITION, BIHAR ASSEMBLY

Can't have Opp without Cong... TMC, SP, NCP must come together, let go of egos... It's late, we must work on a strategy

Yadav feels Bengal polls showed that people believe in secularism, says it is up to Chirag Paswan to come clear on his ideology for any alliance, calls Modi govt reshuffle a bid to cover up failings, and elaborates on why Lalu remains relevant. The session was moderated by Special Correspondent Dipankar Ghose

DIPANKAR GHOSE: You helmed a very intense campaign during the Bihar elections last year. After the polls, you emerged as the single largest party but couldn't form the government. In hindsight, would you have done anything differently?

It was a very important election and for the first time my father (Lalu Prasad) was not physically present with us. The entire responsibility was on my shoulders. We were competing against 'the world's largest party' (the BJP). Many smaller alliances were created to cut into our votes. All the Central ministers landed in Bihar, apart from members of the Bihar government, Nitish Kumar... Central agencies such as the CBI, ED, Income Tax department were also unleashed. So our fight was very important.

A year before the elections, we decided to raise the issue of unemployment because Bihar has turned into a centre of unemployment. The state has a large young population, many of whom migrate out of the state. We even started an unemployment yatra, but then the pandemic struck and we had to cancel everything. Also, it was the first election being held in the pandemic. We were clueless about how things would unfold. We told the Election Commission that if the situation is bad, they can delay the polls as well. So while we contested the polls, we didn't get much time to prepare.

We have often seen that the BJP tries to communalise the atmosphere during elections; they create divisions. Bihar was one election where we forced them to speak on issues. We got a lot of support in our rallies, and our vote share also shows that. If you raise ground issues, people support you. The Chief Minister would mock us and say how will we give 10 lakh jobs, and then his own ally promised 19 lakh jobs.

In terms of resources, we fell short in front of the BJP. If we had one helicopter, they had 30. Since the elections were happening in only one state then, they had put their entire might into it. The mandate of the people was with the Mahagathbandhan, but you can say that the decision of the EC was in favour of the NDA... This also shows that we are not just a 'M-Y (Muslim-Yadav) party', as is often believed, but that we are an 'A-Z party'.

DIPANKAR GHOSE: After the results, you said you would go to court. Why did you decide against it later?

About 12 of our candidates have gone to the high court with evidence. For example, in Munger, when the voting ended, the EC announced the total number of votes cast. But then on the day of the results, more votes were counted. How is that possible? In Hilsa constituency, our candidate Shakti Singh called me up at 5.30 pm and said that he had won the seat with 550 votes. At midnight he was told he had lost by 12 votes. All this evidence will be placed in court.

MANOJ C G: Was giving the Congress 70 seats a mistake?

When the Mahagathbandhan was made, our national president had said that like-minded parties need to come together. That is how Nitish Kumar also joined us in 2015... The Congress has been our oldest ally, whether it is at the Centre or state. We are like-minded parties. This time we also worked on bringing the Left parties on board. We wanted to build a broader alliance and give people an option.

Every party wants to fight on more seats. When you are fighting as part of an alliance, whether it is the Congress or RJD, it is all one. People voted for our agenda. Our effort was to focus on winnability. If a party is strong in an area, it should fight from that seat. If you have to keep the alliance intact, you have to make some small sacrifices, and being the largest party in Bihar, we did that and brought everyone together.

DIPANKAR GHOSE: When you say that you are an 'A-Z party', is there a conscious attempt to break away from the politics of caste?

You have to see the reality... In the '90s, there was a need for social justice. People wouldn't even go to polling booths. Booths were looted and votes were cast. The effort was to bring the oppressed sections, the back-benchers of society into the mainstream. There was a need to ensure equality. That was the reality then. Laluj also said this on our foundation day.

Now, we need economic justice. Today there are many platforms for people to raise their demands and be heard. Poverty, inflation are big problems. In Bihar, in 27 districts, the price of petrol has crossed Rs 100. Bihar grows a lot of maize, sugarcane, bananas, but there are no food processing units for this produce. There are not enough factories and industries in the state which can



WHY
TEJASHWI YADAV

Amid overtures by NCP chief Sharad Pawar and West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, speculation about a third front has gained momentum again. Tejashwi Yadav, who proved his political mettle in the recent Bihar polls by spearheading a high-voltage campaign against the BJP-JD(U) in the absence of father Lalu Prasad, has been emphatic in his call for a Congress-led joint Opposition to take on the BJP. The 31-year-old has also served as deputy CM of Bihar

create jobs. No work has been done for it by the government. The condition of farmers is worse than labourers. Nitish Kumar had dissolved the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis in 2006. This increased migration. Even now, Bihar has to deal with both floods and droughts and the government has not found any solutions. That is why economic justice is very important now and so we are raising it.

...I can also say that Nitish Kumar is very casteist. The party whip, the national president of the party, they are all from his caste. So people can run their propaganda... But we are seeing the reality and raising issues.

SANTOSH SINGH: How do you see Chirag Paswan's role in Bihar politics in the future?

I have always wanted to see more youth participation in policy-making and decision-making. We have always had good relations with Chirag Paswan, and even my father had good relations with the late Ram Vilas Paswan. They worked together in UPA-1. Through the media also we have always said that Chirag Paswan needs to be more clear in his ideology. He has to decide (on any possible alliance in the future).

SANTOSH SINGH: Your alliance with the CPI (M-L) helped you reach out to Dalit voters. Are you looking at broadening your vote base further by bringing in other parties into the Grand Alliance?

If an alliance gets broader, you get more votes. If you compare the 2019 general election vote share to the state polls last year, there was a big difference. By allying with parties that are in touch with ground realities, we have benefited, and we have also benefited them. The CPI (M-L) won 12 seats this time, compared to three last time. Alliance is not just about votes and coming to power, we have to ally with like-minded parties, whose ideology matches ours. The RJD is the only party that has never compromised on its ideology, on its commit-

ments, despite what Laluj had to face. Many parties joined the NDA, BJP at some stage, but not the RJD. We have always fought against communal forces who want to sell the country...

SANTOSH SINGH: What if Nitish Kumar becomes like-minded tomorrow?

You cannot trust him. We gave him one chance, and he did what he is known for. During the Union Cabinet expansion, he again did a U-turn. His words hold no value. We don't have a machine to detect that if he joins us, he will not do a U-turn again.

SANTOSH SINGH: You are criticised for not hitting the streets as often as your father did...

You see my yatras, I have covered 18,000 km by road. Now, for the past year-and-a-half, we have been facing the pandemic. We asked for permission to visit families of affected people, but didn't get it. You must have seen pictures of Laluj and I sitting with villagers, talking to farmers... Show me a recent picture of the CM doing any such thing or talking to the youth. He gets lathicharge done on them. The walls of the CM's residence are getting higher, his security is increasing. During his yatras, he just gets off the helicopter, sees the project and returns. I meet common people every day. The CM only meets bureaucrats for analysis meetings. And what is the result of that? Healthcare, education, everything is in a shambles in Patna. We have been raising issues. This is the first time that people in power are looking to find out what the Opposition leader is doing.

If we had not raised our voice, migrant workers would not have been allowed to return to Bihar (during the first phase of the pandemic), trains would not have run, and lakhs of people would have died on the streets. It is because of us that Nitish Kumar has come down to 43 seats. Bihar has a strong Opposition. When I hit the streets to demand the 19 lakh jobs they promised to the youth, I was charged under Section 307, attempt to murder! I face at least 25 such cases... As CM, if you are trying to find me, then why are you sitting on that chair, make me sit on it. I will do your work.

RAVISH TIWARI: The political scenario now is highly polarised. As a young

politician, how do you intend to tackle it in the future?

This politics of polarisation has increased a lot since 2014. If anyone speaks against the ruling party, they face heat from the CBI, ED and Income Tax departments. And those who compromise and join the BJP, all their sins are washed. I remember the time my mother was chief minister. Atal Bihar Vajpayee would call her and inform her that I am making so and so the governor... There were etiquettes in politics. Then too there were different parties with opposing views, but you also had to honour the post that you held. Earlier, people from different parties could meet, discuss issues. But now even if you are seen with someone (who opposes the ruling party) you may face an inquiry. If you write too much in a newspaper, you will lose your job. So why is this fear being created? If you look at news channels, one can easily figure out the political leanings of the news anchors. This is very dangerous. That is why Laluj had said in 2014, that we need to decide on whether the country will stay together or fall apart.

Look at the constitutional institutions... If you look at the design of the RSS and the communal forces, even when they go out of power, the hatred that they have created in the society will take a long time to dissipate. That's a bigger concern.

