



38 CHAMPIONS SCRIPT HISTORY IN HOCKEY.

1.3 BILLION INDIANS WALK AN INCH TALLER...

Indian Men's and Women's Hockey teams
made a historic entry into the Semi-Finals
at Tokyo Olympics.

Jai Hind!

CONGRATULATIONS TEAM INDIA!




**Odisha is proud to have partnered with Hockey India
in this remarkable journey**

Solutions Crossword 4497: Across: 1 Horseradish, 9 Egghead, 10 Mouth, 11 Ring, 12 Inscribe, 14 Intent, 16 Warsaw, 18 Nuisance, 19 Taxi, 22 Spilt, 23 Antioch, 24 Clandestine. **Down:** 2 Organ, 3 Shed, 4 Riding, 5 Democrat, 6 Studies, 7 Bear witness, 8 Wheelwright, 13 Unfasten, 15 Trivial, 17 Scrape, 20 Acorn, 21 Stet.

ACYRR: [] [] [■] [■] []
 EENXDP: [] [] [■] [] []

6	8	3	2	1	7	9	5	4
9	4	5	8	6	3	2	1	7
7	1	2	5	4	9	3	8	6
1	3	4	6	9	8	5	7	2
2	9	7	3	5	1	6	4	8
5	6	8	7	2	4	1	3	9
3	5	9	4	8	2	7	6	1
8	2	6	1	7	5	4	9	3
4	7	1	9	3	6	8	2	5

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
 Try to be more businesslike over the next few weeks. It may not be to your taste, but you must go through all financial obligations with a fine tooth-comb, checking that there are no ambiguities. You might also consider whether you need a little extra time to yourself.

SBI

Marketing & Communication Department, Corporate Centre, 9th Floor,
State Bank Bhavan, Madam Cama Road, Mumbai - 400021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

RFPNO: CC/M&C/2021-22/01 DATED: 30.07.2021

Bids are invited by State Bank of India from the eligible bidders for empanelment of agencies for Video Production services for SBI. For details, please visit 'Procurement news' at <https://www.bank.sbi>

Last date and time for submission of bids: 23.08.2021 up to 15:00 hrs.

Place: Mumbai
Date: 03.08.2021

Sd/-
DGM (M&C)

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(Ministry of Railways)

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NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

GMC(C), RITES Ltd. Bengaluru invites on behalf of the Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, GOK, Bengaluru online percentage rate bids in Two Packet System for the following works: (1)NIT No. RITES/BLR/OT/16/2021 Date 02.08.2021, Construction of Additional Classrooms To Block, Renovation works for Government First Grade Colleges at Raichur. Est. Cost is Rs.406.31 Lakhs (Approx.), EMD Rs.4.06 Lakhs, Period of completion : 18 months, Last date and time of submission of bid 23.08.2021 upto 11.00 hrs. (2)NIT No. RITES/BLR/OT/17/2021 Date 02.08.2021, Construction of Additional Classrooms To Block, Renovation works for Government First Grade Colleges in Hassan and Chikmagalur District for Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, GOK, Bengaluru Est. Cost is Rs.675.24 Lakhs (Approx.), EMD Rs. 6.75 Lakhs, Period of completion:18 months, Last date and time of submission of bid 23.08.2021 upto 11.00 hrs. The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Addendum / Corrigendum, if any, shall be hosted online only.

Sd/- General Manager (C)
RITES Ltd. Bangalore
For and on behalf of DCTE

"IMPORTANT"

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THE 16 WHO SCRIPTED INDIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY HISTORY

RANI, SAVITA, GURJIT, VANDANA, GRACE, NEHA, NIKKI, UDITA, NISHA, SUSHILA, MONIKA, NAVJOT, SALIMA, NAVNEET, LALREMSIAMI, SHARMILA

**MIHIR VASAVDA**
TOKYO, AUGUST 2

RANI RAMPAL leaned on the fence, closed her eyes and, as the first droplets of rain fell on her face, allowed herself a wide grin.

Soaking in the freshly minted feeling of being an Olympic semifinalist, the India captain was in a daze. She walked from the pitch towards the dressing room through a narrow, barricaded path, stopped for a second, pumped her arms and shouted: "Yaaaay!" Then, she hopped onto a cart and embraced her coach Sjoerd Marijne. "Is this real?" they asked each other.

It didn't feel real. Not to Rani. Not to Marijne. Not to the few hundred people inside the Oi Hockey Stadium or the billion back home. But as the Tricolour

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



The players celebrate after winning their quarterfinal match against World No. 3 Australia 1-0 on Monday. Reuters

Fitter, tougher, faster, fearless: how coach Sjoerd Marijne changed a team on, off field

MIHIR VASAVDA
TOKYO, AUGUST 2

LAST WEEK, as the Indian women's hockey team stared at an early exit from the Olympic Games after their third loss in a row, a fuming coach Sjoerd Marijne called a meeting. The players expected a dressing down, but were in for a surprise. Marijne didn't utter a word in anger. Instead, he screened an in-

spirational movie.

On Monday, after topping Australia 1-0 to enter the semifinals, captain Rani Rampal recalled that session, and said it really helped the team regroup and make a roaring comeback.

The 47-year-old Dutch coach, meanwhile, kept his cards close to his chest — after all, there's a semifinal to play against the sharp Argentines. "I won't reveal the name (of the movie), you can read it in my book," he laughed.



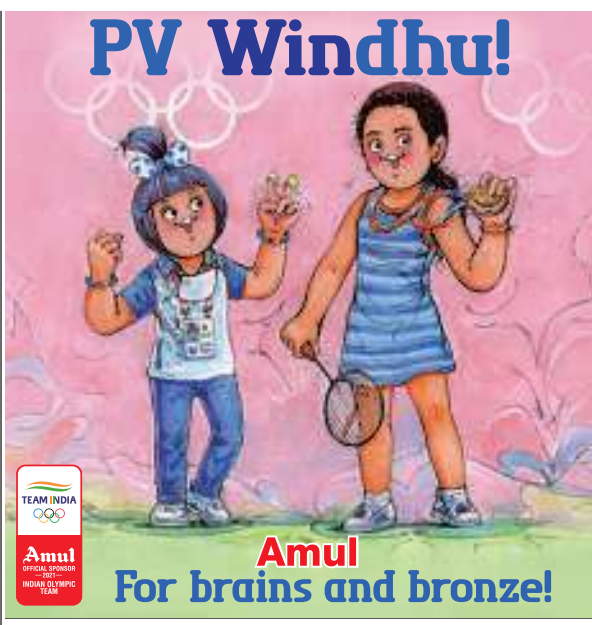
'Sorry family, I coming again later': Marijne posted, along with a photo with the team

It was a glimpse into Marijne's coaching philosophy. "He knows when to push our triggers and how. If we lose, it won't mean he will be hard on us," said a player. "Similarly, if we win, there is no guarantee he will be pleased."

This was apparent after the team qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in late 2019. After making a meal of a seemingly straightforward match, India defeated the US to qualify for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

SPORT

**KAMALDEEP SIXTH IN DISCUS THROW**
PAGES 13, 14

IN LINE WITH OPP DEMAND

Nitish breaks ranks, calls for Pegasus probe, House debate

On caste census, says may meet PM with Bihar leaders, hold own count

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 2

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar, an important ally and coalition partner of the BJP, on Monday threw his weight behind the Opposition's demand for a debate in Parliament on the Pegasus surveillance controversy.

Nitish also said that should the central government continue to reject the JD(U)'s demand for a caste census, the state government "would always have the option" of carrying out its own caste census exercise.

The Centre has stonewalled persistent demands by Opposition parties for an inquiry, or even a debate in Parliament, on the revelations made by a global media investigation on possible surveillance of phones using the Pegasus spyware developed by the Israeli cyber-intelligence company NSO Group.

It has also not responded to repeated demands by parties like the JD(U) and RJD to carry out a census exercise to determine the numbers of different caste groups.

"Let there be a discussion (in Parliament) on the matter (of alleged snooping). Phone-tapping has been discussed for a long



Nitish at his 'janta durbar' in Patna on Monday. PTI

GOVT & POLITICS

RAJNATH CALL FAILS TO BREAK IMPASSE; OPP TO MEET TODAY
PAGE 8

time. One never knows how one's phone can be tapped these days. So there must be a probe," the Chief Minister said in response to reporters' questions on the Pegasus controversy at his janta durbar in Patna.

"People have been talking about it (the alleged snooping) in Parliament. People can be harassed and disturbed with phone tapping. If one takes my view, the matter should be probed," he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Ladakh standoff: India, China agree to disengage from a key patrol point

Agreement on Gogra Post, but not Hot Springs; movement in next few days

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

ENDING THE stalemate in border talks that lasted nearly six months, India and China have agreed in principle to disengage at a key patrol point in eastern Ladakh even though other friction areas remain in the region, government sources said.

The agreement on PP17A was reached during the 12th round of Corps Commander-level talks Saturday. The meeting, which was part of a series of measures to resolve the 15-month standoff in Ladakh, was held on the Indian side of the Chushul-Moldo border.

Sources said China has agreed to step back from PP17A, also known as the Gogra Post, but is "not inclined" to move back from PP15 or the Hot Springs area. "Modalities are being worked out. But on PP17A,

there is an agreement to disengage. On PP15, China continues to insist that it is holding its own side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC)," an official said.

The proposals are with the government, and details of how the troops will move are being discussed, sources said. The movement is expected to start within the next couple of days, they said.

The issue of Chinese ingress in the Depsang Plains and Charding-Ninglung Nallah (CNN) in the Demchok area were not discussed, sources said. But the latest breakthrough is significant, they said, considering the stalemate since February.

A joint statement issued Monday said the two sides had a "candid and in-depth exchange of views on resolution of remaining areas related to disengagement along the Line of Actual Control in the Western Sector of India-China border areas".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Birla asks govt to take his stake in Vodafone Idea if it can save telco

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

KUMAR MANGALAM Birla, chairman of the telecommunications company Vi, has written to the central government that he is "more than willing to hand over" his stake in the company to any public sector, government, or domestic financial entity or to any other firm that the government may think fit, in order to keep Vi (formerly known as Vodafone Idea) going.

**Investors ask if govt wants a 3-player market: says in a letter**

In a letter addressed to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, Birla has said that the company was trying to raise Rs 25,000 crore from various investors, but most of them had asked to be assured that the Indian government wanted to "have a three-

player telecom market".

The Indian Express has seen a copy of the letter, which was written on June 7.

"To actively participate in this fundraising, the potential foreign investors (mostly non-Chinese and we are yet to approach any Chinese investors) want to see clear government intent to have a three-player telecom market (consistent with its public stance) through positive actions on long-standing requests such as clarity on AGR (adjusted gross

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Permanent solution to border row will be from Supreme Court: Sarma

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

WITH THE Centre prodding the Assam and Mizoram governments to dial down tensions after almost a week of the stand-off at the border, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that while the "healing process is on", a long-term solution to the "complex" issue is in the hands of the Supreme Court.

"If the Supreme Court can look into the history, various governments' administrative decisions and decide the boundaries, Assam has no issue... A permanent solution, I think, will be from the Supreme Court of India. If it takes decisions... the issue will be resolved permanently," Sarma said in an interview to The Indian Express.

Sarma also blamed previous Congress governments at the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

**'IT'S A HISTORICAL INJUSTICE THAT HAS COME TO US, THANKS TO CONG'****HIMANTA BISWA SARMA**
ASSAM CHIEF MINISTER**FACING 'DRACONIAN' BLOCKADE: MIZORAM**
PAGE 9

In flooded Ghatal, residents say 'nobody cares about our misery'

ATRI MITRA
GHATAL (PASCHIM MEDINIPUR), AUGUST 2

FROM GHATAL police station to the local jail and the SDO office to even the local disaster management office, all have been inundated. Police have fled the police station to take shelter in a house at the Ghatal bus stand. Over five dozen prisoners have been removed from the jail along with its staff members,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Boats are the only mode of transport in Ghatal now. Partha Paul

INSIDE

**CHILDREN RETURN AS ALL CLASSES OPEN IN PUNJAB****LAX HOME ISOLATION BEHIND KERALA SURGE: GOVT TEAM****U.S. PULLOUT BEHIND MOUNTING CRISIS: AFGHAN PRESIDENT**
PAGES 9, 12

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

CHINA USED its "close connections" with Left parties in India to "build domestic opposition" to the Indo-US nuclear deal between 2007 and 2008. This might have been the "first instance for China to operate politically in Indian domestic politics".

This revelation, that could have political and diplomatic ramifications, is part of former foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale's new book, The Long Game: How the Chinese Negotiate with India, published by Penguin

Random House India, which hit the stands recently.

As Joint Secretary (East Asia), Gokhale was dealing with China in the Ministry of External Affairs in 2007-09, when the deal was being negotiated and India got a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) after Beijing yielded.

In his diplomatic career of 39 years, Gokhale, who is proficient in Mandarin, has spent more than 20 years in China, seven years on the China desk in MEA and seven years in East Asia. He has served as India's ambassador to China and is considered one of the top China-watchers in



Vijay Gokhale, who spent 20 yrs in China, is out with a book

the country. In January 2018, he replaced S Jaishankar as foreign secretary and retired last year. Gokhale's book covers six

topics on which India and China negotiated in the last 75 years—starting from India's recognition of the People's Republic of China to



Tibet, nuclear tests in Pokhran, Sikkim, the Indo-US nuclear deal and Masood Azhar's listing as a 'global terrorist' at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In the chapter on Masood Azhar, Gokhale reveals how China used the Russians to stall the listing of the Jaish-e-Mohammed chief. At one point, he says, the Chinese side also claimed that Pakistan had reliably assured them that the "JeM was defunct" and that "Masood Azhar had 'retired'".

India obviously did not buy that line. As Foreign Secretary, Gokhale was one of the lead negotiators for the Indian govern-

ment when Azhar was designated global terrorist at the UNSC in May 2019.

However, one of the most interesting claims in the book is how China tried to use the Left parties to scuttle the Indo-US nuclear deal.

"...China utilized the close connections with the Left parties in India. Top leaders of the Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist) would travel to China for meetings or medical treatment.

"Both parties were avowedly nationalist when it came to the Boundary Question and other matters of bilateral interest, but

the Chinese were aware that they had fundamental concerns about the Indo-US nuclear deal," Gokhale writes.

"Knowing the influence that the Left parties wielded in the United Progressive Alliance government of Dr Manmohan Singh, China perhaps played on their fears about India's tilt to the Americans. This may have been the first example of China's foray into domestic politics, but they were careful to remain behind the scenes," he further writes.

Gokhale says China's interactions with India throughout this period were in contrast to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



[www.indianexpress.com](#)

WEB
EXCLUSIVE



ASUS ROG ZEPHYRUS DUO 15 SE REVIEW: A GAMING NINJA

This notebook is for those who want the best one, and who have surplus money to splurge on Louis Vuitton bags and the ROG Zephyrus Duo without a second thought.

EXPRESS ENTERTAINMENT



THE VERDICT: SARPATTA PARAMBARAI DELIVERS

This July, two movies wore boxing gloves, but only one scored.

VIDEO



LOCKDOWN WOES HIT SHILLONG

Hit by huge losses, restaurant owner runs a vegetable stall

FROM PAGE ONE

5 WEST BENGAL

Abhishek Banerjee's car attacked in Tripura, Trinamool points to BJP

'Will form Tripura govt in 2023, all those against BJP are welcome'

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, AUGUST 2

TMC GENERAL secretary Abhishek Banerjee's on Monday alleged that his vehicle was attacked in Tripura's Gomati district while he was en route to Tripurasundari Temple in Gomati district.

Banerjee claimed the BJP was behind the attack, posting a video of the purported incident on Twitter and writing, "Democracy in Tripura under BJP rule! Well done Biplab Kumar Deb for taking the state to new heights." He also called on Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb, who holds the Home portfolio, to resign over the incident. Officials on duty at the state police headquarters, however, said they have no information on any attack on TMC leaders.

Later speaking at a press conference in Agartala, Banerjee said that his party will form the next government in Tripura, inviting all "anti-BJP" forces to join hands ahead of the assembly elections scheduled in 2023.

He said, "I'll come again after 15 days. I'll keep coming again and again. We shall struggle till our last drop of blood. The days of hooliganism are over. If they think they can stop us, let them try... Anyone in the Left, Congress or other political parties who wants to fight



Abhishek Banerjee in Agartala. @abhishekaitc

against the BJP and revive democracy in Tripura can come and join hands with the TMC. We shall put up united fight and form the government here."

However, he said that there was "no question" of any alliance with the CPI(M).

Meanwhile, the BJP said that denied any violence took place, stating that its party workers had staged a protest against TMC leaders over the alleged political violence in West Bengal after the Assembly polls in that state.

"Our party workers staged a protest. They didn't attack anyone. The protest was in a democratic way," BJP spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharya told The Indian Express. Banerjee's visit to Tripura comes weeks after the alleged detention and FIR against Prashant Kishor's I-PAC team after they had arrived in Agartala to conduct a survey on public perception on politics and governance.

West Bengal ministers Bratya Basu, Moloy Ghatak and TMC MPs like Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar and Derek O'Brien have visited earlier and alleged democracy is trampled under BJP rule.

'Khela Hobe' slogan will soon be popular across India: Mamata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 2

CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee on Monday launched the 'Khela Hobe' programme at the Netaji Indoor Stadium and distributed footballs to sports clubs.

Banerjee was seen playing with a football and expressed confidence that TMC's 'Khela Hobe' (game on) slogan, first used during the recently held Assembly polls, would be popular across the country.

Launching the programme, Banerjee said, "Believe it or not, 'Khela Hobe' has become very popular. We had raised the slogan in Bengal. Now it was raised in Parliament too, and soon, it will be popular across India. In the days to come, there will be 'khela hobe' everywhere."

Earlier, Banerjee had announced that the state government would observe August 16 as 'Khela Hobe Diwas' across West Bengal.

"We had granted Rs 5 lakh each to 25,000 clubs. We have done community development programmes for upliftment of sporting activities. I believe to take 'Khela Hobe' forward, and we have to take it through sports. We will give one lakh



CM Mamata Banerjee at the Netaji Indoor Stadium on Monday. Express

footballs to clubs in districts besides distributing the same to popular clubs such as Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting Club," said Banerjee while speaking at the event.

The chief minister also launched the 'Swastha Ingit' telemedicine services in all districts of the state. She handed over appointment letters to former Maoists who surrendered to police.

HC HEARING ON POST-POLL VIOLENCE

CBI probe sought into serious crimes

PTI ANDENS
KOLKATA, AUGUST 2

PETITIONERS SEEKING an independent investigation into allegations of post-poll violence on Monday urged the Calcutta High Court to hand over the probe of serious crimes such as rape and murder that were allegedly committed to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as per the recommendation of a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) inquiry team.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal who represented the state police opposed the prayer of the petitioners, claiming that the NHRC report was baseless, and politically motivated as many of its members had links to the BJP. He claimed that the NHRC committee did not follow the procedure for recording prima facie findings.

In its final report submitted to a five-judge Bench of the court on July 13, the NHRC committee had said that the alleged post-violence "was retributive violence by supporters of the ruling party against supporters of the main

opposition party", and recommended a CBI probe into "grievous offences like rape and murder".

Senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani who appeared on behalf of one of the petitioners argued that the evidence on record clearly shows post-poll violence had occurred, and added that victims had been repeatedly threatened to withdraw their complaints.

He objected to the state's allegations of bias against the members of the NHRC panel. "Motivation seems to be the chief argument instead of arguing on the findings. The state has chosen to accuse fact-finding bodies of bias. The state has chosen to side with the complicit police authorities," Jethmalani added.

Meanwhile, the lawyer representing state Forest Minister Jyotipriyo Mallick and TMC MLA Partha Bhownick petitioned the court to add them as parties to the matter.

NHRC team did not question or talk to Mallick and Bhownick, he asked how it added their names to the list without any evidence.

HC judge met lawyer of scam accused: Suvendu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 2



Opp leader Suvendu Adhikari

BJP MLA and Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari on Monday said that he was "concerned at reports" of a sitting judge of the Calcutta High Court meeting the lawyer of an accused in "a major scam case" currently pending in the High Court.

The BJP leader, however, did not specify the "accused" or the "sitting judge" of the High Court.

"Concerned at reports in circulation that a sitting judge of Calcutta High Court on a visit to Delhi met the senior advocate of a prime accused of a major scam pending before the High Court. The independence of the judiciary is non-negotiable if democracy is to survive," Adhikari tweeted.

Adhikari was recently embroiled in a controversy over his reported visit to the residence of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta in New Delhi. Alleging impropriety, the Trinamool Congress had questioned how Adhikari, who is an accused in the Narada sting case and Saradha chit fund scam, was being entertained by Mehta who is appearing on behalf of the

CBI which is investigating the two cases.

Sharing Adhikari's latest tweet, BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malviya tweeted: "CM Mamata Banerjee needs to clarify whether her senior lawyer, a sitting Rajya Sabha MP from West Bengal, representing WB in post-poll violence cases, and also defending a prime accused in a mega scam, met a sitting judge of the Calcutta High Court on Saturday in Delhi."

There was no immediate response from the TMC on Adhikari's charge.

Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court on Monday ordered immediate release from custody of Rakhal Bera, stated to be a close associate Adhikari, while directing the police not to arrest him in any other case without its permission. The court observed that there appears to be a pattern being followed by the police in coordination with one another in attempting to keep the petitioner in custody by hook or by crook on one pretext or the other.

