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By UNNNY



Somnath proof that terror ideology does not last: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAJKOT, AUGUST 20

CITING THE number of times the Somnath temple was raided, and the fact that it had emerged from each such event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that “those destructive forces, and the ideology that establishes an empire on the foundation of terror”, could not last long.

Such forces and empires “can become dominant for some time in a given era, but can never become permanent. They cannot keep humanity suppressed for long,” Modi said while laying virtually the foundation stone of the Parvati temple in Somnath, and inaugurating several projects on the premises and around the Somnath temple complex.

“This”, he said, “was as true when some tyrannical forces were razing Somnath (temple) as it is today, when the world is apprehensive of such ideologies”. India should seek “to learn from history to correct the

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Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Congress president Sonia Gandhi at Parliament House on Friday. PTI

Sonia to Opposition: No alternative, need to come together, plan for 2024

Says need to rise above compulsions; Pawar, Uddhav, Mamata back call

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

SPEAKING FOR the first time on the need for Opposition parties to come together ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Congress president Sonia Gandhi told top Opposition leaders Friday that there is “simply no alternative” before them but to work “cohesively together”.

At a meeting of 19 Opposition parties, including

Congress, Gandhi said all parties have some “compulsions” but it was time to rise above them.

Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the parties should not focus on identifying a “leader”.

“Forget who is the leader, let’s keep our personal interests aside,” she said. She suggested that every Opposition party, including even those not allied with the Congress, should be invited as the “fight is against the BJP”.

“The people are the leaders. Let us set up a core group and work together,” Banerjee said. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi too suggested that the parties should project an “alternate” vision to the BJP, espousing their idea of India.

Shiv Sena’s Sanjay Raut, who attended the meeting along with party chief Uddhav Thackeray, said: “Uddhavji said that in view of the 2024 general elections, the Opposition should unite and Opposition unity should be

taken to the people in such a way that people believe in it.”

Sources said it was decided that the leaders will now meet more frequently to arrive at a consensus on developing a “co-ordination framework” to identify issues to be raised jointly. “This is a beginning,” one leader told The Indian Express.

Referring to the assembly elections next year, CPI general secretary D Raja said the parties should focus on 2022 first and

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CADILA’S 3-DOSE SHOT BASED ON DNA PLATFORM

First Covid-19 vaccine for children above 12 yrs gets emergency use nod

66% efficacy recorded; needle-free, to be administered intradermally; second dose at 28 days, third at 56 days

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

GUJARAT-BASED Zydus Cadila’s three-dose Covid-19 vaccine was on Friday granted emergency use authorisation for use in adults and children above 12, making it potentially the first vaccine to be administered to the adolescent population in India.

With the central drug regulator clearing the vaccine, Zydus Cadila’s ZyCoV-D is set to become the first Covid vaccine candidate developed on a plasmid DNA platform to be commercially introduced anywhere in the world.

The vaccine, jointly developed in partnership with the Department of Biotechnology, had demonstrated a primary efficacy of 66.66 per cent in phase 3 clinical trials. It was the first Covid-19 vaccine in India to be tested in the adolescent population -- those in the 12-18-year

EXPLAINED

Low-cost, no cold storage

ZYCOV-D is the world’s first Covid-19 vaccine built on a DNA platform to be granted emergency use authorisation. Unlike mRNA vaccines, DNA-based vaccines do not require ultra-cold storage systems and are said to be more cost-effective. Zydus also claims that its technology is ideal for tackling Covid-19 as it can be easily adapted to deal with mutations in the virus.

age group.

On Friday, the Indian drug regulator said in a tweet that after evaluating the “interim” phase III clinical trials results in consultation with the subject expert committee, it has approved ZyCoV-D “for restricted use in emergency situation in India for 12 years and above”. The vaccine is to be administered at days 0, 28, and, 56, the regulator said.

While the vaccine has been approved for use in the adolescent population, it’s for the government to take a call on whether to roll out the vaccination drive for this age group.

So far, there are three vaccines that are being used in India’s immunisation drive -- SII’s Covishield, Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin and Russia’s Sputnik V. Moderna’s mRNA vaccine and the single-dose vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson have also received EUA, but they are not being used in the vaccination

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WEST BENGAL

POST-POLL VIOLENCE: CBI SEEKS DETAILS OF CASES FROM DGP

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WORLD

IN AFGHANISTAN, REPORTS OF TARGETED KILLINGS FUEL FEARS PAGE 10

DEAR INDIA, 2047

A letter from...



I congratulate you for voting to keep India a free democracy

RATAN TATA

IF I HAD the opportunity of writing to the young Indian citizens in 2047, the year in which India would attain a 100 years of independence, I would say the following:

To the young Indian citizens of 2047, I would like to congratulate you as members who have voted to keep India as a freely voting democracy which has peacefully settled border disputes and religious controversies. During these years, I would hope that India will have achieved a meaningful position in the global economic arena with its stable economic policies with the vision of the government in power.

Above all, I would hope that you would continue to take your place as part of a nation that will uphold and support a government that will stand for continuing peace and economic stability in the future years.

THE WRITER IS CHAIRMAN EMERITUS, TATA SONS; CHAIRMAN, TATA TRUSTS

J&K ex-Deputy CM who slammed govt land transfer was also illegal occupant

Says don’t know how, when revenue dept entered or cancelled his name

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, AUGUST 20

FORMER DEPUTY CHIEF Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta, who described the transfer of state land under the controversial Roshni Act (now annulled) to private individuals as “land jihad” in the run-up to District Development Council (DDC) elections last November, was himself an illegal occupant of state land from 2010 till the beginning of 2017.

According to information obtained from the Bhalwal Tehsildar under an RTI application filed by Advocate Sheikh Shakeel, Kavinder Gupta along with two others — Subash Sharma and Shiv Rattan Gupta — jointly occupied Khasra No. 1789 measuring 23 kanaal, 9 marla (8 kanaal = 1 acre or 4,047 sq m, 1 marla = 270 sq ft) at village Ghaink in Bhalwal tehsil in Jammu district between 2010 and 2016. Khasra number is a plot number given to a piece of



Kavinder Gupta

land by the revenue department.

Sharma is an independent councillor and represents Indra Colony, Janipur, in the Jammu Municipal Corporation. Shiv Rattan Gupta is a resident of Indra Colony.

Both Kavinder Gupta and Sharma denied having occupied government land in Ghaink village. “I swear by my parents that I don’t know as to how and when revenue officials entered a gir-dawari pertaining to 23 kanals and 9 marla state land at Ghaink in my name, and how and when it was cancelled,” Kavinder Gupta told *The Indian Express*.

In 2010, when the khasra gir-dawari (revenue department document that specifies land and crop details) was entered in their names, J&K had a National

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WFI chief hits out at private bodies, says won’t select wrestlers they back

PAGE 1
ANCHORMIHIR VASAVDA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

IN WHAT could turn out to be a tricky scenario for Tokyo Olympics medal-winning wrestlers Ravi Dahiya and Bajrang Punia as well as other top wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat, Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh has warned play-



WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is a BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh

ers who are associated with private, not-for-profit companies that they will not be considered for selection going ahead.

Singh, a BJP MP from UP, also came down heavily on the government for dealing directly with athletes under its flagship Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). He has demanded a bigger say in the planning for the Paris Olympics.

India has won six medals in wrestling at four consecutive Olympics, starting 2008, including two earlier this month in Tokyo. Dahiya, who competed in

the 57-kg weight class, won a silver medal while Punia clinched bronze in the 65-kg category.

However, for both these wrestlers, and several others, the road to Paris could get complicated after Singh said he no longer required the services of private bodies like the Olympic Gold Quest (OGQ) and JSW Sports, who have been supporting Dahiya and Punia respectively.

Singh alleged OGQ and JSW had “spoiled three wrestlers” although he refused to name them and elaborate how.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

RP-Sanjiv Goenka
Group

Growing Legacies



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Kolkata

3 WEST BENGAL

To prevent rush, minimum income support camps now to be held at booths



Currently, women can enrol for the 'Lakshmi Bhandar' scheme at 'Duare Sarkar' camps being held in blocks. *File*

ATRIMITRA
KOLKATA, AUGUST 20

ALARMED BY overcrowding at 'Duare Sarkar' camps mostly on account of overwhelming response for the 'Lakshmi Bhandar' scheme, the state government has decided to take these camps to booths within a week. There are 77,000 booths across the state.

These camps will exclusively cater to those who want to enrol for the 'Bhandar' scheme, a minimum income support for women.

Officials believe the announcement will decongest 'Duare Sarkar' camps, currently held at the block-level, in compliance with Covid protocols. At these camps, people can get registered for various schemes from 'Bhandar' to 'Swasthya Sathi', Student Credit Card and 'Krishak Bandhu'. First held on August 16, camps will continue till September 15.

With 'Bhandar' a hit among women, the government has revised its expected expenditure to

Rs 17,000 crore from Rs 11,000 crore.

According to sources, of the total registrations at the 'Duare Sarkar' camps, 60 per cent are for the income support scheme. Swasthya Sathi, a health insurance cover, is the second most popular scheme followed by registrations for caste certificates, student credit card and others.

"First, we thought the rush would peter out. However, things are not happening as we had thought. On the other hand, the chief minister has already announced those who don't have 'Swasthya Sathi' cards can also benefit under the 'Lakshmi Bhandar' project. With this, we are expecting that around 2 crore would benefit from the scheme," a senior official said.

Under the 'Bhandar' scheme, women from the General Category can receive Rs 500 a month and those under the SC/ST category are eligible for Rs 1,000 a month. The scheme was part of the TMC manifesto released ahead of the Assembly polls in March-April this year.

9 Covid deaths recorded, active case count 9,635

Kolkata: Nadia district on Friday reported four Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours, followed by one each in Jalpaiguri, Uttar Dinajpur, Purba Medinipur, North 24 Parganas and Kolkata. The nine deaths pushed up the fatality count to 18,346 while following 758 new cases and 767 recoveries, there are 9,635 active cases in the state. At present, 8,424 people are in home isolation while 245 people are in safe homes.

According to the govern-

ment, the discharge rate rose marginally to 98.19 per cent. The state health department said 47,262 samples were tested in 24 hours, of which 1.62 per cent were found to be positive. The government said more than 2.92 lakh people were vaccinated on Friday. To date, more than 96.83 lakh people have completed inoculation.

Meanwhile, the government on Friday reported seven more cases of mucormycosis, of which six were detected earlier. **ENS**

CBI seeks details of post-poll violence cases from top cop

Directed by HC to probe rape and murder cases, CBI has formed four teams

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 20

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has written to West Bengal's director general of police (DGP), seeking the details of all cases of murder, attempted murder, and rape that were reported during alleged post-poll violence in the state, officials said on Friday.

This came a day after the Calcutta High Court handed over the probe to the CBI. The agency has set up four teams — headed by joint directors Ramnish, Anurag, Vineet Vinayak, and Sampat Meena — to investigate the political violence that ensued after the victory of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) on May 2 in a bitterly contested eight-phase

Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said it was not fair to hand over cases to the CBI

Assembly election. Sources said 20-25 officers would be part of the four teams.

Each team will have a deputy inspector general and about four superintendents of police from across the country, officials said. Additional Director Ajay Bhatnagar will supervise the investigation from Delhi instead of the agency's regional office here.

Reacting to the court's decision, state minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said, "It is not fair to hand over the entire probe to

the CBI. We would not like to comment on the verdict passed by the honourable High Court. However, I would like to remind you that judges of the Madras High Court said a day before the High Court's order that CBI was a 'caged parrot' and that they should be released from this situation and made an impartial body."

Her party colleague and TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "It is very problematic that when one joins BJP, the CBI starts protecting [him or her]."

A five-judge Bench of the High Court on Thursday passed a unanimous judgement on a batch of public interest litigation pleas (PILs) seeking an independent investigation into incidents of alleged violence after the poll results were declared.

The court also ordered that a special investigation team (SIT) be set up to probe all other cases.

The SIT will include Suman Bala Sahoo, Soumen Mitra and Ranveer Kumar, all IPS officers of the West Bengal cadre. The Bench will monitor both the SIT and CBI investigations and has asked them to submit status reports to the court within six weeks. A retired Supreme Court judge will oversee the functioning of the SIT. A separate order on the matter will be passed after obtaining the consent of the judge.

The BJP has hailed the court order as "a victory of the Constitution" while the Mamata Banerjee government has decided to challenge it in the Supreme Court.

WITH PTI INPUTS



DAY OF MOURNING

Shias participate in a Muharram procession in Kolkata on Friday. *Express*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, AUGUST 20

MOUNTING A fresh attack on the BJP-led Centre, TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien on Friday posed several questions over the just-concluded Parliament session, one of them being the reason for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's absence during a debate on the constitutional amendment bill on other backward classes (OBCs).

O'Brien, in a video, asked as many as nine questions to Modi



Asks nine questions on Monsoon Session

and his cabinet of ministers on a range of issues, claiming that the opposition was "not allowed" to hold discussions on the Pegasus controversy and the contentious farm laws in the two Houses.

The TMC leader in Rajya Sabha further wondered why the Parliament session was wrapped up ahead of schedule.

"Why did you (PM) not bother to reply to any query asked by the opposition...? Why was our PM missing during the OBC debate in Parliament? Former PMs Deve Gowdaji, Manmohan Singh ji were present. Where was Modi ji?" O'Brien said in the video posted on his Twitter handle.

A constitutional amendment bill to restore the powers of the states to make their own OBC lists was passed by Parliament on Wednesday, the last day of the monsoon session.

The Rajya Sabha MP noted that "38 bills were passed in both

POLL VIOLENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

ONE OF the PIL petitioners, on whose plea the Calcutta High Court ordered CBI probe into all heinous cases during the post poll violence in West Bengal, Friday filed a caveat in the Supreme Court urging that no order be passed without hearing him if the state or other litigant move appeals against the verdict.

A five-judge bench of the High Court, headed by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal, on Thursday ordered a CBI investigation in all alleged cases of heinous crimes like rape and murder, while accepting the recommendations of an NHRC panel, in West Bengal after the assembly poll results this year in which the ruling Trinamool Congress Party came back to power.

The unanimous verdict came

Houses with an average discussion time of 10 minutes on each of them."

He claimed that Modi hasn't replied to any question raised in Rajya Sabha in the past five years. O'Brien also sought to know the rationale behind the delay in electing a deputy speaker to Lok Sabha, a post that has been lying vacant over the last two years.

"Why was the opposition not allowed to discuss Pegasus internal security issues and farm laws? The government must have its way, and the opposition must have its say," O'Brien observed.

NHRC being misused to target us: Mamata

ATRIMITRA
KOLKATA, AUGUST 20

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Friday urged all Opposition parties to unite against the BJP and slammed the Union government for "misusing" Central agencies, including the National Human Rights Commission, against her government. Banerjee was virtually attending a meeting of Opposition leaders, led by Congress president Sonia Gandhi. Banerjee proposed a multi-party core committee to raise people's issues.

Her government has been on the backfoot after an NHRC team, in its report over post-poll violence, told the Calcutta High court that the state had "law of ruler" rather than "rule of law". On Thursday, the HC had asked the CBI to take over the case.

"Institutions and agencies are being misused. The NHRC has been wrongfully used to target Bengal," she said in the meeting.



Mamata at the virtual meeting of Opposition leaders. CMO

"The joint statement we issued has so many demands. Going forward, we should restrict our agenda to only five issues of national importance... urgent issues which need to be addressed," said the CM.

Among the issues she raised at the meeting were vaccines for all, repeal of the farm laws, withdrawal of fuel price hikes and a judicial probe into alleged surveillance by the Pegasus software.

"Forget who is the leader and let us keep our personal interests aside. The people of India will lead. Every Opposition party should come forward to fight against the BJP. Even those who are not an ally with the Congress must be invited in meetings like this," said the chief minister.

PIL petitioner files caveat in SC

on a batch of petitions including the one PIL filed by lawyer Anindya Sundar Das raising the issue of violence taking place in various parts of the state after the state assembly elections.

Das, in anticipation of the fact that the aggrieved parties, including the state government, may file appeals against the verdict, filed the caveat in the top court to ensure that he is heard before any order is passed on the pleas to be filed in the apex court.

The high court bench, which also comprised justices I P Mukerji, Harish Tandon, Soumen Sen and Subrata Talukdar, has observed that there were "definite and proved" allegations that complaints of the victims of violence in the aftermath of the West Bengal assembly polls were not even registered.

Ordering setting up of an SIT to probe all other cases, it has said that it will include Suman Bala Sahoo, Soumen Mitra and

Ranveer Kumar, all IPS officers of the West Bengal cadre.

"All the cases where, as per the report of the Committee, the allegations are about murder of a person and crime against women regarding rape/attempt to rape, shall be referred to CBI for investigation," it said.

The high court has also directed the NHRC committee, constituted by its chairman on a direction by the five-judge bench, and any other commission or authority and the state to immediately hand over the records of the cases to the CBI to carry forward the probe. The bench said it will monitor the investigations by both the CBI and the SIT and asked the two agencies to submit status reports to the court within six weeks.

It has said that the working of the SIT will be overseen by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court for which a separate order will be passed after obtaining his/her consent.

Do not overcharge: Govt to private bus owners

Kolkata: The state government has written a letter to private bus owners' associations, asking them not to charge passengers more than the regular fare.

Sources in the government on Friday said the administration would not hesitate to initiate legal action against bus owners if passenger complaints about overcharging continued to come in.

The secretary of the Regional Transport Authority, which comes under the state transport department, sent the letter to the bus

owners after the department received reports that several private buses were overcharging passengers.

"We have received a letter yesterday and we have been asked to follow the previous fare structure. But that fare structure was prepared in 2018 when diesel price was at Rs 65. Now it has reached Rs 93. How are we supposed to run buses if we do not get any help or grant from the government?" a representative of a private bus owners' association said. **ENS**

Rs 935 cr misappropriated in NREGA scheme in four years, show Ministry data; only Rs 12.5 cr recovered

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, AUGUST 20

OVER THE last four years, Social Audit Units (SAU) under Rural Development Departments (RDD) across India have found financial misappropriation of Rs 935 crore under various schemes of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), according to data obtained by *The Indian Express* through the Management Information System (MIS) of the Rural Development Ministry.

Only about Rs 12.5 crore of this amount — 1.34% — has been recovered so far, the data show.

Although the data is in the public domain, accessing it is difficult because of frequent "network issue". *The Indian Express* accessed the data from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21 through a source in the government.

SAU audits have been carried out in 2.65 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the states and Union Territories of the country at least once over the last four years, since the data began to be uploaded in 2017-18.

The Centre released Rs 55,659.93 crore for MGNREGA in 2017-18, and the amount has



Audits were carried out in all gram panchayats. *Express file*

since risen every year to reach Rs 1,10,355.27 crore in 2020-21. Total expenditure on the scheme has risen from Rs 63,649.48 crore in 2017-18 to Rs 1,11,405.3 crore in 2020-21.

One of key findings of the audit is "financial misappropriation", which includes bribery, and payments to non-existent persons and to vendors for material procured at high rates.

Social audits are seen as a powerful tool to enforce accountability. Union Rural Development Secretary Nagendra Nath Sinha emphasised this in a letter to all state chief secretaries recently, and asked why state RDDs have

made only "little recoveries".

"Yes, we have written to all the states... Lack of attention on this aspect is certainly one (of the issues). Another is the determination of culpability of the persons concerned for the irregularities — and in absence of SOPs to handle such cases such determination is not easy," Sinha told *The Indian Express* when asked why recoveries have been low.

There were often not enough people to ensure payment of amounts shown as recoverable, Sinha said. "But ultimately it boils down to lack of attention and lack of sensitivity in taking social audit to its logical conclusion," he added.

Indeed, no accountability was fixed for the misappropriation in many states. Consider:

■ Tamil Nadu accounted for the highest misappropriation of Rs 245 crore in 12,525 GPs across the state, for which 37,527 audit reports were uploaded. Recoveries stood at Rs 2.07 crore, only 0.85% of the misappropriated amount. One employee has been suspended and two have been dismissed, but not a single FIR has been filed.

■ Andhra Pradesh has 12,982 GPs, and 31,795 social audits were conducted and reports uploaded. Total misappropriated funds amounted to Rs 239.31 crore; recovery was Rs 4.48 crore (1.88%). Penalties of Rs 14.74 lakh were levied, and 10,454 employees were warned/censured. A total 551 employees have been suspended and 180 employees have been dismissed. Three FIRs have been filed.