But they are being slowly exposed. They harped on *achche din*, and now look at the prices of petrol, diesel, onion... They only work on creating distractions, and not on working for the country. Whether it is LIC, BSNL, Air India, Railways, SAIL, what is left? You are making black laws for the farmers, but you don't have time to meet them. You can meet Priyanka Chopra and other celebrities, but you can't meet farmers. We have never seen such a thing... It's the same for the CM here. There is a dictatorial attitude, everything is centralised. We have to come together for the country.

RAVISH TIWARI: Have you tried to figure out what works in favour of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

People need an option... The Congress is a pan-India party. The Opposition cannot come together without the Congress. The Congress has to become the foundation of any such Opposition. Also, it is quite late now and we should start making a strategy on how we will reach out to the people. There is no dearth of issues, people are facing problems and they want this government to fall. People are admitting that they voted for the wrong party. So it is our responsibility to present an alternative to the country. Everyone has to come together, keep aside their egos and differences to save the country. If you remove the regional parties, there are at least 200 seats where the Congress and BJP are in a direct contest. But in areas where the regional parties are strong, they should be put in the driving seat. The time has come for this... Now, what steps are taken, that remains to be seen.

The BJP-RSS has one agenda, a Hindu nation... (Our) strategy should be based on real issues. In Bihar polls, we stuck to unemployment, peace

towards his ideology. He does what he says, we should learn from him. He never compromised on his views and ideology for gaining power. Laluj is a mass leader. The way he communicates with people... he is linked to the poor, villages. Even the agriculture minister today will not know what crops grow in the country. In fact, I would say that Laluj should have been in

Parliament now. It feels empty without him.

DIPANKAR GHOSE: Has the BJP forced Opposition parties to rethink stand on communal politics? What will your strategy be for 2024?

The BJP-RSS has one agenda, they want a Hindu nation. They have a tried and tested formula of communalism. But the strategy should be based on real issues. We have to raise those issues. In Bihar polls too they tried to do it, but we stuck to issues such as unemployment. We talk about peace, and where there is peace there is prosperity. We need to talk in that direction. But there must have been some shortcomings in our communication... The way the BJP, RSS do their publicity of religious and other issues... We have to find a solution for it...

Also, it should not be claimed that some party only talks of Muslims (referring to Sonia Gandhi's 2018 comment that the BJP had managed to convince people that the Congress was a Muslim party). Both Hindus and Muslims can be communal... It cannot be that only Hindus are communal and Muslims aren't.

...When L K Advaniji's Rath Yatra was stopped (in Bihar by Lalu Prasad in 1990), the (Ram Mandir) site was disputed. After the court's decision, things became clear. We had said that we will go with the court order... We need to seriously think of a solution... Even in the media, we don't have discussions on economy, GDP, development. They have debates on Hindu-Muslim, *mandir-masjid*, Dawood, Pakistan. You have to bring the real issues to the forefront. But their publicity machinery is huge... They have so much money. Their office in Delhi is worth thousands of crores. During demonetisation, they bought land in all districts of the country. The solution is only to raise people's issues. People have seen that Modiji has done nothing for the past seven years, and he has made his ministers scapegoats after he got flak for his lack of work.

DIPANKAR GHOSE: How do you read the Bengal election results? Also, are you in touch with Opposition leaders such as Mamata Banerjee and Akhilesh Yadav?

The people of Bengal have given a good message to the country. It shows that people believe in secularism. They voted for it, and for Mamata Banerjee's work. The BJP's efforts failed there. Regional party leaders such as Mamata Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav, Sharad Pawar, we meet from time-to-time. Everyone is concerned about the country. Very soon there will be a strategy in place. I have always said that we should all come together and ensure that our campaign reaches the people. We should go to every state together and tell people what promises the government has not fulfilled, what the issues are... If we have not been able to convince people so far, it means there are some mistakes, and we are not being seen as 'one'. So we need to let go of our egos and differences, who gets what post, we must forget that. If the country survives, we will get posts. If they (the BJP) stay for some more time, there will be no country...

RAVISH TIWARI: Is the internal crisis within the Congress impeding the consolidation of the Opposition?

The Congress has to deal with it and come out stronger. They have to concentrate on those 200 seats... There is no point in delaying the problems. Now I don't know if they (the Centre) use Covid-19 as an excuse to stop us from hitting the ground... We have to make a back-up plan for that too.

LALMANI VERMA: What is your suggestion for the Opposition in UP?

I have said what should happen. Thereafter, it is up to individual regional parties. I cannot force anyone. I cannot tie someone up. Who agrees, who comes together, who doesn't, is their decision. But there is one thing. When in the future, history is read, people will not forgive us.

DIPANKAR GHOSE: Do you see Nitish government completing its term?

No one can predict what happens in politics. No other state has seen four governments in four years other than Bihar... Nitishji said last year that this will be his last election, but no one trusts him. People of Bihar want this government to fall. Let's see.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

ANANT GOENKA: Based on the Cabinet reshuffle, do you think the Prime Minister is giving any signals to Nitish Kumar about the alliance in Bihar?

It doesn't matter if he was giving a signal or not, but it showed that Modiji has failed. It was an attempt to do another image makeover and fool the people, that something will happen! Modiji has been all about distractions. At a time when petrol prices are at an all-time high, businesses are suffering and the economy is facing a slump, the reshuffle was just to show people that something is being done.

ABHISHEK ANGAD: What were your interactions like with you father when he was at the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences in Ranchi?

We would meet him on Saturdays. He was shifted to RIMS from Birsa Munda jail and his health report was released every week. He has been a kidney and heart patient. As a son, I was quite worried because RIMS neither has facilities for kidney treatment nor for heart treatment. That is why we raised questions since it was happening under the (former) BJP government (in Jharkhand)... When I met him, I would update him about what is happening outside, the political developments... We would talk about his health, family, Bihar...

VANDITA MISHRA: What role will Lalu Prasad play in this new RJD that you are now steering forward?

Laluj has had a long political career. He ensured social justice. As railway minister, he managed a profit of Rs 90,000 crore for the sector. In every budget, he reduced fares. He gave Bihar four factories, and even now there isn't a fifth one. He launched the Garib Rath. From Harvard University to INSEAD, Singapore, all honoured him for his efforts to pull the Railways out of debt. He was known as a management guru. He has done a lot of work. We should not forget it. The youth of today will see how dedicated he is

ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH AGRICULTURE

Fertiliser sales down on erratic monsoon rains

ALL-INDIA FERTILISER SALES

	2020	2021	% Growth
April	20.56	20.05	-2.48
May	40.02	31.24	-21.94
Jun	68.74	65.87	-4.18
Jul	92.31	77.03	-16.55
Apr-Jul	221.63	194.19	-12.38

In lakh tonnes

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

RETAIL SALES of fertilisers have fallen 12.4 per cent in April-July over the corresponding four months of last year. All major nutrients have posted lower sales: urea (minus 12.8 per cent), di-ammonium phosphate (minus 27.5 per cent), muriate of potash (minus 8.8 per cent) and complex fertilisers (minus 6.5 per cent). Only single super phosphate sales have registered a 4.6 per cent year-on-year increase.

Reduced fertiliser purchases by farmers is consistent with the Agriculture Ministry's data that shows a 4.7 per cent drop in the area sown under kharif crops till July 30, relative to the coverage during the same period of the 2020 season. Farmers have so far planted 4 per cent less area under rice, with these lagging by 3 per cent for pulses, 5.7 per cent for coarse cereals, 5.5 per cent for oilseeds and 8.7 per cent for cotton.

Both fertiliser sales as well as kharif acreages being down are largely due to an erratic monsoon. While the country received 9.6 per cent above long-period average rainfall in June, it was 6.7 per cent below normal in July. But more important was an extended dry spell from around June 20 to July 11. Since mid-June to mid-July is the peak time for kharif sowing, many farmers are seen to have missed out on that window. While the rains revived from July 12, overall sales of fertiliser for the month were still 16.6 per cent down compared to July 2020 (see table).

Satish Chander, director-general of the Fertiliser Association of India, felt that comparing April-July 2021 sales to April-July 2020 may not be wholly accurate. Last year, there was lot of panic buying because of the lockdown-related uncertainties. Although agricultural inputs were exempted from any movement, distribution or retailing restrictions, farmers as well as dealers stocked up material in anticipation of kharif demand. Fertiliser sales in April-July 2020 were, in fact, 56.7 per cent higher over April-July 2019.

But sales slowed in the subsequent months, with the fiscal (April-March) as a

whole recording 9.7 per cent growth.

"We are back to normal growth now and hope it to be so for the rest of the year," said Satish Chander.

