



Government extends deadlines for various I-T compliances

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President Ram Nath Kovind offers prayers at Ayodhya temple

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Djokovic chases calendar Grand Slam as U.S. Open begins today

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Bhavina, Nishad win silver and Vinod bronze at Paralympics

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JD(U) reiterates demand for caste-based Census

PATNA

At its national council meeting in Patna under new president Rajiv Ranjan Singh, the Janata Dal-United on Sunday passed eight resolutions, including the demand for a caste-based Census.

NORTH & EAST • PAGE 4

Over 2.5 lakh people affected by Assam floods

GUWAHATI

Floods in Assam, delayed by three months, have affected more than 2.58 lakh people across 16 districts, said officials of Assam State Disaster Management Authority. The worst affected is Lakhimpur.

NORTH & EAST • PAGE 4

International flights stay suspended till Sept. 30

NEW DELHI

The suspension of scheduled international passenger flights due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been extended till September 30, the DGCA said on Sunday.

NEWS • PAGE 10

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EDUCATION PLUS • PAGE 5

## As Biden warns of more attacks, U.S. destroys car bomb in Kabul

The explosive-laden vehicle was destined for the airport, says Taliban spokesman

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The United States said it destroyed an explosive-laden vehicle with an air strike in Kabul on Sunday, hours after President Joe Biden warned of another terror attack in the capital as a massive airlift of tens of thousands of Afghans entered its last days.

A Taliban spokesman confirmed the incident, saying a car bomb destined for the airport had been destroyed — and that a possible second strike had hit a nearby house. The U.S. said it had only struck the vehicle, but added that secondary blasts indicated “a substantial amount of explosive material”. Local media reported there may have been civilian casualties.

The strike comes after a suicide bomber from the Islamic State group on Thursday targeted U.S. troops stopping huge crowds of people from entering the airport in Kabul, from where about 1,14,000 people have been evacuated since August 15 when the Taliban swept back into power.

More than 100 people died in the attack, including 13 U.S. service personnel, slowing down the airlift ahead of Mr. Biden’s deadline for evacuations to end by Tuesday. The operation is



**Future tense:** A U.S. Marine carries a baby as the family prepares for the evacuation process at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. ■ AFP

winding down despite Western powers saying thousands may be left behind.

**300 Americans remain** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said some 300 Americans still in Afghanistan were seeking to leave the country. “They are not going to be stuck,” he told ABC, adding that the U.S. had “a mechanism to get them out”.

The Pentagon said on Saturday that retaliation drone strikes had killed two “high-level” IS jihadists in eastern Afghanistan, but Mr. Biden warned of more attacks from

the group. “The situation on the ground continues to be extremely dangerous, and the threat of terrorist attacks on the airport remains high,” Mr. Biden said.

“Our commanders informed me that an attack is highly likely in the next 24-36 hours.”

The IS attack has forced the U.S. military and the Taliban into a form of cooperation to ensure security at the airport that was unthinkable two weeks ago. On Saturday, Taliban fighters escorted a steady stream of Afghans from buses to the main pas-

senger terminal, handing them over to the U.S. forces for evacuation.

The troops were seen throughout the civilian side of the airport grounds and annexe buildings, while U.S. Marines peered at them from the passenger terminal roof. After a 20-year war, the foes were within open sight of each other, separated by just 30 metres.

INDIA SILENT • PAGE 9

TALIBAN KILL SINGER • PAGE 11

BIDEN HONOURS TROOPS • PAGE 11

AKHUNDZADA IS IN KANDAHAR, SAY TALIBAN • PAGE 11

## NITI bats for tax breaks to achieve monetisation goal

It proposes insolvency cover for investment instruments

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

To make the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) a success, the government should give Income Tax breaks to attract retail investors into instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), the NITI Aayog has recommended.

The Centre’s think tank driving the NMP, estimated to raise almost ₹6 lakh crore for the exchequer over four years, has also called for bringing such trusts within the ambit of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to provide greater comfort to investors.

Bringing in policy and regulatory changes to scale up monetisation instruments such as InvITs and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and expand their investor base have been identified as a critical element for the NMP. The government plans to use the InvIT and REIT route to monetise public assets such as highways, gas pipelines, railway tracks and power transmission lines.

“More tax-efficient and user-friendly mechanisms like allowing tax benefits in InvITs as eligible security to invest under Section 54EC of the Income Tax Act, 1961, are important starting points for initiating retail

### Money matters

A look at the NITI Aayog prescription for the National Monetisation Pipeline

■ Expansion of investor base and scale of monetisation instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) is “a key imperative”

■ Tax-efficient and user-friendly mechanisms needed to attract investors

■ Tax breaks should be granted on capital gains for those investing in InvITs, to entice retail investors

■ InvITs should be included under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

■ Providing an insolvency option will give “added comfort” to investors

■ GAIL, NHAI, expected to unveil InvITs to monetise gas pipeline, highway assets soon

participation in the instruments,” the Aayog said in its blueprint, indicating that further taxation-related tweaks may be needed along the way.

### Capital gains offset

Section 54EC allows taxpayers to offset long-term capital gains from transactions in immovable properties through investments in bonds issued by some government-backed infrastructure firms. “Though this will entail a cost in the form of loss of revenue for exchequer, the long-term benefits may outweigh the cost as linking investments in specified bonds with the capital gains exemption had proved

to be a success in the past,” Amit Singhania, partner at Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co., told *The Hindu*, adding that this will encourage retail investor participation in InvITs.

While InvIT structures have been used in India since 2014, the Aayog pointed out that such trusts are not considered a ‘legal person’ and cannot be brought under IBC proceedings, deterring lenders from participating. “Since the trusts are not considered as ‘legal person’ under the extant regulations, the IBC regulations are not applicable for InvIT loans,” the Aayog said.

EXTEND PROVISIONS • PAGE 8

## ‘Oil palm plan is a recipe for disaster’

Activists raise concern over proposal



The Centre plans to promote oil palm plantations in the northeast and Andamans.

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

Given the widespread destruction of rainforests and native biodiversity caused by oil palm plantations in Southeast Asia, environmental experts and politicians are warning that the Union government’s move to promote their cultivation in the northeastern States and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be disastrous.

Other concerns include the impact on community ownership of tribal lands, as well as the fact that the oil palm is a water-guzzling, monoculture crop with a long gestation period unsuitable for small farmers. However, the government says land productivity for palm oil is higher than that for oilseeds, with Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar giving an assurance that the land identified for oil palm plantations in the northeastern States is already cleared for cultivation.

### Letter to PM

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week, soon after the launch of the ₹11,040 crore National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEOP-OP), Meghalaya MP Agatha Sangma warned that the focus areas were “biodiversity hotspots and ecologi-

cally fragile” and oil palm plantations would denude forest cover and destroy the habitat of endangered wildlife.

It could also detach tribespeople from their identity linked with the community ownership of land and “wreak havoc on the social fabric,” said the National People’s Party leader.

Congress leader and former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said proposals for large-scale oil palm cultivation had been studied and rejected as part of the technology mission on edible oils in the late 1980s as it was a “recipe for ecological disaster”.

He alleged that “the present proposal of course is designed to benefit Patanjali and Adani”, both corporates with interests in edible oil expansion.

“The palm is an invasive species. It is not a natural forest product of northeastern India and its impact on our biodiversity as well as on soil conditions has to be analysed even if it is grown in non-forest areas. Any kind of monoculture plantation is not desirable,” said Bibhab Talukdar, a biologist who heads the Guwahati-based conservation organisation Aaranyak, advising caution in introducing oil palm.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

## Pained by farmer-police clashes in Karnal, says Dushyant Chautala

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

A day after several farmers and policemen were injured during a clash in Karnal, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Sunday said he was “pained” at the turn of events, but condemned the farmers for attacking policemen with spades.

He also questioned the Samyukt Kisan Morcha leadership for making Haryana the “epicentre of the movement” against the three contentious farm laws.



Dushyant Chautala

Mr. Chautala, at a press conference in Chandigarh, said the Morcha leaders, mostly hailing from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, were causing turmoil in Haryana to disturb the peace in the

State and derail its agrarian economy. “The SKM leadership should explain why there were no roadblocks in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh after the incident yesterday (Saturday). The 40 top leaders of SKM are mostly from Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, but why is Haryana being made the epicentre? Haryana and its people are suffering, but the political parties in the poll-bound States will benefit,” Mr. Chautala said.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON • PAGE 4

## ‘Every party faces leadership tussles’

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

As the turf war between Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu comes to a head, Lok Sabha member and senior Congress leader Manish Tewari said leadership tuss-

les are “a natural corollary of politics of personality instead of ideology”.

“There is no division in the Congress in Punjab. There is, however, a difference of opinion on certain key fundamentals,” Mr. Tewari told *The Hindu*.

On turbulences in Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, he said they were a “part and parcel” of politics. “Every party is buffeted by them from time to time,” said the senior leader.

INTERVIEW ON • PAGE 9

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Inmates at the city’s old age centres have been among the worst-affected victims of COVID-19. Confined to the premises with no visitors in months, the senior residents are giving up on the only strength that keeps them going — the hope to see their loved ones

# A pandemic of loneliness



HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

It’s been over 12 years since Kiran Bhandari, 70, has been living at ‘Gharonda’ old age home. She doesn’t wish to live any more, a feeling that has only become stronger since the COVID-19 outbreak last year. Like Ms. Bhandari, there are 27 other senior citizens living here in this double-storey home with twin sharing rooms and a sprawling garden area located on a narrow street in South Delhi’s Fatehpur Beri. At least 20 others are currently back with their families because of the pandemic. The inmates at the home come with a load of emotional baggage, memories of a life spent with family and fear of being forgotten by all. The pandemic has only made matters worse. Ms. Bhandari still wears bright red vermilion. She is hopeful that her husband would return one day but somewhere inside, she knows he might not. “I am just waiting to die. I have lived alone for so long. What’s the

point of it? I have a phone and there’s no one to talk to,” she said.

**Abandoned by family**  
Her husband – who was under heavy debt – disappeared one day about 13 years ago, leaving her alone in a rented house in Mahipalpur. She knocked at door of her mother-in-law who turned her away. Her own brother also didn’t take her in. After spending a year at an ashram in Ballabgarh, she was told about this old age home where she has now been staying. “All I pray to God is to let me leave the world from here only. I don’t want to go to another old age home,” she said. The last one and half years have been very tough for Ms. Bhandari. Kamlesh Malik, whom Ms. Bhandari takes as her mother at the home, had gone back to her own family in Rohini for 10 months. She returned only three weeks ago after losing both her sons in a span of three months. Ms. Malik hesitated to share what transpired before she moved into the



old age home. She cried, not for being abandoned by her family but for the demise of her two sons. Ms. Bhandari recalled: “The last few months were very tough, especially without mummy [referring to Ms. Malik]. Every time I watched news and heard about people dying, I just wished to be gone in this wave.” Ms. Bhandari saw a sister in Usha Goyal, 75, and a brother in 64-year-old Kishan Lal. “Ab to yahi ghar wale hain... inhi se baat karke time nikal jata hai [Now, this is my family and time goes by talking to them]”. An inmate who refrained from following news was Mr. Kishan. He said he stopped watching TV because it troubled him. He said he didn’t miss

stepping out much because he usually stayed indoors. Mr. Kishan spends his day helping in daily chores, serving meals and taking care of his roommate – his namesake Kishan Lal, 86. Mr. Kishan had come here seven years ago from Haryana’s Rewari. A heart patient, he suffered two heart attacks and his medicines cost ₹7,000 a month – an amount his son wasn’t capable or willing to bear. His wife still lives with the son and he visits them occasionally. “My heart only works at 25% capacity. I don’t have the courage to deal with any problems anymore. I used to meet my wife and my son before the pandemic outbreak. It stopped after that,” he said.

A life unto themselves: Inmates at Gharonda old age home at Asola Extension Road in Fatehpur Beri. •SANDEEP SAXENA



Talking about his roommate and namesake, the octogenarian Kishan Lal, Mr. Kishan said his son is differently abled and his wife works as a house help in East Delhi. As she was unable to take care of both of them financially, Mr. Lal had to come here eight years ago. He doesn’t have teeth and has trouble walking. His digestive system is weak and he lives only on fluids. “It’s tough to see him like this,” the younger one said. Since February 2020, when COVID-19 pandemic first hit the country, the octogenarian’s family has not come to see him. Others aren’t sure if he even waits.

**Full of fear**  
For Usha Goyal, life during the pandemic has been full of fear of being stuck outside the old age home. On the day the lockdown was announced in March last year, Ms. Goyal was visiting her daughter in Moti Nagar. She ended up staying with her for the next five months till the unlock phase began. Ms. Goyal came to this home 15 years ago with her husband Raghuvir Goyal. Raghuvir passed away after suffering a heart attack 12 years ago. She had three daughters – two of them passed away a few years ago.

She also has a son she doesn’t want to remember him. “I don’t know where he is and I don’t want to know it either.” Her expressions change from calm to angry just at his mention. He is said to have left his family in his early 20s when they used to live in a rented house in Paharganj. “Beti se milti thi har mahine corona se pehle. Jab se wapaa aayi hun, tab se nahin mili hun. Phone pe baat hoti hai [I used to meet my daughter every month before the COVID-19 outbreak. I haven’t met her since I came back after spending five months. We talk over the phone],” she sighed. The last few months have made her feel lonelier but she is okay, she said,

spending her time listening to radio, watching TV, sitting in the garden and talking to the rest of the inmates.

**The most loved one**  
The most impacted by COVID-19 and also the most loved inmate at the home is Gurucharan Singh Bhatia, 88. He was the first resident of this old age home in 2000. “His health has deteriorated a lot in the last year and a half. He doesn’t remember much now and also talks about things nobody understands,” said caretaker Sunil Bishwas, 58, who has been working here since the opening of the home. Mr. Bhatia used to be handle the patients at the clinic located in the front porch of the old age home. He would hand out prescription slips and take details of the visitors. However, now, he is incapable of any of it. But the caretakers and owners let him sit at the clinic and work in whatever capacity he can so he doesn’t feel left out. “He was a social person and COVID-19 meant social distancing. It clearly had an impact on his mind,” Mr. Bishwas said.

**No visitors**  
Mr. Bhatia clearly remembers he was born in Sialkot in Pakistan and during the Partition, he moved to Muradabad. No one has visited him in the last 21 years. His wife is believed to be dead. A man so active once upon a time, now mostly prefers to sleep. The owner of the old age home, Pravesh Jain, a businessman based in South Delhi who runs a trust – Paras Foundation, said the reason behind running this home is his father. “My father would look at old, homeless people and worry about them. After he passed away, I decided to turn this place into an old age home. And I run it like my own house and treat the elderly residing here like my parents. I try to take care of all their needs – from food to medicines,” he said

## HC grants relief to electrician who fell from pole

Judge directs victim’s father to open general store from the money received through compensation

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

In a rare show of compassion for a young electrician, who became permanently disabled following an accident at work, the Delhi High Court has not only ordered monetary compensation but also taken the initiative of planning a stable source of income for him. Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani ruled that both the contractor and the power distribution company were jointly and severally liable to compensate Bharat Singh for putting him in his current state where he is unable to perform even basic, personal and daily chores himself. He is all but 100% dependent on others. The judge directed the contractor – Bryn Construction Company – and BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) to pay ₹10 lakh each,

totalling a sum of ₹20 lakh, to the 28-year-old within four weeks.

**Non-monetary relief**  
Generally, courts restrict their adjudication in similar cases to monetary compensation aspect only. However, Justice Bhambhani went a step further. The judge ordered the father of the victim to open a “general/provisions store” in the name of Bharat from the money received through compensation. The court instructed that the general/provisions store shall be run from a portion of his house in Daulat Nagar, District Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh and all earnings from the store will be used and applied for Mr. Bharat’s medical and living expenses and for his welfare and well-being. The High Court also di-



notifications, as may be applicable to him from time-to-time.

**2014 incident**  
On April 25, 2014, Mr. Bharat, who was then about 21 years of age, while working as an electrician with Bryn Construction Company, was tasked with rectifying a fault in an electricity pole that was causing fluctuation in the electricity supply at a farmhouse in Bijwasan, New Delhi. As Mr. Bharat climbed the electricity pole and started repairing the fault, it fell along with the live electricity cable and he suffered severe trauma on his backbone. The High Court was informed that Mr. Bharat was unable to perform any of his daily chores on his own and requires to be physically supported for all daily routines, from the time he

wakes up till the time he sleeps, since he cannot stand-up or walk or even sit on a chair without support and assistance. The court was further informed that Mr. Bharat needs constant supervision even while sitting, since he is not stable and risks falling over. **No safety gear**  
The High Court noted that Mr. Bharat was not provided any safety gear, including rubber gloves, ladders before he was directed to climb the pole to undertake the repair task. “It is clear that the accident could not have occurred had Bryn and/or BRPL not been negligent in taking reasonable precautions to avoid it, which gives rise to their strict liability for the injuries sustained by Bharat,” the court said.

## Bail plea of man involved in fake currency racket rejected

Circulation of fake notes is detrimental to the economy: HC

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has observed that fake currency has the propensity of having a disastrous effect on the economy, while noting that the process of making fake currency notes has reached a level of immaculate sophistication due to which they are indistinguishable from real currency notes. “Circulation of fake currency notes is severely detrimental to the economy and hampers the financial regulation of the country,” Justice Subramonium Prasad said while rejecting the bail plea of a man who was part of a well-organised syndicate involved in printing, procuring, circulating fake Indian currency notes. “The production of coun-

terfeit currency notes often stems from dissatisfaction with a country’s growth, and is therefore, aimed at financially disintegrating and destabilising the steady equilibrium of liquidity in the economy,” Justice Prasad said. “Counterfeiting of currency notes breeds drug smuggling, purchase of illegal arms and ammunition, funding of undesirable terrorist outfits, cross-border money laundering, human trafficking and various other phenomena. It has a disastrous effect on the economy.” The High Court rejected the bail plea of one Tabrej Ahmed noting that he was part of a “well-oiled machinery/syndicate dealing in printing and circulation of fake currency notes and it

has the propensity of having a disastrous effect on the country’s economy.” “The nature of the activity, the chances of the petitioner [Ahmed] absconding/ jumping bail or continuing to indulge in the same activity on release cannot be ruled out at this juncture,” the court added. On December 19, 2019, Delhi Police Special Cell received secret information that a Dubai-based Pakistani national was trying to bring fake Indian currency notes to the country. Probe was conducted and it has surfaced that a syndicate of procurement, printing, circulation and distribution of fake notes is being done. Ahmed’s name surfaced along with the names of a few other people.

## Mini indoor stadium likely to open soon

Noida facility to boost sporting culture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NOIDA

The first ‘mini indoor stadium’ in Noida could open for public soon as the local authority is reviewing proposals from private firms for maintenance and operation of the facility, officials said on Sunday. Located in Sarfabad village and costing ₹54 crore, the stadium boasts of state-of-art facilities for wrestling, judo, weightlifting, taekwondo and squash, among others, and is expected to particularly give a push to sports talent from rural areas, Noida Authority’s Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) Ritu Maheshwari said. The mini stadium will add to the already existing sporting facilities for residents in Noida that include a full-fledged stadium with an international-level cricket ground and an indoor stadium with a shooting range as their highlights, Ms. Maheshwari said. “The stadium will give a major boost to the sporting culture in Noida and since it is located in Sarfabad village, the talent from rural parts will also get a platform to practice and showcase their skills,” Noida Authority’s Chief General Manager (CGM) Rajeev Tyagi said.