Will stay as MP: Supriyo after meeting JP Nadra

New Delhi: The BJP on Monday managed to persuade Babul Supriyo against resigning as a Lok Sabha member even as the singer-turned-politician insisted that he will no longer be part of active politics.

Speaking to reporters after meeting BJP president J P Nadra, the Asansol MP said he will continue to discharge his constitutional responsibilities as a parliamentarian but will withdraw from politics and leave his official residence in the national capital.

His decision will be a big relief to the BJP as it would not have liked to be forced to contest a by-poll against the Trinamool

Congress, which is upbeat after handing a comprehensive defeat to the saffron party in the recent West Bengal Assembly polls.

Upset at being dropped from the Union Council of Ministers by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the two-term MP had announced that he will resign as MP and quit politics. He told reporters on Monday that Home Minister Amit Shah and Nadra had spoken to him, and he has taken a final decision after thinking over their suggestions.

He asserted that whatever he had said recently was in the interest of the BJP and that he stood by that. PTI

CHANDIGARH HOUSING BOARD
8, Jan Marg, Sector 9-D, Chandigarh, Ph. : 0172-4601612

Corrigendum

Subject : e-Tender for Commercial and Residential Properties on Free-Hold basis.

The Chandigarh Housing Board has invited e-Tenders for 151 built-up commercial units and 38 built-up residential units for sale on lease hold basis vide Public Notice dated 13.07.2021 with the last date of e-bid submission as 02.08.2021 till 6.00 PM.

All the prospective bidders are hereby informed that the date of start of lease period for each of the unit has been provided on the website of the Chandigarh Housing Board i.e. www.chbonline.in

Now the last date of e-bid submission has been extended to **10.08.2021 till 10.00 AM** and the e-bids will be opened on same day at 10.15 AM. The prospective bidders have option to modify (increase or decrease) their bid amount upto 10.00 AM on 10.08.2021.

Chief Accounts Officer,
Chandigarh Housing Board, Chandigarh

WEAR MASK, WASH YOUR HANDS, WATCH YOUR DISTANCE

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E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

ANNEXURE-E

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES, "APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" for recovery of below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/e-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below-

Sr/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s /Guarantor/ s/ Mortgageor (s) /Authorised Officer	Detailed description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues.	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price EMD amount Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Constructive /Physical)	Property Inspection date & Time
1	Goutam Ghosh, Vill.- Ekkabharpur, P.O. Jujershad, P.S Jagatballavpur, Dist. Howrah-711302 Gurrer Bazar Branch Vill & P.O. Siddheswar Dist. Howrah, Pin-711414 Authorised Officer Name: Samir Santosh Toppo, Mob: 8335075012	All that piece and parcel of bastu land and building measuring an area more or less 1.88 Decimals situated at Mouza - Ekkabarpur, J.L. No. 63, Khatian No. - 609, Dag No. 1328/1787, P.S. - Jagatballavpur, District - Howrah, A.D.S.R.O. - Bargachia, Being Title Deed No. I-39/2010 for the year 2010. Property stands in the name of Mr. Goutam Ghosh, S/o Lt. Nayan Chand Ghosh.	Rs.35,21,675.15 as on 03-07-2018 + Unapplied Interest + Other charges thereon	18.08.2021 from 02.00 p.m to 06.00 p.m	Rs.16,66,800/- Rs.1,66,680/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm> and <https://ibapi.in>. Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer.

Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda

Date: 03.08.2021, Place :- Kolkata

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

Regional Office: Greater Kolkata Region
GN 38/2, Sector V, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 700 091
ROSARB GKOL , DN-14, Vishnu Tower
Sector V, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 700 091

E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES, "APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6 (2) & 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" for recovery of below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Guarantor/s/Secured Asset/s/Dues/Reserve Price/e-Auction date & Time, EMD and Bid Increase Amount are mentioned below-

Sr/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s/Guarantor/ s/ Mortgageor (s)	Detailed description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price EMD amount Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Constructive /Physical)	Property Inspection date & Time
1	M/s Mondal Fish Centre Prop-Mr. Mijanur Rahaman Mondal s/o Abdur Rahaman Mondal at 1/1/A Kalikapur Road, PS- Barasaat, North 24 Parganas, Kolkata-700124 and Guarantor Mr. Saifuddin Ali s/o Momin Ali at Bora Choto Jagulia, PO-Choto Jagulia, PS- Barasaat presently Duttapukur, North 24 Parganas, Pin-743924	All that piece and parcel of Bastu Land measuring 1 cottah 08 Chittack be the same more or less along with a two storied building measuring about 882 square feet with super structure constructed area lying and situated at under Mouza- Uttarhat, Re. Sa No-264, J. L No-78, Touzi No-146, R.S. Khatian No-157, LR Khatian No-3460, R.S. Dag No-1090, L.R. Dag No-2512 within Barasat Municipality, Holding No- 1/1/ A, Kalikapur Road, PS- Barasat, North 24 parganas, Kolkata-700124 which is Butted and Bounded by North- 14' wide Municipality Road, south- Land of Different Owners, east- Land of plot "B" Scheme and West- Land of Saukat Ali. Mortgaged property stands in the name of Mijanur Rahaman S/o Abdur Rahaman Mondal being the registered Deed No.- I-07226 of the year 2010 at the Office of the ADSR- Barasat, North 24 parganas, West Bengal.	Rs.41,22,513.00 as on 18.11.2017 and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	09.09.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 40,10,000/- Rs.4,01,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	03.09.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm> and <https://ibapi.in>. Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer on Mobile No. :8335073866

Date: 03.08.2021
Place :- Kolkata

Nimmana Sudhakar
Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda, ROSARB, Saltlake, Kolkata

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

Regional Office: Greater Kolkata Region
GN 38/2, Sector V, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 700 091
ROSARB GKOL , DN-14, Vishnu Tower
Sector V, Salt Lake, Kolkata - 700 091

E-AUCTION
SALE NOTICE

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Sr/ Lot No.	Name & address of Borrower/s/Guarantor/ s/ Mortgageor (s)	Detailed description of the immovable property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues	Date & Time of E-auction	Reserve Price EMD amount Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Constructive /Physical)	Property Inspection date & Time
4.	M/s. Bose Enterprise Prop Mr. Sumit Bose s/o Late Anup Bose, Labony Complex, 4/1 Chatterjeepara Road, Barrackpore, Kolkata 700122 Guarantors Mr. Harekrishna Mandal & Mr. Mohit Kumar Mandal s/o Mr. Kartik Mondal, Vill Bhaluka, Po Majhipara, PS Amdanga Dist North 24 Parganas 743145	All that the piece and parcel of land measuring about 67 decimal lying and situated at Dag no 80 & 81, Khatian no. 357, LR Khatian no. 567 & 386, J.L No. 1, Touzi 2049, at Mouja Bhaluka, Maricha Gram Panchayat, PS Amdanga Dist. North 24 Parganas as mentioned in original Title Deed No. I-3953 dated 07-04-1975 ADSRO Amdanga. Property stands in the name of Sri Harekrishna Mondal s/o-Mr. Kartik Mondal and Sri Mohit Mondal s/o- Mr. Kartik Mondal. The property is butted and bounded by:-North by: Common Passage, South by: Property of Shyamdev Mondal, East by: Property of Nepal Tapasi, Lily Ghosh and West by:Property of Shyamdev Mondal, Tulsi Mondal.	Rs.2554400.00 as on 12.02.2014 (inclusive of interest upto 12.02.2014) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	18.08.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.54,00,000/- Rs.5,40,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM
5.	M/S Paduka Bhavan Proprietor: Mrs. Pampa Mallick:Vill.- Mansatala More, Kotai Ghata, Kushberia, Uluberia, Howrah- 711316	All the piece and parcel of vacant land situated measuring 5.40 decimal more or less lying & situated at Mouza : Kotalgata, P.O. : Bara, P.S. : Uluberia, L.R. Dag no.748, L.R. Khatian no. 1623, J.L. No. 107, District: Howrah, 711316 in the name of Mrs. Pampa Mallick.	Rs.1552793.00 as on 30.11.2019 (inclusive of interest upto 30.11.2019) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	18.08.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.12,70,000/- Rs.1,27,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM
6.	M/s. Maruti Care, Proprietor: Mr. Sujit Biswas at 21, Chanditala, Ghola Bazar, Sodepur, Kolkata-700110; Guarantor: Mr. Sankar Das of Clindi Para, Berachampa-I, Deganga, Dist. 24 Parganas (North), Pin-743423	All the piece and parcel of landed property measuring area total 9 decimal with super structure under Mouza-Changdangnam, J.L. No. - 31, Touzi no.- 146, Hal Touzi -11, R.S. Khatian no.- 19, Dag no.- 3386, L.R. Khatian no.- 1229, Barachampa 1 Gram Panchayat, P.S.-Deganga, North 24 Parganas. The mortgaged property stands in the name of Shri Sankar Kumar Das.	Rs.3035992.00 as on 31.01.2016 (inclusive of interest upto 31.01.2016) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	18.08.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs.7,70,000/- Rs.77,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM
7	M/s Bharat Plastic Industries, Proprietor: Sri Swapn Guchait, Guarantor : Sri Nirmal Guchait, (both at Vill-Barharasankar, PO Ramtarakhut, PS Tamluk, Dist: Midnapore, PIN-721142) Guarantor: Narayan Ch. Maity (at Mecheda, Sanlipur New Market, East Midnapore, PIN-721137).	All that piece and parcel of land & double storied building measuring an area of 14 Decimal at Mouza - Barharasankar ,Dag No. 736 , Touzi No. 1008, RS no 904, J.N. no 48, PS- Tamluk , PO- Buranihat, District: East Midnapur property standing in the name of Sri Swapn Guchait , Sri Nimal Guchait.	Rs.2920366.00 as on 12.09.2012 (inclusive of interest upto 12.09.2012) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	18.08.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 12,50,000/- Rs.1,25,000/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM
8	Mr. Subrat Kumar Rout Address : s/o Sri Bishnu Charan Rout, Gitanjali Apartment, FLAT No. F, Gr. Floor, Thana Road, P.O.-Khardah, P.S.-Khardah, DIST- North 24 PGS, PIN-700116.	Residential flat no. F, on the ground floor measuring a super built up area 585 sq. ft., more or less the G-Hill storied building of "Gitanjali Apartment" at Holding no. 163/78/2, Thana Road, Mouza & P.S. Khardaha, constructed all piece & parcel of land measuring more or less 7 cottahs 6 chittaks 3 sq. ft. together with undivided proportionate share in the common area being part of holding no. 163/78/2, Thana Road, Mouza & P.S. Khardaha, J.L. no. 2, Touzi no. 2998, R.S. Dag no. 4150, R.S. Khatian no. 1504, L.R. Dag no. 5916, L.R. Khatian no. 6967, within Ward no. 14, of Khardaha Municipality, P.S. Khardaha, Dist. North 24 Parganas, Kolkata - 700 116. Property in the name of Sri Subrat Kumar Rout, S/o Sri Bishnu Charan Rout. Butted & Bounded by: On the North by: Stair of the building, On the South by: Flat no. E, On the East by: Inside Corridor and On the West by : Building side space then Municipal Road.	Rs.1159358.00 as on 20.11.2018 (inclusive of interest upto 20.11.2018) and interest thereon together with Incidental Expenses, Cost, Charges etc.	18.08.2021 from 2 p.m to 6 p.m	Rs. 10,55,000/- Rs.1,05,500/- Rs.10,000/-	Physical	10.08.2021 (with prior appointment) between 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM

For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm> and <https://ibapi.in>. Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorized officer on Mobile No. :8335073866

Date: 03.08.2021
Place :- Kolkata

Nimmana Sudhakar
Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda, ROSARB, Saltlake, Kolkata

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021

The EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

YOUR DREAMS ARE WHAT DEFINE YOUR INDIVIDUALITY. THEY HAVE THE POWER TO GIVE YOU WINGS AND MAKE YOU FLY HIGH— P V SINDHU

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SHE’S A WINNER

PV Sindhu's second Olympics medal is only the latest success in a larger story of striving and achieving by India's sportswomen

MEN'S SPORT IN India may be in need of urgent bucking up — an Olympic medal has not been won since London 2012. In this period, spanning the Games in London, Rio and Tokyo, Indian sportswomen have added seven medals across four sports. PV Sindhu has now become the first Indian woman to win a medal at successive Games. The success of women at the Olympics has meant a broadening of the pyramid base from the traditional hubs. It is n't just the wrestlers from Haryana, gymnasts from the east, shuttlers from Hyderabad and lifters from Manipur. Tokyo 2020 has also turned the glittering spotlight on a fencer from Chennai and a boxer from Assam. With the best of sport now available on smartphones, ease of communication because of social media and hyper-efficient search engines, there's no telling when and where a dream gets kindled, watching women sports stars perform and win consistently.

Gymnast Dipa Karmakar didn't just dream up a high difficulty vault for the Rio Olympics, she took her effort to the logical conclusion, came within striking distance of a medal. Sindhu ensured that Saina Nehwal's bronze was upgraded to silver and elevated badminton to a headline television sport, before she returned to the Olympics for a bounce-back bronze. Perhaps the greatest first day at the Olympics for India was when Mirabai Chanu demolished her demons of failure from four years ago to chase down a weightlifting silver, a score of years after Karnam Malleswari's feat barely registered. Mary Kom refuses to go gently into the fading dusk of her career at 38. Another pugilist from the Northeast, Lovlina Borgohain from Assam, has picked up the baton. At the start of Week 2, all eyes are on wrestler Vinesh Phogat, five years after Sakshi Malik salvaged India's twelve-day-long zero count at Rio. Most hearteningly, India's women's hockey team has come to the party, beating mighty Australia.

It seems women go to the Olympics focussing on the podium, and work backwards on the effort needed to get as close to the target as possible. Keenly aware of the deficiencies of opportunities and facilities, and of the slim chances they might be afforded given societal traditions, they don't waste time to get going. Like Nehwal and Mirabai, they take disappointment to heart, and return to work harder. Like Lovlina and Sakshi, they go out there, fearless but without hubris, not giving themselves the cushioning of a "next time" — the sort of second-chances, for instance, that this time's medalless Olympic debutant Saurabh Chaudhary or Amit Panghal might be glibly given. PT Usha, Sania Mirza, Anju Bobby George — they are not just bright stars streaking across TV screens, but role models for countless young women. PV Sindhu went to eight majors and brought home medals from seven. India's sportswomen deliver on their promises, time and again. They get the job done.

ON THE UP

Centre's finances have fared well. But limited disinvestment, need for higher spending, could build up pressure

RECENT DATA SUGGESTS that with the second wave of infections subsiding, and with state governments easing localised restrictions, economic activities in India bounced back strongly from the lows observed in May. At 95.3, the Nomura India Business Resumption Index for the week ending July 25 was only 4.7 percentage points below its pre-pandemic level. It had dipped to 60.2 in May. In line with these trends in the broader economy, recently released data also signals a marked improvement in central government finances during this period. In fact, with the economic fallout of the second wave being less than feared, government finances have fared considerably better in the first quarter of the current financial year than over the same period last year when the imposition of the national lockdown led to a virtual collapse in revenues.

At the aggregate level, the Centre's gross tax collections have touched 24 per cent of budgeted expectations in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year, with indirect tax collections doing a tad better. Under the broad rubric of indirect taxes, recent data signals a rapid pick up in both GST and excise/cess collections. GST collections at Rs 1.16 lakh crore in July were higher than in both May (Rs 1.02 lakh crore) and June (Rs 92,849 crore). With average daily e-way bills generated in July higher than in June and May, the outlook for collections is significantly brighter. Further, with economic activities picking up, fuel demand also rose sharply in July. In fact, as reported in this paper, preliminary sales data shows that petrol consumption has reached pre-Covid levels with state-owned fuel retailers selling 2.37 million tonnes of petrol in July. Even non-tax revenues have been bolstered by a higher than expected surplus transferred by the Reserve Bank of India. However, there continues to be cause for concern. As against an ambitious disinvestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, so far proceeds through this channel have only been to the tune of Rs 7,645 crore. An inability to shore up disinvestment proceeds, coupled with the possibility of having to provide additional support to struggling parts of the economy, could add pressure on government finances down the line.

On the expenditure side, while the Centre's revenue expenditure has grown at a steady pace sequentially during this period, capital expenditure has been volatile, presumably due to lockdown restrictions. With the second wave receding, economic activity picking up, and greater clarity over its revenue streams, the government should now step up spending to provide support to the economy.

PARADISE FOR PIGS

In China, the tallest pig farm in the world is utopia and dystopia, a model for the republic and revolution

IT IS NO easy task to go *Through the Looking Glass*, past *Animal Farm*, and establish *The Republic*. Yet, on a sacred mountain in southern China, a collection of non-descript concrete buildings has stoked and surpassed the imaginations of some of the world's greatest writers. The tallest pig farm in the world, nine storeys high, with 1,270 pigs on each floor, both a porcine utopia and dystopia, an absurd fantasy and a marvel of the modern state.

"The time has come, the Walrus said" in Lewis Carroll's classic, to ponder such deep questions as "whether pigs have wings". In China, while the ungulate cannot fly, it can take the lift. Individual care, 24/7 medical facilities and quick, hygienic disposal of the diseased have been put in place in the condominiums on Yaji ("sacred") mountain. This pampering of pigs — they are weighed, measured, sorted and kept in secure "bio-bubbles" — has ostensibly been necessitated by disease and the threat of dietary shortages. Over the last two years, China lost over 200 million pigs to African Swine Fever and other viruses. And the one-party state, that has been relatively unsuccessful in remaking Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang, has set up a Platonic Republic for the animals. Each creature is cared for, its future predetermined.

But a word of caution: Pigs, like Politburo members, can become self-serving. A duck may ask, along with his sheep and goat friends: Why am I slumming it in farms, on the ground, while the portly pigs enjoy climate-controlled surroundings in high rises? In *Animal Farm*, while all animals were equal, some were more equal than others. The lesson from Orwell, which People's Parties often forget, also is that before there was Utopia, there was dissent and revolution. Revolutions can always come around again.



YASHWANT SINHA

THE RECENT GOINGS-ON in the standing committee on information technology has once again drawn attention to the system of standing committees, which is one of the major innovations of our parliamentary system of governance. Along with the earlier committees, some of which are mandated by the Constitution, these committees do enormous amount of work for Parliament but generally behind closed doors. It is a pity that in this day and age of complete transparency, the committees are forced to function confidentially. This is one of the main reasons why their good work is not known outside Parliament. It is high time to throw open the proceedings of the committees to public scrutiny as happens in most democracies.

Be that as it may, as someone who has dealt with these committees both as a minister and as member/chairperson, I am a great admirer of the system. So, when I read in the media about what happened in the committee on information technology, I was considerably saddened. In my time, the parliamentary committees generally functioned on non-partisan lines, with some unfortunate exceptions. I headed the standing committee on the ministry of external affairs briefly in the 15th Lok Sabha (2009-14) and the standing committee on finance for almost five years. There were three of us in the BJP in those days, who pretended to understand economics and finance, Murli Manohar Joshi, Jaswant Singh and me. The real expert was Arun Shourie, but he was in the Rajya Sabha and only a member of the Lok Sabha could head the finance committees. I was the junior-most of the three. So, Dr Joshi and Jaswant Singh always got what they wanted. I had to make do with whatever was left. So, in the 15th Lok Sabha, Jaswant Singh took the public accounts committee (PAC), Dr Joshi took the standing committee on finance and I had to go to the standing committee on external affairs. Soon

Parliamentary committees have worked with dignity, in non-partisan ways. Sadly this has changed

thereafter, Jaswant Singh was expelled from the party and it took all the diplomatic skills of Sushma Swaraj to persuade him to resign from the chairmanship of the PAC, which by tradition belonged to the main opposition party in Lok Sabha. After his resignation, Dr Joshi preferred to go to the PAC as its chairman rather than continue as chairman of the standing committee on finance. At this point, Sushma Swaraj wanted to know whether I would like to continue where I was or shift to the finance committee.

I was reminded of what Jaswant Singh once told me when he was minister of external affairs and I was minister for finance — that the real work was in the finance ministry, external affairs ministry was mere lafazi (verbiage). So, I told Swaraj that I would prefer to go to the finance committee. I never regretted that decision.

We indeed did an enormous amount of legislative work in the finance committee between 2009 and 2014. I had as colleagues some of the best parliamentarians of the day and the proceedings of the committee were conducted with a lot of energy but also with a lot of dignity. I always asked my questions at the end, after I had offered an opportunity to all members to ask their questions, if any. In fact, the best day of my parliamentary career was when we held the last meeting of the committee, an informal one, and exchanged views for one last time. I was overwhelmed when member after member showered me with encomiums regarding the impartial manner in which I used to conduct the committee meetings. As a result, the proceedings were always smooth, differences were aired with dignity and there was no ill-will even when a member had a major difference of opinion and gave a note of dissent, though it was rare.

I recall with pleasure the joint parliamentary committee which had been constituted to look into the stock market scam of 1992. I

was only four years old in Parliament then, but Chandra Shekhar thought it fit to nominate me to that committee. The chairman of the committee, Ram Nivas Mirdha of the Congress, conducted the meetings of the committee with great fairness. He allowed Jaswant Singh to function almost as the deputy chairman of the committee and gave us the space we wanted. He tasked S S Ahluwalia of the Congress then to work with some of us in close concert so that the committee could produce a unanimous report. But not all committees functioned like that. The second JPC on the 2G scam was a disaster and functioned on purely political lines. We had many ugly scenes in the committee meetings and ultimately had to write a parallel report. The PAC headed by Dr Joshi, which was examining the 2G scam, also saw very ugly scenes. The Congress members were under instruction not to allow the committee to adopt its report. So, when the time came to consider the report, my good friend, and a thorough gentleman otherwise, Saifuddin Soz, even climbed on the table to disrupt the proceedings of the committee. But politics in the committees was more an exception and most of the time the committees functioned as a cohesive unit setting aside party affiliations.