A significant source of worry, however, is international prices. In the last one year, prices of urea imported into India have doubled to about \$520 per tonne. The landed cost and freight prices of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and muriate of potash (MOP) have similarly gone up from \$330 and \$230 to \$630 and \$280 per tonne, respectively, while also rising for inputs such as phosphoric acid (\$625 to \$1,160), ammonia (\$205 to \$670) and sulphur (\$75 to \$200).

Fertiliser prices have basically tracked global agri-commodity prices. The Food and Agriculture Organization's world food price index has soared by 33.9 per cent between June 2020 and June 2021.

But, in fertilisers, there are a couple of additional factors at work.

The first is China. India has been importing roughly 3 million tonnes (mt) of urea and 2-3 million tonnes of DAP annually from China. But China has, of late, been resorting to strategic stockpiling of fertilisers rather than supplying to the world market. The second is Belarus, which is India's second largest supplier of MOP after Canada. The recent economic sanctions imposed by the US and the European Union against the Belarusian regime have raised the prospects of a further hardening of MOP prices.

"Morocco's state-owned company OCP, too, has raised its supply price of phosphoric acid for India from \$998 to \$1,160 per tonne. This is a clear indication we are in a seller's market in fertilisers similar to that witnessed back in 2008," an industry expert pointed out.

According to him, the problems in fertiliser will not be in kharif, but in the upcoming rabi season. "The government should review the stock availability of all nutrients factoring in view the tightening global supply conditions. Not doing can prove costly just ahead of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and other states in February-March," he added.

MANUFACTURERS SEE M-O-M IMPROVEMENT IN JULY

Easing curbs, low cases unlock sentiment: Car sales in fast lane

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

CAR SALES picked up pace in July in line with dip in Covid cases, relaxation in lockdowns across the country and improvement in macroeconomic conditions and consumer sentiment. Market leader Maruti Suzuki announced domestic passenger vehicle sales of 1,33,732 units in July, up 36 per cent over last year and 7.5 per cent higher than June 2021. Hyundai Motor India, too, announced a 25.8 per cent y-o-y jump in sales in July at 48,042 units.

Among other players, Tata Motors saw its domestic PV sale at 30,185 units in July, up 101 per cent over that of last July. Honda Cars announced sales of 6,055 units in the domestic market, up from 1,398 units in July 2020. Similarly, Nissan, MG Motor and Skoda reported healthy growth in sales last month, following improved market sentiment and despite supply constraints of semi-conductors.

With decline in Covid cases and relaxation in lockdowns across states, car manufacturers reported a month-on-month improvement in wholesale numbers in July. While sales dipped sharply in May, following stringent lockdown conditions on account of sharp rise in Covid cases, the situation has been improving over last couple of months.

While MSI saw its sales dip to 32,903 units in May, Hyundai Motor and Tata Motors had seen their sales fall to 25,001 units and

RISING DOMESTIC PV SALES

	JUL-20	MAY-21	JUN-21	JUL-21
Maruti Suzuki	97,768	32,903	1,24,280	1,33,732
Hyundai Motor	38,200	25,001	40,496	48,042
Tata Motors	15,012	15,181	24,110	30,185
Honda Cars	1,398	2,032	4,767	6,055



15,181 units, respectively, in May. As Covid cases jumped in May, several companies advanced their maintenance shutdown in May and shut production for a large part of the month. However, sales have picked up over the last two months and is rising progressively in line with opening up of dealer outlets.

"A positive growth momentum is clearly visible in the passenger vehicle industry with the stabilisation of macro-economic factors, good monsoons and increase in consumer shift towards personal mobility," said Tarun Garg, director, sales, marketing and service, Hyundai Motor India.

Rajesh Goel, sr VP and director, marketing & sales, Honda Cars India, said market sentiment has improved amid prevailing lower Covid infection rate, adding he expects the "upcoming festive period will help the industry to maintain this momentum". He, however, said the industry will keep a closer watch on the challenges related to Covid and rising cost of acquisition of cars due to

price hike from this month.

Maruti Suzuki witnessed sales growth across utility vehicles, compact segment and mini segment. While the sales in mini segment, comprising Alto and S-Presso, stood at 19,685 units, compared to 17,258 units in the year-ago month, the compact segment that includes models, such as WagonR, Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire, rose 36 per cent to 70,268 units as against 51,529 cars in July last year. The UV segment including Vitara Brezza, S-Cross and Ertiga witnessed a strong 68 per cent growth as it rose to 32,272 units last month as compared to 19,177 in July 2020.

While Nissan India reported a multi-fold jump in its domestic sales at 4,259 units in July, up from 784 units in year-ago month, MG Motor India reported a two-fold increase in retail sales at 4,225 units last month, compared to sold 2,105 units in July 2020. Skoda Auto India, too, saw three-fold increase in sales at 3,080 units compared to 922 units in July 2020.

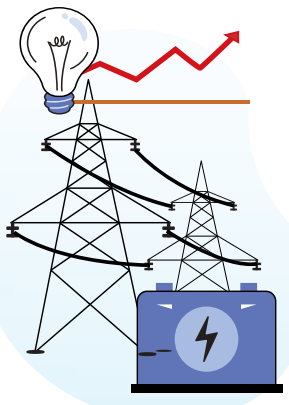
Power consumption bounces back to pre-Covid level in July

The country's power consumption grew nearly 12% in July to 125.51 billion units and returned to pre-Covid level due to easing of curbs and delayed monsoon, as per Power Ministry data

July 2020

Power consumption stood at 112.14 BU, lower than 116.48 BU in the same month of 2019 (pre-pandemic level). Thus, consumption of power has not only grown year-on-year but also returned to pre-pandemic level

Commercial and industrial power demand and consumption got affected April onwards this year due to lockdown restrictions imposed by states



Power demand as well as consumption returned to pre-Covid levels in July and a strong recovery is expected in coming months

Recovery in power demand and consumption in July 2021 is mainly due to delayed monsoon and surge in economic activities amid easing of lockdown restrictions by states, said experts

Easing of lockdown restriction by the states help

Peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched an all-time high of 200.57 GW in July (recorded on July 7, 2021)

Source: Power Ministry/PTI

Dhoot moves NCLAT against Twin Star's Videocon takeover bid

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

VENUGOPAL DHOOT, former promoter of Videocon Group, has moved the NCLAT, challenging an order of the insolvency court NCLT approving Rs 2,962 crore takeover bid by Anil Agarwal's Twin Star Technologies for 13 companies of the debt-ridden group.

Dhoot, in his petition filed before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has re-

quested to set aside the order passed by the Mumbai Bench of the NCLT and to direct the lenders to consider Rs 31,789 crore settlement plan submitted by him under Section 12 of the IBC.

He questioned the role played by the Resolution Professional and said he should have mentioned the foreign oil and gas assets of Videocon Group in the information memorandum (Tender Form) to all the bidders and hence no valuation was considered. **WITH PTI**

Deepak Das takes charge as CGA

New Delhi: Civil Accounts Service officer Deepak Das on Sunday took charge as the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) under the Department of Expenditure, the Finance Ministry said.

A 1986-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service officer, Das has held important positions at different levels in ministries such as science & technology, environment and forest, and Departments for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. He is the 25th officer to hold the position of CGA, who is the principal advisor on accounting matters to the government. **ENS**



The RBI in Mumbai. File

by the incoming high frequency data and we expect growth to turn positive on a two-year CAGR basis from quantitative easing in September," it said.

With an easing of supply and distribution disruptions and monsoon gathering pace, head-

line retail inflation (CPI) is expected to moderate in the coming months. As such, the outlook for headline CPI print remains range bound, even as core inflation is expected to remain sticky, with risks stemming from higher global commodity prices. "We expect the RBI to continue with its measures to support the liquidity and financial framework and manage the yield curve," Morgan Stanley said.

"Additionally, we will remain watchful of any measures that influence short-term rates (such as conducting longer-term variable reverse repos), currently tracking at the lower end of the policy rate corridor," it said.

"Hastened vaccination rollout, a turnaround in activity indicators, and buoyant agricul-

MARKET WATCH

SIX COS LOSE ₹96,642 CR IN VALUATION

New Delhi: Six of the 10 most valued domestic firms witnessed a combined erosion of Rs 96,642.51 crore in their market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries Limited taking the biggest hit. Last week, the Sensex dipped 388.96 points or 0.73 per cent. **PTI**

What is Akasa, the new airline looking at Indian skies?

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

AFTER OVER A year of distressing performance caused by the pandemic, the Indian airlines' space is gearing up for entry of two airlines — Jet Airways 2.0, and Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed Akasa. While the detailed plans for both the airlines are being finalised, it has underscored investor appetite in the segment at a time the existing players are in the red because of muted travel demand during the pandemic.

What is Akasa?

Akasa is an upcoming "ultra low-cost carrier", or ULCC, being launched by stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, who will hold a 40 per cent stake in the airline company.