## Separate toilets for transgenders at metro stations

DMRC measure to help provide safe space and prevent gender discrimination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

For the convenience of transgender passengers travelling on the metro, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has made a provision for them to access separate toilets at stations. The toilets that were meant only for the use of persons with disabilities can now be accessed by transgenders as well.

**Meant for ‘Divyangjan’**  
“In its efforts to provide safe space and prevent gender discrimination against transgenders, the Delhi Metro on priority basis has designated its existing toilets meant only for ‘Divyangjan’ so far, to be accessible for the trans-



Toilets meant for persons with disabilities can now be accessed by transgenders as well. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

genders, too. At present, the Delhi Metro has 347 such dedicated toilets in addition to the regular toilets for other passengers at its metro stations spread across the

network,” the DMRC said. A metro spokesperson said that to guide transgenders to these toilets, bilingual signage and symbols have been installed adjacent

to these toilets. “Besides this provision of separate toilet for them, any transgender who wishes to use gender-based toilet as per self-identified gender will also continue to do so. The Delhi Metro is also in the process of contemplating ways to identify dedicated locations to provide separate public toilet facilities at its upcoming stations in Phase-IV,” the spokesperson added. The DMRC said that the provisions of Section 22 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, mandates adequate welfare measures for transgenders at all public buildings, and the facilities were a step in this direction.

## Man held for cheating people of ₹3.5 crore

Victims were promised high returns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have arrested a man for allegedly cheating people of their investments through schemes offered by him promising high returns, a senior police officer said on Sunday. The accused, Murari Kumar Srivastav, was arrested from Humayunpur village, Sitamari district in Bihar, Additional Commissioner of Police (Economic Offences Wing) R.K. Singh said. The arrest was made on a complaint made by 38 people, who alleged that a company called ‘Progress Producer Company Limited’ and its directors cheat-

ed them of their money invested in the schemes offered by the firm, Mr. Singh said. **531 investors**  
Around 531 victims invested money in these schemes. The directors of the company collected around ₹3.5 crore from investors and fled, the officer said. Srivastav, along with his acquaintances, operated the company from Paharganj and targeted people from Delhi-NCR. Most of the payments were collected in cash. He also sold his house here before running away, the police said.



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Chadha inaugurates water purification plants
NEW DELHI
DJB V-C Raghav Chadha inaugurated water purification plants capable of dispensing 500 litres of water every hour at Government Girls Senior Secondary School, F block, Inderpuri and Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, C block, Naraina Vihar on Sunday.

Video shows men drinking in lockup, SI suspended
NEW DELHI
A sub-inspector of Delhi Police Special Cell has been suspended after a video purportedly showing some men consuming liquor inside a lockup surfaced on social media, officials said on Sunday.



Students at the Delhi University's School of Open Learning.
Students at the Delhi University's School of Open Learning.
Data provided by Delhi University had shown that in the first two weeks of registration, over 1.21 lakh students from the CBSE board had registered to the university.

No trials
Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, trials will not be held by the university this year and admissions will be based on certificates of previous years.

There are around 27 sports-listed and 14 categories under the ECA quota in the university, according to officials. The registration process for undergraduate admission to the various courses began on August 1.

Nearly 4.13 lakh register for 70K seats in DU

The first cut-off list is expected on October 1; admissions to begin on October 4

With one day left for Delhi University's undergraduate registration portal to shut, DU has already seen over 4.13 lakh aspirants registering for the various courses for the 70,000 seats that are on offer.

marks before the cut-offs are declared.
Pinkhi Sharma, DU's Dean of Admissions, said: "We have to see finally how many complete the entire registration process by making the required payment.

MAD RUSH
DU UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS
Registrations to close on August 31
Admission process to be entirely online and students are not required to visit campuses for any admission-related issue

ficials. The CBSE itself saw over 70,000 students scoring above 95% while in 2020, over 38,000 students had scored above 95%.

High cut-off mark
Last year, Lady Shri Ram College for Women had set a 100% cut-off for three courses including Psychology, Economics and Political Science.

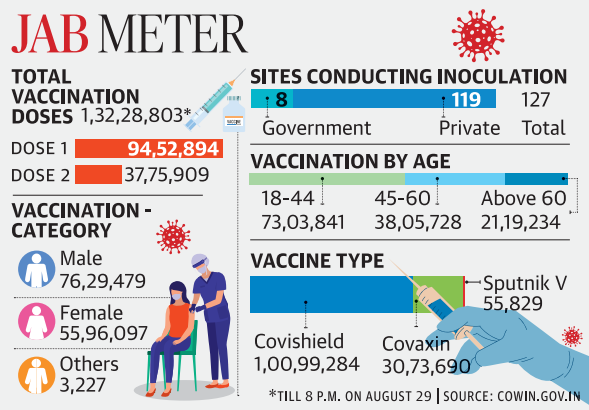
Bus row: Gupta says Delhi govt. trying to silence 'voice of truth'

My tweets are based on reliable information, says BJP MLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
BJP MLA Vijender Gupta on Sunday said the Delhi government was trying to silence the "voice of truth" in response to a criminal and civil defamation suit filed against him by Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot for claiming irregularities in the procurement of 1,000 low-floor buses by the Delhi Transport Corporation.

and his government are scared of the questions, which I am raising in the Delhi Assembly and on social media platforms," Mr. Gupta said.
He added that his tweets are always based on facts, which are from reliable sources.

for making such reckless remarks against him. The Transport Minister has further sought removal of all defamatory content posted by Vijender Gupta against him on Twitter and Facebook.
The Delhi High Court, however, has refused to pass an ex-parte interim order directing the removal of allegedly defamatory statements and posts shared by Mr. Gupta on social media against Mr. Gahlot.



City sees 31 COVID cases
Over 70K tests conducted in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
The city recorded 31 new COVID-19 cases with zero deaths, according to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi government on Sunday.
The bulletin said 71,634 tests had been conducted in 24 hours with a positivity rate of 0.04%.

home isolation.
Under the vaccination drive, 1,85,831 beneficiaries were vaccinated in 24 hours with 1,21,236 beneficiaries receiving their first dose. The number of people who have been benefited by the drive stands at 1,32,02,618, of which 37,68,824 are fully vaccinated.

Security tightened for Janmashtami

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI
Delhi Police on Sunday said security arrangements has been tightened across the national capital in view of Janmashtami celebrations, and asked people to strictly follow COVID-appropriate behaviour. Janmashtami is on Monday.
Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said adequate security arrangements are in place. "We have deployed adequate numbers of personnel in all district across the national capital. We also urge people who will come out of their homes to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour and

DDMA guidelines," Mr. Biswal said.
Senior officers said they will ask people to strictly wear mask and not gather at a public places.
Siddhant Sharma (30), a resident of Vivek Vihar in east Delhi, said after the COVID outbreak, they perform 'puja' at home. "Before the pandemic, we used to go to the temples. Since the COVID outbreak, we have been worshipping at our home. We, especially our parents, do not go outside in crowded areas. The situation is not good and in these tough times, staying at home is the safest option," he said.

Three teenagers drown in the Yamuna in Delhi



The Yamuna river near Wazirabad old bridge where the three boys drowned.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI
Three teenagers who had gone to take a bath in the Yamuna river drowned on Sunday morning here, police said.
The deceased have been identified as Sameer (16), Pankaj (15) and Sumit (15), all residents of Karawal Nagar, they said.
Officials of the fire department said they received information about the incident at 7.40 a.m. following which two fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The divers pulled the three teenagers from the river. They were rushed to a hospital where they were declared dead, a senior officer said.
According to the police, Sameer, Pankaj, Sumit and Bunty went for a bath in the river. While the three had gone into deep waters, Bunty was behind them and was saved, officials said.

Jain inaugurates 10 MW battery energy storage system

It will help city deal with high demand for power, can be charged with solar energy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI
Delhi Power Minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday inaugurated a 10 MW "Battery Energy Storage System" at the Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) plant in Rohini. The system will help the city deal with its peak demand for power, he added.
The system could be charged with solar and other renewable sources of energy. Mr. Jain said the new sys-

The Delhi government is planning to create a 600 MW network of such power banks around the Capital...
SATYENDAR JAIN Delhi Power Minister
tem of energy storage is designed in a way that it can be charged during off-peak power demand hours. The stored energy can be utilised during peak hours, thereby stabilis-

Too close for comfort



Testing times: Students appearing for management exam flouting COVID protocols outside a centre in New Delhi's Anand Vihar on Sunday.

NMRC revises fast trains' stoppages after protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NOIDA
Starting August 31 (Tuesday), the "fast trains" of the Noida-Greater Noida Metro will stop at four more stations between the twin cities during peak hours on weekdays, the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) announced on Sunday. However, the trains would continue to skip

five of the 10 stations that they did not stop at earlier during the peak hours, NMRC Managing Director Rituu Maheshwari said. The NMRC operates "fast trains" during peak hours (8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.) on weekdays. These trains skip 10 stations with a low average ridership between Noida and Greater Noida.

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# Kisan Mahapanchayat flays police action on farmers in Haryana

Farmers cautioned against communal forces desperate to polarise people

ASHOK KUMAR GURUGRAM

A Kisan Mahapanchayat at Nuh on Sunday condemned the police action on protesting farmers at Bastara toll plaza in Karnal a day ago. The farmers belonging to all communities participated in the Mahapanchayat and resolved to make all Samyukt Kisan Morcha decisions a big success, be it the proposed Muzaffarnagar kisan rally or Bharat Bandh.



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait being welcomed during the Kisan Mahapanchayat at Nuh in Haryana on Sunday. ■ PTI

SKM top leaders Rakesh Tikait, Jogender Singh Ugrahan, Dr. Darshan Pal, Yogender Yadav, Avik Saha, Inderjit Singh, Satyawani and others appealed to the gathering to make village-level committees to strengthen the ongoing farmers struggle to get the three “black laws” withdrawn and get a legal guarantee for

Minimum Support Price for all crops.

Dr. Pal expressed surprise as how could a government official order the police to break the heads of farmers without having a signal from the political bosses.

Mr. Yadav raised the issue of discrimination meted out to Mewat region by successive

regimes, which has rendered the region into socio-economic backwardness. Mr. Singh cautioned the farmers against communal forces which were desperate to polarise the people on communal lines by disrupting the historical unity and amity of the Mewati people.

Mr. Ugrahan highlighted

the successes the ongoing farmers movement had already achieved in the form of unprecedented unity of the toiling masses of various States. Besides, this struggle has totally exposed the pro-corporate character of the Modi government, he said.

‘Assets sold for a song’

Mr. Tikait recalled how the conspiracy was hatched to disrepute the farmers movement on 26 January. He said that it was not just the three laws, but the real issue was to save the country. He accused the Modi regime of selling out valuable national assets to his corporate friends for a song.

The farmer leader alleged that hoarding of food grain and fruits had already been launched in huge silos belonging to the Adanis.

## Over 2.5 lakh people affected by Assam floods

Many have moved into relief camps

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Floods in Assam, delayed by three months, have affected more than 2.58 lakh people across 16 districts, officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said Sunday.

Ten of the flood-hit districts are in eastern Assam and three each in central and western Assam. The worst affected is Lakhimpur with more than 1.05 lakh people on rooftops or in temporary shelters on higher grounds.

Officials said the Brahmaputra and several of its tributaries have swollen following incessant rains in Assam and adjoining Arunachal Pradesh, where erosion has affected dozens of villages in the Siang River belt.

According to the ASDMA, 6,218 people have moved into 24 relief camps set up across the worst affected dis-

tricts. Among the flood-hit, 87,337 are females and 47,377 are children.

There was no report of loss of human lives.

Crops on 16,338.46 hectares of land have been affected while several roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged, the authority said.

Meanwhile, at least three feral horses have died in the deluge-hit Dibru-Saikhowa National Park while a hog deer was killed by a speeding vehicle when it was trying to escape floodwaters in Kaziranga National Park as vast tracts of the parks in Assam have been inundated, Forest officials said on Sunday.

Almost 70% of the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park has been flooded, forcing animals to flee to highlands, a Forest department official said.

(With PTI inputs)

## JD(U) calls for caste-based Census

Bihar’s ruling party, under new president Lalan Singh, adopts eight resolutions

AMARNATH TEWARY PATNA

At its national council meeting in Patna under new president Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Bihar’s ruling party, the Janata Dal-United JD(U), on Sunday passed eight resolutions, including the demand for a caste-based Census and a focus on girl education for population control in the country.

Earlier, Mr. Singh who was nominated as new party president, had called upon the party office-bearers and functionaries to work together to fulfil Chief Minister Nitish Kumar’s dream of making the JD(U) “a national party”.

At the national council meeting, the party ratified Mr. Singh’s nomination as national president and recalled the pioneering works done by former party president and now Union Cabinet Minister, R.C.P. Singh.

Eight resolutions were passed at the meeting held at



Janata Dal-United president Rajiv Ranjan Singh ■ FILE PHOTO

the party headquarters and attended by all of its top leaders. In one of its resolutions, the JD(U) said it was necessary the Central government conducted a caste-based Census to make public the actual population of all castes so that the fruits of development reach poor and underdeveloped people. “Caste-based Census will be in the interest of both government and society and it will strengthen our Parliamentary democra-

## Protests against Karnal incident: 30 FIRs filed

Sporadic cases of violence, say police

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GURUGRAM

Around 30 First Information Reports have been registered by the Haryana Police in connection with the widespread incidents of violence and roadblocks across the State in protest against the lathicharge on the farmers in Karnal on Saturday.

“There were sporadic incidents of violence and roadblock across the State on Saturday in the aftermath of the clash between the police and the farmers in Karnal. We have registered 30 FIRs across the State in this connection,” said a senior Haryana Police officer, not willing to be identified. He, however, added that there was no update on the arrests so far.

Inspector-General of Police, Karnal Range, Mamta Singh told *The Hindu* that the Karnal Police were in the

process of registration of criminal cases in connection with the violent clash between the police and the farmers. She said that 14 policemen and 15-20 farmers had so far been reported injured in the clash.

“We have asked the injured farmers to approach the police and get their medical examination done to procure the Medico Legal Report. Around 15-20 farmers have come to us so far and the number is likely to go up,” said Ms. Singh.

**Farmer killed: BKU(C)**

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni) leader Gurnam Singh Charuni, in a tweet during the day, claimed that Sushil Kojal, a farmer with a land holding of around 1.5 acre, had died due to heart failure late on Saturday night after he was injured in the lathicharge at Karnal.

## Manipur autonomous council head accused of fund misuse

We are being threatened to withdraw complaint: beneficiaries

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

More than a year after RTI activists were forced to flee for seeking information on the utilisation of Central funds by the Autonomous District Council (ADC) of Senapati district, beneficiaries in another Manipur district are allegedly being threatened for demanding details on how the money for developmental projects has been spent.

The work agencies and beneficiaries of projects sanctioned under the ADC of Tamenglong district have accused the council’s former Chief Executive Officer Dinglanglung Gangmei and Chairman Namsinrei Panmei of misusing ₹1,802.28 crore received under the 14th Finance Commission of 2017-

18.

Work agencies are locals chosen by the ADC for executing a range of developmental projects.

A statement issued by the work agencies and beneficiaries of Kambiron and Lungkao villages demanded punishment of the two officials for embezzlement.

‘Public has lost trust’

“The public has lost trust in such public servants/civil servants who do not hesitate to commit the act of gross misappropriation and cheating the innocent work agencies and beneficiaries,” it said.

The statement clarified that the work agencies were “not a party to the signatories of any document related to the issuing of work order, check slip or withdrawal of

money from their bank accounts”.

The work agencies and beneficiaries said the authority concerned should be wary of the accused destroying evidence between the period of inquiry and their summoning by the Lokayukta.

They also alleged that the former CEO had been threatening the locals with “severe consequences” if they did not withdraw their complaint to the Lokayukta.

Mr. Gangmei and Mr. Panmei could not be contacted but an associate in the ADC said the charges against them were baseless.

Extremist groups in Manipur have had a history of taking away the lion’s share of development funds allegedly in collusion with officials and contractors.

## Riot-displaced people to return home after 25 years in Assam

We want affected people to live without fear, says BTC chief

RAHUL KARMAKAR GUWAHATI

Thousands of people displaced by ethnic and communal riots in areas under the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) since 1996 are set to return to the homes they left behind.

Central schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Jal Jeevan Mission have been dovetailed with the rehabilitation programme within the next three months, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) chief Pramod Boro said.

“Bodoland had witnessed riots in 1996, 2008 and 2012. Peace has returned to the region after the signing of the BTR Peace Accord in January 2020. We want the affected people to go back home and live their lives without fear,”

Mr. Boro told *The Hindu* from the BTC headquarters Kokrajhar.

He was a signatory to the accord as the president of the All Bodo Students’ Union. He quit the union and became the president of the United People’s Party Liberal, which rules the BTC in alliance with the BJP and the Gana Suraksha Party.

**Adivasi, Bodo people**

“The rehabilitation will start with the affected Adivasi and Bodo people of Gossaigaon area [Kokrajhar district]. It is unfortunate that they have been away from home for 25 years,” he said.

Between 1993 and 2014, more than 970 Bengali-speaking Muslims, Adivasis and Bodos died in clashes triggered by indiscriminate shooting by

extremist groups, primarily the now-disbanded National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Some of the 8.4 lakh people displaced by the violence have remained in shabby relief camps while others relocated to areas beyond present-day BTR.

“We are rebuilding the damaged or destroyed houses of a few thousand. The others have not gone to their houses because of security concerns. We are setting up police outposts in their areas to help them get over their fears,” Mr. Boro said.

The BTC chief also said the former NDFB extremists would be rehabilitated soon in keeping with a clause of the peace accord. “The Assam government will give us ₹160 crore by September for their rehabilitation,” he said.

## AAP brings out ‘Tiranga Yatra’ in Agra; Sisodia slams Yogi govt.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA AGRA

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers brought out a ‘Tiranga Yatra’ here on Sunday, led by Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

The AAP leader slammed the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh over the State’s law-and-order, education, health-care and employment situation.

Ahead of the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, the AAP plans to take out Tiranga Yatras in Aayodhya, Lucknow and Noida to mark the 75th year of India’s Independence.

Mr. Sisodia said his party would carry out ‘Tiranga Yatra’ in the Ayodhya on September 14 and later, it would be brought out in 403 Assembly segments in Uttar Pradesh. In Agra, the ‘Tiranga Yatra’ started from the GIC ground around 4 p.m. and ended at the Shaheed Smarak in Sanjay Place.

‘No good education, job’

Interacting with reporters at the circuit house in Agra, Mr. Sisodia said, “This government is failing to provide good education to the children of the poor, employ-

ment to the youth, and good amount for crop to farmers.”