■ Karnataka has seen misappropriation of Rs 173.6 crore in its 6,027 GPs; only Rs 1.48 crore (0.68%) has been recovered. A total 22,948 audit reports were submitted. Karnataka has registered no FIRs and suspended none of its employees, even though the services of two employees have been terminated.

■ In Bihar, Rs 12.34 crore was misappropriated; recoveries stood at Rs 1.593.

■ In West Bengal, Rs 2.45 crore was misappropriated; Rs 14.802 was recovered.

■ In Gujarat, only Rs 6.749 was misappropriated, nothing of which was recovered.

■ Jharkhand filed the most FIRs — 14 out of the 38 filed across the country over the last four years. Two employees were suspended, and the services of 31 were terminated. However, of the Rs 51.29 crore misappropriated, only Rs 1.39 crore (2.72%) has been recovered.

■ Rajasthan, Kerala, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Ladakh, Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu reported zero misappropriation.

Section 17 of the MGNREG Act mandates social audit of all works in gram panchayats. The Audit of Scheme Rules were notified in 2011, and The Auditing Standards for Social Audit in 2016. The Rural Development Ministry has released a Financial Management Index, in which social audit is a key parameter to judge the efficiency of states in management

of finances. The 2011 Rules say the state government will facilitate the social audit of work done under MGNREGA in every GP once every six months.

Experts said the 'real' misappropriation could well be three or four times the identified amount, as in many GPs, audits have been done only once.

One of these experts who is based in Jharkhand, said: "Also, in 2020-21, the data uploaded are not significant, as in many states, including Jharkhand, concurrent audit was done and there is no provision to upload the data in the MIS of RDD. Combined with the fact that in many states GPs have been surveyed only once, the total misappropriated amount could be at least three to four times (the identified amount)."

A key requirement is for the SAU to be independent. Releasing the Social Audit Assessment Index report in June 2020, RDD Secretary Sinha had said: "...Disconcertingly, it has been noted that half of the SAUs are not independent and that the quality of audits and intensity of action on the findings needs to improve."

 राष्ट्रीय वायुमंडलीय अनुसंधान प्रयोगशाला NATIONAL ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH LABORATORY गार्दकी / GADANKI - 517 112	
No. 1/13(1)/2021-RMT/ADVT-CAN	August 04, 2021
CANCELLATION OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS	
It is notified for information of all concerned that the recruitment process for the posts of JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW notified vide advertisement dated 11.03.2020 stands cancelled.	
Administrative Officer, NARL	

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Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the UCO Bank Under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act, 2002 (54 of 2002)) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with (Rule 3) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002 issued demand notice dated dt. 14-09-2020 calling upon the borrower Sri BIMAL KUNDU S/O SHIBKALI KUNDU VII-SAHEBKACHARI PARA P.O-BALURGHAT Dist. SIB (Rupees Six lak fifty eight thousand five hundred eleven and forty eight paisa) only Inclusive of interest upto 29-02-2020 within 60 days from the date of received of the said notice.		
The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him U/S13(4) of the said Act, read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 18th day of August of the year 2021 .		
The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank for an Amount Rs.6,58,511.48 (Rupees Six lak fifty eight thousand five hundred eleven and forty eight paisa only) inclusive of interest charged upto 29-02-2020 and interest thereon.		
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DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY EMTD of land & building situated at Sahab Katcheri Para PO+PS Balurghat Distt- Dakshin Dinajpur PIN-733101, Mouja Balurghat JL no-109, Plot no- RS1291: LR3102, Khatian no- 3433 Present LR 5885 Holding no-221/1(06-07)/ N having Gift Deed no-2187 dtd 21.01.2006 LR record standing in the name of Mr. Bimal Kundu. Area of the land measuring 0.876 decimal class of land-Bastu. BOUNDARY: North: Jadbab Ghosh, South: Shibkali Kundu, East: Temple and Road, West: Buddhadeb Kundu		
Place: Malda Date: 18.08.2021	Authorized Officer UCO Bank	

‘Pushed’ by security, says Hooda; House panel to probe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 20

HARYANA ASSEMBLY Speaker Gian Chand Gupta Friday agreed to a probe by the House’s Privileges Committees after for-

mer Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda alleged that security personnel pushed him and stopped legislators near the Vidhan Sabha gates when he was leading a march to the House. “Such thing never happened to me. They (security person-

nel) pushed me despite admitting that they recognised me. Such a thing never happened to me. Action should be taken against the guilty otherwise we will stop coming to the Vidhan Sabha,” Hooda said in the Assembly.

Captain, Sidhu break ice, pick synergy panel

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 20

THREE DAYS after AICC general secretary in-charge Harish Rawat asked Punjab CM Amarinder Singh and PPCC chief Navjot Sidhu to exercise restraint, both warring leaders sat together Friday to decide a 10-member Strategic Policy Group for better coordination between the party and the government.

Sidhu went to meet the CM at the latter’s farm house in Siswan on Friday, posed for a picture with the CM and tweeted: “Highly positive co-ordination meeting on proposal for roster of ministers to sit at Punjab Congress Bhawan!!”

After Sidhu suggested it, the CM has now got a roster prepared to assign ministers in his Cabinet to spend time with party cadres at the Congress headquarters in Chandigarh.

A government statement later said that the 10-member group, to be headed by Amarinder, will ensure better coordination between the ruling party and the state government,



Punjab Congress Chief Navjot Singh Sidhu with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday. ANI

and expedite implementation of various schemes.

Besides the CM, the group will have Local Government Minister Brahm Mohindra, Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal and Social Security

Minister Aruna Chaudhary as members, along with Sidhu, the four party working presidents -- Kuljit Singh Nagra, Sukhwinder Singh Danny, Sangat Singh Gilzian and Pawan Goel.

CJI hails former PM Rao’s role in creating arbitration procedure

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

CHIEF JUSTICE of India N V Ramana Friday hailed late Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao as the “father of India’s economic reforms”.

He also said it was Rao who had set in motion a law to allay foreign investors’ concerns about getting caught in unending litigation -- ultimately resulting in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

“You all know the father of economic reforms in this country is none other than PV Narasimha Rao,” the CJI said while addressing an event on the occasion of registration of the trust deed of the



Chief Justice of India N V Ramana

International Arbitration and Mediation Centre, Hyderabad.

It was Chief Justice Ramana who had proposed such a centre in the city.

Referring to the law, he said it was after its introduction that “the

momentum started for arbitration, conciliation, mediation procedures.”

The Chief Justice said that businesses, whether in India or outside, do not want litigation. And even if they are caught in litigation, they want to resolve it peacefully, amicably and without a time lag, he added.

“This (arbitration and mediation) is not a new thing that we innovated. You know that in Indian culture we sort out all our disputes through mediation and negotiation and conciliation. Every day we negotiate with our children, brothers and friends,” he said.

Supreme Court judges L Nageswara Rao and R Subhash Reddy also spoke on the occasion.

100 DAYS IN OFFICE

Himanta announces Covid aid, reforms in education, transport

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 20

All diesel-run government buses in Guwahati will be replaced by electric and CNG buses within the next year, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Friday. “We have purchased 200 electric and 100 CNG buses. This will be Assam’s contribution to the global campaign in reducing carbon emission,” Sarma said, addressing a press conference to mark 100 days of his government.

Sarma, who took charge on May 10, announced several decisions related to education, administration and economic relief.

He complimented Assam Police for their action on human trafficking, the anti-drugs campaign and cattle smuggling. The CM also handed out appointment letters to the kin of six policemen killed in the clashes at the Assam-Mizoram border.

He announced one-time cash assistance of Rs 10,000 to bus drivers and conductors and Rs 15,000 heads of religious institutions who have been affected



CM Himanta Biswa Sarma launches an achievement booklet. Dasarath Deka

by Covid curbs. Assistance for underprivileged women will be increased from Rs 830 to Rs 1,000, from September 10, he said.

Sarma said geography and history (of India and Assam) will be made compulsory subjects in the government curriculum for Class 9, 10, 11 and 12. “...all high schools will get converted to higher secondary schools and junior colleges will include classes 9 and 10,” he said. The provision, which will treat Class 9, 10, 11, and 12 as one entity, will be implemented from April.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

BJP distributes ration in Bihar, Opp says can’t use scheme to promote party

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 20

THE BJP has incurred the ire of the Opposition in Bihar after leaders of the saffron party distributed ration to beneficiaries of the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY). According to Opposition leaders, this was tantamount to using a government scheme to further the BJP’s interest.

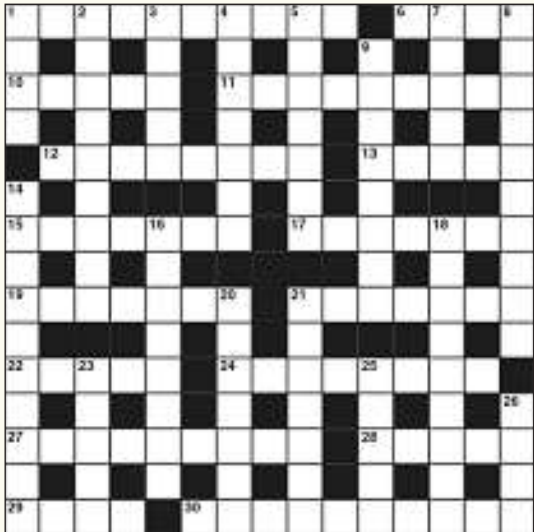
Under the PM-GKAY scheme, every ration card holder will be given 5 kg rice/wheat for free per month till November due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Bihar has 1.6 crore ration card holders, and BJP leaders from the

state have been distributing the ration to the beneficiaries in sacks which have Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s photo printed on them. Top BJP leaders, including Rajya Sabha MP Sushil Kumar Modi, Union minister Nityanand Rai and Bihar Health Minister Mangal Pandey were recently seen distributing sacks of ration.

RJD spokesperson Mrityunjay Tewari told *The Indian Express*, “How can BJP misuse a government platform? It is a blatant use of a government scheme to further the interest of the party. The BJP is giving the impression that ration card holders are also getting free grain along with free sacks.”

CROSSWORD 4514



- ACROSS**
- Reserve player is being considered (10)
 - A cat scrap (4)
 - Woolly animal is all over mother (5)
 - Serious actor skilled at reading parts (9)
 - Example of fashionable attitude (8)
 - Uncommon Elgar variation (5)
 - Possibly flies in groups (7)
 - Pay trio for putting the shrubbery into shape (7)
 - His mark was made in India (7)
 - Bird pecked another (7)
 - Set method of communication (5)
 - They have some point in the desert (8)
 - Costly farmer writers I’ve gathered together (9)
 - Consumer items that are cut and polished (5)
 - Not quick or not quick enough (4)
 - It’s very well known to have had a festival (10)
- DOWN**
- It’s not fair (4)
 - Doing as is required for identification (9)
 - Trace out a way to respond (5)
 - Aunt set about making a complaint (7)
 - The talk of the district (7)
 - Object made of thin string (5)
 - Putting down some of the main dangers of war (10)
 - Pet cried out on its last legs (8)
 - Twisted killer bent on finding Peter Pan’s friend (6,4)
 - Mixed Asian settlement (8)
 - Change for the better? (9)
 - A loathsome creature - repel it perhaps (7)
 - Be sure about including a thousand Easterners (7)
 - HQ of the French vessel (5)
 - Mother making the final move? (5)
 - Drop woman a note (4)

Solutions Crossword 4513: Across: 1 Reproof, 5 Pedal, 8 Corpulent, 9 Pat, 10 Ribs, 12 Novellet, 14 Arrive, 15 Scraps, 17 Duty call, 18 Herb, 21 Nun, 22 In the dark, 24 Arson, 25 Hotspur. Down: 1 Recur, 2 Par, 3 Onus, 4 Faeros, 5 Patience, 6 Duplicate, 7 Litotes, 11 Bartones, 13 Eviction, 14 Addenda, 16 Clutch, 19 Baker, 20 Rest, 23 Amp.

JUMBLED WORDS

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

Life resembles a novel _____ than novels resemble life. - George Sand (4,5)

DOEER GHORNT
LTTOO AFIRFM

SOLUTION: ERODE, LOTTO, THRONG, AFFIRM
Answer: Life resembles a novel more often than novels resemble life. - George Sand

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



Difficulty Level 3s

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4569



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

In the past, you hesitated in the face of seductive proposals, but you may now feel free to accept fresh offers of a social or romantic nature. Take heart from the fact that Venus’ changing position in your solar horoscope is about to bring new and attractive people into your life.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)

You can now afford to relax a little. Six planets are acting in your defence, not a bad total considering recent stresses and strains. Your social life is liable to revolve around hobbies and joint interests, and activities which are generally worthwhile and life-improving.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Mars’ approaching relationship with Neptune obliges you to look around for fresh inspiration. Romantic influences are stronger than usual, though in a much broader sense than the purely emotional. Artistic and imaginative types are bound to feel the real benefits of recent initiatives.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The Moon is rapidly heading towards lively, energetic spaces. Enjoy to the full the next couple of days, while the accent remains on friendships and welcome domestic experiences. You must stress the value of a pleasant environment for your future happiness.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)

Your stars just don’t seem to be able to take their gaze away from your money. Before the next phase or cycle in your affairs, you must get your finances sorted out. There will be much to say about your cash situation, your incomes and outgoings, over the next month or so.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)

These are energetic times. Whether working, relaxing or pressing on with routine chores, you should push yourself as hard as you can. But don’t expect other, more lethargic people to keep up. And don’t worry about delays - they’re part of the pattern.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)

Much of what is said or implied over the current period is likely to be based on unfounded rumour or conjecture, and should therefore be disregarded. On the other hand, this evening you will be forced to listen to other people, like it or not.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

You must be on the mend now, and a professional hiccup should be coming into perspective. You are set up to spend a pleasant weekend, and the closer you feel to a particular person, the greater you will appreciate their sensitivity and discretion.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Jan. 20)

Society has set the weekend aside as the time to relax. It is therefore rather fortuitous that the pleasurable fifth house of your solar chart is so well aspected. You are well primed for an enjoyable day, with an increasing chance of an extravagant outburst.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)

You might want to pause for a long, deep breath. Recent events may have left you poorer than you were before, yet undoubtedly wiser. Such fluctuations in fortune are part and parcel of astrology’s cyclical nature, and the next phase will be one of prosperity.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)

What took place last week seems to have upset a number of personal arrangements. However, as one awkward planetary influence has subsided, so another, more favourable, one has emerged to take its place. Socially the future is bright, so get out and enjoy yourself.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)

You do feel that you have been misled or misinformed. However, such feelings may be based less on real events than on your perpetual tendency to grab the wrong end of the stick as far as other people are concerned. Try focusing on the facts for a change.

BRIEFLY

TAMIL NADU

Reply in English to query, HC tells Centre

Madurai: Citing the Official Languages Act, the Madras High Court has directed the Centre to reply in English if a representation is made in that language. The court was hearing a plea by a Madurai CPI(M) MP Su Venkatesan who had objected to getting a reply in Hindi from the Home Ministry in response to a query in English on CRPF recruitment. He sought a direction to the Centre that it should use only English in all communications with states. "It is the duty of the Union government to reply in English if representation was given in that language," the bench of Justices Justices N Kirubakaran and M Duraisamy said on Thursday. **PTI**

GOA

Two Russians found dead

Panaji: In two separate incidents, two Russian women were found dead in their respective rented apartments near Siliom in North Goa on Friday. While one woman was found hanging, another was found dead in her bed. The police said the deaths were not related. Alexandra Ri-Djavi (24) and Ekaterina Titova (34) were in Goa on tourist visas. The autopsy reports are awaited, police officials said. **ENS**

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Sepoy falls into gorge, dies

Jammu: An Indian Army soldier died Friday after he fell into a 40-foot gorge while "negotiating difficult heights" on higher reaches of the Pir Panjal range in the border district of Poonch. Sepoy Lovepreet Singh, 23, was acting as a guide to a counter terrorist operation team that was moving along a treacherous route from Jabbiwal to Bagsar (Poonch), a statement said. The soldier hailed from Punjab's Gurdaspur district. **ENS**

Inquiries against Vikas Dubey never impartial: Judicial panel

ASAD REHMAN

LUCKNOW, AUGUST 20

THE THREE-MEMBER judicial commission, which was formed on the direction of the Supreme Court to probe the alleged encounters of gangster Vikas Dubey and five others last year, has said in its report that any investigation against Dubey and his associates "was never impartial" and "there was no serious opposition by the state authorities or the government advocates" against them in the courts.

The Commission also said that 21 files detailing criminal cases of Dubey could not be traced despite giving officials sufficient time to locate them.

The Commission has concluded in its report that there was enough evidence that Dubey and his gang were patronised by local police, revenue and administrative officials, and recommended an inquiry against the "erring public servants".

The report of the Commission,



Vikas Dubey was killed in an alleged encounter on July 10.

headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice BS Chauhan, with retired Allahabad High Court judge Justice Shashi Kant Agarwal and former UP Director General of Police KI Gupta as its members, was tabled by the UP government in the Assembly on Thursday.

On July 3 last year, a police team that had gone to Bikru village in Kanpur to arrest Dubey had come under heavy gunfire from rooftops near the gangster's home. Eight policemen, including Deputy Superintendent of Police Devendra Mishra, died in the ambush.

Of the 21 people named in the

FIR, police gunned down six accused, including Dubey, in alleged encounters over the following weeks. On July 10, Dubey was killed when a police vehicle ferrying him from Ujjain, from where he was arrested, to Kanpur met with an accident. Police alleged that he tried to escape and opened fire, and that he was killed in retaliatory fire.

The Commission said that Dubey and his associates easily and quickly got bail from the courts as there was no serious opposition by the state authorities or the government advocates.

"Sections relating to serious offences were dropped before filing the chargesheet. During the trial, most of the witnesses turn hostile... He (Vikas Dubey) was involved in 64 criminal cases, and the State authorities never considered it appropriate to engage a special counsel for his prosecution. The State never moved any application for cancellation of bail or approached the superior court for cancellation of any of the bail orders," the report said.

"The State had not contested the matter any further by approaching the Hon'ble Supreme Court against the said order passed by the High Court refusing to grant leave to appeal," it added.

The Commission also said that "there is nothing on record to show that his (Dubey) cases had ever sincerely been contested by the government advocates before the High Court".

"In most of the cases, the High Court had granted interim relief to Vikas Dubey, staying the proceedings before the subordinate courts in various criminal cases and he remained under the protection of such orders for a period of 13-14 years. The High Court granted bail to Vikas Dubey and his associates, mainly on the ground that he had been acquitted in a large number of cases without making any attempt to know as to under what circumstances he had been acquitted and how and why the witnesses have turned hostile in most of the cases," the report said.

13 MP labourers die after vehicle overturns in Maharashtra

Nagpur: Thirteen labourers from Madhya Pradesh died and two others were injured in a mishap in Buldhana district on Friday.

Buldhana Superintendent of Police Arvind Chawaria said, "Thirteen labourers died after the tipper they were traveling in turned turtle near Dusarbid village, which is under the jurisdiction of Kindkhd Raja police station, on Friday morning."

He added, "The tipper was carrying iron bars and was deployed for the work of Samruddhi Mahamarg. The temporary road built for ferrying material to the site had become slushy. As a result, the tipper leaned on one side and lost balance. It fell down in the adjoining 15-feet-deep part of the land, trapping the labourers under it. While some of them died on the spot, others succumbed to injuries in a hospital in Jalna."

"All the labourers were from Madhya Pradesh," he added.

Among the survivors is the tipper driver and a eight-year-old girl, said Chawaria. The driver fled the scene after the mishap. The two injured are in critical condition at a hospital in Jalna. **ENS**



At the encounter site in Khrew area of Kashmir's Awantipora on Friday. Shuaib Masoodi

2 Hizb militants killed in J&K encounter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 20

TWO MILITANTS affiliated to the Hizbul Mujahideen were killed in an encounter at Awantipora on Friday.

The encounter broke out after 2 am during a cordon and search operation that was launched by the security forces in Khrew area of Awantipora.

"During the search operation as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given repeated opportunities to surrender, however, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which retaliated, leading to an encounter," the Jammu and Kashmir Police said in a statement.

On Friday morning, bodies of the two militants were retrieved from the site of encounter. They

have been identified as Musab Ahmad Bhat, resident of Khrew in Pampore and Muzamil Ahmad Rather, resident of Chakoor in Pulwama.