Today everything has changed. The present dispensation has little use for parliamentary conventions, practices and precedents, indeed for Parliament itself. With all due respect to the Congress, I have to admit that the "Congressisation" of the BJP is now complete. The only regret is that the present-day BJP has adopted all the wrong practices of the Congress but none of its virtues. Add rabid communalism to that and the picture is complete. If that means the erosion of democracy, then so be it.

The writer, a former Union external affairs and finance minister, is vice president Trinamool Congress



CHAKSHU ROY

DISRUPTION IS replacing discussion as the foundation of our legislative functioning. The passionate debate that should inform the country is taking place everywhere other than in Parliament. Last week, this newspaper reported that the government is considering curtailing the monsoon session of Parliament. If that happens, then all four sessions since last year would have been cut short. The first two because of Covid, this year's budget session because of campaigning in state elections, and the ongoing session on account of disruptions.

Political parties understand what causes disorder and the changes required to prevent it. In 2001, a day-long conference was held in the Central Hall of Parliament to discuss discipline and decorum in legislatures. A galaxy of political leaders including the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi, and leader of the All-India Trinamool Congress, Mamata Banerjee, weighed in on the subject. Their inputs and those of parliamentarians like Arun Jaitley, Pranab Mukherjee, and former prime minister Chandra Shekhar helped identify four reasons behind the disorderly conduct by MPs.

The first was dissatisfaction in MPs because of inadequate time for airing their grievances. The second was an unresponsive attitude of the government and the retaliatory posture of the treasury benches. The third was political parties not adhering to parliamentary norms and disciplining their members. Finally, the absence of prompt ac-

SETTING NEW HOUSE RULES

Increase number of sittings, give more time to Opposition, to end disruption

tion against disrupting MPs under the legislature's rules. Two of the conference suggestions to curb disorder in Parliament were enforcement of a code of conduct for MPs and MLAs and an increase in the sitting days of legislatures.

These ideas are not new. For example, the Lok Sabha has had a simple code of conduct for its MPs since 1952. Earlier, the rules required MPs not to interrupt the speech of others, maintain silence and not obstruct proceedings by hissing or by making commentaries during debates. Newer forms of protest led to the updating of these rules in 1989. Accordingly, members should not shout slogans, display placards, tear away documents in protest, play cassettes or tape recorders in the House. A new rule empowers the Lok Sabha Speaker to suspend MPs obstructing the Houses' business automatically. The conference also resolved that Parliament should meet for 110 days every year and larger state legislative assemblies for 90 days.

But these suggestions have not been enforced so far. The government decides when Parliament should meet, for how long and plays a significant role in determining what issues the House should discuss. Successive governments have shied away from increasing the working days of Parliament. When a contentious issue crops up, the government dithers on debating it, leading to Opposition MPs violating the conduct rules and disrupting the proceedings of Parliament. Since they have the support of their parties in breaking the rules, the threat of suspension from the House does not deter them.

Breaking this pattern of parliamentary disruptions requires a few changes in the functioning of Parliament. As recommended by the 2001 conference, there should be an increase in the working days of Parliament. Our legislature should meet throughout the year, like parliaments of most developed democracies. But these increased days will not help prevent disruptions if opposition parties don't have the opportunity to debate and highlight important issues. Currently, government business takes priority, and private members discuss their topics post lunch on a Friday.

In the United Kingdom, where Parliament meets over 100 days a year, opposition parties get 20 days on which they decide the agenda for discussion in Parliament. The main opposition party gets 17 days and the remaining three days are given to the second-largest opposition party. Usually, decisions of the House passed on opposition days are not binding on the government and are an opportunity for the opposing parties to focus national attention on issues that it deems crucial. Canada also has a similar concept of opposition days.

More strengthening of our Parliament is the solution to prevent disruption of its proceedings. There should be a deepening of its role as the forum for deliberation on critical national issues. It is the only mechanism to ensure that disrupting its proceedings or allowing them to be disrupted ceases to be a viable option.

The writer is head of outreach, PRS Legislative Research



AUGUST 3, 1981, FORTY YEARS AGO

CONG (U) STRIFE

JAGJIVAN RAM HAS been warned that he will be expelled from the Congress (U) if he attends the August 5 meeting of the All India Congress (U) Committee convened by Shyam Dhar Mishra, the recently deposed UP Congress (U) head, and others. The three Congress (U) General Secretaries, K P Unnikrishnan, Banka Bihari Das, and Ambika Soni have made this clear. In an answer to a question on whether Ram would be expelled if he attends the meeting, Soni replied, "Yes, anybody who joins the meeting will be expelled. Nobody will be given any special treatment". Congress (U) President Devraj Urs also threatened disci-

plinary action against anyone attending the meeting, "even if its Jagjivan Ram". The aim of the August 5 meeting is to elect a new party chief.

VIOLENCE IN GODHRA

ONE PERSON WAS stabbed to death and three others were wounded when some unidentified gunmen attacked them after pulling out from a truck on the outskirts of Godhra town on the national highway. Godhra, the headquarters of Panchmahals district in In Gujarat, was under indefinite curfew clamped since August 1 after clashes between groups of two communities in which two persons were killed and eight injured.

CABINET RESHUFFLE

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi may reshuffle her cabinet before her departure for Nairobi. The expectation is that some of the dual charges, now held by ministers, might be ended. Planning Minister N D Tiwari looks after labour, and Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee is also in charge of steel.

US SCORES A POINT

THE UNITED STATES has got what it wanted at the North-South meet to be held in Cancun in October. There will be no specific agenda, only "free and open discussion" as demanded by US President Ronald Reagan.

THE IDEAS PAGE

India & Greater Middle East

One of the unintended consequences of Erdogan's overweening regional ambition is the extraordinary opportunity for Delhi to widen India's reach to the west of the Subcontinent



RAJA MANDALA

By C RAJA MOHAN

AN EGYPTIAN SCHOLAR, Mohammed Soliman, has recently written about the significance of what he calls the emerging "Indo-Abrahamic Accord" and its trans-regional implications to the west of India. Soliman's concept builds on the normalisation of Israel's relations with the UAE and Bahrain under the so-called Abraham Accords signed last August in Washington. The naming of the accords was arguably an inspired choice to denote the shared origins of the Jewish and Islamic religions. The UAE and Bahrain were followed by Sudan and Morocco in signing the Abraham Accords.

Although Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) had established diplomatic relations with Israel earlier, the Abraham Accords are widely seen as making a definitive breakthrough in the relations between Israel and the Arabs. Soliman sees the Israel-UAE relationship as having acquired a character independent of Israel's relations with Palestine and a promise of expansive political, economic and technological cooperation.

Soliman also points to the transformation of India's relations with the UAE and Israel under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Although Delhi had relations with Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv for many years, they certainly have acquired political depth and strategic character under Modi. Soliman sees this tri-lateral relationship as the potential nucleus of a wider regional coalition.

Soliman underlines the converging interests between India, the UAE, and Israel amidst Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's assertive claims for the leadership of the Islamic world. The new geopolitical churn is also driven by Pakistan's growing alignment with Turkey and its alienation from its traditionally strong supporters in the Arab Gulf — the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

The fragile efforts since the end of the Cold War at normalising relations between Delhi and Ankara have also broken down, thanks to Erdogan's hostility towards India. Erdogan has been championing Pakistan's case on Kashmir after India changed the territorial status quo of the state in August 2019. At Pakistan's behest, Erdogan is also blocking India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Turkey's quest for regional dominance has also widened the Indo-Abrahamic convergence to the eastern Mediterranean to include Greece and Cyprus. The discovery of new hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean, the renewed territorial disputes between Ankara and Athens, and the Turkish quest for regional dominance has drawn Greece and the UAE closer.

Greece has also looked towards India to enhance bilateral security cooperation. India's external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar was in Athens at the end of June and the two sides have begun defence exchanges. Greece's European partners like France, which have a big stake in the Mediterranean as well as the Arab Gulf, have taken an active interest in countering Turkey's regional ambitions.

Many in Delhi will shake their heads in disapproval at the framing of India's Middle East possibilities in religious terms. But the idea



C R Sasikumar

has considerable traction among groups that are otherwise deeply antagonistic.

For example, many in Pakistan have long convinced themselves of a "Hindu-Yehudi conspiracy" to undermine its very existence. They could throw in the Greeks and add Christians to the conspiracy. Those in India that view the Middle East through the religious prism might believe Hindus and Jews are natural allies in the region. But the deepening of Indian and Israeli ties with moderate Arab states spoils the religious paradigm that so many in India and Pakistan would love to believe in.

The idea of an Indo-Abrahamic accord also troubles those in South Asia who view the Middle East through such secular tropes as anti-imperialism and the contradictions between Israel and Arabs. The intra-regional contradictions in West Asia have always been sharper than those between the region and the external powers.

Arabs do empathise with the Palestinians' plight, but many of them are no longer willing to let the Palestinians veto their normalisation of relations with Israel. Nor do all Arabs see the conflict with Israel as the principal contradiction in the region. For some, non-Arab powers like Iran and Turkey pose a bigger threat than Israel.

Viewing the region either exclusively through the religious or secular lens misses the complex interplay between competing versions of a common faith, the quest for profit, and diverging political interests within the region. Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which seeks to overthrow the current political order in the region, has deeply angered the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Fighting the Brotherhood and balancing Turkey have become existential challenges for Cairo, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi. Although Erdogan's Islamic radicalism might appeal to the Arab street, the Arab elites are not about to let Erdogan reimpose the Ottoman imperium over their lands.

As the current turmoil reconfigures the region's geography, its traditional subdivision into the Gulf, West Asia, and North Africa makes little sense today. Nor can the region be separated from Southern Europe and the Mediterranean at one end and the Subcontinent on the other. The familiar regional institutions like the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation might endure but are incapable of addressing the re-

Viewing the religion either exclusively through the religious or secular lens misses the complex interplay between competing versions of a common faith, the quest for profit, and diverging political interests within the region. Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which seeks to overthrow the current political order in the region, has deeply angered the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

gion's contradictions.

One of the unintended consequences of Erdogan's overweening regional ambition, his alienation of Israel as well as moderate Arabs, his conflict with Greece, and his embrace of Pakistan is the extraordinary opportunity for Delhi to widen India's reach to the west of the Subcontinent.

Soliman asks if the deepening engagement between India, the UAE and Israel can be converted into a formal coalition. To be sure, there are many areas like defence, aerospace and digital innovation where the three countries can pool their resources and coordinate development policies. Coordination with Saudi Arabia will certainly remain a high priority for the three nations. Meanwhile, others like Greece are eager for greater cooperation with the coalition.

If there is one country that can give substantive depth to the Indo-Abrahamic Accord it is Egypt. Having ousted the Muslim Brotherhood from power in 2014, the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is trying to revitalise the nation's economy and reclaim its regional leadership role. Located at the cusp of Mediterranean Europe, Africa, and Asia, Egypt is the very heart of the Greater Middle East.

Independent India's engagement with the region in the 1950s was centred on a close partnership with Egypt. The legendary special relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser was instrumental in promoting Afro-Asian unity and founding the Non-Aligned Movement. It was not all about solidarity though. Nehru and Nasser visualised a strategic partnership and sought to build a joint fighter aircraft and develop a jet engine. If Delhi and Cairo lost each other in recent decades, Modi can rebuild the strategic partnership jointly with el-Sisi who is calling for the construction of a "New Republic" in Egypt.

The opportunities that are coming India's way to the west of the Subcontinent are as consequential as those that have recently emerged in the east. Much in the manner that the "Indo-Pacific" has transformed the way India thinks about the east, the notion of a "Greater Middle East" can provide a huge fillip to India's engagement with the extended neighbourhood to the west.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Negligence and VIP culture contributed to the spread of the Delta variant in Karachi, and the resultant lockdown is the high price that citizens have to pay." — DAWN

To Kabul, with burden of past

London's Afghan engagement has been influenced by entrenched colonial assumptions and ignorance



DAVOOD MORADIAN

AMIDST THE ONGOING developments concerning Afghanistan, an exchange of diplomatic pleasantries between the UK Secretary of Defence and the Taliban spokesperson has received scant attention. In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, Ben Wallace announced that Britain will work with the Taliban should they enter government in Afghanistan. The Taliban's spokesperson seized upon the announcement and described it as "positive".

The exchange illustrates the lesser-known aspect of the UK's intervention in Afghanistan since 2001: To what extent does Britain's colonial past shape its Afghanistan mission? The UK was a junior partner in the US-led Afghanistan mission that is on the edge of implosion. UK-Afghanistan relations, however, span more than two centuries. Unlike popular interest in, and coverage of, the British Raj or Germany-Britain relations, Afghanistan remains a specialised subject and interest in the UK. But for many Afghans, the UK has impacted upon Afghanistan more than any other country, including in shaping its geographical boundaries and political culture and identity since the mid-19th century. It was inevitable, therefore, that the UK's re-entry in Afghanistan in late 2001 would ignite historical memories, prejudices, suspicions and fascination on the part of both sides.

On the surface, the Afghan war was projected as part of the global war on terrorism with a strong undertone of "liberal intervention". Many in London could not, however, tame their temptation to look at Afghanistan from the point of view their ancestors had adopted in the early 20th century. Reading Rudyard Kipling's *Great Game* and watching *Carry On Up the Khyber* became compulsory for the plethora of British military and civilian personnel deploying to Afghanistan.

The UK's choices of place, programmes and policies also articulate its colonial past in the country. The UK chose Helmand as its area of responsibility, a province rich with the memory of the Anglo-Afghan wars. The UK assumed the lead role in tackling Afghanistan's flourishing illicit drug economy, which was mainly concentrated in the southern provinces, once the frontier of British India. More importantly, as early as 2008, the UK was the first country to emphasise the futility of a military solution and advocate the need for a negotiated settlement. Mediation between Afghanistan and Pakistan was another of the UK's priorities.

Less known are the UK's efforts and "success" in "tribal balance". The UK supported the presidency of Ashraf Ghani, who belongs to the Ghiljai branch of Pashtun — to which most Taliban fighters are believed to belong. They reasoned that a Ghiljai president could induce the Taliban to join the political process.

The UK's entrenched colonial assumptions and ensuing hubris, ignorance and blunder are reflected in a number of statements made by senior UK officials. Before deploying his country's troops to Helmand, the UK Secretary of Defence at the time, John Reid,

had the audacity to proclaim, "We would be perfectly happy to leave in three-years time without firing one shot." In reality, Helmand became the scene for "the fiercest fighting involving British troops since the Korean War". Another former UK Secretary of Defence, Liam Fox, advocated for a negotiated settlement and revealed that the UK's main rationale in being in Afghanistan was not "for the sake of the education policy in a broken, 13th-century country". If Fox had acquired an elementary knowledge of the history of the country, he would have known that in the 13th century, Herat was the capital of the Timurid Empire (1370-1507) and a cosmopolitan and globally oriented city.

In 2007, the Afghan government took an unprecedented step by expelling two senior UN and EU officials, with Irish/British passports. The officials were expelled because they had cultivated unauthorised contacts with the Taliban, including by way of the distribution of cash. The Afghan government suspected the officials of being British spies. One of the two deported, Michael Sample, who has married the daughter of a senior Pakistani army general, managed to return to the country and continues to pursue his decades-long interactions with the Taliban.

The Afghan allegations of British collusion with the Taliban were not mere paranoia or conspiratorial. The Taliban are the third militant Islamist movement active in Afghanistan that has been supported by the UK and which aims to replace a progressively leaned political order with a draconian, repressive Islamist one. The UK played an important role in two previous successful attempts of Islamists to capture the Afghan state. The uprising against Afghanistan's modernising and enlightened king and Britain's sworn enemy, Amanullah Khan, in the 1920s combined tribal and clerical elements that had received significant support and encouragement from British agents. The second attempt comprised the Taliban's predecessors, the Mujahideen. Margaret Thatcher roused the Mujahideen by telling them that "the hearts of 'free world' were with them in their bid to fight evil". Such rhetorical support was accompanied by massive financial, military and diplomatic support. The UK Chief of the General Staff, Nicholas Carter, has recently assumed additional responsibility for reviving the UK's mediation effort between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the triangle of Afghanistan-Pakistan-UK, many Afghans would describe it as "2+1", similar to the Palestinians' view of the US' role in the Palestine-Israel conflict. The UK's Pakistan-centric South Asia policy is further illustrated by the absence of any dialogue between London and Delhi on Afghanistan since 2001.

While too much focus on the role of colonial assumption and mindset would lead to an overly deterministic account of the UK's two-decades involvement in Afghanistan, it nevertheless deserves due recognition and scrutiny. Despite losing more than 450 troops and investing significant amounts of financial and political resources, the UK has failed to attain any of its stated objectives in the country. A UK emancipated from its colonial burden would have been in a better position to contribute to Afghanistan's stability and security.

The writer is founder and director-general, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies



OOPALI OPERAJITA

The art of Blinkening

US Secretary of State's praise for India came from the heart

BLINKEN (VERB): TO assiduously and tactfully refuse to be drawn into controversy; to maintain pivotal, cordial relationships, notwithstanding a cacophony of patently instigated noises, and, thereby, render those noises irrelevant.

The recent visit to India by the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, cemented the robust and time-tested relations between the world's largest and oldest democracies. On the agenda for urgent discussion: Covid-19, Afghanistan, the Quad, and a raft of other pressing matters that could brook no delay. In the wake of this visit, and, in particular, the press conference that he and India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, held at the conclusion of their talks, there was a flurry of articles trying to gloss over the fact that Blinken categorically — and graciously, in deference to accepted diplomatic protocol — refused to be drawn into any kind of commentary on India's internal affairs. These articles epitomise a refusal to accept what is true. If only he had cried havoc and let slip the dogs of war! We might work ourselves into a lather all we want, and read dozens of meanings into his statements on both democracies, but the truth is that Blinken assiduously avoided being judgemental about India, saying that he approached India with a sense of "humility". He alluded to our democracies as "works in progress" and offered up tangible

praise for India as a democracy. I, therefore, name this sage diplomatic strategy the art of Blinkening, infused with fresh meaning and depth as it has been, by Antony Blinken. There is just too much at stake in this crucial relationship to let self-righteousness taint it. It takes a large dollop of naïveté to assume that any leader is simply going to jump into an arena now populated by activists and belligerent mediapersons, and, thereby, jeopardise important bilateral relations. The real world does not work that way. The very act of requesting another nation to interfere in India's internal affairs is both immature and treacherous, and epitomises our colonial hangover.

Calling the US-India relationship "one of the most consequential relationships we have with any country on earth," Blinken added: "Finally, our bilateral relationship is strengthened by our shared values. As two of the world's leading democracies, we take seriously our responsibilities to deliver freedom, equality and opportunity to all of our people ... Part of the promise of democracy is the constant striving for better. Those values are at the heart of our democratic systems. They're at the core of the vast array of partnerships connecting our countries, not only between our governments but also between our private sectors, universities, civil societies, and most of all between our people." As someone whose

professional and personal investment in, and connection with, North America dates back to 1980, and whose areas of specialisation are cross-cultural communication, international relations, and public policy, I believe I have a reasonably accurate take on exactly what Blinken meant. He was not fudging around; what he said, with discernible eloquence, came from the heart.

In the above context, a couple of comments in the media need responses: One Indian journalist thinks Blinken "waffled painfully, trying his best to say nothing when asked about the Modi government's democratic backsliding. But Dr S Jaishankar leapt in, right after, to reveal the three issues the US raised with India." This is inaccurate, and sheer fabrication: I watched the press conference live. Blinken chose to reply first, to Courtney McBride of *The Wall Street Journal*, when she asked him about his perception of India as a democracy, and here is an excerpt from what he said: "I'm happy to start ... The most remarkable democratic elections in the world, in many ways, are here in India, just by sheer numbers. It's the largest expression of free political will by citizens anywhere on earth ... And we celebrate that the world's oldest and the world's largest democracies are dedicated at heart to a shared set of values that I be-

lieve will ensure not only the success of democracy, but the success of the relationship between India and the United States." Now, for someone who was trying to say nothing, Blinken said rather a lot, and there wasn't the slightest trace of a waffle or discomfiture in his response.

In a predictably wilful and schismatic map of misreading, a writer at another daily refers, in a tweet, to her article which magnifies, out of proportion, Blinken's discussion of "CAA, love jihad and farmers' protests with civil society representatives", hoping, desperately, to delineate this meeting as the reason for a US Secretary of State's India visit. This is a risible and misfired attempt to diminish the centrality and positive outcome of the Blinken-Jaishankar dialogue, and the Blinken-Modi meeting, as if they were postscripts.

All those manufactured and spurious correlations, the hectoring and the cotton candy cozenage — they were all astutely banished. "Blinkened", if you will. Blinken complimented India as a strong and resilient democracy, on more than one occasion, and with elegance. India now looks forward to President Biden's visit.

The writer is a Distinguished Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TOP-DOWN ORDER

THIS REFERS TO the article, "The green warrant" (IE, August 2). The Supreme Court's blanket judgment is skewed and it must make corrections to the same. It is no secret that men in white-collar jobs don't understand the lives of their blue-collar counterparts but get to make laws for them and decide their fate for them. The Khorri Gaon eviction order is no exception. The order purportedly taking a hard stance for environmentalism forgets that ruling with an iron hand on such sensitive issues can not only be detrimental to the people living there but also counterproductive.