“Because of unavailability of the beds in hospitals, a pregnant woman had to deliver a baby on road in this State. They feed salt and roti in mid-day meal and act against the reporter if they try to raise the issue,” he said.

Mr. Sisodia was referring to a journalist booked in 2019 for allegedly doing the “despicable work” of maligning the image of the Uttar Pradesh government by recording a video of school children being served salt and roti in mid-day meal.

THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF



Narasimha Rao's daughter becomes MLC
Former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's daughter Surabhi Vani Devi, who was elected to the Legislative Council from Hyderabad...

Four brothers killed over property feud, nine held
Four brothers of a family were hacked to death over a property feud in Bagalkot district of Karnataka on Saturday...

Protest against steel plant privatisation
Thousands of people participated in a 10-km-long human chain in solidarity with the agitation against the decision of the Union government to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) here on Sunday...

Infighting engulfs Congress in Kerala

Contentious nomination of District Congress Committee presidents intensifies faction feud

G. ANAND
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress unit in Kerala appeared engulfed in a potentially incapacitating feud on a scale rarely seen in recent years.
The latest round of infighting in the party is the political fallout of the contentious nomination of District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents.



Congress leaders Oommen Chandy and Ramesh Chennithala are upset about the latest appointments.

leadership consulted everybody. "My name was dragged into a process in which I had no say," he said.
Mr. Chennithala echoed a similar sentiment. He said keeping everybody in the loop would have ensured a smooth transition of power

Student held in rape case freed after negative DNA test result

18-year-old was jailed after a school girl alleged abuse

STAFF REPORTER
MALAPPURAM

The Kerala police were left red-faced when an 18-year-old higher secondary student walked out of the Tirur sub-jail on Saturday after 35 days of incarceration. He was jailed in a Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) case after a 17-year-old schoolgirl alleged that he had raped and impregnated her.
After a DNA examination conducted on the girl proved that the boy was not responsible for her pregnancy, the POCSO court ordered his release.
The Plus-Two student from Tennala, near Tirurangadi, said he was acquainted

Who will compensate me for what I suffered? I'm a student. I was taken to two police stations & three jails

with the girl for about a year but had not abused her.
Days of trauma
The youth said he underwent severe mental trauma after being wrongly arraigned in a POCSO case. "Who is going to compensate me for what I suffered these days? I am a student. I was taken to two police stations and three jails," he said.
The police had picked him up at midnight from his

house and taken him to the station without telling his family the reason for the arrest.
"In the jeep, one constable showered me with abuses. At the police station, he threatened to apply pepper spray on my genitals," he said. He had been taken to the girl's house in handcuffs the next morning.
Recalling custodial brutality, he said, "I could not hear properly for many days after a sub-inspector slapped me on my face. The worst police behaviour was at the Kalpakkanchery station."
The youth said the case should be investigated properly and the culprits brought to book.

about whether the fragile unity forged by the party high command would hold.
For one, 'A' and 'I' groups were miffed that the KPCC had suspended senior leaders K.P. Anil Kumar and K. Sivadasan Nair from the organisation for pointing out the DCC postings were arbitrary and imposed from above without factoring in the ground reality.
The groups viewed the disciplinary action as the latest in factional manoeuvring by the emergent 'K.C.Venugopal' clique in the Congress. They perceived a move to marginalise 'A' and 'I' groups and relegate Mr. Chandy and Mr. Chennithala to organisational irrelevance.
The group managers alleged that the up-and-com-

3,400 kg of marijuana worth ₹21 crore seized

NCB intercepts truck in Hyderabad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) seized 3,400 kg of high-grade marijuana from a truck at the Hyderabad Ring Road toll booth on Saturday. It is estimated to be worth around ₹21 crore.
According to officials, the truck was transporting the consignment from the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha border to Maharashtra via Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Three people - D. Shinde, M.R. Kamble and N. Jogdand, all from Latur district of Maharashtra - were arrested.
On receiving an alert, a joint team of the Bengaluru and Hyderabad NCB officials arrived near the toll booth and intercepted the truck. During a search, they found

the marijuana concealed in 141 gunny bags under tarpaulin sheets, which were further covered by a variety of nursery saplings, said Amit Ghawate, NCB, Zonal Director.
According to the officials, a kingpin from Maharashtra was running the operation. He had arranged the banned substance for multiple syndicates that were trafficking drugs in Pune district, Mumbai, Thane, and other States. These syndicates, in turn, sell contraband to students in colleges, in private parties, and individual clients via an elaborate network, said the NCB.
Officials added that the source of the contraband was Andhra Pradesh-Odisha border area.

WEATHER WATCH

AINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 19.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy to very heavy rain likely at isolated places over Telangana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, eastern Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, central Maharashtra, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala

Table with 3 columns: CITY, RAIN, MAX, MIN. Lists weather data for various cities including Agartala, Ahmedabad, Aizawl, Allahabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dehradun, Gangtok, Goa, Guwahati, Hubballi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Kohima, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Kurnool, Lucknow, Madurai, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Mysuru, New Delhi, Patna, Port Blair, Puducherry, Pune, Raipur, Ranchi, Shillong, Shimla, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchi, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam.

Table with 3 columns: CITIES, SO2, NO2, CO, PM2.5, PM10, CODE. Includes a section for 'Pollutants in the air you are breathing' and 'Yesterday' with color-coded indicators for air quality.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

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Time for a change

Assessments for English should be designed differently from that of other subjects since the focus is on competency in language

K. ELANGO

An obsessive concern caused by the disrupted academic year has been the conduct of the summative exams and the declaration of results. Students of Class 12 and the final semester of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes were traumatised by the ensuing uncertainty. Divergent views have been expressed to resolve the conundrum and one suggestion was to do away with language exams and conduct only subject exams.
As a language teacher, I fail to understand why language exams are equated with subject ones. There is hardly any difference in the modes and tools of assessment. The question paper pattern in the same - short answer, paragraph and essay questions - and the duration is also three hours. The way the curriculum is translated into practice also does not differ. While this has been ignored so far, the pandemic has highlighted this fallacy, which needs to be resolved.

Curricular objectives
The curricula at school and college levels distinctly articulate the objectives of teaching of English as: to develop the four language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) to enhance communicative competence; to inculcate the habits of reading and writing extensively; to listen to and comprehend global English with varied accents; and enable students to engage in fluent and error-free communication with all.
The objectives of teaching other subjects are to familiarise students with concepts, ideas, theories, and formulae. Therefore, the exams aim to find out the level of understanding. Unfortunately, exams in English are also designed similarly, defeating the objectives of teaching it as a language.
Assessments in English have to measure proficiency levels in all four skills to calibrate the spontaneous production of language and not reproduction of textual content. Moreover, testing of competence in language is not syllabus-bound; instead, it offers freedom to choose texts from any domain of knowledge.
One who has acquired the four language skills should be able to read any text in English, respond to any English speaker, or express oneself on any subject, whereas

the subject curricula unintentionally limit the learners' operational knowledge of the domain chosen.
International frameworks of reference
Assessments in English could be modelled on standardised tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC or customised to suit our purposes. Unlike traditional ones, these standardised exams comprise all the skills and can be conducted either integratively or discretely, and online or offline. Language skill acquisition does not actually require summative assessments; it can be measured progressively throughout the academic year.
An advantage of using standardised tests (or their adaptations) is the rubrics that accompany each of the skill assessment tools, facilitating objective evaluation and providing scope for different kinds of assessment - self and peer assessments, and assessment by the teacher. The rubrics have to be made familiar to students so that assessment becomes transparent and they understand their strengths and learning gaps.
Additionally, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning, Assessment, abbreviated as CEFR (2001), provides guidelines for different proficiency levels (from basic to mastery), which enable learners as well as teacher-examiners to measure the proficiency levels accurately and strategise to enhance students' competence in English.
It is, therefore, high time we transformed language exams, distinguishing them from subject exams, to enable learners to acquire and demonstrate language skills.

The writer is National Secretary, ELTAI, and professor and former head, Department of English, Anna University, Chennai.

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## A fine line

Infrastructure development and eco-conservation should go hand-in-hand

The need for infrastructure development in the Himalayan region rubs up against the environmental and ecological challenges that they pose. The Uttarakhand government has for decades envisaged hydroelectric projects as the way forward to power the State, premised on the region's undulating topography. However, the rising frequency of intense rains has been contributing to landslips, avalanches, and the loss of lives and property. All of this has a bearing on hydroelectric projects being situated in terrain prone to environmental shocks. In the aftermath of the devastating Kedarnath floods of 2013, the Supreme Court ordered a halt to hydropower projects in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins pending a review on whether they exacerbated the damage. The last few years have seen considerable friction on this issue, especially because the future of hydropower projects is closely linked to the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) programme. For the health of the river, it must be allowed to flow unimpeded, and hydropower projects are an obstacle. A committee of experts recommended to the Court that almost all hydropower projects, cleared by the Government for construction, be scrapped. Proponents of six of these projects approached the Court on the grounds that they had obtained prior clearances and scrapping projects would entail significant losses. Since then, the Centre has been trying to walk a fine line between salvaging some of them while acknowledging, at least on paper, the environmental costs.

There have been divisions even within various Central ministries: the Water Resources Ministry, which manages the NMCG, is opposed to hydropower projects while the Ministry of Power roots for them. Through the years, whenever a group of experts has recommended a cessation of infrastructure development, there is always another group of experts, usually affiliated to government institutions, that differ and recommend the opposite. The avalanche in Chamoli this February, that destroyed two power projects and killed at least 200, was only the latest reminder of the fraught risks that committees and their tussles inadequately account for. The Centre has been saying that it is not too keen on new hydropower projects and is only permitting those that are at least 50% complete to go ahead given the sunk costs. While such statements have been made in Parliament, they do not appear in the latest affidavit to the Court; so there are concerns on whether this is indeed a lasting policy commitment. Uttarakhand, like all other States, is not immune from the demands for reliable power and infrastructure from its people. Along with better dialogue, power companies and the Centre must inspire greater trust in the residents of the region: infrastructure development will have to necessarily account for the region's constraints.

## Rape and insensitivity

Women's security must not be predicated on restrictions of their rights and freedoms

The narrative of violence against women in India continues unhindered. On August 24, an MBA student was gangraped near Chamundi Hills in Mysuru, sending shock waves around the country. Four men and a juvenile have been arrested from Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu in connection with the rape. The men tried to rob the girl and her friend but on finding no valuables, they raped her and assaulted him. Earlier this month, a minor Dalit girl was raped, murdered and hurriedly cremated in Delhi while the parents were kept away. In July, two minor girls were raped in Goa. Despite stringent laws in place, especially after the 2012 Nirbhaya case in Delhi, a rape occurs every 16 minutes in India, according to the latest records available with the National Crime Records Bureau. To make matters worse, sexist, misogynist, survivor-blaming remarks and inept measures invariably follow a heinous crime against women. Girls are pulled up for wearing ripped jeans, and staying out late. Sections of society, in their warped thinking, often argue the survivor could have evaded the assailants by adhering to conservative norms: wearing traditional attire, skipping parties, returning home by sunset. Parents are blamed for not bringing up their girl children with 'Indian values'. After the Mysuru rape, a similar pattern ensued. The Karnataka Home Minister, Araga Jnanendra, 'joked' about rape while accusing the Congress of 'politicising' it. He subsequently retracted his insensitive remarks after State Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai stepped in.

Mysore University did a flip-flop too, first announcing that girls would not be allowed to step off the Manasagangotri campus after 6.30 p.m., and then withdrawing the missive. Activists cried foul because the action showed the intent to blame everything on the girl. To do right by women, courts too should play a role, but despite some soul-searching as in *Aparna Bhat & Ors vs. State of Madhya Pradesh & Anr.*, where the Supreme Court admitted to the "entrenched paternalistic and misogynistic attitudes that are regrettably reflected at times in judicial orders and judgments," other verdicts have fallen short. Recent rulings by the Chhattisgarh High Court and the Kerala High Court, reiterating that any sexual act by a man against his wife, even if it involved force, is not rape, may be correct in law, but served to highlight the lacuna in the penal code, which does not recognise marital rape. In June, the Supreme Court had to order police protection to a couple in a live-in relationship who were denied relief by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Women have come a long way, fighting for their rights against patriarchal mindsets and other social ills. Instead of curbing their freedom, society and the state must ensure protection of women both in public and private places.

# The Afghan theatre and judging India's responses

Closing the embassy in Kabul does not fall among the questionable decisions in the country's foreign policy stance



C.R. GHAREKHAN

The Government's decision to pull out all staff from the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, including the Ambassador, has come in for much adverse comment among analysts and experts. It is argued that all major powers, including China, Russia and Iran, have maintained their missions. We would have been of much better help to our citizens and others had we remained there instead of packing our bags and leaving in such haste. At the least, it is said, we ought to have had a consular office at the airport, such as the one said to have been kept by the Americans. Some have even stated that the Taliban had requested India to maintain its embassy, meaning thereby that they had assured us of safety. This is a brief summary of the views of those critical of the Government.

### Where India stands

This writer has no means of verifying whether or not the Taliban had made such an approach to the Government and would not like to second-guess its decision. But it seems to me, that on balance, the

Government was justified in taking the decision that it did.

First, India is not a major power, particularly when it comes to Afghanistan. We have not followed an independent or national interest-based policy towards the events in that country. This is true also of the previous Government. We have let the Americans decide our actions. To reiterate, we have never been a major player in Afghanistan. All we did was to support whatever government was installed in Kabul by the United States, first that of Hamid Karzai, and then Ashraf Ghani.

Putting all the eggs in the Ghani basket was wrong. He might have been a good academic and authority on developing countries, but he was not a statesman or a good administrator, besides being corrupt and tolerating corruption on a massive scale. Also, he was not a free agent, having to do America's bidding all the time. We poured money — \$3 billion worth — in small and medium projects across the country, which has undoubtedly earned us goodwill among the people of Afghanistan. But that did not earn us any role in the political consultations or so-called reconciliation negotiations among the stakeholders.

### Feelers to the Taliban

In other words, India has not been a relevant player in whatever mattered most in relation to Afghanistan.



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tan.

Criticism of the Government for not engaging the Taliban, not establishing contacts with them, is fully justified. It is reported in the media that the Government did engage the Taliban of late; the Government has not denied this claim. However, if it did begin talking to the Taliban, it was too little, too late.

We should have been open about it and established contacts at the senior level of the Taliban. Other powers did — China, Russia and even Iran, a Shia-majority country openly talking to a Shia-hating Sunni terror group. Even America started talking, openly, without feeling in the least embarrassed, to the Taliban at the senior level; this is the terrorist group which is estimated to have killed 2,500 American military personnel since 2001.

We were obviously not wanting

to upset Ashraf Ghani. We could not talk to the Taliban because they refused to talk to the Government. As Ambassador Vivek Katju has argued, engaging does not imply endorsing. This was a serious lapse. We have to talk to people whom we may find distasteful to talk to, whether it is Pakistan, China or the Taliban.

Even if we had had skeleton staff for consular work, how would those needing consular help have approached them? Nobody wanted to risk going out, everybody was afraid of gun-toting Taliban fighters. Online help? That could be extended from anywhere. Now, the Government has even cancelled all the visas issued so far; not a convincing way to render consular assistance.

If the Taliban did give an assurance of safety and requested us not to close the embassy, how could we rely on their word? Did we, do we, have the means to force them to keep their word? The Americans have; they can still cause a huge amount of harm to the Taliban; they have assets on the ground to do so, and which they are not able to deploy fully to protect their people.

### The other groups

And it is not just the Taliban. There are other groups in Afghanistan that are inimical to India — the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, as well as the Islamic

State in Khorasan (ISK, or ISIS K). The Government had possibly intelligence about the threats posed by these groups. It is reported that they provided thousands of fighters to the Taliban in their jihad against foreign forces. They are a potent threat to us now, also perhaps to the Taliban as demonstrated by the horrific suicide bombing on August 26 which took the lives of at least 13 American military personnel and many more Afghans. Even if one of our citizens had been killed, there would have been an outcry.

### Foreign policy approach

One can criticise the Government for some approaches it has followed in foreign policy, for example aligning so closely with America which has, in turn, has caused the Russians to be unhappy with us and which has led them to move closer to our enemy, China. Giving such huge importance to the Quad (composed of the U.S., Australia, India, and Japan) is also a questionable decision; the Quad is an American manoeuvre to contain China; it is an unabashedly anti-China arrangement which perhaps we ought not to have embraced so enthusiastically. But closing the embassy in Kabul does not fall among the questionable decisions.

Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, Indian Foreign Service (retired)

# Seize this opportunity to institutionalise accountability

The discourse on an indemnity waiver for COVID-19 vaccines is a hidden moment for India to act



VIRAG GUPTA & CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA

The Drugs Controller General of India granted Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) to the COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by Moderna and by Johnson & Johnson, in end June and early August 2021, respectively. In addition, India has an opportunity to receive 5 crore to 10 crore doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's mRNA-based vaccine, including through the COVAX mechanism co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi and the World Health Organization, before the end of 2021.

### What it covers

Despite granting EUA for two vaccines and a third (that of Pfizer-BioNTech) being eligible for approval, uncertainty on supply and availability remains. One of the primary reasons for this is the Indian government's indecision on requests for indemnity from these manufacturers. Indemnity translates to protection from legal proceedings and liabilities, against claims from people who may experience rare and serious Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI).

COVID-19 vaccines are given EUA by the regulatory authorities after a thorough review of their safety and efficacy. However, even though vaccines meet safety parameters, as an immuno-biological substance, a vaccine can be associated with rare and serious AEFIs, some of which — such as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) and Myocarditis — are known. Other

long-term impacts can only be known over a period of time.

There is a need for increased and sustained vaccine supply in India. The country's COVID-19 vaccination drive has been underperforming, and in the seven-and-a-half months since the drive was initiated, only 11% of the total population has been fully vaccinated, and 35.5% has received a single dose. A reason for this is the insufficient supply, which has consistently been less than the projected vaccine availability. The situation persists in spite of the certain regulatory modifications enacted by the Government to increase availability, including: fast track authorisation of COVID-19 vaccines approved by regulatory authorities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Europe, and those included in the World Health Organization (WHO) emergency use listing; waiving off requirements for bridging trials; and doing away with mandatory batch testing for vaccines manufactured abroad. Though these steps have led to the EUA of two additional vaccines, there is a lack of clarity on the definitive timeline on their availability in India. A key bottleneck is demand from manufacturers to grant indemnity. The core argument of the manufacturers is that they have been granted indemnity in their country of origin and have supplied vaccines to other countries only when granted indemnity. Vaccines under COVAX programme, further have an effective waiver of indemnity, through a separate mechanism that has been established.

### The existing provisions

The idea of not granting indemnity is to hold vaccine manufacturers accountable. The manufacturers of the three vaccines currently being administered in India (Covishield, Covaxin, and Sputnik V) have not been granted indemnity.