According to the police, Musab "had a history of terror crime and was involved in planning and executing several terror attacks, including civilian atrocities".

The police also claimed that he was part of a "hit squad of Hizbul Mujahideen" for civilian killings in South Kashmir.

However, Muzamil Ahmad joined the terrorist ranks recently, they said.

An AK-rifle and a pistol were recovered from the site of the encounter. "All the recovered materials have been taken into case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other terror crimes" the police said.

CHHATTISGARH

Two ITBP personnel killed in Maoist attack

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, AUGUST 20

TWO PERSONNEL of the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were Friday killed in a Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district.

The ITBP personnel have been identified as Assistant Commandant Sudhakar Shinde and Assistant Sub Inspector Gurmukh Singh.

Inspector General of Police (Bastar) P Sundarraj said the incident took place around noon, just 600 metres from the Kadameta camp of the 45th battalion of the ITBP.

"A squad from the camp had gone on an area domination operation, when a small group of



Assistant Commandant Sudhakar Shinde (left) and Assistant Sub Inspector Gurmukh Singh

armed Maoists fired on them," said a senior officer.

"The Maoists escaped with one AK-47 rifle, two bulletproof jackets and a wireless set belonging to the security personnel," said Sundarraj. While Shinde was a resident of Nanded district in Maharashtra, Singh was from Raikot in Punjab.

UTTARAKHAND

Narayankoti temple set for facelift after getting 'adopted'

DIVYA A

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

THE NARAYANKOTI temple in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag district is set to get a major facelift after an MoU was signed in New Delhi on Friday between the Ministry of Tourism, the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Director General, Culture, Uttarakhand and the Social Legal Research & Education Foundation (SLREF). The site was identified under the Centre's 'Adopt A Heritage Project' earlier this year. SLREF has come on board as 'Monument Mitra' for the site.

According to the MoU, SLREF will develop various amenities for tourists/visitors around the heritage site, including construction of roads, installation of street lighting, garbage disposal system and ensuring availability of clean drinking water, development of the parking area and revamping the entrance and boundary wall around the temple site.

The Narayankoti site is a group of ancient temples believed to have been constructed in the 9th century.

Uttarakhand Tourism Minister, Satpal Maharaj, said: "... The development of facilities will have a direct impact towards increasing the number of visitors and will benefit local youth by generating employment/self-employment opportunities in the region."

CCPA cracks down on firms with misleading Covid ads

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

AN APPAREL firm that claimed that its shirt kills 99 per cent of the virus that causes Covid-19 and a paint brand which claimed that its product has over 99 per cent efficacy in eliminating the virus are among six companies which had to withdraw their advertisements after the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) found these "misleading" and issued notices to them, a top official said on Friday.

The official told *The Indian Express* that the CCPA has issued notices in 52 cases — 27 for misleading advertisements and 25 for unfair trade practices — since its establishment on July 24, 2020. "Subsequent to the notices, six companies have withdrawn their misleading advertisements, which claimed more than 99 percent efficacy against Covid-19. Four other companies agreed for corrective advertisement," the official said.

The official, without divulging the names of the companies which withdrew their "misleading" advertisements, said they included a popular RO maker, a

paint company, a shirt brand, a fabric and garment manufacturer, a soap maker and an air conditioner maker.

Among the four companies which agreed for corrective advertisement are a hand wash brand and a mattress maker, the official said adding that the notices were issued to these companies after taking the suo motu cognizance of their advertisements circulating in the social media.

The CCPA was established under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, that came into force from July 20, 2020. The Act defines "misleading advertisement" in relation to any product or service, as "an advertisement, which—(i) falsely describes such product or service; or (ii) gives a false guarantee to, or is likely to mislead the consumers as to the nature, substance, quantity or quality of such product or service; or (iii) conveys an express or implied representation which, if made by the manufacturer or seller or service provider thereof, would constitute an unfair trade practice; or (iv) deliberately conceals important information".

However, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is yet to issue guide-

lines on misleading advertisements.

Asked about it, the official quoted above said, "The guidelines on misleading advertisements are in an advanced stage. Consultations with different stakeholders have already taken place. The guidelines are expected to be finalised very soon."

The CCPA has also initiated class action against 9 companies including an e-commerce player and a social media giant on the basis of number of complaints received against these companies, the official said, adding that the class actions are pertaining to refunds related to Covid-19.

In fact, the e-commerce sector accounts for the maximum number of consumer complaints registered on the National Consumer Helpline over the last financial year. Out of 5.79 lakh complaints registered on the helpline in 2020-21, over 2 lakh or 35 per cent of all complaints were related to the e-commerce sector. The banking and telecom sectors received 51,307 and 34,798 complaints respectively.

These three sectors also comprised over 50 per cent of complaints registered between April and July this year.

Mohalla classes, catch-up: Experts offer ways to check learning loss

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

OVER A year and a half after Covid forced one of the longest shutdowns of India's schools, what lies ahead as states tentatively prepare to open up? Given the digital inequity that meant several children have had very little interaction with school, what does this prolonged absence from school mean for children in terms of their foundational literacy and numeracy skills? How can administrations and educationists help children catch-up?

These were some of the questions that a panel unpacked on Friday during IE Thinc, an Express platform where experts confront some of the most pressing issues of our times.

The session, titled 'Rebuilding Schools Post Covid', was organised by *The Indian Express* in association with Central Square Foundation, an organisation working with the vision of ensuring quality school education for all children in India.

The panelists for Friday's session included Rukmini Banerji, CEO of Pratham, the organisation that releases the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER); Atishi, MLA of the Aam Aadmi Party and one of the architects behind the transformation in Delhi's public education; Usha Menon, founder, Jodo Gyan, a social enterprise that is part of a unique experiment in developing conceptual understanding of mathematics among children; and Ben Piper, Senior Director, Africa Education, for RTI



International based in Nairobi, and Principal Investigator for Learning at Scale, a multi-country study of large-scale education programmes.

The session was moderated by Uma Vishnu, Senior Editor, *The Indian Express*.

Talking about the challenges as schools prepare to reopen, Atishi said, "We have been talking about the socio-economic cost of the pandemic, but we haven't spoken about education... The pandemic has taken us back 20 years in terms of access. Even in Delhi, only about 50-60 per cent of the population have access to digital technology. Learning has been hampered on all fronts."

Banerji, however, said she was more optimistic. "The experience of learning and schooling are deeply embedded... The last year-and-a-half, there have been many kinds of learning... We have to take advantage of the fluidity of the situation... It's an exciting time," she said.

The panel also spoke about potential ways in which administrations and educators could help children "catch up" after nearly two years of learning loss induced by the pandemic.

Covid-19 task force not in favour of reopening schools before Diwali: Pawar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, AUGUST 20

MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday said the government's Covid task force believes that schools should not be opened before Diwali.

"The decision regarding reopening of schools will be taken in consultation with the task force. We will go ahead when it tells us to do so. However, considering the situation at present, the task force is of the opinion that schools



Ajit Pawar

shouldn't be reopened before Diwali," said Pawar after chairing a Covid-19 review meeting.

"A section of parents and managements of educational institutions feel that the government shouldn't wait for so long. It's an opinion that schools should be opened in districts with zero per cent Covid-19 positivity rate. The

final decision will be taken by the CM in this regard," Pawar said.

For colleges, the situation is different and they could be allowed to conduct offline classes if students and college staff are fully vaccinated.

"Colleges can be allowed to reopen for students who are aged above 18 and have taken both the vaccine doses. Teachers and non-teaching staff should also have been fully vaccinated. They can be allowed to hold offline classes by following social distancing norms," the minister added.

BSY on foreign trip with family, first since '11

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, AUGUST 20

SENIOR BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, who resigned as the Karnataka chief minister on July 26, has embarked on a holiday to the Maldives with his extended family ahead of a possible return to active politics.

Yediyurappa has two sons — BJP MP BY Raghavendra and BJP vice-president B Y Vijayendra — and three daughters. The entire family runs various businesses and at least two of the younger members are financial consultants who studied in the UK. The family reportedly left for the Maldives on August 18 and are expected to return on August 23, sources said.

"This is the first time in many years that Yediyurappa is on a family trip outside the country and it is a short leave from pub-



Yediyurappa had stepped down as Karnataka chief minister on July 26.

lic life," a BJP leader considered to be close to the former CM said.

Yediyurappa, his son Vijayendra, grandson Sashidhar Maradi, son-in-law Virupakshappa Yamakanam-aradi, and granddaughter's husband Sanjay Sree have been accused of corruption and money laundering in handling government contracts in a private complaint.

The Karnataka High Court

has issued notices to the former CM and others 3 after activist T J Abraham moved the court for the registration of an FIR to carry out investigations in the matter.

The allegations pertain to alleged bribes amounting to over Rs 12 crore for contracts — including Rs 5 crore that was received last year by two companies linked to a grandson of the former CM from multiple shell companies in Kolkata — despite the companies having no revenue in previous years.

Yediyurappa had stepped down as CM at the instance of the BJP leadership amid growing concerns over alleged corruption and interference in the administration by his family. He, however, remains a key Lingayat leader who is vital to the BJP's electoral fortunes and has said that he will help the party to come to power on its own in the next state Assembly polls, sched-

uled to be held in 2023.

Several BJP MLAs and ministers who are unhappy over being left out of the cabinet of new chief minister Basavaraj Bommai have rallied around the former CM. Tourism Minister Anand Singh, upset over the portfolio he was given, met Yediyurappa last week in his quest to be upgraded to a high-profile ministry.

Incidentally, the last time that Yediyurappa went abroad with his extended family was in July 2011 to Mauritius — during an earlier stint as CM — amid allegations of corruption. Two days after he returned to India, a Lokayukta report on illegal mining during his tenure emerged, dislodging him from power.

Yediyurappa, his sons and a son-in-law were later indicted by the CBI in an alleged Rs 40 crore bribery case but were acquitted by a trial court and the matter did not escalate.

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2021

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

IN THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPOSE UNIVERSAL WORSHIP,
MEN HAVE UNSHEATHED THEIR SWORDS AND KILLED
ONE ANOTHER. — FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A SHARPER EDGE

Minister Jaishankar’s strong words on uniting against terror point to growing challenge vis-a-vis Pakistan, and in region

THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER of Afghanistan has added several layers of difficulties to the fraught India-Pakistan relationship. The relationship of the Pakistan Army and ISI with the Taliban, especially the Haqqani network, is an open secret. Their influence over the processes that took the Taliban speedily to Kabul when American forces began withdrawing from the country was also apparent. For at least three years, if not more, security officials in the now deposed government of the Republic of Afghanistan and Indian intelligence reports have pointed to Punjabi fighters supporting the Taliban’s military push. By all accounts, cadres of anti-India groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed made common cause with the Taliban and fought American soldiers and Afghan security forces alongside them. The connections between Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP), the Afghanistan chapter of ISIL, with LeT came to the fore when after the arrest of its top leader in Afghanistan last year following the horrific attack on a Kabul gurdwara, it was revealed that he was a former Lashkar commander. The National Directorate of Security, the Afghan intelligence agency in the erstwhile government, other ISKP cadres with connections to the ISI, had been among those arrested for the attack. The links between these groups and their connections to the deep state in Pakistan were always a concern, but the military conquest of Afghanistan by a fundamentalist group and the emboldening effect it is bound to have on outfits such as LeT and Jaish, among many others, has increased that concern manifold.

This was the context in which External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar flagged the threat posed by terrorism at a United Nations Security Council meeting earlier this week. The minister singled out the Haqqani network, which is allied to the Taliban and is known to have the unstinted backing of the ISI, and the LeT, Jaish and ISKP for special mention. His strong words for a united stand against terrorism contained veiled references against both Pakistan and China — the latter has blocked the designation of Pakistan-based terrorist groups in the past. It is significant that at the meeting, the third special event organised by India during its month-long presidency of the UNSC, China joined other countries, including the US and UK, in making the demand for holding the Taliban to its commitment that it will not allow Afghanistan to be used by terror groups.

As Pakistan is in the driving seat of developments in Afghanistan, and has effectively achieved what it has long wanted — Taliban rulers in Kabul — it too should be prepared for greater scrutiny of its actions. Minister Jaishankar has set in motion a narrative that is likely to dominate domestic debates on Pakistan. In the current situation, the possibility of normalisation of ties with Pakistan, which had come to the forefront with the revival of the ceasefire on the LoC, has receded once again. The benefits of the ceasefire are not small, but it would be difficult to sustain this fragile truce without a wider bilateral engagement.

A WELCOME REPRIEVE

Gujarat HC poses a question mark on constitutionality of not just Gujarat’s ‘love jihad’ law but also legislation in other states

THE GUJARAT HIGH Court decision staying some provisions of the state’s anti-conversion law, including the one that deems all interfaith marriages as those solemnised for carrying out forceful religious conversion, is extremely welcome. While the decision by Chief Justice of the High Court Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav is only an interim order, even as the larger legal challenge of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 is still pending, the ruling sends out a larger message. It poses a question mark on the constitutionality of not just the Gujarat law but also similar legislation in other states, be it Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, or Himachal Pradesh.

The stated aim of recent anti-conversion laws brought in by BJP-ruled states is to prohibit unlawful religious conversions. But in doing so, the law’s vague and excessively broad provisions give powers to the state to hold a police inquiry to probe the motives behind a woman’s change of religion for marriage and to potentially annul such a marriage. The law also allows the “aggrieved person, his parents, brother, sister, or any other person related by blood, marriage or adoption” to lodge an FIR on an allegedly unlawful conversion, essentially legitimising mob interference in an individual’s private life. By shifting the burden of proof on the individual accused of forcibly converting another person, in effect, the law weaponises communal prejudice and paranoia and throws the power of the state behind it. Even as these laws are under challenge before several high courts, they have become a template for harassment of citizens. The interim ruling comes, therefore, as much-needed relief.

The Gujarat HC intervention recognises the unacceptability of law’s intrusion into an individual’s private life even when the state may have a legitimate interest in containing unlawful, forcible conversions. It draws a line and says that the state cannot enter the doors of a marriage where there is no evidence of it being forced or involving violence. However, even with the progressive intervention of the judiciary, decisions are often excruciatingly slow to percolate to the ground. Take the case of the police across the country continuing to file cases under Section 66A of the Information Technology Act despite the apex court striking it down in 2015. Laws that grant the state police powers to regulate freedoms must be rolled back. The Gujarat HC’s reading of the law will hopefully have a bearing on other courts where similar laws have been challenged.

LIKE DRONACHARYA

Coach Nambiar brought home the difference a coach could make to an athlete’s career

OM NAMBIAR, THE Dronacharya award-winning coach who died on Thursday, was arguably the first celebrity coach in the country. Not only because his most famous student was PT Usha, one of the few genuinely world-class athletes the country has produced, but also because he introduced modern methods and drilled in the importance of quality coaching. He brought home the difference a coach could make to an athlete’s career at a time when coaching in the country was amateurish, when retired athletes just filled in the role informally.

To Usha, Nambiar was a father figure. In several interviews, she reflected that she wouldn’t have become half the athlete she was if not for Nambiar’s guidance and perseverance. From spotting her during a district athletics meeting to grooming her for the Olympics, and overseeing her transition to a bold and confident athlete, Nambiar played an influential role in the making of Usha. He was a teacher and also her nutritionist, dietician, recovery expert, psychiatrist, and confidant, who was by her side in triumph and tragedy. He was the support system that helped Usha recover from the near-miss in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and fuelled her push for gold medals in the Asian Games two years later. Two others who bagged laurels in the Seoul Games — Shiny Wilson and Vandana Rao — were his students too.

Later, when Usha herself became a coach, she brought into play what she had learnt from Nambiar. Her style was deeply personal, perhaps to a fault. Just as it was detrimental to her career — she stayed with Nambiar when she could have sought the services of a foreign coach — it was not beneficial for some of her wards that they stayed too long with her. Nambiar, too, reportedly disliked Usha availing the tutelage of other coaches. But that should not tarnish his legacy. Maybe Usha could have been better. But Nambiar will be revered and remembered for the athlete she has been.



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

AMERICAN EMPIRE HAS been stuck in a place where, to use Polybius’s words, “it can neither endure its condition, nor the means to overcome it.” In the context of Afghanistan, learned strategic thinkers and broadsheets of imperial privilege like *The New York Times*, will fulminate over roads not taken. But this exercise, as valuable as it might be, misses the wood for the trees. These questions re-enact the presumption of imperial omniscience, innocence and power. In Phil Klay’s masterpiece, *Missionaries*, Lisette, a journalist who has spent time in Afghanistan, asks the question: “Any wars right now we are not losing?” She promptly thinks the answer is Colombia. But this answer turns on how one defines “not losing”. The exorbitant privilege of empire is you even get to define what counts as loss and shrug off its costs.

There is a long litany of losses. The wars in Iraq, Libya, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon; the coups from Iran to Chile; the creation of secret instruments of violence in assorted places from Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Laos, Honduras, El Salvador; sanctuary to autocracies and exporters of violent fundamentalism from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, each of whom have subverted the US’s own aims. Ask the question: “Did intervention leave a place in a better condition or achieve an objective with least violence possible?” The answer often turns out to be “no”. The tens of thousands of civilian casualties testify to that.

Often progress was set back. The Middle East had many functioning states, pockets of urbane modernity, till the geopolitics set the stage for worse forms of fundamentalist reaction. The exact shape of the Taliban, ISIS, al Qaeda is no more over-determined by the interventions of great powers, than it is by some more primordial essence of a culture. But it is impossible to deny that they are products of modern imperial politics: Its unsettling of local societies, its encouragement to violence, its support of fundamentalism, its breaking up of state structures.

At the heart of empire is the debasement of moral identity. Empire has seven deadly sins. The first is corruption. Internally, empire always empowers corrupt practices, the legions of lobbyists, arms dealers, hucksters,

Modality of US withdrawal from Afghanistan will give fillip to fundamentalism’s deepest impulses

There are no easy solutions in Afghanistan. The corruptions of empire made withdrawal long overdue. But the tragedy of the American withdrawal is that even in trying to extricate itself, America ended up enacting the sins of empire, not overcoming them. The withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an end of the corrupt political economy of violence. The great powers will be new proxies who produce the same cycle of violence and civil war. Withdrawal does not signal a commitment to greater multilateralism or the rule of law. Withdrawal will not produce an honest reckoning with the self-deceptions of empire.

who begin to constitute the secret sinews of the state and channel its war booties. Externally, the reliance on mercenaries, the sordid deals with all kinds of unsavoury groups, the casual saturation with arms, the implication in illicit trade, make empire resemble a gangster operation that has blow-back on the state it represents. Corruption ensured both that the US Treasury was drained and no state was built in Afghanistan. The second sin is self-deception. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, America knew exactly what is going on. But the stakes in keeping the myth of imperial virtue and imperial power produce self-deceptions of the most extraordinary sort.

The third is a morality that, to use Tagore’s phrase, “is split down the middle,” committed to the very things it disavows. What does the rule of law mean when empire itself enacts a regular lawlessness? What does a “humanitarian mission” mean, when it licenses an outsourcing of torture or disregard for civilian life? The fourth sin is its continual expansionism. The omniscience of empire is apt to give every local conflict global significance. But it also has the need to remind the world of its resolve to remain preeminent. That needs war. The fifth is hypocrisy. The more power tries to stretch, the more it deploys double standards. Some hypocrisy is inevitable in politics. But it becomes the defining feature through which the world understands imperial power. The sixth is a cult of violence. There is an abiding paradox in US strategy. The creation of stable states and societies requires the pacification of violence. But there is something bizarre about modern imperial counterinsurgency strategies. From Iraq to Afghanistan to western Pakistan to the drug wars, the abiding legacy of this empire is saturation of societies with arms and militias; as if creating armed factions in society and militarising, running it awash with cash, will ever get you a stable state. The seventh sin is racism. Even the most liberal-minded empire will create a hierarchy of those whose lives matter; even in its emancipatory mission it cannot get away from reinforcing claims of superiority that generate resentment.

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Afghanistan. The corruptions of empire made withdrawal long overdue. But the tragedy of the American withdrawal is that even in trying to extricate itself, America ended up enacting the sins of empire, not overcoming them. The withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an end of the corrupt political economy of violence. The great powers will be new proxies who produce the same cycle of violence and civil war. Withdrawal does not signal a commitment to greater multilateralism or the rule of law. Withdrawal will not produce an honest reckoning with the self-deceptions of empire.