Udit Sarkar, Kolkata

GRUELLING OLYMPICS

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Super Sindhu Sunday" (IE, August 2). Badminton star P V Sindhu has won the bronze after defeating China's He Bingjiao 21-13, 21-15 during Sunday's third-place play-off. India had a special moment when its women's hockey team entered the semi-finals. While these stirring events kept India afloat, there is also the litany of heart-breaks. The Games exert immense pressure as it is always about the athlete combining individual excellence with national pride. It is never easy and the Indian contingent would vouch for that going into the second week.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

IDEAS ONLINE

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FIELDS: SOHAM MUKHERJEE
AND SUMANTA ROY

● A NEW AGE OF
SURVEILLANCE: JAVED
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NEP PIPE DREAM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, "Walking NEP talk" (IE, August 2). The NEP 2020, a year on, remains largely a decent document. And like most government "visions", it remains largely a pipe dream. What seems to be happening on the ground is that education is being left to the private, for-profit sector, at both schools and the university level. What is needed is a strong, neighbourhood-based public school system — along the lines of Britain's Comprehensive Schools — and an expansion of government universities.

Biswadeep Chatterjee, via email

8 IN PARLIAMENT MONSOON SESSION

5 QUESTIONS



TRS RAJYA SABHA MP BANDA PRAKASH SPEAKS TO AVISHEK G DASTIDAR ON WHY HE RAISED CONCERNS ABOUT THE INLAND WATERWAYS BILL PASSED IN THE UPPER HOUSE MONDAY.

You raised certain concerns on The Inland Vessels Bill ?

The length of the rivers and canals in the country is 32,792 km... we are using only 4,000 km of inland waterways... this Bill is a totally unified law ignoring the state government's claims and framework. I said the state governments should also be given proper attention while making laws. Only around 1,100 waterways have been declared as national waterways. I requested that Godavari and Krishna should also be included.

Are you suggesting that the new law encroaches into the domain of the states?

It is an integrated Bill. As per this Bill, the state governments will have no role... registration, licensing... everything will be done by the Centre...

Are you seeing a pattern?

After Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister, whatever Bills they are bringing are all centralised Bills ignoring the federal spirit of the country...

The Bill was passed in the din.

It is a compulsion for them to run the show. They are passing the Bills... In Lok Sabha, without discussion, Bills have been passed. But for the first time in the Rajya Sabha it is happening....

What is the TRS's stand on the Pegasus scandal?

National political parties will fight on many issues. But our interest is only our state. State interest is the top priority for the TRS.

Insurance law amendment passed without LS debate, tribunal reforms Bill introduced

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

THE MONSOON session saw another acrimonious day in the Lok Sabha on Monday due to the stalemate between the Treasury and Opposition benches.

Amid Opposition protests over the Pegasus spyware controversy and farm laws, a Bill to amend the general insurance law — to allow the government to pare its stake in state-owned insurers — was passed without debate, while another to abolish as many as nine appellate tribunals set up under various Acts was introduced.

The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021 is aimed at generating required resources from the Indian markets so that public sector general insurers can design innovative products.

Opposition leaders alleged that the government deliberately



Speaker Om Birla; Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (left) in Lok Sabha on Monday. PTI

brought the Bill, which has far-reaching impact and was introduced on Friday, amid the protests for consideration and passing without discussion. "The Bill is a dangerous one — it's in a way denationalising the public sector general insurance companies," RSPMPNK Premachandran said.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury objected when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stood up to withdraw the Tribunals Reforms

(Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Bill. "By riding roughshod over the Opposition's legitimate right, the Government has been bulldozing one after another legislation without any discussion."

The Bill, introduced in the Budget Session, could not be passed at that time and an ordinance had been promulgated in its place on April 4.

On Monday, Sitharaman introduced a fresh Bill, The Tribunals Reforms Bill, in its place to amend

nine Acts — the Cinematograph Act 1952, the Customs Act 1962, the Airport Authority of India Act, 1994, the Copyrights, Act, 1957, the Patents Act, 1970, the Trade Marks Act, 1999, Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 and the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002.

The amendment is aimed at abolishing tribunals or authorities

under various laws by amending various statutes to streamline the justice delivery system. All cases pending before such tribunals or authorities will be transferred to the Commercial Court or High Court, said the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill.

The government pushed the Bill in the afternoon even as the Opposition MPs — of the Congress-led UPA, Left, BSP, SAD and TMC — continued shouting slogans and raising placards demanding a discussion on the Pegasus issue, standing in the well of the House.

The House witnessed repeated adjournments. Before adjourning the House till 12 noon, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla asked the Opposition members to go back to their seats and said that crores of money has been spent to run the House. "This House is for discussion and dialogue and to raise the problems of the people," he said.

Highest number of students 'without access to digital device in Bihar'

New Delhi: Over 2.96 crore school students across 24 states do not have access to digital devices with Bihar reporting the highest number, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said in a written response to a question in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

The total of 2.96 crore does not include such students from Delhi (4 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (70 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (70 per cent), Punjab (42 per cent) and Chhattisgarh (28.27 per cent) as their absolute numbers were not shared. Data for states, including Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Manipur and Uttar Pradesh is not available, while the survey for West Bengal was still in process. Bihar has the highest number of such students at 1.43 crore, followed by Jharkhand (35.52 lakh), Karnataka (31.31 lakh) and Assam (31.06 lakh). Uttarakhand has 21 lakh such children. PTI

Amid Opp protests, Rajya Sabha clears inland waterways Bill

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

AMID PERSISTENT sloganeering by the Opposition demanding a discussion into the Pegasus scandal and the withdrawal of the farm laws, The Inland Vessels Bill, 2021 was cleared by Rajya Sabha on Monday.

The Bill had earlier been passed by Lok Sabha on July 29.

The government said the Bill aims to bring uniformity in the application of law relating to inland waterways and navigation within the country. Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said it replaces the "obsolete" act of 1917, and is designed to "encompass trade and transportation by inland vessels throughout the country without any hindrance... The proposed Bill will make the inland waterways sector more attractive



Opposition members protest in Rajya Sabha. PTI

to investment resulting in more employment opportunities, more avenues and more economic development in the state".

However, some members who spoke on the Bill amid the uproar, expressed concern that it encroaches into the powers of state governments.

Arguing that inland water-

ways transport in India is highly underutilised as compared to developed countries, TRS's Banda Prakash said, "This Bill is a unified law for the entire country... Instead of having separate rules and regulations framed by the states the entire control is in the hands of the Centre."

AIADMK's M Thambidurai, who was Minister of Shipping and Surface Transport in 1998-99 in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, said the Bill intends to take away the powers of the state governments. "That is the only objection. I have no objection with regard to the intention of the Bill that you want uniformity and everything. But, if in the name of uniformity, you are taking away the powers of the state governments, then our federal system will collapse."

In response, Sonowal said fears that the "Central Government would be infringing upon the rights of States to legis-

late on state list, intrude into the domain of the state legislature and affect the traditional fishermen and movement of their boat, are completely unfounded".

YSRCP's Ayodhya Rami Reddy pointed out that the certificate of registration granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all the states and the Union Territories and there will be no need to seek separate permission from states.

"We hope that this provision has been enacted with due regard to states' jurisdiction and in consultation with the line Departments of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Any loss of revenue must also be compensated for the first five years by the Central Government to the respective states," he said.

The government also introduced the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Convict in 2011 Mograhat hooch tragedy jailed for life

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, AUGUST 2

NUR ISLAM Fakir alias Khora Badshah, the main accused in the 2011 Mograhat hooch tragedy that left 172 people dead and many others crippled and blind, was sentenced to life imprisonment by a trial court here in Alipore on Monday. The 55-year-old, who is physically challenged, was also found guilty of poisoning people and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. Both the sentences will run concurrently, the court said.

The court of Additional District Judge Pushpal Satpathi on Saturday had convicted Fakir under four sections of the IPC, including murder and causing grievous bodily harm, and under multiple sections of the Bengal Excise Act.

"Noor Islam Fakir alias Khora Badshah has been sentenced to life till death for the IPC charges 302 (murder) and 326 (causing grievous physical harm), and 10 years of rigorous imprisonment under IPC section 328 (poisoning)," a senior police officer said.

The hooch tragedy took place



Convict Nur Islam Fakir at a Kolkata court on Monday. Express

in December 2011, when 172 people died and several others fell ill after drinking illicit poisonous liquor in the Sangrampur and Magrahat areas of South 24 Parganas district.

A team of CID led by then Inspector Shimul Sarkar investigated the case and concluded that Fakir, who used to run several unauthorised distilleries in the Sangrampur area along with his associates, spiked country liquor with methyl alcohol.

Twelve persons were named accused in the chargesheet filed

in 2012. The CID arrested 10 people, including 'Khonra Badshah' and his wife. Two of the accused are still absconding.

The court acquitted seven of the accused, including Fakir's wife Shakila Bibi, citing not enough evidence against them.

"What I have lost will never come back to me. My husband lost his eyesight. Now, I run a shop to earn bread and butter for my family. However, I wish the accused stays behind the bar for the rest of his life," said the wife of a victim.

To decongest jails, Bengal releases 63 life convicts

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, AUGUST 2

TO DECONGEST jails in view of the Covid pandemic, the state government on Monday ordered the release of 63 life convicts who have served 14 years in prison. The convicts include 61 men above the age of 60 and two women above 55.

"Section 432 of the Criminal Procedure Code 1973 empowers the State Government to consider the premature release of life convicts who have served at least 14 years in correctional

homes (jails). Hence, in view of the above (Covid), considering the age of the convicts, their conduct... the State Government, on the recommendation of the State Sentence Review Board, has approved... the premature release of 61 male life convicts aged more than 60 years of age and two female life convicts aged more than 55 years of age..." read the government order.

Meanwhile, the state's Covid toll increase to 18,161 with 12 new deaths in the last 24 hours. With 575 new cases, the state has recorded total 15,29,295 cases.

Six killed in road mishap in Bengal

Kolkata: Six migrant workers on their way to Howrah to catch a train to Tamil Nadu were killed in the Bakultala area of Baruipur in South 24 Parganas district on late Sunday night when the van in which they were travelling hit a power line pole. Eighteen others were also injured.

According to police, several of those injured, admitted to Chittaranjan Hospital in Kolkata, are critical.

The deceased have been identified as Rafiq Sheikh, Baburali Mistry, Jamal Sheikh, Hasan Mollah, Saidul Mollah and Hasan Sheikh — all residents of Kulti. ENS

WEST BENGAL

After protest, all failed HS students declared 'passed'

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, AUGUST 2

FOLLOWING WIDESPREAD protests by a large number of students, the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) on Monday announced that all the unsuccessful candidates in the higher secondary examinations (Uchcha Madhyamik) had been declared "passed".

The WBCHSE said it had "sympathetically" revised the evaluation of around 18,000 unsuccessful candidates before declaring them as passed. Council president Mohua Das said, "Yes, all have passed, except those who did not enrol themselves for Class 12."

The higher secondary results were declared on July 22, with the council saying 97.69 per cent students had cleared the exams. Since then, those who failed have been staging protests demanding that they be allowed to pass as no

Board: Sympathetically revised the evaluation of around 18,000 unsuccessful students

examinations were held this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"All these students had either fared very poorly in their Class 11 annual exams or failed in the practicals or projects in Class 12. Hence, they were declared unsuccessful in the evaluation criteria. Some were even found to have appeared for some subjects in the annual examination and not for all the papers. They were included among those who had failed," Das told reporters.

She added, "After holding talks with the state government, we have sympathetically considered the challenges faced by those who had not cleared the exams and evaluated their results."

J&K Apni Party mulls resignation by members

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party, which was formed after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, on Monday threatened that its District Development Council (DDC) members will submit their resignations, alleging that their work to assist people in remote areas was being hindered by the Union Territory's administration.

The party had won 15 seats, while independent supported by it had bagged another 21 seats, taking its total to 36 out of the 280 seats across the UT. Two more members from other parties had

crossed over to it later.

Reminding the administration of the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on empowering local bodies, JKAP chief Altaf Bukhari said his council members were either not allowed to function, or their movement had been completely restricted.

"We are left with no other option but to resign because the UT administration is time and again failing us, and not allowing us to deliver on the ground and provide relief to the people in remote villages. I do not wish to show false dreams to the people," Bukhari said.

SC notice to states, HCs on cases still booked under scrapped Sec 66A

This cannot continue, says court

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

THE SUPREME Court on Monday issued notices to all states, Union territories and registrars general of High Courts on a plea highlighting continued use of Section 66A of Information Technology Act even though it was held unconstitutional by the court in 2015. "This cannot continue," the court said.

"As this matter pertains to not only the courts but the police as well, in fitness of things notice be issued to all States & UTs and Registrar of High Courts," a bench of Justices R F Nariman and B R Gavai ordered while hearing the plea by the NGO People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCIL).

The bench asked senior advocate Sanjay Parikh, who appeared for the petitioner, to also make all states parties to his petition, as police is a state subject. The plea pertains to continued use of the provision by law enforcement agencies in states and even lower judiciary.

"Judiciary... we can take care of separately but police is also there in this instance. There must be one proper order in this because this cannot continue," the bench observed.

On March 24, 2015, in the case Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, the top court struck down "Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000". The court found the law "in its entirety being violative of Article 19(1)(a) and not saved under Article 19(2)", and that "it is clear that Section 66A arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately invades the right of free speech and upsets the balance between such right and the reasonable restrictions that may

Rajnath dials Kharge, but no end to impasse; Opp meet today

MANOJ CG

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

AS THE logjam in Parliament continued over the Pegasus snooping issue, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday spoke to Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and sought his cooperation to end the impasse. With the government not agreeing to a debate on Pegasus, the Opposition signalled that it was hardening its position and is drawing up plans to step up its offensive against the government.

The Opposition leaders -- from as many as 17 parties from both Houses -- will meet over breakfast on Tuesday on the invitation of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to strategise on their next course of action. Sources said that some parties have proposed that the MPs hold a mock session in the Parliament premises to highlight what they called the stifling of their voices inside the two Houses.

The Opposition parties have been disrupting both houses of Parliament for two weeks, demanding a structured discussion on the snooping issue in the presence of either Prime Minister Narendra Modi or Home Minister Amit Shah. They want Shah to reply to the discussion.

Sources in the Opposition said Singh had signalled to Kharge last week that he would call a meeting of all parties to break the impasse after his return from Tajikistan, but that meeting did not happen. Opposition leaders feel that more strident sections in the government may have intervened to prevent such an outreach.



Rajnath Singh, Mallikarjun Kharge

Singh on Monday reached out to Kharge but sources in the Opposition said he offered no concrete proposal to end the stalemate. "The government has to offer a proposal for us to respond. Seeking our cooperation to ensure smooth functioning of the House cannot be considered as a constructive engagement," an Opposition leader said.

The Opposition leaders will meet on Tuesday to chalk out their course of action. After the breakfast at Constitution Club, sources said that the Opposition leaders could walk to Parliament, some 500 metres away, showing their unity.

Sources said the parties -- having taken a public position that they want a discussion on the snooping issue to be replied to by the home minister, cannot now climb down and agree to let the House function. Amid the disruption, and the government refusing to hold a discussion over Pegasus and pushing Bills without discussion, the Opposition leaders want their "version to be heard by people as only the government version is coming out".

Rahul's breakfast invitation is also significant since it is seen as part of conscious efforts by him to engage more with Opposition leaders and lead the unity efforts from the front.

WITH INPUTS FROM LIZ MATHEW

Audio clips on woman's phone belong to Sanjay Rathod: Cops

MOHAMED THAYER

MUMBAI, AUGUST 2

THERE IS "no denying" that audio clips forensically retrieved from the mobile phone of Pune student Pooja Chavan, who died by suicide on February 7, were conversations between the 22-year-old woman and former Maharashtra cabinet minister Sanjay Rathod, a senior Pune police official said Monday.

"No one is denying that the voices do not belong to Chavan and Rathod," an official said Monday.

Pune police sources also confirmed Monday for the first time that the voices on a dozen audio clips circulated publicly after Chavan's suicide, had been forensically "matched with the voice samples of Sanjay Rathod, his aide Arun Rathod and Chavan".

A Shiv Sena MLA from Digras in Yavatmal district, Rathod had resigned as the state's forest minister on February 28 after he came under the scanner for Chavan's death on February 7. There were allegations that Rathod was in a relationship with Chavan, both of whom hail from the tribal Banjara community.

Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Devendra Fadnis had written to the state DGP alleging that the Pune Police was investigating the case only superficially. The BJP leader had sent to the DGP the 12 audio clips that were parts of phone conversations purportedly between Sanjay Rathod and Arun Rathod, and between the Sena MLA and Chavan.

Police said they recently received forensic reports confirming the authenticity of the clips.

Most of the leaked conversations were between two men, who were discussing a woman who had agreed to undergo "treatment" and was apparently suicidal, police said.



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

DEEP DISCUSSION

THE GOVERNMENT may be not agreeing to a debate on Pegasus, but Congress leader Rahul Gandhi seems to have had a detailed discussion on the issue with some Opposition leaders inside Lok Sabha. Rahul was seen in a huddle with RSP MP N K Premachandran — who went to him to talk about the “dangers” of the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, which was passed in Lok Sabha amid protests — Shiv Sena’s Arvind Sawant and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. The four were seen engrossed in a serious conversation for almost 45 minutes while Opposition MPs protested in the Well. According to Congress MPs, Rahul was asking others what they thought about the government’s reluctance to debate Pegasus in Parliament.

HEALTH PLAN

EVEN AS the country battles the pandemic and prepares the health infrastructure for the future, it has found a helping hand in Japan. Come November, the Japan International Cooperation Agency will train Indian public health officials on evidence-based public health planning. Officials from ministries of health as well as Ayush will participate along with officials from state governments in the month-long online training.

VIDEO INVITE

TO COMMEMORATE 75 years of Independence and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which has been announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Culture Ministry on Monday invited people to sing the national anthem and upload the video on www.rashttagaan.in -- a website specially made for this purpose and launched today. A compilation of the videos will be made and telecast live on August 15. Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy has already recorded his version of the national anthem and uploaded the video.

Ambani bomb scare: Phones seized from jailed IM chief

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

THE NATIONAL Investigation Agency (NIA) team probing the bomb scare outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani’s Mumbai residence has taken into possession two cellphones recovered from Tehseem Akhtar, the alleged chief of the Indian Mujahideen, who is lodged in Tihar jail.

Akhtar has accepted that the two Android phones belong to him, but denied sending the messages shared over the Telegram app on them, which claim responsibility for the explosives found in an SUV outside Ambani’s house in the name of purported terror outfit Jaish-ul-Hind.

The NIA collected the phones from the Delhi Police Special Cell office in Lodhi Colony last week. Highly placed sources said the agency is looking into evidence against a senior officer of the Mumbai Police, after which permission would be sought for his arrest. Akhtar is believed to have taken over as head of the IM after the arrest of

its co-founder Yasin Bhatkal in 2013, and is one of the accused in the Mumbai blasts of 2011. The phones had been recovered from his barracks during a search operation by Tihar Jail authorities along with the New Delhi Range of Delhi Police Special Cell on March 11.

“Police found that the cell-phones were being used by him since October. The Tihar Jail administration also conducted an internal inquiry to ascertain how he got the cellphones, but they failed to identify anyone,” a senior jail official said.

Sources told The Indian Express that a team of the New Delhi Range first questioned Akhtar inside the prison complex, and he said the devices were being used by six other prison inmates as well, including a member of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). “Police seized both the cellphones, and sent them for forensic examination, but they did not find anything. Akhtar was later questioned by the NIA as well, and he again denied sending the messages (related to the Ambani bomb scare case),” sources said.

SC orders inclusion of shooter for Paralympics

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

THE SUPREME Court Monday directed the Paralympic Committee of India to include shooter Nareesh Kumar Sharma in the list of those participating in the games scheduled to begin on August 24 in Tokyo.

Following an urgent hearing in the afternoon, a three-judge bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar, B R Gavai and Krishna Murari asked PCI “to recommend the name of ‘Sharma’ as additional participant/additional entry for Men’s 50 m Rifle Position SH1, at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics without any exception...”

The court also directed the committee to file a compliance report by Tuesday.

Senior Advocate Vikas Singh appearing for Sharma on

Monday morning mentioned his petition before a bench headed by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana. He said August 2 is the deadline to send the name of the final selected candidates.

Though he had earlier approached the Delhi High Court, the matter was adjourned to August 6. By then the time for forwarding the names would have already expired, said Singh.

Sensing the urgency, the CJI referred the matter to the bench headed by Justice Khanwilkar, which took it up at 2 pm.

The bench ordered that “in view of the urgency and, more particularly, in light of the observations made in...order dated 27.07.2021 passed by the learned Single Judge of the High Court of Delhi at New Delhi..., prima facie, the petitioner ought to have succeeded before the High Court...”.

Zoramthanga, Sarma say FIRs against officers to be withdrawn

Mizoram claims ‘blockade crisis’, Assam says no orders against truck movement

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 2

BOTH MIZORAM Chief Minister Zoramthanga and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said they would withdraw the FIRs registered against their respective officers in connection with the July 26 violence, in what can be seen as further de-escalation at the inter-state border.

While Zoramthanga on Monday said he had directed the police to withdraw the FIR filed at Vairengte police station, Kolasib district, against all accused Assam officials, Sarma said he would “heartily reciprocate this positive gesture” and withdraw the cases against Kolasib Deputy Commissioner H Lalthlangliana and Vairengte SDPO Tharta Hrangchal.