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There seem to be two key thoughts that are delaying the Government's decision on indemnity. First, the supply from these manufacturers is likely to be a very small proportion of total vaccine availability in the country. Second, it is likely that once foreign manufacturers are granted indemnity, manufacturers currently supplying vaccines might make similar demands citing the fair play rule.

What do the existing rules and regulations suggest? The rules governing clinical trials in India specify that compensation must be granted in case of injury or death of a trial subject. However, though a similar compensation mechanism does not exist for AEFIs reported under the Government's routine immunisation programme in the country or for any other vaccine-related injury; the legal responsibility for any vaccine-related injury, in the existing Indian regulations, lies with the manufacturers. Therefore, if manufacturers are granted indemnity for any COVID-19 vaccine, there has to be an alternative mechanism for people to make a legal claim for compensation. That essentially would mean the Government has to accept responsibility to provide compensation for any such proven injury or harm. Second, indemnity must not be construed as blanket protection for deliberate acts, fraud or instances of negligence. Third, if foreign vaccine manufacturers are granted indemnity, then manufacturers of the vaccines currently in use are likely to demand

similar protections.

Though at a broader level, the stand and unwillingness of these manufacturers to supply COVID-19 vaccines to any country unless granted indemnity is too rigid. However, beyond indemnity, India does have mechanisms in the current legal framework to ensure safety and legal remedy for any harm. First, the Drugs Controller General of India while granting registration certificates is empowered to take action against companies found to be in violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Second, any individual seeking compensation after experiencing AEFI may directly file petitions before consumer courts and the High Courts. Third, recent amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 disallow individuals but permit the regulatory bodies to initiate class action suits (cases representing groups of people who have suffered from the same loss) based on individual complaints.

### Opportunity in the crisis

Requests for indemnity must be contextualised within the larger public interest. For citizens, as long as mechanisms to tackle and compensate for a potential harm are effective, it makes a marginal difference if they come from the Government or a manufacturer. Moreover, even in cases where manufacturers hold legal liability, the Government and regulators cannot wash their hands of their responsibility to protect public health.

Therefore, India should examine safeguards instituted by countries which have granted indemnity to manufacturers, such as America's Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program (CICP) and similar schemes in the U.K., Canada, the European Union, and Singapore. The COVAX has underwritten the compensation burden to protect vaccine manufac-

turers and distributors.

This discourse clearly needs a recalibration and provides the Indian government a valuable opportunity to institutionalise legal safeguards from vaccine injuries and possibly, at a larger level, improve overall patient and healthcare safety in the country. Such institutional mechanisms need to be supplemented with dedicated funding from the Government. Such systems can then be applicable to any licensed vaccines in India.

One of the characteristics of India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been delaying decisions till a point of crisis has emerged. Situations such as the novel coronavirus pandemic demand proactive and decisive problem-solving instead of burying our heads in the sand, hoping the problem will disappear. However, the debate on indemnity has far-reaching consequences. It must be seen as an opportunity far beyond the quantum of vaccines, to review legal provisions and create long-term mechanisms for protection from vaccine harm and making health services safer and accountable. It is a high time that a decision on granting (or not) indemnity to COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers is taken, before the situation morphs into another crisis and then a decision is rushed. The approach has to be to safeguard the interest of the citizen and convert this as an opportunity to reduce vaccine 'licensing to availability gap', increase vaccine availability, and establish institutional mechanisms.

Virag Gupta is a practising advocate in the Supreme Court of India. Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, a physician-epidemiologist, is also a public policy and health systems expert and co-author of 'Till We Win: India's Fight Against The COVID-19 Pandemic'. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Crime in Mysuru

The Mysuru gang rape case is disturbing. (Page 1, "5 held in Mysuru gang rape case", August, 29). But making it even worse have been the uncharitable remarks made by politicians and others, casting aspersions on the survivor-student for the abominable incident. It has become the practice for people in authority to make crass remarks, conveniently forgetting the unquantifiable trauma and agony the survivors undergo. This only shows a retrograde mindset and lack of empathy for the distraught women. Assaults on women only show the law enforcement agency in a bad light; but it is also a blot on the entire society. Finally, it is only intensive

foot patrolling and a visible police presence in crime-prone areas round the clock and exemplary punishments for the perpetrators through fast track courts that can make a very visible difference.

V. JOHAN DHANAKUMAR, Chennai

India has been an unfriendly nation for women in general, with no signs of crimes against them abating. An atrocity almost similar to the 2012 Nirbhaya case has been perpetrated in Mysuru, a city known for its safety and civility. The perpetrators of the ghastly crime need to face quick justice; it is only such a step that will instil confidence in all. The current laws do not seem to be proving to be a deterrent. This is also no occasion to make and exchange

insensitive remarks or comments.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA, Bengaluru

This is one more example of the growing violence against women in the country. Only a fraction of women who are assaulted, file complaints, and most survivors prefer to remain silent because of the social stigma. India is a deeply patriarchal society and it is no exaggeration to say that popular culture encourages young men to harass women. The relevant laws need to be revisited as there has been no reduction in the wave of crimes against women.

R. SIVAKUMAR, Chennai

### Selection of judges

In the long list of appointees to the Supreme Court of

India, what stands out is the omission of Justice Akil Kureshi. The reasons are not far to see. The appointments were kept in the backburner for almost two years and popped up no sooner than star performer Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman retired and was out of the collegium. It is one of the lamentable follies of the Collegium and its consequent fallout on the independence of the judiciary. The striking down of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) which wanted to include other constitutional functionaries in the appointment of judges, has really made no difference. Earlier it was the case of supersession of Justice H.R. Khanna for the post of the Chief Justice of India after he delivered his historic dissent

in *ADM Jabalpur*. Now, it is the unfortunate omission of Justice Kureshi at the threshold itself. No person can be made to suffer for his boldness and fairness as it is the most cherished value of the judicial system and its very bedrock. We may still have some Justice Khannas and Justice Kureshis left, but that is no consolation. We need a fearless judiciary.

N.G.R. PRASAD, Chennai

### Pension regulations

I am a disability activist suffering from multiple sclerosis for the last 23 years. I had to take premature retirement from bank service due to total incapacitation after completion of 30 years of service. My physical condition is such that I have not been able to

visit a bank branch as I have been denied a notional benefit of five years in pensionary benefits; this may well be the condition of many others like me. Recently, the family pension of bank employees was enhanced from 15% to 30% and I sent a representation to the Finance Minister requesting intervention in a matter pending since 1996 when the Disabilities Act was first passed.

What needs to be highlighted is the anomaly in Section 30 of the bank pension regulations regarding denial of notional benefit of five years in the pensionary benefits of those who have taken premature retirement due to total incapacitation.

YASHI PAL RALHAN, Jalandhar, Punjab



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# Towards a more humane police force

Efforts are on to improve the human rights protection regime in police stations



R.K. VIJ

Earlier this month, Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana expressed concern at the degree of human rights violations in police stations in the country. He said that “the threat to human rights and bodily integrity is the highest in police stations”. He also said that “in spite of constitutional declarations and guarantees, lack of effective legal representation at the police stations is a huge detriment to detained persons”. However, a reality check shows that the picture is not so bleak and efforts are being made to improve the human rights protection regime in police stations.

### Deaths in police custody

Deaths in police custody are indeed a matter of grave concern. Each such death must be seriously inquired into, to unravel the truth. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data reveal that though the number of custodial deaths varies year to year, on average of about 100 custodial deaths have taken place every year between 2010 and 2019. Of them, about 3.5 persons allegedly died due to injuries caused by policemen, 8.6 while escaping from custody, 28.1 due to suicide, and the rest due to various reasons like illness and injuries caused in road accidents. A judicial inquiry, which is mandatory for every suspicious custodial death, was conducted in 26.4 cases. Though every death in custody needs to be prevented, suspicious deaths which bring disrepute to the police system must be rooted out completely.

The foremost measure to reduce instances of custodial violence is to reduce the number of arrests. The law on arrest says that arrest for offences punishable up to seven years of imprisonment should be made only when the police officer is satisfied that such arrest is necessary to prevent the person from tampering with evidence, to prevent the person from committing any further offence, etc. The Supreme Court held that each arrest must be necessary and justified; having the authority to arrest is



K MURALI KUMAR

alone not sufficient. In *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar* (2014), it was held that despite the offence being non-bailable under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which relates to torture for dowry, arrest is not mandatory as per Section 41 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). In *Special Action Forum v. Union of India* (2018), the Court further held that the police officer shall furnish to the magistrate the reasons and materials which necessitated the arrest for further detention of the accused. The purpose of these checks is to ensure that the police does not abuse the power of arrest.

NCRB data show that the ratio of the number of arrests to the number of IPC offences has decreased from 1.33 in 2010 to 0.96 in 2019 and despite an increase in total IPC offences, the actual number of arrests has reduced by more than five lakh in the last five years. Though the arrests in the previous years' cases may increase to some extent, it is hoped that violence in custody will be checked if the amended law is implemented in letter and spirit.

The National Police Commission (1977-81), the Law Commission in its 154th report (1996) and the Malimath Committee Report (2003), among others, and the Supreme Court in *Prakash Singh v. Union of India* (2006), have recommended that the investigating police should be separated from the law-and-order police to ensure better expertise in investigation. It was suggested that the separation start in towns which have more than 10 lakh population. It is believed that a separate wing will do more professional investigation and

will not use unwarranted methods to extract confession from the accused. The Central Bureau of Investigation and the National Investigation Agency have already earned the reputation of the country's premier investigation agencies. Though efforts have been made by some States in this direction, more resources are required in policing to implement the Court's directions.

One of the alleged reasons for using extreme methods is to extract a quick confession from the suspect. Though the total police force has increased in the last five years, the civil police mostly remains overstretched. Therefore, unless investigating officers are increased in proportion to the number of serious offences, the quality of investigation may suffer, and the Malimath Committee's recommendation that an investigating officer should preferably investigate no more than 10 cases every year will continue to remain a dream. Similarly, with the increase of newer types of crime like white collar crime and cybercrime, subject experts are needed to assist the police in the investigation.

It cannot be denied that much has changed in the police consequent to the judgment in *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal* (1996). In that case, the Supreme Court laid down guidelines to check custodial torture and increase transparency and responsibility of the police officer effecting arrest. Most of these guidelines such as providing information to a friend or relative about the arrest, medical examination, and permission to meet a lawyer have now been incorporated in the CrPC. Investigating officers

mostly comply with them.

Further, in order to check the violation of human rights, CCTV cameras have been installed in police stations. In *Paramvir Singh v. Baljit Singh* (2020), the Supreme Court has directed States to cover more area of each police station under CCTV cameras and have storage facility of audio-video recording for 18 months. An independent committee shall study the footage and periodically publish reports of its observations. Thus, sufficient steps are being taken to ensure that the abuse of human rights is minimised.

Custodial death is perhaps one of the worst crimes in a civilised society governed by the rule of law. The guilt, therefore, must be punished severely for his misconduct and criminal act. NCRB data show that on average about 47.2 criminal cases were registered annually against policemen in last 10 years. Departmental action against errant officers is a rule in the police force, rather than an exception. The National Human Rights Commission also oversees deaths in custody due to human rights violations and recommends compensation in appropriate cases.

### Protecting human rights

The police officers must know that their mandate is to protect human rights and not violate them. They need to be sensitised regularly and encouraged to employ scientific tools of interrogation and investigation like the lie detection test, narco test and brainfingerprinting test.

The Home Ministry has recently linked the 'police modernisation scheme' with police reforms. Unless sufficient action is taken by the State governments and the police authorities, incentives in the form of additional funds will not be released.

The CJI's suggestion to install display boards on human rights to disseminate information about the constitutional right to legal aid and availability of free legal aid services may deter police excesses. Our commitment to the protection of human rights is unconditional and total. Many steps have been taken so far to check custodial violence and no stone shall be left unturned to eliminate such violence in toto.

R.K. Vij is a senior IPS officer in Chhattisgarh. Views are personal

### FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

# Disappearance of follow-up

Follow-up stories hold those in power accountable but the relentless news cycle makes them hard to do



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

Readers' Editor proposes; reader disposes. Or so it seems. When I started this countdown series, the idea was to focus on journalism and its multiple challenges including the erosion of public trust, the elusive business model and a polarised polity. I also wanted to make the readers realise the differences in approach between audience-oriented editors and a news ombudsman.

I have always been concerned about the vulnerability of journalists. In light of the Pegasus spyware scandal, I was looking at the digital surveillance industry. It is a broad and largely opaque network of companies that produce technology to monitor and track individuals. A recent report by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), 'Spyware: An Unregulated and Escalating Threat to Independent Media', documented how the privatisation of digital repression is hurting free and independent media. I was also intrigued by the averment of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the two-member commission of inquiry headed by retired justice Madan Lokur set up by the West Bengal was unconstitutional.

### Intrinsic element of good journalism

However, I was forced to pause my study of the spyware's debilitating impact on journalism following a mail from a contributor-reader, K. Balakesari, former Member of the Railway Board. He raised questions about the report "Industry's practices are against national interest, says Piyush Goyal" (August 14) in which the Union Minister targeted the Tata group. Mr. Balakesari wrote: "I would have expected that such a strong tirade by a senior Minister in the Union Cabinet against industry in general and particularly against a business house that is held up as a bellwether of corporate rectitude and sound business practices would have merited at least an editorial in *The Hindu*. I can understand industry wanting to downplay the incident because of various considerations but what prevented the media from taking the issue further in the public domain? Censorship or 'voluntary' self-regulation."

Mr. Balakesari is right; as follow-up is an essential and intrinsic element of good jour-

nalism. News manuals say that "follow-ups are needed because one story on its own may not cover all aspects of an event or controversy properly." Mr. Balakesari said that the silence of industry leaders means that they either endorse what the Minister alleged or they are collectively spineless. His question to news organisations in general, and this newspaper in particular, was how this episode made a disappearing act.

### Shifting focus

The lack of follow-up to the Minister's uncharacteristic observation against a conglomerate was neither the result of censorship nor self-regulation. Off-the-cuff remarks by those in power have become commonplace. The news cycle has become relentless and many significant developments – including the fall of Kabul and the Finance Minister's announcement of the ₹6 lakh crore national monetisation plan for infrastructure assets – took place in the days following the strange observation of the Commerce and Industry Minister. The media was forced to focus on these emerging issues.

While I can give any number of reasons for the media not following up on Mr. Goyal's attack on the Tatas, including the factors that forced the Confederation of Indian Industry to pull down the video from its YouTube channel, I value the idea of follow-up. It helps to beat the compulsions imposed by the relentless news cycle and tries to keep the focus on holding those in power accountable.

One of the biggest successes in journalism in recent times is the 'Spotlight' investigation by the Boston Globe reporters. The meticulous documentation by the reporters of sexual abuse by Catholic priests won them a Pulitzer Prize. This investigation highlighted the importance of follow-up stories as part of the news agenda and helped to circumvent the tyranny of the news cycle.

The International Journalists' Network has a section dedicated to follow-ups in its journalism basics section. It argues that the partial decline in follow-up stories is due to slashed newsroom budgets and the warp speed of the Internet age. It says that a structured follow-up mechanism helps a newsroom make the competition follow it. If holding power accountable is the central tenet of journalism, and if newsrooms are not going to be swept by the power of algorithmic decision-making and Big Data, follow-ups are the best journalistic tool.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

# The purpose of literature

It is through inclusive and diverse writings that we get a socio-cultural understanding of a nation

KUNAL RAY

Delhi University recently dropped Mahasweta Devi's renowned short story, 'Draupadi', and two Dalit writers – Bama and Sukirtharani – from the BA English (Hons) syllabus. Several writers, academics and media outlets have reacted adversely to this news. Devi's short story details the plight of tribals and remains relevant to this day. Bama's *Karukku* will forever be remembered for its searing account of her life of subjugation and perennial ostracism. Sukirtharani's poems lay bare her Dalit feminist politics. These are important voices that any student of literature or the Humanities ought to engage with in contemporary India. And it is often through university syllabi that young minds are introduced to such writing which may not feature in the usual bestseller lists or other traps laid out by corporate publishing intended to endear readers to certain types of books – lifestyle, self-help and 'how to do' guides – which don't encourage critical questioning and thinking.

### An introduction to who we are

At this point, we must ask: what is the purpose of literature in a classroom really? Literary studies have moved far beyond merely imparting tools of literary analysis to students in the classroom. Studying literature no longer means analysing plot, character and setting, and writing long prosaic answers in exams alone. These are important elements to understand a text in its entirety but literature is also an introduction to where and how we live and the challenges that face our time and society. In many ways, literature is an introduction to who we are, or ought to be, as people. All over the world, literature syllabi are being redrawn to ensure inclusion and diversity.

The writings of the authors who have been dropped from the course could be subjected to traditional literary analysis. At the same time, they also identify and highlight concerns that aid a socio-cultural understanding of the issues that plague Indian society. These texts, however, are not

to be read as sociology camouflaging as literature. We must discuss their artistic and literary merits too. I have encountered several realities of this nation through these writings with little or no experience of the terrain the writers have written about or the caste atrocities they have faced. Their writing has been a great education to say the least. At the same time, history is archived in the life story of the individual and other characters in their fiction. The decision-makers at Delhi University could argue that all syllabi should be regularly updated. While that cannot be contested, the texts that replace the above writers should invite further scrutiny. Also, it should be asked why only these texts were chosen to be axed while others were left untouched.

This act of elimination will hopefully motivate several to read these writers and explore their work with greater interest. The same happened in the past when texts such as A.K. Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayanas* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* were dropped from university syllabi under political pressure. Needless to say, banned books have always aroused great curiosity amongst readers.

### Reading Indian writing

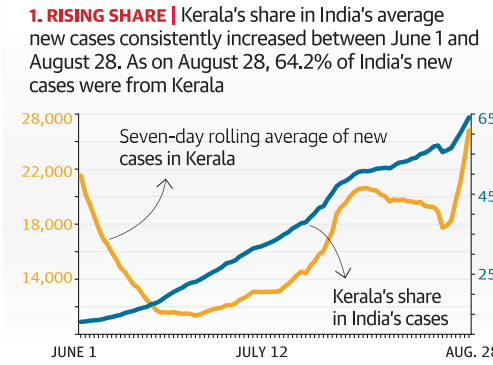
It was a welcome move by Delhi University to teach the writings of Mahasweta Devi and Bama as part of the English syllabus and wean such courses away from their excessive Eurocentrism. To read Indian literature in translation is one of the best introductions to the country and its enormous literary wealth. Through such a practice, students are also taught to read and appreciate literature in the comfort of a familiar context and become informed citizens. While world literature has its own merits, an introduction to Indian writing and especially those that help us to be 'critical insiders' (a term that the writer U.R. Ananthamurthy used) will go a long way in creating passionate learners. Isn't that the purpose of education after all?