Will the Taliban reinvent itself? There is reason to be deeply sceptical that it will. Will it become like a poor Saudi Arabia in the Eighties — a power the West had no problems with, even when it was internally repressive or exporting jihad? Or will anarchy follow? Or will now the internal fissures of Afghan society produce a new political dynamic? No one truly knows.

But the modality of US withdrawal exuded the fundamental sin of empire: Its reinforcement of race and hierarchy. The tropes used to justify the mess of this withdrawal all underscore this. It is the Afghan president, their army, that is to blame, as if after 20 years of intervening in a society, the US had no responsibility. Suddenly, the pretext of common humanity, and universal liberation, which was the pretext of empire, turned into the worst kind of cultural essentialism. It is their culture, these medieval tribalists who are incapable of liberty. We veiled the fact that they are entirely the creation of modern war.

And finally, this shocking sense of, “Frankly dear, we could not care a damn,” about the Afghans who reposed trust and risked their lives. Fundamentalism has drawn its motivating energy, not from God, but from cultivating grievance against imperial hierarchies. The Taliban’s victory is not just a morale booster for fundamentalists everywhere. The US management of the withdrawal will give fillip to fundamentalism’s deepest psychological impulses. It is an anarchic world, each for their own.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

LAWMAKERS & DISORDER

Can the House give MPs more severe punishment than suspension?



P D T ACHARY

THE CHAIRMAN OF the Rajya Sabha is reportedly contemplating action against MPs who, he thinks, were involved in the fracas in the House. There is speculation in the media about what kind of action will be taken against those MPs. There is also speculation about the formation of a special committee to suggest severe punishment. It appears that the Rajya Sabha secretariat has prepared a report on the incident, which accuses some MPs of assaulting security personnel. The MPs, on the other hand, have alleged that strangers in blue uniform were allowed inside the House who roughed them up.

House rules vest in the chairman all the powers necessary to conduct proceedings smoothly. The rules also provide for the suspension of MPs who “disregard the authority of the Chair or abuse the rules of the Council by persistently and willfully obstructing the business of the House”. However, the power to suspend a member is vested in the House, not in the chairman. The chairman names such a member whereupon a motion is moved by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, or any other minister seeking the suspension of the member. Under the rule, the maximum period of suspension is for the remainder of the session. A suspended member cannot enter the chamber or attend any meetings of the committees. He also cannot give any notice for discussion or submission. By convention, a suspended member loses his right to get

The power to suspend a member is vested in the House, not in the chairman. The chairman names such a member whereupon a motion is moved by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, or any other minister seeking the suspension of the member. Under the rule, the maximum period of suspension is for the remainder of the session.

replies to his questions. Thus, suspension from the service of the House is regarded as a serious punishment. But, surprisingly, the rules do not spell out the disabilities of a suspended member. These are imposed on them as per conventions or precedent.

Suspension is the only serious punishment provided for in the rules. Rule 256 of the Rajya Sabha’s Rules of Procedure specifies the acts of misconduct: Disregarding the authority of the chair, abusing the rules of the council by persistently and willfully obstructing the business thereof. A member can be punished for any of these acts and, usually, the punishment is immediate. Punishing members long after the occurrence of misconduct is very rare. Suspension for the remainder of the session makes sense only when they are suspended immediately after the misconduct has been noticed by the chair. For the acts of misconduct by the MPs outside the House, which constitute a breach of privilege or contempt of the House, usually the privilege committee investigates the matter and recommends the course of action and the House acts on it.

A special committee is appointed usually when the misconduct is so serious that the House may consider expelling the member. Such occasions have been few and far between. The first case of expulsion occurred in 1951 when a special committee was appointed to investigate the conduct of H G Mudgal, an MP who accepted financial ben-

efits from business houses to canvass support for them in the government and Parliament. The committee found him guilty of misconduct, which was derogatory to the dignity of Parliament. He was expelled. Another special committee was appointed in 2005 to inquire into the issue of MPs accepting money for raising questions in Parliament. This followed a sting operation done by a private body of investigative journalists. Ten MPs were expelled in connection with this episode.

So, special ad-hoc committees are appointed only to investigate serious misconduct by MPs outside the House. No special committee is required to go into what happens before the eyes of the presiding officer inside the House. As per the rules of the House, they need to be dealt with then and there.

An interesting question that arises in the Rajya Sabha case is whether the House can give the MPs more severe punishment than suspension. The rules do not recognise any punishment other than suspension for a specific period. Article 20 of the Constitution prohibits a greater penalty than what the law provided at the time of committing the offence. It is a sobering thought that the rules of the House do not empower Parliament to inflict any punishment on its members other than suspension for creating disorder in the House.

The writer is former secretary general, Lok Sabha



AUGUST 21, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

POLL REFORMS REJECTED

AFTER A TUMULTUOUS five-hour debate, marked by pandemonium and acrimony, the Lok Sabha on August 20 rejected by a voice vote a motion moved by Madhu Dandavate (Janata) calling for urgent poll reforms to make elections free of shortcomings. While the fate of the motion was more or less a foregone conclusion, the intensity displayed by most of the speakers took everyone by surprise. Towards the end, it assumed shocking dimensions when a Congress (I) member Bhagwan Dev tore up certain photographs of the Garhwal poll tabled by Harkesh Bahadur of the DSF. For 10 minutes, total pan-

demonium prevailed in the House with members from both sides converging on the central table and the photographs strewn on the carpet.

ZAIL SINGH ON ASSAM

HOME MINISTER GIANI Zail Singh assured the Lok Sabha that the government would find a solution to the Assam problem that would be acceptable to all, or at least give minimum satisfaction to the maximum number of people. He said that the talks on the foreign nationals’ issue was going on in a cordial manner. He said before taking a final decision on the issue, the government would

consult the Opposition members.

DU VIOLENCE

A LARGE NUMBER of students of Sham Lal College and other colleges in Delhi University raided Dayal Singh College, set fire to scooters, motorcycles and bicycles parked in the campus, broke window panes, beat several students and escaped before the police arrived. 50 to 60 students and six teachers were in the college when the raiding party arrived. The raid is suspected to be in retaliation to the beating up of students of the Janata Vidyarthi Morcha students who had visited Dayal Singh College earlier in the day.



Kolkata



Lest we remember only hate

What is important is not just what we remember from the tangled agony of Partition, but what lessons we draw from these memories



HARSH MANDER

ON THE EVE of India's Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that August 14 would now be observed as the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day. "Partition's pains can never be forgotten", he declared. "Millions of our sisters and brothers were displaced and many lost their lives due to mindless hate and violence."

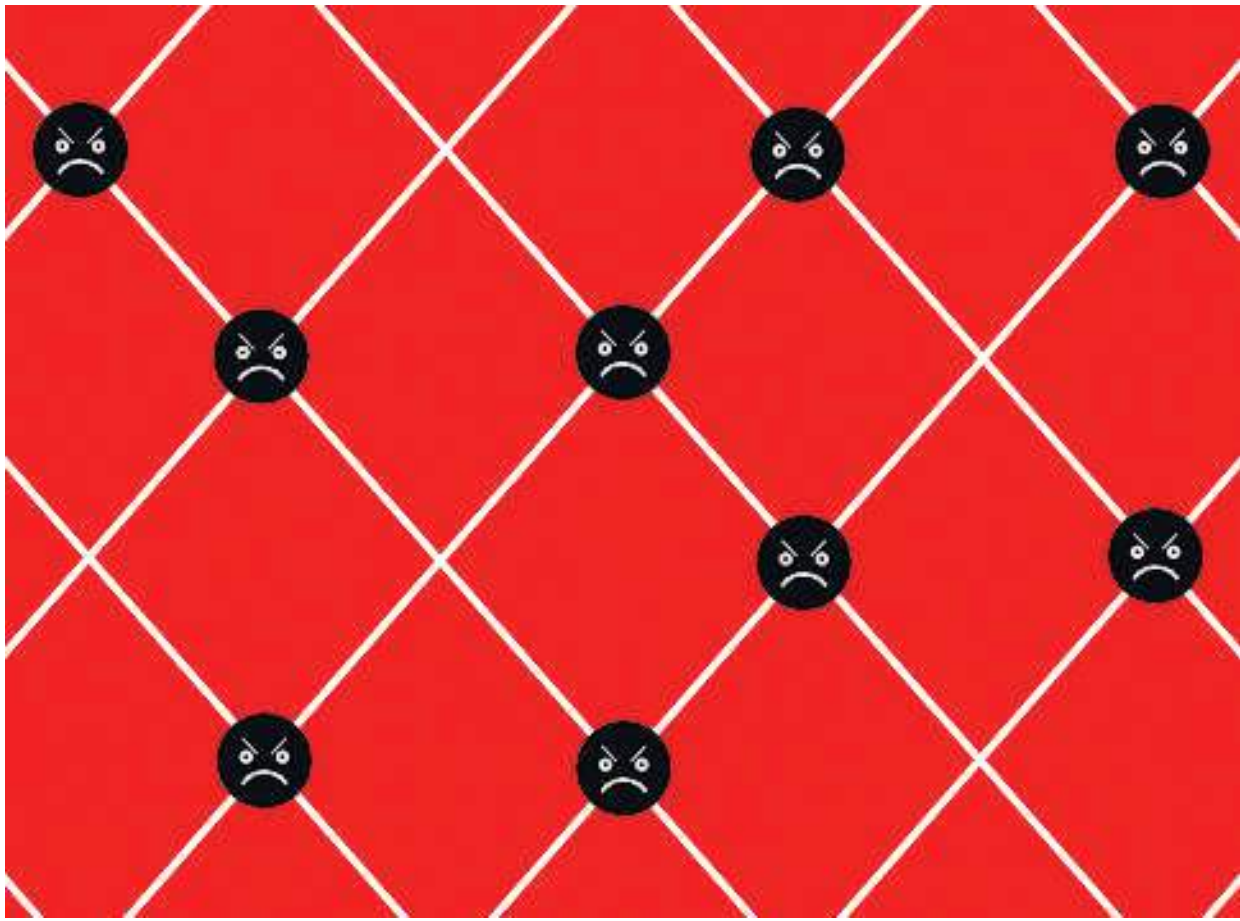
The overwhelming majority of Indians alive today were born long after India's blood-drenched Partition tore the country. They must indeed remember this history: The agony of a million people losing their lives in Hindu-Muslim riots; of trains in both directions piled with corpses; of 14 million people uprooted in the largest distress displacement in human history, except the trafficking of Africans as slaves to the Americas. But the salient questions are — what they should remember, how they should remember, and what lessons they should draw from this recollection.

I recall speaking in a hall in Ludhiana, Punjab, some years ago about the imperative of fighting religious bigotry and hate. An ageing man, older than me, spoke, his voice quivering. He recalled the slaughter and pillage of Partition, which had snatched from him his family and his home. "When I recount this history to my children, how can you expect me to teach them to love and respect Muslims who destroyed us so mercilessly?"

I replied to him, "I understand your pain. I too belong to a Partition family, and the families of my parents suffered traumas identical to yours. But if you must speak of this to your children, and their children, can you at least tell them the full story? Tell them that Hindus and Sikhs did suffer horrendously at the hand of Muslim mobs in places where they were in a minority. But tell them also that Hindus and Sikhs, where in a majority, unleashed identical horrors upon Muslims. No community kept at bay the frenzy of hate in those horrific months. The hands of every community were equally tainted with the blood of innocents. You lost lives and homes, but tell your children that our Muslim sisters and brothers also lost their lives in equal numbers. Partial remembering can only nurture further hate."

I recalled to him Mahatma Gandhi's epic 40-day fast in Calcutta, just weeks after India won her freedom, trying to restore peace and sanity to a city burning in feverish Hindu-Muslim violence. A Hindu man, torn by grief, went to where Gandhiji lay fasting, and shouted, "What you are doing is utterly unjust and heartless. I lost my son — so small — to Muslim mobs. How can I ever forgive them?" Gandhiji replied, "I understand your pain. But let me suggest to you a way. Find a little boy — so small. A Muslim boy whose parents were slaughtered by Hindu mobs. Adopt him as your son, raise him in the faith into which he was born; maybe you will then be able to heal, even to forgive."

My parents' village, Kahuta, near Rawalpindi, was among the worst-ravaged by hate violence during Partition. The Sikhs



C R Sasikumar

and Hindus of the village took refuge in a gurdwara with high, fortress-like walls. When Muslim mobs laid siege to the gurdwara, the men in the community decided that all the women and girls would save their 'honour' by throwing themselves into a well. When some women refused, men of their own families sliced them with swords and threw them in. I am grateful that I never heard a word of bigotry against Muslims from my parents. My father often told me that the word Allah appears more than a thousand times in the Sikh Holy Book. Their prayer room carried the name of Allah on its walls, along with a crucifix, Buddha and many Hindu gods and goddesses.

Decades later, when I decided to leave behind my career in the IAS in protest against the Gujarat communal massacre of 2002, to fight for justice and healing with the survivors, many relatives of my extended family were furious, and cancelled me from their lives. One of them said to me loudly during a family wedding, "We are ashamed of you. After all we suffered during Partition, you have crossed to the wrong side". I replied, "After all our families suffered in Partition, who more than us can understand the suffering of victims of the same hate violence? It is, even more, our duty to stand resolutely with them, against the perpetrators of hate. I am on the right side. It is you who are on the wrong side. Don't you see?"

What is important is not just what we remember from the tangled agony of Partition, but what lessons we draw from these memories.

Can we remember who were the most tragic victims of Partition violence? The women who were treated as property, and battlefields to defend or transgress the "honour" of the community. The Dalit Christians

My parents' village, Kahuta, near Rawalpindi, was among the worst-ravaged by hate violence during Partition. The Sikhs and Hindus of the village took refuge in a gurdwara with high, fortress-like walls. When Muslim mobs laid siege to the gurdwara, the men in the community decided that all the women and girls would save their 'honour' by throwing themselves into a well. When some women refused, men of their own families sliced them with swords and threw them in. I am grateful that I never heard a word of bigotry against Muslims from my parents.

left behind in Pakistan, condemned to continue the work of manual scavenging but savaged by blasphemy laws and religious discrimination.

Can we remember the thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who risked their lives to save their neighbours from the hate violence of people of their own community?

Some of us believe that behind the announcement of the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day are the politics of the ruling establishment. August 14 is celebrated as Independence Day in Pakistan. My social media feed is already choked with messages that blame Gandhi and Nehru for Partition, and maintain that it was Sardar Patel and the RSS that saved India from fragmentation and further dismemberment. The RSS historically played no role in the freedom struggle. Is the announcement of Partition Horrors Day a part of their larger project to rewrite history, with the RSS painted as patriots and the Congress led by Gandhi as traitors? When we remember Partition, we must recall that it was Savarkar of the Hindu Mahasabha who, long before the Muslim League, imagined two separate nations, of Hindus and Muslims. It was the RSS that sought an India of Muslims as second-class citizens. It was the RSS and communal organisations of Muslims that lit and stoked the horrific fires of communal violence.

Yes, Indians must never forget the torment and horrors of Partition. We must remember so that we never allow hate to partition not just our land, but even more fundamentally, our hearts. We must remember always what the politics of religious hate does to a people.

Mander is a human rights and peace worker. His books include Partitions of the Heart: Unmaking the Idea of India

What Sabyasachi owes Sanganer

His collaboration with H&M puts Indian design on the map, but at the cost of struggling craftspeople and hand-made textile producers



JAYA JAITLEY

THE CURRENT SPARKS on social media are not just a frothy tussle between some elite persons, who are considered the protectors of craftspeople, daring to come up against Sabyasachi Mukherjee, one of the most successful names in the fashion business. It is about a genuine and much larger challenge for the world of the handmade. On one side are the values that are important to our cultural heritage, which are about community sharing and retaining pride in our diverse identities and skills. It is about a lifelong *riyaz* to improve one's skills and designs. Craftspeople can create, innovate and co-operate with modernity very easily. Their immense value is that their workmanship incorporates specific cultural histories and stories special to each place and skill. They are our living treasures, who need support and opportunity and they need to be prioritised so that their existing and precious livelihoods are sustained. On the other side is the new "market monster" which makes it alright to swallow up the old ways for the sake of fame and profit. Jeff Bezos, who has been accused of exploiting his workers, has the gall to thank millions of Amazon customers all across the world for funding his multi-billion dollar dream trip into space for five minutes. It is an unequal battle. The passing acknowledgement by our designer to hybrid craft forms is something similar.

When it was announced that marketing lines had crashed due to the success of H&M's tie-up with Mukherjee for a new line, who would not have rejoiced that Indian designers had conquered the world? We have been proud of the typical Indianness of his designs in the Bengal patina, just as we proudly acknowledge Ritu Kumar's contribution to hand embroidery and hand block prints, when other designers were running the Western way. But on reading Mukherjee's statement about the collaboration, it was the mention of a Sanganer block print being digitised that caught the eye of those who have dedicated their lives to ensure that its neglected and often starving practitioners gain respect, recognition and remuneration.

One wonders if Mukherjee knows what's been going on in the real Sanganer. It is a small edge-of-town kind of colony outside Jaipur, surrounded by garbage and sewage. The block printers there have been struggling to get clean water and to continue staying there instead of being summarily relocated to some unknown and unfamiliar area by the Pollution Control Board. Hand-block printing employs wood carvers and metal block makers, dyers, designers and printers. The charm of hand-block printing is also its "perfection of uneven-

ness". Now, the block printers are simultaneously struggling with heavy competition from skill-less screen printers, who provide fabric quickly and cheaply, in the same way that power looms have overrun handlooms. They faced the challenge of mill prints on huge machines in large factories when colonialists prioritised Lancaster and Manchester and destroyed India's tradition of textile production by hand. Then came digitisation, sounding yet another death knell for India's hand work heritage.

The whole point of the crafts-supporting world, even internationally, is to respect handwork and human endeavour over the machine. This support is not just a hashtag or a hand-on-heart statement. Its purpose is to benefit the makers directly and to respect a distinct heritage that loses sense if hybridisation is considered true design. If fashion designers like Mukherjee used some of their profits to uplift the working environment in Sanganer, it would be a genuine gesture of respect for our craft heritage.

When Mukherjee boasts of "putting Indian design on the map" with his name and his brand, it may be a big win for him and for India, but not for those who are fighting to continue block printing in Sanganer so that people like him can be "inspired" and "create hybrids" from multiple regions including other "ancient world cultures", as he says. Sadly, there is no humility in such statements. It is no longer really Indian nor Sanganer craft if it comes out for H&M's "masses" from a digital version. Yet, he should know that he is a huge "influencer" for all fashion design students in India. He drives the media into a frenzy of adoration. Brides are so desperate for a Sabyasachi *lehnga*, which can cost up to Rs 25 lakh, that one small-time electrical shop owner had to sell some of his property to please his to-be-married daughter. We came across a zardozi shop owner in Delhi who showed us his "original copy" of a Sabyasachi sari that he "kept hidden from imitators", he said.

Since the designer's influence is vast, if he even whispers the word "digitisation" in the context of a precious hand-crafted textile, he could crush the aspirations and livelihoods of all hand-made textile producers and invalidate the work done by those who have struggled to keep crafts and livelihoods alive through a better appreciation of hand skills. Those young people who are turning to support the craft sector now in the name of "organic" or "sustainable" or "slow fashion" will switch paths in a moment if some big fashion name says it's okay. There is also a risk of dumbing down those customers who are slowly learning to care about and recognise the differences between powerloom and handloom and screen and block prints. One cannot proudly claim to "Make in India" by destroying another creative section of India, and benefiting only multinationals and designer brands.

The writer is founder, Dastkari Haat Samiti

Empowering the players

In New India, sportspersons have full support from government, PM



ANURAG SINGH THAKUR

THE SIGHT OF our Prime Minister offering churma to Neeraj Chopra, ice cream to P V Sindhu, laughing with Bajrang Punia, telling Ravi Dahiya to laugh more and hearing the experiences of Mirabai Chanu brought a smile to every Indian's face. What was equally encouraging was that he spent time with every athlete who took part in Tokyo Olympics. The next day, he interacted with the Paralympic contingent, discussing their inspiring life journeys.

These gestures indicate a different side to Narendra Modi — a person who is passionate about sports and willing to go the extra mile for India's athletes. Before the Tokyo Games began, PM Modi held an extensive review meeting to take stock of our preparedness.

Those who have seen PM Modi closely can vouch for the passion he has towards supporting a culture of sports and games among the youth. As CM of Gujarat, he began the Khel Mahakumbh initiative, which boosted grassroots level sports participation in a state that is not historically known for sporting excellence. There is also a method in how he has supported sports and sportspersons, which would make me to argue that he is India's first and foremost "Sportsperson's Prime Minister".