Four other officials had also received summons by Assam Police. G P Singh, Special DGP, Assam Police, told The Indian Express that the charges against the four had not been dropped since “they were at the spot when firing took place”.

As a result of the border clashes, six police personnel died and 50 were injured on the Assam side. There were about seven injuries on the Mizoram side.

The move comes a day after both CMs sought to dial down tension after talks with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

In a Twitter post Monday evening, he wrote: “In order to build a conducive atmosphere for amicable solution to the #MizoramAssamBorder dispute & to reduce the plight of suffering



Trucks that were stranded at the state border last week.

citizens, I have directed @mizorampolice to withdraw FIR dt. 26.07.2021 filed at Vairengte, Kolasib District, Mizoram against all the accused...”

A couple of hours later, Sarma tweeted: “...I heartily reciprocate this positive gesture and ask @assampolice to withdraw cases against DC Kolasib and SDPO Virengte.”

He added that he was sending two of his cabinet ministers, Atul Bora and Ashok Singhal, to Aizawl for further dialogue on August 5.

On Sunday, Mizoram said it was dropping Sarma’s name from the FIR, following which Sarma said he had directed withdrawal of the case against K Vanlalvena, MP from Mizoram who had been booked in connection with a media interview.

The border, however, remains tense, said Ramandeep Kaur, SP Cachar district.

“While we retreated from the disputed territory on the day itself and took position behind the CRPF, Mizoram Police still has not de-escalated and their personnel are occupying the same position as they were on July 26,” Kaur told The Indian Express.

However, her Kolasib counterpart Ralte said the “tension was less”. “Assam Police is still there at their post, so is the CRPF and so are we,” he said.

Meanwhile, a freeze on movement of essential supplies from Assam to Mizoram through Lailapur-Vairengte continues.

On Monday, Mizoram Health Minister Dr R Lalthlangliana in a statement said the state was “under serious crisis due to a blockade created by the Assam Government”. He requested the Prime Minister and Home Minister to intervene at the earliest.

“...Assam Government on

the 29th July 2021 summoned all transporters in Guwahati who have been operating in Mizoram to stop transporting any goods into Mizoram due to ‘security concerns’. This resulted into a complete halt of any type of goods coming to the state including basic medicines...,” he said. “Never in the history of this country has anyone resorted to such a draconian and inhumane act to his fellow being.”

David H Lalthlangliana, Deputy Secretary, Home Department, Mizoram, said, “The drivers are willing to proceed to Mizoram... we have asked Assam to please ensure that they are released immediately.”

Cachar’s Kaur said there were some trucks at the border and less movement through Lailapur, despite there being “no directions from Government of Assam restricting their movement. We have asked them to move but many do not want to risk going themselves.” She added that supplies were continuing to Mizoram through Tripura and Manipur.

Ralte said both parties should negotiate so that there is free flow in movement of goods.

Meanwhile, several BJP MPs from northeastern states met PM Narendra Modi. Assam MP and BJP national general secretary Dilip Saikia said the group presented a memorandum on regional issues, including the border issue. They also alleged that the Congress was politicising it. Mizoram Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati also met Shah and Modi to discuss the border issue.



The MPs with PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi. ANI

Border clash: BJP MPs from NE meet PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

A GROUP of BJP MPs from four Northeastern states Monday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the border skirmishes between Assam and Mizoram claiming that foreign forces were fuelling fire in the region. They accused the opposition Congress of “politicising” a sensitive issue.

Union ministers Kiren Rijiju and Sarbananda Sonowal, along with BJP MPs from Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, met Modi in Parliament House. The MPs also gave a four-page memorandum to him.

There were 16 MPs in the meeting — 12 from Assam, two from Arunachal Pradesh and one each from Manipur and Tripura.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Rijiju claimed “foreign forces are fuelling fire” in the region by making inciting statements and promoting manipulated content.

Quoting Modi, Rijiju said the Prime Minister asserted that he doesn’t look at the region from

the prism of politics and that it’s close to his heart.

In the memorandum, the BJP MPs said that they want to convey to all those elements who view the Assam-Mizoram issue as a means of “spreading chaos in India that their shenanigans will not work”. The BJP MPs said they were pained by the violence on the Assam-Mizoram border.

“At the same time, we would like to express our clear disapproval of the attempt by sections of our polity led by the Congress Party to indulge in politics over these happenings and use this as a means to indulge in one-upmanship,” the MPs said in the memorandum.

The parliamentarians underlined that the chief ministers of Assam and Mizoram have expressed the desire to amicably resolve issues. “A series of confidence building measures have also taken place over the last few days. Yet, the actions of the Congress Party remain devious and mischievous,” they said, adding that the party and its leaders have zero regard for the culture of the region.

NSCN-IM calls shutdown in all Naga areas in NE over 2015 peace accord ‘failure’

JIMMY LEIVON
IMPHAL, AUGUST 2

THE ISAAC-MUIVAH faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) has called a 12-hour total shutdown in all Naga areas across Northeastern states to protest the Centre’s alleged failure to materialise the Framework Agreement signed with the Naga outfit.

The Framework Agreement was signed by the Union government and the NSCN on August 3, 2015 to end the six-decade Naga conflict. Peace talks interlocutor, R N Ravi, currently the Nagaland Governor, had signed the agreement on behalf of the Centre in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The NSCN-IM in a statement claimed that the Framework Agreement is yet to see the “light of fulfilment”.

“Six years down the line, there is no positive response yet... The Nagas cannot be taken for a ride in this manner,” the statement said. “What had been committed should be taken to a logical conclusion.”

The Naga group said that the shutdown will come into effect from August 2 midnight to August 3 noon in “Nagalim” (Naga areas), during which all shops and business establishments will remain closed.

The United Naga Council has also called for a “total shutdown” for 12 hours on August 3 in all “Naga areas” of Manipur.

Potential spying ‘targets’, five journalists move apex court

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

FIVE JOURNALISTS, whose names allegedly figured in a list of potential targets for alleged snooping using Pegasus software, have moved Supreme Court, contending that the unauthorised surveillance violated their fundamental rights.

The plea said such surveillance through sophisticated software such as Pegasus will have a “tremendous chilling effect” on the right to free speech, violate fundamental right to privacy and deter people from bringing forth information on wrongdoings in the government, and in turn will affect transparency and governance.

Those who moved the court are Paranjay Thakurta, S N M Abidi, Prem Shankar Jha, Rupesh Kumar Singh and Ipsa Satakshi.

They urged the court to direct the government to produce all materials with respect to any use of Pegasus on them. They also urged the court to direct the Centre to put in place a judicial oversight mechanism to deal with any complaints on illegal breaches of privacy and hacking and punish officials responsible for such breaches.

The court has listed three petitions seeking independent probe in the matter for hearing on August 5. These include a plea by senior journalists N Ram and Shashi Kumar, another by advocate M L Sharma, and a third by CPI(M) Rajiya Sabha MP John Brittas.

‘Healing process with Mizoram on.. permanent solution can be from SC’

ASSAM CHIEF Minister HIMANTA BISWA SARMA told LIZ MATHEW that the “healing process is on” between his state and Mizoram — after the bloody clashes along the border — with the Centre’s “cooperation”, but a permanent solution can be found only by the Supreme Court. Excerpts:

Do you think the current standoff between Assam and Mizoram at the borders is over now?

The situation at the border is still tense. The government of India is talking to both the states. We, both the states, are also talking to each other using our own channels. We hope a solution will emerge.

There is a truce for the time being. What is the role played by the Centre, especially the Union home ministry?

For the last six months, the ministry has been working very hard to make the states reach an agreement over the borders. But unfortunately, it did not have a result for some reasons. After the July 26 incident too, the Home Ministry, including the ministers and senior officials have been trying to resolve the issue by talking to both sides. They are ensuring that no more clashes take place.

Isn’t it a failure of the Centre too? Two days after Home Minister Amit Shah visited the region, the clashes broke out.

This incident was not anyway related to the Home Minister’s



visit. It’s a very very complex issue and a solution to it is not possible overnight. This has been going on since last October. There are efforts from both sides too, but there are some regional and constitutional issues for which a solution is not happening.

How did things become so bad last week?

This has been an issue since the late 1980s. Assam has lost almost 200 people in conflicts with neighbouring states. When they formed the states, they did not define boundaries clearly... When the Congress government had carved out Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya, they should have defined the bound-

aries also... Because of that the people of Northeast are fighting against each other... it’s a historical injustice that has come to us.

But why did Assam take it to a different level? You have issued travel advisories against the Mizoram government. You have treated them like a foreign country.

Travel advisories do not mean anything. Even in Covid time, we issued alerts... It’s not to stop you from going there, but to be alert. When there is tension and conflict, how can you let people go there? We have also issued another advisory to protect the lives and properties of Mizo people in Assam. I do not know why every-one singled out only one advisory.

You have made some remarks that were seen as provocative. Despite being the convener of NEDA, why did you do that?

See, once our policemen died, you must understand there are sentiments in Assam also... There was no damage to Mizo people or Mizoram. If the people would have seen that the Chief Minister was sitting back without saying anything, things would have gone bad in Assam. But I have been keeping my channel of communication with Meghalaya also...

What do you think is the long-term solution?

Long-term solution is very very complex. Assam needs to protect its constitutional boundaries. Others can claim historical facts. Our state is a result of var-

ious administrative arrangements made by the Government of India... unlike other states, Assam is not just about one community and the state is not created on a particular community’s demand... These boundaries were given to us by Parliament... If the Supreme Court can look into the history, various governments’ administrative decisions and decide the boundaries, Assam has no issue.

You have asked for a neutral agency to probe the incident.

Like the Supreme Court took the dispute with Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, the apex court can take a decision. The Supreme Court has the mandate to decide on the inter-state boundary dispute. The matter is pending... If the Supreme Court takes a decision, we will be grateful.

Do you think this incident will affect your efforts to coordinate between states?

We have been trying to find common issues to work together. But we have been burdened with the issues created by Congress governments in the past. Congress felt a united Northeast couldn’t be governed. That was the reason it played divisive politics in this region. Our efforts to come together are going on... the healing process is going on with Mizoram. At some point of time, with the active cooperation of the Government, we will be able to work together. A permanent solution, I think, will be from the Supreme Court... the issue will be resolved permanently.

Behind Olympic hockey success, Odisha’s support over the years

ASHWARYA MOHANTY
BHUBANESWAR, AUGUST 2

AS INDIA celebrates the entry of the men’s and women’s hockey teams in the Olympics semifinals, the success holds a special significance for Odisha, which has been at the forefront of supporting the sport. Not only are the current vice-captains of the men’s and women’s teams from Odisha, but the state has over the years produced several national-level hockey players and stepped up to develop infrastructure and sponsor national teams.

When in 2018, the state government decided to sponsor the



Indian players celebrate their quarterfinal victory against Australia. PTI

Indian national hockey teams (men/women, junior/senior) for a tenure of five years, replacing

Sahara, it was the first time that a state government had decided to sponsor a national team. The government had pledged Rs 150 crore for the purpose.

“The main objective is to bring back the glory of Indian hockey. Indians have an emotional connection with hockey. Therefore, Odisha will extend all possible support in the coming years,” Secretary, Sports and Youth Department, Government of Odisha, Vineel Krishnan said.

The state has hosted major tournaments in the last five years. It hosted the World Cup in 2018, 2014 Champions Trophy, and Hockey World League final in 2017. It is also the host for the 2023 Men’s

Hockey World Cup, to be played in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

“The fact that national teams have camped in Bhubaneswar ahead of major tournaments is a manifestation of how we have progressed in terms of infrastructure and logistical support,” former Indian hockey captain and chairman of Hockey Promotion Council Dilip Tirkey said.

With the World cup in mind, the state cabinet in March this year approved the ‘State-level Sports Infrastructure Development Project’ for development of infrastructure at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, and construction of International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, at an estimated cost of

Rs 356.38 crore. The Rourkela stadium will be the largest in India, with 20,000 seating capacity.

In 2018, collaborating with Tata group, the state government established a Hockey High Performance Centre at Kalinga Stadium. It also has 12 grassroot centres. Of the 20 sports hostels in the state, two in Sundargarh are dedicated to hockey. The government is now working to set up 17 astro turfs in all 17 blocks of the district.

The state has produced greats like Dilip Tirkey, Ignace Tirkey, Lazarus Barla and Sunita Lakra. The current Indian team has Birendra Lakra, vice-captain of men’s team, and Deep Grace Ekka, vice-captain of women’s team. The

common link between them all is their home district of Sundargarh.

In Sundargarh, hockey is more than just a sport. “We get queries about hockey even from remote villages. With the infrastructure development, we will produce more national players from here,” said Sundargarh District Sports Coordinator and senior hockey coach Milton Bilung.

“Deep was 11 when she started training under me. Over a decade a lot has changed. Many children are more interested in hockey,” Tejkumar Xess, senior coach of the state hockey team and Deep’s uncle, said.

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SIMPLY PUT

Why Gilgit-Baltistan matters to India and Pak

The Pakistan government has finalised legislation for incorporating the region as a province. How was it ruled so far, and why the change of status now?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
MUMBAI, AUGUST 2

PAKISTAN'S LAW and Justice Ministry has finalised draft legislation to incorporate Gilgit-Baltistan, the region known before 2009 as Northern Areas, as a province of the country, according to a report in *Dawn* newspaper.

New Delhi, which has asserted that Gilgit-Baltistan is an integral part of India "by virtue of the legal, complete and irrevocable accession of Jammu & Kashmir to the Union of India in 1947", is yet to respond to the latest report, but is certain to do so. The area's strategic importance for India has increased in light of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor agreement, under which Beijing is investing hugely to develop the area as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, and the concerns of a two-front war after the standoff in Eastern Ladakh last year.

History of the region

Gilgit was part of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, but was ruled directly by the British, who had taken it on lease from Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of the Muslim-major-

ity state. When Hari Singh acceded to India on October 26, 1947, the Gilgit Scouts rose in rebellion, led by their British commander Major William Alexander Brown. The Gilgit Scouts also moved to take over Baltistan, which was then part of Ladakh, and captured Skardu, Kargil and Dras. In battles thereafter, Indian forces retook Kargil and Dras in August 1948.

Before that, on November 1, 1947, a political outfit called the Revolutionary Council of Gilgit-Baltistan had proclaimed the independent state of Gilgit-Baltistan. On November 15, it declared it was acceding to Pakistan, which accepted the accession only to the extent of full administrative control, choosing to govern it directly under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a law devised by the British to keep control of the restive tribal areas of the northwest.

Following the India-Pakistan ceasefire of January 1, 1949, Pakistan in April that year entered into an agreement with the "provisional government" of "Azad Jammu & Kashmir" — parts that had been occupied by Pakistani troops and irregulars — to take over its defence and foreign affairs. Under this agreement, the "AJK" government also ceded administration of Gilgit-Baltistan to Pakistan.

Beyond the provinces

In 1974, Pakistan adopted its first full-fledged civilian Constitution, which lists four provinces — Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan were not incorporated as provinces. One reason ascribed to this is that Pakistan did not want to undermine its international case that the resolution of the Kashmir issue had to be in accordance with UN resolutions that called for a plebiscite.

In 1975, PoK got its own Constitution, making it an ostensibly self-governed autonomous territory. This Constitution had no jurisdiction over the Northern Areas, which continued to be administered directly by Islamabad (the Frontier Crimes Regulation was discontinued in 1997 but repealed only in 2018). In reality, PoK too remained under the control of Pakistani federal administration and the security establishment, through the Kashmir Council.

The main difference was that while the people of PoK had rights and freedoms guaranteed by their own Constitution, which mirrors the Pakistan Constitution, the people of the minority Shia-dominated Northern Areas did not have any political representation. Although

they were considered Pakistani, including for citizenship and passports, they were outside the ambit of constitutional protections available to those in the four provinces and PoK.

First changes

It was only in the first decade of the new century that Pakistan began considering changes to its administrative arrangements in the Northern Areas, as the constitutional limbo became untenable due to the new post-9/11 dynamics of the region and the increasing Chinese involvement in strategic development ventures. Gilgit-Baltistan was vital to those projects, given that it provides the only land access between the two countries.

In 2009, Pakistan brought in the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009, replacing the Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC) with the Legislative Assembly, and the Northern Areas were given back the name of Gilgit-Baltistan. The NALC was an elected body, but had no more than an advisory role to the Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, who ruled from Islamabad.

The Assembly is only a slight improvement.

It has 24 directly elected members and nine nominated ones. The ruling party in Islamabad has won every election held to the region's Assembly since 2010. In November 2020, Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan-Tehreek-i-Insaf won with 24 of 33 seats.

Provincial status

On November 1, 2020, observed in Gilgit-Baltistan as "Independence Day", Imran Khan announced that his government would give the region "provisional provincial status". In March this year, the newly elected Assembly passed a unanimous resolution demanding an amendment to the Constitution to make Gilgit-Baltistan a provisional province of Pakistan, "without prejudice to the Kashmir dispute".

According to *Dawn*, Imran Khan had in July asked his Law Minister to fast-track a draft legislation for making Gilgit-Baltistan a province, and it has been finalised now as the 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill and submitted to him. The proposed law is believed to suggest that because of its status as part of the unresolved Kashmir issue, Gilgit-Baltistan be given provisional provincial status by amending Article 1 of the Constitution. Separately, a

set of amendments would be introduced to give Gilgit-Baltistan representation in Pakistan's parliament, besides establishment of the Assembly. It is also said to have provisions for representation of the region in the National Assembly and the Senate.

The change in status, when it happens, will meet a long-standing demand of the 1.5 million people of Gilgit-Baltistan. There is anger against Pakistan for unleashing sectarian militant groups that target Shias, but the predominant sentiment is that all this will improve once they are part of the Pakistani federation. There is a small movement for independence, but it has very little traction.

While some reports have suggested that Pakistan's decision is under pressure from China, wary that Gilgit-Baltistan's ambiguous status might undermine the legality of its projects there, there is also speculation that this could be a precursor to Pakistan's acceptance of India's August 5, 2019 changes doing away with Kashmir's special status. During the PoK elections, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) had alleged Imran Khan was about to incorporate both Gilgit-Baltistan and PoK as provinces of Pakistan in a "secret deal" with India.

Where tigers roam mountains

Uttarakhand has flaunted its tiger range up to 12,000 ft. How commonly are tigers found at such altitudes?



NTCA/WII



Emmanuel Rondeau/WWF-UK

Clockwise from top left: Camera-trap images of a male tiger in the Mishmi Hills of Arunachal Pradesh in 2017; a tiger in a wildlife corridor in Bhutan in 2017; a tiger in Sikkim's Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in 2018; and a tigress in Askot Musk Deer wildlife sanctuary in Uttarakhand in 2016.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

TO CELEBRATE International Tiger Day last week, the Uttarakhand government highlighted the expanse of the state's tiger map from Corbett National Park to Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary. Between the terai and the mountains, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami flaunted the tiger range from an elevation of 1,181 ft (360 m) to 12,073 ft (3680 m) as a testimony of Uttarakhand's success in tiger conservation.

The tiger's usual range is under 6,000 ft (below 1,800 ft, think Kasauli). That makes its presence above 12,000 ft — the elevation of the Kedarnath temple — rare. But tigers have shown up before a strategically placed motion-triggered camera at higher altitudes.

Global spotlight

While there have been ample anecdotal accounts of tigers roaming significantly higher slopes of their Himalayan habitats, the global fascination with the so-called high-altitude or snow tigers was triggered by a BBC documentary that claimed to have "discovered a lost tiger population in Bhutan mountains" in 2010.

The documentary, *Lost Land of the Tiger*, made splashes around the globe, even as conservationists pointed out that the tigers in question were never lost. In fact, the first photographic evidence of a tiger in Bhutan was recorded in 2000 in Phrumsengla national park at 9,728 feet (2,965m), then the highest altitude record of the species.

Then, not long before the BBC team landed in Bhutan, another camera-trap study



WII

set a new elevation record for tigers, capturing an adult male in the snow inside Jigme Dorji National Park at 13,780 ft (4,200 m) in 2008. Since the global hype generated in 2010, high-altitude tigers have been photographed in Bhutan on multiple occasions, including the first high resolution capture above 11,000 ft by Emmanuel Rondeau for WWF-UK in 2017.

In 2020, Nepal also captured two ridge-scaling tigers — one at 8,200 ft (2,500 m) in Dadeldhura in April, and another at 10,400 feet (3,165 m) in Kangchenjunga Landscape region in November.

Sightings in India

In India, anecdotes of high-altitude tigers survive in community tales, as also in the accounts of hunters, adventurers and naturalists. Back in 1912, in the annals of his expeditions in Tibet and Assam Himalaya, British political officer F M Bailey alluded to the tigers in the high-altitude forests of the Mishmi Hills (Arunachal Pradesh).

Naturalist H S Prater (Bombay National History Society, 1948) observed that "the tiger has left its tracks in the winter snows of



East Wildlife Division, Sikkim

the Himalayas at an altitude of 10,000 ft". In his *Man-eaters and Memories* (1959), Indian Forest Service officer J E Carrington Turner wrote about shooting a man-eating tiger in Gori Valley, now in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district. In *Forbidden Land* (1898), anthropologist Arnold Henry Savage Landor described how a Rajwar (belonging to Ban Raji tribe) from Uttarakhand's Askot offered to take him tiger hunting.