Jhunjhunwala has reportedly planned to launch the airline by April 2022, and has onboarded aviation industry veterans such as former Jet Airways CEO Vinay Dube and ex-IndiGo president Aditya Ghosh. While Dube is expected to be the CEO of the company, Ghosh is expected to be on the board as Jhunjhunwala's nominee. The Mumbai-based investor will pump in \$35 million, according to a Bloomberg report, and is planning to have a fleet of 70 planes over the next four years. The airline expects to be granted a no-objection certificate from the Civil Aviation Ministry over the next few days.

How is India's airline space shaped?

Currently, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd-run budget airline IndiGo is India's largest airline, with over 54 per cent market share in the domestic passenger market, followed by state-owned Air India, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India. GoAir, which has filed papers for its initial public offering, recently rebranded itself to GoFirst and plans to revamp its business model to become a ULCC. The upheaval of the Indian airline industry has largely been on the back of deep losses reported in 2020-21 (April-March) because of Covid — a situation that has persisted with the second wave in the new fiscal. "Massive, perennial losses have created a debt trap which has resulted in most airlines having very limited means of recapitalisation. The government is providing almost no direct support; lenders have by and large closed their doors to airlines, even for restructuring purposes; and lessors will soon have no option but to start applying pressure on defaulting airlines. Simultaneously, we are heading into a higher cost environment, while staff morale is declining," CAPA noted in its India airline outlook for 2021-22.

Is there a case for new players in the sector?

With the 2019 closure of Jet



Stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala will hold a 40 per cent stake in the airline. File

Airways, a potential disinvestment of Air India, and the weakened position of other existing players, the airlines industry is facing a threat of consolidation of market share with the major players. Additionally, with vaccination rollout gaining momentum, market participants expect the sector to bounce back. In his interview with Bloomberg TV, Jhunjhunwala said: "I'm very bullish on the Indian aviation sector in terms of demand and I think some of the increment players will not recover".

What is the ULCC model?

In the ULCC airline business model, the company focusses on keeping operating costs even lower than typical budget airlines like IndiGo and SpiceJet. In the low-cost model, airlines unbundle certain amenities that are usually associated with the full-service airline experience — like seat selection and food and beverages. In the ultra low-cost model, there is an even further unbundling of services like checked-in and cabin baggages. Traditionally, while LCCs operate with significantly lower fares and only somewhat lower costs than full-service carriers, ULCCs operate with minimal costs to ensure profitability.

Who will Akasa compete against in India?

Being a ULCC, Akasa will potentially attempt to take IndiGo head on, which has bled through the pandemic. However, despite its massive losses, IndiGo remains in a comparatively strong position. Speaking at the post-earnings conference call on July 27, IndiGo's CFO Jiten Chopra said: "The strength of our balance sheet is our biggest defense in the fight against Covid and we will continue to enhance this strength by focusing on cost reduction, liquidity enhancement and capacity addition". CAPA said it expects Indian airlines to lose a consolidated \$4.1 billion in FY22, similar to that in FY21. In addition to Akasa, the relaunch of Jet Airways will also be key, primarily on the expectation that the two entrants will look to aggressively pursue market share in the initial days. However, their ability to go aggressive on the fares will depend on the government doing away with fare curbs that were imposed during the reopening of Covid lockdowns.

Input costs, slow sales crimp India Inc profits

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

FROM BIOCON, Maruti Suzuki, Nestle, Dr Reddy's Labs and TVS Motors to a host of smaller companies like Crompton Greaves and Rallis, results for Q1FY22 have barely met the Street's expectations. However, producers of metals like JSW Steel have seen their profits soar while IT players have done reasonably well. Larsen & Toubro reported a good set of numbers with the engineering behemoth seeing an uptick in ordering prospects.

The Q1FY22 numbers must be read in the context of the very weak base from a year-on-year perspective and a slightly strong base effect on a quarter-on-quarter basis. Net sales have fallen sequentially both for consumer and industrial businesses, not surprising given the local lockdowns across the country during the quarter.

At TVS Motors, revenues declined 26 per cent q-o-q while at Crompton Greaves, they were down 28 per cent as lockdowns impacted revenues. Maruti Suzuki volumes fell 28 per cent q-o-q. UltraTech reported a 23 per cent

q-o-q drop in volumes while at JSW Steel, they were down 11 per cent. Gross margins for a host of companies were under pressure as raw material costs remained high. At HUL, for instance, gross margins fell 140 bps y-o-y to 50.4 per cent driving down Ebitda margins by 115 bps y-o-y.

What stands out is that even after the considerable cost cutting in FY21 companies continue to eke out savings by trimming expenses. At Vedanta, for instance, costs were muted across divisions.

The concern is that rural demand might not be as resilient as in the last couple of years, given many areas were badly hit during the second wave. Lenders like Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services, which have a fair bit of exposure to rural India, are reporting weak numbers. **FE**

BRIEFLY

Joblessness rate

New Delhi: Unemployment rate fell to a four-month low of 6.95 per cent in July. The rate had spiked to 11.9 per cent in May, as per CMIE. **FE**

RBI new rules

New Delhi: The RBI's directions on raising interchange fee and making available the facility of bulk clearing round the clock have become effective from Sunday.

GST returns

New Delhi: GST taxpayers with a turnover of over Rs 5 crore can self-certify their annual return, CBIC said. **PTI**

10 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador

MEXICO

Mexico votes on whether to probe ex-presidents

MEXICANS ARE set to vote on whether to investigate five of the country's former leaders in a referendum championed by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, amid criticism that the move is a political stunt and turnout could be low. Lopez Obrador has cast past administrations as deeply corrupt and made combating graft his top priority. But critics say he hopes to use the consultation to energise his base, and that it is unlikely to muster enough votes to be valid. At least 40% of registered voters, or 37 million people, would need to vote for the results to be binding. Analysts say they doubt the turnout, which was slightly above 50% in June elections, will be sufficient. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN

Police guarding polio vaccine teams attacked

GUNMEN ON a motorcycle shot and killed a police officer returning home after security duty with polio vaccination workers in northwest Pakistan, police said. The killing came during one of two attacks Sunday on police providing security for polio vaccination teams. The attack leading to the officer's death happened in Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The officer was returning home on his motorcycle after providing security for a polio team, police said. **AP**

GERMANY

Former death camp guard, 100, to go on trial

A 100-YEAR-OLD former guard at the Sachsenhausen Nazi concentration camp near Berlin will face trial in the autumn, 76 years after the end of the Second World War, German weekly Welt am Sonntag reported. The district court of Neuruppin admitted the charges of accessory to murder in 3,500 cases, and the trial is slated to start in October. The defendant should be able to stand trial for 2 to 2-1/2 hours a day, a court spokesman told the paper. The accused, who was not named, was said to have worked as a camp guard from 1942 to 1945 in Sachsenhausen. **REUTERS**



NEW ZEALAND SORRY FOR RAIDS ON PACIFIC PEOPLE

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern sat motionless Sunday as members of the Pacific Island community pulled a large white mat over her head, completely covering her. Moments later they removed it and embraced her. It was part of an emotional ceremony at the Auckland Town Hall during which Ardern formally apologised for a racially charged part of the nation's history known as the Dawn Raids. It's when Pasifika people were targeted for deportation in the mid-1970s during aggressive home raids by authorities to find, convict and deport visa overstayers. **AP**

Pakistan finalises Bill to give provisional provincial status to Gilgit-Baltistan: report

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 1

PAKISTANI AUTHORITIES have finalised a Bill to give provisional provincial status to strategically located Gilgit-Baltistan, a media report said on Sunday.

India has clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit and Baltistan, are an integral part of India by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.

India maintains that Pakistan's government and judiciary have no locus standi on territories illegally

and forcibly occupied by it.

Dawn newspaper reported that under the Bill proposed by the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) of Gilgit-Baltistan may be abolished and the region's election commission is likely to be merged with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Sources in the law ministry told the newspaper that the draft of the Bill titled '26th Constitutional Amendment Bill' had been prepared and submitted to Prime Minister Imran Khan.

In the first week of July, the prime minister had assigned the task of preparing the Bill to fed-

eral Law Minister Barrister Farogh Naseem.

The proposed law suggests that due to sensitivity attached to the region, it could be given provisional provincial status by amending Article 1 of the Constitution that related to the provinces and territories, sources said.

They added that a set of amendments would be introduced to give the region representation in Parliament, besides the establishment of the provincial assembly in the territory.

The sources are confident that the constitutional amendment is in accordance with the international practice of merger

of territories and it will not adversely affect the Kashmir cause in any manner, the report said.

The Pakistan government and the Opposition had reportedly discussed the move prior to last year's meeting of the political leadership with Pakistan's Army chief.