A few days ago, a 2013 video went viral. In that video, Modi was addressing a group of college students in Pune, where he lamented that India has a large and talented population as well as a history of sporting excellence, but in Olympics after Olympics, we have struggled to raise our

medal count. He said that there is no reason a nation like ours should remain deprived of Olympic success. But, according to him, the issue was not the players but our inability to create the right supporting atmosphere. The women's and men's hockey teams have gone on record saying that the PM's phone calls after their defeats played a key role in boosting their morale. In 2019, when Neeraj Chopra suffered an injury, PM Modi wished him a speedy recovery, which was widely appreciated.

When it comes to sports, the PM has understood the root of the problem — that sports generate much interest but when it comes to incentives and participation, there is a wide gap. There was both fact and optimism when he remarked after meeting the Olympic winners — "seeing the recent successes in sports, I am confident there will be a shift in parental attitude towards sports." When parents see India's medal count rising, one hopes they will be more open to their children pursuing sports. But, more importantly, when they see all arms of the government, and the corporate sector support our players, they will realise that sports makes for an attractive and honourable career.

Amongst the various ways we can enhance India's sporting success is by looking at encouraging our states towards a "One State, One Sport" outlook: They can prioritise one game or promote a few (while not ignoring others) based on the available talent pool, natural interest, climatic conditions and available infrastructure. This will bring a focussed

approach but also allow for optimum utilisation of existing resources in the state.

Further, we must also get on board corporate India to adopt "One Sport, One Corporate". Across the world, corporates are at the forefront of extending support to budding talent, building leagues, enhancing the fan experience, marketing as well as merchandising to enhance the financial kitty of players. The success of corporates with cricket over the years is a case in point. Additionally, the sponsorship pattern has transitioned from FMCG brands to new FinTech unicorns. This can be a win-win for players, corporates and the game itself.

Another important aspect is to build a grassroots sporting culture. For this, it is imperative to expand the calendar for various games at the local, state and national levels. India needs regional leagues in every sport that will provide an opportunity for young athletes to hone their skills throughout the year at various levels, as well as enhance the sports ecosystem and infrastructure in the country. I also believe our university system can be transformed into an oasis for Olympic excellence.

These measures will fill the gap between interest and participation going forward.

One of the things that has helped Indian sports is the emphasis on quality and global standards. The conventional route was bureaucratic and tiresome; this has changed in the Modi government, where even the PM prefers to receive feedback directly from the players. While meeting the Tokyo 2020 con-

tingent, he asked them to keep sharing their views on ways to strengthen sporting infrastructure. Be it Mirabai or Mary Kom, the PM has personally ensured they got the best treatment for their injuries.

Another issue impacting Indian sports is (ironically) the rise of modern technology. PM Modi has addressed this in his book, *Exam Warriors* and in Pariksha Pe Charcha townhall programmes. He talked about giving as much importance to the playing field as to the play station. Modi has not dismissed the advent of modern technology. He has sought a healthy balance where the human element of sports — teamwork, togetherness — is maintained. Further, the National Education Policy also consists of mechanisms that will make sports education an attractive option. In the years to come, Manipur will get India's first sports university, which will be a boon to athletes and harness the rich sporting legacy in the Northeast.

Tokyo 2020 was an Olympics of many firsts for India. We won our first gold in athletics, the hockey team did wonders and there were successes in other sports such as discus throw, golf, fencing, etc. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme, Khelo India and the Fit India Campaign have laid the foundations for greater success. New India has fire in its belly. Our sportspersons have the full support of the government and the PM in their quest for sporting excellence.

The writer is Union Minister for I&B and Youth Affairs & Sports

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A QUESTION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Word police' (IE, August 20). It appears that the decision to ban the use of the colloquial term "*gorakh dhanda*" (unethical practice) by the Manohar Lal Khattar government in Haryana was taken to soothe the "hurt sentiments" of Gorakhnath community. But what about the phrase "*Aaya Ram-gaya Ram*", which originated in Haryana? It is a unique contribution to the lexicon of the Hindi language to describe the phenomenon of defection by leaders from one political party to another. The phrase is a disdainful description of politicians' unethical behaviour. Will the government ban this phrase when approached by the devotees of Lord Ram?

L R Murmu, Delhi

LESS OPAQUE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Welcome the nine' (IE, August 20). The call for transparency and accountability in the functioning of the Supreme Court collegium isn't intended to dilute the pivotal role played by the judiciary in our state structure. The lack of secrecy in the appointment and transfer of judges would ensure common people are in the loop, making any attempt of assault in the functioning of the judiciary by any other organ of the state a lesser possibility. A fair and independent judiciary is the collective responsibility of every citizen.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

GENDER STEREOTYPE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The future

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● DELHI FAILS HOMELESS: SHALAKA CHAUHAN, ARAVIND UNNI

● LIBERALISE MACHINE TRADE: MANMEET AJMANI, DEVESH ROY, H TAKESHIMA

www.indianexpress.com

is female' (IE, August 19). The main tenet of this supposedly feminist article is gender essentialism, a theory the scientific community started questioning years ago. The writers believe "empathy, compassion and sensitivity" are "innate abilities" of women. This is a rebash of the misogynistic belief that men are intrinsically analytical and women, emotional. We now know that these observed gender differences are due to socialisation; there are few biological differences between men's and women's brains. The writers should consider whether women are innately empathetic or social structures compel them to be so. The article goes on to argue that more women should join the workforce because of the benefit their inherent, "non-technical" skills provide. This view confines women to the role of emotional problem-solvers and thus positions them as supplemental to men.

Ashira Shirali, Gurgaon



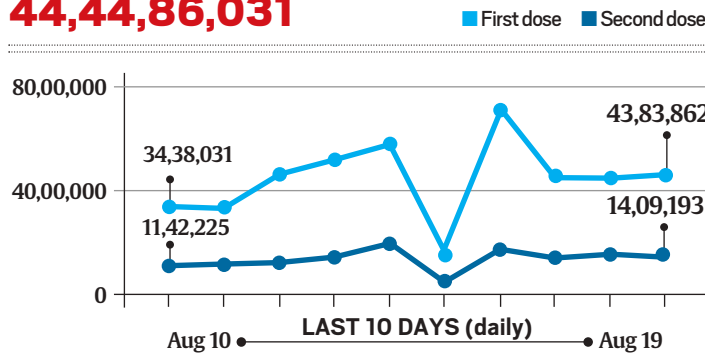
@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

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

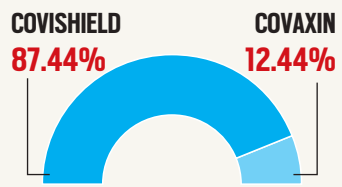
CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

TOTAL VACCINATED IN INDIA (at least one dose)
44,44,86,031



TOTAL DOSES
57,22,81,488

(Sputnik V's 6,77,713 doses not represented in pie)

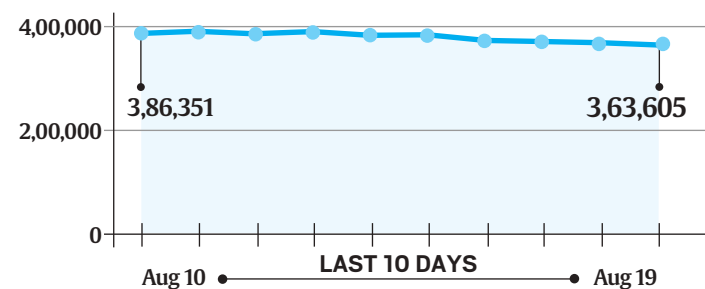


DOSES ON AUG 19 57,93,055

AUG 18: 58,36,403 (1ST DOSE: 43,82,113 ; 2nd: 14,54,290)

INDIA ACTIVE CASES

3,63,605



Note: The August 19 figures in these graphs are based on the government updates on August 20

INDIA TOTAL CASES 3,23,58,829

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on August 20

People with prolonged or severe Covid have highest antibody levels, study finds

PEOPLE WHO have had severe or long-lasting cases of Covid-19 are more likely to have high levels of an important antibody needed to fight against future infection, according to a new study from Rutgers University published in *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

The published paper, 'Determinants and dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 infection in a diverse population: 6-month evaluation of a prospective cohort study', was part of the larger Rutgers Corona Cohort study, which followed 548 healthcare workers and 283 others from the start of the pandemic.

The researchers found that, within 6 months of the start of the study, more than 93 of the total 831 participants (11%) tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, or for antibodies. Of those 93, 24 were severely symptomatic and 14 were asymptomatic. One-third of the infected participants had symptoms — such as fatigue, shortness of breath and loss of taste and smell — that lasted at least a month; 10% had symptoms that lasted at least four months.

Most people infected by SARS-CoV-2 develop antibodies. The study showed that antibody production varied based on severity of symptoms: 96% of participants

who had severe symptoms were found to have IgG antibodies compared to 89% with mild to moderate symptoms and 79% who were asymptomatic.

"Neurological changes, including brain fog and problems with memory or vision, were infrequent among infected participants but did tend to last for many months when they occurred. Notably, having persistent symptoms was also associated with having higher antibody levels over time. We know from other research that vaccination further enhances immune protection and sometimes even helps ease long-term symptoms," a Rutgers University press release quoted co-lead author Daniel B Horton as saying.

Co-lead author Emily S. Barrett was quoted as saying: "It is normal for antibody levels to decline over time. Nevertheless, IgG antibodies provide long-term protection to help the body fight reinfection."

The study recruited people before they were diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 infection and evaluated people across a spectrum of illness severity, providing broader insight into antibody response over the long term.

Source: Rutgers University



The Taliban war chest

Where did the Taliban find funds to sustain themselves over a two-decade war with the US? With the Americans gone and the Afghan opposition collapsed, what military assets do the Taliban have?

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

IN RETURNING to power in Kabul over the weekend, the Taliban demonstrated both the success of a lightning military offensive against Afghanistan's then government, as well as their remarkable resilience in the face of onslaughts by the world's most powerful military for 20 years.

When they were driven out of Kabul in November 2001, the Taliban had been in power for a little over five years, and in existence for only seven. What makes them the fighting force that outlasted the United States in its longest ever war, and defeated the Afghans who received equipment and training worth over \$80 billion from the Americans? Where have the Taliban found the funds to sustain themselves over a two-decade war with an adversary with almost limitless resources?

Flourishing drug trade

In a May 2020 report, the United Nations Security Council estimated that "overall Taliban annual combined revenues range from \$300 million to upwards of \$1.5 billion per annum". It said that while the figures for 2019 were lower, officials "were careful to note that the Taliban used resources effectively and efficiently and were not experiencing a cash crisis".

The primary source of the Taliban's funds has been the drug trade, as report after report has shown over two decades. Their income suffered in recent years because of the "reduction in poppy cultivation and revenue, less taxable income from aid and development projects, and increased spending on "governance" projects", the UNSC report said.

However, "while heroin cultivation and production have provided the bulk of Taliban revenue for many years, the emergence of methamphetamine in Afghanistan is giving impetus to a major new drug industry with significant profit margins," the report noted.

According to the report, "interdiction of methamphetamine was first recorded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2014 (9 kg) and has continued on a sharp upward trajectory, with 650 kg interdicted in the first half of 2019". Methamphetamine, the report said, "was stated to be more profitable than heroin because its ingredients are low-cost and it does not require large laboratories".

The Taliban, it said, "were reported to be in control of 60 per cent of methamphetamine laboratories in the key producing provinces of Farah and Nimruz".

The report quoted officials as saying "the system of heroin smuggling and taxation organised by the Taliban...stretched across eight of Nangarhar's southern districts from Hisarak to Dur Baba, on the border with Pakistan".

"In each district, smugglers paid a tax to district Taliban commanders of 200 Pakistan rupees (approximately \$130), or its equivalent in afghanis, per kilogram of heroin. Smugglers were provided documentation by each Taliban commander certifying payment of tax before proceeding to the next district and repeating the same process. Afghan officials stated that the smuggling routes thus helped to financially empower each district Taliban commander."

In a report published last year, UNODC said "Afghanistan, the country where most opium is produced, which has accounted for approximately 84 per cent of global opium production over the past five years, supplies markets in neighbouring countries, Europe, the Near and Middle East, South Asia and Africa and to a small degree North America (notably Canada) and Oceania."



US Army soldiers walk through a poppy field near Zangabad village in 2009. The primary source of Taliban funding has been the drug trade, including from heroin and methamphetamine, besides opium. *The New York Times*

Mining, taxes, donations

In September 2020, Radio Free Europe reported on a confidential report commissioned by NATO, which concluded that the Taliban "has achieved, or is close to achieving, financial and military independence", which "enables [it] to self-fund its insurgency without the need for support from governments or citizens of other countries".

Besides the illicit drug trade — overseen by Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob, the son of Taliban founder Mullah Muhammad Omar, a shadowy figure who is expected to play an important role in the new government — the Taliban had "expanded its financial power in recent years through increased profits from illegal mining and exports", the report said.

It estimated that the militant movement earned "a staggering US \$1.6 billion" in the year ending March 2020. Of this, \$ 416 million came from the drug trade; over \$ 450 million from the illegal mining of iron ore, marble, copper, gold, zinc, and rare earth metals; and \$ 160 million from extortion and taxes in the areas and on the highways it controlled. It also got \$ 240 million in donations, largely from Persian Gulf nations. To launder the money it earned, it imported and exported consumer goods worth \$ 240 million. The Taliban also own properties worth \$ 80 million in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the report said.

Weapons from Pak and loot

The Taliban do not appear to have had any dearth of weapons to fight the Afghan and US forces. Support from Pakistan has always been key, but the Taliban did not rely on any single source of arms and ammunition.

Journalists such as Gretchen Peters, Steve Coll, and others have repeatedly pointed to the support of the ISI and Pakistan army to the Taliban, directly and through the Haqqani network, a sprawling Islamist mafia based in Pakistan's tribal areas and in Afghanistan, comprising fighters, extremist religious schools, and shady businesses with powerful connections to Arab countries in the Gulf and in Pakistan. American leaders and generals have openly accused Pakistan of divert-

ing to the Taliban funds that it received to fight against the fundamentalist movement.

There are other players too. In September 2017, then Afghan Army Chief General Sharif Yaftali told the BBC that he had documents to prove that Iran was "supplying weapons and military equipment to the Taliban in western Afghanistan".

A November 2019 report by the US Defense Intelligence Agency noted that since "at least 2007, Iran has provided calibrated support — including weapons, training, and funding — to the Taliban to counter US and Western influence in Afghanistan, combat ISIS-Khorasan, and increase Tehran's influence in any post-reconciliation government".

The US has also accused Russia of supporting the Taliban, but there is little evidence of that.

Beyond these external avenues, the Taliban has also been able to arm itself with the weapons and ammunition that the US has provided to the Afghan forces over the years.

America's Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), a Congress-backed watchdog, noted in an analysis in 2013 that nearly 43 per cent of the firearms — 2,03,888 of the 4,74,823 — provided to the Afghan forces were unaccounted for. "Given the Afghan government's limited ability to account for or properly dispose of these weapons, there is a real potential for these weapons to fall into the hands of insurgents, which will pose additional risks to US personnel, the ANSF, and Afghan civilians," the analysis said.

US military assets with Taliban

No figures are available for what kind of American military assets, and in what numbers, have fallen into Taliban hands.

The US Government Accountability Office said in a report in 2017 that between 2003 and 2016 the US funded 75,898 vehicles, 5,99,690 weapons, 208 aircraft, and 16,191 pieces of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance equipment for the Afghan forces.

In the last few years, 7,000 machine guns, 4,700 Humvees, and over 20,000 grenades have been given to the Afghan forces, SIGAR

said show.

SIGAR's July quarterly report mentioned that the Afghan Air Force had a total of 167 aircraft, including jets and helicopters that were "usable/in-country" as of June 30. This included 23 A-19 aircraft, 10 AC-208 aircraft, 23 C-208 aircraft, and three C-130 aircraft, besides 32 Mi-17, 43 MD-530, and 33 UH-60 helicopters.

On August 17, two days after the Taliban took control of Kabul, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said, "We don't have a complete picture, obviously, of where every article of defence materials has gone but certainly, a fair amount of it has fallen into the hands of the Taliban."

Stijn Mitzer and Joost Oliemans, conflict analysts specialising in modern-day weaponry and military tactics who have worked for websites such as Janes, Bellingcat and NK News, have used open-source intelligence to track the equipment that is proven to have fallen into Taliban's hands.

According to them, the Taliban now possess two warjets, 24 helicopters, and seven Boeing Insitu ScanEagle Unmanned Vehicles that were with the Afghan forces earlier. Additionally, according to them, between June and August 14 the Taliban captured 12 tanks, 51 armoured fighting vehicles, 61 artillery and mortar, eight anti-aircraft guns, and 1,980 trucks, jeeps, and vehicles, including over 700 Humvees.

All of this — in addition to the fact that the forces of the erstwhile Afghan government have surrendered everywhere in the country and the old Northern Alliance opposition is a shadow of its former self — makes the Taliban more powerful than it ever was. It is now "much more militarily powerful", Jonathan Schroden, a military operations analyst who directs the Countering Threats and Challenges Program at the CNA Corporation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and analysis organization based in Arlington, Virginia, told *The Indian Express*. "It effectively converts them from a lightly armed guerrilla movement to a pseudo-conventional army."

According to Dr Schroden, among the military equipment that the Taliban now has, the D-30 howitzers are probably the most lethal. "It is concerning both as a waste of US taxpayer money and as a potential source of weapons for the myriad terrorist groups that have ties to the Taliban," he said.

And "there is a non-zero possibility of groups like al-Qaeda or the Pakistani Taliban getting their hands on some of the weapons."

The making of Hindustan-228, HAL aircraft for commercial transport

AKSHEEV THAKUR
BENGALURU, AUGUST 20

ON AUGUST 15, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) carried out a successful ground run and low-speed taxi trials of a commercial aircraft, Hindustan-228, for type certification by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Why is this important?

While HAL produced the Hindustan Trainer-2 and its variant the Hindustan Propulsion Trainer 32 (HPT-32) for the Indian Air Force six decades ago, and more recently the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) for the IAF, the Indian aviation sector had not produced any civil transport aircraft earlier.

The 19-seat Hindustan-228 or the Do-228 is India's first major attempt in India to develop a small civilian transport aircraft after the 14-seater Saras aircraft development programme at the National Aeronautics Laboratory (NAL) was shelved in 2009 on account of multiple problems.

What will be its role?

Small civilian aircraft will be an essential element of the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme that the Centre is attempting to put in place for regional connectivity. Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said recently that the government aims to set up 1,000 new air routes and establish 100 new airports.

"Two civil demonstrators of Do-228 have already been made and are ready to be deployed in the Northeast and Uttar Pradesh, the two places where we want to start the UDAN scheme," HAL chairman R Madhavan said this week.

The Hindustan-228 has been conceived as a multirole utility aircraft for VIP transport, passenger transport, air ambulance, flight inspection roles, cloud seeding, recreational activities like para jumping, aerial surveillance, photography, remote sensing and cargo transport. With a maximum cruise speed of 428 km/hr and a range of 700 km/hr, the aircraft is capable of night flying. HAL is also looking forward to exporting the aircraft to countries like Nepal.



The aircraft has successfully completed trials for DGCA type certification. *Express*

How is the aircraft designed?

It is built on the existing frame of the German Dornier 228 defence transport aircraft used by the defence forces. In February 2020, HAL received the modification document for the HAL Do-228 upgraded civil aircraft from the DGCA. Two civil Do-228s produced by HAL for launch under UDAN have a

maximum takeoff weight of 6,200 kg. For a transport aircraft to be flyable under the Commercial Pilot Licence category, HAL has to reduce the weight below 5,700 kg.

The HAL Do-228-201 (upgraded) civil aircraft is equipped with a digital cockpit.

At what stage is its development for

civilian use?

The Do-228 has fulfilled the requirement of a Light Transport Aircraft (LTA) within the defence forces.

HAL has produced 125 Dornier-228s under licence at its Kanpur facility since 1983. On December 26, 2017, the DGCA cleared HAL Do-228 to be used for civilian flights. The Kanpur facility is now manufacturing Hindustan-228s to support UDAN.