In recent times, a 70-metre-long track of tiger pug marks were spotted in the snow at 10,000 feet near Jelep La — a mountain pass between east Sikkim and Tibet Autonomous Region, China — in March 2009. Photographic evidence emerged in January 2014 in Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh at a relatively modest 5,800 ft (1,765 m). Since 2016, multiple records of tigers above 10,000 feet have been recorded in India:

MARCH 2016: A tigress was camera-trapped at 10,742 ft (3,274 m) in Askot Musk Deer wildlife sanctuary near Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand.

JANUARY 2017: Two male tigers were captured at 11,909 ft (3,630 m) and 10,650 ft (3,246 m) in the Mishmi Hills (Dibang Valley)

of Arunachal Pradesh. These two were the first photos of tigers (other than Russia's Amur tigers) in the snow.

DECEMBER 2018: A tiger was photographed at 9,563 ft (2,915m) in Sikkim's Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary.

MAY 2019: A tiger was camera-trapped in Rudraprayag's Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary at 11,155 ft (3,400m).

Causes for concern

Records of high-altitude tigers getting somewhat routine have alarmed a section of conservationists. Warming induced by climate change, they argue, is making the higher mountains tolerable for tigers.

But the fact that tigers are found roaming the snow indicates that their upward movement is not deterred by the cold. A more likely explanation is that tigers, given an opportunity, have always ventured far and wide. Thanks to a better monitoring regime and camera-traps, scientists and managers are now getting to learn more about their actual ranges.

The fact that there are enough tigers in certain pockets to wander around is certainly good news. But that should not prompt hasty proposals, such as declaring a high-altitude area as tiger reserve, or even shifting a conservation area upward, based on a few tiger photos.

Like Siberian tigers do not actually live in Siberia (but in temperate broadleaf-mixed-pine and pure deciduous forests), it is unlikely that tigers spotted in the snow have settled down there. Their survival still depends on the forests below. There can be no trade-off between traditional tiger habitat and these new heights of feline interest.

Covaxin works against Delta Plus: reading the findings of new study

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS
PUNE, AUGUST 2

WHILE THE Delta variant mutated into 'Delta Plus', first detected in India in April 2021, researchers decided to study the efficacy of the Covaxin vaccine. They have found that despite a slight reduction in neutralisation antibody titres, the vaccine remains effective against the Delta, AY.1 (Delta Plus) and B.1.617.3 variants. Covaxin has been developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Delta & Delta Plus

The Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 has been classified as a variant of concern (VoC) by the

World Health Organization. Apart from being associated with the second wave in India during March-May this year — it is estimated to be responsible for 90% of the cases reported in the country — the variant has spread across nearly 99 countries and been found to be more infectious than the Alpha, Beta and Gamma variants. The Delta variant has also been identified as the leading cause of breakthrough infections globally among vaccinated individuals.

Recently, the Delta variant has mutated into the sub-lineages Delta AY.1, AY.2 and AY.3. Of these, the apparently highly infectious Delta AY.1 (Delta Plus) variant was first detected in India in April 2021, and subsequently in 20 other countries as well.

The prevalence of Delta AY.1, however, has

been relatively low so far. Genome sequencing by INSACOG (Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium) has found 70 cases of Delta Plus.

Why the study

So far, no information was available on the efficacy of currently available vaccines against the Delta Plus variant. It is also uncertain whether Delta Plus is associated with higher transmissibility, severe disease, and evasion of immune response compared to the Delta variant.

The possibility of the variant escaping the immune response has been a major concern during the ongoing vaccination programme. This variant contains an additional mutation (K417N) in the spike protein and emerging

evidence suggests that this mutation could lead to resistance against monoclonal antibodies called casirivimab and imdevimab.

Researchers at ICMR-National Institute of Virology (NIV), therefore, took up the research. They studied the neutralisation activity of the sera of 42 individuals vaccinated with two doses of Covaxin, 14 recovered cases after two vaccine doses, and 30 breakthrough cases after two doses against the Delta, Delta AY.1, and B.1.617.3 variants, compared to the B.1 variant.

The findings

"Our research study showed that Covaxin vaccine could still neutralise Delta, AY.1 and B.1.617.3 variants," Dr Samiran Panda, Head of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases,

ICMR told The Indian Express. Sera of vaccines — Covid-naïve, recovered cases with full vaccination, and breakthrough cases — demonstrated 1.3, 2.5 and 1.9-fold reduction against the Delta variant in comparison to the B.1 variant respectively, said the study, 'Comparable neutralisation of SARS-CoV-2 Delta AY.1 and Delta in individuals sera vaccinated with BBV152, published on the preprint server *bioRxiv*.

Lead author Dr Pragya Yadav said a minor reduction was observed in the neutralising antibody titre in recovered cases, fully vaccinated and post-immunised infected cases as compared to Covid-naïve vaccinated individuals. "However, with the observed high titres, the sera of individuals belonging to all the groups in the study would still neu-

tralise the Delta, Delta AY.1 and B.1.617.3 variants effectively," Dr Yadav said.

Covaxin against Delta

In a previous study, Covaxin had demonstrated 77.8% effectiveness against symptomatic Covid-19 and 65.2% protection against the Delta variant, according to Bharat Biotech.

In this new study, despite the sera of vaccinated Covid-recovered cases and those of breakthrough cases showing considerable reduction in the neutralisation antibody titre, Covaxin could still neutralise Delta, AY.1 and B.1.617.3 variants. "The bottom line is that Covaxin is effective and a slight reduction in neutralisation antibody titres is not going to be detrimental for the vaccination programme," Dr Panda said.

ECONOMY

SENSEX: 52,950.63 ▲ 363.79 (0.69%) NIFTY: 15,885.15 ▲ 122.10 (0.77%) NIKKEI: 27,781.02 ▲ 497.43 HANG SENG: 26,235.80 ▲ 274.77 FTSE: 7,077.04 ▲ 44.74 DAX: 15,559.50 ▲ 15.11

International market data till 1900 IST

GOLD	RUPEE	OIL	SILVER
₹46,917	₹74.34	\$74.64	₹66,473

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market; gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as on July 30, 2021

POLITICAL FUNDING DONATIONS

Parties get ₹150.5 cr via electoral bonds in July; over half from SBI Kolkata branch

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, AUGUST 2

POLITICAL PARTIES received electoral bonds worth Rs 150.51 crore from donors in July, a non-election period and three months after the polls in Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.

Of this, as much as Rs 97.31 crore-worth bonds were sold by the Kolkata main branch of State Bank of India (SBI), Rs 30 crore bonds were sold by Chennai branch of SBI and Rs 10 crore bonds by SBI's Hyderabad branch.

As much as Rs 126 crore bonds were of the face value of Rs 1 crore each and Rs 23.60 crore bonds were of the face value of Rs 10 lakh each, SBI said in reply to the RTI application filed by Commodore Lokesh K Batra (Retd).

The bond sale, 17th phase, happened between July 1 and 10. With this, political parties have received a total of Rs 7,380 crore in 17 phases from donors, mainly corporate houses and industrialists, towards "funding of elections". In April 2021, when election process in four states and one Union Territory was in full swing, SBI sold bonds worth Rs 695.34 crore to donors of parties. Voting for five Assembly polls began on March 27, with results being declared in first week of May. The Supreme Court had refused to stay sales of electoral bonds ahead of the polls on a PIL filed by an NGO pertaining to funding of parties and alleging lack of transparency.

FACE VALUE OF ₹1 CREAM

₹126 cr

■ As much as Rs 126 crore bonds were of the face value of Rs 1 crore each and Rs 23.60 crore bonds were of the face value of Rs 10 lakh each, SBI said in reply to the RTI application filed by Commodore Lokesh K Batra (Retd)

Electoral bonds are purchased anonymously by donors and are valid for 15 days from the date of issue. A debt instrument, these can be bought by donors from a bank, and the political party can then encash them. These can be redeemed only by an eligible party by depositing the same in its designated account maintained with a bank.

The bonds are issued by SBI in denominations of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore. Political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which have secured not less than 1 per cent of the votes in the last general election to an Assembly or Parliament, are eligible to open current accounts for redemption of electoral bonds.

Even major political parties have not disclosed the amount they received through electoral bonds. Donors gave Rs 1,056.73 crore in 2018, Rs 5,071.99 crore in 2019 and Rs 363.96 crore in 2020, SBI had said in a previous RTI reply to *The Indian Express*.

INTEREST COSTS TO FALL, CASH MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE: EXPERTS

MSME liquidity line set to widen as more NBFCs start 'factoring'

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

PARLIAMENT'S CLEARANCE to The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, along with a government plan to mandate companies with over Rs 250-crore annual turnover to register on the TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System) platform, will significantly boost funding availability for MSMEs, lower interest costs and improve cash management, industry sources said.

Currently a handful of NBFCs and banks were providing funding to MSMEs against their receivables. Factoring law amendments have been cleared in both Houses of Parliament in the current session. This will enable nearly 9,000 NBFCs to participate in the factoring market instead of just seven now. Improved participation by NBFCs in the factoring market will enhance liquidity for MSMEs and lower their interest costs.

Factoring is a transaction where an entity (like MSME) sells its receivables (dues from a corporate) to a third party (a 'factor' like a bank or NBFC) for immediate funds. Banks and NBFCs provide finance against these receivables,

EXPLAINED What is factoring?

FACTORING IS a transaction where an entity (like MSME) sells its receivables (dues from a corporate) to a third party (a 'factor' like a bank or NBFC) for immediate funds. Banks and NBFCs provide finance against these receivables, enabling availability of ready funds for the MSMEs.

enabling availability of ready funds for the MSMEs. This is done on an online TReDS platform initiated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). TReDS facilitates financing and discounting of MSME trade receivables through multiple financiers.

"Only in India, factoring could be done by the banks or NBFCs that have a factoring licence — those who do over 50 per cent of business through factoring. Now, all NBFCs have been allowed to do factoring business, irrespective of proportion of income from factoring. This, therefore, brings liquidity into

factoring business, which was deprived of it as only largely banks and few NBFCs could participate in it," said Sundeeep Mohindru, CEO of M1exchange, an online platform for trade receivables.

NBFCs' lending to MSMEs is typically against the balance sheet strength of these smaller companies, leading to interest rates that can be higher than 16 per cent. But in the case of funding against receivables (or factoring), the NBFC is taking a risk on the customer of the MSME who is larger corporate, leading to lower (nearly halving) interest costs, he said.

The Finance Ministry also plans to accept suggestion of a Parliamentary panel studying the impact of Covid-19 on MSMEs that it should be made mandatory for CPSEs with turnover of over Rs 250 crore to register on TReDS platform, a senior government official said. "As on 31.12.2020, of 4,599 companies having turnover of more than Rs 500 crore, as identified by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 1,461 companies have registered themselves on TReDS platform. 170 CPSEs and 3,903 MSMEs registered with these CPSEs have also been onboarded on the platform. Totally, 11,690 MSMEs have on-boarded," the Department-re-

lated Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry noted in its report on MSMEs last week.

"The Committee recommends that the registration should be made mandatory for all CPSEs having a turnover of more than Rs 250 crore (from Rs 500 crore at present) as it would enlarge the ambit of TReDS," it said. Every tax invoice raised by GST-registered MSMEs should reflect automatically on the TReDS platform.

The legal changes have also enabled intermediaries to register a factoring transaction on the Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest (CERSAI) portal instead of the existing practice of banks doing assignment in CERSAI one by one.

With 3,000-5,000 factoring transactions in a single day, assignment entry onto CERSAI has been time consuming so far.

"Now the change in Factoring Act has permitted intermediaries like us to register the factoring unit directly on the CERSAI portal... this will reduce the lead time on operating on the portal from days to few minutes and hours. This makes the process faster, efficient and reduces chances of duplicity of transactions," said Mohindru.

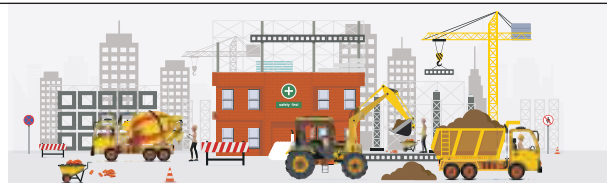
'Construction of 6 lakh homes worth over ₹5 lakh cr face delay'

Construction of over six lakh housing units valued at over Rs 5 lakh crore is either fully stuck or delayed across seven cities as of mid-2021, an Anarock report said

'Totally stuck' projects:

Among more than six lakh units, that are part of projects launched in seven cities on or before 2014, the report by Anarock Property

Consultants classified 1.74 lakh homes valued at ₹1.40 lakh crore as "totally stuck", adding that two-thirds of these are priced below ₹80 lakh



Use of SWAMIH fund: The Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) fund has rescued several projects, but the exact help tendered by the scheme has not been specified

Totally stalled projects: ■ Delhi-NCR: 1.13 lakh units worth ₹86,463 cr ■ Mumbai Metropolitan Region: 41,730 units worth ₹42,417 cr Source: Anarock/PTI

Major reasons for jump in stuck or delayed projects in NCR: ■ Litigations ■ Pandemic ■ Issues around funding

Southern cities: Housing projects in southern cities, namely Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, are mostly on track

BRIEFLY

Exports up 47%

New Delhi: Exports rose 47.19 per cent to \$35.17 billion in July, provisional data by Commerce Ministry showed Monday. Meanwhile, the RBI said services exports in June rose 24.1 per cent on-month to \$19.72 billion in June. **PTI**

Oil slumps 4%

New York: Oil prices tumbled about 4 per cent on Monday as weak economic data from China and the US and higher crude output from OPEC producers stoked fears of weakness in demand.

Afterpay buyout

Sydney: Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey's payments firm Square Inc will acquire for \$29 billion 'buy now, pay later' pioneer Afterpay Ltd, in the biggest buyout of an Australian firm. **REUTERS**

Essar Oil UK CEO

New Delhi: Essar Oil (UK) Ltd on Monday announced appointment of Deepak Maheshwari as its new CEO.

Koo compliance

New Delhi: In its monthly compliance report, Koo said it has proactively moderated 65,280 content pieces, while 3,431 posts were reported by its users in July. **PTI**

Google processor

Bengaluru: Google will use in-house designed processors, called Tensor, for its Pixel 6 and Pixel 6 Pro phones launching this fall, in a shift away from Qualcomm Inc's technology that has powered Android devices for over 15 years. **REUTERS**

LIC new MD

New Delhi: Mini Ipe took charge as Managing Director of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). **ENS**

AMID COVID

Unemployment rate in urban areas rose to 13.3% in July-Sept 2020: Labour survey

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

IN THE aftermath of Covid, unemployment rate in urban areas shot up to 13.3 per cent in July-September 2020 from 8.4 per cent in the corresponding period a year ago, the quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Monday showed.

Urban unemployment was recorded at 20.9 per cent in April-June 2020, 9.1 per cent in January-March 2020, 7.9 per cent in October-December 2019, 8.4 per cent in July-September 2019 and 8.9 per cent in April-June 2019.

Urban unemployment in the

As per the quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey, labour force participation rate for all ages was 37% in July-September 2020

age group 15-29 years was 27.7 per cent in July-September 2020 as against 20.6 per cent in July-September 2019 and 34.7 per cent in April-June. Female unemployment rate was recorded at 15.8 per cent in July-September, up from 9.7 per cent in the corresponding period a year ago and but lower than 21.2 per cent in the previous quarter. For urban males, it was at

12.6 per cent in July-September as against 8.0 per cent in July-September 2019 and 20.8 per cent in the previous April-June quarter.

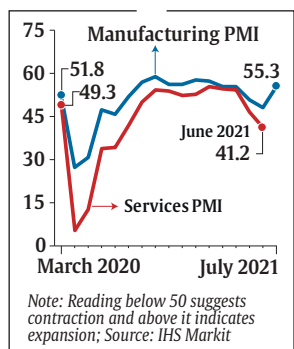
As per the survey, labour force participation rate for all ages was 37 per cent in July-September 2020, up from 36.8 per cent in the same period a year ago. It was 35.9 per cent in April-June 2020. Workforce Participation Rate stood at 32.1 per cent in July-September 2020, down from 33.7 per cent in the same period a year ago. It was 28.4 per cent in April-June 2020.

Unemployment data for urban areas is released quarterly based on current weekly status. This dataset differs from the Annual Report of Periodic Labour Force Survey, which covers both rural

and urban areas and gives estimates of employment and unemployment in both usual status (ps+ss) and CWS. The estimate of unemployed persons in CWS gives an average picture of unemployment in a short period of 7 days during the survey period. In the CWS approach, a person is considered unemployed if he/she did not work even for 1 hour on any day during the week but sought or was available for work at least for 1 hour on any day during the period.

The PLFS fieldwork was suspended from March 18, 2020 but was then resumed on June 1, 2020. The sample size was the lowest, compared to the previous four quarters and consisted of 1.70 lakh people and 43,257 households in the July-September quarter.

'Manufacturing PMI growth at 3-month high'



Note: Reading below 50 suggests contraction and above it indicates expansion; Source: IHS Markit

Mumbai: Following the nationwide Covid-19 unlocking, the manufacturing sector in July showed the strongest rate of growth in three months.

After slipping into contraction for the first time in 11 months in June, the seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) moved back above the critical 50.0 threshold in July. The headline figure rose from 48.1 to 55.3, as factory orders rose on reports of improved demand. **ENS**

Bhagwati, Rangarajan conferred with Prof CR Rao Gold Medal

New Delhi: Dr Jagdish Bhagwati, professor of economics, law and international relations at Columbia University and director of the Raj Center on Indian Economic Policies, and Dr C Rangarajan, former Chairman, Economic Advisory Council of the PM and ex-RBI Governor, have been conferred with the inaugural Prof CR Rao Centenary Gold Medal.

The Indian Econometric Society Trust has instituted the award to honour the doyen of mathematical statistics and the society's founder-president professor CR Rao's contributions to quantitative economic theory and practice. **ENS**

POST-MONEY VALUATION OF \$3.44 BILLION

Unacademy raises \$440-mn funding

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

UNACADEMY HAS raised a fresh \$440 million in funding led by Temasek at a post-money valuation of \$3.44 billion.

The investment was also backed by General Atlantic, Tiger Global and SoftBank Vision Fund.

Mirae Asset, Aroa Ventures, the family office of Oyo founder Ritesh Agarwal, and Zomato CEO Deepinder Goyal participated in the funding round that gave an exit to some of Unacademy's angel investors, the company said.

In a tweet, Gaurav Munjal, founder at Unacademy Group, said fresh capital will be used to build and scale varied offerings. **FE**

PolicyBazaar eyes ₹6K-cr IPO

New Delhi: PolicyBazaar aims to raise up to Rs 6,017.5 crore through its initial public offering (IPO), according to the preliminary documents filed with Sebi.

The offer consists of fresh issuance worth Rs 3,750 crore and a Rs 2,267.5-crore offer for sale by a clutch of shareholders, including SoftBank and the firm's co-founder and group CEO Yashish Dahiya. While SoftBank plans to sell shares worth up to Rs 1,875 crore, Dahiya along with co-founder and group CFO Alok Bansal, collectively aim to sell shares worth up to Rs 345 crore, as per draft red herring prospectus. **FE**

Q1 RESULTS HDFC standalone profit falls 1.6%

Mumbai: With Covid hitting the home loan segment, mortgage lender Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) on Monday posted a 1.66 per cent fall in standalone net profit at Rs 3,000.67 crore against Rs 3,051.52 crore in the same quarter last year.

The profit declined 5.63 per cent from Rs 3,179.83 crore registered in March 2021 on a sequential basis. On a consolidated basis, profit after tax rose 31 per cent on-year to Rs 5,311 crore. **ENS**

PNB net rises over three-fold

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank on Monday reported over three-fold jump in its standalone net profit for the quarter ended June 30 at Rs 1,023.46 crore, mainly due to fall in operating expenses and good recovery.

PNB had posted a net profit of Rs 308.45 crore in the same quarter last year. Sequentially, it was up from Rs 586.33 crore in the March 2021 quarter. **ENS**

VOUCHER-BASED DIGITAL PAYMENTS PLATFORM PM: e-RUPI to deliver 'targeted, transparent, leakage-free' benefits



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the launch of e-RUPI, via video conferencing, on Monday. **PTI**

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

LAUNCHING THE digital payments solution e-RUPI on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the voucher-based system will "play a huge role in making DBT (direct benefit transfer) more effective in digital transactions in the country and give a new dimension to digital governance".

"This will help everyone in targeted, transparent and leakage free delivery... e-RUPI is a symbol of how India is progressing by connecting people's lives with technology," he said.

The e-RUPI platform, has been developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the National Health Authority is a cashless and contactless digital payments medium, which will be delivered to mobile phones of beneficiaries in form of an SMS-string or a QR code.

This people-specific and purpose-specific payments system will essentially function like a prepaid gift-voucher that will be redeemable at specific accepting centres without any credit or debit card, a mobile app or internet banking. e-RUPI will connect the sponsors of the services with the

beneficiaries and service providers in a digital manner without any physical interface.

The Prime Minister also spoke about how technology was being leveraged to bring in transparency and integrity in transactions while making available newer opportunities for the poor. "For reaching today's unique product, foundation was prepared over the years by creating the JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) system which connected mobile and Aadhaar. Benefits of JAM took some time to be visible to people and we saw how we could help the needy during the lockdown period while other countries were struggling to help their people," he said.

He added that so far, over Rs 17.5 lakh crore has been transferred directly to the accounts of the people via DBT through over 300 schemes. "The biggest benefit of this all is that Rs 1.78 lakh crore were prevented from going to the wrong hands."