According to an Opposition leader, Gilgit-Baltistan has acquired great significance in the region due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. **PTI**

Myanmar military ruler takes PM role, again pledges elections

REUTERS
BANGKOK, AUGUST 1

MYANMAR'S MILITARY ruler Min Aung Hlaing has taken on the role of prime minister in a newly formed caretaker government, state media reported on Sunday, six months after the army seized power from a civilian government.

In a speech on Sunday, Min Aung Hlaing repeated a pledge to hold elections by 2023 and said his administration was ready to work with a future regional envoy on Myanmar.

The announcement and speech came exactly six months after the army seized power February 1 from a civilian government following elections that were won by Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party but that the military said had been fraudulent.

Min Aung Hlaing has chaired the State Administration Council (SAC) that was formed just after the coup and that has run Myanmar since then, and the caretaker government will replace it.

"In order to perform the country's duties fast, easily and



Myanmar's military ruler Min Aung Hlaing

effectively, the state administration council has been re-formed as caretaker government of Myanmar," a newsreader on state Myawaddy television said.

In his speech, Min Aung Hlaing repeated a pledge to restore democracy, saying, "We will accomplish the provisions of the state of emergency by August 2023".

He added: "I guarantee the establishment of a union based on democracy and federalism."

Shortly after the coup, junta leaders promised new elections within two years. The reference on Sunday to August 2023 was interpreted by some local media

as extending that time frame by six months.

Min Aung Hlaing also said his administration would work with any special envoy named by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN foreign ministers are to meet on Monday, when diplomats say they aim to finalise a special envoy tasked with ending violence and promoting dialogue between the junta and its opponents.

The army seized power after Suu Kyi's ruling party won elections that the military argues were tainted by fraud. It has said its takeover was in line with the constitution. The country's electoral commission has dismissed the fraud allegations.

After the coup, Suu Kyi, 75, was charged with several crimes. Her trial on charges of illegally possessing walkie-talkie radios and breaking coronavirus protocols is scheduled to resume on Monday.

The military authorities have faced months of protests, strikes that have paralysed public and private sectors, and a resurgence of armed conflicts in the borderlands.

Israel, US, UK blame Iran for attack on tanker

Tehran denies role in drone strike on ship off coast of Oman

JON GAMBRELL
DUBAI, AUGUST 1

THE UNITED STATES and the United Kingdom joined Israel on Sunday in alleging Iran carried out a fatal drone strike on an oil tanker off the coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea, putting further pressure on Tehran as it denied being involved in the assault.

Calling it an "unlawful and callous attack", British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said his country and its allies planned a coordinated response over the strike Thursday night on the oil



The oil tanker Mercer Street

tanker Mercer Street. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken soon followed, saying there was "no justification for this attack, which follows a pattern of attacks and other belligerent behaviour." While no one has claimed re-

sponsibility for the attack, Iran and its militia allies have used so-called "suicide" drones in attacks previously, which crash into targets and detonate their explosive payloads. x

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh described the allegation Iran carried out the attack as "baseless."

"It's not the first time that the Zionist regime occupying Jerusalem has made such empty accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran," Khatibzadeh said. "Wherever this regime has gone, it has taken instability, terror and violence with it." **AP**

EXPLAINED
Ongoing shadow war

IRAN AND Israel have been waging a shadow war for years, with attacks on each others' facilities and interests being carried out without any public acknowledgement. In the past couple of years, the major arena for this confrontation has been the sea, with a number of attacks on Iranian and Israeli ships in recent months for which each side has blamed the other.

Outgoing Iran president: Govt not always truthful

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, AUGUST 1

IRAN'S OUTGOING President on Sunday acknowledged his nation at times "did not tell part of the truth" to its people during his eight-year tenure, as he prepares to leave office with his signature nuclear deal with world powers in tatters and tensions high with



Hassan Rouhani

the West.

President Hassan Rouhani's comments, aired on state television, come as officials in his government have appeared rudder-

less in recent months amid a series of crises ranging from the coronavirus pandemic to parching droughts fueling public protests.

After appearing just days earlier to be lectured by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei about their failures in the nuclear negotiations, Rouhani's remarks appeared aimed at acknowledging the problems his government faced in its waning hours.

President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, a protégé of Khamenei, will be inaugurated Thursday.

"What we told people was not contrary to reality, but we did not tell part of the truth to people," Rouhani said at his last Cabinet meeting as president. "Because I did not find it useful and I was afraid it would harm national unity." He did not elaborate on what he meant by his remarks.

Zoom reaches \$85 million settlement of lawsuit over user privacy, 'Zoombombing'

JONATHAN STEMPEL
AUGUST 1

ZOOM VIDEO Communications agreed to pay \$85 million and bolster its security practices to settle a lawsuit claiming it violated users' privacy rights by sharing personal data with Facebook, Google and LinkedIn, and letting hackers disrupt Zoom meetings in a practice called Zoombombing.

A preliminary settlement filed on Saturday afternoon requires approval by US District Judge Lucy Koh in San Jose, California.

Subscribers in the proposed class action would be eligible for 15% refunds on their core subscriptions or \$25, whichever is

larger, while others could receive up to \$15.

Zoom agreed to security measures including alerting users when meeting hosts or other participants use third-party apps in meetings, and to provide specialized training to employees on privacy and data handling.

The company denied wrongdoing in agreeing to settle. It did not immediately respond on Sunday to a request for comment. Saturday's settlement came after Koh on March 11 let the plaintiffs pursue some contract-based claims.

Zoom's customer base has grown sixfold since the Covid-19 pandemic forced more people to work from home. **REUTERS**

BRITAIN RACES TO INOCULATE AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE BEFORE COLDER WEATHER ARRIVES

Pizza for shots: UK targets youth with vaccine incentives

DANICA KIRKA
LONDON, AUGUST 1

RESTAURANTS, RIDE-HAILING apps and food delivery services are backing Britain's Covid-19 vaccination drive, offering discounts and even free slices of pizza to persuade young people to roll up their sleeves and get the shot.

The programme, announced Sunday by the Department of Health and Social Care, is designed to boost the vaccination rate among adults under 30 as Britain races to inoculate as many people as possible before colder weather arrives.

While more than 90% of

adults in Britain have received at least one dose of vaccine, the rate for people between the ages of 18 and 30 is about 60%, according to government statistics.

As he thanked businesses for helping out, Health Secretary Sajid Javid urged people to "take advantage of the discounts." Uber, Bolt, Deliveroo and Pizza Pilgrims are among the brands to offer incentives.

"The lifesaving vaccines not only protect you, your loved ones and your community, but they are helping to bring us back together by allowing you to get back to doing the things you've missed," he said.

Britain is not the only nation



UK PM Boris Johnson at a Pizza Pilgrims store. The new programme announced by the government ropes in food, ride-hailing apps and other brands to offer discounts to encourage adults under 30 to get vaccinated. *Reuters file*

to try more carrot — and less stick — to persuade the reluctant to roll up their sleeves. US

President Joe Biden this week called on states and local governments to join New York and

Minnesota in offering \$100 rewards, hoping a financial incentive will spur the hesitant to be vaccinated as the highly contagious delta variant sweeps through parts of the country.

Britain is keen to increase vaccination rates amid a surge in new infections as the government seeks to fully re-open society.

Meanwhile, politicians are anxious to bolster the economy as the national furlough program, which guaranteed the wages of millions of people who were unable to work due to government restrictions, comes to an end.

Treasury chief Rishi Sunak is urging Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ease international

travel restrictions, arguing that Britain's "draconian" rules are unnecessary given the success of the vaccination programme.

The Sunday Times reported that Sunak wrote to Johnson to encourage him to let people enjoy their summer holidays, while expressing concern about the impact the restrictions are having on tourism and the hospitality industry.

Johnson's Cabinet will meet later this week to review the current travel rules, which require expensive Covid-19 testing for people arriving from most popular holiday destinations in Europe and force anyone coming from France to self-isolate for up to 10 days. **AP**



Kolkata

From thoughts of suicide to winning silver at Olympics

SRIRAM VEERA
AUGUST 1

GREEN AND PURPLE hair, a grinning Joker mask, and loads of pluck and humor, the American shotputter Raven Saunders has been a viral sensation this Olympics. She wanted her fans to wear green in honour of her “Hulk” alter-ego. On her Twitter bio, #BlackGirlMagic and pride rainbows stand out.

“Seven out of 10,” was Saunders’s verdict of the Olympic breakfast. Apparently the eggs were a bit powdery and sausage is just ‘aight”.

It wasn’t all ‘aight” when she was driving her car one January morning in 2018. She had finished fifth in Rio and so proud were the residents of her town Charlestown that the mayor had declared August 17 2016 as Raven Saunders day and threw in a welcome parade. But lights had subsequently gone out from her life. The money was tight, school life wasn’t easy, injuries were piling up, and performances were going awry.