Kunal Ray teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune

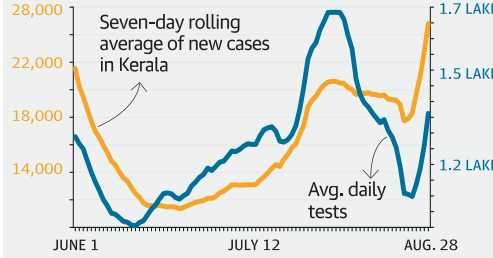
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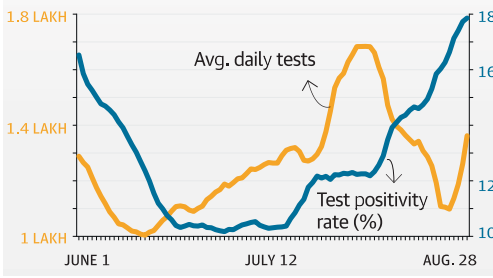
1 Between July 28 and August 28, Kerala's share in the country's daily cases increased from 45% to 64%



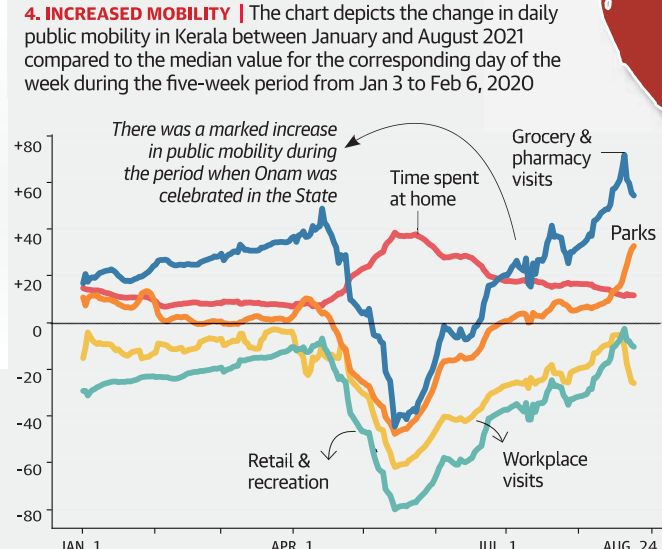
2. FACTOR OF TESTING | New cases in Kerala have been rising since July. However, they were accompanied by an increase in tests too. While the rise was arrested between Aug. 1 and 22, cases began to increase again as a result of a sharp drop in daily tests during Onam. After the festival, tests were again ramped up, which led to a spike in cases



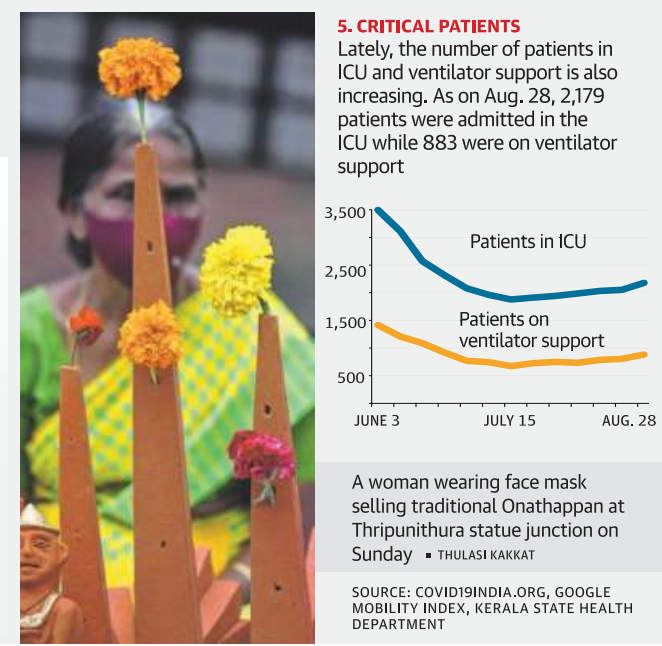
3. RISING TPR | In August, avg. daily tests reduced despite the consistent rise in the avg. daily TPR. It was 12% on Aug. 7 (the day tests started decreasing) and 16% on Aug. 22. This means that many infections would have been missed while testing. After testing increased, the TPR continued to increase and stood at 18% on Aug. 28, as many previously unidentified cases would have been captured



2 Between Aug. 12 and 23, 1.18 lakh tests were conducted on average daily in the State compared to the 1.54 lakh done in the previous 10-day period



4. INCREASED MOBILITY | The chart depicts the change in daily public mobility in Kerala between January and August 2021 compared to the median value for the corresponding day of the week during the five-week period from Jan 3 to Feb 6, 2020



A woman wearing face mask selling traditional Onathappan at Thripunithura statue junction on Sunday • THULASI KAKKAT  
SOURCE: COVID19INDIA.ORG, GOOGLE MOBILITY INDEX, KERALA STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

### The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 30, 1971

### Prohibition goes in Tamil Nadu

Though Prohibition will remain suspended in Tamil Nadu from to-morrow, bars will not be allowed in hotels and restaurants, according to a decision taken by the State Government [Madras, Aug. 29]. Social clubs will, however, be permitted to serve liquor to its members as hitherto. But the license fee in their case will be doubled from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 2,000. In addition, these organisations will be required to pay a club fee of Rs. 2 (instead of Rs. 1.60) for every 50 bottles of liquor served to its members. An official spokesperson explained there were at present 22 social clubs in the State holding two kinds of licences, F.L.2 and F.L.2.A. The former authorised them to serve drinks to its members, both Indian and foreign, while the latter restricted it to foreigners alone. This discrimination would be removed from to-morrow and there would be a single licence for all clubs. Western-style hotels holding F.L.3 licences are now permitted to supply liquor to foreign tourists and foreign residents for consumption within their private rooms at the hotels.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 30, 1921

### Manual Training in Education.

Education is generally regarded as a means to an end, an investment calculated to yield a substantial return in the form of a decent employment. It is also evident that the glamour about education is day by day waning because the present day education "does not pay." Several suggestions are made as to how the present day education could be improved so that it might produce more healthy, independent and capable men of practical wisdom with a wider outlook of men and things than the puerile graduate, uncertain of his profession, weak in health and forlorn about his future. Not the least among the suggestions is the introduction of Manual Training as an essential part of the school work. A Swedish educationist had stated that Manual Training would instil a taste for and love of bodily labour, develop independence and self reliance, cultivate habits of order, neatness, accuracy and perseverance, train the eye and give a general dexterity of hand and promote the development of the physical powers. Mr. M. Jules Ferry, the great advocate of manual training in France stated that, in order the value and nobility of Manual Training should be recognised by people, it should find a place in the school curriculum.



FROM PAGE ONE

## Pained by farmer-police clashes, says Chautala

He promised action against a Sub-Divisional Officer who was caught on camera asking police personnel to “break the heads” of farmers. “The video of a 2018-batch IAS officer has gone viral. Later there was a clarification that he had not slept for two days, but he probably doesn’t know that farmers too remain awake for 200 days in a year. What he said is condemnable and action will be taken for sure,” Mr. Chautala said.

He questioned the objective behind the agitation when new *mandis* (markets) were being opened in the State, the crop was being procured at the MSP and the

money was being transferred directly to the bank accounts of the farmers. “We have repeatedly said *mandis* and MSP are going to stay,” Mr. Chautala said.

Replying to question on the clash, Mr. Chautala said, “You cannot welcome someone with a garland, if they attack you with a spade.” He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had offered to suspend the three laws and even make amendments, but the Morcha leadership did not come forward for talks. Mr. Chautala said that dialogue was the only way forward and offered to mediate if the farmers wanted to talk with the government.

## Oil palm plan is a recipe for disaster, say activists

The Union government insists it is already proceeding on the basis of cautious scientific analysis. A study done by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research recommended 28 lakh hectares across the country where oil palm can be cultivated, out of which only 9 lakh hectares are in the northeastern States, Mr. Tomar said.

“This 9 lakh hectares is not being given by cutting forests or other crops. This is land available for cultivation. The other reason is that besides the availability of land and the suitability of climate, in the context of environment too, it will help bring balance,” the Agriculture Minister told reporters after the Cabinet approved the new mission.

“There is research going on to increase the production of oilseeds like mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, and there has been increasing growth in the production of these oilseeds, but if we have to fill huge gap in production versus demand [of edible oils] soon, we will have to venture into crops where production is more. The production of palm oil from one hectare is far greater than the production of mustard oil in the same area. So naturally, though we are promoting the production of other oilseed, the production rate of oilseeds cannot be compared to that of palm oil,” he said. Palm oil currently makes up a whopping 55% of India’s edible oil imports, and the new mission is intended to move towards domestic production and self reliance instead.

### Previous experience

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have already had some experience with oil palm, including some abandoned plantations on Katchal Island in the Nicobar chain, and a 1,593-hectare area on Little Andaman which was planted more than 35 years ago and abandoned on the instructions of the Supreme Court.

According to a feasibility report prepared by the Indian Institute of Oil Palm Research (IIOPR), based on visits to the islands in late 2018, these can be revived and supplemented by plantations in the grasslands, which make up more than 75% of the land area of Little Andaman, Katchal, Baratang, Kamorta and Teressa. “Existing grass in the islands is not of any use and is being burnt every year to avoid snakebites,” said the IIOPR’s feasibility report, which added that the soil and climatic conditions were suitable for oil palm plantation, with high rainfall doing away with the need for irrigation which could suck out groundwater. All five islands are home to tribal communities, including the Jarawa and Onge tribes. The IIOPR suggested that multi-cropping during the first three years of the oil palm’s life cycle would help provide income before the plantation yields returns from the fourth to seventh years.

However, in a January 2019 letter to the Agriculture Department, the Chief Conservator of Forests of the Union Territory pointed out that much of these lands are protected or reserve forests and any land use changes would require the approval of the Supreme Court, whose 2002 order had directed that existing plantations, whether of oil palm, rubber or teak, should be phased out. The land should be regenerated to its natural profile without any further introduction of exotic species, it said. In its feasibility report, the IIOPR said the Chief Secretary of the islands gave an assurance that “A&N administration would take care of issues relating to Supreme Court Ban and other Committee Reports with the help of the Government of India”.

### Lesson from Sri Lanka

Although it shares similarly suitable climatic conditions, Sri Lanka has recently disavowed oil palm, with a May announcement to raze existing plantations and ban palm oil imports as the crop has replaced more environmentally friendly and employment generating plantation crops, dried up local streams, and showed signs of becoming an invasive species threatening native plants and animals.

In the parts of peninsular India which already grow oil palm, the response has been mixed. Industry stakeholders in Kerala, which has had widespread experience with plantation crops, are excited about growth prospects via the new mission. Former Oil Palm India chairman Vijayan Kunissery told *The Hindu* that a number of rubber farmers are interested in switching to oil palm and expected a revival of the sector by 2022. The State government has identified potential sites for cultivation in Wayanad and Palakkad districts, apart from rejuvenation of existing gardens supported by the new mission.

In Andhra Pradesh, which currently grows more than 90% of India’s oil palm, farmers depended on bore well irrigation. G.V. Ramanjaneyulu, an agricultural scientist who heads the Hyderabad-based Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, pointed out that oil palm requires 300 litres of water per tree per day, as well as high pesticide use in areas where it is not a native crop, leading to consumer health concerns as well.

The high levels of investment and the long wait for high returns tend to attract large corporate investors, while small cultivators have struggled with the long gestation period, and have required heavy government support. “If similar subsidies and support are extended to oilseeds which are indigenous to India and suited for dryland agriculture, they can help achieve self-reliance without dependence on oil palm,” Dr. Ramanjaneyulu said.

(With inputs from Nava-mi Sudhish in Kollam, Kerala)

# Youth breaking the mould and embracing start-up culture: PM

They are keen on new destinations, goals and have new aspirations, says Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the youth were breaking the mould and embracing the start-up culture even in small towns and cities, a sign, he said, of India’s bright future.

In his monthly radio broadcast programme, *Mann ki Baat*, Mr. Modi said space sector reforms had caught the people’s imagination, and expressed confidence that a large number of satellites in the coming days would be those on which youngsters from universities, labs and other sectors had worked upon.

### Indian traditions

With the festival season coming up in the country, the Prime Minister said the world had been paying “heed to Indian spiritual traditions and philosophy”, adding that in this scenario, pe-



ople also had a responsibility to carry forward these great traditions.

“That which is temporary and has perished has to be left behind, but what is timeless has to be carried forward. Let us celebrate our festivals, understand their scientific meaning and the connotation behind them. There is an underlying message in every festival,” he said, wishing people a happy Janmashtami, which is celebrated on Monday.

Noting that Vishwakarma Puja will be observed in the coming days, he said the festival was essentially an ancient Indian practice of pay-

ing tributes to different skills. Mr. Modi paid glowing tributes to hockey legend Dhyan Chand saying he conquered the world of hockey for the country.

National Sports Day is celebrated every year on August 29 on the occasion of Dhyan Chand’s birth anniversary.

### Olympics gold

Noting that India won an Olympic medal in men’s hockey after over four decades, he said the youth were now drawn towards sports and their parents were happy to back them. This itself was a great tribute

to Dhyan Chand.

Observing that the young population’s mindset had undergone a sweeping change, he said it was now keen on new destinations and new goals by taking new paths and having new aspirations.

### Sanskrit promotion

Mr. Modi mentioned a FM radio station at Kevadiya in Gujarat through which radio jockeys were working to promote Sanskrit.

He said the ancient language, through its thoughts and medium of literary texts, nurtured knowledge and also strengthened national unity.

The Prime Minister urged people to continue to maintain precautions against COVID-19.

“More than 62 crore vaccine doses have been administered in the country but still we have to be careful, be vigilant,” he said.

## Sanjay Raut has damaged Shiv Sena: Rane

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

The Shiv Sena had been irretrievably damaged by its chief spokesperson MP Sanjay Raut, said Union Minister Narayan Rane on Sunday as the vicious sabre-rattling between Mr. Rane and the Sena continued unabated.

Speaking in Sindhudurg district on the last day of his Jan Ashirwad Yatra, Mr. Rane said Mr. Raut’s remarks in the Sena mouthpiece *Saamana* had resulted in the “party going to the dogs”. “If he keeps up this level of personal invective against me, then I will be compelled to offer a similarly sharp response through my newspaper *Prahaar*,” he warned.

## President prays at Ayodhya temple

Kovind says it is impossible to imagine Ayodhya without Lord Ram

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

It is impossible to imagine Ayodhya without Lord Ram, said President Ram Nath Kovind as he visited the Uttar Pradesh town on Sunday to launch several cultural projects.

The President also visited the makeshift Ram Janmabhoomi temple and offered prayers there.

“Ayodhya *nagri* is not just Prabhu Ram’s *janmabhoomi* and *leelabhoomi* but without Ram it is impossible to even imagine about this town,” Mr. Kovind said.

The President was speaking at the inauguration of the Ramayana Conclave and launch of various projects of the Department of Culture and Tourism, U.P.



President Ram Nath Kovind at the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya on Sunday. •PTI

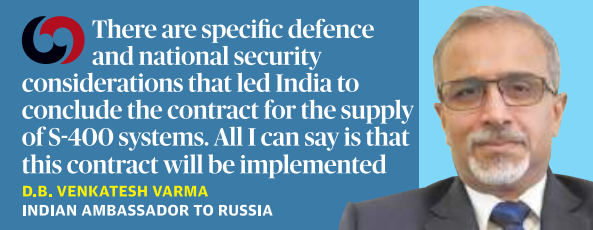
## India, Russia to expand Central Asia ties: envoy

The two countries will ink deal on logistics, naval coordination during Russian Defence Minister’s visit

DINAKAR PERI  
MOSCOW

India and Russia are expecting to conclude the bilateral logistics agreement, Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS), and a Navy-to-Navy cooperation memorandum of understanding (MoU) when Russian Defence Minister Gen. Sergei Shoigu visits India later this year. The two sides are also looking at expanding cooperation in Central Asia and the possibility of supplementing bilateral exercises with trilateral and multilateral ones, Indian Envoy in Russia D.B. Venkatesh Varma said.

On the deal for S-400 air defence systems, the envoy, in an exclusive interview to



*The Hindu*, said: “There are specific defence and national security considerations that led India to conclude the contract for the supply of S-400 systems. All I can say is that this contract will be implemented. We will do what we have to do and necessary for India to preserve and protect its national security interests.”

Both countries are also scheduled to hold the maiden 2+2 ministerial dialogue

during the visit of Gen. Shoigu. On the summit meeting, he said that dates were yet to be fixed, but was expected to take place towards the end of this year subject to the COVID situation.

Mr. Varma said that both sides were also looking at how they could cooperate in using India as a production base for exporting to third countries of Russian-origin equipment and services and would add to the Make in In-

dia programme. “Russia will remain a key defence partner for India for decades to come,” he said.

### Afghanistan crisis

The fast-changing developments in Afghanistan have of course taken everyone by surprise – unexpected as to their speed, as well as their consequences, Mr. Varma said, adding that it was imperative that India and Russia adapt their policies, whatever their policies were in the past.

While a number of countries in the region and beyond are affected by the Afghan developments, India and Russia are, in essence, affected even more due to the rise of Islamic funda-

## Govt. extends deadline amid IT portal glitches

New dates for institutional taxpayers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

With the new Income Tax portal yet to become fully functional, the Finance Ministry on Sunday extended the deadlines for several categories of taxpayers to file tax-related forms electronically. The fresh deadlines for IT specified forms, a couple of which have been extended to March 31, 2022, largely pertain to institutional taxpayers, not individuals. These include multinational firms, sovereign wealth funds, and bodies like charitable trusts.

“On consideration of difficulties reported by the taxpayers and other stakeholders in electronic filing of certain Forms under the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961 read with Income-tax Rules, 1962 (Rules), Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has decided to further extend the due dates for electronic filing of such forms,” the Ministry said in a statement.

“The extension will pro-

vide much needed relief to taxpayers for making the compliances and will also save them from penal consequences,” said Shailesh Kumar, partner at Nangia & Co. LLP. “The extension has been made not only to address immediate filing requirements due within August or September 2021, but also some medium-term relief has been given to taxpayers for some compliances,” Mr. Kumar said.

The last date for taxpayers to pay up dues under the Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme for direct tax dispute resolution has also been extended from August 31 to September 30, where no additional amount is payable. Where taxpayers are required to pay an additional amount, the October 31 deadline has been retained, the Ministry said.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs extended the deadline for an amnesty scheme under the GST regime, from August 31 to November 30.

## AI moves court to quash Cairn plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Air India has asked a New York court to dismiss a petition filed by Britain’s Cairn Energy for seizure of its assets to enforce \$1.2-billion arbitral awards against the Indian government, saying the litigation was premature as an appeal against the arbitration award was still pending.

The petition by the airline, which is separate from the government’s plea in a Washington court seeking dismissal of Cairn’s lawsuit to seek confirmation of the arbitral award, lacks jurisdiction to adjudicate a “mere hypothetical question” or one that depends upon contingent future events that may or may not occur, the New York district court said.

Cairn first moved a court in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia seeking confirmation of the arbitration awards and then filed a petition in the New York court to seek declaration of Air India as an “alter ego” of the Indian government and so it should be made liable to pay the arbitral awards.

An international arbitration tribunal in December last year set aside the levy of capital gains tax, using a 2012 retrospective legislation, on a 2006 reorganisation of Indian business that Cairn carried before listing it on local stock exchanges.