According to the government, e-RUPI — built on NPCI's UPI system — would ensure leak-proof delivery of welfare services. It will initially be deployed alongside the National Digital Health Mission and to support the vaccine drive, but added that it can also be used for delivering services under schemes meant for providing drugs and nutritional support.

Auto Expo 2022 postponed

New Delhi: The Auto Expo, which was scheduled to take place in February at Greater Noida, has been postponed due to Covid and apprehensions of a third wave. SIAM said on Monday. **PTI**

how to reduce the initial acquisition cost of car," Bhargava said.

Maruti Suzuki India Chairman R C Bhargava. *File*



High GST, acquisition cost slowing down car demand: Bhargava

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 2

HIGH COST of acquisition due to a variety of reasons, including higher GST than other major nations, is slowing down car demand and unless the Centre and states take steps to reduce it, the industry is unlikely to experience reasonable growth, as per Maruti Suzuki India Chairman R C Bhargava.

Addressing shareholders in the company's Annual Report for 2020-21, he said after the second Covid wave hit the first quarter of FY22, the performance in next three quarters will depend on how effectively people get vaccinated.

"The GST on cars, based on the past rates of excise duty, is much higher than the GST (or equivalent) in all other major countries of the world. It is unlikely that the car industry will experience reasonable rates of growth unless the central and state governments consider

TOPOF THE
WORLD

Anthony Wong

HONG KONG

Pro-democracy singer held for 'corrupt conduct'

HONG KONG'S anti-corruption watchdog on Monday charged a singer and prominent pro-democracy activist, Anthony Wong, with "corrupt conduct" at a 2018 election rally, the latest legal action against dissent by authorities in the Chinese-ruled city. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) said in a statement that Wong had provided "entertainment to induce others to vote" for pro-democracy activist Au Nok-hin in a 2018 legislative council by-election. "At the rally, Wong performed two songs on stage. At the end of the performance, he appealed to the participants of the rally to vote for Au at the election," ICAC wrote, adding that he breached the Elections Corrupt and Illegal Conduct Ordinance.

REUTERS

MYANMAR

Shadow govt condemns junta chief for taking on PM role

MEMBERS OF a shadow government set up by opponents of Myanmar's coup condemned the country's military ruler for taking on the role of prime minister in a caretaker government and said the move was designed to try to win legitimacy. "The transition... is a reflection of the fact that they are preparing for an international diplomatic battle, trying to prove the fact that they are a government," said Aung Myo Min, minister for human rights in the National Unity Government, which was formed in April by various groups.

REUTERS

COLOMBIA

Ex-army chief to be charged over extrajudicial killings

COLOMBIA'S ATTORNEY general's office will charge former army commander General Mario Montoya for responsibility of 104 extrajudicial executions, as part of the "false positives" scandal, it said on Sunday. The false positives took place between 2002 and 2008, during the term of ex-President Alvaro Uribe, when soldiers murdered civilians and registered them as guerrilla fighters killed in combat to receive benefits. The country's transitional justice court said 6,402 people were killed this way, but victims' groups say the numbers could be higher.

AP

Afghan President blames worsening security situation on sudden US pullout

Battling Afghan forces, Taliban fighters push deeper into southern provincial capital of Lashkargahon

REUTERS

KABUL, AUGUST 2

TALIBAN FIGHTERS pushed deeper into the southern Afghan provincial capital of Lashkargahon Monday and closed in on government buildings, a senior official said, as the insurgents pressed a rapid advance.

Heavy fighting was raging close to the National Directorate of Security, the prison and the police headquarters in the main city in Helmand province, the government official said, asking not to be named.

President Ashraf Ghani, meanwhile, blamed the country's fast-deteriorating security situation on a "sudden" decision by the US to withdraw its troops.

"We have had an unexpected situation in the last three months," he told the Afghan Parliament.

Ghani added that the Afghan government had a US-backed security plan to bring the situation under control within six



"We have had an unexpected situation in the last three months," Ashraf Ghani told Parliament

months. He also accused the Taliban of keeping up its ties with terrorist groups and of stepping up attacks on women.

The Taliban rejected Ghani's accusations. "Declarations of war, accusations and lies cannot prolong Ghani's government's life; his time has run out, God willing," the movement's spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said on Twitter.

Taliban fighters have moved in on three provincial capitals in the

last few days and seized territory nationwide since Washington said it planned a complete withdrawal of troops by September.

Most of their advances have focused on rural areas and they have yet to take full control of a major city.

An Afghan military commander said the government forces managed to beat back the Taliban later in the day.

"In the afternoon the level of intensity of the fighting (in Lashkargah) decreased as the Taliban suffered heavy casualties following the air and ground operations," Sayed Sami Sadat, the commander of the Maiwand army corps, told Reuters.

Peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban negotiators started last year in the Qatari capital of Doha, but have not made any substantive progress despite a few rounds.

The two sides committed to speeding up the talks, at a meeting last month in Doha between a high-level Afghan political delegation and the Taliban.

US to evacuate journalists, aid workers from Afghanistan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, AUGUST 2

THE BIDEN administration on Monday expanded its efforts to evacuate at-risk Afghans from Afghanistan as Taliban violence increases ahead of the US military pullout at the end of the month.

The US State Department said it was widening the scope of Afghans eligible for refugee status in United States to include current and former employees of US-based news organisations, US-based aid and development agencies and other relief groups that receive US funding. Current and former employees of the US government and the NATO military operation who don't meet the criteria for a dedicated programme for such workers are also covered.

However, the move comes with a major caveat: applicants



MEANWHILE

WILDFIRES BLAZE ON IN DROUGHT-HIT TURKEY

Firefighters using planes and helicopters, and locals with buckets of water, battled wildfires raging for a sixth day near southern resorts in drought-hit Turkey and the government faced fresh criticism of its handling of the disaster. Seven fires were still burning on Monday, fanned by temperatures above 40°Celsius, strong winds and low humidity, the government said.

Belarusian Olympian who feared for her safety is offered asylum in Poland

Sought help at Tokyo airport as Belarus tries to forcibly send her back home

MOTOKORICH

TOKYO, AUGUST 2

KRISTINA TIMANOVSKAYA, the Belarusian Olympic sprinter who sought protection at a Tokyo airport as her nation tried to forcibly send her home from the Summer Games, has been offered asylum in Poland.

Timanovskaya, 24, entered the Polish Embassy in Tokyo on Monday and will fly to Warsaw on Wednesday, according to Alexander Opeikin, the executive director of the Belarusian Sports Solidarity Fund, a group that opposes the Belarusian government.

Marcin Przydacz, the deputy foreign minister of Poland, confirmed on Twitter that Timanovskaya had received a humanitarian visa.

Timanovskaya had said she feared for her safety in Belarus after she criticised her coaches and the country's national committee for registering her for a relay event for which she had not trained.

She had originally been scheduled to run a heat of the 200 metres, one of her regular races, on Monday but instead spent the day seeking a new country in which to settle.

"She is OK. She's a little bit disappointed, because she wanted to continue in the Olympic Games," Opeikin, who has been in contact with Timanovskaya since the events unfolded Sunday, said by telephone.

"She's disappointed she couldn't compete in the 200 metres today, but she understands the whole situation, she understands her rights, she understands the deep violations of her rights as an athlete, of her human rights," he said. "She needs to tell the whole world about this situation."

The asylum offer capped nearly 24 hours of drama at the Olympics, where Timanovskaya had placed fourth in her heat in the 100



Kristina Timanovskaya runs in the women's 100-metre event at the 2020 Summer Olympics, on Friday. AP

EXPLAINED
Cause for concern

ACTIVISTS SAY there is good reason for Timanovskaya's fears for her safety in Belarus, even though she only criticised sporting decisions taken by authorities. Ever since a massive protest movement erupted a year ago following a presidential election that the Opposition said was rigged, the Belarusian government has relentlessly targeted people who make even mild criticisms of authorities. Activists helping Timanovskaya also said a campaign was already underway against the sprinter in the state-run media in Belarus, worsening her worries. Another detail adding to the concern is that the head of the country's national Olympic committee is the eldest son of Belarus President Lukashenko.

metres Friday. She then said on Instagram that her coaches had informed her at the last minute that she would have to run the 4x400-metre relay in place of a team member who had not taken enough anti-doping tests to qualify for the event.

NYT

Another police officer escorting polio workers killed in Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PESHAWAR, AUGUST 2

UNIDENTIFIED GUNMEN shot dead a police officer escorting a team of polio workers in northwest Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday, the second such incident in two days.

The officer was killed by the unknown gunmen riding a motor cycle while he was joining the polio workers in the tribal district of Dera Ismail Khan bordering South Waziristan, police said.

A search operation to arrest the killers is underway, they said.

The attack took place a day after bike-borne gunmen fired at a police constable in the Daudzai area of Peshawar district and fled from the scene.

The policeman was returning home after being with a polio

team when he came under fire, police said.

Polio health workers and law enforcement officials who are tasked with providing security have often been targeted by militants and miscreants in Pakistan.

Last week, the federal government had announced to launch a nationwide five-day polio immunisation drive from August 2 to inoculate 23 million children against the crippling disease.

PM Imran Khan on June 24 expressed hope that Pakistan will become polio-free in the next year.

Taking to Twitter, Khan said only one case of the crippling disease had been reported this year so far, adding: "We will eradicate polio completely in coming year."

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only two remaining countries in the world where polio is endemic after Nigeria was declared free of poliovirus last year.



Family members greet each other at Terminal 5 of Heathrow Airport in London on Monday. AP

'It means the world': families and friends reunite at UK's Heathrow

BEN MAKORI

LONDON, AUGUST 2

FAMILIES AND friends were overjoyed at London's Heathrow Airport on Monday after a travel rule change meant they could reunite after 18 months of pandemic separation.

"Very, very excited. It means the world," said Sue Blake, as she waited to greet her son, daughter-in-law and grandson who had flown in from New York and who she last saw two years ago.

"It's a big chunk of his life and I'm so thrilled for him that he

can come here," she said of the eight-year-old.

Watching the hugs and tears in the arrivals hall, Heathrow's boss urged Britain to remove barriers to travel, not add to them, amid speculation that the government was poised to impose more rules.

"Let's just make it easier now for people to travel," Heathrow's chief executive John Holland-Kaye told Reuters.

Britain, where the death toll from the coronavirus pandemic has nearly reached 130,000, reopened its borders to large parts of the world on Monday, scrapping quarantine for fully vaccinated ar-

rivals from the European Union, excluding France, and the US.

The move was welcomed by families divided by the pandemic and airlines strained by it. "It is really awesome," said 31-year-old medical writer Colleen Castro after collecting her luggage.

She and her husband had come to London to deliver some happy news to his parents.

"It's been a really long time and, actually, I'm pregnant with my in-law's first grandchild, so it's really exciting to finally be able to be here and share that news with them."

REUTERS

New theory: Earth's longer days kick-started oxygen growth

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, AUGUST 2

SCIENTISTS HAVE a new idea for how Earth got its oxygen: It's because the planet slowed down and days got longer.

A study published Monday proposes and puts to the test the theory that longer, continuous daylight kick-started weird bac-

teria into producing lots of oxygen, making most of life as we know it possible.

They dredged up goeey purple bacteria from a deep sinkhole in Lake Huron and tinkered with how much light it got in lab experiments. The more continuous light the smelly microbes got, the more oxygen they produced.

One of the mysteries in science is how Earth went from having

minimal oxygen to the breathable air we have now. Scientists long figured microbes called cyanobacteria, were involved, but couldn't tell what started the great oxygenation event.

Researchers in a study in Monday's *Nature Geoscience* theorise that Earth's slowing rotation, which gradually lengthened days from six hours to the current 24 hours, was key for the

cyanobacteria in making the planet more breathable.

About 2.4 billion years ago there was so little oxygen in Earth's atmosphere that it could barely be measured, so no animal or plant life like we know could live. Instead, lots of microbes breathed in carbon dioxide, and in the case of cyanobacteria, produced oxygen in the earliest form of photosynthesis.

DEEPENING CRISIS IN POORER COUNTRIES AS DELTA VARIANT SPREADS

Covax, vast global vaccination programme, struggles to get shots into arms

BENJAMIN MUELLER

& REBECCA ROBBINS

AUGUST 2

DEATHS FROM Covid-19 were surging across Africa in June when 100,000 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived in Chad. The delivery seemed proof that the United Nations-backed programme to immunise the world could get the most desirable vaccines to the least developed nations. Yet five weeks later, Chad's health minister said, 94,000 doses remained unused.

Nearby in Benin, only 267 shots were being given each day, a pace so slow that 110,000 of the

programme's AstraZeneca doses expired. Across Africa, confidential documents from July indicated, the programme was monitoring at least nine countries where it said doses intended for the poor were at risk of spoiling this summer.

The vaccine pileup illustrates one of the most serious but largely unrecognised problems facing the immunisation programme as it tries to recover from months of missteps and disappointments: difficulty getting doses from airport tarmacs into people's arms.

Known as COVAX, the programme was supposed to be a global powerhouse, a multibillion-dollar alliance of international health bodies and non-

profits that would ensure through sheer buying power that poor countries received vaccines as quickly as the rich.

Instead, COVAX has struggled to acquire doses: It stands half a billion short of its goal. Poor countries are dangerously unprotected as the Delta variant runs rampant, just the scenario that COVAX was created to prevent.

The urgent need to vaccinate the world goes far beyond protecting people in poor nations. The longer the virus circulates, the more dangerous it can become, even for vaccinated people in wealthy countries.

Without billions more shots, experts warn, new variants



Unloading vaccines provided through Covax in Mogadishu, Somalia. AP

could keep emerging, endangering all nations.

"COVAX hasn't failed, but it is

failing," said Dr. Ayoade Alakija, co-chair of the African Union's vaccine delivery programme. "We really

have no other options. For the sake of humanity, COVAX must work."

More supplies are finally on the way, with the Biden administration buying 500 million Pfizer doses and delivering them through COVAX, the centrepiece of a larger pledge by wealthy democracies. The donated doses should begin shipping this month.

But the Biden donation, worth \$3.5 billion, comes with a caveat: To help fund it, the administration is diverting hundreds of millions of dollars promised for vaccination drives in poorer countries, according to notes from a meeting between COVAX and American officials. Short on funding, those countries have had a hard time

buying fuel to transport doses to clinics, training people to administer shots or persuading people to get them.

Even as COVAX officials scramble to fill that funding gap, the overriding question is whether the programme can move beyond its mistakes, and beyond an imbalance of power that has left it at the mercy of wealthy countries and pharmaceutical companies. Pfizer, for example, balked at a direct deal with COVAX this spring, interviews reveal, instead reaching an agreement through the Biden administration, an arrangement that hurt COVAX's credibility as an independent vaccine purchaser.

The programme has strug-

gled with delays and infighting. Bureaucratic barriers imposed by its leadership have held up the disbursement of \$220 million to help countries administer vaccines.

Driven by a nonprofit funded by the Gates Foundation, COVAX is a creation without precedent. It has gotten vaccines to poorer countries faster than was previously typical and developed a system to compensate people for serious post-vaccine reactions and protect vaccine-makers from legal liability.

Still, the 163 million doses it has delivered are a far cry from plans to have at least 640 million doses available by now.

NYT



Kolkata



MEDALS TALLY

COUNTRY	G	S	B	TOTAL
1. China	29	17	16	62
2. USA	22	25	17	64
3. Japan	17	06	10	33
4. Australia	14	04	15	33
5. ROC	12	21	17	50
6. G Britain	11	12	12	35
7. France	06	10	07	23
8. Germany	06	06	11	23
9. South Korea	06	04	09	19
62. India	00	01	01	02

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

Eye on India

WOMEN'S JAVELIN THROW
ANNU RANI
Qualification: 5:50 AM

MEN'S SHOT PUT
TAJINDERPAL SINGH TOOR
Qualification: **7:25 AM**

HOCKEY
MEN'S SEMIFINAL
India vs Belgium: **7:00 AM**

WRESTLING
WOMEN'S FREESTYLE 62KG
Sonam Malik vs Bolortuya Khurelkhuu (MGL) in 1/8 Final **8:30AM**
Semifinal (Subject to Sonam's qualification) **2:45PM**

WORLD WATCH

WOMEN'S 200M
Final: **6:20PM**
■ The deep field features five runners who have sub-22 times in the event. Olympic champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and her Jamaican teammate Elaine Thompson Herah along with Gabrielle Thomas will be contenders.

MEN'S POLEVAULT
Final: **3:50PM**

FOOTBALL
Men's semifinals
Brazil vs Mexico **1:30PM**
Japan vs Spain **4:30PM**

■ Mexico's squad is almost exclusively formed by their domestic league pros, the Japanese are playing on home soil, while Spain has arguably the deepest and most talented squad. Brazil versus Mexico could also decide the Olympic Golden Boot race.

RESULTS

WOMEN'S 200M
■ Dutee Chand finished 7th in Heat 4 with a timing of 23.85.

EQUESTRIAN
■ Fouaad Mirza and his horse Seigneur Medicott made the eventing final and finished 23rd overall.

SHOOTING
50m Rifle 3 positions men's qualifying: Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeev Rajput failed to qualify for the final, finishing 21st and 32nd

INTERNATIONAL

BREAKING THE ASIAN STRANGLEHOLD
■ Denmark's Viktor Axelsen beat Chinese defending champion Chen Long 21-15, 21-12 to become the first non-Asian man to claim the singles title since 1996. Compatriot Poul-Erik Hoyer-Larsen was the last winner from outside Asia at the Atlanta Games.

ONEDOWN, TWOTOGO
■ Dutch runner Sifian Hassan surged clear of the field to win the 5,000m with a time of 14min 36.79sec. The win means Hassan's dreams of claiming three gold medals in Tokyo — the 1,500m, 5,000m and 10,000m — remain very much alive. **ENS**

EXPRESS AT OLYMPICS



MIHIR VASAVDA
TOKYO, AUGUST 2

WHILE PULLING off their biggest heist at the Olympics, India made short work of Australia, quite literally.

Playing their biggest, most tense match ever, India resorted to a game of 'mini hockey', a tactical switch executed with breath-taking efficiency. Sjoerd Marijne's team started their quarterfinal by pressing high and unafraid to play long passes from the centre of the pitch to the attacking third, bypassing the midfield completely. But after drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur scored her first goal of the campaign to put India ahead in the 22nd minute, Australia got more aggressive, pushing India deep into their half in search of an equaliser.

That forced Marijne to deploy a different strategy at the start of the third quarter. Continuing with long passes to get some breathing space could have only led to easy interceptions, simple turnover of possession and more pressure on the defence.

So, the team turned to playing a 'mini game'. Instead of going long, the players reduced the distance between themselves on the pitch and started playing shorter passes. It was simple: pass the ball, stop the ball, pass-stop, pass-stop... The mini-hockey game requires strong fundamentals, and during this spell of play, India's players showed how far they had come in terms of their technical abilities. They could play give-and-go hockey – receiving the ball on the run, and passing it in one quick motion – by stopping the ball cleanly and running patterns with two or three players playing this short game together, similar to creating triangles in football. They were receiving the ball close to their body, which made it difficult for the Australians to steal possession.

This also helped India to keep the ball for longer durations, thus breaking Australia's rhythm and it cut out needless running, which was critical given the humid conditions in Tokyo. This was particularly effective on the left flank, where Udit, Salima Tete and Navjot Kaur combined to then feed forwards positioned on the inside, Rani Rampal and Lalremisiami.

This wasn't the first time Marijne had adopted this tactic. In the second leg of the Olympic qualifying playoff against the United States too, India played the short game to wrestle back control after being under pressure for most part of the first half. The problem, almost always, is in the execution. And that's what happened at the Olympics as well. Until Monday.

Turnaround

The tears triggered the turnaround. India were handed a rough schedule. In their opening three group stage matches, the team that finished at the bottom in the Rio Olympics was up against the podium finishers – silver medallists Netherlands first, then bronze winners Germany followed by champions Britain. India conceded 11 goals in those three games and it felt like a Rio repeat all over again. The 4-1 loss to Rio gold medallists Britain, a team they've stolen points from before, hurt the players the most and left the team reeling. Marijne called it their 'worst game'. He's set a benchmark of 6 out of 10 for his players, the bare minimum consideration for what constitutes a good performance. In that match, he said, none of the players passed that test.

Rani, the captain, said the players wept inconsolably following the defeat. ("But) in the first match against The Netherlands, we played so well in the first two quarters. That



Members of India's women's team pose for a photograph after winning their quarterfinal against Australia on Monday. Reuters

gave us a lot of confidence that if we can play like that against the No. 1 team in the world, we can take on any team in the world. We were playing so well in that game, but still we lost," she said. After that defeat, the team got together, watched a movie to motivate themselves and dissected everything that hadn't gone as planned. Marijne and Rani, who have spent several months and years dreaming about a scenario like this, were never in doubt about the team's capability. The bigger issue, as far as the coach was concerned, was to make sure the team's tempo and focus did not waver during a game.

Circles of attention

The Dutchman calls it the 'circles of attention'. Essentially, it is about staying in the present.

"You are in Circle One when you are totally in the zone. The more you start thinking about other situations, be it an umpire's problem or the result or your next opponent, you start drifting outside the first circle," Marijne says. "Our mind is never concentrated on Circle One. But if you stay in the present, your mind remains calm, you can concentrate on your task and function at an optimum level."

Monday was one of those days when all these factors magically came together, in a near-perfect performance. India was hungrier of the two teams and were bending more with their stick grazing the turf so that the ball didn't touch their feet, resulting in fewer missed traps and fouls.