“I was young, I was black and I was gay, Just moved to Mississippi,” Saunders told WMC Action News. “There was a lot of stigma and things like that around certain stuff. I really felt like there was no outlet for me. Track was like an outlet, but it was only so much. Especially mentally when you’re going home and having to deal with it. It started weighing on me a lot that year.” That January morning she was supposed to drive to get campus.

“I knew I had to be somewhere, but I just rolled past campus and kept driving and driving,” she told The Post and Courier. “I was in a daze, and I could tell something was very off. I just felt like I was in over my head. I was probably about 10 or 15 minutes from trying to end my life.”

In her bleakest moment, she thought about her therapist and texted. Saunders hadn’t been in touch with the therapist for six months as she had been promoted and was no longer her therapist. But she listened to her impulse and messaged. “I wanted to let somebody know what was going on, so I texted her that I was afraid and that I didn’t know what I was going to do to myself,” Saunders said.

That text saved her life and the therapist coaxed her to check into a mental health facility. A month later, she quit her school. Her mother and coach didn’t know her traumas. She didn’t compete much in 2019 but has been at it from 2020.

“As I was going through it, I didn’t want to feel like a bother to the people that I love. You know people are going through their own things, and you feel like a burden,” she told Post & Courier. “You don’t want to put your things on other people. I tried to get through it and handle it on my own, and you think it’s not that bad until it is that bad.”

She was diagnosed with depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

“I do a lot of meditation and things like that,” she said. “And being out here at the training center, I’m around really positive people. We’ve got Olympians, gold medalists and athletes like that. And with my closest friends, I’m trying to be more vocal about what I’m going through, asking them to check up on me and just trying to be more open about what I’m struggling with.”



Raven Saunders’s best throw of 19.79 metres on a scorching day at the Olympic Stadium helped her bag the silver behind China’s Gong Lijiao. Reuters

HIGH JUMP: TWO TO TANGO

Wailing in joy with his friend: How Barshim & Tamberi shared the spoils

SRIRAM VEERA
AUGUST 1

IT’S 2016, Monaco. Gianmarco Tamberi lay writhing in the ground, rolling and twisting. Wailing in agony. In the stands his coach broke down. It’s 2021, Tokyo. Gianmarco Tamberi lay writhing in the ground, rolling and twisting. Wailing in joy. In the stands his coach broke down. In 2016, just before the Rio Olympics, attempting a 2.41 metre high jump to break his own Italian record, he crash-landed. The shoe tore apart, the ankle ruptured and he stared at his leg and sobbed like a kid as he realised he would be out of Rio. Five men had to console him and somehow transfer him to a stretcher.

Five years later, he is a joint Olympic gold medallist with his friend Mutaz Essa Barshim in a remarkable sequence of events. It all came down to his last jump. The favourite, Barshim, had failed to clear 2.39. If Tamberi did, he would be the winner. If he didn’t, there would be a jump-off with Barshim. The event had already been close to three hours.



“

I really don’t know anything about him...he did a fantastic job.

”

FRED KERLEY

WHEN ASKED ABOUT MARCELL JACOBS, THE NEW 100-M OLYMPIC CHAMPION

Bolt from the blue

Texas-born Italian sprinter Marcell Jacobs is surprise winner of the 100m in 9.8 seconds; first ever medal for country in this event



Marcell Jacobs takes victory in the men’s 100m final. Reuters

ASSOCIATED PRESS/REUTERS
TOKYO, AUGUST 1

THE 100 METERS at the Olympics is the event that turns sprinters into kings: Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis, Usain Bolt. On one of the most unusual nights the port has ever seen, fans, experts, and even the racers themselves needed a lineup card.

The race that has long defined Olympic royalty went to a Texas-born Italian who hadn’t cracked 10 seconds until this year. He’s a 26-year-old whose best days before this came in the long jump. He’s a man even the runner in the next lane didn’t really know.

At the Tokyo Olympics, Marcell Jacobs is The World’s Fastest Man. “I think I need four or five years to realize and understand what’s happening,” Jacobs said.

The Italian crossed the line in 9.8 seconds Sunday night to capture the first 100-meter medal ever for the country better known for its soccer prowess. Pietro Mennea won the 200 at the 1980 Olympics in Moscow and Livio Berruti won that race at the 1960 Games in Rome. Even in a contest with no clear favorites — American Ronnie Baker was a candidate and China’s Su Bingtian ran a shocking 9.83 in the semis — Jacobs came from nowhere. He topped America’s Fred Kerley, a 400-meter runner who moved down in distance because he saw a medal chance, and Canada’s Andre DeGrasse, who adds another 100-meter bronze to the one he won Rio.

Kerley finished second in 9.84 and DeGrasse was next at 9.89. “I really don’t know anything about him,” Kerley said of the new gold medalist. “He did a fantastic job.”

Jacobs’ path was made that much clearer because of who wasn’t in the race. The reigning world champion, Christian Coleman, is serving a ban for missed doping tests. The world leader in 2021 and the favorite to win the gold, Trayvon Bromell, didn’t make it out of the semifinals. Bolt, who has commanded the Olympic and every other sprint stage since 2008, is retired.

He was a sure thing in all nine Olympic sprints he ran since the Beijing Games — a stretch of dominance that redefined track and field, but also left a gaping hole in the sport when he called it a career.

“He changed athletics forever,” Jacobs said. “I’m the one who won the Olympics

HOW THEY FINISHED IN TOKYO		
ATHLETE	TIME	COUNTRY
1. L. Jacobs	9.80	Italy
2. F. Kerley	9.84	USA
3. A. De Grasse	9.89	Canada

FIRST EUROPEAN SINCE 1960

ITALIAN MARCELL Jacobs is the first gold medal winner from a European country since Armin Hary who represented the combined East and West German team at the 1960 Rome Olympics.

FASTER THAN BOLT

JACOBS’ TIMING OF 9.80 seconds was quicker than Usain Bolt’s 9.81 seconds to win gold at the Rio Olympics five years ago. Bolt, however, ran 9.63 (Olympic record) at London and 9.69 at Beijing and holds the world record of 9.59 seconds.

GATLIN... BOLT... BOLT... BOLT... JACOBS

IT HAS taken three Olympic cycles for someone other than Bolt to win the 100 metres gold. Justin Gatlin from USA won the gold at the 2004 Athens Olympics before Bolt’s hat-trick of medals.

after him. That’s unbelievable. But drawing comparisons, I don’t think it’s the time now.”

Bolt’s world record is 9.58. Before Sunday, Jacobs’ personal best was 9.95. “I mean, 9.8 from the Italian guy?” DeGrasse said. “I didn’t expect that. I thought my main competition would be the Americans.” Perhaps the only person at the track who really knew the new champ was the man who hugged him after he crossed the finish line.

That was Gianmarco Tamberi, the Italian high jumper who tied Qatari’s Mutaz Essa Barshim for gold.

Tamberi and Barshim ended their evening-long jump-fest in a dead heat — a rare result that appeared headed for a

WHO IS MARCELL JACOBS?

LAMONT MARCELL Jacobs, 26, had not broken the 10-second barrier before May this year. No wonder even some of his competitors in the final admitted to not knowing about him till Sunday when he qualified for the final. In May, he set the Italian national record of 9.95 seconds.

At the Olympics, he has peaked at the right time. In the heats on Saturday, he clocked 9.94 seconds, improving it to 9.84 seconds in the semis, a European record. When it mattered he came up with 9.80. Jacobs is the reigning European champion in the 60 metres and he used his superior start to take an early lead to leave Fred Kerley (9.84) and Canadian Andre De Grasse (9.89) in his wake.

For someone who made the switch to sprinting from long jump just four years ago, Jacobs has made exceptional progress. He was the winner in the long jump at the Italian National Championships in 2016 with 7.89 metres, average by world standards.

Jacobs was born in El Paso, USA. His mother is Italian, and father an African-American. ENS

jump-off to decide gold and silver. But after huddling with an official who told them two gold medals were possible, Barshim — the two-time world champion who won silver in Rio and bronze in London — agreed to call it a tie for first.

Rojas smashes triple jump record

Yulimar Rojas broke the indoor triple jump world record on Friday.

The two-time world champion from Venezuela had a jump of 15.43 meters, seven centimeters more than the previous record held by Russian Tatyana Lebedeva since 2004.

“I’m over the moon,” Rojas said. “I can’t believe I’m the world record-holder. I want to get home and cry. I need to cry to release the adrenaline I have right now.”

The jump at the Villa de Madrid meeting was two centimeters better than Rojas’ outdoor personal best, and the second-best overall behind the outdoor world record of 15.50 meters held by Ukrainian Inessa Kravets since 1995.