“Cairn’s petition to confirm the Award is pending in the District Court for the District of Columbia,” Air India said in the August 23 petition. It said that the government had filed before a court in The Hague a Motion to Stay and a Motion to Dismiss the arbitral award.

## Webinar to be held on banking for MSMEs

Sectoral experts to participate in event

STAFF REPORTER  
CHENNAI

A webinar on “How banks can boost MSME growth during the pandemic” presented by the State Bank of India and *The Hindu BusinessLine* will be held from 4 p.m. on August 31.

Ketan Gaikwad, managing director and CEO, Receivable Exchange of India; K.E. Raghunathan, convenor, Consortium of Indian Associations; and B. Sankar, Chief General Manager-SME and SCF, State Bank of India, will speak as a part of the webinar.



The discussion will be moderated by Surabhi, Deputy Editor, *The Hindu BusinessLine*.

To watch the webinar, register at <https://bit.ly/3jnxAzW> or scan the QR code.





INTERVIEW | MANISH TEWARI

# ‘Every party is buffeted by leadership tussles from time to time’

There is no division in the Congress in Punjab, but there is, however, a difference of opinion on certain key fundamentals, says senior Congress leader

SANDEEP PHUKAN

*Talking about the leadership tussle in Punjab Congress, Lok Sabha member and senior party leader Manish Tewari said it was “a natural corollary of the politics of personality instead of ideology”. Excerpts:*

Punjab is going to the polls in about six months, but the Congress seems to be imploding. The party is divided between Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and State Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu. You too questioned Mr. Sidhu's advisers?

■ The Indian National Congress [INC] in Punjab has been tempered in the fire of nationalism. It was the vanguard of the struggle against separatism, extremism and terrorism in Punjab. More than 30,000 Congressmen and women were martyred to protect, preserve and defend the unity and integrity of India between 1980 and 1995. The Congress, therefore, is a patriotic emotion in Punjab and not a political party in the conventional sense of the word.

There is no division in the

Congress in Punjab. There is, however, a difference of opinion on certain key fundamentals.

The reason I had to call out one of the ‘so called’ advisors is that you cannot just go against the national consensus on Jammu & Kashmir [J&K] as articulated by two unanimous resolutions of Parliament in 1994 and 2012 respectively.

The INC is against the dismemberment of J&K, it voted against the abrogation of Article 370 in Parliament but at no point in time has the INC or any of its responsible functionaries held or believed that J&K is not an integral part of India. Anyone who believes to the contrary is way out of line.

Mr. Sidhu has talked about lack of freedom in decision-making and doesn't want to become a

showpiece in the party.

■ In my four decade long active association with the INC what I have imbibed is that politics means ‘we’ and not ‘me’. The job of every leader is to carry people along. Try and create the widest consensus among your compatriots on issues and matters. Democracy isn't a contest between personalities alone. It is rather a battlefield of ideas and visions. The litmus test being its acceptability by the people.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi appointed Mr. Sidhu despite stiff opposition from party MPs and the Chief Minister. So, targeting him is seen as challenging her the leadership.

■ It is the prerogative of the Hon'ble Congress president to appoint PCC [Pradesh Congress Committee] presidents. That prerogative has never been in question and that discretion is unfettered to say the least. However, where there is a stark aberration manifesting itself, as a



**● The reason I had to call out one of the 'so called' advisers is that you cannot just go against the national consensus on Jammu & Kashmir**

third generation Congressman, I consider it my bounden duty to respectfully point it out. I do not think that in any way even remotely tantamounts to challenging the prerogative of the Congress president. All of us have also been appointed by her. She gave us ticket to come to Parliament. Incidentally, I was her ve-

ry first political appointee when she became Congress president in 1998. She appointed me as the national president of the Indian Youth Congress. I respect her as much as I respect my late mother.

Let them be Punjab, Chhattisgarh or Rajasthan, every Congress-ruled State is witnessing a leadership tussle. And the top leadership is unable to handle it well. Is it a sign of a leadership vacuum at the top?

■ These turbulences are a part and parcel of politics. Every party is buffeted by them from time to time. Even the BJP has had to replace Chief Ministers in Uttarakhand and Karnataka. When politics departs from ideology and centres on personalities, such unrest is a natural corollary. We are passing through a peculiar phase of Indian politics where we are witnessing the death of ideology.

Won't the uncertainty about

leadership within the Congress affect the prospects of Opposition unity in the run-up to the 2024 polls?

■ Opposition unity against the current dispensation is a bottoms-up and not a top-down process. The reason why the Opposition is coming together is because people want it. They are tired of the constant lies, half truths, chest thumping braggadocio, economic mismanagement, criminal negligence in the handling of COVID-19, the undermining of each and every institution of our Republic and the constant assault on the idea of India. There is an intrinsic DNA of decency in every Indian that is now revolting against the current regime and its default reliance on the Hindu-Muslim binary of polarisation.

A recent dinner hosted by Kapil Sibal was seen as a resurgence of the G-23 [Group of 23 dissenters]. More than a year after you all sought reforms, how far

has the party travelled in terms of addressing these issues?

■ G-23 is not a group of self-seekers. It is an emotion. A sentiment of those ordinary Congress workers who want to see the INC return to pinnacle of its heyday. Those who seek ideological clarity, organisational robustness, political sagacity and an alternative narrative to the bigotry of the ruling NDA/ BJP dispensation identify with this feeling. Unfortunately there are ‘certain people’ who want to convince the leadership that ‘these’ people are challenging your paramourty. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that we lost 2014 and 2019 general elections fairly badly. The fact is that in the last round of Assembly elections we did not fare well. The fact is that young people, as opposed to us grizzled veterans, are leaving the party looking for greener pastures. The fact is this nation requires a rejuvenated Congress as never before. Unfortunately, our intent and en-

deavour has been deliberately misrepresented by ‘certain interests’.

Finally, yours is a border State and has tremendous security implications given what is happening in Afghanistan and the State's own history. What are your thoughts on this?

■ The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan represents a huge triumph for the Pakistani deep state. It has emboldened every extremist/terrorist organisation in the wider Middle East and South Asia from the Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic State, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad. The narrative that the Mujahideen/ Taliban vanquished the Soviet Union – a superpower then, in the penultimate decade of the 20th century and U.S. the only remaining hyperpower in the second decade of the 21st century has huge resonance in J&K and Punjab would be portentous in the days to come.

## Karnataka CM to decide on reopening of schools

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai will hold a meeting with members of COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee and the Ministers concerned on Monday to take stock of the pandemic situation as well as decisions related to opening of primary schools and relaxation of guidelines for the Gowri-Ganesh festival in September.

Sources said Mr. Bommai would chair a meeting at 4 p.m. and take decisions related to opening of primary schools after consulting health experts and Ministers heading departments such as Health and Family Welfare, Primary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education.

With growing demand for relaxation of norms for public celebrations of Gowri-Ganesh festival, which falls on September 10, by BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and many right-wing organisations, Mr. Bommai is expected to take a decision on Monday.

# India silent on Taliban overture

Outreach from Taliban leader Stanekzai ahead of crucial UNSC sessions

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

South Block has maintained a studied silence in response to the comments from Taliban leader Sher Mohammed Stanekzai who on Saturday described India as “very important for the region”.

Mr. Stanekzai's comments were the first overt signal from the Taliban that it wishes to engage India which is currently the President of the UN Security Council and is set to preside over global deliberations on the current chaotic situation in Afghanistan.

“India is very important for the region, and we want trade and economic relations with it. We expect the relationship will continue like before,” Mr. Stanekzai said in a video message. Mr. Stanekzai has served as the leader of the political team of the Taliban that negotiated the Doha pact with the U.S.

The overture from the Taliban for ties “like before” has come after months of speculation about India's overt and covert diplomacy with various stakeholders about the Taliban. Mr. Stanekzai's video statement has



**Homecoming:** An Indian embassy staff member with his family arriving at the Air force base, in Gujarat. ■FILE PHOTO

shown that some progress has been made in repairing India's ties with the Taliban which have been weighed down by India's misgivings about the outfit following the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight IC814 in December 1999 which led to the release of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar and other terrorists.

Mr. Stanekzai's ‘peace signal’ is being interpreted widely as Taliban's changing stance towards India because the country holds the presidency of the UN

Security Council. But diplomatic observers here have pointed out that the realism on both sides is tinted heavily with the U.S. role as the arbiter of a multilateral agenda at the Security Council where it is the “pen holder” on issues related to Afghanistan and terrorism.

A statement from the Security Council issued a day after the fall of Kabul on August 15, mentioned “Taliban” unambiguously and urged it not to allow terrorists to operate from its

soil. But another statement issued on August 27 removed Taliban from the text stating, “no Afghan group or individual should support terrorists.” The changing stance on Taliban and its allied partner, the Haqqani Network – currently in charge of capital Kabul's security – has been highlighted by the suicide attacks at the Kabul airport that were blamed on the Islamic State fighters that are posing a threat to the Taliban in Afghan cities like Kabul and Jalalabad.

Mr. Stanekzai's realism regarding India is aimed to help brighten the chances of delisting of groups such as the Haqqani Network from the list of global terrorists. India has been an advocate of tough measures against the Haqqani Network. But of late, India's statements at the UNSC and UN Human Rights Council were cautiously worded and avoided mention of the Taliban. Experts here say this display of caution shows New Delhi is “playing a role” within the framework defined by the Doha agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

## ‘No cognisable offence by Deshmukh’

CBI's preliminary probe report leaked

ALOK DESHPANDE  
MUMBAI

A leaked report of a preliminary inquiry conducted by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) reveals that the agency had concluded that “no cognisable offence has been committed by Anil Deshmukh, the former Home Minister of Maharashtra”.

The inquiry was conducted by a CBI team following orders by the Bombay High Court on a criminal writ petition filed by advocate Jayshri Patil who had lodged a complaint in wake of the letter written by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. In his letter, Mr. Singh had alleged that Mr. Deshmukh had asked former Mumbai Police API Sachin Vaze to collect ₹100 crore from hotel owners in Mumbai.

However, based on this inquiry report, the CBI filed an FIR against the former Minister. Subsequently, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) too initiated a probe against Mr. Deshmukh and has summoned him several



Anil Deshmukh

times to appear for it.

The CBI report, which has been leaked to the media and has been seen by *The Hindu*, has now cast doubts over the ongoing investigation by the central agency. According to sources, despite the investigation officer not finding any cognisable offence committed by Mr. Deshmukh, an FIR was registered.

According to CBI report, “There is no proof of any meeting of Sachin Vaze with the then Home Minister at his residence apart from official briefings/purposes in the presence of other officers. There was NO proof of any demand by the then HM or his P.S. Sanjeev Palande for collection of money.”

## ‘U.S. will focus more on China now’

USISPF chief says India can benefit from U.S. investment that is leaving China

SUHASINI HAIDAR

The Biden administration's moves to pull out troops from Afghanistan and Iraq mean there will be more American focus on dealing with China, and India could benefit from U.S. investment that is leaving China if the Modi government becomes more transparent in policy-making and “open for business”, said Indo-U.S. trade body chief Mukesh Agni.

However, he said there is not as much interest in concluding an Indo-U.S. Free Trade Agreement as there was during the Trump administration and India must also put aside its hopes of having its “GSP status” restored, which was cancelled in 2019. Both sides must work on more deliverable goals.

### Bones of contention

“If [India] makes GSP a central issue, and the U.S. side makes human rights, labour rights a central issue, then it's a non-starter. Look at other bigger challenges we have,” Mr. Agni, President and CEO of the Washington-based U.S. India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) told *The Hindu* in an interview.

**● India needs \$100 billion a year investment, if it wants to be a \$5-trillion economy. So it has to communicate better to the world that it is open for business, while at the same time, trying to become self-reliant**

MUKESH AGNI  
Indo-U.S. trade body chief



Last week, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had said in a speech the U.S. had indicated it was “not looking” for a new trade agreement, but wanted to work on improving market access issues that have become a sore point. However, despite the cancellation of India's GSP status, exports to the U.S. are the fastest rising than to any other country, indicating the GSP status, which New Delhi has been pushing for, may not have affected demand.

Mr. Agni was in Delhi for meetings with several Ministers including Mr. Goyal, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar who is a “Board Member Emeritus” of the USISPF, as well as Ministers of Information Technology (MEITY), Civil Aviation, Sports, Health and Education ahead of a planned visit by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi to the United States in a few weeks.

The USISPF has invited Mr. Modi to address a special annual meeting of its members in Washington, where President Biden is expected to hold the first in-person ‘Quad’ summit with the leaders of India, Australia and Japan.

### Economic cooperation

The summit, which is yet to be confirmed by all the leaders, is likely to be held on September 26-27, a day after PM Modi delivers an address to the U.N. General Assembly. The four countries are likely to discuss economic cooperation on issues like critical and emerging technology, countering climate change and a COVID-19 vaccine partnership. The meeting will also be significant as it would come shortly after

the U.S. completes its pull-out from Afghanistan.

“I think pulling out from Afghanistan and Iraq will give resources to the strategists in the U.S. side and they will start looking at putting resources on dealing with China. So I think you will see Quad getting more stronger from that perspective, with more focus. And hopefully, it will go beyond the geopolitical to looking at the economic agenda,” Mr. Agni said.

Mr. Agni also said with India-China tensions growing and the Modi government blocking Chinese FDI (foreign direct investment) proposals, India will need to depend on other countries like the U.S. to realise the PM's hopes of a “\$5-trillion dollar economy”, as well as a possible economic trade agreement on the lines of the “Trans-Pacific Partnership.”

Mr. Agni said India still has a “communication problem” among U.S. businesses, as it is not seen as investor-friendly on issues like consultative policy making; legal protections like the indemnity issue holding up the import of U.S.-made vaccines and arbitration and dispute resolution, referring to the Cairn Energy dispute.

## Congress to hold press conferences on NMP

Assets of 70 years up for sale: Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Congress is all set to hold a series of press conferences on National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) that seeks to monetise assets like ports, airports, rail and roads, among others.

On a day when Prime Minister Narendra Modi held his *Mann Ki Baat*, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi tweeted, “The country is talking about friend-monopoly # IndiaOnSale.” Earlier, Mr. Gandhi ac-

cused the Modi government of selling the assets, built over 70 years.

While Mukul Wasnik will be addressing the media in Guwahati on August 31 and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge will do so in Hyderabad on September 1.

Sachin Pilot plans to hold a press conference in Bengaluru, Milind Deora in Kochi, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in Lucknow and Digvijaya Singh in Patna.

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**IN BRIEF**

**NCB questions actor Armaan Kohli**

MUMBAI  
Bollywood actor Armaan Kohli was questioned by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) after banned drugs were allegedly recovered from his house here, sources in the central agency said. An NCB team searched Mr. Kohli's house on Saturday and later took him to the agency's office in south Mumbai as some narcotics were found at his house, an official said. Mr. Kohli had featured in the Salman Khan-starrer *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo* and other films and was a contestant of the reality show *Bigg Boss*. PTI

**Gehlot out of hospital after angioplasty**

JAIPUR  
Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who underwent an angioplasty after the detection of a block in one of his coronary arteries, was discharged from the Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here on Sunday following his recovery. A stent was placed successfully in his artery in which 90% block was found, doctors said. "I would like to thank all the staff, including the doctors, nursing staff, ward boys and sweepers of SMS Hospital, who took good care of me," he tweeted.

**Unitech promoters shifted from Tihar jail**

NEW DELHI  
Former Unitech promoters Sanjay Chandra and Ajay Chandra have been shifted from the Tihar jail here to Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail and Talaja Central Jail, following a Supreme Court order, officials said on Sunday. Director-General (Prisons) Sandeep Goel confirmed that the brothers were shifted on Saturday. A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah had ordered the move after reports of the Enforcement Directorate about the conduct of Sanjay and Ajay Chandra and the connivance of Tihar jail staff in flouting orders and undermining the jurisdiction of the court. PTI

**Two held for forcing man to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'**

BHOPAL  
A Muslim scrap dealer was allegedly threatened and forced to chant "Jai Shri Ram" by two men at a village in Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, following which the police have arrested the accused duo, an official said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday and two purported video clips of it have gone viral on social media, police said. Kamal Singh, 22, and Ishwar Singh, 27, were booked under Sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), 505 (2) (public mischief) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) of the IPC. PTI

# 'India Inc. not sanguine about growth'

Hheads of industry do not share the optimism of the government and RBI, shows CII poll of CEOs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Indian industry does not seem to share the optimism of the government and the Reserve Bank of India about this year's growth prospects, according to a poll of CEOs conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Nearly two-thirds of CEOs of large corporates polled by the CII at its national council meeting earlier this month expect India's GDP growth in 2021-22 to be 9% or less.

The central bank has recently downgraded its GDP growth projection for the year to 9.5% from 10.5% earlier, while the Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian expects growth to be at 11% as estimated in the Economic Survey.



**Road ahead:** High commodity prices and transportation costs are making industry leaders less bullish on growth prospects in the country this year. ■FILE PHOTO

Just 12% of the CEOs expect growth to be over 10%, while 20% expect GDP to grow at 8% or less than 8%. As many as 44% expect growth to be between 8% and 9%, while 23% expect it to hit the 9%-10% range.

While policymakers have been stressing that inflation is a transient problem, industry captains coping with high commodity prices and transportation costs are not so sure.

Just 33% of the CEOs expect average retail inflation during the year to cool from

the present level (5.6% in July), while 67% expect it to be uncomfortably close to or beyond the RBI's monetary policy tolerance threshold of 6%. As many as 30% of the CEOs polled by the CII, expect average inflation to go past 6% over the year.

On the investment front, over half the CEOs attributed the lack of animal spirits and new investment plans to the fact that the ease of doing business remains cumbersome at the ground level.

As many as 33% of the CEOs said fresh investments were not in the offing as current capacities exceed demand, while 32% blamed the high cost of doing business in the country, by which they did not refer to the cost of capital. Just 15% of CEOs said the cost of capital (read interest rates) is high.



Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya releases the first batch of Covaxin made in Ankleshwar. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## First Covaxin batch from Gujarat-based unit is out

It can make 1 crore doses per month

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday released the first commercial batch of COVID-19 vaccine manufactured in Ankleshwar, Gujarat. The Minister said that vaccination was most important to strengthen the country in the fight against the pandemic.

He said that the Ankleshwar plant had a manufacturing capacity of more than one crore doses a month.

On the status of Covaxin production in India, the Union Minister said that Bharat Biotech had already deployed multiple production lines at its Hyderabad, Marur, Bengaluru, and Pune units, and the addition of Chiron Behring, Ankleshwar, would further augment its Covaxin production capacity.

A release issued by the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers noted that a new facility constructed during 2020 was now being utilised for the production of Covaxin.

The production had begun in early June, before which the team had executed engineering batches to study the equipment func-

tionality at the facility. Products manufactured from Ankleshwar facilities would be available for supplies starting September 2021, he added.

Krishna Ella, chairman and managing director, Bharat Biotech, said, "Our goal to develop a vaccine with global safety and efficacy standards has now been achieved, we are now marching towards the goal of annualised capacity of - 1.0 billion doses."