On May 27, the first ground run of the first prototype was carried out, followed by last week's ground trials and low-speed taxi trials for DGCA type certification, which in turn will help get international certification. HAL Chairman R Madhavan told *The Indian Express*: "The international certification has been taken up parallelly. DGCA is onboard with us. We will go for a high speed trial very soon and will certify the aircraft. Once this is done, it becomes more usable."

What is the status of the Saras project?

The project was halted following a crash on March 6, 2009 that killed three test pilots. By then, the second prototype had flown 45

times, and had even been presented at Aero India 2009 — a few days before it crashed.

In 2017, the government asked NAL to revive development of its 14-seat Saras Mk2 aircraft under the UDAN scheme. The project was revived after analysis revealed the crash was a result of procedural lapses and not due to technical issues.

The Saras, a twin turboprop aircraft, was initiated in the 1990s but was constantly plagued by controversies. The first prototype, which flew on May 29, 2004 was nearly 993 kg overweight on a proposed 4,125 kg. The aircraft flew nearly 125 flights. Subsequently, an engine change cut the weight in the second prototype, but the aircraft crashed in 2009. A third prototype that was closer to the 4,125 kg mark was then in the pipeline.

The development of Saras is projected as a precursor to the development of a proposed 70-seat Regional Transport Aircraft involving NAL and HAL that was initiated in 2013 but was subsequently shelved with HAL focussing on modifying the Dornier-228 aircraft.

9 ECONOMY

SENSEX: 55,329.32 ▼ 300.17 (-0.54%) NIFTY: 16,450.50 ▼ 118.35 (-0.71%) NIKKEI: 27,013.25 ▼ 267.92 HANG SENG: 24,849.72 ▼ 466.61 FTSE: 7,053.63 ▼ 5.23 DAX: 15,695.68 ▼ 70.13

International market data till 1900 IST

POLICY WATCH
ECONOMY

‘Focus on emerging challenges; private investment in green energy required’

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

THE INSTITUTE of Economic Growth (IEG) Society president NK Singh said on Friday that there is a need to focus research on emerging challenges such as climate and energy transition, encouraging private investment in renewable energy and establishing closer partnership with states, as they remain central to implementation of reforms. Fifteenth Finance Commission Chairperson Singh stepped down from the post.

Former PM Singh, who had been the president of the IEG since 1992, said he was withdrawing from several active duties in the light of his advanced age and ‘indifferent health’, and suggested NK Singh’s name as president of the institute. Asked about his plans for the IEG, Singh said there is a need to focus on contemporary challenges.

“First the world has changed from when the Institute was created in 1952, our priorities have changed and there is need to really make it much more contemporary to the challenges of today, and what could these be: climate and energy transition, fuel pricing, carbon pricing, the social and economic consequences of the fuel transition because, after all, the bulk of the fossil fuel staff is in the poorer parts of India — Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha. These are also the parts which do not have renewable energy. It’s easier said

15th Finance Commission Chairperson NK Singh was recently elected IEG Society president. *File*

that renewable is cheaper but this transition is going to be challenging,” Singh told *The Indian Express*.

He said there is a need to attract private investments in renewable energy, as climate issues remain central. “What can we do to crowd in private capital in renewable energy... How can we reduce perceived regulatory and other risks for private capital in funding the sustainable energy investments. This is one very broad emerging area that needs attention,” he said.

Macroeconomic management is another subject which requires further research, especially when there is no fiscal council at the Central government level. “Another important area is much closer partnership with states because in next 20-30 years states are going to be central in the story, in terms of implementation of the changes in factors of production: land, labour, capital... Quality of states annual economic survey can also be improved,” Singh said.

Singh has had strong ties with the IEG — as a student in the Delhi University and currently serving as a Life Trustee.

CRUDE DOWN 13.9% BUT PETROL, DIESEL NEAR RECORD HIGHS

Global-local divide in fuel: OMCs making up for ‘under recoveries’

KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

WHILE PETROL and diesel prices are still at or near record-high levels in the country, international crude oil has fallen 13.9 per cent since the beginning of August.

Industry sources told *The Indian Express* that Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) might be withholding part of the benefit from the fall in international prices to compensate for under recoveries during earlier periods. Separately, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has ruled out reducing Central taxes on petrol and diesel, citing the financial burden of having to pay interest payments on oil bonds issued to OMCs for earlier under recoveries by the Congress-led UPA government.

An unexpected build-up of fuel inventories in the US and concerns about the spread of the Delta variant pushed Brent crude to \$65.63 per barrel on Friday (as of 12:30 pm EDT) — its lowest level since May.

“Under recoveries during prior periods, such as state elections

EXPLAINED
No duty cut likely

WITH NO excise duty cut expected and OMCs withholding part of the benefit of lower international prices, consumers would only benefit from lower fuel prices if crude continued to remain at lower levels for a sustained period.

when price increases were held back, are likely the reason that OMCs are being slow in passing on the benefit of lower international prices to consumers”, said an official at a public sector OMC. Usually, the full impact of changes to crude oil prices is often seen with a lag as domestic rates are benchmarked to a 15-day rolling average of global prices of petrol and diesel.

Industry sources said the full impact of lower global prices would be felt sooner in diesel than petrol as under recoveries for the former were significantly lower

than the latter, and were likely to be recouped soon if the current trend of low prices continues.

Experts noted that with no excise duty cut expected and OMCs withholding part of the benefit of lower international prices, consumers would only benefit from lower fuel prices if crude oil prices continued to remain at lower levels for a sustained period.

Even though the prices of petrol and diesel are deregulated and can be revised daily, OMCs had, in March and April, halted hikes as a number of states went to elections.

OMCs had also held prices constant for over 80 days last year from March 16, as crude fell sharply due to the Covid pandemic. Experts said the decision to hold prices steady, during the period when crude touched lows of around \$20 per barrel, led to far higher marketing margins for OMCs during FY21.

OMCs have also held the price of petrol constant for the past 34 days and cut the price of diesel by about 60 paise per litre over the past three days after holding steady for 33 days. Petrol is retail-

ing at Rs 101.8 per litre in the Capital, while diesel is at Rs 89.27.

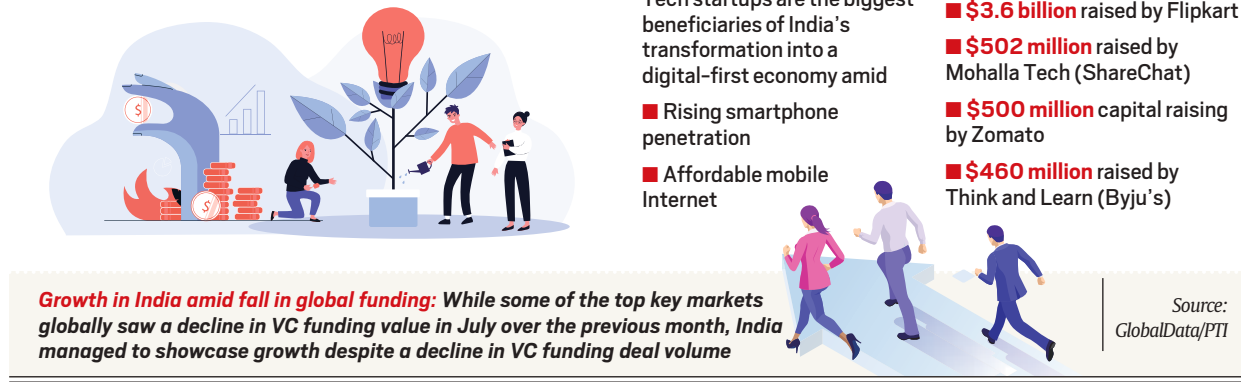
High crude prices, coupled with elevated taxes on fuel, have led to a 21.7 per cent increase in the pump price of petrol and a 20.8 per cent jump in diesel since the beginning of the year. Elevated taxes on petrol and diesel have also been key contributors to record high prices. Last year, the Centre hiked Central levies by Rs 13 per litre on petrol and Rs 16 on diesel to shore up revenues as Covid caused a sharp fall in economic activity.

“The government wants to ensure that the earnings of OMCs are protected as they are key investors in important infrastructure such as pipelines, new refineries and LPG infrastructure,” said Vivekanand Subbaraman, analyst at Ambit Capital. He added margins for OMCs had been increasing steadily over the past few years as their profits were rising even though their sales volumes had remained relatively stable.

Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

‘India startups second to Chinese in raising VC funding in 2021’

Indian startups got \$16.9 billion of venture capital (VC) funding in 2021, next only to Chinese counterparts in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) countries, a GlobalData analysis said



BRIEFLY

Microsoft, OYO

New Delhi: Microsoft has invested nearly \$5 million in OYO through the issuance of equity shares and compulsory convertible cumulative preference shares.

EPFO payroll

New Delhi: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation saw net new enrolments of 12.83 lakh in June. **PTI**

BPCL chatbot

New Delhi: Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) has launched an AI chatbot, Urja, to serve business and retail consumers.

Bharat Bank

New Delhi: Bharat Co-operative Bank (Mumbai) Ltd will celebrate its 43rd foundation day on August 21. It has launched 3 easy business loans, a statement said. **ENS**

Duty relief

New Delhi: The government has halved basic customs duty on crude soy oil and sunflower oil to 7.5 per cent, as well as cut basic import duty on refined soy oil and sunflower oil to 37.5 per cent, till September 30. **PTI**

New J&J CEO

Bengaluru: Johnson & Johnson vice chairman of executive committee Joaquin Duato will become its CEO from January 3, replacing Alex Gorsky. **REUTERS**

Power islanding

New Delhi: The government has said 17 islanding schemes for power supply are planned in addition to 26 such existing and under-implementation projects. The scheme is a defence mechanism for power system. **PTI**

Facebook, Indifi tie up for credit to SMBs

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, AUGUST 20

FACEBOOK INDIA on Friday announced a programme to help small and medium businesses (SMBs) that advertise on Facebook to get quick access to credit of between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 50 lakh through independent lending partners.

“India is the first Facebook country where this programme is getting rolled out. The programme is open to businesses registered across 200 towns and cities of India,” Facebook said.

Through Facebook’s partnership with Indifi, small businesses that advertise with Facebook can get loans at a predefined interest rate of 17-20 per cent per annum, it said. “The programme will also

Loans from ₹5 lakh to ₹50 lakh for small and medium businesses

enable small businesses to apply for loans without collateral through a quick online application. Small businesses applying under this programme will not be charged a processing fee by Indifi.”

Indifi will also disburse the loan amount within five working days of the borrower completing all documentation formalities after acceptance of the offer by Indifi. Many small businesses face challenges in securing loans of lower ticket-size as they are not viable for many lenders. “The goal of the initiative is to make business loans more easily accessible

to small businesses, and reduce the credit gap within India’s MSME sector,” Facebook said.

It added that small businesses wholly or partly women-owned can get a special 0.2 per cent reduction per annum on the applied loan interest rate by Indifi.

Indifi is an online lending platform providing loans to small businesses. Alok Mittal, who last led India operations of US venture capital firm Canaan Partners, is Indifi’s MD & CEO and co-founder.

Facebook said, “The programme is a completely not-for-profit arrangement with Facebook’s lending partners and small businesses are not obligated to spend their loan amount on Facebook advertising.” The announcement came at a virtual event on ‘Enabling MSME growth through finan-

cial inclusion’, hosted by Facebook India along with FICCI. Ajit Mohan, VP & MD Facebook India, said at the event, “Facebook is deeply committed to creating economic opportunities for India’s small businesses. Access to timely capital is more important than ever as it can help jump-start their recovery and drive big growth.”

Uday Shankar, President, FICCI said, “FICCI has always advocated for stronger private sector participation for the growth of India’s MSMEs and welcomes the launch of Facebook’s small business loans initiative to make access to credit more easily available to the industry. We look forward to collaborating with Facebook over the coming months to develop programmes and solutions that can provide an impetus to the sector.”

RBI, Irdai to vet FDI plan in pvt bank-promoted insurance co

New Delhi: The government has said applications for foreign direct investment (FDI) in an insurance company promoted by a private bank will be cleared by the RBI and Irdai to ensure that the 74 per cent limit of overseas investment is not breached. These changes were made by amending the Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) Rules, 2019, as per a gazette notification by Finance Ministry on August 19. “These rules may be called Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) (Second Amendment) Rules, 2021,” it said. **ENS**

AT COMPANY’S 39TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Eicher Motors MD Lal’s re-appointment rejected

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

EICHER MOTORS’ shareholders, at the company’s recently held annual general meeting (AGM), have rejected a proposal for re-appointment of Siddhartha Lal as the company’s managing director for a period of five years with effect from May 1 this year.

During the company’s 39th AGM, which was held earlier this week, the members also rejected

During the company’s AGM, shareholders also rejected the proposal of increasing Siddhartha Lal’s remuneration

the proposal of increasing Lal’s remuneration.

While 73 per cent of the votes favoured the re-appointment, the rest 27 per cent were against it. As a special resolution, it needed

support from 75 per cent of the votes cast to pass the proposal. Out of the total 21,74,67,139 votes, 15,88,49,543 (73.04 per cent) were in favour of the re-appointment, while 5,86,17,596 (26.95 per cent) votes disapproved the proposal.

The company’s public institutional shareholders particularly opposed the move.

Out of the total 8,13,98,998 votes received in the category, 5,86,16,986 (72 per cent) disapproved the proposal and just

2,27,82,012 (27.98 per cent) favoured the move.

“The resolution was not passed with requisite majority,” Eicher Motors said in a regulatory filing. Meanwhile, an ordinary resolution seeking Lal’s re-appointment as a director on the company’s board was approved by shareholders. Around 86 per cent of the votes were in the favour of the proposal. Royal Enfield, a part of Eicher Motors, is a player in the mid-sized motorcycle segment. **WITHPTI**

MPC: JAYANTH VARMA OPPOSES ‘EASY POLICY’

One member differs with panel on ‘easy’ stance; urges ‘hard look’, rise in rates

RBI Guv says economy needs support for congenial financial conditions

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, AUGUST 20

WHILE FIVE of the six members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) voted for retaining the accommodative stance at the MPC meeting on August 6, one member — Jayanth Varma — was for taking a “hard look” at continuing the easy money policy as the balance of risk and reward in favour of monetary accommodation is gradually shifting.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the economy still requires support in terms of maintaining congenial financial conditions and fiscal boosters. “At such a critical juncture, can we really pull the rug and let the economy tumble?” Das said, according to the minutes of the MPC meeting. “The need of the hour is twofold: first, continue the monetary policy support to the economy; and second, remain watchful of any durable inflationary pressures and sustained price momentum in key components so as to bring back the CPI inflation to 4 per cent over a period of time in a non-disruptive manner.”

However, taking a different view, Varma — who voted against the accommodative stance — said “easy money today could lead to high interest rates tomorrow”.

“In the last several meetings, my statements have expressed the belief that the balance of risk and reward is in favour of monetary accommodation. As the pandemic continues to mutate, it appears to me that the balance of

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das. *File*

risk and reward is gradually shifting, and this merits a hard look at the accommodative stance,” he said, as per the minutes.

Unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, the RBI panel raised the projection for retail inflation to 5.7 per cent for FY22 from 5.1 per cent earlier, quite close to its upper tolerance limit in the 2-6 per cent band. The MPC left the repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent while retaining the accommodative stance. It retained the FY22 real GDP growth at 9.5 per cent.

As per the RBI minutes, Varma was “not in favour of the decision to keep the reverse repo rate at 3.35 per cent,” and voted against the accommodative stance.

While the economy is struggling to regain the momentum that had gathered in the second half of 2020-21, the highest priority now is to revive growth along a sustainable trajectory that becomes compatible with the inflation target as the pandemic recedes, RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra said.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

Sebi puts Adani Wilmar’s ₹4,500-cr IPO in abeyance

ENSE ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, AUGUST 20

MARKETS REGULATOR Sebi has put the Rs 4,500-crore initial public offering (IPO) of Adani Wilmar Ltd in “abeyance”. As per the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) website, the Adani Wilmar IPO has been “kept in abeyance”.

Adani Wilmar, a 50:50 joint venture between the Adani Group and Singapore-based Wilmar Group, had filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the Sebi on August 2.

While the regulator has not given any reason for keeping the IPO in abeyance, an ongoing investigation into the group’s flagship company Adani Enterprises might have prompted the Sebi to put the issue on hold. Adani Enterprises, promoted by Gautam Adani,

DRHP ON AUGUST 2

■ **Adani Wilmar, a 50:50 JV between Adani Group and Wilmar Group, had filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with Sebi on August 2**

holds 50 per cent stake in Adani Wilmar, which owns the edible oil brand ‘Fortune’.

The proposed IPO offer worth Rs 4,500 crore will comprise a fresh issue of equity shares by the firm and there will not be any secondary offering. If there are pending investigations against a company by the Sebi or any other regulatory body or government authority, the regulator normally puts the IPO in abeyance.

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PHED, REGION AJMER

PHONE No. 0145-2624748 FAX No. 0145-2627671

No. F. ()/Ar. MP/2021-2022/6104-6154 Dated: 6.8.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS FOR WORKS

Bids for the Providing, Laying, Joining, Testing & Commissioning of Rising/ Distribution pipe line of various sizes/types to convert the existing water supply scheme into piped water supply scheme and to provide Functional House Tap Connections in the village- Kharkedi and Hathikhera under JYM of District Ajmer. (Estimated cost of work- Rs. 419.61 lacs) are invited from interested bidders upto 31.08.2021. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajjasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state.

UBN No.: PHE2122WSOB06055 NIB No.: PHE2122A2707

Sd/-
(Mukul Bhargava)
Additional Chief Engineer,
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TPDDL/ENG/ENQ/200001330/21-22 RC for supply of Polyolefin Sleeves	32.18 Lac/ 81,000	23.08.2021	13.09.2021; 1630 Hrs/ 13.09.2021; 1700 Hrs
TPDDL/INS/ENQ/200001331/21-22 Standard Fire & Special Perils and Burglary Insurance	1.40 Crs/ Nil	21.08.2021	10.09.2021; 1400 Hrs/ 10.09.2021; 1600 Hrs

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10 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



A "Tesla Bot" prototype.
Tesla via Reuters

USA

Musk says Tesla likely to launch humanoid robot prototype next year

TESLA CHIEF executive Elon Musk on Thursday said the electric automaker will probably launch a "Tesla Bot" humanoid robot prototype next year, designed for dangerous, repetitive, or boring work that people don't like to do. Speaking at Tesla's AI Day event, the billionaire entrepreneur said the robot, which stands around five foot eight inches tall, would be able to handle jobs from attaching bolts to cars with a wrench, or picking up groceries at stores. The robot would have "profound implications for the economy", Musk said, addressing a labour shortage. He said it was important to make the machine not "super-expensive". **REUTERS**

HAITI

Foreign aid trickles in as Haiti struggles to count victims

A DRIP of foreign aid began to reach more rural areas of southwestern Haiti on Thursday, arriving five days after a powerful earthquake killed more than 2,000 and flattened tens of thousands of buildings into rubble. Hundreds of people lined up to receive provisions from the UN World Food Programme at a camp in the rural town of Camp-Perrin for people displaced by Saturday's 7.2 magnitude quake. The official death toll stood at 2,189 but was expected to rise. Local officials are still tallying the dead, and demanded more assistance to dig out the collapsed buildings. **REUTERS**

RUSSIA

Navalny tells Russians to vote tactically

KREMLIN CRITIC Alexei Navalny appealed to Russians from behind bars on Thursday, nearly a year after he was poisoned with what the West says was a nerve agent, and told them to vote tactically in elections next month to try to hurt the Kremlin. His smart voting plan is one of the last levers Navalny and his allies have after a crackdown this summer outlawed his movement as "extremist". His allies are banned from taking part in the Sept. 17-19 election, and United Russia, which supports President Vladimir Putin, is expected to win despite a slump in its popularity. **REUTERS**

BRITAIN

Police warn of two weeks of disruption from protests

LONDON'S POLICE warned on Friday that protests by environmental activists planned for the next two weeks will cause disruption across the capital and will distract officers from dealing with crime. Extinction Rebellion, which caused days of traffic chaos in London two years ago, said it will target the capital's financial district in disruptive protests which are due to start on Monday. The group accuses firms of helping to fuel climate change and it brought much of London to a standstill during 11 days of action in 2019. **REUTERS**

After Taliban takeover, reports of targeted killings fuel Afghans' fears

AHMAD SEIR, TAMEEM AKHGAR & DAVID RISING
KABUL, AUGUST 20

REPORTS OF targeted killings in areas overrun by the Taliban mounted Friday, fuelling fears that they will return Afghanistan to the repressive rule they imposed when they were last in power, even as they urged imams to push a message of unity at Friday's prayers.