Ending was nothing short of fairytale



TEJASWIN SHANKAR

THE MEN’S high jump final at the Tokyo Olympics was nothing short of a spectacle. With seven men still jumping at 2.37 metres for a shot at Olympic gold, this has to be the greatest high jump final in the history of the event at the Olympic Games and arguably one of the greatest at any other championships.

The only other competition that comes to mind is the Atlanta 1996 finals where Charles Austin (USA) set the Olympic record of 2.39, Artur Partyka (POL) took 2nd with a clearance of 2.37m and Steve Smith (GBR) took the bronze with 2.35m.

Mutaz Essa Barshim (QAT) and Gianmarco Tamberi (ITA) where joint winners of the competition at Tokyo, which itself came as a surprise to ardent fans across the world because at any major championships the gold medal spot exclusively belongs to the outright winner of the competition and in case of a tie, a jump-off is conducted.

As far as I remember, the only other time this happened was at the World U20 Championships in 2018 where Andonios Merlos (GRE) and Roberto Vilches (Mex) shared the gold without opting to break the tie with a jump-off.

A jump-off is another term for sudden death where each jumper gets to jump at progressive heights determined by the officials until one of them misses. An example would be the high jump competition at the 2015 World Championships where Derek Drouin (CAN), Bohdan Bondarenko (UKR) and Guowei Zhang (CHN) were in a three-way tie for the gold medal after which a jump-off was conducted to determine the outright winner of the competition. Derek Drouin (CAN) won his maiden world title after winning the jump-off (went on to win the gold at Rio Olympics) and the silver was shared by Bondarenko (UKR) and Zhang (CHN) with no bronze medal being awarded.

A similar situation unfolded in Tokyo

When Barshim and Gianmarco Tamberi shared the gold medal

MUTAZ ESSA Barshim, the Qatari started at 2.24m and cleared the height in his first attempt. He jumped over 2.27m, 2.30, 2.33, 2.35 and 2.37 in his first attempts, but failed in all three subsequent attempts at 2.39 metres. Italian Gianmarco Tamberi started at 2.19 m and then like Barshim sailed over the bar without a single failure till dropping it thrice at 2.39m. Rules state that if competitors are tied at the same height, the winner is the one with fewest failures at that height. If

EXPLAINED

E will start at the next greater height, with each jumper getting one attempt. The bar is lowered and raised until only one jumper succeeds at that height. However, when the official asked the two jumpers in contention if they wanted to go for the jump-off, they declined, which essentially meant that both Barshim and Tamberi shared the gold.



Mutaz Essa Barshim (left) and Gianmarco Tamberi after winning gold. Reuters





EYE ON INDIA



ATHLETICS
WOMEN'S DISCUS THROW
(MEDAL ALERT)
Kamalpreet Kaur- final at 4:30pm
Kamalpreet Kaur (in pic) was one of two athletes to meet the automatic qualification mark of 64m.

WOMEN'S 200M
DUTEE CHAND- HEAT 4 7:24am
Semifinal (upon qualification) starts from 3:55pm

EQUESTRIAN
INDIVIDUAL EVENTING
Fouaad Mirza
Jumping qualification starts from **1:30pm**
Jumping final (upon qualification) starts from **5:15pm**

HOCKEY
WOMEN'S QUARTERFINALS
India vs Australia 8:30am
India will take on Australia, who finished top in Pool B and scored 13 goals in five games, conceding just once.

SHOOTING
MEN'S 50M RIFLE THREE POSITIONS
India vs Great Britain
Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeev Rajput
Qualification **8am**
Final (upon qualification) **1:20pm**

WORLD WATCH

BADMINTON
MEN'S SINGLES
Viktor Axelsen (DEN) vs Chen Long (CHN).
Rio gold medallist Chen Long of China will aim to emulate compatriot Lin Dan in winning consecutive Olympic titles. He will take on Rio bronze medallist Viktor Axelsen of Denmark.
Gold medal match **5:20pm**

LONG JUMP
FINAL 6:50am
After finishing seventh in Sunday's high jump event, Juvaughn Harrison will go vertical on Monday. The American, nicknamed Mr. Jumps, is in the final starting Jamaican Tajay Gayle and Cuban Juan Miguel Echevarria.

100M HURDLES
FINAL 8:20am
Puerto Rico's Jasmine Camacho-Quinn (in pic, who won the semi-final in an Olympic record 12.26 seconds, will aim to finish ahead of Jamaican Britany Anderson and American world record holder Kendra Harrison.

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

With the bronze in Tokyo, PV Sindhu has now won five world championship medals and two Olympic medals, the only Indian woman to finish on the podium twice at Summer Games

BRONZE 2013
World Championships

BRONZE 2014
World Championships

SILVER 2016
Rio Olympics

SILVER 2017
World Championships

SILVER 2018
World Championships

GOLD 2019
World Championships

BRONZE 2020
Tokyo Olympics

GOAT - Grittiest Of All Time



PV Sindhu after sealing a historic win on Sunday.

Reuters

Sindhu becomes country's first woman double medallist, winning a hard-fought bronze against Chinese He Bingjiao, 21-13, 21-15

SHIVANI NAIK
AUGUST 1

COMETH THE elusive podium, cometh the woman. Colour of medals varies and her fellow podium peers change, but Sindhu signifies podium-permanence.

On Sunday, she became the first woman internationally since Beijing 2008, to medal in women's singles in back-to-back Olympics. Only three other women - Korean Bang Soo Hyun, Indonesian legend Susi Susanti and Chinese double Olympics champion Zhang Ning have been on the podium at successive Games. Sindhu says 2024 is doable, so she's not done yet.

While a gold has been elusive for the Indian at the Games, she stomped out of stacked fields in two straight Olympic cycles, to maintain her place in the 1-2-3 over the last 5 years - something that none of her contemporaries of the Golden Generation have managed, owing to injury or big-occasion fragility.

She is also yet to lose to a Chinese shuttler when a medal is at stake on the big stage.

More than anything else, Sindhu got the job done, 24 hours after her biggest dream of an Olympic gold, crashed to the floor. In what was her most commanding display of the Games, Sindhu was pushed for every point she won, and even more on the ones that He BJ nicked away.

Sindhu's success has always been built on a base of a ploughman's plod. Not for her since the World Championship of 2019, when she rode roughshod over all in sight, the spectacular sizzle of a Tai or the clinical precision of Chen Yufei. You would shudder to call her a defensive

retriever owing to the big smash; but you'd never be able to label her a one-dimensional boom bombastic smash player, because she is so stubborn to catch every shuttle in play.

On Sunday, battling for bronze, Sindhu had to release herself from the burdensome bind of India's famous 4th place. He BJ isn't a manic runner, nor does she boast of irretrievable smashes. What she can do successfully is suck the power out of any Sindhu smash, smother the force in the rally to deny the Indian any pace.

This meant, Sindhu had to work her limbs to generate power everytime she sent the shuttle back. It's easier to use an opponent's pace on a fast court to deflect and work the angles. Here Sindhu was re-starting the engine shot after shot.

As such, it was apt that the reward for this plod was a bronze. Because it was hard work even if the result seemed predestined and the match one-sided.

All those months spent making her defense solid were put to test. He BJ made her defend all around the net, kept a steady supply of flat pushes and made her run around till the very end. Unlike against Tai, Sindhu could find her wits and the time to persevere before she shifted pressure on the Chinese. Sindhu wasn't unduly hassled by the southpaw angles. Instead she used her crosscourt smashes and drops - a chunky dozen of them to attack He BJ's backhand back corner.

Sindhu doesn't always need to scream to show her intent. Against the technically proficient Chinese, she had to chase the shuttle to every corner of the court, and in that the Indian displayed her work ethic and commitment. Going into the interval at 11-8, she would open

up a gap, and close out the set with a string of versatile winners. The outwitting at the net at 13-8, the smash-tap sequence at 17-11, a round the head zinger, an unfettered straight smash, Sindhu would pin He BJ to the 12 points, and power along with no mercy from her end.

The cross court smashes got even more menacing in the second, and Sindhu merrily went for a body shot early in the set. He BJ's last resistance happened around the mid-game interval of the second, when surprisingly she attempted to unfurl a backcourt flurry, dumping her reliance on the net. It was like opening a dainty six spoke umbrella in a stormy bluster of showers. She got rained over.

For four matches at this Olympics Sindhu has lapsed into a concentration fade at around this point. She was alert for the lull today and went double quick at He BJ from then. While her pushes and cross drops were bothering the Chinese, the latter narrowed it at 15-13. The Indian didn't allow a breach.