### Global partners

Bharat Biotech was also exploring manufacturing partnerships with its partners in other countries which had expertise in commercial scale manufacturing of inactivated viral vaccines under biosafety containment for further augmentation, he added.

In his speech, the Minister noted that India was running one of the largest vaccination programmes in the world and it was made possible due to the development of these indigenous vaccines.

"The National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been successfully going on across all States and Union Territories since January 16, 2021," he added.

## Slow uptick in Maharashtra cases

Surge seen in Pune district with 1,000 new cases and 25 deaths in 24 hours

SHOUMJOIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

COVID-19 cases continued to register an uptick in Maharashtra on Sunday, with the State reporting 4,666 new ones against 3,301 patients being discharged. The active case tally rose to 52,844.

As many as 131 deaths pushed the State's cumulative fatalities to 1,37,157. The case fatality rate rose to 2.12%.

The total number of cases has reached 64,56,939, while cumulative recoveries have risen to 62,63,416 with the recovery rate standing at 97%.

"Of a total of 5,36,59,613 laboratory samples tested thus far, 64,56,939 (with the average case positivity falling incrementally to 12.03%) have returned positive with



**Concerted campaign:** A health worker administering a COVID vaccine at a drive-in centre in Mumbai. ■EMMANUEL YOGINI

more than 2.03 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer Pradeep Awate said.

Pune reported yet another surge of more than 1,000 new cases, taking its total cases to 11,17,298 while 25 deaths pushed the total death tally over 18,650. District authorities said the active case tally had exceeded the 9,000 mark.

The district has been recording the most cases in the State for the past few days, contributing nearly 20% of all fresh cases with the rural

parts reporting 600 cases to 650 cases daily.

Mumbai reported 345 new cases to take its total case tally to 7,43,499 while the active count stood at 3,378. A couple of deaths took the city's death count to 15,974.

Ahmednagar reported 732 new cases and 12 deaths, taking its total cases to 3,05,288 of which 5,168 are active. The district's cumulative death toll has risen to 6,536. Satara reported 406 new cases and 18 deaths taking the total cases to 2,37,812 of which 5,515 are active.

Neighbouring Sangli reported nearly 458 new cases and 19 deaths. The total case tally stands at 2,01,357 with the active cases standing at 4,712 while its total death toll reached 5,455.

## Norms to be stricter in Mumbai

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has issued instructions for strict enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour in public places in the wake of a possible third wave gripping the city.

BMC Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal on Sunday issued instructions to all the Assistant Municipal Commissioners of the 25 wards for strict implementation of the guidelines.

In his order, Mr. Chahal took note of a photograph published by *The Hindu* in its Mumbai edition of hundreds of people gathered in the Marine Drive promenade on Saturday flouting the physical distancing norms.

## International passenger flights stay suspended till Sept. 30

Selected routes to be cleared on a case-to-case basis: DGCA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The suspension of scheduled international passenger flights due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been extended till September 30, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Sunday.

"However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," it added.

Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India



Limited commercial flights have been operating since the onset of the pandemic.

since March 23, 2020, due to the pandemic. But special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020 and under bilater-

al "air bubble" arrangements with select countries since July 2020.

India has formed air-bubble pacts with around 28 countries, including the U.S., the U.K., the UAE, Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air-bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories.

The DGCA circular also said the suspension does not affect the operations of international all-cargo services and flights specifically approved by it.

## SC issues protocol for physical hearings

Virtual mode to continue on Mondays, Fridays

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has issued fresh standard operating procedures to accord final hearing of cases in physical mode from September 1, and will employ a hybrid option from Tuesday to Thursday every week amid strict observance of COVID safety norms.

The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the pandemic and several Bar bodies and lawyers have been demanding that physical hearings should resume as they face



financial and technical difficulties.

The SOP, issued by the Secretary-General on Saturday, made it clear that the courts would keep hearing miscellaneous cases through virtual mode on Mondays and Fridays.

"Wearing of mask, frequent use of hand sanitiser and maintaining physical

distancing norms are mandatory for all entrants into the Supreme Court premises, including into the courtrooms," the SOP said.

The procedures mandated that once litigants and the lawyers opt for the hearing through physical mode, "hearing through video/teleconferencing mode to the party concerned will not be facilitated".

### Representations heard

The SOP has been issued on the directions of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana who took note of the recommendations of the Judges' Committee set up earlier to consider representations and requests of Bar bodies.

"With a view to gradually facilitate resumption of

physical hearing, the final hearing/regular matters listed on non-miscellaneous days may be heard in the physical mode [with hybrid option], as may be decided by the Bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the courtrooms; further, any other matter may be heard in physical mode on such days, if Bench directs likewise.

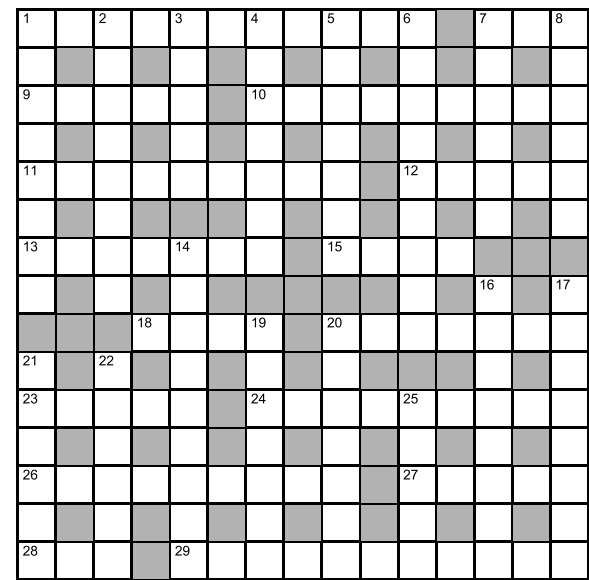
"All other matters, including those listed on miscellaneous days shall continue to be heard through video/teleconferencing mode."

The Bench, hearing cases through physical mode, may decide on taking a break during the hearings for 15 minutes, so that the courtroom may be sanitised, it said.

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SCAN TO PLAY



- 15 Winger caught in sheer neglect (4)
- 18 Affirm a pledge (4)
- 20 Open an airline? That would be a bloomer (7)
- 23 Love to get protection right away (5)
- 24 Herb crossing lunar crater is a violation (9)
- 26 Tick off money, collecting record margin (9)
- 27 Fire wall, finally it doesn't make any sense (5)
- 28 Where it's odd to be small (3)
- 29 Hat of straw rejected by crazy follower (11)

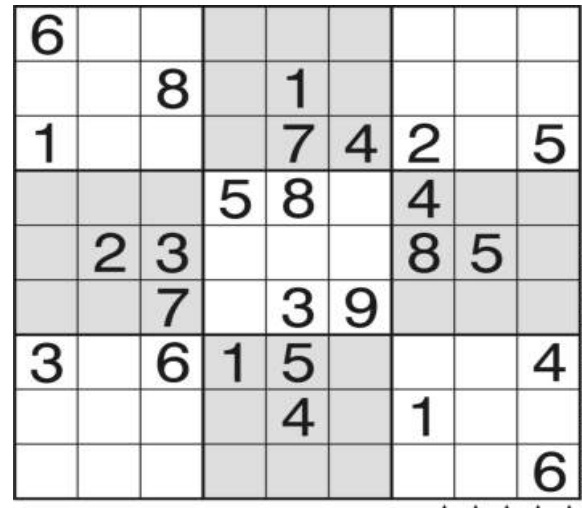
### DOWN

- 1 Growing vegetable done - turn upside down (4,4)
- 2 Group singing, choir's assembled for "sign of the cross" (8)
- 3 More comfortable, Charlie's willows? (5)
- 4 Almighty flower? (3,4)
- 5 Bridge convention yet to be used by novice (7)
- 6 Before a perch, stop - so full of self doubt (9)
- 7 Eggs go through in a vehicle (6)
- 8 Wrong list changes the heart rate (6)
- 14 Take up study about parasites? Forget it (5,4)
- 16 Criminal tries to mediate, invite star (8)
- 17 He pilots a ship of sorts (8)
- 19 Refuse salary, get away (7)
- 20 Breaking safe, the rascal enters wearing masks (7)
- 21 Dolly's local scene (6)
- 22 Dead body found close to border, in the forest (6)
- 25 Chosen to help from the south of the country (5)

### ACROSS

- 1 OK, shifted as ordered but it's sure to fail (4,2,5)
- 7 Doctor comes right away, is prompt (3)
- 9 All exposed, deny one quit due to boredom (5)
- 10 Try to limit deprivation with very short skirt (5,4)
- 11 Give politician the money collected in church (9)
- 12 Land or farm machinery? (5)
- 13 Exotic scenes covering oriental spirit (7)

## SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13338

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

## FAITH

### The devoted do not fear

At various times, we all make offerings to God, but no one gives everything he has. But Putana gave up her very life, and thus earned moksha, said V.S. Karunakarachariar, in a discourse. Putana had come to kill Krishna. How then could she be considered worthy of moksha? Although her intention had been evil, she had ultimately been killed by Krishna, and had also had the good fortune of touching the Lord. Giving up her life can be said to be giving up everything, and so she qualified for His *daya*. Krishna closed His eyes, when he sucked her milk and her life. Some interpret this to mean that the Lord was sorry that the first person He was killing in that avatara was a woman.

But Krishna closed His eyes for a different reason. Here was Putana giving up her life to Krishna, and what could He give her in turn? Krishna felt that nothing He could give her was enough for this supreme sacrifice! In shame, therefore, He closed His eyes. Such is the Lord's kindness, that He is never satisfied that He has compensated or rewarded us enough. This attribute of the Lord is pointed out by Venkatadri kavi, the author of *Lakshmi Sahasra*. He says that the Lord does not know what to give him (Venkatadri) as a reward. The Lord feels that whatever He gives will be too small a gift for the poet.

Why did Krishna kill those Kamsa sent to destroy Him? Instead could He not have killed Kamsa first? He wanted Kamsa to live in terror, not knowing when Krishna would slay him. Such fear is what His enemies experience. The Sun is scorching, but the lotus finds the Sun pleasing. Likewise, devotees do not have to fear the Lord. But those who oppose Him will be afraid of Him.







ASK US



K. NITYA KALYANI

**Q. My mother is 59. She had breast cancer and is taking medicine for the same. My father is 70 and he has diabetes. They don't have health insurance. I want to take health insurance for them, but not sure about which factors to look into while taking the policy. As per my research, public sector general insurance companies will not give them insurance due to their age and existing health conditions. Can you help me out with the factors to look into while taking the policy and recommend policies?**

NIYATI SHAH

**A.** Age and adverse health history create challenges in buying health insurance for the first time. This is one reason why it is advisable to opt for it at a younger age, not only for coverage at a lower premium, but also a chance to work off the various waiting periods for coverage and be assured of life-long renewability which every company has to give.

Having said that, there is no blanket ban on insuring an older person or a person with a health incident behind them. In fact, almost all companies have senior citizens health insurance policies, including public sector insurers.

Coming to health insurance for a cancer survivor, you should look at specialised health insurance companies' offerings of ongoing cover for cancer survivors, including cover for recurrence, metastasis and second malignancy.

You could find pilot products, which means they are being offered on a test basis for five years and could be withdrawn, modified or continued. The insurance itself would be for a year and renewable until the product is on offer and, if it is withdrawn, the company will offer to port you to a suitable alternate product.

Such products are being tested out in the market and would have more constraints than the usual products like longer waiting periods for certain types of claims. They will also have restricted sum assured which will result in your claim amounts being further restricted due to sub-limits.

With limited options you just have to choose the best of what is on offer.

**Q. My insurance premium due date every year is the 23rd of March. However, I pay the premium before April 15th each year, within the grace period of 30 days offered by the insurance company. My question is since the premium due and the premium paid in my case always falls on two different financial years. In which financial year can I claim exemption for the insurance premium paid?**

SANKARAN M

**A.** The date of payment of insurance premium is the basis for claiming income tax benefits regardless of when the premium falls due. If you paid the premium on April 15, 2021, you can claim the rebate under Section 80C or 80D, as the case may be, for the financial year 2021-22.

**Q. We are a 26 years' old couple and have been recently married. We have a family floater option for health insurance and I have a whole-life insurance policy in my name and my husband has a PPF account. Apart from this, we do a regular recurring deposit of ₹2,000 and have two different FDs amounting around ₹70,000. As a young couple, we have had doubts as to the needs of an LIC policy and its gains. How much and if we can really get any sum assured. Though we did talk to the agent, their language wasn't understandable enough. As per the financial goals I have my education loan to repay. I am taking a break to prepare for my post-graduation entrance exams and my husband is the only one earning right now (₹6 lakh p/a). We wish to buy a house in coming four to five years and want to save at least ₹5 lakh for down payment and the like. What according to you should be our plan for improving our savings and right method of investment?**

SRAAVYA LA

**A.** For a young couple migrating from two incomes to a single income, your risk protection appears well-planned. Periodically review the sum assured on your hospitalisation policy to ensure it is in line with medical costs on an ongoing basis.

Your whole-life insurance policy is a safety net and perhaps a term life policy for your husband would be an advisable addition. It offers a no-frills life insurance cover for a matching no-frills premium.

Your savings commitment in RD and PPF would account for up to ₹1.75 lakh of your ₹6 lakh annual income. You have to repay your educational loan and pay your health and life policy premiums.

It is best to buy insurance for risk cover, and it is not warranted to view it as an investment to maximise returns.

Yes, there are policies that offer both investment return and risk cover, but the correct way to analyse their benefit is to compare them with a combination of an investment option and a pure risk cover costing the same in total, and seeing which has a more efficient net return.

Apart from your living expenses, if you save ₹10,000 a month in the safest of fixed return options, that principal alone will amount to ₹6 lakh in five years. If you want to maximise returns and have the risk appetite, you can consider other investment options.

(K. Nitya Kalyani is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in). Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

# Align your investments with goals

Most of us have never made an appropriate list of our financial goals due to which we are exposed to the risk of a mismatch

GAURAV MASHRUWALA

In the month of May in 2019, I was returning from Ahmedabad by Duronto Express. This was a non-stop train between Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

A fellow passenger wanted to get down at Borivali. However, he was not aware that the train wouldn't stop there. He had two options, either to jump off the train at Borivali station, which was obviously a riskier option, or to travel all the way up to Mumbai Central and then make his way back to Borivali.

He opted for the latter and had to make arrangements to

travel to Borivali. His time got wasted, money spent and energy drained. All because there was a mismatch between the station he wished to get down and the train he had booked.

Similarly, most of us end up making mistakes while investing. Years ago, a middle-aged couple called me up. They

were living in a smaller city of Gujarat. From that city's perspective, they were wealthy. Apart from the bungalow they lived in, the total value of their assets was about ₹5 crore.

The assets consisted mainly of real estate – in the form of a plot of land, two residential properties and a few shops. Of the ₹5-crore assets, only about ₹25 lakh of investment was liquid in the form of bank FDs, shares, mutual funds and other investments, which could be encashed immediately.

The rest was all in illiquid, indivisible real estate. The reason they called me was because they needed ₹47 lakh to fund their daughter's forth-

coming education abroad. They had two choices, either they could take an education loan or liquidate a piece of land costing approximately ₹90 lakh. There was obviously a mismatch between their financial goals and investments.

Most of us have never made an appropriate list of our financial goals – those goals for which we are saving and investing money. Because of this habit, we are unknowingly exposed to a mismatch risk.

**Aim for optimum returns**  
All of us want to invest in instruments that generate higher, faster and maximum returns. Between an aeroplane and a bicycle, which one

would travel higher, faster? Obviously, the aeroplane. However, if we were to travel to a place that is 3 km away, which one would be our choice of transport? Naturally, we would opt for a bicycle ride.

**What's the point in generating maximum returns if those are not going to be of use to us when we need them? Focus on optimum returns, not maximum returns**

Hence, always focus on optimum returns and not on maximum returns. What's the point in generating maximum returns if those are not going to be of use to us when we need them? Every time we invest, we should ask ourselves the question, "For which investment is this financial goal?" If the investment is not aligned to a financial goal, then unknowingly, we are exposed to a risk of mismatch.

Every year in the months of January, February and March, I receive a plethora of queries about investing in instruments that offer investor tax benefits. In reality, these are the worst months to invest for tax saving. Several financial products are unveiled to lure investors into investing during this time.

Due to lack of time, most people end up investing in instruments that are of no use to them. A 65-year-old widow without any dependents purchased a life insurance pro-

duct by paying a hefty premium. A couple repaying a home loan invested in a five-year bank FD with lock-in. They were any way getting benefit for repaying the principal amount of the home loan.

Many salaried individuals exhaust their tax-saving limit when they contribute to EPF and pay school tuition fees for their children. They don't need to invest more.

Senior citizens can consider investing in the Senior Citizen Saving Scheme. Families with a girl child can consider the Sukanya Samridhi Yojna.

Our Income Tax Act is brilliantly enacted. If we plan at the beginning of the financial year and choose an instrument that would help us achieve our financial goals, we will surely find one that will help us with both tax savings and achieving financial goals.

We RIAs (registered investment advisors with SEBI) often joke, "Most people die in India in the month of Jan., Feb., March." This is sarcasm. We say this because most life insurance policies are sold in these months to save on income tax.

**Plan in advance**  
Someone rightly said, "If we fail to plan, we plan to fail." Plan your investments, link them to financial goals, and give direction to them. Only then we will enjoy the fruits. (The writer is a financial planner & author of *Yogic Wealth*)

## THINK INVESTOR: TRADITIONAL VS NEW AGE INVESTMENTS

# Wanna become rich or achieve your goals, or both?

Your primary savings must be in traditional investments, anything additional can be in alternative investments of your choice

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY

To say that we live in a technology-driven world is axiomatic. First-person view drone and virtual reality have brought excitement to our lives. The question is: Will new-age investments such as cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) bring the same enthusiasm to our personal finance? In this article, we discuss why traditional investments are appropriate to achieve life goals and new-age investments (or alternatives) are best kept in the 'explore' portfolio.

**Traditional vs alternatives**  
Equity and bonds are considered as traditional investments. You can add real estate to this group if you accept the argument that people traded in real estate even before they invested in equity and bonds. All other investments are considered as alternatives.

This category has witnessed blistering additions in the last two decades – private equity,

volatility-based products as well as wine and antiques for those who wanted to convert their passion into investments. And now, it is cryptos and NFTs.

Before you invest in alternatives, consider whether you are investing to achieve a goal or whether you are exploring avenues to get rich. Of course, all of us want to be rich, but only some are fortunate enough to become successful entrepreneurs or investors.

So, you may want to first set up a path to achieve your goals and then explore avenues to getting rich.

By goals, we mean buying a house and funding your child's college education.

It is preferable to invest in traditional investments to achieve your goals. Why? For one, traditional investments have an established market and, therefore, are easy to sell. You can redeem your equity mutual funds because there are regulations in place to do so. For another, traditional invest-

ments do not exhibit the level of volatility seen in traded alternatives such as cryptos.