Terrified that the new de facto rulers would commit such abuses, thousands have raced to Kabul's airport and to border crossings, desperate to flee following the Taliban's stunning blitz through the country. Others have taken to the streets to protest the takeover — acts of defiance that Taliban fighters have violently suppressed.

The Taliban say they have become more moderate since they last ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s and have pledged to restore security and forgive those who fought them in the 20 years since a US-led invasion. Ahead of Friday prayers, leaders urged imams to use sermons to appeal for unity and urge people not to flee the country.

But many Afghans are sceptical, fearing that the Taliban will erase the gains, especially for women, achieved in the past two decades. An Amnesty International report provided more evidence Friday that undercut the Taliban's claims they have changed.

The rights group said that its researchers spoke to eyewitnesses in Ghazni province who recounted how the Taliban killed nine ethnic Hazara men in the village of Mundarakht on July 4-6. It said six of the men were shot, and three were tortured to death.

The brutality of the killings was "a reminder of the Taliban's

TALIBAN KILLED RELATIVE OF DW REPORTER, GERMAN BROADCASTER SAYS

Berlin: Taliban fighters hunting a journalist from Deutsche Welle (DW) have shot dead one member of his family and severely injured another, the German public broadcaster said, adding that three more of its journalists had had their homes raided. DW said the Taliban had been doing a house-to-house search to find the journalist, who it said was now working in Germany and did not name.

REUTERS

past record, and a horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring," said Agnes Callamard, the head of Amnesty International.

The rights group warned that many more killings may have gone unreported because the Taliban cut cellphone services in many areas they've captured to prevent images from being published.

Meanwhile, a Norway-based private intelligence group that provides information to the UN said it obtained more evidence that the Taliban have rounded up Afghans on a blacklist of people they believe worked in key roles with the previous Afghan administration or with US-led forces.

In an email, the executive director of RHIPTO Norwegian Center for Global Analyses said the organisation knew about several threat letters sent to Afghans, including a man who was taken from his Kabul apartment this week by the Taliban. **AP**



KHALIL HAQQANI ATTENDS FRIDAY PRAYERS IN KABUL: Khalil Haqqani speaks after Friday prayer at the Pul-i-Khishti Mosque in Kabul on Friday. A leader of one of the most powerful and violent Taliban factions, Haqqani is on both the US and UN terrorist lists. To many Afghans and foreigners, Haqqani's emergence in the capital was a stark reminder of who now runs Afghanistan. *NYT*

Biden pledges to Americans in Kabul: 'We will get you home'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 20

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden pledged to Americans still trapped in Afghanistan: "We will get you home."

Biden's comments at a White House news conference Friday come as the US government struggles to ramp up a massive airlift clearing Americans and other foreigners and vulnerable Afghans through the Kabul airport, rescuing them from a Taliban takeover of the country.

Biden is facing criticism for a chaotic and often violent scene outside the airport as crowds



A baby is handed over to US soldiers over the perimeter wall of the airport in Kabul, on Thursday. *Reuters*

struggle to reach safety inside. He called the past week "heartbreaking", but insisted his administra-

tion was working hard to smooth and speed the evacuations.

"I don't think anyone of us can see these pictures and not feel that pain on a human level," Biden said, but "now I'm focused on getting this job done."

Evacuation flights at the Kabul airport had stopped for several hours on Friday because of a backup at a transit point for the refugees, a US airbase in Qatar, US officials said. However, a resumption was ordered later.

Thousands of people remain to be evacuated ahead of the US' Aug 31 deadline to withdraw its troops from the country, although the pace had picked up overnight.

FB, Twitter secure Afghan users' accounts

ELIZABETH CULLIFORD
AUGUST 20

FACEBOOK, TWITTER and LinkedIn said this week they had moved to secure the accounts of Afghan citizens to protect them against being targeted amid the Taliban's takeover of the country.

Facebook has temporarily removed the ability for people to view or search the friends lists of accounts in Afghanistan, its security policy head Nathaniel Gleicher tweeted on Thursday.

Gleicher also said the company had launched a "one-click tool" for users in Afghanistan to lock down their accounts, so people who are not their Facebook friends would be unable to see their timeline posts or share their profile photos.

Human rights groups have voiced concerns that the Taliban could use online platforms to track Afghans' digital histories or social connections.

Twitter said it was in touch with civil society partners to provide support to groups in the country and was working with the Internet Archive to expedite direct requests to remove archived tweets. **REUTERS**

Taliban: China has big role in Afghanistan

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, AUGUST 20

THE TALIBAN have appealed to the international community to recognise it amid growing resentment against it at home and abroad, even as the Afghan militant group sought to placate China, saying Beijing can play a "big role" under its rule in the strife-torn country.

Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the international community should "respect the will of the Afghan people" and of-



At a protest in Kabul on Thursday. *Reuters*

ficially recognise his group, which has taken over power in Kabul.

Dismissing growing concerns over the Taliban curbing the freedoms of women under

its plans to impose Sharia law like it did during its previous rule 20 years ago, Shaheen told China's state-run CGTN TV that the new Taliban government in Kabul would protect women's rights to education and work.

He also urged international monetary organisations to release funds to the new government.

The Taliban, which shared close ties with Pakistan, have been warming up to Beijing ahead of its recent offensive resulting in seizing power in Kabul.

"China is a big country with a huge economy and capacity. They

can play a big role in rebuilding Afghanistan," Shaheen said. "We have had a relationship with China and Russia during the past (few) years. We have told them they should not have any concerns from Afghanistan," he said.

"We see it in our interest not to allow anyone to use our soil against our neighbouring and regional countries. It is important for us," he said. "Also for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, we need the help of all countries," including neighbouring countries as well as the US and the rest of the world, Shaheen said. **PTI**

Harris faces task of convincing Asian nations of US reliability after Afghanistan chaos

NANDITA BOSE & DAVID BRUNNSTROM
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 20

US VICE President Kamala Harris, in a visit to Singapore and Vietnam next week that aims to counter China's growing influence, will have to contend with a new problem: the collapse of Afghanistan, which has left allies questioning the credibility of US foreign policy promises.

US allies have complained



Kamala Harris

they were not fully consulted on President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan by Aug. 31, which appeared at odds with his promises to recommit to global engagement.

With the Taliban's rapid takeover putting their national

security interests at risk, countries in both Europe and Asia are wondering whether they can rely on Washington to fulfill long-standing security commitments, experts say.

Harris' trip aims to establish deeper ties with Southeast Asia, a region Washington considers key to checking Chinese expansion.

Regional experts like Murray Hiebert at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies said Harris would have to try to reassure her hosts that

Washington's commitment to Southeast Asia is firm and not a parallel to Afghanistan.

"The debate in Afghanistan will prompt concerns again about US staying power and keeping promises to allies," he said.

The chaotic evacuations from Kabul have evoked images of the 1975 US withdrawal from Vietnam, whose Communist government Washington sought to isolate for two decades after the Vietnam War, but with which it now enjoys warm ties. **REUTERS**

Malaysia's new prime minister brings graft-tainted party back to power

ROZANNA LATIFF, LIZ LEE & MEI MEI CHU
KUALA LUMPUR, AUGUST 20

MALAYSIA'S KING appointed Ismail Sabri Yaakob as the prime minister on Friday, returning the job to a party tainted by graft accusations as the southeast Asian nation grapples with a Covid-19 surge and an economic slump.

Ismail Sabri replaces Muhyiddin Yassin, who stepped down on Monday after coalition infighting cost him his majority, but the new prime minister's backing by the same alliance raises concerns that he will also lead an unstable government.

Ismail Sabri is to be sworn in on Saturday, the palace said, after he secured a slim majority with



Ismail Sabri Yaakob

the backing of 114 of parliament's 222 members.

"His Majesty expressed the hope that with the appointment of the new prime minister, the political crisis can end immediately and all lawmakers can unite to put aside political agendas," it said in a statement.

King Al-Sultan Abdullah has previously said the new prime

minister would have to face a confidence vote in parliament to prove his majority.

Ismail Sabri's appointment restores the post to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysia's "grand old party", which was voted out in a 2018 general election, after a multibillion-dollar scandal at state fund 1MDB.

He becomes Malaysia's third prime minister since the 2018 election, after UMNO pulled its backing for Muhyiddin last month, citing his failure to manage the pandemic. "With a razor-thin majority, he will need to make sure he does not face rebellions of those who are eyeing his position," said Sivamurugan Pandian, a political analyst at the Malaysian Science University. **REUTERS**

China approves three-child policy with sops to encourage couples to have more children

KJM VARMA
BEIJING, AUGUST 20

CHINA'S NATIONAL legislature on Friday formally endorsed the three-child policy mooted by the ruling Communist Party, in a major policy shift aimed to prevent a steep decline in birth rates in the world's most populous country.

The revised Population and Family Planning Law, which allows Chinese couples to have three children, was passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC).

In an apparent attempt to address the reluctance of Chinese couples to have more children due to mounting costs, the amended law has also passed more social

EXPLAINED No penalty, added incentives

THE NEW three-child policy means that Chinese couples now having more than two children will no longer have to pay the "social maintenance fee", which was a financial penalty imposed on them. Moreover, couples will be encouraged to have children, with incentives such as potentially more parental leave, better employment protections for women and improved childcare infrastructure.

Asia-Pacific extends lockdowns, adds curbs to fight surge in Delta infections

REUTERS
AUGUST 20

NATIONS FROM Australia to Vietnam announced more drastic curbs and longer lockdowns for citizens on Friday, as authorities struggle to rein in outbreaks of the highly infectious Delta variant of the coronavirus.

In Australia's biggest city of Sydney, 2 million residents, or roughly 40% of its population, face curfew from 9 pm to 5 am next week, along with limits on exercise.

A lockdown of the entire city, now in its eighth week, was also extended until the end of September, with residents told to wear masks outdoors, except for exercise.

"I asked health and police to work together, to give me a final list of what we can throw at this, to leave no shadow of a doubt as to how serious we are," Gladys Berejikian, the premier of Sydney's home state of New South Wales, told reporters.

The state, which is Australia's most populous, reported 644 new infections on Friday, while southeastern Victoria state, home to Melbourne, recorded 55, as authorities there warned of a risk the outbreak could slip

out of control.

In neighbouring New Zealand, an outbreak that began this week widened to the capital, Wellington, from the biggest city of Auckland, prompting Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to extend a nationwide lockdown until Tuesday.

Vietnam imposed its toughest order yet, barring residents of the business hub of Ho Chi Minh City from leaving their homes from Monday, although further details have yet to be announced.

Like Australia and New Zealand, Vietnam was once lauded for success in containing the virus, but is finding earlier measures were insufficient.

It has more than 312,000 infections and 7,150 deaths, up from a May 1 figure of less than 3,000 cases and 35 deaths.

Japan plans to roughly triple daily Covid tests to 320,000, an acknowledgement that its main containment strategy of breaking up clusters of infections was no longer working in big cities like Tokyo, the capital.

The move comes after new daily cases exceeded 25,000 on Thursday for the first time.

South Korea extended for two weeks social distancing curbs that include a ban on gatherings of more than two people after 6 pm.



Employees dine between polythene sheets as a safety measure at a garment factory in Dhaka. *Reuters*

US sees opening in Asia as Chinese vaccines stumble

SUI-LEE WEE & STEVEN LEE MYERS
AUGUST 20

FEW PLACES benefited from China's vaccine diplomacy as much as Southeast Asia, a region of more than 650 million that has struggled to secure doses from Western drugmakers. Several of these countries have recorded some of the fastest-growing numbers of cases in the world.

China, eager to build good will, stepped in, promising to provide more than 255 million doses, according to Bridge Consulting, a Beijing-based research company.

Half a year in, however, that campaign has lost some of its luster. Officials in several countries have raised doubts about the efficacy of Chinese vaccines, especially against the more transmissible Delta variant.

Indonesia, which was early to accept Chinese shots, was recently the epicentre of the virus. Now, officials there are administering the Moderna vaccine as a booster to health care workers who had received two doses of Sinovac.



Unloading boxes of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine in Tangerang, Indonesia, this month. *Reuters*

And in Thailand, residents vaccinated with one dose of China's Sinovac are now given the AstraZeneca shot three to four weeks later.

The setback to China's vaccine campaign has created a diplomatic opening for the US when relations between the two countries are increasingly fraught, in part because of the coronavirus.

Vaccine aid from the US offers an opportunity to restore relations in a region that American officials have mostly ignored for years while China extended its influence. The Biden administration has dispatched a crowd of senior officials to the region. **NYT**

SPORT

Rasool wants BCCI to step in, says being forced to think about future

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, AUGUST 20

A DAY after *The Indian Express* reported on the notice to all-rounder Parvez Rasool by Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA), asking him to return the pitch roller or face "police action", the cricketer says he feels "victimised" and wants the Indian cricket board to "intervene now" before things get out of hand.

"They said police action will be taken. Then in the mail, they said, do we have enough proof to nail him down. Does that mean you have come here to nail me down? Their intention looks different," Rasool, the lone J&K player to represent the Indian team, told this paper on Friday.

The 32-year-old all-rounder stated he got even more upset when one of the officials wrote on a social website that Rasool needs

to be given a longer rope so that he hangs himself. As per Rasool, the official deleted his comment later.

"The official deleted it but I have the screenshot of it. Can anyone tell me what wrong I have done that I need to be hanged? If you have any doubts, they have my phone number, they can call me. It took mere seconds to clarify but it seems they wanted to victimize me," he explains.

The JKCA committee of administrators came into existence in June after the Jammu and Kashmir High Court passed an order that the BCCI should run JKCA cricket.

One month later, two BJP spokespersons — Gupta and advocate Sunil Sethi — were appointed to the panel, along with cricketer Mithun Manhas by the Indian board.

Additionally, Majid Dar was appointed to

look into the development of cricket at Srinagar and report to the sub-committee.

Rasool narrates his side of the story about the notice. "Roller is not like a tennis ball that I can keep in my pocket and roam wherever I want to. It's for ground use, it's for cricket development. I really don't why these things are happening here. I got a 'second notice' which stated that we had sent you a notice on 5th of July."

However, Rasool says he never received the initial notice.

Gupta, a sub-committee member, said, Rasool was sent the notice via email because the cricketer's contact details were given for the district cricket unit.

Rasool questions the intention behind the notice. "They said that it's in their record book, if it was there in the record book then why was I not sent first notice, instead I was sent second notice. It means it was an after-

thought. There must be a receipt with them? If you feel someone is not using it properly, then, you write to them and not to a cricketer who has nothing to do with this. I don't get the point why they wrote me a mail especially as I have nothing to do with this. Write to the district officials."

The recent events have made Rasool think about his future with JKCA. He was deeply anguished with the way things are happening in the valley.

"I have played cricket with passion and hard work. They are now forcing me to think about my future. I have come here to play cricket and not to do all this. Playing in this environment looks very tough now. If they have done this to me imagine what they can do with smaller players" he said.

These days he is busy promoting cricket back in his town Bijbehara in the Anantnag district. He is sponsoring young cricketers to take up cricket in the valley.

The district is the only venue which has turf pitches while cricket is played on matting tracks elsewhere in the region. His district wanted to organize a cricket tournament but JKCA issued a circular that those who are part of an unsanctioned cricket tournament will be banned by the association.

Other tournaments got the go ahead despite Covid-19 restrictions. "There were other tournaments happening, some were happening on mat wickets. A few districts later approached JKCA saying that as their tournament is already on, they should be allowed to conclude it. The JKCA agreed to it but when we asked they said no, due to the Covid-19 situation they couldn't allow us to host the tournament. We are still waiting for approval from JKCA" he said.

Rasool now wants the Indian board to intervene. "I think BCCI should intervene now. Please see my work. I'm trying to promote cricket on my part."

BRIEFLY

Bhateri, Devi settle for silver

Ufa: A gold medal remained elusive for India at the junior world wrestling championship as both Bhateri (65kg) and Sanju Devi (62kg) lost their respective finals rather tamely while Saneh (72kg) was stretched out of the mat after enduring a knee injury in the bronze play-off here on Friday. Sanju Devi had managed comeback wins in her previous bouts but Friday was not her day as Russia's Alina Kasabieva took the gold with a technical superiority win. Kasabieva first effected a take down move and then got a two-point throw. There was still hope but once the Russian got hold of Sanju's leg and got the desired grip to execute 'fitley', there was no chance for the Indian to come back. **PTI**

Stadium to be named after Chopra

Pune: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Pune's Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT) and Army Sports Institute (ASI) on August 23 and is likely to name a facility here after Olympic javelin gold medalist Neeraj Chopra, officials said on Friday. A release from the Defence PRO said Singh, during his visit to Army Sports Institute, is likely to name the stadium in the campus as 'Neeraj Chopra Army Sports Institute, Pune Cantonment'. Chopra, a Naik Subedar in the Army who won gold in the javelin competition in the recently-concluded Tokyo Olympics, had himself trained at the ASI. As per the release, Singh will felicitate 16 Olympians from the Services during his visit to ASI, apart from addressing troops and sportsmen training at the premier facility. **PTI**

Matthews left out of contract list

Colombo: Eighteen Sri Lankan cricketers on Friday signed central contracts for five months till the end of this year but former captain Angelo Matthews was left out. Sri Lanka Cricket announced that the "players signed the contracts without any deviation from the contracts offered previously, which was formulated by SLC along with the Technical Advisory Committee". "18 players signed the National Player Contracts, which came into effect from 01st August 2021. The new contract will be for a 05 month period and will end on the 31st December 2021," the SLC said in a statement. **PTI**

Cairns is off life support after surgery

Karachi: Former New Zealand all-round Chris Cairns is off life support and is recovering following a heart surgery, his lawyer said on Friday. Cairns had suffered a major medical emergency - an aortic dissection - earlier this month and was put on life support. Aortic dissection is a serious condition in which a tear happens in the inner layer of the body's main artery. "I'm pleased to advise that Chris is off life support and has been able to communicate with his family from hospital in Sydney," his lawyer Aaron Lloyd said in a statement. "He and his family are thankful for all of the support and well wishes from everyone, and for the privacy they have been afforded." **PTI**

Wouldn't change anything for the world: Biles

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AUGUST 20

SIMONE BILES didn't plan for her second Olympics to become a flashpoint in the evolving conversation about the role proper mental health plays in all levels of sports.

Then again, she's hardly complaining. If anything, she's leaning into it.

The American gymnastics star has no regrets about her decision to opt-out of five of the six finals in Tokyo because of a mental block, calling it a small price to pay if it lets others realize they retain the right to say "it's OK not to be OK" no matter how bright the spotlight. "I wouldn't change anything for the world," said Biles, who left Japan with a silver medal from the team competition and an individual bronze on balance beam. "I gave an outlet for athletes to speak up about their mental health and their well-being and learn that you can put yourself (as a person) first before the athlete."

It's a message that will be part of the post-Olympic Gold Over America Tour Biles is headlining this fall. The 35-city exhibition, which kicks off in Tucson, Arizona, on September 21, will incorporate gymnastics and dance elements but also feature a segment led by former UCLA gymnast Katelyn Ohashi on the importance of taking care of yourself mentally.

"We wanted to make it as relatable as possible and let these kids know that we've been going through these things," Biles said.

Biles will be joined on Tour by Olympic teammates Jordan Chiles and Grace McCallum as well as MyKayla Skinner and Jade Carey. Chiles and McCallum earned a silver in the team competition while Skinner won silver on vault and Carey earned gold on floor exercise. Biles qualified for the finals on all four apparatuses in Japan but pulled out of three of them to deal with "the twisties," meaning she lost her air awareness and didn't feel it was safe to compete.

She returned to capture a bronze on beam, tying her with Shannon Miller for the most career Olympic medals by an American gymnast (seven). Asked if she had any clarity on what might have brought on "the twisties," Biles thinks it may have been the buildup of various issues she's faced over the last several years. "I mean, I'm in therapy. I go to therapy pretty religiously," she said. "And it's just something that took hold of me (where) your body and your mind tells you when enough is enough."

While Biles' decision received the predictable backlash on social media, she called the support she's received since returning from Japan two weeks ago overwhelming.

CHRISTOPHER CLAREY
AUGUST 20

RAFAEL NADAL announced on Friday that he was withdrawing from this year's US Open and would miss the rest of the 2021 season because of the chronic left-foot condition that has troubled him intermittently since his teens.