A backline winner at 17-14 was just reward for all her toil, and despite trading punch clears, Sindhu would be in striking distance at 18-14. Perhaps Sindhu's most-improved shots since Rio, giving her a well-rounded game, are her backhand drives and taps. And it was this stroke that gave India its third medal of the Games.

Sindhu has won the World Championship playing more aggressively than this. She's won a higher medal - silver at Rio, getting the better of players ranked above her. But she will prize this bronze medal. She woke up on a saddening Sunday, went out there and punched in the gut the total wretchedness of the lifelong regret of a scary 4th place. It makes her India's grittiest of all time.

Sindhu's method: More than just the smash

PV SINDHU'S famed attack is headlined by the smash. But the bronze medal match against He Bingjiao on Sunday was an embodiment of Sindhu's attacking play, that goes beyond just the big booming smash-kill.

Target Backhand

He BJ is a left-hander with a highly dependable backhand. Leading at 9-8, Sindhu would get into a long rally, with an aim to break He BJ down on her backhand. In the last 20 stroke exchange, with 10 from Sindhu, 5 were aimed at the Chinese shuttler's backhand, forcing her to go across the body.

Interspersed across the rally pinning the opponent to deep backhand, this was Sindhu's sequence - a reflexive forehand thwack, a net lift, a loopy drop, another lift at the net, and finally the ending smash.

He BJ would employ her entire range of the backhand to deal with this line of attack - she went across the body her arm parallel to the



PV Sindhu went chasing the shuttle against He Bingjiao, undaunted by the striding work,

ground, she then sent back a toss from around the head.

The straight one

While crosscourts were Sindhu's go-to and yielded many points on the day, the venom came from the straighter one. It wasn't a scornful, snappy shutting off of her opponent though. At 10-8 in the opener, Sindhu would pick shuttles diligently, go chasing them to all corners, negotiate the lengths, lunge, bend, reach out wide, scramble, but never get out of

position. He BJ gave her time on the strokes, she wasn't particularly fast or deceptive today. But Sindhu's anticipation even when she was retrieving immense number of strokes indicated she wasn't being mentally stretched.

The point of no return

At 15-13 He BJ trailed in the second still harbouring hopes of reversing the momentum. She had built herself some pattern of reducing the gap on Sindhu's 11-8 lead. But Sindhu went back to work on grabbing the next point, fighting for it as if it was the first one she played.

In the ensuing rally, Sindhu would forget about the steep smash, and the outstanding cross drop and a mammoth round the head smash she had played moments ago. Putting her head down, she would go chasing the shuttle, undaunted by the striding work, and just when He BJ built herself a dream of comeback, Sindhu would pause to send back a crosscourt smash the Chinese way. **SHIVANI NAIK**

A CALL TO NOT LET DOWN INTENSITY AND FAMILY NO LESS THAN A CONVEYER BELT OF TALENT

Coach's message to team: Your work has just started



MIHIR VASAVDA
TOKYO, AUGUST 1

SO, THAT feels different: India in an Olympic semifinal.

Pinch yourself. Just a week ago, the same team lost 7-1 to Australia in the group stage game. Now, on Tuesday, they will take on world champions Belgium for a place in the Olympic final.

One would assume a lot would have changed within the team after such a morale-sapping defeat. But in truth, very little did. The team, coach Graham Reid said, did not panic even though it was India's biggest defeat in terms of scoreline at the Games. "The thing is if you actually go and have a look at the game, we weren't that bad," India coach Graham Reid said. "The result was bad but the numbers didn't show a 7-1 game."

The statistics showed, according to Reid, that India was ahead in most areas. The problem, however, was that the team allowed the Australians to control the narrative from the midfield and gave them plenty of space in that area.

To Reid, that was the only minor arrangement that needed to be made. Reid, however, said he only wanted to get one point across

to his players: you weren't that bad. Since that 7-1 defeat, India have not lost a single match, finished second in a group that also comprised Olympic champions Argentina and are now in the semifinals.

This outcome, for many, might not be surprising. Jinx-breaking and historic, sure. But within the hockey circles, India had gradually started to earn respect. In Sreejesh, the team had a world-class goalkeeper who had single-handedly bailed them out on several occasions. Defender Harmanpreet Singh is considered to be one of the fiercest drag-flickers in the world. Manpreet Singh has gained in reputation as a leader in the last year or so. As for Reid, he is a man on a mission after failing to lead Australia into the last four of the Rio Olympics.

This was the reason Belgium coach Shane McLeod had, in fact, predicted on Sunday morning that one of the semifinals would be between his team and India - and he turned out to be right. Even former Netherlands coach Paul van Ass, in an interview to hockey.nl a month or so ago, had listed India as an outside favourite for the title in Tokyo.

Whether India can progress further will depend not on the skill - that they possess in abundance - but it will be in their ability to respond under pressure, as they did against Britain.

Sunday's quarterfinal was a match flush with drama that compensated for serial imperfections of both teams.

Britain might not induce the same level of fear among Indians but like so many other countries in the last four decades, they too have not missed a chance to stab them in the heart. Especially at the Olympics, where, be-



Gurjant Singh(left) celebrates after scoring against Great Britain on Sunday.

AP

fore tonight, India had not beaten them since 1988. Britain had won all four matches between the two teams from 1988 to 2000.

The match was a classic clash of styles. Britain ran a lot, were cynical at times and kept their shape. India were fluid, played with flair, weren't organised always but they had their moments of brilliance which dragged the team beyond the finish line.

It was widely expected to be a game that would be settled by drag-flicks, given both teams' prowess in the department, but India showed refreshing willingness to move forward even in the last couple of minutes, when the immediate instinct of the players was to sit back and protect the lead.

It meant India, so far largely a one-trick pony with Harmanpreet and Varun Kumar scoring with their cannonball-like drag-flicks, suddenly surprised Britain with free-

flowing attacking plays and scored three field goals. "To win this competition you have to have corners going well and field goals being scored," Reid said.

The win was also significant in terms of overcoming the mental barrier. India have considered too many late goals and have lost in the quarterfinals of a major tournament more than once. Sunday, Reid felt, could mark the beginning of something new. "At the end of the day, what was lacking is just that experience of big games," he said. "They have the belief. You have to learn to win and then you have to repeat it."

That was his message to the players immediately after the hooter was sounded. The team huddled in the centre of the pitch and Reid had only reminder: "Enjoy the next couple of hours. But our job has only just started."

Gurmail, Rajbir, Jugraj ... now Hardik

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 1

PUNJAB POLICE superintendent (SP) and former player Varinderpreet Singh still remembers his four-year-old son Hardik accompanying grandfather Pritam Singh, a former Indian Navy player and coach, to the hockey ground at their village Khusrapur near Jalandhar.

While Pritam and Varinderpreet didn't get a chance to play for India, Pritam's younger brother Gurmail Singh was part of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold medal-winning Indian team. On Sunday, as 22-year-old midfielder Hardik first assisted Gurjant Singh for India's second goal and later scored the third to seal a 3-1 win against Great Britain. Varinderpreet was keenly following his son's every move.

"Hardik's grandfather was as passionate about hockey as anybody. I still remember it was the month of June when a four-year-old Hardik accompanied my father to the village hockey field. When we said that it's too hot, my father replied, 'If the kid does not feel the heat, then why should we be scared. Unfortunately, my father died in 2017. If he was alive today, he would have applauded Hardik donning the Indian jersey and helping India reach the semifinals at Olympics,'" Varinderpreet told *The Indian Express*.

The Singh family also includes Gurmail and Rajbir Kaur, former Indian women's hockey captain, apart from uncle and former India drag-flicker Jugraj Singh.

It was not until 2018 that Hardik got a chance in the senior Indian team and there was a time when he had started thinking about playing in leagues abroad rather than concentrating on his India career. He would make his



On Sunday, Hardik assisted Gurjant Singh for India's second goal and later scored the third to seal the 3-1 win.

Reuters

senior debut at the Asian Champions Trophy and would also feature in the 2018 World Cup. Jugraj remembers his conversation with Hardik at that time. "Hardik has been a very disciplined boy. The best thing about him is that he is an attacking midfielder. I remember in 2017 when he became a bit impatient about not getting a chance at senior level and wanted to play leagues, I told him that he still has a long way to go. With experience, he has shown that he has skill and strength apart from presence of mind," Jugraj says.

Gurmail, a right-half in the Moscow team, hopes to have another Olympic medallist in the family. "Being a member of the last Indian team to win an Olympic gold, it has been a long wait and we are praying for Hardik and the Indian team to bring another medal for India." Hardik's mother Kanwaljeet Kaur will be reciting Sukhmani Sahib path when India play Belgium in the semifinals. "Hardik calls us before every match and tells us to not only pray for him but for the whole Indian team. That's what we did today and will be doing for the semis," she says.