**Perceived valuation**  
You can consider alternative investments as part of your 'explore' portfolio. This as a portfolio where you invest in alternatives to earn higher returns or derive returns from non-traditional factors such as volatility and inflation. Investing in cryptos, NFTs and passion assets such as arts and antiques fall into this 'explore portfolio'.

This means that your primary savings must be in traditional investments. Your additional savings can be in alternative investments of your choice.

You must, however, conduct your due diligence before investing in alternatives. This is important given the short track record for these assets and the continual development in process and technology to provide credibility to these investments.

Note that an asset's price is



**Stark contrast:** Traditional investments don't exhibit the volatility seen in traded alternatives like cryptocurrencies. •GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

based on its perceived value. You may buy, for instance, an NFT of the Magpie-robin, an endangered species that lives in Seychelles. These so-called 'collectibles' may be valuable when it catches collectors' fancy, given that there will be only limited tokens sold by Nature Seychelles. But their price will

depend on perceived value. True, even financial assets trade on perceived value, but there is an underlying cash flow as a reference point.

Bond investments have interest income; you can depend on company earnings to arrive at a stock value.

This provides some ground

to justify the valuation process of traditional investments.

Exploring newer investment avenues is fine, but considering alternatives for your goal-based investments is quite another argument. You would do well to allocate not more than 25% of your total investments to alternatives as part of the 'explore' portfolio. Note that these investments could be illiquid; you may be forced to sell at a lower price based on the urgency with which you want to convert them into cash.

It will be interesting to observe how individuals who prefer the touch-and-feel of real assets such as land and gold embrace digital assets such as cryptos and NFTs. Only time will tell which will turn good – traditional investments set up to achieve your goals, or alternatives investments that have the potential to make you rich, or perhaps both.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

PERSONAL LOAN - RATES AND CHARGES				
Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (₹)	EMI (₹)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure - 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure - 5 years	
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2.75%
ICICI Bank	10.50-19.00	10,747-12,970	2,149-2,594	Up to 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	10.00-15.60	10,624-12,053	2,125-2,411	₹1,000-10,000
State Bank of India	9.60-13.85	10,525-11,595	2,105-2,319	Up to 1.5% (Max ₹15,000)
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.75-24.00*	10,809-14,384	2,162-2,877	Up to 2.5%
Canara Bank	10.20-13.90	10,673-11,608	2,135-2,322	Up to 0.5%
Punjab National Bank^	8.95-14.50	10,367-11,764	2,073-2,353	Up to 1%
Federal Bank	10.49-17.99	10,744-12,694	2,149-2,539	Up to 3%
South Indian Bank	10.15-14.45	10,660-11,751	2,132-2,350	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	9.55-12.90^^	10,513-11,351	2,103-2,270	Up to 1%
Indian Overseas Bank	12.05	11,135	2,227	Up to 0.75%
Indian Bank	9.05-13.65	10,391-11,544	2,078-2,309	1%**
Dhanlaxmi Bank	11.90-15.70	11,097-12,079	2,219-2,416	Upto 2.5% (Min ₹1,250)

\*Digital Personal loan starting at 10.50% p.a.

\*\*For pensioners, NIL processing fees for loan up to ₹25,000, and fees of ₹250 for loan above ₹25,000

^0.10% additional concession in applicable interest rate to customers who opt for coverage under Credit Life Insurance.

^^ Interest rate of 8.55% p.a. offered to BPCL (Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd) employees

NEW CAR LOAN-RATES AND CHARGES			
Name of Lender	Interest rate (%)	EMI (₹)	Processing fee (% of loan amount)
		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure-5 years	
Bank of Baroda	7.00-10.25	9,901-10,685	0.50%
Union Bank of India	7.15-7.50	9,936-10,019	₹1,000
Punjab National Bank	7.15-7.65	9,936-10,055	Up to ₹1,500
Canara Bank	7.30-9.90	9,972-10,599	0.25% (₹1,000-5,000)
Bank of India	7.35-8.55	9,983-10,270	Up to 0.25% (₹1,000-20,000)
UCO Bank	7.45-7.70	10,007-10,067	1% (Max: ₹1,500)
State Bank of India*	7.50-8.45	10,019-10,246	NIL till 31.01.2022
IDBI Bank	7.50-8.10	10,019-10,162	₹2,500
Bank of Maharashtra**	7.40-10.40	9,995-10,722	NIL till 30.09.2021
Indian Overseas Bank	7.55	10,031	₹500-₹10,000
ICICI Bank	7.90-9.85	10,114-10,587	₹3,500-₹8,500
HDFC Bank	7.95-8.30	10,126-10,210	0.5% (₹3,500-₹8,000)
Karnataka Bank	7.95-10.00	10,126-10,624	0.5% (₹2,500-₹10,000)
Dhanlaxmi Bank	8.10-9.20	10,162-10,428	1%
Federal Bank	8.50	10,258	₹2,000-4,500
Axis Bank	7.45-14.50	10,007-11,764	₹3,500-₹7,000
South Indian Bank	9.05-10.50	10,391-10,747	1% (Max: ₹10,000)
RBL Bank	12.00-14.00	11,122-11,634	Up to 2%
City Union Bank	12.25-12.75	11,185-11,313	1% (Min: ₹250)

\*Further interest rate concession of 0.20% on purchase of electric vehicle (Green Car Loan)

\*\*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holder. 0.05% concession on interest rate to women & armed forces personnel subject to minimum floor ceiling of RLLR.

Rates and charges as on August 25

Source: Paisabazaar.com



# High jumper Nishad and paddler Bhavina bring cheer with silver

Vinod adds discus bronze, making it a memorable National Sports Day for India; despite a protest, dy. chef de mission confident of the discus thrower keeping medal

## PARALYMPICS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TOKYO

Table tennis star Bhavina Patel and high jumper Nishad Kumar won silver medals while discus thrower Vinod Kumar claimed a bronze at the Paralympics here on Sunday, to give the country a big reason to smile on National Sports Day.

The 21-year-old Nishad, a farmer's son from Himachal Pradesh, cleared 2.06m in the T47 class before 41-year-old BSF man Vinod, whose father fought in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, produced a best throw of 19.91m to clinch a bronze in F52 event.

The two athletics medals came after paddler Bhavina gave India its first medal in the Games after going down to Chinese paddler Ying Zhou in the Class 4 women's singles final.

### Asian record

Nishad cleared the same height of 2.06m to set a new Asian mark. USA's Roderick Townsend, won with a world record jump of 2.15m, while fellow-American Dallas Wise was also awarded a silver for his 2.06m effort.

The second Indian in the fray, Ram Pal, finished fifth with a best jump of 1.94m.

T47 class is meant for athletes with a unilateral upper limb impairment resulting in some loss of function at the shoulder, elbow and wrist.

Vinod also set an Asian record while winning the bronze medal. Piotr Kosewicz (20.02m) of Poland and Velimir Sandor (19.98m) of Croatia won gold and silver.

A protest has been lodged against Vinod after his podium finish. The Indian contingent is, however, confident that the athlete will retain his bronze. "It was only four

days back that his classification was done and I was there. Three Tokyo Paralympics classifiers had classified Vinod as F52. We are confident that the medal will stay after review," Team India's deputy chef de mission Arhan Bagati said.

The F52 classification is for athletes with impaired muscle power, restricted range of movement, limb deficiency or leg length difference, with athletes competing in seated position.

### Bittersweet

Earlier, Bhavina's impressive run ended with a fighting 7-11, 5-11, 6-11 loss to World No. 1 Zhou, a two-time gold medalist, in a summit clash which lasted 19 minutes.

"I'm extremely delighted to win a medal but also a bit disappointed as well. I got a bit nervous," Bhavina, who also became the first Indian to win a Paralympic medal in table tennis, was quoted as saying by International Paralympic Committee.

"I can only assure you that next time I meet her you will see a different me. She clearly got the better of me and had all the shots in her book to outsmart by effort. However, this medal will go a long way and I can assure you that," added Bhavina.

In archery, the Indian challenge ended in the compound mixed pair Open section after the duo of Rakesh Kumar and Jyoti Balian made a quarterfinal exit. The sixth-seeded duo lost to Turkey's Oznur Cure and Bulent Korkmaz 151-153. Earlier, the Indians had stormed past Thailand's Anon Aungaphinan and Praphaporn Hom-janthuek 147-141.

In women's compound open section, Jyoti lost to Kerrie-Louise Leonard of Ireland 141-137 in the first round.



Doing India proud: Nishad Kumar and Bhavina Patel rose to the occasion with silver medal performances while Vinod Kumar brought smiles with a bronze. ■ REUTERS & TWITTER

### The Nishad file

Age: 21

■ Native of Amb, Una district, Himachal Pradesh

■ Event & category: High jump, para athletics, T47

■ Ranked World No. 3

■ Training base: SAI National camp, Bengaluru

■ Personal coach: Satyanarayana

### HONOURS

■ Silver at Tokyo Paralympics

■ Bronze at Para athletics Worlds, Dubai 2019

■ Gold at Fazza Para athletics

GP, Dubai 2021

■ Gold at Fazza Para athletics GP, Dubai 2019

### BACKGROUND

■ Hails from a family of farmers. Was eight when his right hand was cut by a grass-cutting machine at his family farm

■ Competed in the 2017 Schools Nationals with able-bodied athletes and finished 10th with 1.75m

■ Moved to Panchkula to train at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium

■ Made a golden debut at international level in Dubai in 2019

### The Bhavina file

Age: 34

■ Born in Mehsana, Gujarat

■ Lives in Ahmedabad

■ Event & category: Table Tennis - Class 4

■ Coach: Lalan Doshi

### HONOURS

■ Silver at Tokyo Paralympics

■ Has represented India in 28 international tournaments

■ Was ranked a career-best No. 2 after winning silver at the PTT Thailand championship in 2011

■ In 2013, bagged the silver medal at the Asian championship in Beijing

■ Bronze at the ITTF Asian championship in Beijing in 2017

### BACKGROUND

■ Born to owners of a small cutlery store in Sundhiya, a village near Mehsana, she was diagnosed with polio when she was 12 months old. Since then, she has been wheelchair-bound

■ After shifting to Ahmedabad to better her career prospects, she started playing table tennis at her training institute. The National crown in 2007 made her pursue para sport full time

### The Vinod file

Age: 41

■ Native of Rohtak, Haryana

■ Event & category: Discus throw, para athletics, F52

■ Ranked World No. 6

■ Training base: SAI National camp, Bengaluru

■ Personal coach: Satyanarayana

### HONOURS

■ Bronze in Tokyo Paralympics

■ Bronze in Fazza Para athletics GP, Dubai, 2021

### BACKGROUND

■ Comes from a family of Armymen. Joined BSF after completing his education but fell off a cliff in Leh in 2002 during the training period. Suffered severe injuries on both legs and was bed-ridden for nearly 10 years

■ Knew about para sport during the 2016 Rio Paralympics and visited the SAI Rohtak centre, and started training there

■ Went on to win a bronze at the 2017 and 2018 Para athletics Nationals in F53

■ In 2019, finished fourth in the Para athletics Worlds in Dubai

## History beckons as Djokovic chases sporting immortality

A record 21st Major will complete the coveted calendar Grand Slam; Osaka, Barty lead women's field

### US OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NEW YORK

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam in 52 years and become the all-time men's leader in Slam titles by capturing the US Open.

Not since Rod Laver in 1969 has the feat been achieved and the chance at tennis history has fuelled Djokovic's fire. "I know how big of an opportunity is in front of me," the Serbian star said. "I'm very motivated to play my best tennis. I'm hugely inspired and motivated by that, no doubt."

### Missing stars

Five past champions won't be in the field when the showdown begins on Monday at Flushing Meadows, with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Juan Martin del Potro and 2020 winner Dominic Thiem absent due to injuries.

The main obstacles in Djokovic's path to a 21st career Slam crown will be a set of rising 20-something talents trying to build their trophy

hauls — Russia's second-ranked Daniil Medvedev, Greece's third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas and fourth-ranked Olympic champion Alexander Zverev of Germany.

After opening against a qualifier, Djokovic could face sixth seed Matteo Berrettini in a quarterfinal, Zverev in a semifinal and Medvedev or Tsitsipas in the final.

US Open 2019 runner-up Medvedev, who won a tune-up title at Toronto, sees Djokovic as a clear favourite.

Tsitsipas is proud of his ranking and his Roland Garros finals run. "Three is a number that's very significant," Tsitsipas said. "It pushes me so much to sustain that, to want to go the extra mile."

Zverev, last year's US Open runner-up, won the

Cincinnati title and beat Djokovic in the Olympic semifinals. He's on a 11-match win streak.

### Eyes on Osaka

Meanwhile, women's defending champion Naomi Osaka seeks her third US Open title in four tries. What's uncertain is whether New York will see Osaka re-discover her dominant form.

The 23-year-old Japanese star lit the flame in the Olympic cauldron at the Tokyo Games and lost in the third round. Since Japan she has played only two matches ahead of the Open.

Ashleigh Barty, the top ranked woman since September 2019, has rolled to wins at Wimbledon and Cincinnati, putting her on best form entering the Flushing Meadows fortnight.



### Talking points

■ Djokovic will look to become only the second man in the Open Era (after Rod Laver in 1969) to win all four Majors and complete the calendar Grand Slam

■ The Serb can also take sole possession of the record for most men's singles Grand Slam titles if he wins his fourth US Open and 21st Major overall

■ Djokovic's biggest challengers will be Zverev, who beat Djokovic en route to the gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics and won the Cincinnati Masters, Medvedev, who won the Toronto Masters, and Tsitsipas, who has an ATP Tour-leading 48 victories this year and made the last four at both Toronto and Cincinnati

■ Barty will look to become the first woman since Serena (in 2012) to complete the Wimbledon-US Open double. Serena and Venus remain

the only women to have achieved the feat this millennium, having done it twice each

■ Defending champion Osaka returns to the Grand Slam stage for the first time since her withdrawal from the French Open because of mental health issues. The World No. 3 has won four of the last six hard-court Majors

■ The 2021 US Open will be the first Slam event without Serena, Venus, Federer and Nadal since the 1997 Australian Open when all four hadn't made their Slam debuts yet

■ The men's singles draw will feature only three players who have won singles Majors - Djokovic, Murray and Cilic. The women's section, in contrast, will have 13

### INDIA IN ENG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja was taken to a hospital in Leeds on Saturday for precautionary scans to know the extent of a knee injury he sustained during the third Test against England.

Jadeja apparently hurt his knee while fielding during the England innings on the second day of the match.

Jadeja posted a picture of himself, wearing hospital apparels, on his instagram page with a caption "Not a good place to be at".

As of now, the Indian team management doesn't seem to be too worried as it might not be "very serious".

The Indian team is supposed to leave for London on Monday and if the scan reports do not reveal anything major, Jadeja will accompany the team.

The fourth Test starts on September 2 at the Oval and there is a possibility of R. Ashwin replacing Jadeja on a track which is known to offer help to the slow bowlers.

Meanwhile, pacer Mark Wood and all-rounder Chris



In trouble: Jadeja injured his knee while fielding during the third Test at Headingley. ■ FILE PHOTO

Woakes are set to be added to the England squad for the fourth Test against India after regaining full fitness, head coach Chris Silverwood said on Sunday.

Wood had hurt his right shoulder while fielding during the second Test at Lord's, while Woakes has recovered from the heel injury that has kept him out of international cricket since the ODI series against Pakistan in July.

Woakes played a domestic T20 game on Friday and will be a welcome addition to the

squad in the absence of key players such as Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer. "Both of them have come through fine. Wood was bowling yesterday morning. He will be available for selection and Woakes has played so he becomes available again," Silverwood said a day after England's series-levelling win over India at Leeds.

The fourth Test begins on Sept. 2 at the Oval.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler could miss the remaining two Tests to attend the birth of his second child.

## Max Verstappen wins F1's shortest race

REUTERS  
SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

Red Bull's Max Verstappen won Formula One's shortest race on Sunday with the rain-hit Belgian GP red-flagged after three laps behind the safety car and half-points awarded for only the sixth time ever.

Fans waited for three hours in torrential rain before the safety car led the field from the pitlane.

The race was then stopped after completing the laps necessary for half points to be scored.

George Russell of Williams finished second to secure his first podium.



Verstappen. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Lewis Hamilton was third for Mercedes and his overall lead over Verstappen was cut from eight points to three.

## Son sends Spurs to the top; Greenwood nets United's winner

Barcelona and Real Madrid manage full points; Juventus slumps to a defeat against promoted side Empoli

### EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

Son Heung-min sent Tottenham to the top of the Premier League as the South Korean's 42nd minute free-kick clinched a 1-0 win against Watford at home, while teenager Mason Greenwood's 80th minute strike fired Manchester United to a record-breaking 1-0 victory at Wolves on Sunday.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side has made a flawless start to the new domestic season and sits two points clear of second-placed West Ham after a third successive victory.

Three consecutive 1-0 wins, including one against champion Manchester City, as well as progress in the Europa Conference League, suggest Tottenham could enjoy a better season than expected.

At Molineux, United set an English top-flight record for unbeaten away league games in their first match since agreeing to sign Cristiano Ronaldo from Juventus.

The Portuguese was not available to make his debut this weekend as he waits to officially complete the move.

United have now gone 28 successive away league games without defeat, pass-



Decisive moment: United's Mason Greenwood races away in delight after his late strike against the Wolves ■ REUTERS

ing the mark they shared with Arsenal.

Barcelona dug deep for a narrow 2-1 win over Getafe in

the LaLiga with Dutch striker Memphis Depay providing the winner.

Getting used to life with-

out Lionel Messi, Barcelona has seven points from three games along with Real Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia and Mallorca.

On Saturday, Dani Carvajal's second-half goal gave Real Madrid a 1-0 win at Real Betis as Carlo Ancelotti's men rode their luck.

In Serie A, Juventus slumped to a shock 1-0 home defeat to promoted Empoli on Saturday in its first match of the post-Ronaldo era.

### The results:

Premier League: Wolves 0 lost to Manchester United 1 (Greenwood 80); Burnley 1 (Wood 61) drew with Leeds 1 (Bamford 86); Tottenham 1 (Son 42) bt

Watford 0. LaLiga: Barcelona 2 (Roberto 2, Depay 30) bt Getafe 1 (Ramirez 18). Saturday: Elche 1 (Roco 11) drew with Sevilla 1 (En Nesryri 40); Real Sociedad 1 (Barrenetxea 42) bt Levante 0; Real Betis 0 lost to Real Madrid 1 (Carvajal 61).

Bundesliga: Union Berlin 2 (Giesselmann 22, Awoniyi 41) bt Borussia Moenchengladbach 1 (Hofmann 90+1); Wolfsburg 1 (Roussillon 52) bt RB Leipzig 0. Serie A: Genoa 1 (Cambiaso 69) lost to Napoli 2 (Fabian Ruiz 39, Petagna 84); Sassuolo 0 Sampdoria 0. Saturday: Juventus 0 lost to Empoli 1 (Mancuso 21); Fiorentina 2 (Gonzalez 41, Vlahovic 70) bt Torino 1 (S. Verdi 89); Atalanta 0 drew with Bologna 0.