"I have been suffering too much with my foot for the last year now," Nadal said in a video posted on social media.

Nadal, 35 and a four-time U.S. Open champion, most recently won the singles title in New York in 2019. He defeated Daniil Medvedev in a five-set classic and then unusually broke down in tears courtside in his chair as he watched a commemorative video honoring his career.

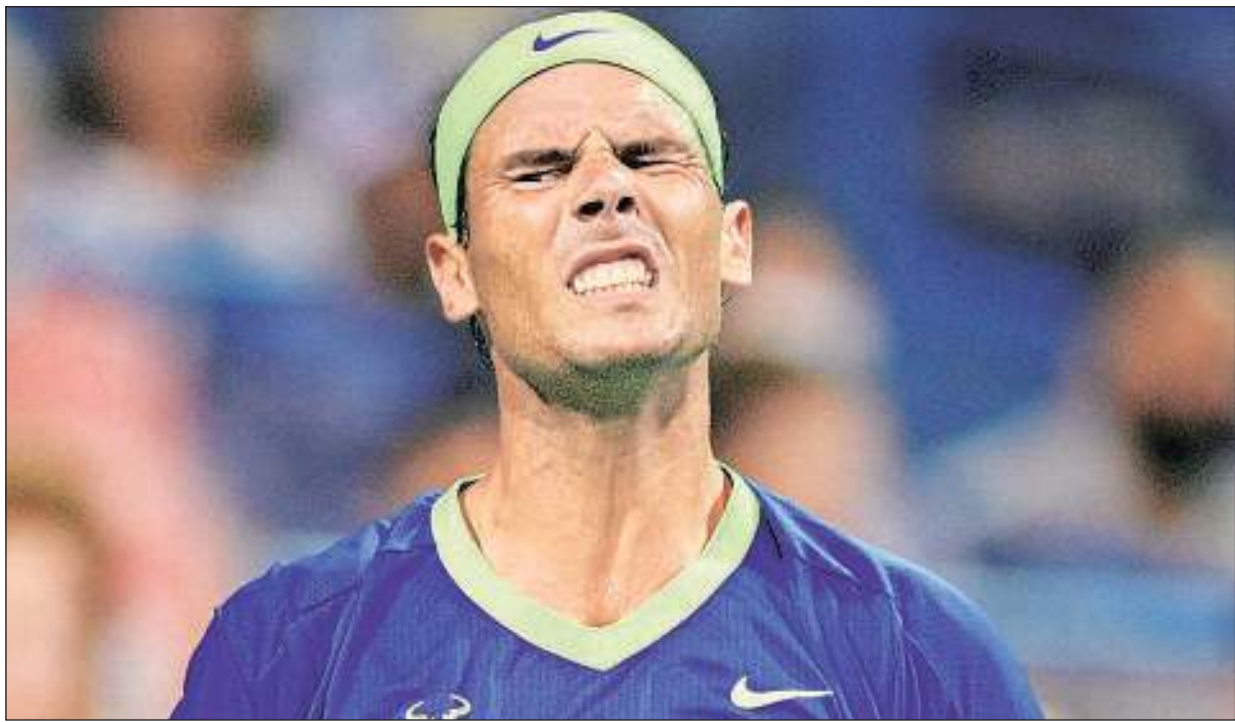
But Nadal chose not to defend his title last year when the U.S. Open was played without spectators and with significant health restrictions in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This year, after losing in the semi-finals of the French Open to Novak Djokovic, Nadal did not play at Wimbledon or the Olympics as he tried to resolve his foot problem. He returned to action in Washington this month, but his movement was clearly still affected by the injury as he defeated Jack Sock in his opening match and then lost to Lloyd Harris in the next round.

Nadal traveled to Toronto but withdrew from the Masters 1000 event there and returned home to Spain to weigh his options.

"I needed to talk with my family, with my team and with my doctors especially to understand what is going on," the fourth-ranked Nadal said on Friday. "But the foot is not the proper way today and during the last year I was not able to practice and prepare myself the way I need to be competitive at the standard I want to be. So we had to take that decision, but I am confident that I will recover myself 100 percent and I will be able to fight again for the most important things."

Nadal's left-foot condition first hampered him on tour during the 2004 season when he was 17 years old, forcing him to miss much of the clay court season. That delayed his debut at the French Open to 2005, when he won the first of his record 13 singles titles at Roland Garros. Nadal's withdrawal means that for the second straight year, he and Federer will miss the U.S. Open.

Federer, 40, announced last week that he would miss the rest of the 2021 season and would need a fourth knee surgery. Dominic Thiem, who won the U.S. Open last year, has a right wrist injury and is also out for the remainder of the season. **NYT**



Nadal's left-foot condition first hampered him on tour during the 2004 season when he was 17 years old.

How injuries have been part and parcel of Rafa's illustrious career

SHAHID JUDGE
MUMBAI, AUGUST 20

Barely a week after Roger Federer said he would miss the rest of the 2021 season, Rafael Nadal too has opted out because of injury.

What is the injury that has forced Nadal out for the season?

The Spaniard has been struggling with a chronic problem to his left foot, an ailment that has plagued him throughout his career. Nadal missed most of the 2005 clay season due to the stress fracture on his left foot, but recovered in time to make his debut at the French Open, which he won

Is this the first major injury he's suffered from in his career?

Now in his 20th year as a professional (he

turned pro in 2001), Nadal's career has been riddled with injuries despite the 88 titles he's won along the way. Along with the left foot injury, he's had repetitive troubles with his left shoulder and tendonitis on both knees. He was forced out of the 2016 French Open because of a torn tendon in his left wrist (his playing arm). Earlier this year, he missed playing the ATP Cup for Spain because of stiffness in his back which also affected his Australian Open campaign.

Is this the first time he will miss a Grand Slam due to injury?

No. Since winning his first ever Grand Slam at the French Open in 2005, the upcoming US Open will be the seventh time he's skipped competing at a Major due to injury. This will be the fourth time in his career that he's missed the New York event though — three times due to injury.

A tendinitis problem in 2009 kept him out of the Wimbledon Championships. He missed the 2012 US Open and 2013 Australian Open due to Hoffa's syndrome in his left knee. He skipped the US Open in 2014 due to troubles with his right wrist, and then the torn tendon he suffered at the 2016 French Open kept him out of Wimbledon that year. He did not travel to the US Open to defend his title in 2020 due to safety concerns as the Covid-19 pandemic raged on. Now the same foot problem that first diagnosed 16 years ago kept him out of Wimbledon and the US Open this year.

What has Nadal's 2021 season been like?

Nadal did manage to win two tour titles — the ATP 500 event in Barcelona and the ATP 1000 Rome Masters in May. In the Majors, he reached the Australian Open quarterfinals, but was upset by Novak Djokovic in the French Open semi-finals.

INTERVIEW: BRIJ BHUSHAN SHARAN

‘My allegation against TOPS is they directly oversee training decisions’

MIHIR VASAVDA
DELHI, AUGUST 20

BRIJ BHUSHAN Sharan Singh, the president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), said he wants to make an example of wrestler Vinesh Phogat, who was served a show-cause for allegedly refusing to stay with the Indian team at the Tokyo Olympics and not wearing the team's official uniform for her bouts. Singh also demanded a bigger say in the planning for the Paris Olympics while accusing the Target Olympic Podium Scheme as well as private bodies like the Olympic Gold Quest and JSW Sports for sidelining the federation. Excerpts from an interview:

Has there been further progress on the issue related to Vinesh?

We have referred it to our disciplinary committee, which will call Vinesh, Sonam and Divya Kakran. It's easy to say 'I've made mistake'. But what made you commit that mistake, and why? These are senior wrestlers. Vinesh has replied through her lawyer and

said she did not stay with the Indian team for the betterment of the other wrestlers so that they don't get exposed to the virus. Okay, maybe it was for others' good. But then why didn't she wear the (official) kit? Because of that mistake, she has to know what all I had to undergo, what happened to me.

What happened to you?

After Deepak Punia's incident happened, when his coach beat up one official, I had to appear before a commission that had members from the United World Wrestling and International Olympic Committee. I had to ensure the team did not get debarred. I told them there has never been a case where our wrestlers have flouted any rules and expressed regret but they questioned me, 'how do you run the federation. Your wrestler isn't wearing the (official) kit'. She could have lost a medal had she won. I had to beg and plead.

There was just one coach for four women wrestlers but seven coaches and support staff for three male wrestlers.

The Indian Olympic Association had set a limit on number of coaches and physios.



WFI president has said wrestlers connected to JSW and OGQ won't be selected to represent India unless contracts are shared with federation.

But as federation president, do you think it was right for four women to get just one coach?

This you can ask (assistant secretary Vinod) Tomar ji [Tomar: "We had one chief coach and common freestyle coaches for both teams."] And if you are coming to the issue of Vinesh not having her personal

physio at the Olympics, she did not tell the federation who her physio was. How are we supposed to know unless she tells us?

Vinesh has written multiple emails to the federation with all details.

She gave those proposals to TOPS, never to us directly. She should have given it to us.

There are emails...

It has never happened that Vinesh approached the federation. This is my allegation against TOPS. They are directly overseeing issues like where the athlete should go for training.

So the issue is not planning per se but just that Vinesh, according to you, sent the proposal to TOPS and not to WFI?

If it was our plan then I could have sent my whole team. Bajrang and Vinesh were two very senior wrestlers. They thought a certain plan was better for their future so they told TOPS, who then told us.

At the Olympics, a women's coach (Rajiv Tomar) had gone as women's team coach.

No, he did not go as women's coach but he was made the women's coach temporarily for some reason.

What was the reason?

That Tomarji will tell you. [Tomar: He was there at the pre-departure camp in Sonapat. Since there is no difference in men's and women's freestyle wrestling, he had common coaches for both teams and he was one of them.]

Vinesh has had a string of good performances. Is banning an athlete from the world championships a just punishment?

I am not her enemy. But IOC ke saamne jo jaleel aur bejjat hona pada... how could she wear a different kit? She is senior enough to understand there is a proper kit for every tournament. We have to look at other wrestlers too. India's wrestling isn't dependent on one wrestler.

Do you want TOPS to be involved in wrestling?

Yes, they are needed. But whatever programme they make, chief coach and federa-

tion should be taken into confidence.

How do you see the role of OGQ, JSW, etc.

We do not need OGQ and JSW. They have spoiled three wrestlers, I won't name them. When the Indian government is ready to spend on the athletes, then why do we need them? They can support junior and cadet wrestlers who actually need support. Not just those who are close to winning a big medal. They aren't spending as much as the government, which has spent close to Rs85 crore on the wrestlers. My biggest problem is they don't inform me who they are sending as sparring partners.

If a wrestler is connected to any of these, what is their future?

Bilkul nahi khelne doonga (Won't allow them to play).

Not even someone like (Tokyo silver medalist) Ravi Dahiya...

Even I am giving Ravi Rs 1 lakh per month. From how many places will you take money? If they still want to be involved, they should share a copy of their agreement with the players and factor in our views.

End of free run

Parkour, an outlet for Afghan youth from the country's war-ravaged past, suffers a hammer blow with Taliban's return to power

GAURAV BHATT
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 20

HOLED UP in a dormitory in Kabul, Qudrat Frotan breaks down remembering the last time he stepped outside. The 23-year-old was among the desperate Afghans who swarmed the international airport on Monday to escape the country after the Taliban captured the capital. An explosion, the resulting stampede and injuries to his roommate made Frotan retreat. "My friend has 16 stitches on his head. His right arm is broken. I saw two girls lying on the ground but no one dared to pick them up and take them to the hospital," Frotan tells The Indian Express. "I rushed back to the dormitory and haven't left. I am like a prisoner. All I'm hearing is that the Taliban are inspecting houses and people on their list are being taken away."

Frotan has reason to be worried. "We worked for peace and equality among the boys and girls of Afghanistan through parkour. That is against the will of the Taliban, and anything against their will is punished."

Frotan, one of the architects of Afghanistan's vibrant parkour scene, taught young acrobats to jump, roll, vault over and under the obstacles in the urban landscape. In 2018, he founded the Afghan Parkour Society which organised workshops and shows in 18 provinces. Last year, he was adjudged 'Peace Ambassador' by the International Parkour Federation.

"I don't think we will be able to work with Afghan youth anymore," Frotan says. "Most of our active members have gone to Iran, Pakistan... I am scared and waiting for help. If nothing happens, I will have to go to Iran illegally."



From its roots in military training in pre-World War I France, parkour, or free-running, evolved into an underground extreme sport, then a metaphysical martial art, before becoming the latest fitness craze among gym rats. Its exponents are part of Madonna's dance troupe and James Bond's rogues' gallery. They are subjects of documentaries and YouTube videos of daredevilry and one-upmanship.

In Afghanistan, however, parkour meant freedom. The practitioners, currently running away and laying low, have spent their lives running through obstacles and never staying still. The streets patrolled by gunmen now were a playground and canvas rolled into one. Wide-eyed pedestrians and motorists stopped to watch as the groups scaled drainage pipes and backflipped off walls. Kabul was the friendly



THEN AND NOW: Children in Kabul practise Parkour as a part of a workshop organised by the Afghan Parkour Society that was formed in 2018 by Qudrat Frotan (right, top). (Right, below) Frotan with his friend who had stitches on his head.

neighbourhood and the pioneers of parkour its Spider-Men. "The kids really admired us. They would tell us, 'You are jumping, flying like Spider-Man'," Jamil Shirzad affords a weak laugh. "They saw the cartoons and films and witnessed the stunts in real life. That inspired them."

Shirzad, 28, founded the Kabul Boys Parkour close to a decade ago. What began as a three-man operation grew to include 60 members. The group's progress has been catalogued by several documentaries.

"We made motivational videos for those who are really hopeless in Afghanistan. We performed for kids in orphanages and on live television. There were competitive events as well," says Shirzad. "The talent in Afghanistan attracted foreign journalists, parkour athletes to come here and make documentaries. We filmed with BBC, Voice of America, Discovery, Journalists and parkour enthusiasts from Czech Republic, Germany, China, Japan, Pakistan and Iran came to visit us."

Attracting the youth

With great power, came great responsibility. "Parkour was about introducing a new sport to the youth and also to show the positive side of Afghanistan to the world," Shirzad says. With a lack of gym and training facilities,

My friend has 16 stitches on his head. His right arm is broken. I saw two girls lying on the ground but no one dared to pick them up and take them to the hospital... I am like a prisoner. We worked for peace and equality among the boys and girls of Afghanistan through parkour. That is against the will of the Taliban, and anything against their will is punished."

QUDRAT FROTAN
FOUNDER, AFGHAN PARKOUR SOCIETY

Afghan parkour took to the war ruins on the edge of Kabul. Scaling and leaping from one point to another in the dilapidated buildings served two purposes: tougher 'obstacle courses' and reminders of the nation's strife-filled history.

"The youth of Afghanistan didn't want to go back to the bitter history. These wars in Afghanistan had left everyone traumatised. They were all looking for peace and freedom, which they found in parkour," says Frotan. "Young people were very frustrated and there was no trust among them. Everyone was fac-

ing psychological challenges. By doing parkour, they learned how to get over the mental blocks as well as the problems in their lives. Thinking is the solution, not violence."



The parkour collective was also a fight for gender equality; the groups believe that the act of teaching women has made them targets.

"We fought for gender rights, to train girls to be active, to train girls in self-defence. They would perform on the streets," says Shirzad. "It was about going towards a better future and a better life but that dream has been shattered. We are living in a nightmare now."

As of Friday evening, Shirzad hasn't slept in 60 hours. Like the rest of his Kabul Boys Parkour colleagues, he too is in hiding. The days are spent awaiting calls from his mother and siblings and directing his teammates to different, safer locations.

"In Taliban's minds, we were breakdancing, free-running with foreigners and journalists. We were introducing the culture to them, which is out of Islam. That we were informing them," he says. "They are with their cars everywhere, carrying guns. It is a very scary situation for us and our only dream is survival right now."



Tough times

Survival, even day-to-day, is challenging. "There's no market for the vendors. There's no food on the table of poor people. The banks are closed, ATMs are closed. Everything's frozen. Nobody has any cash. To even get some food is becoming difficult. We have four hours of electricity and the internet is very expensive. There's no way of staying connected with each other."

Shirzad says he is taking a risk every time he posts on Instagram, asking for helping hands and safe passage. The parkour fraternity has been supportive but the group requires tangible assistance.

"I will be a loser leader if I leave Afghanistan before my members. The embassies are only evacuating those who work with them. We were activists for sports, we were activists for gender rights, we were activists for motivating the youth, performing and teaching free of cost. But we will not be considered."

Shirzad spent years teaching a mantra to the Afghan youth: "you can jump over any obstacle." He admits the current challenge seems insurmountable. "As a leader, I cannot accept failure. But the reality is that this isn't just the end of parkour in Afghanistan. It feels like the end of all life."

U-20 Worlds: Shaili Singh tops qualies, makes long jump final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAIROBI, AUGUST 20

UP AND coming long jumper Shaili Singh lived up to the expectations as she made it to the finals after topping the qualification round with an effort of 6.40m in the U-20 World Athletics Championships here on Friday.

The 17-year-old Shaili, considered one of the brightest upcoming stars in Indian athletics, achieved her best of the day in her third and final jump after starting off with a 6.34m in Group B. Her second jump recorded 5.98m.

She was one of three long jumpers who secured automatic qualification, set at 6.35m, for the final. She would have made the grade on the strength of her opening effort of 6.34m but chose to strain every sinew on her last attempt to gain the psychological edge going into Sunday's final. Shaili is considered a medal prospect but the final is expected to be a tough affair with some of the world's best making the cut. Sweden's 18-year-old Maja Askag, who had won the European U-20 title last month, qualified as second best overall after winning Group A with a best jump of 6.39m. Lissandra Maysa Campos (6.36m) of Brazil, Shantae Foreman (6.27m) of Jamaica and Maria Horielova (6.24m) of Ukraine, who qualified as third, fourth and fifth respectively, have jumped beyond 6.40m this season.

Shaili, who had won the long jump event at the National (Senior) Inter-State Championships in June with an effort of 6.48m, is the current U-18 world No. 2 and U-20 national record holder.

The Jhansi-born athlete was raised by a single mother who worked as a tailor. She currently trains at the academy of celebrated long jumper Anju Bobby George in Bengaluru. She is coached by Anju's husband Bobby George. In men's javelin throw final, Kunwar Ajai Raj Singh Rana raised hopes of winning a medal briefly with his second best throw of the year before finishing fifth.

The 19-year-old Rana rose to the bronze medal position with his 73.68m fourth round throw, his best of the day, but Nigeria's Chnecherem Nnamdi regained the third place with a 74.48m response.

In the fifth round, Poland's Eryk Kolodziejczak also bettered the Indian's best throw to nudge ahead of Rana to fourth place. Another Indian in the fray, Jay Kumar took the sixth place with a best effort of 70.74m.

In other events, Nandini Agasara made it to the women's 100m hurdles semifinals after finishing fourth in her heat in 14.18 seconds.

ADVERTORIAL

World Senior Citizens Day

Home Care for Senior Citizens: Issues and Remedies



WHEN CHILDREN migrate abroad, or move to other cities within the country in search of job the senior citizens are mostly in their late 40s, or early 50s. At that time, barring a few exceptions of course, they can take care of themselves. However, the scenario changes gradually with the passage of time when they turn frail and fall short of confidence to perform even the daily chores.

In a country like India and more so in a place like Kolkata such circumstances prompt us to seek assistance from our close relatives, or friendly neighbors for addressing medical and non-medical (including financials) needs on a regular basis. Those who can afford depute attendants and/or nurses. However, as we know, despite best of intention things may go wrong.

With children visiting aged par-

ents once, or twice a year vulnerable parents are left in the custody of care-takers on the basis of implicit faith reposed on them. However, trust also gets breached when a few care-takers tend to take undue advantage of the situation resulting in negligence of duty and even in some unfortunate cases, maltreating the elderly.

Under such circumstances organizations like Porosh are contacted by worried children seeking immediate remedy by engaging professionals who are trustworthy. At the time of engaging care-givers we adopt quite a few remedial measures by way of background checking of attendants and nurses, founders – Souprano & Paushali – paying regular visits to the members, theirs being accessible to the members & their children '24*7' and installation of Wi-Fi surveillance camera for monitoring the care-takers after taking due permission of the members. The latter acts as a deterrent.

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