It's not often one sees a team keep a clean sheet in a fast-moving, high-scoring sport like hockey; rarer even to see that happen in an Olympic quarterfinal. The fickle nature of sport means it's impossible to say if India will be able to dish out the same level of performance against a physical side like Argentina, one of women's hockey's powerhouses.

But that for Marijne and his team would be drifting way outside the first circle of attention. "Let's savour this win," Marijne said. "Let's live this moment."

In final moments, Sirsa girl makes the 'most vital save for Indian hockey'

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 2

IN 2003, when Savita Punia joined the Haryana government's hockey nursery in Sirsa under coach Sunder Singh Kharab, she would carry her goalkeeper's kit on state transport buses from her village Jodhka. And often, she would complain to her father about bus conductors touching her kit with their feet or not letting her board with the extra bag.

On Monday, the 31-year-old thwarted every Australian attack to help India register a historic 1-0 win and reach the semifinals of the Tokyo Olympics. In the final minutes of the game, as she stopped two penalty corners, the commentators said: "She has made the most important save for Indian hockey."

Back in Sirsa, her father Mahinder Singh Punia recalled those early days.

"Unlike other players, Savita had to carry an extra bag for the goalkeeping kit from our village to the hockey nursery on local buses. A lot of times, the conductors would ask her to keep the bags aside or move them with their feet. Sometimes, they wouldn't let her board due to the big bags. Sometimes, she would cry because the conductors had kicked her bag aside, which was not acceptable to her," Mahinder told *The Indian Express*.

With her father working as a pharmacist, Savita's interest in hockey grew as her grandfather Ranjit Singh Punia, a farmer, listened to radio commentary of matches and took her along to watch local games. Finally, Mahinder took Savita to the hockey nursery in nearby Sirsa. While Savita initially wanted to be a forward or midfielder according to her grandfather's wishes, coach Kharab insisted on grooming her



Savita Punia didn't want to be a goalkeeper at first.

as a goalkeeper.

"I still remember Savita told us that she wanted to be a midfielder or forward. But when I saw her training and made her undergo drills and tests, I was impressed by her quick reaction time and height. So I suggested to her father to let her become a goalkeeper," Kharab recalled. With the nursery having only two kits for the goalkeepers already selected, Kharab requested Mahinder to buy Savita one of her own. "While we were a bit skeptical of her becoming a goalkeeper, I spent Rs 17,000 to get her a new kit from Sirsa. She would always guard her kit and take extra care of it. She would remain in the hostel and visit home only in case of an emergency. Somehow, it made me believe that she will make us proud one day," Mahinder said. Kharab trained Savita from 2003 to 2007 – during this period, he was shifted to Hisar where he took Savita along – before she was selected for the Sports Authority of India centre there. The youngster played for the Haryana junior teams

and often competed for a spot with players from Shahbad, a town famous for producing more than 10 international players including current India skipper Rani Rampal.

Savita impressed national selectors and made it to the junior Indian team in 2007 before making her senior debut in 2008. "As a goalkeeper, her footwork and arm and leg position were very good even in her junior days and she would make sure to spend a lot of time with the team's forwards and midfielders to understand their thinking. Be it summer or winter, she was always ready for training in the goal-keeping kit. She had a lot of patience," Kharab said.

"Once in a tournament in Delhi, two teams from Haryana -- from Shahbad and Hisar -- played the final. Even though Hisar lost, former India player and coach M K Kaushik and Amit Bose forwarded Savita's name to be included in the junior Indian team camp," he said. Savita went on to help India win the Asia Cup in 2017, where she was declared the best goalkeeper, and the silver medal at the 2018 Asian Games.

Against Australia in Monday's quarterfinal, as Savita made a number of saves, Kharab noted down points to pass on to her. "She was always in the line of the ball and made some direct saves, too. Even though Australia did not have their experienced penalty corner specialists, she made sure that India survived the last quarter. Earlier in the tournament, she did not follow the line of the ball once and let a goal in. She learnt from the mistake. Hopefully, she will be like a wall in the semis, too," he said.

Coach Azad Singh Malik, who has seen Savita's rise through the Haryana junior teams, was watching, too. "Her biggest strength is her patience. She has a clear mind and keeps seeking defenders' inputs about the opposition forward line or penalty corner moves," he said.

Trans debate rages as Hubbard exits

SRIRAM VEERA & MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, TOKYO, AUGUST 2

SHE LET the loaded barbells drop to the floor for the third unsuccessful time and smiled graciously. She raised her left hand in silent acknowledgement, and the New Zealand national coach pat her back as she stepped off stage. On social media, the majority mocked her, with cracks about "nob""s" to "couldn't snatch" circulating. They have been at her for days and months now, ever since Laura Hubbard, a weightlifter who was born a male and transitioned to a woman at the age of 35, announced she was going to compete in Tokyo. Now 43, Hubbard, the first transgender Olympian, has been at the forefront of a raging debate on multiple themes: gender, morals, scientific, and human rights.

The fairness angle

It is fair for a transgender woman, who went through puberty as a man, to compete against a cisgender woman? Or is it a great sign of inclusiveness? Or should it be seen as a safety issue? Not in Hubbard's sport of weightlifting but say in boxing, where the power of punches could matter a lot more than mere points. It's been argued that someone who has gone through puberty as a male has inherent advantages related to bone and muscle density.

Technically, within the context of the Olympics, it's legal. Under current guidance, which the IOC updated in 2015, trans-women athletes' testosterone levels must be below 10 nanomoles per litre of blood for at least 12 months before the first competition.

Ross Tucker, a sports scientist explained to this newspaper the bigger sporting context. "I



Laura Hubbard, 43, was the oldest competitor in weightlifting. Reuters

think Hubbard will be the physical manifestation of a debate that is 15 to 20 years old now ... It changes everything," Tucker said before the contest. He adds that Hubbard winning a medal will make it difficult for the IOC and other sports to remain silent. Instead they'll be forced to debate on its fairness. "The conversation will happen more. And of course, if nothing changes, Hubbard will be the first, not the last, and I suspect by Paris 2024, there may be six to ten trans-athletes in contention for Olympic spots."

Testosterone tension

The testosterone argument is a minefield. Elsewhere, Tucker explained: "Testosterone drives the development of male characteristics – larger hearts and lungs, more haemoglobin, denser and differently shaped skeletons, less body fat, and increased muscle size and strength." Taken together, these biological differences create performance advantages – Tucker reckons a top-level boxer can punch 260% more powerfully than the best female.

Kabarwala celebrates Kamal's 6th spot

NITIN SHARMA
KABARWALA (SRI MUKTSAR SAHIB), AUGUST 2

AS HIS daughter Kamalpreet Kaur finished sixth in the discus throw event at the Tokyo Olympics, Kuldeep Singh made sure that every one of the 100-odd people at their house in village Kabarwala left after having tea and *laddoos*.

While Kamalpreet's mother Rajwinder Kaur was crying during a video call with her daughter, her brother and cousins headed to the garden in their home to burst crackers to celebrate the joint-best finish by an Indian athlete in field events at the Olympics tied with Krishna Poonia's sixth-place finish at the 2012 Olympics.

"What more can we ask for if the medal has not come Kamalpreet's way. She has put us and our tiny village in the prayers of every Indian and on the biggest sporting stage in the world. How many fathers can say that their daughter competed in an Olympics and that too in the final against the world's best and would return with India's joint-best finish in field events ever at the Olympics? It's a day to celebrate for all of us," an emotional Kuldeep told *The Indian Express*.

With relatives and friends gathering from morning itself, the Singh household seemed to be hosting a function. Rajwinder and her nieces would perform Sukhmani Sahib path before the event. As Kamalpreet made a third throw of 63.70m, the villagers would cheer with some curious elders asking youngsters about Kamalpreet's chances of winning a medal. Another round of applause and euphoria ensued when Kamalpreet made it to the top eight throwers after three attempts of the rain-inter-



Kamalpreet's father Kuldeep Singh (left) watches her daughter's discus throw event with friends and relatives at his residence in Kabarwala. Kamleshwar Singh

rupted contest, and became eligible for the final three tries. But with Kamalpreet not being able to improve upon her third throw and needing a mark of well over 65m to have the chance of a medal, some faces turned glum. But there was no mistakeable pride at what she had achieved.

"We have 26 acres of land, including contracted farmland with two of my brothers. When Kamalpreet showed interest in sports and started winning medals at the district level, we thought it was a pastime for her and would subside after 2-3 years. But later, when she told me to get her admitted at the Sports Authority of India Hostel at village Badal, it meant she would rarely visit home. All these years we craved to see her, and today we watched her at the Olympics," said the proud father.

Between throws, Kuldeep and his younger brother Prabhdeep Singh would also go and check the livestock. With their father Gurbax

Singh also keeping an eye on the final, Kuldeep made sure that all the visitors were served tea from fresh milk. "Kamalpreet loves our livestock and whenever she visits home, she makes a point to yield milk with her own hands. While most of the milk was consumed today, tomorrow onwards a major part will be saved to prepare ghee for Kamalpreet. The day she returns, she would ask for aloo paranthas. Kudi ne 2-3 Olympic *chor khedne ne te medal jeetne ne* (The girl has to play 2-3 more Olympics and win medals)," says Prabhdayal.

As for Kuldeep, he has already started making plans for her daughter's return. "She was a bit unlucky as rain made the circle a bit slippery and with her weight, she struggles on this kind of surface. But that's sport. And that's what my daughter loves and we will support her for our lifetime," says the proud father as he is called out for bursting crackers.



HERSTORY

From cradles of the sport to a Naxal stronghold. Some criticised for not doing chores, others moulded by the heat of farms and factories. Living up to a brother who represented the nation, rejoicing a sister who bought a stick with daily wages. Playing to escape an alcoholic father & to vindicate a father who fought societal norms. **SHAHID JUDGE & MIHIR VASAVDA** tell the larger-than-life back-stories of Indian hockey's giant-killers

RANI RAMPAL
(26, FORWARD)
SHAHBAD, HARYANA

RANI HAS been playing international hockey for almost half her life, a journey that began with her playing with a broken hockey stick while wearing a salwar-kameez. She made her debut at the age of 14. Now 26, Rani is the key player of the team. With her unerring ability to be at the right place at the right time, she has been India's saviour on many occasions. She has also helped the team win a Junior World Cup medal, Asian Cup, and was one of the key reasons why India could qualify for the back-to-back Olympics for the first time.

NIKKI PRADHAN
(27, DEFENDER)
HESAL, JHARKHAND

HAILING FROM an area known to be a Naxal stronghold, Pradhan claimed she does get scared when travelling back to meet her parents. Riddled with financial troubles while growing up, her elder sister, who also played hockey, had worked as a labourer in order to purchase a hockey stick. Pradhan got her first pair of hockey shoes and a stick when she moved to an academy in Ranchi in 2006. She was in and out of the national structure before finally securing a spot in the team in 2015, just in time for Rio, where she became the first player from her state to play at the Olympics.

LALREMSIAMI
(21, FORWARD)
KOLASIB, MIZORAM

ONE OF the finest forwards in the team, Siami, as she is called by her teammates, is central to the idea of playing high-tempo hockey. When she was first selected as a 16-year-old, Siami could not speak English or Hindi. She communicated mainly through sign language apart from talking in monosyllables. She shared a room with her idol Rani Rampal, who led Siami's initiation into the team. She created history by becoming the first female player from Mizoram to make it to the Olympics and was the first Olympian from the state in 25 years after Archer C Lalremsanga.

DEEP GRACE EKKKA
(27, DEFENDER)
LULKIDIHI, ODISHA

EKKKA comes from a family of hockey enthusiasts; her older brother Dinesh is a former India 'keeper. Following in his footsteps, Ekka also wanted to be a 'keeper but was pushed to play as a defender by Dinesh & her uncle (also a 'keeper). Her fondness for the sport, & the large amounts of time she'd spend practising her craft prompted the other Lulkidihi-residents to criticise her for not doing her 'chores'. Her family supported her and she'd go on to be a part of the team that won the 2017 Asia Cup. With over 200 caps, she's now playing at her second Olympics.

UDITA DUHAN
(23, DEFENDER)
HISAR, HARYANA

She followed in her father's footsteps by playing handball initially. Hockey was never in the picture, until the handball coach at her school stopped coming for practice. On her mother's advice she decided to try her hand at hockey, and her speed caught everybody's attention. She started as a forward but only realised her potential when she moved into defence. In 2016, she was named captain of the bronze-winning team at the U-18 Asian Cup in 2016. A year later, she was promoted to the senior team & has become a permanent fixture ever since.

NAVNEET KAUR
(25, FORWARD)
SHAHBAD, HARYANA

She is one of eight players in the team who also competed at the Rio Olympics. Navneet has been one of India's most consistent forwards and has been a part of several path-breaking performances, starting with the 2013 Junior World Cup bronze medal. The forward from Haryana considers Australian great Jamie Dwyer as her hero and on Monday, she put up a dazzling performance to defeat her idol's national team. She scored the crucial winning goal against Ireland that led to the quarterfinal berth.

GURJIT KAUR
(25, DEFENDER)
AMRITSAR, PUNJAB

The designated drag-flicker's only goal in Tokyo so far was the one that won the quarterfinal vs Australia. The defender has been chipping in with crucial goals throughout her career, scoring 8 at the Asia Cup triumph in 2017, and was the top scorer when India won the 2019 FIH Women's Series Final. Nicknamed 'Guri', she wasn't overly fond of sports but did try her hand at circle kabaddi. She was sent to a hostel, to avoid the long travel to school which was situated near a hockey ground. Watching people play tempted her to join in, and once she did, she never stopped.

NAVJOT KAUR
(26, MIDFIELDER)
KURUKSHETRA, HARYANA

She was eight when her father, a mechanic who wanted at least one of his children in sports, insisted she take up hockey. She started training in 2003 while at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park School. A midfielder on paper, her ability to poach goals is what saw her break into the senior team in 2012. Since then, she has gone on to win bronze and silver medals at the Asian Games in 2014 and 2018 respectively. She was also in the team that made it to the 2016 Rio Games, and the quarterfinals of the World Cup in 2018.



NEHA GOYAL
(24, MIDFIELDER)
SONIPAT, HARYANA

For a teenaged Neha Goyal, hockey was an escape that came with two meals. This kept her away from her alcoholic father who would abuse her mother. The first-time Olympian worked alongside her mother in a cycle factory, earning Rs 5 to fix one spoke of a wheel. Goyal's calling card in hockey is her ability to turn on her blistering pace and score goals. She made her debut for the national team at the age of 18. Since 2018, Goyal has won the silver medal at the Asian Games and has been conferred the Hockey India Midfielder of the Year Award.

NISHA WARSII
(26, MIDFIELDER)
SONIPAT, HARYANA

A late-bloomer, Warsii only made her international debut two years ago. Partly, it was because she had a rather start-stop association with the game. She took up the sport since there was not much equipment required, and was keenly supported by her father who worked as a tailor. In 2015 though, he suffered a paralytic attack and her mother had to work at a foam manufacturing factory to make ends meet. It took Warsii another three years before she broke into the Indian team in 2018, and since then she's been a mainstay.

SUSHILA CHANU
(29, MIDFIELDER)
IMPHAL, MANIPUR

ONE OF the senior-most players in the team, Sushila has been one of India's most influential players in the last decade alongside Rani Rampal. The half-back from Manipur, who works for the Railways in Mumbai, captained the team at the Rio Olympics, which was the women's team's first appearance at the Games since 1980. She has over 150 caps for the national team, has played across the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, and was instrumental in shutting out the Australians in the quarter-finals.

SALIMA TETE
(19, MIDFIELDER)
HESAL, JHARKHAND

Salima Tete's hockey journey began the same way most people in India fall in love with sports – in a dusty maidan where the stones needed to be removed and the temporary goalposts had to be constructed. The teenager was born in the Naxal stronghold, which is also a hockey hotbed. She worked on the family's farm, earned money and bought a hockey stick for herself. Ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, she had won 29 caps for the senior national team. She'll hope the next two will come with an Olympic medal.

VANDANA KATARIYA
(26, FORWARD)
LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH

To seal a quarterfinal spot, India had to beat South Africa to stand a chance. In stepped Vandana Katariya, three times, becoming the only Indian woman to score an Olympic hat-trick. This came just three months after a personal tragedy. Growing up in Haridwar, locals dissuaded her family from allowing her to play sports instead of focusing on chores. But her father would not have it and fought societal pressures to let her play. He passed away three months ago, and Katariya was unable to attend the funeral. Now she'll play in an Olympic semifinal, a win short of a medal.

MONIKA MALIK
(27, MIDFIELDER)
SONIPAT, HARYANA

Her father Takdeer Singh Malik, an ASI with the Chandigarh Police, had a liking towards wrestling, but Monika asserted that he never forced the sport on her once she decided to follow the hockey route. Born in a village in the Sonapat district, she started her hockey training at a government school in Chandigarh. 'Monu', holds a business administration degree from Kurukshetra University. On the hockey field, the national team's backbone has won the Asia Cup in 2018, a bronze and silver medal at the 2014 and 2018 Asian Games respectively.

SHARMILA DEVI
(19, FORWARD)
HISAR, HARYANA

The teenager happened to make her international debut in Tokyo at the Olympic Test Event in 2019. She was also on the scoresheet when India beat the United States 6-5 on aggregate to secure qualification. Devi developed interest in the sport thanks to her grandfather, a former national level player. She was intrigued by the balls used in hockey, volleyball and football, and took a while before choosing the sport she wanted to pursue. So far she's scored two international goals – the first led to the Olympics, the second was in Tokyo.

SAVITA PUNIA
(31, GOALKEEPER)
JODHPUR, HARYANA

There was a time Punia dreaded being the 'keeper because she'd have to lug the heavy equipment across state transport buses, and wear it for a match during the summer heat. Now she's the main choice 'keeper, the team's vice-captain, and one of the heroes of Monday's quarter-final. Punia was encouraged to play hockey by her grandfather, but it wasn't till her father spent a huge sum of money on a new kit that she started to take the game seriously. She grew in stature just as the women's team started to improve rapidly, picking up two medals at consecutive Asian Games.

From Rio to first week of Tokyo, it's only women on the podium

SHIVANI NAIK
AUGUST 2

INDIA NOW has seven women with eight medals from the last 25 years at the Olympic Games, compared to the eight men and their nine medals. Seven of those women's medals have come from London, Rio and the first week of Tokyo. PV Sindhu has tied the double Olympic medallist score with Sushil Kumar already. Winning the bronze, after her 2016 silver, the reigning World Champion would play no part in India's fourth-place moping. The women's hockey team kept the mighty Australians at bay and reached the semifinals. Mirabai Chanu spent five years trying to keep her imbalanced feet steady when lifting 87kg in one snap motion. Lovlina Borgohain walked the front row of the opening ceremony, and stood tall, rangy and athletic in the ring. Bhavani

Devi made a fast foray into sabre fencing while Manika Batra attempted to move Indian table tennis progress by a painstaking inch. India's story at Tokyo 2020 is about the charge of Indian women athletes, and them securing five medals out of five in this last one-and-a-half Olympics. The first of those five was won by wrestler Sakshi Malik at Rio 2016. It came about after 12 medal-less days. Then a debutant at the Games, India's first female wrestling medallist says it took a handful of month-long training stints in Spain, sparring with reputed World and Olympic medallists, to inject quiet confidence into her. "Just being around that environment of excellence in your sport can boost you and make you believe you belong. Giving those chances of top-level competition are most important for women," Sakshi says. "Now



PV Sindhu has already tied the double Olympic medallist score with wrestler Sushil Kumar. PTI

imagine when given these opportunities consistently. You'll be surprised how far they can take you."

Typically, in contact sports, young girls came up against familiar rivals: "They said 'kaisi ladki hai jo ladkon ke saath kushthi

karti hai (What kind of girl wrestles with boys). No one will marry her, she'll have deformed ears, and ungirly physique. But my

India's story at Tokyo is about the charge of Indian women athletes, and them securing five medals out of five in this last one-and-a-half Olympics.

parents told me exactly the opposite. They said I was good at sport. That was enough," she says of the reinforcement. Children seldom look beyond the family for validation, Sakshi adds.

Ambition meets opportunity

Indian sport has benefitted from the maturity levels of female athletes who show higher cognitive abilities, especially in tactical sports. While outliers like Sindhu (tall, strong, worked hard on agility) can match physical parameters of competition, India's female medallists have shown remarkable adaptability to stay bull-headed about their medal dreams. "Women are driven so they train very hard. But when they

get support of coaching, physios and nutrition, that path to medal becomes very clear. Then like me, you can go to the Olympics feeling fearless and supported, and stay respectful towards competition but not get overawed, put your head down and fight with zero pressure," Sakshi says. Former Commonwealth Games medallist Aparna Popat has now watched three Games bring in badminton medals, and says the 2010 CWG was the turning point for Indian women – as they started raking in medals from 2012. "Support and planning really took off then. It's not about comparing to men: women fight women from other countries. So just make sure you give them what their opponents are getting

- we matched China in badminton because we gave our girls coach, physio, strategist, cook. Maybe you'll fall short, but the women knowing they got everything can do wonders. Then they don't need extra motivation," she explains. That all of this is new for Indian women is making the numbers appear skewed compared to men. But Popat reckons the relentless supercharging of female ambition targeted at medals has changed India for good. "I played in times when we were super-apologetic about why we played sport: because we liked it or some such thing. But with even basic support, things that made women hesitant - clothes, society, injury, just vanish," she says. A female sporting champion has normalised the career path in a decade's time, she says. "With every medal, the challenges of perception and acceptance are chipping away," Popat adds.